



## **Expatriate development workers: An evaluation of the process and outcome of sociocultural adjustment**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Previous research on expatriation has focused principally on managers in multi-national corporations. However, there is an acknowledged need to disaggregate the expatriate population in order to recognise the different contexts in which expatriation takes place. This thesis focuses on expatriation within the context of international development, evaluating the process and outcome of sociocultural adjustment in individual development workers.

Development workers are an important type of expatriate to study. Their ability to adjust effectively to host cultures is increasingly important as NGOs face growing competition for funds alongside greater calls for accountability and increased demand for their services. Moreover, development work is theoretically challenging as a result of close contact with host nationals, a greater degree of cultural distance between home and host cultures, and the witnessing of poverty and inequity.

A mixed method approach was employed in this thesis. Semi-structured interviews were used to evaluate the sociocultural adjustment experiences of expatriate development workers together with reflections on the contribution of their sending organisations. A postal survey was subsequently used to examine recruitment, selection and cross-cultural training practices in a broader sample of UK-based NGOs.

This thesis makes its contribution by evaluating sociocultural adjustment in an under-researched expatriation context that is argued to be especially challenging both for the sending organisations and the individual expatriates. The findings identify a number of specific challenges, and provide a rich insight into the way in which these combine to influence the sociocultural adjustment of expatriate development workers and the adjustment outcomes that they achieve. Despite being a challenging context, the development workers in this study had all reached positive adjustment outcomes. The role of sending organisations was also examined, which indicated that recruitment, selection and cross-cultural training practices were shaped by pragmatic considerations. This was evidenced by an emphasis on recruitment sources and selection criteria that sought to identify qualified and experienced individuals with minimal training needs. Cross-cultural training focused on the provision of project and organisational inductions, supporting this interpretation. The findings led to the proposal of a model of sociocultural adjustment in expatriate development workers. The model emphasises the need to balance the use of other expatriates as a support mechanism with the effect of this on the individual's relationship with host nationals. The model also identifies several factors that can simultaneously create tensions between expatriates and host nationals whilst driving the expatriate to seek support from other expatriates.

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## **GLOSSARY**

The following list provides a brief explanation of key terms and acronyms used in this thesis. The explanations are not intended to be indisputable, but instead reflect their usage within this thesis. Where the meaning of a specific term is of particular significance to the thesis, a more detailed discussion is provided at an appropriate point within the main text.

### **CBO**

Community-based Organisation. Also known as “grassroots” organisations. These are informal development organisations working at community level within developing countries. They are run by and for local communities.

### **CCT**

Cross-Cultural Training. Training provided either before or after entry into the host culture in order to prepare an individual for life and work in an unfamiliar culture.

### **Charity**

An organisation that has non profit-making as its purpose, and is registered with the Charity Commission in the UK.

### **Development**

The phase following relief (see entry) where the focus of activity is on capacity building within the affected community, including education and skills development, micro-finance and so on.

### **Development worker**

An individual who works overseas, on a paid or voluntary basis, for or on behalf of an NGO (see entry). Frequently referred to as “Aid workers”.

### **Expatriate**

An individual who travels outside their home country, for the purpose of work, for an extended but finite period of time.

### **LDC**

Less-Developed Country. Also referred to as ‘developing’ countries, and ‘third world’ countries.

### **IFRC**

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

### **INGO**

International Non-Governmental Organisation. A term that is used by some to identify NGOs based in donor countries, and which is therefore interchangeable with ‘Northern NGO’ (see entry).

### **MNC**

Multi-National Corporation.

### **NCVO**

National Council for Voluntary Organisations.

**NGDO**

Non-Governmental Development Organisation. A term used by some to distinguish between non-governmental organisations in general and those that engage in development work.

**NGO**

Non-Governmental Organisation. See Chapter two for a discussion of the different types of NGO.

**Northern NGO**

NGOs based in developed (donor) countries.

**OECD**

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

**RedR**

Registered Engineers for Disaster Relief. A non-profit organisation providing training and information on personal preparedness for relief and development work. Also maintains a register of professional engineers willing to be called up for emergency relief work overseas.

**Relief**

The phase immediately following a trigger event (eg. an earthquake, volcano or man-made disaster) where the focus of activity is the saving of life, prevention of further suffering, control of disease.

**Southern NGO**

NGOs based in developing (recipient) countries.

# CHAPTER ONE

## THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

This thesis makes a significant contribution to a previously under-researched field of enquiry, namely that of expatriation within the context of international development. The analytical basis of this thesis rests on the concept and process of sociocultural adjustment, which is conceptualised as a behavioural form of adjustment concerned with the way in which an individual adapts to interactions with host nationals. Chapter Two evaluates the concept of adjustment. It is argued that sociocultural adjustment is more challenging for development workers than for other expatriates (e.g. managers in commercial organisations) as a result of the distinguishing features of this type of work. Development workers frequently have more extensive contact with host nationals due to the nature of their work and their desire to be accepted by the host community. Consequently the ability of expatriates to interact effectively with host nationals is of central importance in this context.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in its analysis of the nature and scope of sociocultural adjustment experienced by individual development workers. In-depth qualitative data was obtained through the use of semi-structured interviews carried out during a two-week field visit to Uganda, East Africa. During the interviews it emerged that the participants' sending organisations did not play a significant role in their preparation, which conflicts with the literature that advocates a comprehensive approach to expatriate selection and training. Consequently, supplementary data on NGO recruitment, selection and training practice is reported to explore whether such practice was typical of sending organisations in this context. This study thus makes an important theoretical and practical contribution to existing knowledge and understanding of the expatriate development context. Theoretically, a model of the sociocultural adjustment process is proposed which demonstrates adjustment as a more complex, multifaceted and mediated process than previously suggested in the literature. Practically, the study underscores the crucial role played by NGOs in preparing development workers for overseas appointments and informs the recruitment, selection and training processes adopted.

This chapter provides an overview of the study, beginning with an explanation of the purpose of the research. A discussion of the rationale and importance of the study

follows, whilst the chapter concludes with an overview of the way in which the thesis is structured.

## **1.1 The aim of this thesis**

The overall aim of this study was to evaluate the way in which expatriate development workers experience processes of sociocultural adjustment. The next section (Section 1.2) argues that it is necessary to examine expatriation in specific and homogeneous groups of expatriates, and to address gaps in previous research by considering under-researched types of expatriate. This study identifies development workers as meeting these criteria. Further, Chapter Two argues that adjustment in the context of international development may be expected to be more challenging as a result of the characteristics of this type of work and the locations in which it typically takes place. This led to the development of the overall research question that guided the study;

**RQ:** *Why is sociocultural adjustment more challenging in the international development context?*

Four research objectives (labelled RO1 to RO4) were subsequently developed to aid the process of addressing the overall research question. Chapter Two contends that sociocultural adjustment may be more challenging in the context of international development. In particular it is argued that development workers may experience adjustment challenges as a result of the degree of host culture contact that the participative development philosophy involves, difficult living conditions associated with limited resource availability, host national attitudes toward development workers, and living in remote areas that limit access to support mechanisms. However, there is little previous research that specifically examines the adjustment of development workers, so the first research objective sought to explore the way in which the characteristics of development work and the locations in which it typically takes place influence processes of sociocultural adjustment;

**RO1:** *How does the international development context influence the way in which expatriate development workers experience processes of sociocultural adjustment?*

Chapter Two identifies adjustment as both a process and an outcome. As an outcome, it is suggested that four principal outcomes can be derived from where an individual sits on two variables; the extent to which the home culture is maintained, and the extent to which the host culture is accepted. Given the argument that

adjustment may be more challenging in the development context, a logical line of enquiry is to examine whether the challenges faced by development workers lead to less positive adjustment outcomes, and whether different individuals reach different outcomes. This led to the second research objective;

***RO2: What adjustment outcomes are realised by expatriate development workers?***

Expatriation often takes place in the context of a sending organisation. In the field of international development, NGOs are the sending organisations. Chapter Three examines literature on the role of sending organisations in the expatriation process, and concludes that the challenges of expatriation demand a comprehensive approach to recruitment, selection and cross-cultural training in order to minimise the risk of failure. However, NGOs operate with a series of resource constraints which may affect their ability to take the approach advocated in the literature. Consequently, development workers were asked to reflect on the role of their sending organisations in order to begin to explore the way in which NGOs support their development workers. This led to the third research objective;

***RO3: How do expatriate development workers perceive the role of their sending organisation in their adjustment?***

In addressing the third research objective, it became clear that several of the development workers interviewed had received minimal support from a sending organisation, or had received cross-cultural training as part of a voluntary placement earlier in their career. This was an unanticipated finding, and raised questions about the extent to which NGOs engage in the comprehensive recruitment, selection and training practices advocated in the expatriation literature. It was therefore decided to gather supplementary data on NGO IHRM practice. This was addressed using a fourth research objective;

***RO4: How do NGOs recruit, select and train their expatriate development workers?***

In summary, this section has explained the purpose of this study as an examination of sociocultural adjustment in expatriate development workers. During the course of the research, the role of sending organisations emerged as an interesting supplementary line of enquiry, and data in this regard was subsequently gathered and reported as part of the study.

## 1.2 **Rationale for this study**

Previous expatriation research has suffered from several limitations which have informed the design of this study. This section establishes the rationale and importance of this study.

### 1.2.1 **The need to examine homogenous groups of expatriates**

Expatriates are used by a variety of organisation types including business, educational, non-profit, the military and the public sector. Nevertheless, many studies are insufficiently clear about the type of expatriate that they are examining. This limits the ability to draw conclusions about aspects of expatriation in specific settings. This is a view supported by Tung (1981; 1982), who suggests that there is some confusion in the majority of studies as a result of not being specific about the type of expatriate under consideration. Shaffer *et al.* (1999) criticise previous research for assuming that adjustment is the same for all expatriates, and for failing to examine differences in the process and pattern of adjustment for different types of expatriate. The importance of focusing on specific types of expatriate has also been emphasised by Harris & Brewster (1999), who argue that it is necessary to disaggregate the expatriate population in order to recognise the different contexts in which expatriation takes place.

In particular, adjustment has been found to be influenced by contextual factors such as the degree of cultural distance between home and host cultures (Florkowski & Fogel 1999; Redmond 2000; Ward & Chang 1997), the level of host culture contact (Aycan 1997; Navara & James 2002), and living conditions (McFarlane 2004; Thompson 1997). For example, a study by Navara and James (2002) comparing the adjustment of missionaries and non-missionaries in the same host country found differences in levels of satisfaction between these groups, and concluded that it was important to study homogenous groups of individuals to avoid confusion about the effect of context on the expatriation process. More recently, Bikos *et al.* (2007) acknowledged that a limitation of their study was the inclusion of the spouses of different types of expatriate, and that their analysis did not distinguish between these. The effect of contextual factors on adjustment is introduced in Section 1.2.2 before being examined in detail in Chapter Two.

## 1.2.2 Challenges to the sociocultural adjustment of expatriate development workers

Previous research has thus far failed to acknowledge the importance of expatriation through non-profit organisations. Scullion & Brewster suggest that expatriation through NGOs has grown, and yet "there has been almost no research into the management of expatriation in these non-commercial organisations" (2001:352). Indeed, previous studies have examined a limited number of expatriation contexts, with the majority focusing on either the commercial (e.g. Forster 1997a; Katz & Seifer 1996; Selmer 1998-2005; Takeuchi *et al.* 2005b) or educational (e.g. Oguri & Gudykunst 2002; Redmond 2000) contexts (see Kealey 1989; McFarlane 2004; Navara & James 2002 for exceptions). It is therefore argued that there is a need for studies such as this one to focus not only on specific expatriation contexts, but also to examine types of expatriate that have hitherto been under-researched.

The argument for examining expatriate development workers can be advanced further by considering the challenges that this setting presents. The contribution of NGOs to international development is made through individual development workers. It is these individuals that live and work with host communities, delivering aid materials, sharing skills, knowledge and experience, and mobilising the resources of the host community. Knowles (1998) notes that development work mainly takes place in less developed countries (LDCs), and very often in the rural parts of these countries as this is where the most marginalised communities are located. Rural communities are often less developed than their urban counterparts, and the host culture more evident. Consequently the difference between development workers' home culture and that of the host nationals in this context can be significant. Previous research suggests that the degree of cultural difference influences the extent to which an expatriate experiences adjustment difficulties (Redmond 2000; Ward & Chang 1997). For example, Florkowski and Fogel (1999) reported that the level of development of the host country was the most important factor in expatriates' desire to terminate their assignment early, although they did not seek to explain this. Similarly, Caligiuri *et al.* (1998) identified that 25% of their sample moved from a developed to a less developed country, but did not consider the effect of this on adjustment. This study makes a contribution in this regard by explicitly evaluating the adjustment of individuals moving from a developed to a less developed country.

As participative approaches to international development have become more commonplace, development workers are working more closely with host nationals (Willis 2005). Previous research provides evidence of a correlation between the degree of host-culture contact and the difficulty experienced in adjusting to that host culture (e.g. Navara & James 2002). In participative approaches to development, it is necessary for development workers to be more deeply integrated into local communities. Hence their degree of host-culture contact is likely to be significant, suggesting that the adjustment process may be more challenging as it is necessary to fully understand the host culture and to be able to function effectively and sensitively within it. However it can also be argued that increased contact with host nationals provides valuable social learning opportunities that can aid adjustment. For example, Aycan (1997) suggests that willingness to interact with host nationals can contribute to effective sociocultural adjustment. This study contributes to this debate by considering the way in which relationships with host nationals influence sociocultural adjustment.

Development workers are more likely to be working in isolated locations (Knowles 1998) with limited or unreliable access to resources including communications infrastructure. This can make it difficult for individuals to re-establish familiar routines, with Aycan (1997) suggesting that changes to living conditions can influence an expatriate's intention to stay in the host country. Such locations can also make it difficult to access support mechanisms that are available to other types of expatriate. This can lead to feelings of isolation and an inability to make use of formal and informal knowledge bases, as well as opportunities for mentor support from colleagues with more in-country experience (McFarlane 2004). McFarlane goes on to say that such isolation can evoke feelings of abandonment, fear and despair, and that isolation reduces the scope for social support mechanisms to address stressful and traumatic experiences (see also Davidson *et al.* 1991; Flannery 1990). Thompson (1997) notes several coping mechanisms necessary for development workers to be able to continue their work. One of the most important is the opportunity to obtain support from others at both personal and professional levels (see also Kraimer *et al.* 2001). She emphasises the role of others in being a sounding board, and in helping to release tension and stress. Toh and Denisi (2007) suggest that expatriates need to develop new social support networks to aid their adjustment, which may be difficult as a result of the locations in which development work takes place. The isolation experienced by development workers can thus present a further challenge to their effective adjustment. This study contributes to

this debate by evaluating the role of contact with other expatriates in individuals' sociocultural adjustment.

### 1.2.3 The importance of understanding this expatriation context

The effectiveness of expatriate development workers is of growing importance to Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). In 1994 the Rwandan government expelled Western NGOs from the country, accusing them of 'doing a bad job' in responding to the humanitarian crisis there (Edwards & Hulme 1995). There was subsequently something of a revolution in the NGO sector, with a renewed interest in performance, evaluation and accountability. Expulsion from Rwanda was a clear signal to international NGOs that it was no longer sufficient to simply be seen to be acting - they had to be seen to be effective in their operations.

Allied to this, NGOs are having to place greater emphasis on performance and accountability as a result of the growing resource pressure that they are under. Resources are being stretched from both ends of the 'aid chain'. Although it has been noted that government is channelling more money through NGOs, there is increasing competition for funds from private donors. Evidence from the National Council of Voluntary Organisations suggests that charitable giving in the UK is falling, with the result that more charities are competing for a smaller pool of money. In addition, 'donor fatigue' is showing signs of setting in as the public are bombarded with requests for money from this growing number of charities. The result may be that individuals give less, or cease to give at all as they feel pressured into donating, or think that too much is being asked of them. People are also living longer past retirement age, and as a result of legislative changes are having to pay for their own nursing home care. This looks set to reduce the amount of money that the elderly are able to donate, both whilst alive and through their will. Research by the Charities Aid Foundation (Lane *et al.* 1994) also suggests that the young are becoming less interested in charity, which is significant as this group will form tomorrow's core donor community. Where donors have to choose between competing projects or NGOs, they will want to know which is offering the best chance of success. The rise in 'consumerism' has led to private donors becoming more discerning, demanding information about how their money is being spent. For example, thirteen groups have been identified as users of VSO's accounts and annual report, with each group having quite specific informational needs (Hind 1995:230). Those NGOs that are able to demonstrate their past performance are more likely to receive the available

funding. Furthermore, demonstrating how well the organisation is working toward its mission is crucial to retaining legitimacy, which is vital in attracting and retaining donors.

At the other end of the supply chain, an increasing number of both short- and long-term emergencies are stretching NGO resources. The IFRC reported over 120 large-scale emergencies between January and April 2000, almost one per day (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies 2000). These comprise ‘natural disasters’ which many believe to be caused by climatic changes, and an increasing number of humanitarian emergencies resulting from civil war and other conflict. This is putting a strain on the resources of many NGOs, particularly those with very broad mission statements. Increasing demand for the services of NGOs means that they must ensure that they administer their resources in the most effective manner. This requires evaluation, as well as ongoing monitoring of activities. Government is not the only stakeholder to be concerned about accountability and evaluation (Kendall & Knapp 1999). These demands have not gone unnoticed by nonprofits, leading Hind (1995) to note that nonprofits have become more aware of their stakeholders, and are increasingly considering how they can make themselves more accountable.

With increasing pressures to evaluate, NGOs are focusing on ensuring that their operational activities are effective and make good use of the limited resources available. This places an emphasis on the effectiveness of expatriate development workers, and has encouraged the development of codes of practice relating to standards of aid that beneficiaries can expect, as well as human resource management practices in NGOs.

Within the UK, the ‘SPHERE’ Standards in Aid scheme is the public manifestation of NGO research into the quality of aid provided by NGOs to their beneficiaries. The document, which sets out the nature and quality of aid that beneficiaries can expect to receive, was drawn up by a group of major NGOs and is endorsed by a growing list of others (People in Aid 2004). Linked to this, ‘People in Aid’ is an attempt by the same group of UK-based NGOs to ensure that development workers are fit for purpose. The intention is to ensure that through appropriate HRM policies and practices, development workers are able to maintain the desired service quality. As the preamble to the People in Aid Code highlights;

*"International NGOs [INGOs] are increasingly recognising the importance of good human resource management. People In Aid, and our Code of Good Practice, exist to assist INGOs in their efforts to improve this key contributor to the effective fulfilment of their mission ... The People In Aid Code is a framework INGOs can use to assess their human resources performance and thereby enhance the quality and effectiveness of their work. Implementing the People In Aid Code acts as a catalyst for improvements to their policy-making, procedures, training and monitoring"*

(People in Aid 2004)

The People in Aid code focuses upon the role of the sending organisations (NGOs) in facilitating effective aid delivery through their development workers. This code is a recognition by NGOs that they must ensure their operations are effective, and that their human resources play a central role in this.

### **1.3 The structure of this thesis**

This thesis has eight chapters, including this one.

The review of literature is divided into two chapters, reflecting the argument that although adjustment is an individual process it often (although not always) takes place in the context of a sending organisation. The first literature chapter (Chapter Two) focuses on the individual perspective, thereby focusing on the research question and the development of the first two research objectives (RO1 and RO2). It begins by examining the defining features of international development work in order to articulate the rationale for believing that sociocultural adjustment will be more challenging in this context. The chapter continues with a critical examination of the literature on cross-cultural adjustment, before operationalising sociocultural adjustment as the guiding theme for this study. Sociocultural adjustment in the context of international development is examined, providing the conceptual basis on which the empirical data is interpreted.

In conducting the empirical work on the sociocultural adjustment of development workers, the role of their sending organisations emerged as a salient theme. The second literature chapter (Chapter Three) therefore focuses on the role of sending organisations in the expatriation process. It begins by identifying a link between adjustment and the interests of sending organisations by examining alternative modes of expatriate failure. Here it is argued that failure can be manifested as ineffective adjustment to the host culture, and that this can subsequently have an adverse effect on the sending organisation as well as the individual concerned. The

chapter critically examines the contribution of sending organisations to sociocultural adjustment through recruitment, selection and cross-cultural training practice. In doing so it continues the argument that it is important not only to further our understanding of adjustment, but to also make practical use of this by linking it to the role of sending organisations.

Chapter Four explains the research methodology used for the empirical work in this thesis. This study makes its contribution by examining the sociocultural adjustment of expatriate development workers. Supplementary data was also gathered on the role of NGOs as sending organisations to explore the extent to which development workers' experiences of their sending organisations were typical of wider NGO practice. Consequently, the study adopted a mixed method approach. The sociocultural adjustment experiences of expatriate development workers were examined using a combination of face-to-face and e-mail interviews. Supplementary data on the recruitment, selection and cross-cultural training practice in UK-based NGOs was gathered using a postal survey.

Chapter Five introduces empirical data on the sociocultural adjustment experiences of expatriate development workers, focusing on the first and second research objectives (RO1 and RO2) which ask "How does the international development context influence the way in which expatriate development workers experience processes of sociocultural adjustment?" and "What adjustment outcomes are realised by expatriate development workers?" The chapter provides a 'thick description' and interpretation of the experiences of expatriate development workers that contributes to our understanding of how the international development context influences sociocultural adjustment.

Chapter Six introduces empirical data on the role of sending organisations in the international development context. It makes use of individual development workers' experiences along with reported recruitment, selection and cross-cultural training practice by a wider sample of UK-based NGOs. In doing so, the chapter focuses on the third and fourth research objectives which ask "How do expatriate development workers perceive the role of their sending organisation in their adjustment?" and "How do NGOs recruit, select and train their expatriate development workers?" The chapter extends the study's main purpose by situating the sociocultural adjustment experiences of development workers within the context of broader sending

organisation practice. In doing so, it supports the contribution that this study makes to practice by facilitating the development of recommendations for NGOs.

Chapter Seven synthesises the research findings into a model of sociocultural adjustment in expatriate development workers. The model makes a contribution to knowledge by extending previous research to identify specific features of the international development context that were found to influence sociocultural adjustment in this context.

Chapter Eight concludes the thesis by re-examining the main findings and the ways in which the research contributes to understanding of expatriation. The effect of the study's limitations are acknowledged, and research is proposed that seeks to build upon the foundation provided by this study. Consistent with the apprenticeship model of the Doctorate, a personal reflection on the learning process is also provided.

## CHAPTER TWO

### DEVELOPMENT WORK: A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE CONTEXT AND PROCESS OF CROSS-CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

This thesis evaluates the process and outcome of sociocultural adjustment in expatriate development workers. This chapter begins by introducing international development as the context for this study, and contends that sociocultural adjustment is of central importance for expatriate development workers as a result of the prevailing participative philosophy of international development. This approach to international development, with the attendant *modus operandi* of operational NGOs, means that development workers typically live and work with the poorest and most marginalised host communities. This presents a number of challenges to their adjustment, and emphasises the importance of sociocultural adjustment as the effectiveness of the development effort is dependent on the relationship between development workers and host nationals. The chapter continues by defining adjustment as both an outcome and a process. Consideration is given to the conceptualisation of adjustment, and the adoption of Searle and Ward's (1990) 'psychological – sociocultural' framework as the basis for focusing on sociocultural adjustment in this study is explained. Sociocultural adjustment is then operationalised as the ability to interact effectively with host nationals, their motivation to learn about the host culture, to engage in voluntary interactions with host nationals and to learn from their mistakes. The chapter proceeds by critically reviewing the limited research on adjustment in development workers within the context of the wider cross-cultural adjustment literature. In doing so the chapter evaluates the sociocultural adjustment challenges that may be faced by development workers, thereby providing the conceptual and practical contexts in which the empirical data will later be interpreted. The chapter concludes that little is known about how the specific set of features that characterise expatriation in the international development context combine to influence the process and outcome of sociocultural adjustment.

#### 2.1 *The international development context*

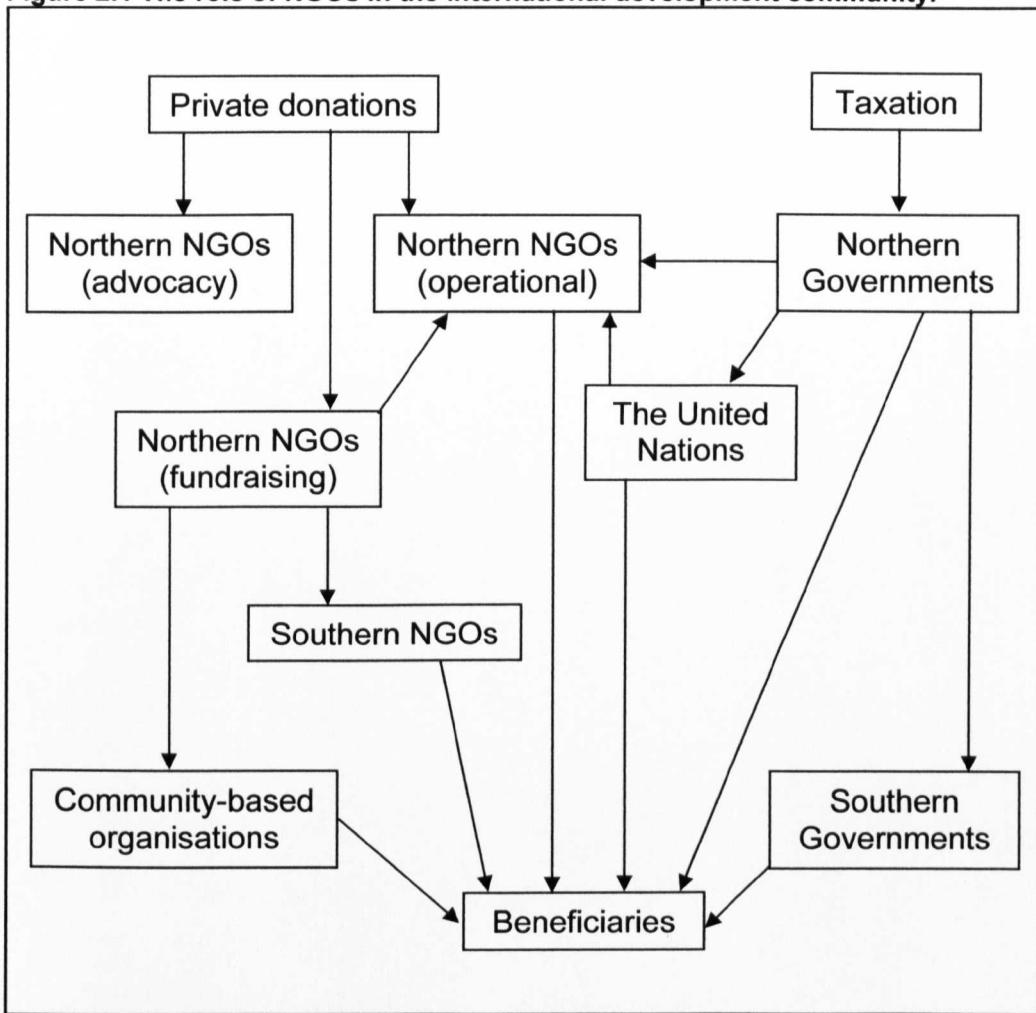
Previous expatriation research has been criticised for failing to pay adequate attention to the effect of context by being unclear about the type of expatriate under consideration (e.g. Harris & Brewster 1999; Navara & James 2002; Tung 1982). It is

therefore important to be clear about the organisational context of expatriation research in order that its influence can be recognised. This section introduces the international development context, and considers the effect that it may be expected to have on expatriates operating in this setting.

Whilst a comprehensive review of the history and philosophy of development is outside the scope of this thesis, this section explains the context of this study and is later used to aid interpretation of the empirical data. The following sub-section (2.1.1) begins by providing a brief overview the international development community.

### **2.1.1 The international development community**

The international development community is large and complex, and as such presents a challenging environment in which to work. The guiding principles of international development - working toward global equity in areas such as health, education and opportunity - naturally attract a range of different organisations. Developed from existing models by Fowler (2000) and Wood *et al.* (2001), Figure 2.1 (next page) illustrates the flow of resources from developed to less-developed countries. In doing so it identifies the types of organisation involved in international development, and illustrates the complexity of the environment in which development workers operate.

**Figure 2.1 The role of NGOs in the international development community.**

Source: Adapted from Fowler (2000) and Wood et al. (2001).

Wood et al. (2001) provide examples of the number of organisations involved in complex humanitarian emergencies. They suggest that many operations can involve up to 20 humanitarian organisations. Medium sized operations can involve 7 or 8 UN agencies, the ICRC<sup>1</sup> and IFRC<sup>2</sup>, the national Red Cross and Red Crescent movements, and around 50 NGOs. Large operations such as those in the Great Lakes region of Africa in the mid-1990s and the Balkans in 1999 involved up to 300 humanitarian organisations of various types. This suggests that development workers are likely to be operating in a complex environment comprising multiple agencies, each of which may have different agendas and operational priorities.

Figure 2.1 also distinguishes between different types of northern NGO based on the principal way in which they seek to fulfil their mission. The research in this thesis

<sup>1</sup> International Committee of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

<sup>2</sup> International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

focuses on northern operational NGOs. Cusiter (2007) provides an overview of the methods used by the three types of northern NGO identified in Figure 2.1. In summary, whilst all NGOs work toward the goal of alleviating poverty, each type uses different methods to achieve this. Advocacy NGOs work by raising awareness of development issues and by seeking to influence policymakers. Fundraising NGOs acquire resources that are subsequently channelled through other organisations to beneficiaries in the host countries. Operational NGOs work directly with beneficiaries in less-developed countries, delivering aid materials, proving practical support and mobilising community resources.

### **2.1.2 The contribution of NGOs to international development**

Operational NGOs make a distinctive contribution to international development. Governments are often criticised for focusing on economic development, commercial benefit, and the creation of export opportunities for their own firms (Knowles 1998) whilst being ineffective at the grassroots level. Intergovernmental organisations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank are similarly criticised for emphasising economic development, which Fowler (2000) argues does not necessarily improve people's lives at grassroots level. This view, Fowler believes, is supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and many NGOs. In contrast, it is argued that NGOs pay more attention to the lives of individuals, families and communities by focusing on social, economic and environmental welfare (Knowles 1998). This is consistent with the view that NGOs are proponents of community-based (participative) approaches to international development.

As proponents of community-based, participative approaches to development, NGOs are considered to be particularly effective in reaching the poorest and most marginalised communities (Knowles 1998). Their size and agility is argued to enable them to act quickly, whilst their closeness to local communities allows them to readily identify local needs (Willis 2005). NGOs attempt to use local skills, expertise and resources as far as possible, which serves to empower communities and is consistent with achieving sustainable development. It is argued that NGOs are more efficient and effective than governmental organisations in tackling poverty as they are less bureaucratic and make use of local resources. Further, it is frequently suggested that beneficiaries trust NGOs as a result of their perceived impartiality. It

is these qualities that characterise the distinctive contribution of NGOs to international development.

Concurrently however, NGOs are criticised for the lack of global impact that their small scale projects are able to achieve (Edwards & Hulme 1997; Knowles 1998). Thus NGOs and governmental organisations would appear to have complementary strengths, suggesting that a development community where these organisations work together would be effective at both micro and macro levels. Indeed this is what appears to be happening, with increased cooperation between NGOs, intergovernmental and governmental agencies. This is evident in the cooperation noted by several UN agencies (e.g. United Nations Children's Fund 2006; United Nations Development Programme 2006) and the UK government's Department for International Development (Department for International Development 2006). Such cooperation has resource benefits for NGOs, enabling them to reach more beneficiaries than they otherwise would. However, it also presents potential problems as official donors have specific reporting requirements. Additionally, acting as a sub-contractor can have an impact on the very *modus operandi* that makes NGOs so important to international development. The relationship with official donors is therefore an important one which can affect the way in which NGOs work.

The way in which NGOs operate has consequences for the adjustment of expatriate development workers, with the locations in which development work takes place and the degree of interaction with host nationals being of particular importance. The following section (2.2) critically evaluates the concept of cross-cultural adjustment, before the effect of the international development context on the adjustment of expatriate development workers is examined in Sections 2.3 and 2.4.

## **2.2 Cross-cultural adjustment**

This section critically evaluates the cross-cultural adjustment literature, providing a conceptual framework that is later used to interpret the empirical findings. This study focuses specifically on sociocultural adjustment, which is conceptualised as a behavioural form of adjustment concerned with the way in which an individual adapts to interactions with host nationals. The study evaluates both the process and outcome of sociocultural adjustment. As a process, sociocultural adjustment is operationalised as the process by which an individual learns about the host culture in order to facilitate effective interactions with host nationals. As an outcome, it is

operationalised as the degree of acceptance of the host culture and the degree of maintenance of the home culture.

### **2.2.1 Defining adjustment**

The term ‘adjustment’ has been defined in a number of ways in previous studies, leading Thomas and Lazarova (2006) to note that the term is often ill-defined. Nevertheless, a common theme is that adjustment is concerned with the relationship between an individual and a new environment. A pattern is also evident which reflects a view that adjustment can be considered as both a process and an outcome (e.g. Haslberger 2005). As an outcome (or state of being), adjustment can be defined as the degree of ‘fit’ between an individual and their environment (Berry 1997). As a process, Aycan (1997) refers to adjustment as a process of change in an individual leading to increased fit and reduced conflict between the individual and their environment.

Gregersen & Black (1990:463) suggest that adjustment refers to “...the degree of a person’s psychological comfort ... regarding the new situation”. This implies that adjustment is a state of being, an outcome. In a more practical sense, Brett (1980:101) suggests that adjustment is the “...re-establishment of routines that provide valued outcomes and feelings of control, and are predictable”. This offers a more specific, but pragmatic, view which emphasises feelings of normality and routine in one’s behaviours. Here, it is possible to discern a view that adjustment is both a process and an outcome. A further definition suggests that the concept of adjustment may be described as the process through which an individual applies his/her unique set of abilities in order to come to terms with a new environment (Dawis *et al.* 1964). This is an interesting and multifaceted definition. Dawis *et al.* are clear that adjustment is a process rather than an outcome, suggesting that the concept is a dynamic one. Further support for the dynamic nature of adjustment is evident in the reference made to interaction with the environment. Indeed, Black & Mendenhall (1991) argue that adjustment involves a period of learning about business and social norms as a precursor to productive behaviours. Brett *et al.* (1992) logically extend this idea to propose that the process of adjustment is specific to each individual, further supporting the importance of context in understanding the process.

In this thesis, adjustment is defined both as a process and an outcome. As a process, the study reflects Dawis *et al.*'s (1964) definition of adjustment as the process of change that an individual goes through in order to come to terms with their new environment – in other words, their experiences of living and working in the host country, and the challenges and breakthroughs that they encounter. As an outcome, the study is reflective of Gregersen and Black's (1990) view of adjustment as a state of being. In this sense, the study concerns itself with the extent to which development workers accepted the host culture together with the extent to which they sought to maintain contact with their home culture. The process and outcome of adjustment are examined in detail in sections 2.2.3 and 2.2.4 respectively.

## 2.2.2 Conceptualising cross-cultural adjustment

Thomas and Lazarova (2006) suggest that inconsistent definition of adjustment has contributed to its inconsistent conceptualisation, which in turn has led to myriad ways of operationalising the construct. Cross-cultural adjustment was originally considered to be a 'unitary phenomenon' (Black *et al.* 1991; Selmer 2001a), by researchers such as Gullahorn & Gullahorn (1962) and Oberg (1960). At this time, adjustment was defined in terms of overcoming culture shock, which suggests a link with the concept of psychological adjustment. More recently the concept has been disaggregated, leading to the development of multidimensional models of adjustment. Two such models are evident in the expatriation literature; Searle and Ward's (1990) 'Psychological – Sociocultural' model, and Black *et al.*'s (1991) 'Work, non-work and general adjustment' model. The conceptual basis for this study is Ward and Searle's (1990) model that distinguishes between psychological and sociocultural adjustment.

Black *et al.*'s (1991) model has been identified as the most influential theoretical framework for examining expatriate experiences (Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.* 2005) and has been widely used as the basis for studies of expatriate adjustment. Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.* (2005) conducted a meta analysis of expatriate adjustment studies, and identified 51 studies that were partly based on the framework, and 15 that mirrored elements of it. This is endorsed by Haslberger (2005) who notes that the framework dominates expatriate adjustment research, whilst Thomas & Lazarova (2006) credit the model with being the most popular. This conceptual framework has been supported by a series of studies by its authors (e.g. Black & Gregersen 1990, 1991a, 1991b; Black & Stephens 1989). McEvoy & Parker (1995) and Shaffer *et al.*

(1999) have also presented support for these dimensions. Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.* (2005), in their meta analysis of 66 studies using this framework argue that it is clearly operationalised and consistently validated. Thomas and Lazarova (2006:250), however, are critical of this model, suggesting that it suffers from "severe conceptual and measurement limitations". They proceed to argue that the model is theoretically weak and lacks clear construct definition and operationalisation. They also suggest that the model has measurement limitations, as it was based on self-reported data, used an unacceptably small sample, contains only a selection of scale items, and is based on general assumptions. Other authors have found limitations in the model, including Suutari & Brewster (1998) who suggested that the model may not be relevant to adjustment to similar cultures, Hippler (2000) who identified overlaps between the three categories, Stahl and Caligiuri (2005) who found significant redundancy in the interaction and work adjustment scale items.

An alternative model that appears to be gaining support is that proposed by Searle and Ward (1990). Through a number of studies, they have sought to address a perceived shortcoming in previous work by suggesting a clear conceptual framework upon which to build future research. They identified two types of adjustment that form the basis of cross-cultural adaptation - psychological adjustment and sociocultural adjustment (Searle & Ward 1990; Ward & Chang 1997; Ward & Kennedy 1992; Ward & Searle 1991). This framework has been increasingly adopted (e.g. Jun *et al.* 1997; Selmer 1998, 1999a, 2001; Takeuchi *et al.* 2005b), although Thomas and Lazarova (2006) suggest that it remains less popular with expatriation researchers. Nevertheless, Thomas and Lazarova (2006) credit it with offering a more robust theoretical basis for the examination of adjustment. Psychological adjustment is based on a stress and coping theoretical framework, and focuses on affective responses to the cultural transition. Sociocultural adjustment is based on social learning theory, and focuses on behavioural responses (Ward *et al.* 2001). This framework is examined in detail later. However, despite arguing that the model is more theoretically sound, Thomas and Lazarova (2006) identify measurement limitations. Issues of measurement are examined in Chapter Four, Section 4.4.1. Thomas and Lazarova (2006) go on to highlight the difficulty in making cross-study comparisons because the sociocultural adjustment scale in particular is frequently modified to reflect the characteristics of the sample. This suggests that sociocultural adjustment is at least partially context-specific,

which adds weight to the argument in this thesis that adjustment research needs to be extended to previously under-researched expatriate types.

### ***Psychological adjustment***

Psychological (attitudinal) adjustment focuses clearly on the way in which individuals mentally adapt to the new situation, and has an ‘internal’ focus. This form of adjustment is based on attitudinal aspects of the adjustment process (Juffer 1986), dealing with the subjective well-being or mood states (Grove & Torbjorn 1985; Selmer 2001a). This form of adjustment is said to be best understood with a stress and coping theoretical stance (Ward & Chang 1997), focusing on feelings of stress and strain, and on the coping mechanisms used to deal with unfamiliar experiences. Psychological adjustment is argued to be ‘voluntary’, and thus is more deeply held once it is achieved (Jun *et al.* 1997; Selmer 2001). Selmer (2001a) goes further, suggesting that psychological adjustment is not needed in order to function effectively in a host culture. He argues that an individual can feel psychologically uncomfortable with the host culture, but can function effectively if a degree of sociocultural adjustment has been achieved. There appears to be a greater level of research activity addressing the psychological aspects of adjustment, regardless of whether the researchers explicitly acknowledge the sociocultural – psychological framework. For example, studies by Anderzen & Arnetz (1997, 1999), Aryee & Stone (1996), and Forster (1997a) have focused on psychological adjustment.

Subjective wellbeing has been conceptualised in various ways in previous studies, including depression, fatigue, tension, anxiety, and mood disturbance (e.g. Anderzen & Arnetz 1999; Ataca & Berry 2002; Goldberg 1972; Selmer 2001b).

The role of support mechanisms in psychological adjustment has been acknowledged in previous research (Ward *et al.* 2001). Such support can come from family members and other expatriates. The location of much development work in remote rural areas means that development workers can find themselves isolated from sources of support. Development workers may therefore find it more difficult to benefit from the ability to relieve tension and stress, and to make use of the formal and informal knowledge bases that other expatriates can provide (McFarlane 2004).

Ward & Chang’s (1997) work on cultural fit suggests that psychological adjustment may be associated with the degree of cultural distance experienced. McFarlane (2004) offers support for this in the development context, suggesting that a greater

cultural distance can compound feelings of isolation. Indeed inter-cultural encounters may be more challenging, with ineffective encounters being more likely. This may consequently affect wellbeing as the individual feels anxious at being unable to communicate effectively. Indeed such difficulties are compounded when the development worker experiences a greater degree of contact with host nationals as a result of the participative development philosophy. This is supported by Oguri & Gudykunst (2002) who suggest that inability to communicate effectively can affect both sociocultural and psychological adjustment.

### ***Sociocultural adjustment***

Sociocultural (behavioural) adjustment, in contrast, is concerned with the way in which an individual adapts in terms of their interactions with host nationals, and reflects their ability to fit in with locals. Hence there is an ‘external’, interaction focus which is best understood from a social learning perspective (Ward & Kennedy 1996). Sociocultural adjustment is therefore about the ability to fit in, to engage in behaviours that produce positive feedback / outcomes, and to manage everyday situations (Thomas & Lazarova 2006). As a behaviourally-based form of adjustment, it is argued that sociocultural adjustment can be learned like a language and discarded when it is no longer needed (Furnham & Bochner 1986; Selmer 2001). Further, it is suggested that this form of adjustment is more involuntary (Jun *et al.* 1997) as it is a direct result of social learning in order to be able to function in the host culture.

Sociocultural adjustment, then, is the possession of knowledge about which behaviours to execute or suppress in specific situations, and the ability to actualise this knowledge in relevant situations (Black & Mendenhall 1990). Applied to sociocultural adjustment, social learning theory contends that individuals adjust to interactions with host nationals by learning appropriate behaviours through observation and experience. Such behaviour modelling relies upon the desirable behaviours being visible, relevant and repeatedly available for observation (Bandura 1977). Consequently, repeated exposure to such behaviours provides greater opportunities for social learning to take place. Interactions with host nationals are therefore central to the adjustment process, with host nationals acting as socialisation agents (Toh & Denisi 2007).

As discussed in Section 2.1.2, NGOs operate in a manner that emphasises collaborative working with host communities. Consequently, development workers

would expect to have a high degree of contact with host nationals. This demands effective sociocultural adjustment in order that interactions are successful, and that the development worker achieves a level of acceptance from host nationals. The degree of host national contact experienced by development workers may be argued to have both positive and negative consequences for sociocultural adjustment. In a positive sense, higher levels of contact provide greater opportunities for social learning to take place which in turn promotes sociocultural adjustment (Oguri & Gudykunst 2002). Various studies suggest that greater contact with host nationals has a positive influence on adjustment (see section 2.4.1). For example, Feldman & Thomas (1992) observed that effective expatriates engaged in more frequent contact with host nationals. Similarly, Triandis (1994) suggested that increased interaction with host nationals resulted in greater comfort in these interactions, thereby contributing to effective sociocultural adjustment.

However, higher levels of contact may also exacerbate difficulties in adjusting to norms of behaviour which may either facilitate social learning or encourage withdrawal from the host culture. This is perhaps especially likely when there are more significant differences between the home and host cultures. Indeed the degree of cultural distance has been associated with adjustment difficulty (Ward & Chang 1997). It may therefore be expected that sociocultural adjustment may be more challenging for development workers as a result of both the degree of host national contact and the degree of cultural distance between the home and host cultures.

Other challenges presented by development work may also influence sociocultural adjustment. Brett (1980) suggests that adjustment involves the re-establishment of familiar routines that result in positive and predictable outcomes. This has a clear association with sociocultural adjustment in terms of being able to invoke positive outcomes during interactions with host nationals. However, Thompson (1997) suggests that beneficiaries (host nationals) may be experiencing highly unusual circumstances. This may disrupt conventional norms of behaviour, thereby making it more difficult for the development worker to identify and adjust to these. This is supported by Smith's (2002) identification of risk-taking behaviours amongst development workers, which McFarlane (2004) attributes to a lack of social infrastructure. Ultimately, however, understanding of the sociocultural adjustment of expatriate development workers is limited. Therefore whilst it is reasonable to suggest that the concept of sociocultural adjustment can be applied to this expatriation context, it is unclear how the process of sociocultural adjustment might

be manifested for this type of expatriate. This led to the development of the first research objective;

***RO1: How does the international development context influence the way in which expatriate development workers experience processes of sociocultural adjustment?***

The preceding discussion suggests that adjustment in the context of international development is complex and multi-faceted. The effect of the challenges faced by development workers may be expected to be inherently individual, shaped by the manner in which the individual deals with these challenges and the extent to which they are able to reconcile the differences that they experience. This suggests that different individuals may take different lengths of time to adjust to the host culture, and indeed may achieve different degrees of adjustment. The following section (2.2.3) examines adjustment as a dynamic process, reflecting the suggestion that an individual's level of adjustment may vary with time.

### **2.2.3 Adjustment as a dynamic process**

When the individual first arrives in the host country and is known to be new to the host culture, host nationals may excuse inappropriate behaviours, and may help the individual to successfully negotiate daily transactions. This may lead to reported feelings of 'fitting in', and thus 'higher' sociocultural adjustment. However, over time host nationals may begin to point out inappropriate behaviours and expect the individual to do more things for themselves. This is the point at which the individual is likely to begin to notice if s/he is not adjusting effectively, and thus will begin to report lower levels of comfort in relation to the ability to fit in and to successfully complete daily transactions.

Attempts have been made in the literature to track levels of adjustment over time. Although adjustment is necessarily an individual process (Brett *et al.* 1992), Lysgaard (1955) originally described a loosely U-shaped stage-based theory of adjustment using aggregated findings from a group of Swedish students in the USA. He found that those students who had been in the USA for 6-18 months were significantly less adjusted than those that had been there for less than 6 months and more than 18 months. Although Lysgaard's (1955) anthropological description of his participants' experiences did not explicitly describe the findings as a U-curve, his work has subsequently been acknowledged as the first to identify this pattern in the

adjustment process. Lysgaard's (1955) study suggested three main stages of adjustment; an introductory stage where adjustment was 'high' (meaning that the individual was well-adjusted), a loneliness stage where adjustment was 'low', and an adjusted stage where adjustment was again 'high'.

Oberg (1960) later developed this stage theory in a study that described the process and experience of culture shock. His version of the U-Curve model consists of five stages through which it is argued the expatriate moves. The cross-cultural encounter begins with a 'honeymoon period', during which the expatriate experiences excitement at the novelty of the new country. After this initial euphoria, the expatriate experiences a 'culture shock' phase, during which s/he becomes disillusioned with the host country perhaps due to increased contact with host nationals (Lysgaard 1955), and frustration with the differences being experienced. The expatriate then enters an 'adjustment' phase, during which s/he learns to operate effectively in the host country. The theory has a final 'mastery' phase where the individual is totally at ease in the host culture. Gullahorn & Gullahorn (1963) further extended this theory by incorporating re-entry into the home culture. Here, they suggest that culture shock is experienced for a second time upon return to the home culture, leading to a W-curve.

The length of time necessary for the U-curve to show itself varies in empirical studies, to such an extent that this pattern is not always observed. Torbjörn (1982), studying Swedish expatriates, found that a U-curve began to appear after 0-3 months. Similarly, Black *et al.* (1991) found the curve to begin after 0-2 months. Selmer (1999a) found that culture shock was not experienced by Western expatriates in China until 17-18 months, a delay explained by the possibility that these expatriates were effectively barred from interacting socially with host nationals. Interestingly, Selmer (1999a) claims to have found 'clear evidence' of a U-curve pattern in the level of sociocultural adjustment, but not in psychological adjustment. He offers no clear reasoning for this, but speculates that this may be due to the difficulty in 'achieving' psychological adjustment.

Although the U-Curve theory makes intuitive sense, its validity has been periodically questioned. Selmer (1999a) noted that recent empirical studies have not given much support to the U-curve hypothesis. More specifically, Brewster (1991) found that the theory did not explain some European cases. He also noted that the prevalence of shorter assignments meant that many expatriates were not abroad for long enough

for the model to be of much use, although the discussion above about the length of time necessary for the U-curve to become evident perhaps suggests that this pattern may still be observed during shorter sojourns. Ward *et al.* (2001) offer two major criticisms of the U-Curve model. They criticise the model for being atheoretical, arguing that it is based on speculation and that it lacks a credible theoretical underpinning. This criticism is also based on work by Ward & Kennedy (1996), and Ward *et al.* (1998), who conducted longitudinal studies to test the U-Curve theory. In these studies, an inverted U-curve was found. This demonstrated that the students in the sample exhibited moderate levels of distress at the beginning of the sojourn, followed by a period of lower distress, followed by moderate levels of distress. A further criticism of the U-curve theory can be derived from this observation of an inverted U-curve. The U-curve suggests that the outcome of the adjustment process will be a positive level of adjustment, whereas the inverted U-curve suggests that the outcome is a lower level of adjustment. This uncertainty is consistent with work (discussed in Section 2.2.4) which identifies alternative adjustment outcomes. If we are to accept that there are different adjustment outcomes, a single model of the adjustment process would appear to be problematic. This argument supports the suggestion that adjustment is specific to individuals (i.e. that each individual will have different experiences and outcomes from the adjustment process) and that a U-curve of adjustment over time will not always be evident. Indeed, Ying (2005) in a study based on Lysgard's (1955) U-curve model found no such pattern in a longitudinal study of sociocultural adjustment in Taiwanese students in the USA. Instead, the findings indicated a gradual linear decline in stressors over time.

However despite such criticism, the U-Curve theory has remained popular as there is noted by Ward *et al.* (2001:82) to be "no credible successor". Ward *et al.* (2001) go on to suggest that stage theories have become less popular recently, although the framework continues to be used periodically in the literature. There also continues to be empirical support for the model (e.g. Kealey 1989; Selmer 1999a), although such support is far from universal. Given the level of disagreement over the extent to which the U-curve model accurately describes adjustment patterns over time, we are perhaps restricted to concluding simply that there is likely to be a variation in the level of adjustment over time. This might be a U-curve, but could equally be an inverted U-curve, or a straight line either rising as adjustment is achieved, or falling as the individual withdraws from the host and possibly their own culture. Indeed Weissman & Furnham (1987) suggest that difficulties with such

models lie in a lack of clarity on the type of expatriate and the aspect(s) of adjustment being examined.

An alternative view of the process of adjustment describes it as a transitional experience (Adler 1975). Adler acknowledges 'U' and 'W' curve models, but suggests that expatriates pass through five stages; contact, disintegration, reintegration, autonomy, independence. In passing through these stages the individual experiences excitement, confusion and disorientation, rejection of the host culture, skills development, and acceptance of the host culture. Nevertheless, previous research on the relationship between adjustment and time appears inconclusive. However, process models do support the view that adjustment varies over time. Consequently, it may be anticipated that the adjustment of development workers in this study may be affected by the time that they have spent in the host country, and perhaps by previous experience in the host country. This thesis does not directly focus on the relationship between adjustment and time. However, process models support the interpretation of the adjustment experiences of development workers in this study by offering one possible explanation for variation in the level of adjustment between respondents.

## **2.2.4 Adjustment as an outcome**

One of the criticisms of process models is that they implicitly suggest that all expatriates will reach a common adjustment outcome. For example, the dominant U-curve model suggests that at least an adequate level of adjustment will be achieved providing a sufficient amount of time is available. However, another body of literature takes a different perspective, focusing instead on alternative adjustment outcomes. This literature is significant for this study as it acknowledges that expatriates may reach different levels of adjustment independently of the time available to adjust. Understanding adjustment outcomes is important as ineffective adjustment can result in negative outcomes for the individual and for the sending organisation. This section focuses on the effect of alternative adjustment outcomes for the wellbeing of the individual and the factors that may contribute to these outcomes in the context of expatriate development workers. The implications of ineffective adjustment for the sending organisation are examined at the beginning of the following chapter (Chapter Three, Section 3.1).

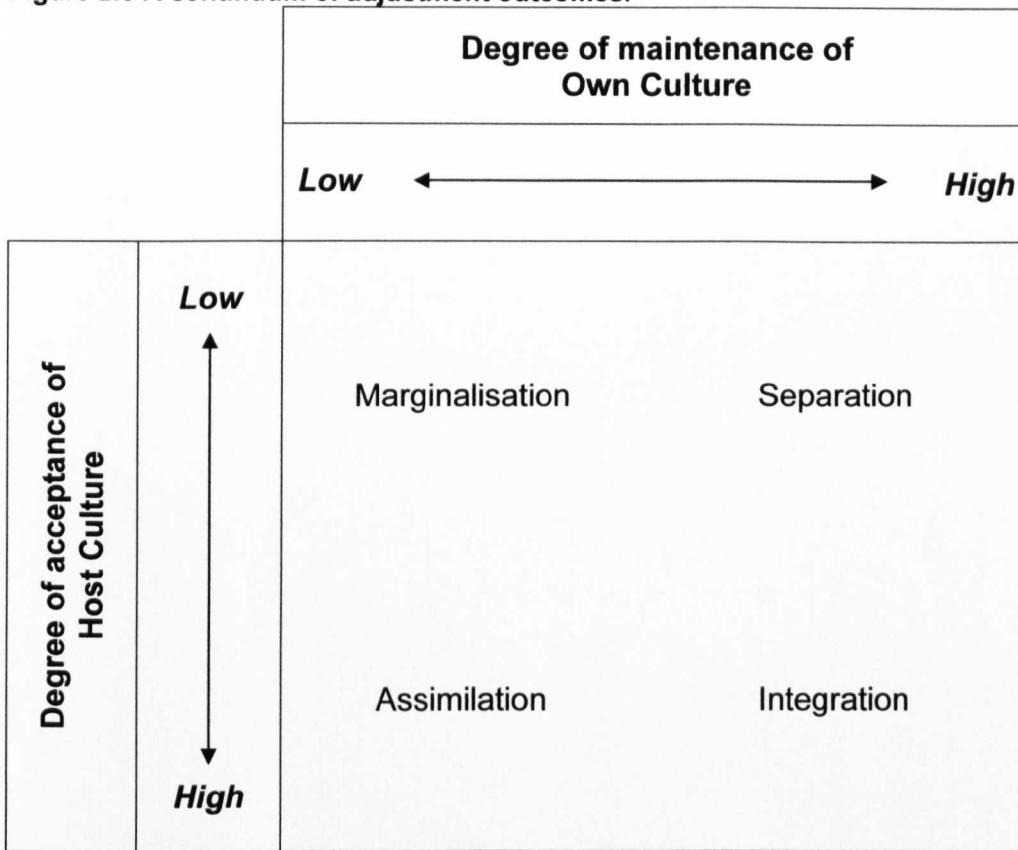
Nash (1967) suggested that adjustment is a process of reconciling the individual's relationship with both home and host cultures. Consistent with this view, Berry (1997) proposes four possible outcomes from the process of adjustment. These are based upon two variables; the individual's desire to maintain their own cultural identity, and the extent to which they wish to, or have been able to, integrate themselves with the host culture. Ward *et al.* (2001) propose a similar set of four outcomes at the individual level. Figure 2.2 illustrates the four possible adjustment outcomes;

**Figure 2.2 Adjustment outcomes.**

		<b>Own Culture</b>	
		<b>Rejected</b>	<b>Maintained</b>
<b>Host Culture</b>	<b>Rejected</b>	Marginalisation	Separation
	<b>Accepted</b>	Assimilation	Integration

Source: Developed from Ward *et al.* (2001:32)

However, integration, assimilation, separation and marginalisation may be better viewed as extremes rather than discrete outcomes. Adjustment involves the expatriate in a process of learning during which they seek to reconcile differences between the home and host cultures. Rather than simply 'accepting' or 'rejecting' the host culture, it is perhaps more likely that some aspects of the host culture will be accepted whilst others are rejected. Similarly, some aspects of the home culture may be rejected in favour of the host culture, whilst others are maintained. It may therefore be more appropriate to model these adjustment outcomes as extremes on a continuum;

**Figure 2.3 A continuum of adjustment outcomes.**

Source: Adapted from Ward *et al.* (2001).

The two most positive outcomes occur when the host culture is accepted, and the home culture is either rejected or maintained. Of these, integration is the most positive, describing an outcome where the expatriate is able to interact freely with host nationals at the same time as maintaining his/her own cultural identity. Here, the individual identifies with both home and host cultures, and feels that both can be maintained and integrated. The individual is able to synthesise their multiple identities, and have been referred to as 'mediating persons' (Bochner 1982). This, it is suggested (Bochner 1982) leads to health, wellbeing and personal growth and is therefore the most positive outcome.

Assimilation describes an outcome where the expatriate has integrated fully with the host culture at the expense of maintaining his/her own cultural identity. This is based on the original work of Stonequist (1937) who identified 'passing' as an outcome whereby the individual rejects their own culture in order to adopt the host culture. Work in this area by, for example Bochner (1994), has used self-reporting methods to elicit data on which culture(s) the respondents felt they most identified with. Acceptance of the host culture is an especially challenging issue for expatriate

development workers. The participative nature of international development work makes it particularly easy for development workers to over-identify with the host culture. Indeed Thompson (1997) suggested that development workers often progress to take on the ‘cause’ as their own at the expense of maintaining their own personality. It may therefore be argued that achieving integration may be difficult for expatriate development workers. Instead, assimilation may be more likely as the home culture is rejected alongside an acceptance of the host culture.

The least positive outcomes occur when the host culture is rejected, alongside either maintenance or rejection of the home culture. Separation describes an outcome where the expatriate maintains his/her own cultural identity, but has no desire to interact with host nationals. Here, the individual identifies most strongly with the home culture, and rejects the host culture as being ‘alien’. Bochner (1982) suggests that this leads to racism and nationalism when the role of the home culture is exaggerated. Further, this outcome is argued to result in distress for the individual (Tajfel & Dawson 1965; Ward *et al.* 2001). Such an outcome may be less likely amongst development workers. The motivation to become involved in development work is often based on a desire to contribute to the host community (Thompson 1997). This desire suggests an implicit acceptance of the host culture, although of course this does not prevent the individual from having difficulties in adjusting to the host culture.

Marginalisation describes a situation where the expatriate has no desire either to identify with his/her own culture, or to interact with host nationals. Here, the individual is said to vacillate between the two cultures, but fails to feel at home in either (Park 1928). The individual will experience confusion of identity, and is again likely to experience distress (Bochner 1982).

This section has examined alternative adjustment outcomes, and has considered these within the context of the challenges faced by expatriate development workers. The literature on adjustment outcomes is important as it acknowledges that different individuals may realise different levels of adjustment independently of the amount of time that is available. This contrasts with process models of adjustment that implicitly suggest that all expatriates will reach a common adjustment outcome given a sufficient amount of time. The discussion of alternative adjustment outcomes in relation to the challenges faced by development workers supports the argument that adjustment is an individual process, and provides a conceptual basis on which the

empirical data on adjustment is analysed and interpreted in Chapter Five. This supports the formulation of the second research objective;

***RO2: What adjustment outcomes are realised by expatriate development workers?***

### **2.2.5 Operationalising sociocultural adjustment**

In order to examine a concept, it is necessary to have some form of indicator (or indicators) that will be used as a surrogate measure for the concept under examination (Bryman & Bell 2007). In developing such indicators, one is operationalising the concept under investigation. This thesis evaluates the process and outcome of sociocultural adjustment.

As a process, sociocultural adjustment is operationalised as the process by which an individual learns about the host culture in order to facilitate effective interactions with host nationals. In this study development workers' experiences were examined to identify the approaches that they took to social learning. Evidence was sought on the individuals' motivation to learn about the host culture, the degree and type of contact that they had with host nationals, and their attitude toward the host culture and host nationals. Questioning sought to elicit examples of challenges and breakthroughs, effective and ineffective interactions, things that were found easy and difficult to adapt to, things that helped and hindered the relationship with host nationals, mistakes and misunderstandings that were encountered, and approaches that were taken to learn about the host culture.

As an outcome, sociocultural adjustment is operationalised as the degree of acceptance of the host culture and the degree of maintenance of the home culture. Consequently, evidence was sought on the extent and nature of contact with members of the home and host cultures. Questioning sought to identify examples of the way in which differences between the home and host cultures were described, positive and negative opinions of home and host cultures, the degree of comfort in the company of host nationals, and the extent to which contact was maintained with the home culture through other expatriates.

The way in which the process and outcome of sociocultural adjustment were operationalised led to the development of topics for the semi-structured interviews, which are explained in Chapter Four (Section 4.4.2).

## **2.3 The effect of location on sociocultural adjustment**

Location plays an important role in cross-cultural adjustment. Previous research has emphasised the contribution of cultural distance between the home and host cultures to adjustment difficulty (e.g. Ward & Chang 1997). However, the majority of previous research has tended to focus on expatriation between countries at similar levels of development (e.g. between the United States and Europe), and principally between urban locations therein. Development work takes place in a different setting, and consequently this section examines how features of the development work context may be anticipated to influence the sociocultural adjustment of expatriate development workers.

### **2.3.1 Cultural distance between home and host cultures**

The contribution of operational NGOs to international development (discussed in Section 2.1.2) is made through individual development workers. It is these individuals that live and work with host communities, delivering aid materials, sharing skills, knowledge and experience, and mobilising the resources of the host community. Knowles (1998) notes that development work mainly takes place in less developed countries (LDCs), and very often in the rural parts of these countries as this is where the most marginalised communities are located. Rural communities are often less developed than their urban counterparts, and the host culture more evident. Consequently the difference between development workers' home culture and that of the host nationals in this context can be significant. Previous research suggests that the degree of cultural difference influences the extent to which an expatriate experiences adjustment difficulties (Redmond 2000; Ward & Chang 1997). It may therefore be argued that the adjustment of expatriate development workers is likely to be more challenging as a result of the cultural difference that they will experience. Much previous research has focused on expatriation between countries at similar levels of development, with the majority of studies not explicitly acknowledging the development characteristics of the home and host countries under consideration. Where this is acknowledged, this variable is not included in analyses. For example Caligiuri *et al.* (1998) note that 25% of their sample moved from a developed to a less developed country, but did not examine the effect of this on adjustment. One exception is a study by Florkowski and Fogel (1999). Although conducted in a commercial context, they acknowledge that the level of development of the host country was "by far the most important determinant of expatriates' interest in leaving before their assignments were finished" (Florkowski & Fogel

1999:798). Unfortunately the reasons for this were not considered in the paper, although it is reasonable to suggest that this may be associated with the degree of cultural distance and differences in living conditions.

### **2.3.2 Access to basic resources**

As discussed earlier in this chapter (Section 2.1.2), one of the key benefits of NGOs is their ability to reach the most remote and disenfranchised beneficiaries. It is suggested that many such beneficiaries are hard to reach because they live in remote rural areas, are isolated from communications infrastructure, or live in urban slums (Knowles 1998). This has implications for both living and working conditions of the development workers (Knowles 1998). One consequence is to limit their access to resources such as electricity, running water and communication channels. When access to previously taken-for-granted resources is limited, it can become more difficult to re-establish familiar routines. Indeed Aycan (1997) notes that adjustment to some changes in living conditions can influence an expatriate's intention to remain in the host country. It has been suggested that the re-establishment of such routines can aid adjustment by contributing to feelings of normality (Brett 1980). In this sense, 'normality' appears to imply consistency with the home culture. Florkowski and Fogel (1999) found that expatriates tended to be more adjusted when they worked for a company that paid enough for them to maintain their existing standard of living whilst in the host country. This suggests, therefore, that development workers may find it difficult to maintain certain routines that are consistent with their home culture. Consequently, this may make it difficult for the development worker to maintain their own cultural identity, thereby contributing to a marginalisation or assimilation outcome.

### **2.3.3 Availability of support mechanisms**

The contribution of support mechanisms to cross-cultural adjustment has been noted in previous research (Kraimer *et al.* 2001; Ward *et al.* 2001). Toh and Denisi (2007) argue that in moving to a new country, expatriates need to develop a new network of social support. Such support can, of course, come both from other expatriates and from host nationals. The role of host nationals in this regard is examined in Section 2.4.1. In the development context the ability to seek both personal and professional support from other development workers has been identified as an important coping mechanism (e.g. McFarlane 2004; Thompson

1997). Access to support at a personal level, according to Thompson (1997), is an important coping mechanism as it allows for the release of tension and stress. Such contact is suggested to provide opportunities for informal debriefings on interactions with host nationals. This may help the individuals to reconcile their experiences of the host culture whilst providing a mechanism for maintaining contact with their home culture. Such benefits may be argued to support the achievement of integration as an adjustment outcome.

At the professional level, the ability to communicate with the sending organisation is noted by McFarlane (2004) to be influential in terms of access to formal and informal knowledge bases that can aid the adjustment process. However, McFarlane (2004) also suggests that when faced with stressors, development workers can tend to distance themselves from the sending organisation. This perhaps means that access to communications may not always be perceived as important by the development worker.

Working in isolated locations can make it difficult to seek the support of other expatriates, with limited access to a reliable communications infrastructure exacerbating the problem. This can lead to feelings of isolation and an inability to gain access to formal and informal knowledge bases, as well as opportunities for mentor support from colleagues with more in-country experience (McFarlane 2004). She goes on to say that such isolation can evoke feelings of abandonment and despair (McFarlane 2004), and that isolation reduces the scope for social support mechanisms to address stressful and traumatic experiences (see also Davidson *et al.* 1991; Flannery 1990). The isolation experienced by development workers can therefore present a further challenge to their adjustment.

However, maintaining contact with other development workers may not always have positive effects. Whilst such contact does indeed provide opportunities to share experiences and frustrations with people from a similar cultural background, it can also provide a forum for criticism of the host culture. Over-reliance on this coping mechanism may therefore encourage excessive criticism of the host culture, as well as contributing to a withdrawal from opportunities to associate with host nationals. If an individual becomes too reliant on this support mechanism to the exclusion of contact with host nationals, a separation adjustment outcome is perhaps likely, where the home culture is maintained and the host culture is rejected. This is consistent with an early phenomenological study by Nash (1967) which suggested

that less adjusted expatriates tended to be critical of the host culture, using the home culture (through other expatriates) as a positive reference group to make judgments about the host culture. Indeed Smalley (1963) notes that symptoms of culture shock include rejection of the host culture, manifested in the formation of distinct expatriate communities, reliance on ‘protective isolation’, and the elevated importance of symbols of home (for example food and flags).

### **2.3.4 Working in conflict areas**

More development work is now taking place in locations where there is ongoing conflict (Cater & Walker 1998). McFarlane (2004) argues that development workers face threats to their lives, partly as a result of violence due to working in areas experiencing civil conflict, but also as a result of accident and disease linked to the locations in which these roles are undertaken. Hostility toward foreigners is also an issue in conflict situations (McFarlane 2004), which is exacerbated by the fact that peacekeeping forces are typically not responsible for protecting development workers. In a personal account of time spent in El Salvador, Thompson (1997) recalls that there was a real danger to international development workers. A priority, she says, was to avoid being detained. Detention could be avoided only by acting in such a way as to be perceived by the authorities as being wholly impartial in the ongoing civil conflict. Further, the government were hostile to international agencies, so development work had to be discrete, which caused tensions with local NGOs as their members wanted international staff to take on high-profile roles to provide a measure of protection.

In summary, this section has examined the way in which the sociocultural adjustment of expatriate development workers can be affected by the locations in which development work typically takes place. Previous research has identified the effect of cultural distance between the home and host cultures on adjustment. This remains important in the development context, with the degree of cultural distance experienced by development workers argued to be greater than for other types of expatriate. It was further argued that the locations in which development work takes place can have additional effects on adjustment. It was suggested that limited access to basic resources can make it difficult to re-establish familiar routines, which in turn can affect the adjustment of the development worker. Similarly, development workers often operate in locations that restrict their access to a communications infrastructure, limiting their ability to access both formal and informal support

mechanisms including those provided by the sending organisation, other expatriates, and friends and family at home. The discussion also suggested that safety and security issues may affect the locations in which development workers operate.

## **2.4 The effect of host culture contact on sociocultural adjustment**

Sociocultural adjustment is concerned with the way in which an individual adapts to interactions with host nationals. Consistent with its foundation in social learning theory (see Section 2.2.2) sociocultural adjustment is strongly influenced by ‘contact variables’ (Ward *et al.* 2001) that affect the formation of a positive relationship between expatriates and host nationals. Several such factors are evident in the literature. The degree of contact that an expatriate has with host nationals is a dominant theme in the extant literature, although there are conflicting arguments on whether a greater degree of contact helps or hinders sociocultural adjustment. Similarly, a motivation to learn about the host culture can be beneficial, although there is some evidence to suggest that over-identification with host nationals in the international development context can be harmful to the expatriate. Sociocultural adjustment can also be influenced by the way in which host nationals view expatriates, with evidence to suggest that host nationals can reject expatriates due to actual or perceived financial differences, or the possession of an ethnocentric mindset. The relationship may also be influenced by professional frustrations arising from differences in approaches and attitudes to work. The following sections evaluate these factors in the context of international development.

### **2.4.1 The degree of host culture contact**

The participative philosophy of international development demands that development workers operate on a collaborative basis with host nationals. The degree of contact that an expatriate has with host nationals can be argued to have both positive and negative effects on sociocultural adjustment.

In a positive sense the ‘contact hypothesis’ (Allport 1954) contends that the more interaction between an individual and a specific cultural group, the more positive the individual’s attitude toward that group. Black (1988) links this to expatriation by

arguing that holding positive attitudes toward host nationals has a beneficial effect on cross-cultural adjustment. The argument here is that positive attitudes contribute to effective engagement with the social learning opportunities afforded by contact with host nationals.

Willingness to interact with host nationals enables expatriates to demonstrate their desire to learn about the host culture, and can result in host nationals reciprocating with a greater degree of acceptance and cooperation, which in turn can contribute to effective sociocultural adjustment (Aycan 1997). Mendenhall and Oddou (1985) and Black (1990) concur with this view, adding that limiting interactions to other expatriates limits opportunities to learn about the host culture. Triandis (1994) offers further support, noting that differences between expatriates and host nationals initially inhibit interactions. This, he suggests, keeps expatriates within their comfort zones and prevents them from engaging in opportunities to learn about and adjust to the host culture. Instead, interactions provide opportunities for expatriates to observe and mirror culturally-appropriate behaviours (Selmer 2002). Feldman and Thomas (1992) found evidence that more effective expatriates interacted more frequently with host nationals. Greater contact with host nationals would therefore point to an integration or assimilation adjustment outcome.

In a negative sense, the degree of contact with host nationals has been linked with adjustment difficulty (e.g. Navara & James 2002). Greater exposure to the host culture has been found to contribute to increased adjustment difficulty as this exposure forces the expatriate to deal effectively with host nationals. Difficulties are further exacerbated when there is a greater degree of cultural distance between the home and host cultures (as discussed in Section 2.3.1). In participative approaches to development it is necessary for development workers to be more deeply integrated into local communities (Knowles 1998). Hence their degree of host-culture contact is likely to be significant, suggesting that the adjustment process may be more challenging as it is necessary to fully understand the host culture and to be able to function effectively within it.

However, whilst a greater degree of contact is suggested to increase adjustment difficulty, it may be argued that the effect of this is dependent on how the individual responds to this contact. One possibility is that increased contact with host nationals presents significant adjustment challenges which contribute to the withdrawal of the

development worker from the host culture. This would point to a separation or marginalisation outcome.

## 2.4.2 Identification with the host community

Thompson (1997) suggests that development workers are drawn to this type of work so they can identify with something that has real meaning and importance. She argues that this is just an intermediate stage, and that many international development workers move from identifying with the cause to taking it on as their own identity. This, she argues makes it impossible for the individual to see their own personality as important. This is reinforced by Ehrenreich & Elliott (2004) who note that 'over identification' with beneficiaries is a negative consequence of exposure to various stressors that can have adverse effects on the emotional wellbeing of the development worker.

One manifestation of over-identification with the beneficiaries' 'cause' is that development workers often work long hours (Ehrenreich & Elliott 2004). McFarlane (2004) supports this, suggesting that development workers find it difficult to disengage from their work, whilst Thompson (1997) notes that feelings of guilt affect the judgement of fatigue. Thompson (1997) goes on to argue that development workers choose this type of work to be able to identify with something important. She suggests that as the beneficiaries' 'cause' becomes absorbed, self care becomes less important and development workers become less capable of looking after themselves.

Consequently, emotional burnout is a real risk for development workers. This can be caused by various factors. Burnout may be caused by excessive 'giving' and exposure to traumatised groups (van Gelder & van den Berkhof 2002). It is also suggested by McFarlane (2004) that development workers risk burnout because they find it difficult to accept the need to look after themselves, and to acknowledge that they also need physical and emotional support. Other studies provide evidence to suggest that development workers feel uncomfortable in using preventive measures that are not available to the local population (e.g. Blaque-Belair 2002; Lange *et al.* 1994; Sharp *et al.* 1995).

Thompson (1997) also adds a different perspective on burnout. She suggests that 'foreigners' (international development workers) can suffer tremendous guilt as a

result of not suffering in the same way as those they seek to help. This, she says, leads them to feel that they have no right to be afraid or burnt out, and that this in turn fosters a focus on internalising ones feelings. Unprocessed feelings, she says, lead to burnout. Ehrenreich & Elliott (2004) support this, noting several anecdotal accounts of the consequences of being exposed to the stressors discussed here. These include burnout, compassion fatigue, secondary traumatisation, PTSD, depression, over identification with beneficiaries, and self-destructive behaviours. According to a recent study by Eriksson *et al.* (2001), around one third of returned development workers surveyed displayed at least moderate symptoms of PTSD suggesting that this is indeed a challenging expatriation context.

One of the challenges for expatriate development workers is therefore to avoid over-identifying with the beneficiaries (e.g. Thompson 1997). Whilst over-identification can affect the wellbeing of the development worker, it may also have implications for the adjustment outcome. Identifying with the beneficiaries' cause can be viewed positively as it demonstrates a commitment to the development worker's role, and may therefore contribute to acceptance of the host culture. However over-identification has been argued to result in the development worker neglecting their own personality and wellbeing (Ehrenreich & Elliott 2004; Thompson 1997). This suggests that the home culture may also be rejected, resulting in either an integration or assimilation outcome depending on the extent to which the host culture is accepted.

However, Miyamoto & Kuhlman (2001) found evidence to suggest that expatriates who focus on returning home experienced greater culture shock as they were less open to the host country experience. So, it may be that in the development context identification with the cause may serve to facilitate adjustment by motivating the expatriate to learn about and engage with the host culture. Another positive view is expounded by Witkin (1978) who identified links between cognitive style and adaptation. He distinguished between 'field-dependent' and 'field-independent' cognitive styles, and suggested that individuals exhibiting a higher degree of field-dependence have an external focus and are more effective at getting along with others. This, he argued, leads such individuals toward 'social' occupations including welfare, helping and humanitarian professions. Consequently, the type of person drawn to development work may be found to exhibit 'field-dependent' qualities, which make them effective in social interactions, thereby supporting processes of sociocultural adjustment.

### 2.4.3 Attitudes toward development workers

The relationship with host nationals is an important one for sociocultural adjustment. Host nationals have an important socialisation role, supporting adjustment by demonstrating appropriate behaviours, and providing social support, assistance and friendship (Toh & Denisi 2003, 2007). Several studies have examined the relationship between expatriates and host nationals. Toh and Denisi (2003) examined host nationals' reactions to expatriate pay policies. They found that host nationals may feel resentment as a result of differential reward packages. Such resentment, they suggest, could lead to negative outcomes including workplace withdrawal behaviours and reduced cooperation with expatriates which have consequences for adjustment. Such outcomes, however, were only found to occur when host nationals see expatriates as a relevant referent group. Toh and Denisi (2003) suggest that when there is a large economic difference between the home and host countries, or if expatriates are close to host nationals, expatriates will not be viewed as a relevant referent group, and consequently such negative outcomes are less likely to occur. In the international development context, there is usually a large economic difference between home and host countries, suggesting that development workers will not be seen as a relevant referent group. Paradoxically, development workers seek to build close relationships with host nationals, which may counteract this. It is therefore unclear whether the relationship between development workers and host nationals will be affected by differential reward packages or other actual or perceived financial differences.

In another study, Toh and Denisi (2007) examine the role of host nationals as socialising agents. They suggest that the degree of support that host nationals offer to expatriates is contingent on the extent to which expatriates are perceived as outgroup members. The status of expatriates as outgroup members is argued to be influenced by attributes that serve to distinguish between expatriates and host nationals. Several factors are identified, including ethnicity (Toh & Denisi 2007). In the development context, it is possible that Western expatriates will be of a different ethnicity to host nationals. This, according to Toh and Denisi (2007:285), can be manifested in differences in skin colour, eye colour, hair, dress norms, physical build and spoken language. Such surface-level attributes are easily observable and can influence the way in which expatriates are perceived by host nationals.

Host national attitudes toward the role of development workers can thus affect sociocultural adjustment. Whilst development workers believe that they are making a valuable contribution, this view may not be shared by the host community. Development workers may therefore be rejected by host nationals (Danieli 2002). This can place development workers at risk of distress as their 'offer of support' is being turned down. Toh and Denisi (2005) argue that a lack of host national support can hinder adjustment, whilst Florkowski and Fogel (1999) found that expatriates reported lower levels of commitment and adjustment when they felt rejected by host nationals. This can also be viewed from the host nationals' perspective, with local staff (and beneficiaries) experiencing frustration due to lack of cultural understanding and power differentials (McFarlane 2004). Consequently, interactions with host nationals may be challenging as the development worker may experience hostility toward their presence in the host country. This is supported by Zeira (1979), who found that host nationals exhibiting higher degrees of ethnocentrism were less satisfied with expatriate managers. In particular, these host nationals were more likely to highlight shortcomings in expatriates' understanding of and sensitivity toward the host culture. Barriers such as this can hinder the social learning process that is necessary to support sociocultural adjustment.

Furthermore, Knowles (1998) suggests that host nationals sometimes believe that development workers should carry out all of the development work. This challenges the effectiveness of the development worker by causing tensions and placing additional pressure on them. This may contribute to the formation of barriers between the development worker and host nationals, leading to either a separation or marginalisation outcome being realised.

#### **2.4.4 Professional frustrations**

Development workers can become professionally frustrated if their skills and experience are not fully employed. Ehrenreich & Elliott (2004) note that this frustration can also arise from other directions, such as lack of adequate resources to achieve the desired outcomes, exposure to excessive bureaucratic demands, a sense of helplessness due to the scale of the problem being tackled, having to prioritise who to help, and apparent lack of gratitude from beneficiaries. Pressure to evaluate and pressures to make progress and to produce evaluation documentation (Knowles 1998) can also contribute to a sense of professional frustration.

The move toward participative development and a focus on community-level activity targeting the poorest and most marginalised beneficiaries (see Section 2.1.2) means that development workers are likely to witness extreme poverty and inequity as they work more closely with host communities. This not only affects the individuals physically in terms of their living and working conditions, but emotionally in terms of witnessing suffering and inequities in wealth distribution (Knowles 1998). This can result in frustration as the development worker is exposed to the enormity of the development challenge, and the feeling that their contribution is insignificant. Similarly, frustration can arise from the difficulty of being accepted as an equal by host nationals, something that development workers often strive to achieve. An early study on culture shock by Smalley (1963) reported that Americans found it hard to adapt to their elevation to a higher social position in many Asian and African countries. Further, Smalley found that this hindered the ability of Christian missionaries to identify with the poorest and most marginalised members of the host community. This represents a barrier to participative approaches to development, and may result in personal and professional frustrations as the development worker is unable to operate in the manner that they intended.

A lack of role clarity can also contribute to ineffective adjustment, a suggestion that is consistent with the use of realistic job previews (Wanous 1980). Role clarity can influence not only work adjustment, but other aspects of adjustment as well. Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.* (2005) found evidence that role clarity has moderate potential to 'spill over' and minimise non-work adjustment difficulties. Harvey (1997) outlines spillover theory in the context of work and family spheres, suggesting that an (in)ability to adjust in one sphere spills over and affects adjustment in the other. In the development context McFarlane (2004) found that high uncertainty and lack of role clarity could be linked with anxiety and distress, although this was noted to be pre-departure rather than in-country. Barron (1999) and Hechanova *et al.* (2003) also found support for the suggestion that role ambiguity is a predictor of less effective adjustment. Linked to this is the role of idealistic, romanticised notions of humanitarianism held by inexperienced development workers. This leads to emotional conflict and disappointment when these images are dispelled by the realities of the experience. This, it is suggested by McFarlane (2004) leads to disappointment and later to distress.

Difficulties in organising staff and resources can present unwelcome challenges. McFarlane (2004:6) refers to these as "systemic role conflicts" whereby there are

conflicts in terms of professional goals (noting that rebuilding peace, security etc. may conflict with the goals of a corrupt or dictatorial government). Further, dealing with beneficiaries that may act for self-interest rather than the wider community benefit (McFarlane 2004) can make it difficult for the development worker to achieve their goals. Similarly, participative approaches involve local communities in setting the development agenda (Willis 2005). This has the potential to cause tensions as the development worker may have different ideas, but has to suppress them in order to fulfil their obligation to the participative methodology.

Frustrations can also arise from differences in attitudes and approaches to work (McFarlane 2004). For example, development workers may take a task-oriented approach to work which emphasises efficiency and effectiveness, whilst host nationals may take a people-oriented approach which emphasises relationships and consensual decision-making. Nash (1967) noted Americans' difficulties in coming to terms with moving from a country where efficiency was central to a country (Spain) where time received less emphasis. Different views of time, what Nash (1967) refers to as 'rhythms of life', were found to cause frustration and exasperation. He suggests that as time appears to be wasted, it is perceived by the expatriate to be more valuable, leading to criticism of host nationals as having "no conception of time" (Nash 1967:160). In an interesting study, Van de Vliert and Van Yperen (1996) examined the effect of ambient temperature on perceptions of role overload. They concluded that individuals perceive a greater degree of role overload when the ambient temperature is higher. Although the effect was reported to be small, it is consistent with earlier work which suggests that individuals are less inclined to work in hotter climates (e.g. Bandyopadhyaya 1978; Myrdd 1968). Van de Vliert and Van Yperen (1996) speculated that the small effect size in their study may have been a result of their sample of middle managers who, they suggest, were likely to work in air conditioned offices – a luxury unlikely to be enjoyed by development workers. Such differences in attitudes and approaches to work can contribute to rejection of the host culture if they are not fully understood by the development worker. This can consequently lead to a separation or marginalisation outcome.

In summary, this section has examined the way in which contact with host nationals can affect the sociocultural adjustment of expatriate development workers. Previous research has identified the importance of the degree of contact with host nationals for expatriate adjustment. Discussion in this section has linked this with the features

of the international development context identified earlier in this chapter (see Section 2.1).

Participative approaches to development bring development workers into close and frequent contact with host communities. The degree of contact with host nationals influences the level of adjustment difficulty experienced by an expatriate. Furthermore, close contact with host nationals can contribute to over-identification with the beneficiaries' cause. This can result in feelings of guilt, an inability to disengage from work, burnout, and a lack of self-care. Challenges can also arise from the way in which host nationals relate to development workers. Some host nationals feel that development workers should do all of the work, or even reject the presence of the development worker altogether. This can result in feelings of professional frustration, as can a lack of role clarity, conflicting goals, different ways of working, and pressures to evaluate. Tensions between the development worker and host nationals can also result from conflicting views about the rationale and perceived value of the development worker's presence in the host country.

However, it is important to recognise that not all development workers will necessarily experience these challenges in the same way. Each individual expatriate brings their own set of attributes that affect the way in which they will react to the challenges presented by development work and subsequently experience the process of adjustment to the host culture. Chapter Three develops this argument by examining the role of recruitment, selection and cross-cultural training as mechanisms that sending organisations can employ to maximise the ability of development workers to adjust effectively to the host culture.

## **2.5 Chapter summary**

This chapter evaluated the context and process of sociocultural adjustment. Adjustment was defined as the degree of fit between an individual and a new environment, and the adoption of Searle and Ward's (1990) 'psychological – sociocultural' model of adjustment as the conceptual basis of this thesis was explained. The process of sociocultural adjustment was defined as the way in which an individual adapts to interactions with host nationals, whilst as an outcome it was defined as the degree of acceptance of the host culture and the degree of maintenance of the home culture.

The chapter introduced international development as the context for this study. Key features of this context were identified and their potential effect on the sociocultural adjustment of development workers examined in relation to the broader adjustment literature. It is concluded from this review that sociocultural adjustment in expatriate development workers has not been effectively examined before. From studies carried out with other types of expatriate we know that various factors can make adjustment more challenging;

- Greater degree of host culture contact
- Greater degree of cultural distance
- Limited access to support mechanisms
- Limited access to basic resources
- Being located in LDCs
- Negative host national attitudes toward expatriates

However, previous studies have not examined expatriation contexts that exhibit all of these characteristics. Consequently, little is known about how the specific set of features that characterise expatriation in the international development context combine to influence the process and outcome of sociocultural adjustment. This informed the development of the first and second research objectives that guided the study's evaluation of the process and outcome of sociocultural adjustment;

***RO1: How does the international development context influence the way in which expatriate development workers experience processes of sociocultural adjustment?***

***RO2: What adjustment outcomes are realised by expatriate development workers?***

In addressing these objectives the study adds to our understanding of how the process and outcome of sociocultural adjustment are experienced in a previously under-researched expatriation context. In particular, the study provides a rich insight into the experiences of development workers as they adjust to interactions with host nationals.

This chapter has highlighted contextual challenges to sociocultural adjustment. However, the impact of these challenges is influenced by the unique combination of personality traits, skills, knowledge and experiences that each individual possesses, along with the support provided by their sending organisation. The next chapter evaluates these issues.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE CONTRIBUTION OF RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND CROSS-CULTURAL TRAINING TO EXPATRIATE ADJUSTMENT**

The previous chapter (Chapter Two) addressed expatriation from an individual perspective, examining the sociocultural adjustment challenges for development workers. Another predominant theme in the expatriation literature focuses on the role of sending organisations in the adjustment process. This is reflective of a view that expatriation usually (although not always) takes place through a sending organisation, and that the sending organisation plays a key role in supporting adjustment through its application of recruitment, selection and cross-cultural training interventions. The main line of argument is that effective expatriate adjustment can be facilitated through a combination of recruiting and selecting the 'right' candidates, preparing those candidates effectively for the assignment, and providing suitable ongoing support for them whilst in the host country. Further, the argument suggests that sending organisations should engage in a comprehensive and integrated approach to expatriate recruitment, selection and cross-cultural training in order to minimise the likelihood of expatriate failure. Following this argument such an approach would be expected to be evident in the development context as a result of the challenging nature of this expatriation environment. This chapter applies existing understanding of expatriate recruitment, selection and cross-cultural training to the characteristics of development work in order to conceptualise these IHRM interventions within the international development context. This is later used to guide the collection of data on expatriate recruitment, selection and cross-cultural training practice in UK-based NGOs, and subsequently to aid interpretation of this data in Chapter Six.

The chapter begins by examining the issue of expatriate failure, arguing that there has been a shift in emphasis from failure as the premature termination of an assignment toward a focus on levels of satisfaction and adjustment. This demonstrates a bridging of the gap between the psychological and managerial literatures on expatriation, recognising that ineffective adjustment can have an adverse effect on the sending organisation as well as the individual concerned. Drawing on the resource constraints that NGOs typically face, the chapter then examines the role and importance of recruitment, arguing that informal methods are consistent with the characteristics of the organisations and the desired candidates.

Selection criteria are then explored, and it is argued that the shift in emphasis from technical competence toward factors influencing adjustive capabilities as selection criteria for expatriate staff is reflective of the current role of development workers (as discussed in Chapter Two, Section 2.1). Finally, the role of cross-cultural training in facilitating effective adjustment to a host culture is examined. Difficulties in conceptualising types of training are discussed, and a content-based model is adopted to facilitate examination of the interventions available and the roles that they play in aiding the adjustment of expatriate workers.

### ***3.1 Expatriate failure: The effect on the sending organisation***

Although there is some debate as to whether the use of expatriate staff is consistent with the prevailing philosophy of development (e.g. Crewe 1994) it has been argued that Northern NGOs nevertheless continue to employ such staff in operational development roles (Fowler 2000). As some begin to question the role and value of expatriate development workers, it becomes increasingly important that these staff are able to operate in an effective manner. It is therefore important to ensure that expatriate failure is understood in order that the sending organisation is able to implement appropriate strategies to minimise the likelihood of such failure. This section examines alternative modes of failure, beginning with the traditional view of failure as premature termination of the assignment before drawing on the adjustment literature (see Chapter Two for a full discussion of expatriate adjustment) to argue that failure can also be manifested in other ways as a result of ineffective adjustment to the host culture. The consequences of a failure to adjust effectively to the host culture are examined toward the end of this section.

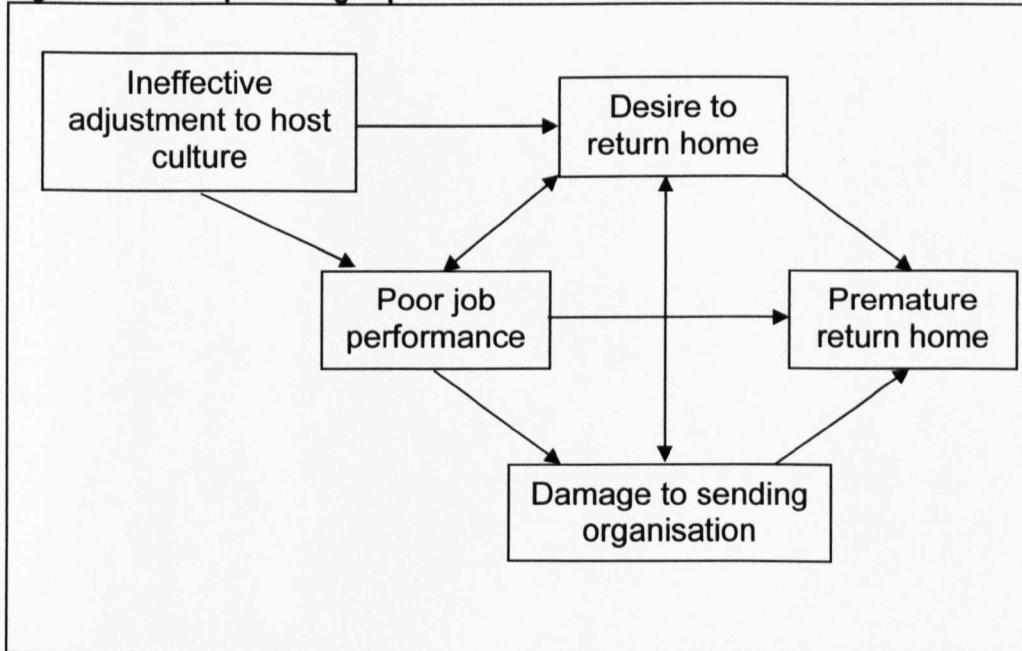
Research papers on expatriate preparation and training often begin by seeking to justify the need for such provision (e.g. Selmer *et al.* 1998; Zakaria 2000). Invariably this justification is built upon the assertion that the failure rate of expatriate staff is high (e.g. Tung 1981; Yavas & Bodur 1999). Some authors have, however, begun to question this high failure rate. Harzing (1995) and Forster (1997b) suggest that the high rate of expatriate failure is a myth perpetuated by continued misquoting of two articles (namely Tung 1981, 1982). Consequently they argue that the scale of the 'problem' is based on unsubstantiated comments made in two early studies. Alternatively, it may be argued that our understanding of failure in this context has evolved, and that this has influenced the way in which failure has been examined in empirical studies.

Expatriate failure is most often defined as premature return to the home country (Black et al. 1991). Forster (1997b) provides a definition of expatriate failure which reflects this traditional view, suggesting that failure occurs when an expatriate returns home prematurely as a result of poor performance and / or personal difficulties. However, an expatriate may wish to terminate their assignment early, but does not feel able to do so and therefore remains in their post. Shaffer and Harrison (1998) examine the role of adjustment in psychological withdrawal from international assignment. They refer to the desire to terminate an assignment as 'withdrawal cognitions', whereby an expatriate expresses either a specific or general intention to quit, or begins a search for alternative employment. There are various reasons why an expatriate may not act on their desire to terminate their assignment. They may be reliant on the financial incentives provided by the sending organisation, may not want to admit that the assignment is not working for them, or may feel that premature termination of the assignment would damage their career (Tung 1981). Indeed in the development context, it is possible that attachment to the 'cause' may dissuade an expatriate from leaving their post early. In such cases the expatriate may remain in their post despite wishing to return home. Based on the traditional definition of failure, this would be described as a success. However, it is clear that this situation is far from successful, and would be likely to have damaging consequences both for the organisation and the individual (Black & Mendenhall 1991; Caligiuri 2000b). Hence, whilst premature termination of the assignment is indeed a failure, there are more damaging (but more difficult to identify) forms of failure that can occur before the termination stage is reached.

If premature termination of an assignment is taken to be the end-point of an expatriate's failure, it becomes possible to conceptualise this form of failure in terms of contributing factors. This gives rise to the suggestion that failure can occur in ways which do not necessarily result in the expatriate returning home. An alternative view of failure is as low work performance in the host country (Copeland & Griggs 1985). Underperformance may be even more damaging both to the organisation and the individual than premature return home. One possible outcome of underperformance is that the expatriate will become demotivated. Yavas & Bodur (1999) suggest that this may have implications which include damage to the individual's career and their self-esteem (see also Shaffer & Harrison 1998).

A second potential outcome is that the underperformance will cause damage to the sending organisation in the host country. This is particularly important when it is recognised that expatriate staff typically hold strategically important roles (Caligiuri 2000b). Indeed Mendenhall & Oddou (1985) suggest that there may be implications for management performance, productivity levels, operations efficiency and client relations, whilst Caligiuri (2000b) takes a more pessimistic view by suggesting that an ineffective expatriate could affect the future of the sending organisation's operations in the host country. Black & Mendenhall (1991) identify similar consequences for the sending organisation including unrealised business opportunities, problems with local unions, and damaged company reputations (see also Shaffer & Harrison 1998). Such underperformance may therefore result in the expatriate wishing to terminate their assignment, actually terminating their assignment, or causing damage the sending organisation (which may or may not lead to premature termination of the assignment). Figure 3.1 illustrates the relationship between these modes of failure.

**Figure 3.1 Conceptualising expatriate failure.**



Source: Compiled by the author.

The previous chapter (Chapter Two) suggested that ineffective adjustment to the host culture has implications for the wellbeing of the individual. The discussion in this section has extended that argument to suggest that ineffective adjustment may lead to alternative forms of expatriate failure which have implications for the sending organisation as well as for the individual. It may therefore be argued that ineffective adjustment to the host culture is perhaps the first manifestation of failure which can

subsequently contribute to the four other forms of expatriate failure illustrated in Figure 3.1. This ‘process of failure’ articulates the importance of this thesis in understanding the adjustment process in expatriate development workers. This chapter proceeds to argue that the appropriate application of recruitment, selection and cross-cultural training interventions can mitigate the risk of expatriate failure. The following section begins by examining the contribution of recruitment to this process.

### **3.2 Recruiting expatriates**

There appears to be general acceptance that IHRM interventions, notably selection (e.g. Arthur & Bennett 1995; Tung 1981, 1982) and training (e.g. Black & Mendenhall 1990), are instrumental in tackling expatriate failure. There is however little previous research that focuses directly on the recruitment of expatriate staff. Indeed it has been noted that recruitment is the “poor relation” of selection, receiving much less research attention (Marchington & Wilkinson 1998:115). In the expatriation literature, many studies focus on the role of pre-departure training and on-site socialisation (e.g. Black *et. al.* 1991; Selmer *et. al.* 1998), as well as identifying antecedents of effective adjustment which may be applied as selection criteria (e.g. Caligiuri 2000b). However, the effectiveness of training interventions is implicitly reliant on having first selected suitable individuals for the overseas assignment. Further, the selection of appropriate individuals implicitly relies upon having recruited a pool of suitable candidates in the first place, with Watson (1994) noting that selection can not overcome failures in recruitment but rather that it can only make them more evident.

One possible explanation for the lack of coverage of expatriate recruitment is that the literature principally focuses on expatriation in MNCs. Here, expatriate assignments are used differently to those in the NGO context. In the commercial setting, overseas postings are often used as part of management development programmes, to exert some form of headquarters control over an overseas business unit, or to transfer or reinforce organisational culture (e.g. Shen & Edwards 2004). Implicit in these applications is that expatriates are chosen from existing staff, and therefore selection becomes more important than recruitment. Indeed, Mendenhall *et al.* (1987:335) discuss expatriation in terms of “career pathing”. Their review of literature was described as inconclusive, but found some evidence to support the suggestion that expatriation in MNCs is associated with in-company vertical career

advancement. Indeed in a study of expatriate recruitment and selection in Chinese MNCs, Shen & Edwards (2004) reported that all companies in their sample recruited internally for expatriate positions. As a result of the lack of existing research on expatriate recruitment, this thesis makes use of literature on the recruitment of staff in small organisations, reflecting the fact that whilst there are a small number of large NGOs, the vast majority are small.

In a general sense, the purpose of recruitment and selection is to ensure that appropriate individuals are appointed to the available post(s). The choice of recruitment approach is influenced by the need to identify the best possible pool of candidates from which to select, and the need to ensure that process does not identify either too few or too many candidates. It is important, then, to use the right approach in order to attract applications from suitable candidates. Suitably qualified, experienced and motivated expatriate development workers are in fairly limited supply, making the recruitment process more challenging as they are more difficult to locate. The literature identifies two broad approaches to recruitment. ‘Closed search’ techniques use existing contacts and networks to identify candidates, whilst ‘open search’ techniques access the wider labour market through the use of methods with a broader reach. Although both approaches are potentially suitable for the identification of candidates for expatriate development posts, it may be argued that informal closed-search techniques are more appropriate as a result of the characteristics of development work, resource limitations and the limited supply of development workers. This argument is developed through the following two sections (3.2.1 and 3.2.2).

### **3.2.1 Closed search techniques**

‘Closed search’ includes several informal methods including internal recruitment, recommendations from existing employees, networks of contacts, and former applicants or employees. Internal recruitment is argued to be the first method that should be used (Armstrong 2003; Carroll *et al.* 1999). This approach offers NGOs several benefits. Many people want to be development workers for entirely the wrong reasons, with People in Aid (1997) reporting that NGOs are often overwhelmed with enquiries for overseas posts by people without the necessary skills, qualifications and experience. Furthermore, many applicants do not fully appreciate what development work actually involves, instead having romanticised notions that are quite different from the reality. Internal recruitment offers the

opportunity to select from people that have demonstrated their commitment to development work, and who have a clear understanding of the activities that the NGO is engaged in. In addition, NGO staff based in the home country often have frequent contact with overseas partners and with expatriate staff in the host countries. This gives them the opportunity to develop their intercultural skills and to demonstrate these on an almost daily basis. In effect, this enables the NGO to evaluate candidates in the 'safe' home setting. Internal recruitment is also very cheap (Marchington & Wilkinson 1998) and easy to use, which are important considerations for many NGOs that are small and operate on limited budgets. Thus, recruiting expatriates from existing staff may be argued to improve the likelihood of finding individuals with the right skills, knowledge and personal qualities, whilst also being highly cost-effective. Such an approach, however, can be criticised for failing to consider the 'whole field' of potential candidates by using 'open search' methods (Carroll *et al.* 1999) with the result that better or more suitable candidates may not be noticed. The application of open search techniques in the context of international development workers is examined in the following section (Section 3.2.2).

Word of mouth is an effective form of communication, and the use of personal contacts and networks can be a particularly useful recruitment tool (Marchington & Wilkinson 1998). This mechanism may include staff and organisational contacts, speculative applications, and previous applicants, and is seen as a cost effective approach (Carroll *et al.* 1999). However, this approach fails to make use of the wider labour market and can perpetuate the existing organisational culture, although this can have both positive and negative consequences (Marchington & Wilkinson 1998; Carroll *et al.* 1999). Word of mouth has traditionally been associated with firms operating in close-knit industries such as coal mining, and remains useful where there are few suitable candidates, and where these candidates are difficult to locate through other means. It is also very common in small organisations (Carroll *et al.* 1999), suggesting that word of mouth may be an effective and efficient method of recruitment for NGOs. Suitably qualified and experienced development workers are limited in number, and are difficult to locate as they are either already working overseas on other development projects, or are working in non-development related posts.

However, development worker networks exist that are an effective means of reaching suitable candidates, suggesting that it may not be necessary to rely on word of mouth. Examples of such networks include RedR and the Aid Workers'

Forum. The value of informal mechanisms is supported by Fowler (2000) who observes that NGOs frequently identify candidates for expatriate posts by informal methods including networking, poaching and headhunting. Such informal approaches offer benefits which include high speed and low cost. Furthermore, the candidate is likely to be a known entity, is likely to have been given more prior information about the organisation and the post, and is more likely to be accepted and socialised by existing staff (Carroll *et al.* 1999; Tanova 2003). However, Tanova (2003) also suggests that informal approaches to recruitment may not be sufficient for higher level posts requiring specific qualifications. It may therefore be concluded that whilst such informal methods are well suited to some expatriate development roles, it may be necessary to employ more formal methods when seeking to fill more senior expatriate posts.

In summary, closed search recruitment has been defined as the use of informal methods that limit the scope of the search to existing contacts. It was argued that these techniques are especially suited to the recruitment of expatriate development workers. The principal benefits of a closed search approach in this context were shown to centre on the speed with which suitable candidates could be identified, and the low cost involved in doing so. In addition, the ability to screen candidates using either word of mouth recommendation or by recruiting internally was suggested to be beneficial in mitigating against the risk of soliciting applications from large numbers of unsuitable candidates. Finally, the use of closed search techniques was argued to be effective when suitable candidates are limited in number and difficult to locate, characteristics that are evident in the pool of development workers. However, it was acknowledged that closed searches can be criticised for their inability to access the wider labour market, thereby perpetuating any shortcomings in the individuals that are part of the existing networks and limiting opportunities for new entrants into the profession.

### **3.2.2 Open search techniques**

Open search techniques involve searching the wider employment market using methods such as advertising, job centres and recruitment agencies (Carroll *et al.* 1999). The specific methods used will be influenced by the available supply of suitable candidates and the type of post to be filled, as well as the resources available to the organisation (Marchington & Wilkinson 1998). As previously suggested, the supply of expatriate development workers is limited, and they can

also be difficult to reach. Using traditional media (such as local and national newspapers) is likely to be ineffective in this context, although some NGOs do use this approach. National newspapers reach a broad audience which may result in too many inappropriate applicants, whilst a regional or local approach would be too restrictive. There are, naturally, some professional newsletters and electronic resources that would enable clear targeting of development professionals including the RedR newsletter and the Aid Workers' Forum website. However, subscribers to these resources may be dominated by existing development workers rather than those wishing to enter the profession.

The use of recruitment agencies or consultants is typically considered to be the most expensive approach. It is suggested that this approach is favoured by organisations seeking to fill senior positions (Marchington & Wilkinson 1998), where confidentiality and the expertise of the consultant justifies the expense involved. Although ultimately the cost of this approach may be prohibitive for most NGOs, there are potential benefits. With a limited supply of expatriate development workers, a consultant that was able to draw on a range of existing contacts could prove effective. NGOs would also benefit from the expertise of the consultant whilst reducing the need for specialist in-house staff. Fowler (2000) suggests that recruitment agencies may also be useful to NGOs when recruiting within 'politicised environments' where there are high levels of unemployment.

The argument in this and the previous section (3.2.1) suggests that recruitment is an often overlooked part of the selection process. However, even the most sophisticated selection mechanisms and criteria can not compensate for failings at the recruitment stage. The review of recruitment approaches suggests that both open and closed search techniques would be relevant within the context of identifying candidates for expatriate development posts. However, it is argued that informal methods might be more attractive and appropriate to NGOs based on resource considerations, the characteristics of development work and the available supply of development workers. It is therefore argued that NGOs would be expected to make more extensive use of informal recruitment tools such as word of mouth and professional networks to identify candidates for expatriate development posts.

In summary, recruitment is an important first stage in the process of appointing expatriate development workers as it forms the foundation upon which selection decisions are made. However, it has been argued that expatriate recruitment has

received limited previous research attention, and consequently that little is known about the way in which organisations carry out this task. In particular no previous research has been found that examines the recruitment of expatriate development workers.

### **3.3 Selecting expatriates**

Many studies on the management of expatriates focus on pre-departure training and on-site socialisation (e.g. Selmer *et al.* 1998; Suutari & Birch 2001). However, the effectiveness of these interventions is implicitly reliant on having first selected suitable individuals for the overseas assignment. After all, "It is well-established that short-term training cannot turn highly inappropriate individuals into excellent communicators or overcome highly unfavorable [sic] local conditions" (Kealey & Protheroe 1996:144). This raises the interesting question of whether successful expatriate workers are born or made (Kealey & Protheroe 1996), the answer to which places the emphasis on selection or training respectively. This question is developed further in Section 3.3.4 where the influence of personality characteristics on adjustment is examined, whilst the contribution of cross-cultural training is considered in Section 3.4.

Notwithstanding the nature – nurture debate, Katz & Seifer (1996) suggest that all firms seeking to offer expatriate assignments should use a selection process. Dowling *et al.* (1994) take this further, concluding that selection, along with training and socialisation, is rightly recognised as a key issue in ensuring expatriate success. Although it is reasonable to assume that all organisations engage in some form of selection procedure (Mendenhall *et al.* 1987), the quality of such approaches has been criticised (Marchington & Wilkinson 1996). The following discussion examines alternative approaches to selection evident in the expatriation literature, and argues that criteria associated with effective cross-cultural adjustment are most appropriate.

#### **3.3.1 Selection on technical competence**

Based on the ethnocentric perspective, a universalist view of expatriation previously dominated the international human resource management literature. Here, it was argued that technical competence is the key to international success with Lanier (1979) suggesting that the skills of effective management are transferable between

countries. This is further supported by findings from Baker & Ivancevich (1971). Reflecting this, it has been suggested that expatriate staff have traditionally been selected on the basis of their technical competence (Hays 1971, 1974; Kealey & Protheroe 1996). This view was quickly discredited in the academic literature, although Mendenhall & Oddou (1985) argue that there remained an ingrained practice amongst personnel directors that 'domestic equals overseas performance'.

However, although the possession of an appropriate level of job skill is clearly important (Baliga & Baker 1985; Mendenhall & Oddou 1988; Tung 1981), this should perhaps be viewed as a pre-requisite for continuation of the selection process. Indeed work by Dowling *et al.* (1994) confirms this common-sense view by suggesting that technical competence, although important, has no effect on the ability to adapt to new cultures, to deal effectively with colleagues, or to embrace foreign norms of behaviour. Furthermore, the nature of some posts demands that the incumbent possess different skills to conduct the same work in different countries. Managerial posts are prime examples of this, with different cultures having different approaches to core management concepts such as negotiation (Simintiras & Thomas 1998) and business ethics (Sims 2006). Selection on the basis of technical (i.e. professional) competence alone is therefore clearly insufficient, failing as it does to take account of the context in which the expatriation takes place, the accepted professional practices in different locations, and the significance of the expatriate's ability to adjust to life and work in an unfamiliar cultural environment.

The shift from paternalistic to participative approaches to international development alluded to in Chapter Two is significant here. Under the paternalistic development philosophy, development workers' principal contribution was the provision of technical expertise to host communities (Remenyi 2004). This inherently created a barrier between the 'expert' development worker and the host communities that were viewed as passive recipients of this expertise. The result was that there was little need for the development worker to understand the host culture. Selection, therefore, was perhaps likely to emphasise technical competence above other attributes. This approach is consistent with the early ethnocentric view of expatriation evident in the commercial expatriation literature considered at the beginning of this section.

However, as the prevailing philosophy of development changed, so too did the role of expatriate development workers. The move toward participative approaches required development workers to develop a closer and more collaborative relationship with host communities. Consequently, it is necessary for them to understand and involve host communities, breaking down barriers and creating the motivation and conditions for host communities to take control of their future (Willis 2005). It is argued that this philosophy requires development workers to be more culturally aware and culturally sensitive in their relationship with beneficiaries than the previous paternalistic philosophy. Therefore, selection solely on the basis of technical competence is unlikely to be effective. Under the current participative development philosophy, therefore, technical competence is perhaps best viewed as a prerequisite for continuation of the selection process. This argument is consistent with the prevailing view in the expatriate literature that emphasises the use of selection criteria that are likely to identify individuals with knowledge, skills and attitudes that contribute to an ability to adapt to new cultures and to operate effectively in an unfamiliar environment. These criteria are examined in the following sections.

### **3.3.2 Selection on prior overseas experience**

Reflecting a focus on the ability to adjust to a host culture and to reconcile the need for different relational skills, one approach has been to place a high level of importance on prior overseas experience. Here, the argument is that the individual has proved themselves capable of working in unfamiliar environments and that by association they have developed appropriate adjustive skills (Selmer 2002). Kealey & Protheroe (1996) have suggested that many international recruitment specialists use this as a key selection criterion, whilst anecdotal evidence suggests that this is also true of NGOs.

The value of previous experience, however, is dependent upon the success of the previous assignments. Nevertheless, a study by Kealey (1989) found limited evidence to suggest that prior overseas experience was beneficial to cultural adjustment, whilst Yavas & Bodur (1999) more recently concluded that longer previous overseas experience contributed positively to effective cross-cultural adjustment. The reason for this relationship is not clear. However, it may be argued that overseas experience enables the individual to build their awareness of the types of challenge that life and work in an unfamiliar environment can present. Ward &

Searle (1990) support this, suggesting that experience contributes to the formulation of accurate expectations (see also Black *et al.* 1991; Selmer 2002). Similarly, the experience provides an opportunity for the acquisition and development of coping mechanisms that are transferable between cultures. Aycan (1997) emphasises this, suggesting that prior international experience enables the development of coping skills through opportunities for observation, modelling and reinforcement.

A key criticism of the use of prior experience is based on the concept of cultural distance. Ward & Chang (1997) argue that adjustive difficulty is influenced by the degree of cultural distance between the home and host cultures (see Chapter Two, Section 2.3.1). Bringing this into the context of selection, it can be argued that experience in one host country may not necessarily prepare an expatriate for work in another if the previous and current host countries are culturally dissimilar. Black *et al.* (1992) offer some support for this, finding that the relationship between experience and adjustment is moderated by the relevance of the experience to the current post. In advance of an overseas assignment, the individual goes through a period of anticipatory adjustment during which expectations are created on the basis of information available (e.g. Black *et al.* 1991). Whilst this is often considered in terms of the contribution that information-based training can make to this process (information-based training is discussed in Section 3.4.3), prior experience also presents a basis upon which expectations can be created (Selmer 2002). In particular, difficulties can arise as the expatriate creates potentially inaccurate expectations about the new host country based on their previous experience. The possession of inaccurate or unrealistic expectations can have an adverse effect on cross-cultural adjustment (e.g. Caligiuri *et al.* 2001). It may therefore be more appropriate to take account only of relevant overseas experience (i.e. experience in the same or similar cultures as the post for which the individual is being selected) in order to minimise the creation of inaccurate expectations.

To this end, Takeuchi *et al.* (2005a) examined the effect of different types of prior international experience on adjustment. The study distinguished between domain-specific (i.e. work or non-work experience) and culture-specific (i.e. host country or other country) experience. They posited that prior experience in the host country would aid sociocultural adjustment as a result of the contextual relevance of the knowledge gained, that non-work experiences (i.e. holidays) would improve non-work adjustment, and that more international experience should be associated with higher adjustment (Takeuchi *et al.* 2005a). Findings from their study suggested that

culture-specific experience moderated general adjustment, but not work adjustment, and that culture-general experience moderated work adjustment. Their findings therefore offer partial support for the argument that specific host country experience aids adjustment, whilst also recognising that any international experience can still be beneficial in some respects. Selmer (2002) offers similar evidence, concluding that culturally-unrelated experience (i.e. in a country that is dissimilar to the current host country) does not assist either sociocultural or psychological adjustment, whilst culturally-related experience can contribute to some aspects of sociocultural adjustment.

In international development, a further complication is the urban-rural divide in less-developed countries. Chapter Two (Section 2.1.1) examined the role of operational NGOs, arguing that their distinctive contribution to international development is their ability to work with the poorest and most marginalised rural communities (e.g. Knowles 1998). Rural communities, it was suggested, often exhibit a stronger cultural identity than their urban counterparts. As such, it was argued that expatriate development workers can be presented with a greater cultural distance to contend with. The cultural differences evident within less-developed countries add further support to the argument that the value of previous overseas experience is dependent on its relevance to the intended post.

### **3.3.3 Selection on individual circumstances**

In addition to personality traits (which are examined in the following section), individual circumstances have also been linked to effective adjustment. Selmer (2001d) found that adjustment was more effective when the expatriate was older, perhaps as a result of wider life experience and greater ability to deal with change and uncertainty (see also Selmer 2001b). There is also evidence to suggest that the expatriate's family situation is influential in the adjustment process. Here, it is argued that being accompanied by a spouse or partner results in more effective adjustment, perhaps as a result of the practical and emotional support and sense of continuity that the partner brings (e.g. Caligiuri *et al.* 1999). However, being accompanied can be a double-edged sword, as Mendenhall *et al.* (1987) note that the morale and performance of an expatriate can be affected by the inability of family members to adjust to the host culture. Mendenhall *et al.* (1987) continue to propose that the selection process should take account of the ability of the spouse to adjust to the host culture.

The quality of the relationship can also have an effect on the degree of support offered by an accompanying partner. This issue has not received a great deal of research attention in the context of expatriation, although it has been considered in relation to other forms of cross-cultural transition. For example, Naidoo (1985) found that Asian women in Canada exhibited lower levels of stress when their husbands were supportive. The reverse has also been found, with Ataca & Berry (2002) concluding that marital problems were significantly related to ineffective psychological adjustment and general dissatisfaction.

Despite calls for a more comprehensive approach to expatriate selection, it has been suggested that a 'back-to-basics' approach might be more appropriate (Selmer 2001d). In particular, he argues that employees are increasingly reluctant to accept an overseas assignment, citing reasons such as the negative effect of a placement on their spouse's career and poor career prospects upon their return. It is thus contended that selection is more about finding a willing candidate than selecting from a large number of potential candidates.

Although this may be true in the commercial context, NGOs are reported to be frequently inundated with applications for overseas assignments (People in Aid 1997). Consequently, these organisations have to deal with the reality of selecting from a range of applicants. This is perhaps a result of the desire by many individuals to contribute to international development in a 'hands-on' manner. However, this appears to present NGOs with difficulties as many of these applicants do not have the skills, experience or attitudes required for this type of work (People in Aid 1997). This makes it especially important that NGOs employ a comprehensive selection process to ensure that candidates with suitable qualities are selected.

### **3.3.4 Selection on personality characteristics**

The limitations of focusing on technical competence and prior overseas experience have long been recognised, with researchers as far back as 1981 suggesting that a more comprehensive approach to selection should be employed (Guzzo *et al.* 1994; Tung 1981; Zeira & Banai 1987). In line with this view, Mendenhall & Oddou (1985) proposed a multi-dimensional selection process which takes into account behavioural factors, as well as the candidate's career aspirations and the abilities of their spouse and family to adapt to the overseas environment. This model reflects a

more wide-ranging approach that acknowledges the importance of individual characteristics as predictors of adjustment and work performance.

The importance of personality characteristics has subsequently been supported by many other researchers (see for example, Arthur & Bennett 1995; Black 1990; Caligiuri 2000b; Church 1982; Ones & Viswesvaran 1999). At a broad level, Yavas & Bodur (1999) found that an outgoing personality could be linked to effective adjustment. More specifically, Caligiuri (2000b) examined the influence of the 'Big Five' personality characteristics on performance and desire to terminate the assignment. Her findings suggest that personality does help to predict the desire to terminate the assignment and supervisor-rated job performance. In particular, higher levels of extroversion, agreeableness, and emotional stability were found to be significant predictors of the desire to remain in the post, whilst conscientiousness and openness / intellect were not. Conscientiousness was the only 'Big Five' trait found to predict supervisor-rated performance, with greater conscientiousness being predictive of higher supervisor-related performance.

In his work on expatriate business managers in China, Selmer (1999b) found that the use of problem-focused coping strategies could be linked with effective adjustment (adjustment was examined in Chapter Two). Here it is argued that focusing on acknowledging and tackling difficulties during the expatriation period is more conducive to effective adjustment than a symptom-focused approach which emphasises escapism and looking forward to the end of the assignment. Selmer (1999b) went on to associate a problem-focused orientation with specific personality traits including extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and intellectual openness, thus offering limited support for the findings of Caligiuri (2000b). Similarly Gong (2003) found evidence to suggest that possession of a learning-focused goal orientation aided effective adjustment. General self-efficacy and self-monitoring have also been linked to effective adjustment (Harrison *et al.* 1996).

Taking a different perspective, Ward & Chang (1997) argue that it is not the expatriate's personality *per se*, but the degree of difference between the expatriate's personality and the typical host culture personality that influences their ability to adjust. Similarly, Katz & Seifer (1996) argue that the necessary personality traits are contingent on the nature of the job and the degree of cultural separation between home and host country. Tung (1981) echoes the need for a contingency approach to

expatriate selection based on the degree of interaction with host nationals and the degree of similarity between home and host cultures. Further, in their review of literature on the selection of expatriates, Jordan & Cartwright (1998) highlight the value of extroversion as being contingent on host culture personality norms. Thus, it is argued, it is not possible to identify an ideal personality for adjustment, but rather that the desirable personality is contingent on the specific cultural context in which the expatriation takes place. This has implications for selection criteria, as it suggests that different criteria should be used for posts in different locations.

This thesis argues that international development presents an especially challenging expatriation context. The previous chapter (Chapter Two, Sections 2.3 and 2.4) examined the specific challenges faced by development workers. That discussion concluded that additional challenges relating to living conditions, access to support, living in areas experiencing ongoing conflict, attachment to the cause, attitudes toward development workers, intercultural encounters, professional frustration, and engagement in risk-taking behaviours were characteristic of this type of work. To cope with these challenges it can be argued that individuals must possess qualities such as self-efficacy, resilience, self-monitoring and optimism (e.g. McFarlane 2004). The living conditions in less-developed countries can be very different to the home country, with limited access to basic resources. This can present both a physical and emotional challenge, requiring a degree of resilience in order to cope with such conditions. Similarly, limited access to sources of support can also require a degree of resilience together with optimism and self-efficacy in order that the individual can be independent and self-supporting. Resilience is also important in mitigating against the risk of over-identifying with beneficiaries, which can result in a lack of self-care (e.g. Thompson 1997). Beneficiaries do not always value the contribution or presence of development workers, whilst some act in their own self-interest or appear to lack the motivation to help themselves. Development workers consequently need to be able to deal with rejection, requiring resilience, optimism and a sense of self-efficacy in order to continue to value the contribution that they can make to the host community. It may therefore be anticipated that NGOs would make use of criteria linked with effective cross-cultural adjustment, as well as those that can be shown to help the development worker to cope with the specific challenges presented by this type of work.

The preceding argument shows that selecting staff for expatriate assignments is more complex than it is for domestic posts. Not only is it necessary to select on the

basis of professional competence, it is important to take account of an additional range of factors relating to the ability of the candidate to adjust effectively to the host culture and to cope with the specific challenges of development work. Thus, the traditional approach focusing solely upon technical competence is argued to be insufficient, especially when consideration is given to the current trend for participatory development (discussed in Chapter Two) which places less emphasis on the transfer of skills and knowledge and more emphasis on working collaboratively with host nationals. Instead, it is argued that through the application of literature on cross-cultural adjustment, it is possible to identify individual characteristics which have been associated with effective adjustment, willingness to remain in the post, and job performance. When the complexity and challenges of the international development context are considered, it is argued that NGOs would be expected to employ a comprehensive selection process which evaluates not only professional qualifications and experience, but personality characteristics, situational factors, and motivations for wishing to work in development. However, notwithstanding this argument, the selection of expatriate development workers has not previously been examined.

### ***3.4 Cross-cultural training***

Although some might disagree (e.g. McCaffery 1986), it is generally accepted that expatriate staff should receive some form of training. There is an abundance of literature on cross-cultural training, mainly focused upon evaluating its effectiveness. Before examining the role and effectiveness of this training intervention, this section conceptualises cross-cultural training in terms of its content in order to ensure that more specific conclusions may be drawn from the existing literature. In doing so, the limitations of chronological classifications of cross-cultural training evident in some studies are examined and the value of content-based models presented. The training needs of expatriate development workers are then examined, providing a foundation on which to build an evaluation of the role and effectiveness of cross-cultural training in this context.

#### ***3.4.1 A framework of cross-cultural training***

Cross-cultural training may be defined as "any intervention designed to increase the knowledge and skills of expatriates to help them operate effectively in the unfamiliar host culture" (Caligiuri *et al.* 2001:358, see also Brewster & Pickard 1994; Harris &

Brewster 1999; Shumsky 1992 for similar definitions). However, although it is possible to provide such definitions, this should not imply that cross-cultural training is a homogenous entity. Rather, cross-cultural training is a complex concept, incorporating a "range of training types, with varying objectives, methods and ambitions" (Kealey & Protheroe 1996:145). It is therefore important to disaggregate the concept by clearly identifying its component parts, in order that conclusions about its role and effectiveness can be as specific as possible.

Two main approaches to the classification of cross-cultural training are evident in the literature. The first approach is chronological, classifying training inputs according to whether they are delivered before or after arrival in the host country. Perhaps rooted in the "Framework of International Adjustment" which distinguishes between anticipatory and in-country adjustment (Black *et al.* 1991:303), a chronological classification appears popular in the literature. Hence it is common to see studies that focus either on 'pre-departure' or 'post-arrival' interventions, with the former having traditionally received more research attention (Suutari & Birch 2001). Implicit in the literature is the view that most training occurs at the pre-departure stage, whilst at the post-arrival stage interventions are more concerned with socialisation and mentoring.

Classifying training interventions according to the timing of their delivery has logical appeal. It draws a useful distinction between interventions designed to prepare, and those designed to integrate the individual into the new environment. Secondly, it may be reasonable to assume that the point of entry into the new culture signals a change in training objectives. This approach does however suffer from limitations. Firstly, it assumes that 'pre-departure' and 'post-arrival' training are homogenous entities (Kealey & Protheroe 1996), comprising similar content and methods of delivery. Making the assumption that all training delivered at a specific time (pre-departure or post-arrival) is similar seems inappropriate, when one considers the diversity of industries and organisations that utilise expatriate workers, and the range of job roles undertaken by these individuals. This is a view supported by Kealey & Protheroe (1996), who highlight the diversity of approaches to cross-cultural training. They further argue that it is necessary to 'disaggregate' the concept of intercultural training, in order that statements about its effectiveness relate as precisely as possible to specific kinds of training, noting that this is an approach absent in the literature. This would appear to make sense, given the diversity of

training approaches that could be employed. It is certainly not reasonable to assume that what is true of one kind of training holds for other kinds.

A second assumption underpinning a chronological classification approach is that the training interventions under consideration are correctly timed. Assuming that training inputs are being delivered at the optimum time is questionable, given that practical considerations are perhaps likely to dominate any theoretical determination of timing. Selmer *et al.* (1998) have argued for a psychological approach to determining the timing of training inputs. Here, it is suggested that trainees' level of psychological receptivity varies throughout the expatriate situation, and consequently that the type of training offered should reflect the ability and willingness of trainees to engage with the training input. A classification based on the timing of delivery presents further practical difficulties. In reality there is likely to be a duplication of inputs between pre-departure and post-arrival training. Such duplication (reinforcement) may be an integral part of the training programme, and by classifying chronologically, we are not acknowledging continuity of training through the pre-departure and post-arrival stages. Chronological classifications of cross-cultural training are therefore problematic as they do not identify the content or purpose of the training. Consequently such models are not useful in examining the use and effectiveness of such training provision, issues that are important in this study.

An alternative approach classifies training inputs according to their content, and by association, their objectives. Mendenhall *et al.* (1987) focus on the content of cross-cultural training, appearing to suggest that the timing of interventions is not an important consideration. They advocate a three-part model of training comprising cognitive, affective and behavioural components. A similar approach has been advocated by several other researchers (see for example Grove & Torbiorn 1985; Tung 1981, 1982). The framework used in this thesis to examine the use and effectiveness of cross-cultural training interventions by UK-based NGOs (shown in Figure 3.2) is adapted from one proposed by Kealey & Protheroe (1996:146). Here, three components of cross-cultural training are identified; information-based, awareness-based, and skills-based.

**Figure 3.2 Conceptualising cross-cultural training.**

	<b>Information-based</b>	<b>Awareness-based</b>	<b>Skills-based</b>
<b>Focus</b>	Informational	Informational & Skills	Skills
<b>Broad Approach</b>	Cognitive	Cognitive & Experiential	Experiential
<b>Common Techniques</b>	Audio-visuals, reading materials, seminars, project information sessions, lectures	Cultural assimilator audio-visuals, case-studies	Behaviour modelling, role-play, simulation games, video playback, language training
<b>Immediate Outcomes</b>	Resolution of anxieties about practical issues, improved understanding of host country and culture	Increased awareness of skills and behaviours needed for success in host culture	Improved skills in communications, management of transition stress
<b>Overall Outcomes</b>	Adaptation & Effectiveness Skills		

Source: Adapted from Kealey & Protheroe (1996:146) and other sources.

The content-based model of cross-cultural training advocated here addresses the limitations of chronological classifications. This approach recognises the complexity of cross-cultural training provision, and provides a more robust distinction between its various components. Focusing on the objectives of the components of cross-cultural training allows for more precise conclusions to be drawn about their effectiveness.

As with all attempts at classification, a few words of qualification are required. Although distinctions are made between the interventions identified, a certain level of overlap remains, suggesting that the framework should perhaps be viewed as a continuum. In general, it is reasonable to consider that interventions on the left hand side of the table are delivered before those on the right. However, it is important to note that no attempt is made to identify the point at which the expatriate leaves their home country. It is also reasonable to suggest that interventions on the left are more information-based, whilst those toward the right are skills-based, although all interventions may incorporate elements of both.

This chapter now proceeds to consider the training needs of expatriate development workers, before using the content-based model in Figure 3.2 to examine the role and contribution of different types of training.

### **3.4.2 Training needs of expatriate development workers**

The training needs of expatriate development workers are influenced by the recruitment and selection process, as this determines the extent to which the individual matches the requirements of the post. The resource limitations that many NGOs have, together with the operational urgency with which some international development posts must be filled suggest that experienced candidates may be preferred by NGOs. The main benefits of such a strategy are to minimise the training provision that is necessary, and consequently to speed up the appointment process and to minimise costs. If such a strategy is indeed used by NGOs, it would be expected that training provision would focus on the provision of information about the NGO and the specific role to which the individual had been appointed. In such circumstances, the experience of the individual would be expected to provide adjustive capabilities, cultural awareness and sensitivity, and an ability to research a host country in advance of departure.

Assuming that an individual is technically proficient, but lacks experience in international development, a full range of training needs are likely to exist. Again, the individual will require an induction into the organisation, including its history, aims, ethos, structure and culture. This is especially important in international development as it is important that development workers are sympathetic to the philosophy that guides the work of the sending organisation. Detailed information about the specific post for which they have been recruited will also be required. This can be difficult in international development as roles can change significantly, even between appointment and departure. This can present challenges for inexperienced individuals in creating accurate pre-departure expectations, which have been found to form an important part of the adjustment process (e.g. Caligiuri *et al.* 2001).

As argued in Chapter Two, development workers operate in a complex and challenging environment comprising a range of organisations with varying objectives and methods of working (e.g. Fowler 2000; Wood *et al.* 2001). For the inexperienced development worker, an induction into the international development community would therefore be beneficial. This might include an introduction to the history of

international development, the internationally agreed development goals, the key actors in the development community and their methods of working. The benefit of this would be to build their understanding of the broader context in which they will be operating, which would further contribute to the creation of accurate expectations.

Chapter Two (Sections 2.3 and 2.4) argued that development work presents a series of challenges to the adjustment of development workers. Inexperienced development workers would therefore require training that introduces them to norms of behaviour in the host culture, the skills needed to implement these desirable behaviours, the adjustment process that they are likely to experience, and the specific challenges that they are likely to face in the host country. Such training would serve to build awareness of the challenges that they may face, and to develop the skills necessary to cope with these challenges.

In summary, this section has examined the training needs of expatriate development workers within the context of the challenges to their adjustment identified in Chapters One and Two. It was suggested that specific training needs vary according to the recruitment and selection strategy employed by the sending organisation. The limited resources of NGOs and the short lead times between appointment and departure were argued to result in a preference for seeking suitably experienced individuals. In such circumstances a basic level of information-based training may be sufficient in order to brief the individual on the specific task that they will be undertaking, with other training needs having been addressed through the individual's previous experience. For inexperienced individuals, further training needs were identified. These include information about the host culture, the adjustment process, and the skills needed in order to adjust effectively to a host culture. The following sections provide a critical examination of the purpose and effectiveness of different types of cross-cultural training, making use of the content-based framework introduced in Section 3.4.1. This framework is later used to support interpretation of the empirical data.

### **3.4.3 Information-based training**

The provision of information has long been the focus of orientation sessions for expatriate staff, and continues to be widely employed (Kealey & Protheroe 1996; Forster 1997a). In essence it is concerned with providing the kind of basic information that we all want to know about a new job and the practicalities involved,

but that we often take for granted within a domestic context. It is perhaps due to the common-sense basis of this type of input that has resulted in its widespread use, despite limited empirical evidence to demonstrate its effectiveness (Selmer *et al.* 1998). Two types of information-based training are often provided concurrently as a result of shared timing, objectives and methods of delivery. Practical information training is concerned with job-related issues and practical day-to-day issues, whilst area studies addresses wider, societal-level issues relating to the host country. Certainly, these two forms of training are sometimes treated as one, being referred to simply as 'informational training' (see for example, Tung 1981).

### ***Training objectives***

According to the specific forms of information imparted during information-based training (examined below), this intervention appears to combine strategies suggested by Nicholson (1984) for dealing with both the preparatory and encounter phases of work-role transition. Although each training event naturally has its own set of context-specific objectives, several generic objectives are evident in the literature. These are discussed in the following paragraphs.

The motivational state of the expatriate has been linked to psychological adjustment (Black *et al.* 1991), satisfaction and commitment (Ostroff & Kozlowski 1992), and to the overall success of the overseas assignment (Selmer 1998). Having practical issues outstanding is likely to affect the motivation, receptivity, and psychological well-being of the expatriate. Resolving uncertainties and creating realistic expectations prepares the trainee for more advanced training, making them more receptive to such interventions (Kealey & Protheroe 1996).

Upon encountering a new and unfamiliar environment a period of adjustment, or socialisation, will occur (Arnold 1997). During this phase, extensive information-seeking is undertaken by the newcomer. Morrison (1993) identified five types of information that may be sought; technical information, referent information, normative information, performance feedback, and social feedback. It has been suggested that informational training has the ability to shorten the period of adjustment (Kealey & Protheroe 1996), perhaps concentrating the encounter phase by moving some of the early information searching to the pre-departure phase.

It has been argued that individuals undergo a period of anticipatory adjustment prior to experiencing a new situation (Black *et al.* 1991). During this time, expectations are generated about what will be experienced in the new environment. These expectations, it is suggested, are based upon the information that is available to the individual (Caligiuri *et al.* 2001). Hence the provision of information plays an important, although not exclusive, role in the creation of realistic expectations. Based on the theory of met expectations (Porter & Steers 1973), there is some evidence to suggest that realistic expectations formed prior to departure do indeed improve cross-cultural adjustment (Caligiuri *et al.* 2001). These findings therefore offer support for earlier work which suggests that the creation of realistic expectations, through the provision of complete, accurate and timely information, should be a key objective for cross-cultural training (Black & Mendenhall 1990; Black *et al.* 1991). This research is consistent with the more general concept of realistic job previews (RJPs), whereby the provision of information is designed to create realistic expectations, which are then more likely to be met, leading to higher rates of job survival (see for example, Wanous 1973).

Area studies training has similar objectives, providing information about the host country in an effort to reduce anxieties and to facilitate the creation of realistic expectations. However it does so by moving beyond day-to-day practical information, to encompass societal-level issues of structure, development and accepted norms. Hence, the history of the host country is likely to be introduced, along with social, political and economic structures. The national culture and major religions would also be explored (Kealey & Protheroe 1996). The provision of information about the host country and culture helps the trainee to build their understanding of local norms of behaviour, which aids effective sociocultural adjustment. The ability of this form of training to achieve this understanding has some empirical support (see for example Bird *et al.* 1993; Earley 1987).

It was suggested in Section 3.2 that expatriate posts are often used as career development tools in MNCs, whereas this is not the case in NGOs. NGOs therefore tend to seek experienced individuals that are able to make an immediate contribution to the operational activities of the organisation in the host country. Consequently it may be expected that NGOs provide only information that is specific to the post to which the individual has been appointed. This would suggest a focus on 'practical information' training in order to meet basic informational needs relating to the specific post. Such information would allow the individual to prepare for the

post by carrying out appropriate research, gathering resources and creating accurate expectations about their role in the host country. In contrast, 'area studies' training might be expected to be the responsibility of the individual development workers. Experienced development workers might reasonably be expected to be familiar with potential host countries, to be skilled in researching new host countries, or to possess the skills necessary to adapt quickly upon arrival.

### ***Training effectiveness***

Although the provision of practical information has widespread support, a link between the provision of information and work-role performance has not been empirically demonstrated (Kealey & Protheroe 1996). Indeed an early, and frequently cited, study by Tung (1981) concluded that the provision of information alone was not capable of causing substantial changes in attitude, or in personal qualities such as empathy. This, however, should not be entirely surprising, given that these outcomes appear inconsistent with the implicit objectives of such a training approach. Indeed, Kealey & Protheroe (1996:152) acknowledge the limitations of area studies training, concluding that "... while it does enable people to understand the host country better, it does not go very far in equipping them with personal and professional skills to work effectively within that culture". Further, simply providing practical information (and indeed any form of information-based training) does not guarantee success. The information must be accurate, complete, and timely. Consequently, assessments of the effectiveness of cross-cultural training have tended to employ methodologies which emphasise trainees' retrospective self-reported levels of satisfaction with the training received (e.g. Yavas & Bodur 1999).

Kealey & Protheroe (1996:150) have suggested that trainees are "broadly satisfied" with the practical information they receive, whilst area studies has been credited not only with improving factual knowledge about the host country, but also with producing a better understanding of appropriate behaviours (Bird *et al.* 1993). These benefits are not only supportive of trainees' cultural adaptation (Bird *et al.* 1993), but they may also be a valuable precursor to experiential training methods. These findings are further supported by an experimental study by Earley (1987), which found that area studies had a similar (beneficial) impact on overseas performance as experiential-based interpersonal skills training. The study also found that a combination of area studies and interpersonal skills training was particularly

effective in improving overseas performance, especially when area studies preceded the skills training.

Other studies have produced less positive results. A survey of UK expatriates by Forster (1997a) reported criticism of the information provided prior to departure. In particular, the accuracy and completeness of the information was criticised, with expatriates suggesting that some key information had been out-of-date, and had been delivered by trainers who did not have recent experience of the host country. Interestingly, the expatriates' partners in Forster's study consistently reported lower satisfaction with the informational briefings, suggesting that non-work issues were less-well covered. A study of expatriates working in Turkey produced similar findings (Yavas & Bodur 1999). Here, expatriates reported that they were inadequately prepared for the practicalities of daily life in Turkey, having been unaware of the traffic jams, and frequent water and electricity cuts that they would face.

It is therefore clear that the accuracy and currency of information, whether about the role or the host country, is critical to the effectiveness of information-based training. More specifically, inaccurate or out-of-date information can result in the creation of inaccurate expectations, which in turn can lead to dissatisfaction (e.g. Yavas & Bodur 1999) and ineffective adjustment (e.g. Caligiuri *et al.* 2001). This may be argued to be a particular problem in preparing international development workers. Development work takes place in a complex, dynamic and sometimes volatile environment (e.g. Fowler 1998). This can make it especially difficult to obtain the accurate and up-to-date information necessary for effective information-based training. In particular, difficulties in maintaining communications with those working in the field can make it problematic to gather such information. Furthermore, role requirements and host country situations can change between appointment, training and departure, thereby rendering information-based training of limited value. A further complication is the rural-urban divide together with the variation in conditions that is evident in less-developed countries. This means that information is very specific to a locality, and is consequently not easily transferable to other settings even within the same host country. This makes it difficult to ensure that information is relevant to the individual concerned.

This section has critically examined the contribution and effectiveness of information-based training interventions. The literature on information-based training, however, has not specifically focused upon the training of expatriate

development workers. Consequently this raises questions about the use and effectiveness of this form of cross-cultural training in NGOs. This limitation in the literature contributed to the development of the research objective that is introduced at the end of Section 3.4.5.

### **3.4.4 Awareness-based training**

Cultural awareness training is a second form of cross-cultural training described as residing between the pure informational techniques and more experiential approaches (Kealey & Protheroe 1996). Consequently, it seeks not only to provide cultural information, but also to personalise this by enabling individuals to develop a 'feel' for the new culture. It does this typically by using a 'cultural assimilator', a computer-based simulation that allows expatriates to learn appropriate behaviours through a process of trial and error. Hence this approach aims to bridge the information - experiential gap by encouraging the development of appropriate interpersonal skills, although it stops short of employing conventional experiential techniques such as role-play.

#### ***Training objectives***

The purpose of awareness-based training is to provide information about the host culture, and to begin to personalise this through the use of a cultural assimilator. In doing so the trainee is introduced to the host culture and is able to rehearse culturally-appropriate behaviours in a safe and controlled environment. The following paragraphs discuss generic objectives of awareness-based training that are evident in the literature.

Although information-based training is useful in acting as a 'primer' for other forms of training, it does nevertheless seek to impart information about the host country in a fairly impersonal manner. This lack of engagement has led to criticism of such approaches on the basis that they are too passive (McCaffery 1986). However, Selmer (1998) argues that more interactive approaches are inappropriate when the trainee is too far (geographically, psychologically and chronologically) from the host culture. Cultural awareness training aims to bring the host culture to life through the use of experiential training methods (Kealey & Protheroe 1996). Hence trainees are given the opportunity to interact with the host culture in a limited way within a controlled environment, thereby helping to personalise the host culture.

It is likely that at least some expatriates will feel uneasy about the prospect of communicating with host nationals. Whilst informational training helps to a certain extent, having the opportunity to test out behaviours without the risk of offending host nationals is desirable. Hence cultural awareness training, with its mix of informational and experiential approaches, may be "valuable in reducing anxiety about interpersonal contact with members of the host culture" (Kealey & Protheroe 1996:153).

In international development, the ability to interact freely and effectively with host nationals is important as a result of the prevailing participative philosophy of development. This brings development workers into close and frequent contact with host nationals, a factor that has been linked to greater adjustive difficulty (e.g. Navara & James 2002). Furthermore, it was argued in Chapter Two (Section 2.3.1) that development workers are often faced with a high degree of cultural distance between their home and host cultures. This has been associated with greater degrees of adjustive difficulty (e.g. Ward & Chang 1997). Consequently, awareness-based training can be argued to be particularly valuable in this expatriation context.

### ***Training effectiveness***

The effectiveness of cultural awareness training is broadly supported in the literature (Kealey & Protheroe 1996). Early work by Fiedler *et al.* (1971) provided evidence to support the common-sense view that assimilator training is more effective than general area studies training in improving adjustment as it provides an opportunity to interact with the host culture. At around the same time, an experimental study by Worchel & Mitchell (1972) demonstrated a link between cultural assimilator training and improved overseas performance. In 1985, Landis *et al.* conducted an interesting experiment whereby white US males were trained in black US culture. This experiment found support for the use of a cultural assimilator, particularly when its use was followed up with experiential (role-play) training. This finding is consistent with a suggestion made earlier (in Section 3.4.3) that informational training serves a useful role in preparing trainees for experiential training. The combination of didactic and experiential methods has also received support from elsewhere (Earley 1987; Harrison 1992, 1994; Selmer *et al.* 1998), whilst Waxin & Panaccio (2005) found participative training to be more effective than didactic methods. Brislin *et al.* (1983) also favour the use of simulations (which they categorise as an experiential method,

along with role-plays and situation exercises), suggesting that they are especially valuable when implemented in the host country.

Although the use of cultural assimilators is consistent with McCaffery's (1986) assertion that trainees should be treated as independent learners, this approach does suffer from inherent flaws. Firstly, a simulator can not accurately replicate real-life social situations, which are far more complex than can be contained within a short text-based description. Secondly, the trainees are given a list of options from which to choose, a luxury that they will not have in real situations. Thirdly, a simulator can not take account of the different ways in which people will respond to the same situation, with individuals having different perceptions and attitudes (Kealey & Protheroe 1996). Fourthly, cultural assimilators can not reflect the non-homogeneity of the host culture (Kealey & Protheroe 1996), a factor that can be significant in the development context as a result of cultural differences between urban and rural locations in less-developed countries. Fifthly, cultural assimilators have been criticised for their propensity to overemphasise cultural difference, rather than helping to develop behavioural coping abilities (Landis & Brislin 1983). Finally, although a simulator may help trainees to identify appropriate responses, it can not help them develop the skills necessary to make those responses in a real situation (McCaffery 1986). This final criticism reinforces the need to follow awareness-based training with skills-based training to enable trainees to translate their cultural awareness into appropriate behaviours.

Whilst it is clear that the objectives of this form of training remain relevant to expatriate development workers, its limitations also remain. In addition, there are specific practical difficulties that may be argued to influence the effectiveness of awareness-based training for development workers. As the focus of the training moves away from the provision of information, it becomes more time- and resource-intensive. This raises issues in terms of the ability and willingness of NGOs to provide this form of cross-cultural training. In development work, the time between appointment and departure can be short, leaving little opportunity for the provision of awareness-based training. Furthermore, this form of training makes use of cultural assimilators which model the host culture. Such systems may prove costly for NGOs with limited resources as a specific assimilator is required for each host culture. Indeed proprietary assimilators may not be available for the less-developed countries that NGOs principally operate in as they are less likely to be needed by other types of sending organisation. Furthermore, assimilators have been criticised

for failing to deal with cultural variation within host countries (Kealey & Protheroe 1996). This is particularly pertinent in less-developed countries, where there can be significant variation especially between urban and rural areas. In such circumstances, an assimilator may be of limited value if it does not accurately represent the specific host culture that the individual will live and work in.

Previous research, however, has not considered the use or effectiveness of this form of cross-cultural training in the context of international development. Consequently the transferability of such research is uncertain, raising questions about the use and effectiveness of awareness-based training in the context of international development. This led to the development of the research objective introduced at the end of Section 3.4.5.

### **3.4.5 Skills-based training**

The use of skills-based training is consistent with McCaffery's (1986) view that skills are more useful than specific information, enabling the expatriate to function independently and to learn appropriate behaviours once in the host country. Indeed, whilst increased knowledge of a country and culture can facilitate the creation of realistic expectations and reduce anxieties, it can not directly improve work-role performance.

It has been argued that the role of expatriates is changing from knowledge transfer toward collaborative working (Kealey & Protheroe 1996), and indeed this is evident in the international development context. Chapter Two (Section 2.1) argued that the current philosophy of international development emphasises community participation (e.g. Remenyi 2004). This move recognises that development can not be owned and managed by external organisations, but instead is dependent on local ownership and the building of local capacity. The result is that development workers are no longer 'experts' delivering resources and expertise, or imposing agendas or methods of working. Instead they are required to work to understand and involve beneficiaries in a range of ways. In particular this change has led to a closer and more collaborative relationship between development workers and host nationals. It is argued, therefore, that development workers must be culturally aware and sensitive in their relationship with host nationals. Hence intercultural skills training, with its focus on 'learning to learn' as well as adapting existing skills to the local

culture, may be argued to constitute a key element of cross-cultural training for this type of expatriate.

### ***Training objectives***

The purpose of skills-based training is to develop the intercultural skills necessary to be able to live and work effectively in an unfamiliar culture. Such skills are not intended to be culturally-specific, but rather enable the individual to adjust effectively to any host culture. These 'intercultural skills' have been argued to comprise of three elements; adaptation skills, cross-cultural communication skills, and partnership skills (Kealey & Protheroe 1996). Each of these may be considered as an objective for this form of training. These are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Selmer *et al.* (1998) have suggested that introducing trainees to the adjustment process they will experience will help to ensure that the challenge of cross-cultural adjustment is not underestimated. Intercultural skills training seeks to build upon this awareness to develop the personal skills needed in order to cope with the stress of transition. Such skills are required not only by the expatriate, but by their spouse and family too. Mendenhall *et al.* (1987) reinforce the importance of including the expatriate's spouse and family in the cross-cultural training as a result of the impact that their adjustment has on the motivation and performance of the expatriate.

There is plenty of anecdotal evidence to demonstrate the negative effects caused by expatriates employing inappropriate managerial and interpersonal styles (e.g. Kealey & Protheroe 1996). These skills are needed at both professional and personal levels, influencing work-role performance and the general overseas experience respectively. Appropriate skills include the ability to understand, to tolerate and to accept cultural differences. Mendenhall *et al.* (1987) seem to refer to these collectively as 'sensitivity training'. The ability to communicate effectively and sensitively with people from different cultures is vital in international development as this work is often undertaken in emotionally- and politically-charged environments where cultural misunderstandings or insensitivity would have significant consequences for the development worker and their sending organisation.

The prevailing participative philosophy of development (e.g. Remenyi 2004) requires development workers to be able to form a close and collaborative relationship with the host community. The development worker must therefore possess the skills to

break down barriers, empower beneficiaries, and to create the conditions for host communities to take control of their own future. This type of skill is needed primarily at a professional level, helping the expatriate to work effectively as an integral part of the host culture.

These intercultural skills are especially important for development workers as a result of the prevailing participative approach to development and the attendant need to interact freely and sensitively with host nationals. Furthermore, the nature and context of development work can be argued to require adjustive skills rather than the possession of culturally-specific information. As suggested earlier, practical considerations can make it difficult for NGOs to provide training for their development workers. In particular, training based on culturally-specific information is especially problematic in this context as a result of difficulties in obtaining relevant, accurate and up-to-date information. Consequently, it may be argued that the possession of adjustive skills is more beneficial as these allow the individual to adapt to different host countries without the need for culture-specific inputs from the sending organisation. Furthermore, such skills enable the individual to adapt to intra-country differences and to cope with the complex, dynamic and potentially volatile environment in which development work often takes place. However, time and resource constraints may lead NGOs to select on the basis of these skills rather than to develop them through the provision of appropriate training. Therefore, although such skills can be argued to be especially important for development workers, the lack of previous research in this expatriation context means that it is unclear whether these skills are developed through appropriate training or are used as part of the selection process.

### ***Training effectiveness***

There are few studies in the expatriate literature that specifically consider the effectiveness of intercultural skills training, with the majority of work considering the effectiveness of CCT as a whole. One notable exception is a study by Earley (1987) which found that skills-based training was especially effective in improving overseas performance when preceded by area studies training. There are, however, studies that consider the effectiveness issue within a domestic context. An early study by Scorer & Spence (1982) used a longitudinal research design, and found that not only did a programme of behaviour modelling training produce short term improvements in attitude and sensitivity, but that the most improvement was

exhibited some 20 weeks after the training intervention. More recently, Harrison (1992) found that behaviour modelling had a positive effect on trainees' ability to successfully manage a cross-cultural encounter. Interestingly, his results also suggested that the trainees' performance was further improved if the behaviour modelling was preceded by the use of a cultural assimilator. Although these studies offer evidence that skills training can positively influence behaviour, the validity of extrapolating from these results has been questioned (Kealey & Protheroe 1996).

Whilst the literature examined here provides a basis on which to investigate the use and effectiveness of cross-cultural training provision, the studies were not carried out in the context of international development. International development is a distinctive and challenging expatriation context, and therefore the transferability of previous findings to this context is uncertain. The argument presented in this section (Section 3.4) suggested that information-, awareness-, and skills-based training do indeed have objectives that are consistent with the development context and the training needs of development workers. However, questions were raised about the ability of NGOs to provide such interventions.

### **3.5 Chapter summary**

This thesis argues that expatriate development workers operate in a challenging and dynamic environment where failure to adjust effectively to the host culture can have negative consequences both for the individual and the sending organisation. Chapter Two argued that effective adjustment is central to the wellbeing of the development worker, and examined the specific challenges that development work presents. This chapter has argued that the sending organisation has an important role in contributing to cross-cultural adjustment. This contribution is made through the appropriate application of recruitment, selection and cross-cultural training interventions. It was contended that NGOs would be expected to employ a comprehensive recruitment, selection and training package to facilitate the effective adjustment of their expatriate staff. This argument was based on the specific challenges presented by development work. However, it was also suggested that NGOs may be forced to take a more pragmatic approach to their IHRM practices as a result of limited resources, the need to fill posts quickly, and the short lead time between appointment and departure.

However, there was noted to be no published literature that focuses specifically on the recruitment, selection or training of expatriate development workers. This represents a limitation in the existing literature, and raises questions about the way in which NGOs actually recruit, select and train their expatriate development workers. The chapter thus informs the collection, analysis and interpretation of data on the role of sending organisations in this expatriation context.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DEVELOPING THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This thesis evaluates sociocultural adjustment in expatriate development workers. Chapter Two defined adjustment as both an outcome and a process. As an outcome, adjustment is the degree of fit between an expatriate and their environment. As a process, adjustment is the change that leads to greater fit and reduced conflict between an expatriate and their environment. Sociocultural adjustment is a behavioural form of adjustment concerned with the way in which an individual adapts to interactions with host nationals. More specifically, sociocultural adjustment is concerned with the extent to which an expatriate feels comfortable with, and is able to engage in meaningful interactions with, host nationals. Processes of sociocultural adjustment were evaluated through the use of in-depth qualitative data obtained using semi-structured interviews carried out during a two-week field visit to Uganda, East Africa. In evaluating sociocultural adjustment experiences, questions were raised about the role of sending organisations. Consequently, supplementary data was gathered on the role of NGOs as sending organisations in this context, using a postal survey of UK-based operational NGOs. The main research was preceded by a series of exploratory interviews that served to inform the development of the research question.

This chapter begins by revisiting the purpose of the research, before introducing realism as the guiding research philosophy. The role and conduct of a series of exploratory interviews is subsequently explained, before the selection and administration of the research methods used in the study are examined. The chapter concludes with a consideration of the ethical issues involved in the study.

#### ***4.1 The purpose of the research***

The overall aim of this study was to evaluate the way in which expatriate development workers experience processes of sociocultural adjustment. Chapter One argued that it is necessary to examine expatriation in specific and homogeneous groups of expatriates, and to address gaps in previous research by considering under-researched types of expatriate. This study identifies development workers as meeting these criteria. Further, Chapter Two argued that adjustment in the context of international development may be expected to be more challenging as

a result of the characteristics of this type of work and the locations in which it typically takes place. This led to the development of the overall research question that guided the study;

**RQ:** *Why is sociocultural adjustment more challenging in the international development context?*

Four research objectives (labelled RO1 to RO4) were subsequently developed to aid the process of addressing the overall research question. Chapter Two contended that sociocultural adjustment may be more challenging in the context of international development. In particular, cultural distance, access to basic resources, availability of support mechanisms, working in locations of ongoing conflict, the degree of contact with host nationals, the risk of over-identification with host communities, host national attitudes toward development workers and professional frustrations were all argued to contribute to the adjustment challenge faced by development workers. However, there is little previous research that specifically examines the adjustment of development workers, so the first research objective sought to explore the way in which the characteristics of development work and the locations in which it typically takes place influence processes of sociocultural adjustment;

**RO1:** *How does the international development context influence the way in which expatriate development workers experience processes of sociocultural adjustment?*

Chapter Two identified adjustment as both a process and an outcome. As an outcome, it was suggested that four principal outcomes can be derived from where an individual sits on two variables; the extent to which the home culture is maintained, and the extent to which the host culture is accepted. Given the argument that adjustment may be more challenging in the development context, a logical line of enquiry is to examine whether the challenges faced by development workers lead to less positive adjustment outcomes, and whether different individuals reach different outcomes. This led to the second research objective;

**RO2:** *What adjustment outcomes are realised by expatriate development workers?*

Expatriation usually (although not always) takes place in the context of a sending organisation. In the field of international development, NGOs are the sending organisations. Chapter Three examined literature on the role of sending organisations in the expatriation process, and concluded that the challenges of

expatriation demand a comprehensive approach to recruitment, selection and cross-cultural training in order to minimise the risk of failure. However, NGOs operate with a series of resource constraints which may affect their ability to take the approach advocated in the literature. Consequently, the development workers were asked to reflect on the role of their sending organisations in order to begin to explore the way in which NGOs support their development workers. This led to the third research objective;

***RO3: How do expatriate development workers perceive the role of their sending organisation in their adjustment?***

In addressing the third research objective, it became clear that several of the development workers interviewed had received minimal support from a sending organisation, or had received cross-cultural training as part of a voluntary placement earlier in their career. The experiences of these individuals suggested that the process of filling international posts in this context can be somewhat opportunistic, whereas the expatriation literature is normative and prescriptive in nature. This was an unanticipated finding, and raised questions about the extent to which NGOs engage in the comprehensive recruitment, selection and training practices advocated in the expatriation literature. It was therefore decided to gather supplementary data on IHRM practice in a broader sample of NGOs beyond those of the individual development workers interviewed earlier in the study. This was guided by a fourth research objective;

***RO4: How do NGOs recruit, select and train their expatriate development workers?***

In summary, this section has explained the purpose of this study as an evaluation of sociocultural adjustment in expatriate development workers. During the course of the research, the role of sending organisations emerged as a contextual factor and supplementary data on the recruitment, selection and cross-cultural training practices of a broad sample of UK-based NGOs was obtained. Having revisited the purpose of this thesis, the following section gives consideration to the research philosophy that guided the development of this study.

## **4.2 The guiding research philosophy**

This section examines the research philosophy that has guided this study. Research philosophies offer alternative philosophical positions on the meaning and acquisition

of knowledge. It has been suggested that all research reflects a specific philosophy, even if this is not explicitly acknowledged (Grix 2004). In the social sciences, it is possible to discern three main research philosophies; positivism, interpretivism, and realism. This research is guided by the realist paradigm.

#### **4.2.1 Alternative philosophies**

Positivism reflects a natural scientific view which believes that it is possible to separate the world from our knowledge of it. Positivist researchers thus believe that they can objectively observe reality without influencing that reality (Grix 2004). Consequently, research guided by the positivist paradigm seeks objectivity, using scientific methods to make neutral and value-free observations (Robson 2002). Most previous research on cross-cultural adjustment implicitly adopts a positivist stance (e.g. Black & Stephens 1989; Caligiuri 2000b; Selmer 1998; Ward & Kennedy 1999; Yavas & Bodur 1999). Such studies gather standardised data using rating scales designed to measure levels of psychological and / or sociocultural adjustment (see Section 4.4.1 for a discussion of these scales). Statistical techniques are then used to look for relationships between levels of adjustment and one or more factors believed to contribute to effective adjustment. For example, Caligiuri (2000b) examined the effect of the 'Big 5' personality traits on expatriates' desire to terminate their assignment early. Similarly, Black (1990) examined the effect of cultural flexibility, social orientation and willingness to communicate on expatriate adjustment, whilst Harrison *et al.* (1996) examined the relationship between adjustment, self-efficacy and self-monitoring.

Such approaches could have been adopted in this thesis. However, cross-cultural adjustment is a complex and individual process that can not be fully understood in this way. It is further contended that the experiences of individuals can not be fully separated from the way in which the researcher interacts with the respondents. Rejection of a positivist approach to the examination of adjustment experiences suggests that interpretivism may be an appropriate philosophy to guide this thesis. Interpretivism is often discussed in terms of being diametrically opposed to positivism (Grix 2004). Whilst positivists believe in the value of structure and objectivity, interpretivists believe in subjectivity. Interpretivism argues that there are significant differences between the social and natural worlds which preclude the use of scientific method in the context of social research. Interpretivists argue that the world is socially constructed, and that it is therefore not possible to identify an

objective reality (Robson 2002). This tradition also argues that researchers are inherently part of the social reality that they observe, and consequently that an objective and value-free analysis is not possible. This research paradigm appears to be rarely used in studies of cross-cultural adjustment. Peltonen (1998) provides one example in his discourse analysis of expatriates' experiences in relation to their career cycle. More recently, Bikos *et al.* (2007) carried out a naturalistic study into the adjustment experiences of expatriate spouses, whilst Zimmermann *et al.* (2003) adopted a qualitative methodology to examine the adjustment of German expatriates in China.

In examining sociocultural adjustment experiences it is accepted that the researcher can not be fully independent of the participants. However, efforts were made to minimise the researcher effect by maintaining a degree of objectivity in the data collection through the use of semi-structured interviews, an approach that contrasts with the interpretivist philosophy. In addition, a structured approach was later used to gather objective data on the role of NGOs as sending organisations. Here, the researcher contends that it is possible to be independent of the participants through the adoption of appropriate methods. However, it is also acknowledged that there may be discrepancies in the way that IHRM practices are reported by respondents, although the use of a structured approach sought to minimise this. Further, it is recognised that there is a great deal of variation in the characteristics of UK-based NGOs, and that this research is exploratory in nature. It is therefore considered inappropriate to attempt to make law-like generalisations from the findings. Again this reflects a philosophical position that sits between positivism and interpretivism.

#### **4.2.2 Realism as the guiding philosophy for this thesis**

A realist perspective has long been evident in social research and has been used in a variety of disciplines including psychology, management, health, and international studies (Robson 2002). Realism is founded on the belief that there is a reality that exists regardless of our awareness of it. In other words, that there exist both observable and unobservable worlds (Grix 2004). This suggests that as a realist, one believes that surface observations as made by positivists do not provide the full picture. Instead, such observations are argued to be tenuous and susceptible to alternative interpretations (Manicas & Secord 1983). Thus it may be conceived that realism seeks to bridge the divide between positivist and interpretivist philosophies

(Grix 2004) by accepting the role of scientific method whilst concurrently arguing the need to look below the surface of observable events.

Realism accepts that there are differences between natural and social phenomena, and as such accepts that different methods have to be used for different subjects (Robson 2002). Furthermore it has been suggested that realists do not discern any meaningful difference between qualitative and quantitative methods, as both can contribute to the process of sense-making (Mark *et al.* 2000). Realists therefore accept that some things can be researched scientifically, whilst others can not (Grix 2004; Robson 2002). This study uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, reflecting the different subject matters covered by the research objectives.

The theoretical basis of this thesis argues that cross-cultural adjustment is a complex, dynamic and individual process which exists in the minds of the expatriates and can only be 'observed' through their interpretations of their experience. A qualitative approach was thus used to explore the sociocultural adjustment experiences of expatriate development workers (RO1 to RO3) and to gather rich, deep and full data relating to those experiences. The realist paradigm supports the view that the process of adjustment can not be fully understood by surface observations – that "the immediately perceived characteristics of objects, events or social relations rarely reveal everything" (Neuman 2000:77).

As outlined earlier, the research was expanded to examine and analyse the role of NGOs in preparing development workers for overseas assignments. This line of argument suggested that the process of adjustment could be influenced by the recruitment, selection and cross-cultural training practices adopted by NGOs. A quantitative approach was thus used to examine the role of sending organisations (RO4). It is contended that this research objective was best addressed through structured methods. However, it is accepted that there may be discrepancies in the way that the practices are reported, and indeed between those reported and those that are actually implemented. Consequently, the researcher acknowledges that the findings from this part of the study can not be generalised to the wider NGO population. Such generalisation is inconsistent with the realist philosophy.

Having considered the research philosophy guiding this study, the chapter now proceeds to examine the research methods employed. The following section

discusses three sets of exploratory interviews that were carried out to inform the development and refinement of the research question.

### **4.3 *The exploratory interviews***

Several exploratory interviews were conducted alongside the review of literature in order to inform and subsequently refine the purpose of the research. These were carried out in three sets. The first set explored NGO performance, accountability and evaluation with NGO staff responsible for monitoring and evaluation. The second set of interviews examined the nature of expatriation with individuals having experience in international development. The third set of interviews explored approaches to, and attitudes toward, recruitment, selection and training of expatriate development workers by managers in UK-based NGOs. The following three sections (4.3.1, 4.3.2 and 4.3.3) discuss the approaches taken to these interviews and the contribution that the findings made to the development of the research question. Limitations in the number of interviews and the methods of identifying respondents in this exploratory stage are not considered to be significant as these interviews were used early in the study to inform the development of the research question and objectives.

#### **4.3.1 *NGO performance, accountability and evaluation***

The first set of interviews was designed to explore issues relating to performance, accountability and evaluation within NGOs and was carried out at an early stage in the research. To achieve this several UK-based NGOs were identified using judgement sampling. These NGOs were contacted by e-mail, outlining the purpose of the research and requesting an interview with an appropriate member of staff. Two interviews were subsequently arranged with staff responsible for monitoring and evaluation.

Consistent with the exploratory objectives, the interviews were conducted on a semi-structured basis. An interview schedule was used as a prompt for the interviewer, although this was readily deviated from (see Appendix One for the interview schedule). This approach ensured that specific topics of interest were covered whilst maintaining the freedom to pursue alternative directions that arose during the conversations. The interview schedule was devised from early reading of literature relating to NGO and charity management. Specifically, the interviews sought to develop a better understanding of the way in which NGOs demonstrate their

accountability to various stakeholders, approaches and applications of evaluation and the role and importance of performance. Each interview began with an informal (unrecorded) discussion, which served the dual purposes of helping the respondent feel more comfortable, and of helping to clarify the purpose of the interview. Both interviews were tape-recorded with prior agreement from the respondents, and were later transcribed verbatim for analysis.

The findings from these interviews are not explicitly presented as part of the thesis, but were influential in developing the research question. The interviews highlighted the importance of performance in NGOs, and the increasing role that monitoring and evaluation has in this setting. Both respondents emphasised that NGOs are under increasing pressure to demonstrate their performance, citing the expulsion of international NGOs from Rwanda in the 1990s due to their perceived poor performance as the trigger event for this. This led the researcher to examine the Sphere Standards in Aid code of practice, and subsequently the People in Aid code which recognises the importance of staff in international development and seeks to improve HRM practices in NGOs. The association between demand for improved NGO performance and the role of expatriate staff forms part of the rationale for this thesis, which was discussed fully in Chapter one.

#### **4.3.2 The expatriate experience: VSO volunteers**

The second set of interviews explored the experiences of former VSO volunteers in relation to both preparatory training and their time overseas. Colleagues at The University of Northampton were canvassed by e-mail to identify those with relevant overseas experience. This contact identified five former VSO volunteers, all of whom subsequently participated in exploratory interviews.

As part of the exploratory stage, these interviews were conducted on a semi-structured basis and used a convenience sample. This is consistent with the exploratory purpose, whereby the researcher sought to develop a better preliminary understanding of the experience of working overseas in a development context. Again, an interview schedule was used to guide the interviews (see Appendix Two for the interview schedule). This provided a degree of direction to the interviews, whilst allowing the researcher to pursue issues raised by the respondents that had not previously been considered. All five interviews were carried out in the offices of the participants, and were tape-recorded and later transcribed verbatim for analysis.

The interviews explored the respondents' experiences of preparatory training, their perceptions of the value of that preparation, and their reflections on their overseas experience including the challenges they faced and the things that they found easy to deal with. Although the findings are not explicitly reported in the thesis, they helped the researcher to understand the types of training and support that may be provided by sending organisations, and the types of experience that people have when working overseas in a development context. The findings were therefore instrumental in refining the research question by developing a focus on cross-cultural adjustment and the role of the sending organisation in facilitating the adjustment process.

#### **4.3.3 Selection and training of expatriate development workers**

The final set of interviews was designed to identify examples of current expatriate selection and cross-cultural training practice in UK-based NGOs, and to elicit views about the role and value of these IHRM interventions from managers responsible for these activities. Contact with several NGOs known to use expatriate staff was initiated by e-mail, describing the area of interest and requesting an interview with a suitable member of staff. As a result of the e-mail contact, two NGO managers agreed to interviews.

Again a semi-structured format was used, with an interview schedule providing a degree of structure to the interviews (see Appendix Three for the interview schedule). The interviews were tape-recorded with the consent of the respondents, and the tapes were subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis.

The findings from these interviews were used, in conjunction with the review of literature, to develop the data collection instrument for the first part of the main study (discussed in Section 4.4). They were also used as part of the main study, as the respondents gave a good insight not only into current IHRM practices but also the rationale for the approaches used.

## **4.4 Examining sociocultural adjustment in expatriate development workers**

Examination of the sociocultural adjustment experiences of individual development workers was guided by the following research objectives;

***RO1: How does the international development context influence the way in which expatriate development workers experience processes of sociocultural adjustment?***

***RO2: What adjustment outcomes are realised by expatriate development workers?***

***RO3: How do expatriate development workers perceive the role of their sending organisation in their adjustment?***

These research objectives were developed in Chapter Two. The following sections explain and justify the data collection and analysis methods used to address these objectives.

### **4.4.1 Selecting the data collection method**

This study departs from the methods used in previous studies on cross-cultural adjustment by adopting a qualitative approach based on the use of semi-structured interviews. Previous research on cross-cultural adjustment has tended to use quantitative methods to measure levels of both sociocultural and psychological adjustment (Zimmermann *et al.* 2003). Various scales are evident in the literature, although there appears to be a high degree of convergence in recent work. However, to explore expatriate development workers' perceptions of the adjustment process, a qualitative approach was adopted. This decision was taken in response to the criticism that such scales may have limitations in their construct validity (e.g. Zimmermann *et al.* 2003). Others, including Haslberger (2005), have also called for the use of qualitative methods to develop 'thick descriptions' that can aid understanding of the complexities of adjustment. This section begins by critically reviewing the dominant scales used to measure aspects of adjustment, before examining the use of qualitative methods for this purpose and concluding with a justification for the use of semi-structured interviews as the data collection method for this part of the study.

***Previous approaches to measuring psychological adjustment***

As outlined earlier, the majority of previous studies examine adjustment using quantitative methodologies. In relation to psychological adjustment, two scales appear to dominate. The first is the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) (Goldberg 1972). This scale was originally designed to measure minor psychiatric symptoms, but has subsequently been adopted by several researchers in the field of cross-cultural adjustment to measure the subjective wellbeing of expatriates (Arnetz & Anderzen 1992; Nicholson & Imaizumi 1993; Selmer 1998, 2001b, 2005). The scale comprises 12 items (sample item: Have you recently lost much sleep over worry?), with respondents being asked to rate each item on a four point scale from "Not at all" to "Much more than usual". The scale has good internal reliability, with a reported alpha of 0.84 (Selmer 1999a).

A second scale that is often used to measure psychological adjustment is Zung's (1965) self-rating depression scale (ZSDS). This scale was designed to measure symptoms of depression, but has since been used to measure affective, physiological and psychological components of depression in expatriates (e.g. Zung 1965, 1972; Ward & Chang 1997). The scale comprises 20 items, with respondents rating each item on a 4-point scale. Ward & Chang (1997) argue that the scale has a high degree of reliability both internally (with an alpha of 0.82) and across a diverse range of multi-national samples.

***Previous approaches to measuring sociocultural adjustment***

Quantitative techniques have also been used to study sociocultural adjustment. Black (1988) and Black & Stephens (1989) developed a scale based on their 'work, non-work, general interaction' framework of sociocultural adjustment. Unlike those used to measure psychological adjustment, this scale was specifically designed for use with (business) expatriates. The scale comprises 14 items relating to work, interaction with host nationals and general non-work issues. Respondents are asked to rate themselves on each issue using a 7-point scale from "Very unadjusted" to "Completely adjusted". Selmer used this scale in his 1998, 2001b and 2005 studies. In his 2005 study of Western joint venture managers in China, Selmer reported an internal reliability of 0.81 for the items relating to general non-work issues, 0.80 for the items relating to interaction with host nationals, and 0.70 for the items relating to work issues. Harrison *et al.* (1996) also made use of this scale in their study of the relationship between adjustment, self-efficacy and self-monitoring.

Other studies have used variants of the Black (1988) and Black & Stephens (1989) scale. For example, Yavas & Bodur (1999) developed their own 15-item scale based on the adjustment literature. This scale bears a close resemblance to the Black (1988) and Black & Stephens (1989) scale, with elements covering interaction, everyday living, work and amenities / facilities.

Oguri & Gudykunst (2002) make use of Ward & Kennedy's (1999) Sociocultural Adjustment Scale in their study on the influence of self-construals and communication styles on adjustment. This scale contains items relating to different aspects of daily life, and asks respondents to rate the degree of difficulty that they have experienced with each aspect (sample item: Communicating with people of a different ethnic group). The original scale comprises 41 items, rated on a 5-point Likert-style scale. Oguri & Gudykunst (2002) reduced the scale to 39 items, and modified the response mechanism to a 7-point Likert-style scale. They report an internal reliability of 0.95.

### ***Limitations of quantitative approaches***

Although the scales used in previous studies on both psychological and sociocultural adjustment have been shown to have a high degree of internal reliability with alphas between 0.70 and 0.95, the construct validity of such scales has been questioned (e.g. Zimmermann *et al.* 2003). Further evidence comes from Oguri & Gudykunst (2002), who tentatively concluded that psychological and sociocultural adjustment are predicted by different sets of variables when psychological adjustment is operationalised as the degree of depression or mood disturbance, but that the same set of variables predicts both types of adjustment when psychological adjustment is operationalised as satisfaction in the host culture. This suggests that the way in which adjustment constructs are measured is significant, and that existing scales appear to measure different aspects of adjustment. Thus it may be argued that existing scales do not adequately take account of the complexity of adjustment constructs. It may further be argued that asking specific questions may lead respondents to give undue emphasis to issues that they may otherwise have considered to be unimportant. It is this stance, together with the exploratory objectives of this research which led to the decision to use a qualitative approach for this part of the study. However, it is acknowledged that in qualitative approaches the role of the researcher is central to the avoidance of such forms of bias.

There are limited examples in the adjustment literature which employ qualitative methods. Perhaps the most notable exception is a study by Zimmermann *et al.* (2003) which explored adjustment modes used by German expatriates in China. Zimmermann *et al.*'s methodology was predicated on the argument that adjustment should be investigated in a way that uncovers the issues that the expatriate perceives to be significant. A qualitative methodology, they argue, enables the process of adjustment to be better understood as the respondents are able to make the links between actions and outcomes rather than such links being examined statistically during data analysis. A second study which made use of qualitative methods was by Peltonen (1998). This study used discourse analysis in an attempt to understand the ways in which expatriates talk about their cross-cultural experiences in terms of their career development. More recently, Bikos *et al.* (2007) employed a mixed method approach involving the use of questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Their longitudinal study was facilitated by the researchers' status as female expatriate spouses.

### ***The use of semi-structured interviews***

The use of semi-structured interviews to examine sociocultural adjustment experiences addresses the limitations of quantitative approaches identified earlier in this section. Semi-structured interviews are one of several types of qualitative interview (Sarantakos 2005), and are one of the most commonly used approaches to qualitative interviewing. The use of semi-structured interviews offered several benefits for this study. Of particular relevance are the flexible nature of the approach, its recognition of the primacy of the respondent, its openness to change during the research process, and the ability to study reality as it is manifested in everyday life (Robson 2002; Sarantakos 2005). It was considered important that the research method did not introduce specific adjustment issues, but rather that issues of importance to the respondents should be uncovered and explored. Semi-structured interviews enabled respondents to take ownership of the process, and permitted them to discuss aspects of their experience that were significant to them. The semi-structured format also provided the flexibility needed to deal with the variety of respondents in terms of their backgrounds and work settings. Notwithstanding the flexible approach to interviewing that was adopted, the conceptualisation of sociocultural adjustment as a behavioural form of adjustment concerned with the way in which an individual adapts to interactions with host nationals acted as a guiding framework for the formulation of prompts, probes and follow-up questions. Maintaining a degree of consistency between interviews was

important to enable comparison between respondents and the subsequent identification of themes.

In common with all approaches to data collection, the use of semi-structured interviews does suffer from limitations. The main limitations derive from the flexible nature of this form of interview and the role of the interviewer in the process. The lack of a standard format for the interviews raises issues of reliability, in the sense that different researchers might obtain different data from the same respondents simply by conducting the interview differently (Easterby-Smith *et al.* 2002). This may be countered by arguing that the flexibility and responsiveness of the approach offers important benefits in terms of the ability to explore the issue(s) of interest in a comprehensive way. In any case, the realist philosophy guiding this research accepts that replicability in such studies as this is limited (Robson 2002).

The flexible approach to interviewing, with its attendant lack of standardisation, also raises issues of validity (Saunders *et al.* 2003). In this context, validity can be affected by the way in which questions are framed and follow-up probes used. The role of the researcher is significant here, and a failure to build trust and rapport with the respondents may result in only a partial picture being painted by the respondents. This may result in the issues of concern not being fully revealed. Interviewer bias is also a potential limitation, with the appearance or behaviour of the interviewer having an impact on the responses given. These factors can result in a failure to establish trust, or may give rise to social desirability bias.

However it is argued that as an exploratory study, a greater importance should be placed on maintaining the flexibility to examine the complex and dynamic concept of cross-cultural adjustment rather than on designing a study that seeks to generalise to the entire development worker population. Certainly, there is no intention to be able to generalise from the findings. Based on an acknowledgement of the potential limitations of this data collection method, various actions were taken to minimise the incidence and effect of data quality issues. These included efforts to establish rapport with the respondents, and taking care not to pass judgement on anything said during the interviews.

#### 4.4.2 Administering the semi-structured interviews

Having considered the selection of semi-structured interviews as the data collection method for this part of the study, this section explains the process by which the interviews were carried out.

##### ***Sampling***

It is sometimes suggested that qualitative researchers do not use sampling methods to select their participants (Sarantakos 1997). However, this idea somewhat undermines the credibility of qualitative studies. Sarantakos (1997) argues that qualitative researchers simply apply sampling procedures that are consistent with the qualitative philosophy. Indeed, Patton (2002:230) notes that "perhaps nothing better captures the difference between quantitative and qualitative methods than the different logics that undergird sampling approaches ... Not only are the techniques for sampling different, but the very logic of each approach is unique because the purpose of each strategy is different".

This generally means that qualitative researchers use some form of non-probability sampling, although variations on probability methods may also be used (Sarantakos 1997). Some researchers specify their sample before data-collection begins, based on existing theory. Others use 'theoretical sampling', whereby the sample is chosen progressively during the data collection process. Patton (2002) argues that the underlying principle of sampling in qualitative research is the selection of information-rich cases that fit the purpose of the study and the available resources. This, it is suggested, can be achieved with purposive sampling. Patton (2002) identifies fifteen variants of purposive sampling:

**Table 4.1 Variants of purposive sampling.**

Extreme or deviant case sampling
Intensity sampling
Maximum variation sampling
Homogenous sampling
Typical case sampling
Critical case sampling
Snowball sampling
Criterion sampling
Theory-based sampling
Confirming and disconfirming cases
Stratified purposeful sampling
Opportunistic or emergent sampling
Sampling politically important cases
Convenience sampling

**Source:** Adapted from Patton (2002: 243-4)

In this study a combination of snowball and opportunistic sampling strategies was used. During a two-week visit to Uganda, East Africa, semi-structured interviews were conducted with expatriate development workers identified using a snowballing approach. The researcher was fortunate to have a contact in a local university, who had previously worked with international aid agencies. She was able to provide some initial leads, and from there each respondent was asked to suggest other expatriates to contact. This method proved to be very effective in this context, as the local expatriate community was very close-knit. Snowball sampling is argued to be effective in identifying information-rich informants (e.g. Patton 2002), and was used by Bikos *et al.* (2007) in their study of female expatriate spouses in Turkey. Potential respondents were contacted in advance by telephone and a time and location arranged for the interview. All respondents contacted readily agreed to an interview.

On return to the UK, further interviews were sought. Here it was found to be much more difficult to locate suitable respondents, so an opportunistic strategy was used. Two organisations that provide training for development workers were contacted and requests made to promote the research at their training sessions. One organisation agreed to allow leaflets to be left at their resource centre which development workers have access to during workshops. The other agreed to post a flyer promoting the research on their website. Leaflets detailing the purpose of the

research were subsequently produced and sent to the first organisation, and an electronic copy sent to the second organisation. Potential respondents were asked to contact the researcher for more information. Enquiries were received by email and the suitability of potential participants verified by a short exchange of emails. The interviews carried out in the UK were completed via email (see later in this section for more on this process).

This study focuses on expatriate development workers. However, the term 'development worker' can be interpreted in different ways, and indeed development work is undertaken through a variety of organisations. Consistent with the argument in Chapter One (Section 1.2.1) that it is important to study homogeneous groups of expatriates, and to be clear about the type of expatriate under consideration, care was taken when selecting participants for this part of the research. To be eligible, participants therefore had to meet the following criteria;

First, participants had to be expatriates. Pragmatic considerations led to this being applied in a flexible manner, with no distinction drawn between UK nationals and third-country nationals. Nevertheless, the majority of participants were in fact UK nationals, with the remainder being nationals of other Western countries. This gave a degree of consistency in terms of the cultural distance between the participants' home and host countries.

Second, participants had to be development workers. This was operationalised as the participant being attached to an NGO, which by definition is engaged in activities pursuant to the objectives of international development. Potential participants attached to governmental or commercial organisations were specifically excluded from this study.

Third, participants had to be employed by their sending organisation. This criterion was used to distinguish between professional development workers and the many volunteers that engage in similar activities. This was considered an important distinction as volunteers can be argued to have a different motivation for engaging in development work, usually undertake relatively short placements before returning home, and may receive a different type of support from their sending organisation.

In determining the number of participants required for a qualitative study, Patton (2002:244) suggests that there are no rules, contending that sample size is

dependent on "what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources". In some circumstances, it is contended that a sample size of one is sufficient. Patton (2002) cites several examples of such studies, including Park's (2001) case study of her autistic daughter. Morse (1994) however, notes that at least six participants should normally be used when one is trying to understand the essence of experience. Mindful of such advice, this part of this research comprised eleven interviews. This compares favourably with the 18 expatriates that Zimmermann *et al.* (2003) interviewed. The sample size for this stage of the research can, of course, be criticised. However it is contended that the sample size is consistent with the exploratory purpose of the study, and the acknowledgement that there is no intention to generalise from the findings. Further, the series of interviews had reached a point of saturation, with the later interviews ceasing to identify issues that had not already been noted by earlier respondents.

### ***Conducting the interviews***

The interviews conducted for this part of this research were semi-structured. In line with convention, an interview schedule was used to aid the researcher (see Appendix Five for the interview schedule). This approach allowed key topics to be covered with each respondent, whilst enabling interesting ideas to be explored more fully (Patton 2002). It also allowed the researcher to deviate from the guide to pursue lines of enquiry that had not been anticipated, and to remove questions considered inappropriate to specific respondents (Robson 2002). The interviews conducted in Uganda were face-to-face, whilst those carried out in the UK were email interviews.

The interview schedule was developed from the extant literature and comprised five core topics; professional background, current post, preparation for the current post, initial reactions to the host country, and adjustment experiences. A loose chronological structure was adopted to encourage participants to reflect upon their experiences in a logical manner. The schedule began by exploring how the participants had come to be in their present post. This covered their professional background, the nature of their present post, and the role of their sending organisation in preparing them for the post. The aim was to be able to contextualise the participants' adjustment experiences by understanding the way in which they had been recruited and selected for their post, and the type of preparation and support that they had engaged with. These topics were informed by the literature on

expatriate recruitment, selection and cross-cultural training reviewed in Chapter Three which identified existing approaches to these activities.

The main interview topics centred on exploring the participants' initial reactions to the host country and their subsequent adjustment experiences. Although the use of existing adjustment scales was rejected (see Section 4.4.1), their underlying principle of examining the degree of difficulty with different aspects of the adjustment experience informed the development of the interview schedule. This is consistent with the operationalisation of the process and outcome of sociocultural adjustment explained in Chapter Two (Section 2.2.5). Consequently detail was sought about aspects of life and work in the host country that were found to be easy and challenging, together with reflections on the relationship with home and host nationals. Therefore although the researcher was informed by previous adjustment research, it was considered important not to impose specific ideas from different expatriation contexts and consequently it was a conscious decision to adopt a fairly broad questioning style. The flexible nature of semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to be responsive to each participant's circumstances. Consequently each interview was conducted slightly differently. For example, when exploring pre-departure training it transpired that some respondents had travelled independently, and the researcher was able to refocus these interviews to discuss individually-directed preparatory activities. Hence it was inevitable that earlier interviews indirectly informed later interviews, although this was not a conscious decision.

The interviews were conducted in a variety of locations, to suit the respondents. Some were conducted very informally (e.g. sitting outside in the sun), others took place in more formal office settings, whilst others still were conducted in the dining room of the researcher's guesthouse. Regardless of location, all respondents appeared to be comfortable with speaking openly about their experiences.

With the permission of the respondents, each interview was tape recorded. The tapes were later transcribed verbatim by the researcher for analysis. The interviews lasted for between 30 and 90 minutes, with most lasting for around 60 minutes. The email interviews were the equivalent of approximately 75 minutes, based on the amount of text received. Field notes were made as soon as possible after each interview to capture observations and reflections on non-verbal communications and (where possible) the respondents' workplace. Naturally this was not possible with the email interviews.

The use of email interviews is not well documented in the literature, although Sarantakos (2005) has recently acknowledged this as a legitimate data collection method. The interviews in this study were carried out on an asynchronous basis, with several days passing between responses. Each email posed between 2 and 3 questions to the respondent. The asynchronous nature of the communication meant that the respondents had the opportunity to consider the questions and their responses before sending them. Sarantakos (2005) notes that this can have both positive and negative consequences. The positive view is that the responses may be more considered, and grammatically accurate. The negative view is that this loses the spontaneity of response received in face-to-face interviews. By posing a small number of questions each time, the respondents were encouraged to provide fairly detailed answers. This staged approach also allowed for questions of clarification to be asked more readily. The benefit of this method was that access could be gained to respondents who were geographically remote from the researcher. Although in this study the majority of the interviews were carried out face-to-face interviews, the use of email interviews in future studies with development workers has great potential.

#### **4.4.3 Analysing the interview data**

The interview data was analysed using a form of thematic analysis consistent with Crabtree and Miller's (1992) 'editing' approach. Boyatzis (1998) introduces thematic analysis as a systematic process of encoding qualitative data, using codes to identify themes. A theme, he explains, is a pattern in the data generated either inductively from the data, or deductively from theory or previous research. This approach enabled the reporting of key elements of the participants' experiences, offering 'thick descriptions' of their sociocultural adjustment (Patton 2002). In doing so the researcher was able to tell the 'story' from their perspective whilst simultaneously dissecting these accounts in order to extract broader meanings (Green and Thorogood 2005). The analytical process began with the transcription of the interview tapes. As King (1994) notes, there is no satisfactory alternative to having complete and accurate transcripts to work with. Consequently, the researcher completed the transcription process personally, both to ensure the quality of the transcripts and to begin the process of immersing himself in the data. Further immersion in the data followed, including both reading and re-reading the transcripts and listening back through the interview tapes.

Following the 'editing' approach, each transcript was re-read and themes associated with sociocultural adjustment identified in the data. In identifying themes, the researcher was informed by previous research on sociocultural adjustment, although the themes were ultimately induced from the transcripts. In a practical sense this meant a focus on aspects of the participants' experiences associated with their relationship with host nationals along with their adjustment outcomes. Here, the researcher examined the transcripts in particular for evidence of the way in which participants interacted with host nationals and with other expatriates. Themes that ultimately emerged related to intentions and subsequent efforts to integrate with host nationals, interactions with host nationals in a non-work context, the nature of the relationship with host nationals, frustrations and barriers to interactions with host nationals, intentions and efforts to escape from the host culture (e.g. by staying in or spending more time with other expatriates), and contextual factors that may have influenced the ability and willingness to integrate with the host community. Examples were also sought that illustrated particular challenges and breakthroughs in developing the relationship with host nationals. These themes identified the importance and interconnectedness of the relationship with host nationals and with other expatriates, as well as specific factors that influenced these relationships in this context. The themes subsequently informed the development of the model of sociocultural adjustment presented in Chapter Seven.

In summary, this section has detailed the methods used to examine the sociocultural adjustment experiences of expatriate development workers. As an exploratory study, semi-structured interviews and a flexible analytical approach were used. This was considered important to enable the issues of importance to this specific type of expatriate to emerge.

#### **4.5 Examining the role of the sending organisations**

The experiences of individual development workers suggested that a limited role is played by sending organisations in this context. This is inconsistent with the expatriation literature, and thus the research was broadened to examine recruitment, selection and training practice in a wider sample of NGOs. This section develops the methodology used to address the final research objective;

***RO4: How do NGOs recruit, select and train their expatriate development workers?***

The development of this research objective was explained in Chapter Three. The following sections explain and justify the data collection and analysis methods that were used to address this research objective.

#### **4.5.1 Selecting the data collection method**

The research aimed to examine the role of NGOs as sending organisations by gathering data on expatriate recruitment, selection and cross-cultural training practice. This called for a survey approach to data collection, primarily as a consequence of the need to seek data from a potentially large and geographically diverse population. There is, however, a range of methods that may be classified as survey approaches (Saunders *et al.* 2000). This study adopted a postal questionnaire, one of the main instruments for gathering data in social science research (Bryman & Bell 2007).

As already noted, the chosen method should reflect the type of data required. For this part of the study, the data sought was capable of being readily operationalised as discrete variables. As a result, extensive use could be made of closed questions, which is consistent with the most effective design of a self-completion questionnaire (Bryman & Bell 2007). Further, a questionnaire approach enabled this data to be gathered in a standardised format, minimising coding and analysis difficulties.

Postal questionnaires are recognised as the most convenient format for the respondent (Bryman & Bell 2007). NGO staff are often under immense time pressure, with the result that requests for participation in research are (quite understandably) not given priority. It was therefore considered important that the data collection instrument employed should impose as little as possible upon the respondent. Hence, although the use of structured telephone interviews remained a possibility, this method was dismissed as it would require respondents to be available for a set period of time, whereas a postal questionnaire may be completed at a time and pace chosen by the respondent (Bryman & Bell 2007).

Although the advantages of the postal questionnaire made it a suitable tool for this part of the study, the approach is not without its limitations. There are several criticisms of postal questionnaires, some of which are appropriate within the context of this study.

Perhaps the main limitation of the postal questionnaire is the notoriously low response rate often achieved (Bryman & Bell 2007). However, it has been suggested that higher response rates may be achieved when the topic of the research is of interest to the respondents (Greer *et al.* 2000). As Bryman and Bell (2007:244) note, "Respondents may be highly tolerant of questionnaires that contain many questions on topics that interest them". Based on the enthusiasm shown by respondents during the exploratory interviews, the researcher was confident that this research was of interest to NGO training staff. Additionally, many techniques have been suggested to improve questionnaire response rates. These range from writing a good covering letter and including a stamped addressed envelope (Bryman & Bell 2007), to making prior contact with respondents and offering various monetary or non-monetary incentives (Saunders *et al.* 2000). The steps that the researcher took to maximise the response rate are outlined in Section 4.4.2.

It has been suggested that there is a greater risk of missing or incomplete data when using postal surveys. This can occur as a result of respondents not understanding questions, or because they feel that certain questions are irrelevant. This problem is exacerbated because the researcher is not present to prompt or probe the respondent (Bryman & Bell 2007). In this study the respondents are professionals, so it was considered reasonable to expect them to be capable of following a well-constructed questionnaire. The research topic was also shown to be of interest and relevance to NGO training staff during the exploratory interviews. The pre-testing procedure used is outlined in Section 4.5.2.

#### **4.5.2 Developing and administering the postal survey**

The development of self-completion questionnaires is not as easy as it may first appear (Bell 1999; Oppenheim 1992). There are many issues to consider, ranging from the design of individual questions and the layout of the questionnaire form (e.g. Saunders *et al.* 2000), to techniques for maximising the response rate (e.g. Bryman & Bell 2007). A copy of the questionnaire is provided in Appendix Four.

Before proceeding it is necessary to note that the focus of this study evolved during the research process. The original intention had been to examine the role of the sending organisations in more detail, and for this to have played a more significant part in the overall study. A cross-national comparison of NGO practice in managing

expatriate development workers was planned, with the survey of UK-based NGOs acting as a pilot for this. Consequently, the postal survey gathered more data than has been reported in this thesis. However, the limited number of operational NGOs (those that use expatriate development workers) together with the low response rate achieved with the UK sample meant that this would have had limited value. This contributed to the decision to use the exploration of NGO practice as supplementary data.

### ***Developing the questionnaire items***

Consistent with the original purpose, the questionnaire items aimed to elicit a comprehensive account of the way in which NGOs manage their expatriate development workers.

The questionnaire items did not directly follow those used in previous studies. This decision was taken due to the distinctive nature of the NGO context, whereby it was concluded that the use of items developed for commercial sending organisations would risk imposing an unsuitable framework that may distort the data received. Instead, development of the items was informed by the extant literature (reviewed in Chapter Three) and the exploratory interviews with NGO HR managers (outlined in Section 4.3.3). For example, organisational demographic data was heavily context-specific. The result was that the items were appropriate for this type of sending organisation, an assertion that was endorsed during the pre-testing that took place with a former VSO trainer and an NGO HR manager (the pre-testing process is outlined later in this section). It is, however, acknowledged that the development of context-specific items limits the extent to which it is possible to relate the findings to those from previous studies.

Four principal themes were covered in the questionnaire; organisational demographics, the use of expatriate development workers, recruitment and selection practice, and cross-cultural training practice. Organisational demographics were established through the identification of several characteristics; income (distinguishing between that received from governmental sources and that received from other sources), the number of staff (distinguishing between full- and part-time staff, and between paid staff and volunteers), geographic locations of activity, and types of activity. These themes were selected to identify NGO characteristics that may be argued to influence IHRM practice. For example, level of income reflects the availability of resources which can be argued to influence the ability to engage in

comprehensive approaches to recruitment, selection and training. Similarly, the number of staff and number of expatriates may be indicative of the viability of developing formal approaches. Respondents were initially asked whether they used expatriate development workers in order to establish their eligibility for inclusion in the study. Subsequent items developed this theme, seeking more detail about the number of such staff, the roles for which expatriate staff were used, and the duration of overseas posts. Recruitment methods, and selection criteria and methods were examined through items that sought to identify their use and importance. Cross-cultural training practice was explored in relation to the content and timing of training provision, training methods employed, approaches to training evaluation, and attitudes toward the role and value of such provision.

### ***Designing the questionnaire form***

Careful attention was given to the general layout and presentation of the questionnaire and accompanying materials. Given that the questionnaire sought to elicit data across a number of themes, it was felt to be important for response rates and accuracy of completion that this area received sufficient attention. Various sources of advice were reflected upon in order to learn from prior experiences (e.g. Oppenheim 1992). In light of this, particular attention was given to the wording of the items, clarity of the instructions and response options, and the general appearance of the form.

### ***Pre-testing***

It is good practice to pre-test questionnaires before administering them on the final sample. This testing may be carried out in three stages; informal testing with friends and colleagues, informal testing on an individual basis with representatives from the population of interest, and formal piloting (Robson 2002). This questionnaire was subjected to two stages of testing. The draft questionnaire was initially tested with 'informed colleagues', including the Director of Human Resources at The University of Northampton, the OB / HRM Division Leader at The University of Northampton, and a former Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) trainer. Feedback from this process identified a small number of issues with terminology that may be misinterpreted in the context of international development. After making suggested revisions, the questionnaire was tested with an HR manager from a UK-based NGO before being administered.

### ***Sampling***

The population of interest for this part of the study was UK-based operational NGOs that use expatriate development workers (see Chapter Two for a discussion of the different types of NGO). Some studies are able to draw upon large, ready-made sampling frames (e.g. electoral registers, telephone directories, and so forth) (Oppenheim 1992). Although a 'perfect' sampling frame could not be located for this research, a good alternative was found. British Overseas NGOs for Development (BOND) is a well-respected network of UK-based organisations specifically involved in overseas relief and development activities. It claims to be the UK's "broadest network of voluntary organisations working in international development" (BOND 2002), and its credibility is reflected in the number and status of organisations that have chosen to become members. Furthermore it is recognised by DfID, the UK Government's Department for International Development.

This sampling frame has two main limitations. First, it is known to contain non-operational NGOs - NGOs that are engaged in fundraising or advocacy which therefore do not use expatriate development workers. This could have been mitigated against by implementing a screening process to filter out non-operational NGOs. Consideration was given to reviewing the internet sites of BOND members to determine whether they used expatriate staff. However, a short trial review of several members' sites revealed that methods of operation are seldom explained in sufficient detail to draw reliable conclusions in this regard. The use of direct contact through telephone or email was rejected as being disproportionately time-consuming due to anticipated difficulties in gaining access to an individual that could answer the enquiry authoritatively. The result was that the questionnaire would be sent to some NGOs that would not be able to complete it, which would not affect the quality of the data received (although non-response by such organisations would artificially impact on the response rate). The second limitation is that as a voluntary network there is no compulsion for NGOs to join, meaning that there may be organisations within the population of interest that are not BOND members. The researcher manually checked the membership list and was satisfied that all of the major operational NGOs were members, although naturally this was not an objective evaluation of the database. The BOND membership list was therefore used as the sampling frame for this part of the study, which at the time of data collection contained 215 organisations.

Although it has been suggested that it is not usually realistic to survey an entire population (Bryman & Bell 2007), such an approach is sometimes feasible (Saunders *et al.* 2000). This part of the study adopted a census approach, as a sample size of 215 organisations is well within the capabilities of a postal survey. It was also felt that any attempt at sampling would risk eliminating operational NGOs from the final sample, which would have an adverse effect on the quantity of data received.

#### **4.5.3 Analysing the survey data**

As noted in the previous section, not all of the items included in the original questionnaire were used in the final analysis. Therefore it was necessary, before commencing the data analysis, to decide which items to discard for the purpose of this part of the study. This decision was driven by the final research objective (RO4) which sought to broaden the examination of adjustment experiences at the individual level by providing an insight into the role of sending organisations in this expatriation context. Consequently, the decision was taken to focus on three key themes; recruitment practice, selection practice and cross-cultural training provision. This is consistent with previous studies that have sought to examine the role of sending organisations by focusing on these aspects of IHRM practice (e.g. Katz and Seifer 1996; Shen and Edwards 2004). These themes were also evident in the adjustment experiences of the individual development workers.

The questionnaire made significant use of closed questions, which allowed the response options to be pre-coded. These were used to identify aspects of recruitment, selection and training practice, whilst open questions were used to allow respondents to explain or elaborate upon their answers. In line with convention, a coding book was produced to ensure accurate and consistent coding of the data from the few open questions that were used. Particular attention was also paid to ensuring clear differentiation between 'not applicable' and 'don't know' responses. Two types of open question were contained in the questionnaire: those that called for short answers, and those that asked the respondent to elaborate upon or explain answers to certain closed questions. Responses to 'short answer' questions were coded for inclusion in the SPSS data file. Responses to 'long answer' questions were not coded at this stage. Each useable questionnaire was given an identification number to enable the accuracy of data inputting to be checked and any errors to be quickly and easily rectified.

The coded data was inputted into SPSS Version 10.1 for analysis. Standard techniques for error checking were carried out, including manual checking and the use of maximum / minimum values to identify 'out of range' data (e.g. Pallant 2005).

Consistent with the purpose of this part of the study, descriptive statistics were used to examine the use and reported effectiveness of recruitment methods, the use and reported importance of selection criteria and the use and reported effectiveness of cross-cultural training.

#### **4.5.4 Response rate**

The postal survey was sent to all 215 members of the BOND (British Overseas NGOs for Development) network. After follow-ups a total of 89 responses were received, giving a response rate of 41%. However, of these replies only 26 reported using expatriate staff, giving a usable response rate of 12%. Whilst the usable response rate is somewhat disappointing, it is reflective of the limitations of the sampling frame (acknowledged in Section 4.5.2). The principal limitation confirmed by the usable response rate is that the BOND membership directory contains non-operational NGOs (i.e. those engaged in fundraising and / or advocacy, and that consequently do not use expatriate staff). This does not affect the quality of the data obtained, but does limit the ability to generalise from the findings.

This section has detailed the methods and process employed to examine the role of NGOs as sending organisations. The following section turns attention to the ethical issues associated with the study, and explains the way in which these were addressed.

### **4.6 Ethical considerations**

It is important to consider a number of ethical issues when designing, conducting and disseminating a programme of research. Although a variety of checklists exist, the fundamental principles of ethical research in the social sciences emphasise the importance of establishing the value of the study, ensuring that respondents participate on the basis of informed consent, that confidentiality is assured, and that the rights, safety and wellbeing of respondents are maintained (e.g. Robson 2002).

This study followed the general guidelines set out by the British Psychological Society (BPS 2004).

According to Robson (2002) a key point of departure is to establish the intrinsic value of the study in order to justify the engagement of research participants in the process. A clear rationale for this study was set out in Chapter One. There, it was argued that this study is of both theoretical and practical value in contributing to our knowledge of expatriation in a challenging and yet previously under-researched context. The findings from the study have the potential to inform the way in which future expatriate development workers are prepared and supported by their sending organisations, thereby offering potential benefits for these stakeholder groups. The researcher was therefore confident that it was ethically sound to engage respondents in the study. The research adopted a mixed method approach, with each method raising specific ethical issues.

#### **4.6.1 Semi-structured interviews**

The researcher took care to ensure that no harm was caused to participants. Examining adjustment experiences is inherently personal and it was possible that the research may have uncovered sensitive issues, especially if the participant had experienced difficulties. For example participation in an interview may have given individuals an outlet to express feelings that had previously been suppressed. Had this occurred, the research could have caused harm to the participant(s). The researcher responded to this risk by using questions and probes that were deliberately broad in nature. This allowed participants to discuss their adjustment experiences without feeling pressured to reveal aspects of their experience that they were unwilling to share. Where they were guarded, for example in the case of John who referred to 'some nasty incidents', it was clear that he did not want to elaborate so the researcher did not probe further on that point. In this sense, the interviews were not dissimilar to the kind of conversation that participants may have had with their friends during informal 'debriefing' sessions. Indeed the researcher was able to establish rapport with the participants in the face-to-face interviews as a result of being of a similar age and background, which helped them to feel comfortable and able to share their experiences freely. The use of a broad questioning style together with sensitive use of probing sought to minimise the risk of causing harm to the participants.

Participants gave their informed consent to be involved in the study, and were offered multiple opportunities to withdraw this consent. Potential participants in the semi-structured interviews were identified by a combination of personal contact and snowballing (see Section 4.4.2). The researcher initially telephoned potential participants to explain the purpose of the research and to request an interview. At this point individuals had the opportunity, having been made aware of the purpose of the research and the form that their participation would take, to decline to participate. All individuals contacted readily agreed to participate in an interview, thereby giving their informed consent. Furthermore, the gap between the telephone conversations and the dates of interview (typically 1-2 days) effectively allowed a 'cooling off' period during which the individuals had an opportunity to reconsider their participation. One potential participant chose not to turn up to an arranged interview, thereby exercising their right to withdraw. Each interview subsequently began with the researcher reiterating the purpose of the research and offering a further opportunity to withdraw. The researcher left a one-page 'letter of introduction' with each participant, explaining the purpose of the research and the giving the researcher's contact details.

Participants were assured that their responses would be handled in the strictest confidence. Participants were asked to give their first names, together with basic information about their professional background and the organisation for which they were working. This was important in order to preserve the context in which the individuals' adjustment experiences had taken place. When reporting this information care was taken to ensure that this was not done in a manner that would enable the identification of specific individuals, thereby adhering to the principle of confidentiality.

It is good practice to debrief participants, and to involve them in the interpretation of interview data. In striving to maintain a degree of anonymity, limited identifying information was gathered from participants. As a result it was not possible to re-establish contact with the participants after the interviews had taken place. This meant that the researcher was unable to check his interpretation of the interview data with participants. However, as outlined earlier a letter of introduction was left with each participant, detailing the nature of the research and giving the researcher's contact details. This gave participants the opportunity to seek feedback from the researcher, although none chose to do so.

#### 4.6.2 Postal survey

It is important to ensure that participation is voluntary, and that participants can make an informed decision to contribute to a study. In the postal survey, informed consent was obtained implicitly as the respondents had to 'opt in' by choosing to complete and return the questionnaire. To allow respondents to make an informed decision the covering materials explained the purpose of the research, the way in which the data would be used and reported, and provided the researcher's contact details (Oppenheim 1992).

There was no reason to believe that the safety or wellbeing of the respondents would be affected by their participation. Respondents were asked to address the questions on behalf of their organisation in their capacity as an HR practitioner. The data sought was principally concerned with examining organisational practice, and consequently the questions were not considered to be sensitive or intrusive. Nevertheless, the questions were carefully developed to avoid ambiguity, and the response options were tested to ensure that respondents could give the answers that they wanted. This was considered important to limit the possibility of respondents feeling compelled to conform to pre-defined categories when addressing questions.

Confidentiality was another important consideration as respondents may have been reluctant to divulge details of their organisation's IHRM practice. Respondents were assured that their responses would be treated in the strictest confidence both in the covering materials and through a reminder at the foot of each page of the questionnaire. The survey asked for the name of the NGO and the respondent's contact details, although as a self-completion questionnaire there was no compulsion to provide this information. These details were used to track responses and to enable questions of clarification to be asked if necessary. However the identifying data was not included in the dataset, nor were they used to identify responses reported in the thesis. Subsequent dissemination of findings from this study will adhere to the same principle.

In summary, the methodology for this study was informed by the ethical guidelines issued by the British Psychological Society (BPS 2004). The researcher addressed standard ethical considerations and applied good practice in designing, conducting and disseminating the research. In particular efforts were made to ensure that

participation was voluntary and given on the basis of informed consent, that the wellbeing of the participants was protected, and that the data was treated in the strictest confidence.

## ***4.7 Chapter summary***

This chapter explained and justified the methods used to collect and analyse the empirical data used in this thesis. The chapter began by revisiting the overall research question, before explaining the four research objectives that guided the study. It was explained that this study focuses on exploring the way in which expatriate development workers experience processes of sociocultural adjustment. In exploring adjustment experiences, questions were raised about whether respondents' experiences of the role of their sending organisations were typical of the way in which NGOs recruit, select and train expatriate development workers. Consequently, a supplementary research objective was added, and empirical data gathered to explore these aspects of IHRM practice. The chapter then proceeded to discuss the role of a realist perspective in guiding the design and conduct of this research. Finally, the chapter explained and justified the choice of data collection methods and the analytical approaches used for the empirical work. The following two chapters introduce the empirical data. Chapter Five explores the sociocultural adjustment experiences of expatriate development workers, whilst Chapter Six presents supplementary data on the role of NGOs as sending organisations in this expatriation context.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **THE SOCIOCULTURAL ADJUSTMENT EXPERIENCES OF EXPATRIATE DEVELOPMENT WORKERS**

This chapter evaluates the adjustment experiences of individual expatriate development workers. Empirical evidence is presented relating to the first and second research objectives;

***RO1: How does the international development context influence the way in which expatriate development workers experience processes of sociocultural adjustment?***

***RO2: What adjustment outcomes are realised by expatriate development workers?***

Sociocultural adjustment is concerned with the way in which an individual adapts to interactions with host nationals. It emphasises the ability to fit in with the host culture, and to engage in behaviours that result in positive outcomes (e.g. Furnham & Bochner 1986). This form of adjustment is argued to take an 'external' perspective that is concerned with social learning (Ward & Kennedy 1996). This chapter contributes to understanding of expatriation by exploring the way in which processes of sociocultural adjustment are manifested in the experiences of expatriate development workers, making use of a qualitative methodology that enables a richer insight into experiences of adjustment than the quantitative approaches that dominate this discipline.

The data introduced in this chapter identifies two principal issues that were found to influence sociocultural adjustment amongst the sample; the relationship with host nationals, and the relationship with other expatriates. In turn, eight factors were found to simultaneously influence the relationship that the respondents were able to have with host nationals and with other expatriates. The findings suggest that the process of sociocultural adjustment involves a complex balancing of the relationship with these two groups. In particular, the findings suggest that as well as being a valuable support mechanism, contact with other expatriates can have damaging consequences for the relationship with host nationals.

After providing a short introduction to the research participants in order to contextualise the data introduced in this chapter, discussion begins by examining the respondents' relationship with other expatriates. Next, attention turns to the

respondents' relationship with host nationals, before proceeding to examine the eight factors that were found to simultaneously influence the relationship with host nationals and other expatriates. The chapter concludes by examining the adjustment outcomes that were realised by the respondents.

## **5.1 Introducing the research participants**

This section introduces the expatriate development workers that participated in this part of the study. This is done in order to contextualise the empirical data examined in this chapter. Table 5.1 summarises the key characteristics of each of the research participants.

**Table 5.1 Summary of research participants.**

Name	Age	Job / role	Organisation type	Previous development experience	Time in host country	Location
Fiona	Mid 20s	Programme Manager	Sends gap year students on 12 month placements	None	3 years	Uganda
Susan	Mid 20s	Liaison Officer	Small church-based org. working on water supply	Six weeks in the host country five years ago	2 years	Uganda
John	Early 30s	Programme Officer	International volunteer-sending org.	TEFL in Eastern Europe	4 years	Uganda
Jules	Mid 20s	Programme Manager	Sends gap year students on 12 month placements	TEFL in India and China	1 year	Uganda
Mia	Late 40s	Country Representative	International NGO	'Extensive' development experience	2 years	Uganda
Michelle	Mid 30s	Hospice Nurse	Local hospice	Had worked in the host country three years ago	1.5 years	Uganda
Ingrid	Late 40s	Founder	Local org. working with street children	Lived in the host country for over 25 years	25 years	Uganda
Mark	Early 40s	Missionary	US Church	None	7 years	Uganda
Winnette	Mid 30s	Nurse	Local org. working with street children	None	1 year	Uganda
Gwion	Late 20s	Engineer	Volunteer sending organisation	None	3 months	Uganda
Sheila	Early 50s	Nurse	Local medical centre	None	1 year	Kenya

A total of eleven semi-structured depth interviews were carried out, predominantly during a field visit to Uganda, East Africa. The use of semi-structured interviews was

argued in Chapter Four to address the limitations of quantitative approaches. In particular, the imposition of existing adjustment scales risks the respondent placing undue emphasis on items in the scale that they had previously not considered to be important. The sample was identified using a snowballing approach (see Chapter Four), which is consistent with the small and close-knit nature of the expatriate development worker community. As can be seen in Table 5.1, respondents varied widely in age, level of previous experience, duration in the host country, type of organisation, and job role. The chapter now proceeds to examine respondents' relationship with other expatriates.

## **5.2 Relationship with other expatriates**

Discussion in Chapter Two identified the importance of support mechanisms in facilitating cross-cultural adjustment (e.g. Ward *et al.* 2001). Of particular significance was contact with other expatriates, with McFarlane (2004) arguing that this provides access to formal and informal knowledge bases, as well as offering mentoring opportunities. Davidson *et al.* (1991) reinforce this, suggesting that isolation from other expatriates reduces access to social support mechanisms. Other expatriates have also been identified as being a sounding board, a role that helps to relieve tension and stress (Thompson 1997).

Existing research therefore emphasises the positive contribution that contact with other expatriates can make to adjustment. Respondents in this study endorsed this view, illustrating the benefits that they had experienced. However, they also noted negative consequences of being associated with other expatriates, perhaps as a result of the need for development workers to work closely with host nationals. Indeed in this context, respondents found that being too closely associated with the expatriate community could have an adverse effect on their relationship with host nationals. This section examines both the positive and negative aspects of using other expatriates as a support mechanism. Factors that were found to influence the relationship with other expatriates are examined later in this chapter.

### **5.2.1 The need for contact with other expatriates**

Respondents endorsed the view that it was important to have contact with other expatriates. For some respondents, notably Jules, attempts had initially been made to limit contact with expatriates in an effort to help integrate with the host community.

However, this subsequently turned out not to be possible. Jules noted how limiting contact with expatriates simply resulted in feelings of loneliness;

*"... for the first four, five months, I didn't really have many expatriate friends. And I did feel lonely"*

(Jules)

She went on to describe how she realised the need for expatriate friends, likening this to the selection of friends at home based on shared frames of reference;

*"... it took me four, five months just to accept that I do need expatriate friends. I just need people, it's the same as in Britain, your friends are people generally from your sort of background, and usually the same class as you, and a similar educational background"*

(Jules)

Jules' experience highlighted how important it can be to maintain contact with one's own culture, reflecting the view that integration is a more positive adjustment outcome than assimilation (e.g. Ward *et al.* 2001). Jules' experience perhaps counters the argument in Chapter Two that participative development can result in development workers over-identifying with the cause and by association with the host culture. Respondents in this study did not appear to over-identify with their beneficiaries, and indeed reported that contact with other expatriates was an important part of their adjustment. They noted in particular that other expatriates were invaluable in providing opportunities to escape temporarily from the host culture.

Respondents noted how contact with other expatriates provided the opportunity to engage in informal debriefing sessions. Sue described how contact with other expatriates provided the opportunity to discuss experiences, to moan about frustrations, and to share ideas about how to deal with aspects of the host culture;

*"... I think the need for hanging out with other expats [sic] is largely you're from a similar culture, you've had similar experiences in your work, in the day, you're like 'oh, I know I had the same' or 'this happened to me'. Because you obviously can't talk like that with Ugandans because, in a way you're talking about their culture and their way of life, in fact how it differs from yours, sometimes it isn't necessarily whether its better or worse, its just comparing things, and sometimes you are having a moan about it, and you don't necessarily want to do it, make a big issue of it, but you just need to say 'oh I'm finding it difficult getting used to this, or the way this happens, this works'"*

(Sue)

Winnette also noted the comfort of being able to communicate freely with other expatriates;

*"... to be able to speak your own language, and just mix with the people you, you know that background of, and when they speak you understand what they mean ..."*  
(Winnette)

Michelle suggested that it was important to maintain contact with expatriates, noting that this gave her the opportunity to vent frustrations and to speak with people that understand what it is like to be an expatriate;

*"... you need to have people who can appreciate how you're feeling, your frustrations, things that you're finding difficult. And at the end of the day you're English, and there are differences and you need to be able to have ways of discussing those and getting your own support."*

(Michelle)

Winnette made a similar point, describing how she sought reassurance from other expatriates that her experiences and feelings were normal;

*"Talk about it with other expats., how their experience is, see if I am normal [laughs] or going nuts! Actually in the beginning, the first two months, that really helped ... there was a Dutch family here, just go and see them, drink coffee with them, and share what I was going through, and hearing that they had gone through the same process a few years earlier. And then, after drinking coffee, being with them, chatting with them, going home and feeling better."*

(Winnette)

These experiences illustrate the benefits of maintaining contact with other expatriates. The ability to temporarily escape from the host culture, and to be able to communicate freely with people from a similar background to themselves were particularly important. This, respondents suggested, helped them to make sense of their experiences, and to be reassured that their experiences were not unusual. This is consistent with previous research (e.g. Thompson 1997) that identifies contact with other expatriates as an important coping mechanism for development workers. However, contrary to McFarlane's (2004) suggestion that development workers may have limited opportunities to maintain contact with other expatriates as a result of being in remote locations respondents in this study did not appear to have any such difficulties, although this may be a function of the sample used.

### 5.2.2 The dangers of contact with other expatriates

Contrary to previous research, respondents in this study reported how being associated with negative expatriate stereotypes can damage the relationship with host nationals. Consequently, seeking support from other expatriates was found to have limitations as well as benefits for sociocultural adjustment, something that has not been acknowledged in previous work. Fiona reflected on how some expatriates, principally those that are not development workers, do not work closely with host nationals;

*“... a lot of the expats I know don't work with Ugandans [at] the same level I do, and don't have ... as healthy an attitude towards Ugandan culture as I would like to think I do myself. Without blowing my own trumpet ... I think I have a good understanding of Ugandan culture, you know, knowing things to respect, and like I say I speak a little bit, a tiny bit of Buganda [a local language], like just greetings and a few things, and that definitely helps me, which a lot of White people I know, they wouldn't bother, why should they. Which is an attitude, an expat attitude that I don't agree with, I just don't particularly like.”*

(Fiona)

Fiona's experience supported the suggestion that it could be potentially damaging to be associated with expatriates that reflect the negative stereotypes held by some host nationals. In particular, she suggested that mixed social situations could be difficult, and that there could be a sense of having to select between alternative groups of friends;

*“And there are situations, social situations sometimes where I feel awkward being White because I'm with a whole bunch of other White people and there's maybe Ugandans around and, the other White people you're with are maybe not as comfortable with the Ugandans being around, and there's a sort of tension, and I'll sit there and I'll think 'well, who would I rather be with in this situation?', it would be the Ugandans than these White people who ... have got this sort of superior attitude. I mean not all the expat [sic] community are like that, there's just some who like I say don't work with Ugandans in the same level I do, and so don't have the same respect and understanding of the culture ...”*

(Fiona)

This, she suggested, contributed to a greater degree of separation from host nationals and the demonstration of an ethnocentric attitude toward the host culture. This seemed to create a tension between the acknowledged benefits of maintaining contact with other expatriates, and the way in which this contact could affect the relationship with host nationals. For John, the response seemed to be a decision to distance himself from other expatriates. Indeed he went as far as to say that he

didn't like being called an expatriate, and resented being acknowledged in the street by expatriates that he didn't know purely because he was White;

*"Sometimes when you are walking down the street and an expat ... is walking towards you sometimes they'll just say 'Hello', and that really bugs me [laughs], but you know, we suddenly have an affinity with each other, and its pathetic really, why not be rude and turn my head away ... just 'cause I'm White you want to say hello, what's that about?"*

(John)

In distancing himself from other expatriates, it seemed that John was able to be accepted for who he was rather than being viewed as an expatriate stereotype. This, he suggested, was a view shared by some other types of expatriate who consciously sought to minimise their exposure to other expatriates;

*"... some people just won't go near expats. Up-country workers and volunteers ... they come to Kampala really rarely, they hate it, and they get away as soon as they can 'cause ... its kind of affirming all their prejudices and stereotypes against expats, most of which are fair enough, I'm not particularly mad about expats, and I don't particularly like being called one [laughs] ..."*

(John)

Although the data collected do not enable the cause and effect relationship to be examined, John appeared to have adjusted well and had been accepted by the host nationals that he worked with. Indeed he recounted how he had been 'adopted' by a woman in one of the villages that he had worked in;

*"[I have a] really very strong feeling for the people that I was working with in Iganga, not necessarily my immediate colleagues, but people in the village, the adult learners, and particularly the women ... I have my own Busoga name, Kakiray, which is what I'm known by there ... and there's a woman who was kind of my adopted mother, Grace, who's also called Kakiray, but she's a fantastic woman that kind of claimed me as her son. Obviously it's not any great serious thing, but it was quite a strong feeling of belonging."*

(John)

In summary, the experiences examined here suggest that contact with other expatriates is seen as very important in providing an opportunity to associate with people that can understand the challenges and frustrations of the adjustment process. The findings therefore offer support for previous research (e.g. Davidson et al. 1991; McFarlane 2004; Thompson 1997) that emphasises the benefits of this support mechanism. However, contact with other expatriates was also found to have consequences for the relationship with host nationals. In particular concerns were

raised about being associated with negative expatriate stereotypes, and the effect of this on the ability to achieve acceptance by host nationals. This is significant because the negative consequences of seeking support from other expatriates have not been acknowledged in previous research. The factors that were found to influence the relationship with other expatriates, and the consequences of relying excessively on the support of other expatriates, are examined throughout this chapter.

### **5.3 Relationship with host nationals**

The relationship with host nationals is important in development work. As argued in Chapter Two, participative development involves working closely with beneficiaries to understand and utilise the skills and knowledge that they possess, to involve them in the identification of agendas and the design of projects, to make use of their skills in delivering projects, and in evaluating the effectiveness of projects (Willis 2005). It is argued that this philosophy requires development workers to be more culturally aware and culturally sensitive in their relationship with beneficiaries. The relationship between the development worker and host nationals is therefore central to the success of participative approaches to development as well as to the development worker's sociocultural adjustment.

#### **5.3.1 Positive perceptions of expatriates**

Adjustment can be aided by a positive perception of, and attitude toward, expatriate development workers by host nationals (e.g. Danieli 2002). Both Fiona and John noted that the presence of a White expatriate generates interest in projects. This was noted both in terms of raising the profile and perceived importance of a project at a broad level, as well as enhancing interest and engagement with day-to-day activity. It was suggested that there are many competing projects, and the involvement of a White expatriate raises the perceived importance of a project. John had direct experience of this, with his presence in a village resulting in him being the centre of attention, and with the interest in him transferring to the project he was there to work on;

*"... we used to have seventy adult groups that we worked with. Every time I went it was an event, I mean, Ugandans, particularly Busoga [a specific region in Uganda] they're incredibly hospitable, it's a major major event, having any visitor, but a European visitor, and even if its John that they've seen time and time again, every time, it would be a big thing. People like to make a big thing of it, in the end, well not in the end, quite quickly, actually having had a chat with my boss here, I used that quite a lot as a sort of catalyst for making things happen. It was a good way of motivating people and I spent a lot more time going out and doing that, and kind of, I had, most groups had songs, not written about me, but you know, my name would be in sentences of songs, which is an extraordinary feeling, extraordinary. And you know, you'd dance, and it was a really good way of giving some motivation and improving morale, but also bringing other people in, and in some ways it was taken more seriously because most of the adult literacy groups were predominantly women, not taken seriously by men at all, and kind of looked down upon, and having a European there ... it was taken more seriously."*

(John)

John's experience suggests that the attention raised by his simply being there could have helped him to feel adjusted to his role as he could be effective more quickly with the support and buy-in that his presence generated. The attention may also have reinforced his feeling that he was fulfilling a valuable purpose, and that his presence was really making a difference to the local community. In support of this, John talked at length about his attachment to the village that he had previously lived and worked in.

Fiona had been involved in a project which linked local and expatriate volunteers in working with marginalised young people in rural areas. She was clear that the local volunteers would have been perfectly capable of running the project and achieving its goals without the expatriates, but that the expatriates raised the profile of the work and generated more buy-in from the beneficiaries of the project;

*"I think the overseas volunteers are important because I think a lot of the Ugandan volunteers want to do the programme because they know that they're going to be working with overseas volunteers ... sometimes initially in communities, because there's White volunteers there, initially the communities, the schools are interested. If it was just Ugandan volunteers I think although the Ugandan volunteers fit in easier in community life I don't think they'd get that same initial interest as there is because the White volunteers are there, which is probably not correct, but is the way it works."*

(Fiona)

This is similar to John's experience in that Fiona highlights the positive perceptions of White expatriates that seem to exist, and the role that these play in generating interest and involvement in projects.

In a slightly different way, Mark noted that he had experienced being automatically believed simply because he was White. Sue and Winnette also reported being given preferential treatment by host nationals. Whilst such reactions may be reflective of a positive view of expatriates, respondents reported that such preferential treatment could have negative consequences for the extent to which the expatriates could integrate with host nationals. This is examined further in Section 5.3.3.

### **5.3.2 Negative attitudes toward expatriates**

Although this automatic acceptance and respect may indeed raise the profile of projects and encourage community participation, the effects are not entirely positive. Participative development encourages and requires involvement from local communities and beneficiary groups, rather than expatriates dictating how things will be done (Willis 2005). Thus, expatriates can perhaps find themselves fighting against the desire of locals to follow the expatriate's lead when the expatriate wants locals to take the initiative, to contradict, and to discuss issues. Gwion experienced this, and reported having to work hard to encourage locals not to always agree with him and his expatriate colleagues, and to promote the idea that it was perfectly acceptable for them to disagree;

*"In Soroti [a small town in Uganda] it is considered bad manners to openly question your employer, if your employer asks you to do something that you don't think is a good idea you shouldn't say you disagree but pretend that you haven't heard him. We considered it an important part of the project to improve the local construction capacity by sharing our knowledge of construction methods, and this process was not helped by the reluctance of the workers to ask us to explain things that were new to them and appeared illogical. We did try to explain that the project was supposed to be an education, for us and for them, and that we would not fire anybody for saying he disagreed with us on something and with several (but unfortunately not all) of the workers we were successful in this respect."*

(Gwion)

Gwion's experience suggested that host nationals' attitudes to expatriate development workers could inhibit the pursuit of participative approaches to development. Whilst Gwion and his colleagues wanted to work collaboratively and to share their skills and expertise with local workers, this proved to be challenging. Such experiences can be argued to create anxieties and frustrations as the development worker feels that the participative objective is not being fulfilled.

Whilst Gwion reported that local workers were used to doing what they were told by the expatriates, Mark suggested that he was often given too much credit for achievements;

*“... they give me way too much credit, way too much, too kind, and I've been more than anything embarrassed over and over again by Ugandans because of my skin”*  
(Mark)

This can be also be problematic as it can undermine the achievements made by host nationals, may lead to resentment that the expatriates are getting all of the credit for work that they have not necessarily done, and also hinders the transfer of responsibility to locals.

Whilst several respondents appeared to have positive experiences of working in their respective host countries, Sheila had a very different experience. Sheila was recruited as a nurse to work in a local health clinic. The nurse in charge of the clinic seemed to feel very threatened by Sheila's presence, and did very little to involve her in the clinic. Sheila reflected that as a White expatriate, her presence was largely symbolic rather than practical, which is a stark contrast to the observations of Fiona and John;

*“The Canon in charge of the health clinic system in our area wanted a White nurse because it meant the church clinic would draw in more patients and therefore there would be more profit for the church to be had.”*

(Sheila)

Sheila's experience was of being ostracised by her immediate boss (the nurse in charge of the clinic), who seemed to view Sheila's presence as being an unwelcome necessity. This particular relationship had a significant effect on Sheila's psychological adjustment, which in turn appeared to affect her satisfaction with life and work in the host country. Sheila tried to break down barriers, making positive comments about how much there was for her to learn about tropical medicine;

*“I bent over backwards to raise her self esteem and self worth. ‘How much she had to teach me’, ‘Didn’t she know lots’, ‘I never see anything like this in the UK’. Nothing worked.”*

(Sheila)

Sheila was ultimately unable to break down these barriers, and as a consequence was able to make little contribution to the work of the clinic. Sheila explained a typical example of the relationship that she had with this particular colleague:

*"I would arrive, sit in her clinic, she would see two patients in Kikamba [a local language] and then walk out of the clinic saying 'you do the rest'. The rest didn't speak English ... [my translator] would have a conversation with them, tell me what was wrong with them and what to prescribe."*

(Sheila)

In the end, despite several efforts to engage with her local colleagues, Sheila largely withdrew from her work. Although she reported feeling depressed, she did not want to admit defeat, and instead spent all of her spare time travelling to meet other expatriates. Sheila's experiences are consistent with McFarlane's (2004) findings which suggest that expatriate development workers can suffer from frustration if their skills are not fully utilised. In Sheila's case, this frustration may have contributed to her feelings of depression, although other factors including her unexpectedly remote location may also have contributed to these feelings.

### **5.3.3 The effect of differential treatment**

Respondents identified how positive perceptions of expatriates were often manifested in preferential treatment. Such treatment can be argued to affect the relationship between the expatriate and host nationals. Winnette was keen to blend in, living and working as an integral part of the host community. However, she reported that expatriates seemed to be treated differently by host nationals, something that was made easier by often being the only 'Mzungu' (White person) in the room, or walking down the street. She suggested that host nationals felt a need to treat expatriates differently, and speculated that this could have been a relic of colonial times;

*"everybody sees a room full of Ugandans and just one Mzungu [White person], you are the different one. And they will treat you different ... they feel they need to treat you different, I don't know, if it's a Colonial thing or not, or just being different"*

(Winnette)

The example that Winnette gave of preferential treatment was of being continually offered the front seat in cars, but suggested that as relationships were built it became possible to be treated more equally;

*"It took me a time to get used to that always sit up front [in the car] ... when people start to know you better, they let you sit in the back if you like that, okay, you know, whenever they start knowing you its alright, you don't get a special seat in the front any more. But you need to tell them, 'just let me sit with the people, let me do this', and then they appreciate it, they are okay, its like 'okay if you like that'. You need to work on that yourself."*

(Winnette)

For Winnette, this special treatment conflicted with her desire to integrate with the host community, and appeared to engender feelings of separation. However, she seemed to be able to break down this particular barrier by explicitly tackling the preferential treatment that was offered. Whether this really enabled her to form closer relationships with host nationals is more difficult to establish, and indeed the data in this study does not allow this question to be addressed.

In contrast, Sue did not appear to make any attempt to counter the preferential treatment that she had received. She described how she had been given preferential treatment as a result of the respect with which expatriates were generally viewed by host nationals;

*"... also you do get treated differently, like the advantage is that you go into banks, and in our bank we go round the back to see the bank manager ... you're quite welcome to go and get your money quickly. You don't get stopped at Police checks or revenue checkpoints ... I went to the doctors the other day there was an hour queue, I was happy to wait actually, and I went and sat down, and then ten minutes later she looks at me and says, 'quick ... I can work you in' "*

(Sue)

In describing these examples, Sue appeared to feel slightly guilty and embarrassed by such treatment. This necessarily had an effect on the extent to which she could integrate into the host community. However, Sue was one of the respondents that did not express an explicit desire to do so, suggesting that at some level she was happy to be treated differently. Mark similarly recalled being embarrassed by the positive way in which host nationals treated him, and endorsed Winnette's earlier suggestion that such treatment may have been influenced by host nationals' colonial experience;

*"I just continually felt like, 'wait a minute, don't believe me just because I'm white, don't like me because I'm white, you shouldn't like me, there should be animosity' ... I also felt like they trust me too much, they give me way too much credit, way too much, too kind, and I've been more than anything embarrassed over and over again by Ugandans because of my skin, trying to push me to the front of the line, and I think it's a big reflection on how positive their colonial experience was."*

(Mark)

John also reflected on how expatriates could get away with things that host nationals would not;

*"... when you come here you instantly are in a place where no door is shut to you ... the flashiest hotel, even if you're scruffy, ripped jeans and trainers, you can walk in, to the front of the queue, and that's like a really bizarre thing."*

(John)

John's experience went further than simple examples of preferential treatment. He described how it was never going to be possible to integrate in the host community because of the inherent barrier created by being a White expatriate who is noticed everywhere they go;

*"... most people are still seeing your skin first, and that's quite difficult ..."*

(John)

*"... in certain places like Iganga [a small town in Uganda], [you] walk down the street and everyone's looking at you. Everyone's commenting on you, stops what they're doing."*

(John)

*"... there's a lot of sort of attitude, and the 'Mzungu, Mzungu' thing which you've probably experienced already, can be really irritating, some people have a very good attitude towards it and don't find it a problem. Sometimes it was unpleasant, is unpleasant. And those are things sometimes its just water off a ducks back, and sometimes you feel a bit vulnerable and it just really pisses you off ..."*

(John)

The experiences of these respondents illustrate the ways in which expatriates were treated differently to host nationals. Such treatment is superficially positive, with some respondents receiving preferential treatment for example at the doctor or bank. This may foster feelings of acceptance that have an initially positive effect on psychological adjustment (Danieli 2002). However, the host national perception of expatriates that leads to this preferential treatment would appear to create barriers to the formation of social relationships and consequently to their sociocultural adjustment. The result was that whilst some respondents intended to integrate with

host communities, they found this difficult to achieve as they were never treated as equals by host nationals. This may, therefore, have contributed to ineffective adjustment as the individuals felt uncomfortable with being viewed and treated differently, together with feelings of frustration at not being able to integrate to the extent that they had intended. This is partially supportive of work by McFarlane (2004) which found that expatriate development workers can experience frustration if their skills are not fully utilised. Here, such frustration may be argued to derive from the difficulty in achieving a level of integration that reflects the participative philosophy of development. Furthermore, such treatment appeared to make it difficult for some respondents to fulfil their obligation to a participative approach to development as this relies upon a degree of equality between themselves and host nationals (Willis 2005). The issue of preferential treatment does not appear to have been considered in the expatriation literature, and therefore these findings offer an important extension to previous research on the way in which expatriates and host nationals interact.

Two respondents (Winnette and Mark) had speculated that the preferential treatment they experienced may be related to the positive colonial experiences of the host nationals. However, a more cynical view is to suggest that this may be associated with the wealth differential between expatriates and host nationals. The following section explores this issue.

## **5.4 *Financial inequity***

By definition, development workers operate in locations where people are suffering from some degree of poverty (Knowles 1998). Hence, development workers have to deal with financial differences between themselves and the host nationals that they live and work with. Financial inequity was reported to create tensions that influenced the nature of the relationship that was possible with host nationals as well as the desire to spend time with other expatriates. Two aspects of this were evident; continual requests for money by host nationals, and the recognition that even development workers can be very wealthy by host country standards.

### **5.4.1 Requests for money**

Some respondents reflected on the requests for money that they received from host nationals. This was recognised as part of host nationals' perception of expatriates,

but nevertheless something that caused irritation and frustration. John and Winnette in particular reported that they experienced continual requests for money from host nationals;

*“... you are just expected to be a rich person ... they see you and they assume that you're making \$3000 a month ... there wasn't a day in two-and-a-half years that I wasn't fending off requests for money.”*

(John)

*“... I can be very tired of people asking for money all the time, seeing you as a walking [laughs] purse or something. That can be really tiring. And once in a while it comes back and then I think, 'just shut up will you?!'. But then I know, okay its part of the culture, its part of life here. But at times it can be very very annoying, very difficult.”*

(Winnette)

Whilst Winnette and John considered such requests to be little more than an irritation, this perception of expatriates nevertheless creates a degree of mistrust of host nationals. Indeed Sue suggested that she found it difficult to relax in the company of host nationals. This was attributed to the financial inequity between herself and her host national colleagues and friends. In Sue's experience financial inequity manifested itself in host nationals feeling that she should pay for them when they went out together;

*“... sometimes you would like to go out with friends that you're not always paying for. Because if I invite someone [a host national] out from work for a drink I know that they would expect me to pay for them, so you have to make sure you have the money and things. Whereas it's nice to go out with a friend that you don't have to, or you treat each other...”*

(Sue)

Sue's response was to prefer to socialise with other expatriates in order to be able to forget about the possible financial motives of host nationals;

*“So it's harder to find Ugandans that are equal in terms of, they're not coming out with you because they want assistance or money. Sometimes you need a break from that, you just want to go out and socialise”*

(Sue)

The respondents seemed to agree that this attitude toward expatriates was a part of the host culture, and discussed the issue with a sense of resigned acceptance that it would continue. So in a sense requests for money were not considered to be significant by the respondents, with Winnette explicitly accepting that this was a part of the host culture. However, such requests appear to have considerable

consequences for sociocultural adjustment as they create a degree of mistrust between expatriates and host nationals. This seemed to encourage a desire to socialise with other expatriates in order to avoid the potential financial motives of host nationals. Such avoidance is perhaps exacerbated by the difference in social activities enjoyed by expatriates and host nationals (see Section 5.6). Factors such as this that have the effect of dissuading expatriates from socialising with host nationals limit opportunities for social learning, thereby hindering processes of sociocultural adjustment (Ward & Kennedy 1996).

#### **5.4.2 Being wealthy by host country standards**

John made the comment that host nationals expected expatriates to be wealthy, and that this perhaps encouraged requests for money. The suggestion was that this was not necessarily an accurate perception, especially in relation to development workers. Other respondents, however, reflected on how the modest Western salary that some development workers receive could provide significant spending power in the host country.

Mark in particular highlighted the implications of his modest salary, reporting that his salary was comparable to senior figures in the host country. He suggested that this was psychologically difficult to reconcile as it gave him significantly greater spending power than he had ever had in his home country. Mark found this especially difficult;

*“... its weird to be thrown into a position where you are the wealthiest person in the neighbourhood, no matter what you try, I’m as wealthy as a member of parliament. And I make \$25,000 a year, and that’s a very very awkward, weird world to be in.”*  
(Mark)

Mark went on to suggest that there would always be financial differences between expatriate development workers and host nationals, describing how easy it was to stand out from host nationals by possessing apparently ‘normal’ resources;

*“And I would say that’s the number one tension you’re going to feel, you’re going to be wealthy no matter how hard you try to be poor, you’re going to be wealthy. If you choose to have electricity, if you choose to bring your computer, if you choose to have more than five shirts, and if you choose to have transportation, you’re in the one half of one percent in Uganda. How are you going to deal with that, and I think that takes a lot.”*  
(Mark)

Mark's experience shows how perceptions of wealth can be developed as 'normal' possessions (by home country standards) make expatriates stand out from host nationals that are not able to afford such items. This conspicuous consumption serves to create and reinforce perceptions of wealth, which appear to be subsequently transferred to all expatriates. Mia also recognised how a high salary set her apart from host nationals, describing a domestic situation that is very different from the beneficiaries she works with;

*"... my salary is good, I have a high salary, I am very comfortable, which of course makes it easier. I can live in a very nice house with a huge garden, and I can have staff, I can drive my own car, I don't have any financial worries ..."*

(Mia)

Such differences inherently affect the nature of relationship that is possible between the expatriate and host nationals. John seemingly earned less than Mark and Mia, but nevertheless identified how his ability to integrate with host nationals was also affected by financial differences;

*"... the level of integration that's possible, I didn't have many close friends in Iganga [a small town in Uganda] because its very hard to develop relationships when ... I earn probably around the same as a local headteacher or a doctor in Iganga, that still sets you apart, and I still had a nice house, lived on my own, and I don't have any children or wives to look after, so I did have a much better standard of living ... And living and working with people who are suffering incredible poverty just there are some tensions that naturally arise out of that. So the integration wasn't kind of what I'd, idealistically hoped to be just absolute 100% part of something, and people would just know John."*

(John)

These experiences illustrate how financial differences contributed to tensions during the respondents' interactions with host nationals. Some respondents identified how their salaries were similar to those of senior figures in the host country, creating a significant barrier between themselves and the host nationals that they lived and worked with. This distinction was magnified by the fact that expatriate development workers work with the poorest and most marginalised parts of local communities (Knowles 1998). For other respondents, tensions were experienced directly as host nationals expected them to pay when they socialised together. This was reported to cause a degree of resentment, and a reluctance to socialise with host nationals. One respondent suggested that it was difficult to tell if host nationals wanted to socialise with her simply as a means of obtaining money, a suspicion that led to a desire to socialise more frequently with other expatriates. Other respondents noted

how being asked for money was a daily occurrence which appeared to contribute to the creation of barriers that hindered interactions with host nationals.

### **5.5 Different frames of reference**

Consistent with the prevailing participative philosophy of development (Willis 2005), the majority of respondents suggested that they tried to get to know host national colleagues in order to break down barriers. Most attempted this by trying to achieve a degree of balance between socialising with other expatriates and socialising with host nationals. Jules initially made a deliberate attempt to socialise only with host nationals, but subsequently realised that she needed contact with other expatriates too;

*“... one thing I didn't want was a lot of expatriate friends when I first came out here, I wanted to have, you know, socialise with Ugandans. But I realised culturally that ... I find it much easier to socialise with people who understand me ...”*

(Jules)

Jules went on to suggest that whilst she had host national friends, she felt that there would always be a barrier between them as a result of their different life experiences;

*“... their understanding of me is always going to be limited because they've never been to Britain, they've never lived in Britain, they don't have an understanding of the culture. So, I mean, a lot of my vocabulary, my expressions, how I'm trying to describe things that they can't necessarily understand, so the relationship will always be different ... we don't have the same frames of reference ... the relationship's different”*

(Jules)

The issues that she highlights in the context of 'frames of reference' are based on differences in life experiences, background and upbringing, as well as in the use of language. This, she suggested, limited the extent to which mutual understanding could be achieved. Similarly, Fiona described how she had developed a very close relationship with a host national friend. She pointed out, however, that despite the closeness of the relationship, there were still barriers based on limited mutual understanding;

*"... [I] slowly but surely got on better with them, especially one girl, one of the Ugandan girls Anne and I became closer than she was with the other Ugandan girl, just, we got to the point where she didn't see me as a White person and I didn't see her as a Ugandan, it was just friendship, it wasn't based on colour ... but there were still some things I would chat to her about, and she'd be interested, but she just wouldn't understand the same way that a White girl would have"*

(Fiona)

Michelle reported that she socialised with a mix of expatriates and host nationals. Her experience emphasised the effect of differences between expatriates and host nationals rather than the nature of the differences:

*"I don't think you can have purely Ugandan or African contacts because you need to have people who can appreciate how you're feeling, your frustrations, things that you're finding difficult. And at the end of the day you're English, and there are differences and you need to be able to have ways of discussing those and getting your own support."*

(Michelle)

Michelle's experience highlights the role of expatriate friends in providing an opportunity to discuss difficulties and frustrations encountered during contact with host nationals.

These experiences suggest that even when a good level of sociocultural adjustment can be argued to have taken place, differences still remain that affect the relationship between expatriates and host nationals. The experiences emphasise the influence of differences in life experiences, backgrounds, and use of language in particular. The respondents suggest that such differences can limit the degree of mutual understanding that can be achieved, and that this in turn can affect the extent to which they were able to form the kind of friendship that was possible with other expatriates. Consequently, different frames of reference can be argued to influence not only the relationship between expatriates and host nationals, but also the perceived need for contact to be maintained with other expatriates.

## **5.6 Differences in social interests**

Whilst Sue suggested that financial expectations created some reluctance to socialise with host nationals, another factor that appeared to influence opportunities for social interaction was simply a difference in interests.

Several respondents reported that the main barrier to interaction that they had experienced resulted from different backgrounds, experiences and interests between themselves and host nationals. This was particularly evident amongst the younger respondents. These differences limited the amount of time that respondents felt able to spend with host nationals, which subsequently made it difficult for them to get to know each other in less formal settings.

At a practical level, two respondents suggested that it was difficult to socialise with host nationals simply because they enjoyed different pastimes to expatriates;

*"... at the weekends and stuff, we go swimming, sunbathing, rafting, whatever, so I do spend more time definitely with the expat [sic] community ... what I like doing and relaxing at the weekends ... my Ugandan colleagues, its not the same thing that interests them as it would me and other expats."*

(Fiona)

*"... the relationship's different, and the things I would do with them [host nationals] would be different. You know, what they would enjoy doing in their spare time is different to what I would, and my friends from Europe would enjoy doing"*

(Jules)

This limited the opportunities for these respondents to spend time with host nationals. For example, the respondents suggested that expatriates enjoyed sunbathing and whitewater rafting, neither of which appealed to most host nationals. This made it difficult for the respondents to simultaneously socialise with host nationals and engage in activities of interest to them. These types of difference appeared to suggest that socialising with host nationals could involve a degree of sacrifice as it was necessary to make a decision between engaging in activities of interest and spending time with host nationals. This issue appeared to be specific to the younger respondents.

Similarly, Fiona suggested that host nationals seemed to frown upon the fact that expatriates tended to smoke and drink alcohol whilst socialising. Such habits appeared to create a further barrier to interaction. Fiona related this both to different social norms, and to different attitudes to money;

*“... most of the white people were having a beer or two in the evenings and smoking cigarettes whereas the Ugandans, they weren’t. So that was a bit awkward to begin with, I think they thought ‘do these guys drink all the time’, or, ‘they’ve got enough money to drink all the time’, but after a while things, you know, suspicions about each other definitely broke down and everybody started relaxing a bit more and getting on.”*

(Fiona)

Sue was more specific in highlighting the effect of religious beliefs on social behaviours. She discussed how the strong Christian values held by many host nationals meant that drinking alcohol presented a barrier to social interaction;

*“... and the Christian thing aswell, if you’re Christian you don’t drink at all. So, that sometimes stops if you meet a lot of Christians.”*

(Sue)

Sue also reinforced Fiona’s earlier point about how host national attitudes toward social activities were influenced by the issue of affordability. In particular she observed how some social activities that expatriates took for granted were perhaps considered to be inaccessible luxuries for many host nationals;

*“But then you get the people that can afford to go out and waste their money on alcohol or a night out. And in Jinja [a small Ugandan town] you don’t find they can do that, especially families, small income ... Many people here don’t have ... money to spend on going out, or going for a meal, why would they go out for a meal when they could cook at home, and its twice the price, unless its a treat?”*

(Sue)

Again this identifies a potential source of conflict not only in terms of affordability, but also in relation to the effect that expenditure on activities considered as luxuries could have on the way in which host nationals view expatriates.

Part of the process of sociocultural adjustment would seem to involve a move away from formal transactional encounters (for example in shops) toward informal and social interactions. The findings examined here suggest that this may be difficult as there can be a perceived need to choose between different groups of friends in mixed settings. This is made more challenging by differences in social interests which can limit opportunities for expatriates and host nationals to socialise together. Furthermore this can invoke a feeling that socialising with host nationals involves a degree of sacrifice as it is difficult to do this whilst simultaneously engaging in activities of interest to the expatriate. Opinions of smoking and alcohol were also

identified by respondents as examples of differences in social behaviour that could affect the way in which expatriates are viewed by host nationals.

Financial differences were again evident, appearing to influence the ability and willingness of host nationals to engage in certain types of social activity. The ability of expatriates to engage in less formal interactions in social settings is an important part of the process of sociocultural adjustment. The issues examined in this section show how, for the respondents in this study, this type of interaction proved to be challenging. However, this is not to say that such contact is impossible, with several respondents in this study appearing to make a great deal of effort to engage with host nationals at a social level.

## **5.7 Symbolic role of language**

In reviewing a series of studies on the cross-cultural adjustment of various refugee groups Ward *et al.* (2001) identified the importance of language skills. In particular, language skills can be argued to facilitate effective adjustment to a host culture by enabling communication with host nationals, facilitating social learning and providing access to social situations. In this study, all respondents except one reported that they did not need to speak a local language in order to interact with host nationals. However this did not mean that language was an insignificant issue. For these respondents language was found to take on a symbolic importance that affected their interactions with host nationals.

Mark's language skills were exceptional, with other respondents confining their efforts to learning a few greetings. Mark however had been in the host country for seven years, and had become fluent in one of the local languages. Nevertheless he was clear that it was not necessary to learn a local language in order to live and work effectively in the host country;

*"So it is true Ugandans speak great English, especially educated ones, and there's no reason, there is no practical reason for anybody who's coming here, to learn Lusoga [the local language that Mark is fluent in] ... or a local language, or any language, because of the widespread English [spoken] here ..."*

(Mark)

However he spoke passionately about the effect that his fluency in Lusoga had on his interactions with host nationals;

*"So it just really surprises people, [it] takes them back, because they think 'why did you learn', the only reason you would learn it is to go communicate with the poorest of the poor. ... But for me its been huge, because you immediately make friends, hear people talking about you, joking about you usually, making fun of you, whatever, and being able to joke with them, make yourself the butt of the jokes. It's a big power-distance remover ... learning this language is just a shock to everybody, so it puts the shoe on the other foot and people begin to get interested in you as opposed to you having to pry into their lives, they're trying to pry into your life, and say 'what are you doing here, why do you speak this language?'"*

(Mark)

Mark noted in particular that his fluency surprised host nationals, and helped to break down cultural barriers. In a much more limited way, other respondents also identified the symbolic benefits of learning some basic phrases. Fiona reported that host nationals tended to be more open and trusting towards her if she attempted a few words of the local language;

*"Yeah, and then I made a little bit of an effort to try and learn their language, just like small phrases, 'how are you', 'where are you going' and just small things like that, and that always, always helps, I find that all over Uganda that if you speak a bit of, just a small amount of the local language, if you can greet, people are just so much warmer to you, they're like 'you make an effort, I like you, I'm happy with you'."*

(Fiona)

John had similar experiences, noting that host nationals like it when expatriates attempt to speak their language;

*"learn the language ... we all know the greetings ... I can speak a bit and I can understand quite a lot. And it has an amazing effect when you ... greet people either in the ... generic Luganda which is understood everywhere, or the very very specific ... Lusoga ... and people just love it."*

(John)

This experience was echoed by Gwion, who suggested that attempting to speak a little of the local language was always viewed favourably;

*"Learning a few basic greetings in the local language only takes a few minutes and in my experience gets a universally positive reaction."*

(Gwion)

In Ingrid's case, learning a local language was not particularly successful. Nevertheless, she found that simply having made an effort to learn was still viewed positively by host nationals;

*"I tried to learn the language, I think I wasn't very successful there, but at least the fact that I put some time in [and] people saw that ... it was valued by them."*  
(Ingrid)

Winnette highlighted how easy it would have been to speak English rather than to learn the local language. However, she too noted the benefits in terms of breaking down barriers and encouraging host nationals to engage with her.

*"... so many people speak English here so its easy to just use English and not bother about language. But people really appreciate it, even if you just speak some basic things, they really appreciate it, if you just greet them in their own language. It opens up a whole new world, they are much more open to receive and to start relationships. And its hard, especially when you live in the town where most of the people have had primary and secondary school [education] in English, and they will always approach you in English anyway. But yeah, there's still many people around, especially people I work with who are illiterate, and they speak their own language, and they try a bit of Luganda here, or Swahili, but their own language is different. So you really try to find out how the greetings are, how their customs are, even if you don't speak their language fluently. It just makes a big difference, they really feel that you are making an effort, not just coming to deliver your own message."*  
(Winnette)

These experiences show how despite there being a limited practical need to speak a local language, attempting to do so nevertheless contributed to relationship building by breaking down barriers. In particular, efforts to learn a little of the local language were generally found to serve as a powerful 'goodwill gesture' consistent with the participative philosophy of development.

However, not all respondents were as willing to use local languages. Michelle, commenting on the need for her to speak one of the local languages, was clear that this skill was not necessary because 'everyone' that she worked with spoke English;

*"And also I suppose one of my anxieties aswell was communicating with the people here because I don't speak any of the local languages, that was a slight anxiety, although many people speak English ... I've gone to no formal training classes simply because of my role here, I don't need to speak a local language. If I was involved directly in patient care I would need to speak a local language. The course is run English-speaking, everybody is completely English."*  
(Michelle)

When asked whether her inability to speak any of the local languages had caused her any difficulties, Michelle suggested that she had experienced no problems in being able to communicate both in work and outside work. Interestingly, she did not

seem to acknowledge the benefits noted by other respondents of attempting to communicate in people's favoured language;

*[speaking only English has] not been a disadvantage to me work-wise at all. [Outside work] most people, I mean English here is the language of the country, so most people do speak English. I mean, it can be a little bit difficult if people sometimes don't understand me if I'm out in the country. But that's, that's very rare. I wouldn't say its been a problem really at all.*

(Michelle)

Previous research on language in expatriation has emphasised the value of host country language skills in facilitating effective communication and providing access to social situations (e.g. Ward *et al.* 2001). For all but one respondent in this study there was reported to be no practical need to speak a local language in order to communicate with many host nationals. Instead, language appeared to take on a more symbolic role. Respondents reported that learning and attempting to use just a few simple phrases had a positive effect on their acceptance by host nationals. Such efforts were found to tackle cultural barriers, reduce suspicions and to foster a more positive relationship with host nationals. Language appeared to be a tangible manifestation of the expatriates' efforts to understand host nationals and their intention to integrate with the host culture.

## **5.8 Conflicting approaches to work**

Approaches to work in the host culture have previously been highlighted as influencing adjustment to a host culture (e.g. Yavas & Bodur 1999). In international development, McFarlane (2004) suggests that expatriate development workers can face difficulties in organising staff and resources, whilst achievement of their goals may be hindered by the agendas of others (McFarlane 2004), a lack of resources (Ehrenreich & Elliott 2004) and pressures to produce evaluative documentation (Knowles 1998).

### **5.8.1 Attitudes to time**

One of the main issues noted by respondents was the role of time in the host culture. 'African time' was a label used by several respondents to describe the generally laid back approach to life taken by host nationals. This attitude created frustrations at work, but simultaneously meant that life in general was more relaxed for the respondents. Being laid back and relaxed about life and work is something

that is in stark contrast to Western behavioural norms, and respondents were clear that it was their responsibility to adapt to this. This perspective reflected a positive approach to adjustment by these respondents. In reflecting upon the effect of 'African time', several specific issues were identified. These include slow progress and a lack of urgency when completing tasks, and a lack of punctuality in relation to meetings. Such differences can adversely affect the adjustment of the development worker by creating frustration and anxiety as a result of slow progress and what can be viewed as a lack of co-operation from host nationals.

Sue suggested that things happen more slowly in the host culture, without a sense of urgency, noting that this can result in frustrations;

*"... it doesn't take long, a few weeks to realise how things are out here, be it corruption, be it slowness, be it what we would probably deem laziness, but the pace of life is slower, and values are very different. And there doesn't seem to be the urgency in things ... it can be frustrating ..."*

(Sue)

Fiona echoed the view that work is less pressurised, making the point that less is achieved as a result of the laid back approach to work in the host country;

*"... things obviously happen a lot more laid back here in Uganda than they do in the UK ... you don't get as much done here ... the whole general atmosphere is a lot more laid back ... I'm sure if I went back to work in the UK office now it would take me a while to get back up to speed, people'd be like 'why are you taking it so easy?' ... its African time man!"*

(Fiona)

Fiona's comments demonstrate that she had adapted to the pace of work by slowing down to match the work rate of her host national colleagues. She later reflected on how she had initially tried to work in the same way as she had at home, only to realise that this was never going to work;

*"... you maybe turn up for a meeting, a really important meeting, and you're there waiting for three hours, whereas before I'd like schedule three meetings and not make it to any of them on time ... you get to know that things happen in their own time here ..."*

(Fiona)

*"Maybe things are slower here, but who's to say that that's wrong, it's just different. And yeah, I don't think it took me that long to learn just to respect the things that are different here, and not to stress so much ..."*

(Fiona)

Fiona appears to have been able to adjust very quickly to this source of psychological discomfort, and indeed recognised that it was her responsibility to do so. Like Fiona, Jules made the point that it was up to her to adjust to the pace of work and life in the host country, and commented on how she now worked more slowly;

*"... I think I have adapted, I've really tried to adapt, and I work quite slowly now [laughs] myself, at a much slower pace, and I have a lot less expectations of, for example colleagues and, meetings, punctuality ... which have less importance here"*

(Jules)

Sue, Fiona and Jules all worked very closely with host nationals and seemed to quickly learn that things happen more slowly in the host culture. Although they accepted that this was a cultural difference that they had to get used to, Sue did make the point that a relaxed attitude to time could be perceived as laziness. This could cause cultural misunderstandings and create a barrier between expatriates and host nationals, although this did not seem to happen here. Nevertheless, the respondents did report feeling frustrated by the slowness with which things were done, suggesting that different attitudes toward time can contribute to difficulties in adjustment. However these respondents appeared to have adjusted effectively to the host culture, suggesting that this source of frustration had not adversely affected their relationship with host nationals.

### **5.8.2 Task vs. people orientation**

Related to this, attitudes to work were highlighted as being different between expatriates and host nationals. For example Sue noted that personal relationships seemed to be more important in the host culture environment. In her experience this was reflected in a blurring of the boundary between the organisation and the individual. For example, at a basic level she found host national staff to be reluctant to take their annual leave entitlement. However, a more damaging manifestation of this was the continual expectation that the organisation would offer financial support for staff in the form of salary advances and loans. Sue explained at length how she had worked hard both to encourage staff to take their annual leave, but also to think

more about planning their personal finances so that they did not rely on salary advances.

Another aspect of this was the way in which conferences were conducted. Sue reported that at conferences she had attended, everybody's questions were addressed, even when these seemed to repeat previous questions. She attributed this to the host culture placing a high level of importance on everyone having an opportunity to be heard;

*"... we [in the UK] tend to rush about, timing, and urgency, and there I found that everyone likes to have a say in the meeting. If you attend a meeting and there's question and answer time, they won't just say 'well we have no more time for questions' when there's still five people with their hands up. They will answer every question, and it will always be a five minute answer for each. Then it also helps you realise that people, Ugandans place a lot of importance on that, having input. Sometimes you find they're all repeating each other in their questions, just wording it slightly, but, you know, they like to voice their opinions, so that was useful to know."*

(Sue)

This is another manifestation of the host culture's people orientation which respondents found difficult to get used to. Ingrid was more formal in her analysis of some of the tensions that she had experienced, reporting that with hindsight she had approached work with a task orientation whereas local staff had a clear people orientation. This difference, she reflected, had resulted in her being perceived as being too forceful and lacking in concern for those that she worked with;

*"... I was task oriented and Ugandans are people-oriented and that clashed, and I think that's the reason why my contract at that time was not extended, for setting up that school ... [At] that time I didn't understand it, [but] now that I'm down the line I see that ... my communication style was too direct. I was very much task-oriented, where people here are people-oriented. I was very independent, where people here are very much group and consensus-like."*

(Ingrid)

Mia also observed that expatriates have a task orientation, attributing this to the transient nature of expatriate life and the fact that expatriates are in the host country to fulfil a specific purpose;

*"... but I think there's a degree of superficiality in peoples' lives like this, because you're all transient. [E]verybody you meet in the expatriate community has different degrees of being transient, some people are about to leave, and some people have just arrived, and some people have been here in the middle."*

(Mia)

*"I wouldn't say, its not really superficial, because my life here is very much my work, yeah, I work a lot and I have a young child, so I, you know, but yes, its my work, that's also why I'm here."*

(Mia)

The experiences and observations of Sue, Ingrid and Mia suggest that host nationals can have a different work orientation to that of expatriates. The task orientation of expatriates observed by these respondents conflicted with the people orientation of host nationals. As Ingrid found, this can result in misunderstandings as expatriates are perceived to be too focused on achievement at the expense of working relationships.

The experiences of the respondents identify frustrations that may arise due to different attitudes to work between expatriates and host nationals. Sue, Fiona and Jules found that host nationals' relaxed attitude to time caused frustrations as meetings were delayed and over-ran, and less was achieved due to a general lack of urgency amongst host national staff. Whilst all three respondents recognised that this was a cultural trait and made an effort to adjust to it, they continued to be frustrated at the slower rate of progress that resulted. Ingrid, Sue and Mia reported different work orientations between expatriates and host nationals. They each offered evidence that expatriates tended to be task-oriented, whilst host nationals were people-oriented. This caused problems especially for Ingrid, who recalled how she had been heavily criticised for being too direct in her communication as a result of her focus on results.

These findings therefore offer some support for previous studies which suggest that different approaches to work can influence adjustment (e.g. Yavas & Bodur 1999). However, the findings extend previous work by identifying specific differences that contributed to adjustment difficulties for the respondents in this expatriation context. In particular, it was found that relaxed attitudes to time and a tension between task- and people-orientations resulted in frustration for the respondents. Whilst conflicting attitudes to time caused little more than frustration, the task-orientation of the respondents put them into conflict with host nationals, thereby adversely affecting sociocultural adjustment.

## 5.9 Cultural distance between urban and rural areas

The respondents that had experienced both urban and rural areas in the same host country reported how each represented a very different living and working environment. Jules noted how there was a dual process of adjustment, having first to adjust to the urban area (where many expatriates have some form of induction programme), and then undergoing a further period of adjustment to the rural environment;

*"... the cultural shock, the culture between towns in Uganda and the rural areas is huge as well ... you're coming to Uganda and thinking the town's a cultural shock, and then the biggest cultural shock is going to the rural areas ..."*

(Jules)

Similarly, Fiona reported that communication difficulties at the beginning of her time in a rural area had caused feelings of exclusion and isolation;

*"... the first two weeks were tough ... you're out in real Ugandan rural life ... the teachers didn't really speak to me in the first three weeks, which I later found out wasn't cos they disliked me, but because they couldn't understand me properly... But those first three weeks I just felt, especially like all this life was going on in front of me and I was just standing outside and nobody was communicating with me properly..."*

(Fiona)

Fiona's experience highlights how an inability to communicate effectively can contribute to psychological discomfort associated with feelings of isolation, and is consistent with Oguri & Gudykunst (2002) who argue that both psychological and sociocultural adjustment are affected by the ability to communicate effectively.

Winnette described how the transition from urban to rural areas had caused her some difficulties as the two areas are so distinct from each other;

*"The first month I spent in Kampala [the capital of Uganda], and a lot of people speak English there so its easy to communicate and to start getting to know [the] culture ... in an easy way, not struggling with your language. Being able to talk. So the first month I really enjoyed, it was like on top of the mountain 'yes, I'm here, I'm going to do many nice things, meeting many nice people', the first month was no problem."*

(Winnette)

*"... I was ... in the villages where nobody speaks English, so somebody takes you alongside and you feel like a two year old again, going to [laughs] nursery, not knowing the language, not knowing the culture. The whole day I couldn't speak one word [of] English except from talking to my translator. And I just felt like, at home, I was doing my job, using my skills, and I was somebody, and all of a sudden I was nobody. Nobody knew me, I didn't speak the language, I just felt a stranger..."*  
(Winnette)

In particular it was suggested that it was easier to adjust to the urban environment as it was more 'Westernised', whilst the host culture was much stronger in the rural areas. Fiona noted how she found her life easier in an urban area;

*"... my life is more Western here [in a town] than it was when I lived in the village which does make it easier ..."*

(Fiona)

John also found the urban areas to be more Western, describing the presence of a large supermarket and shopping centre;

*"... when the new Uchumi supermarket at Garden City opened ... which is like this huge shopping mall, and [when] I first went there, it was quite shocking, I really couldn't wait to get away 'cause it was just like being in Reading or Basingstoke or somewhere ... except that it was mostly Africans, Ugandans there rather than Basingstoke people."*

(John)

Similarly, Jules reflected on how the host culture was more distinct in the rural areas;

*"And the cultural traditions are so strong [in the villages]"*

(Jules)

Sue had also found that people in the urban areas are more Westernised, giving the example of host national friends that she had in an urban area;

*"... my Ugandan friends in Kampala ... I probably get on with them very well because they're quite Westernised, they've been to the UK and America a lot, so we understand each other's cultures a bit more ..."*

(Sue)

These experiences illustrate a two-stage process of adjustment, adjusting first to the urban area and then again to the rural area. These findings suggest that issues of

isolation can arise when moving from urban to rural areas as a result of greater cultural distance, manifested as greater use of local languages and stronger evidence of the host culture. This suggests that the concept of cultural distance (Ward & Chang 1997) should perhaps be applied within the host country as well as between the home and host countries, and that the location within the host country can be significant in the sociocultural adjustment process. For respondents in this study, the relationship with host nationals appeared to be easier in urban rather than rural areas.

## **5.10 Living conditions**

One of the key benefits of NGOs is their ability to reach the poorest and most marginalised communities (Knowles 1998). Furthermore, their closeness to local communities enables them to adapt readily to local needs (Willis 2005). Many beneficiaries that NGOs work with are located in remote rural areas, isolated from communications and other infrastructure (Knowles 1998). This has implications for the living conditions of development workers who may find themselves living in areas with limited access to electricity, running water and reliable communications. This, it may be argued, presents physical and emotional challenges whilst making it difficult to re-establish familiar routines. McFarlane (2004) also suggested that development workers may live and work in conditions of recent or ongoing conflict, arguing that this can present threats to their security and wellbeing.

### **5.10.1 Security issues**

Previous research (e.g. McFarlane 2004; Thompson 1997) suggests that development workers may live and work in locations that are experiencing ongoing conflict, and that this presents a threat to the security and consequently the adjustment of the individual. Whilst none of the respondents in this study were in areas of ongoing conflict, the issue of security did nevertheless arise.

Fiona reported having been the victim of burglary. Whilst this may be viewed as a relatively minor incident, the effect on her wellbeing was significant. Fiona commented on how the theft had made her feel lonely, illustrating how such incidents can lead to feelings of insecurity that are exacerbated by being away from familiar surroundings. This event had clearly compounded feelings of isolation;

*“... all my clothes got stolen, I'd left my window open a little bit one day and some guy had dragged, managed to drag my chair over which had all my clothes neatly piled on it, so all my clothes got stolen, and felt very lonely and very away from home.”*

(Fiona)

John reported having experienced some “nasty incidents” whilst living in a village, but was not willing to elaborate on this. He did however illustrate the general security situation in Kampala by describing the circumstances in which he lived;

*“where I live in Kampala now, we have a 24-hour guard, armed guard, panic buttons in the house, a wall like this [gesturing to a 12 foot high brick wall], but it has razor wire and glass, broken glass on the top ... I wouldn't live without that in Kampala ...”*

(John)

However, John pointed out that this wasn't a response to specific threats against expatriate development workers, but rather that these were considered to be sensible precautions;

*“Although I think Uganda is very safe ... you can't drive places at night, there are some kind of considerations that you just, and even those things stop being a restriction, they're just things that you don't do, everywhere there's things that you don't do.”*

(John)

Indeed he went on to suggest that Kampala was a safe place to live;

*“Its primarily very very safe, and you know I think Kampala is one of the safest African capitals, its really, you don't feel threatened.”*

(John)

John had clearly accepted the need to take certain safety precautions, and did not allow these to create any anxieties about his safety. Such precautions appear to be very different to those that John might have taken in his home country (the UK), and for some expatriates this could contribute to feelings of anxiety and vulnerability. Indeed, Michelle reported feeling slightly anxious about having to take security precautions. This was attributed to her having not lived outside a secure compound before;

*“... it was the first time I'd lived out in a house rather than on a work compound before. So initial anxieties about living somewhere, I was living on my own initially, having to have a guard at night for your home security. Slight anxieties, but nothing, nothing much...”*

(Michelle)

So although none of the respondents were living or working in areas of ongoing conflict, some concerns about security were nevertheless raised. However, the respondents generally appeared to feel quite safe. The security issues that were raised appeared to reflect sensible safety precautions taken by everyone, and as a result there appeared to be a degree of acceptance of such measures. Indeed John made the point that it is necessary to take safety precautions wherever you live, and that his host country was no exception.

However, although John appeared to have adjusted to the need for different forms of security, and accepted these as a normal part of his life, Michelle reported some anxiety about the need for such security. She did not therefore appear to have fully adjusted to the need for safety precautions, and was more conscious of their presence. These findings therefore suggest that security does influence adjustment insofar as it is necessary to accept the need for different security practices that reflect norms of behaviour in the host country, and to establish routines that reflect these practices. In the (African) host countries that respondents worked in, such practices included living in a secure compound with an armed guard, and avoiding going out after dark. These findings offer support for previous research that identifies security issues as influencing adjustment (e.g. McFarlane 2004), but extends this by suggesting that security issues can also influence adjustment in areas that are not experiencing ongoing conflict.

### **5.10.2 Availability and reliability of resources**

The living conditions in urban and rural areas were reported to be very different. John described the conditions in which he lived whilst in one of the villages;

*“when I had my first house I had two tiny little rooms, just with no ceiling, no mossie nets or anything, absolutely mosquito and roach infested ... I had my little gas fire with a cylinder ... ironing clothes with charcoal irons ...”*

(John)

He later contrasted this with his living conditions in the capital city, suggesting that urban areas offered the opportunity to have better quality accommodation. Jules was perhaps more explicit in describing how rural areas have limited access to resources which presents an adjustment challenge by influencing living conditions;

*"... the biggest cultural shock is going to the rural areas, having no electricity, no running water, having to cook with all the local food ..."*

(Jules)

Brett (1980:101) defines adjustment as the "...re-establishment of routines that provide valued outcomes and feelings of control that are predictable". The re-establishment of routines is an integral part of the adjustment process, perhaps as it contributes feelings of familiarity and control. However, it has also been suggested that the living conditions faced by development workers can affect their ability to re-establish such routines. Respondents in this study considered the extent to which it was valuable to attempt to re-establish familiar routines, concluding that this was not always possible or desirable.

John spoke at length about his adjustment, noting an initial desire to fight against the cultural differences that caused him to feel uncomfortable. This, he suggested, was manifested in attempts to recreate the home environment in the host country;

*"And as you try, as you let go of your life at home, and you bring a lot with you, and want it to be like that ..."*

(John)

He later described how he had tried to create a link with home by establishing a familiar environment in his accommodation;

*"... you get some kind of settlement allowance to buy some things, so I went and bought all this new kit and all these pots and pans and plates and glasses and had my house, and did my curtains, and made this lovely little thing, and trying to deny the fact that outside my door three goats and two cows were tethered and crapping everywhere, and there were a hundred kids staring through the windows at me..."*

(John)

Similarly, Winnette reported how she had initially relied upon the comfort of the 'Western world' that she had created in the house that she shared with another Western expatriate;

*"Sometimes, especially in the first six months I felt very comfortable in my own house. I was sharing a house with a Scottish lady, and there was our small Western world, and I really needed that. And the days off I would spend just at home just being in my own world. And I really had to push myself out and start enjoying my time off, with Ugandan friends for example or going out, or just go and do some shopping. To be in the real world, the real world here, not trying to create another world. At the beginning I needed it, but I still feel like I need to take the effort to have, to be in comfort in Uganda."*

(Winnette)

In the quote above, Winnette also recognises the need to accept that hiding behind familiarity is not a sustainable solution, and describes the efforts that she later began to make in order to expose herself to the host culture. John was more specific in reflecting on how he had gradually realised that it was necessary to adapt to local ways of doing things. This included accepting that the electricity supply was unreliable, and that he therefore needed to use local approaches to lighting and ironing in particular;

*"[Local people iron their] clothes with charcoal irons, which are fantastic, its just like a box full of charcoal that you take off the burner, and that's what you use to iron. And these are things that I do now, I do all my cooking now on charcoal, I have a charcoal iron because every other day the power goes off, and you can't rely on power. I used to hate having no power and having to read by lantern, by storm lantern, and now I turn the lights off and read by candlelight or storm lantern 'cause I prefer it."*

(John)

Nevertheless, John suggested that everyone needs something to remind them of home;

*"... I mean everyone has their sort of little, touchstone comforts, whether its just, Marmite, or getting magazines sent over ..."*

(John)

These experiences suggest that whilst the re-establishment of familiar routines is theoretically important to adjustment (e.g. Brett 1980), this is not always possible or desirable. The findings showed how the creation of a familiar environment could encourage the expatriate to build barriers between themselves and host nationals. The comfort of familiarity appeared to contribute to initial feelings of psychological adjustment, but subsequently led to feelings of isolation and reduced effort to interact with the host culture. The avoidance of contact with host nationals clearly impedes the process of sociocultural adjustment. It may therefore be argued that effective adjustment relies on attempts to avoid the re-establishment of familiar

routines, although this would initially be difficult and counter-intuitive. Further, the findings suggest that some routines are not replicable due to resource constraints. This was shown to influence the acceptance of local ways of doing things, which subsequently appeared to contribute to the adjustment process. The findings therefore appear to be inconsistent with Brett's (1980) definition of adjustment as the re-establishment of familiar routines, suggesting that such an approach may only have short term benefits.

### **5.11 The effect of role clarity**

Lack of role clarity can contribute to ineffective adjustment, a suggestion that is consistent with the use of realistic job previews (Wanous 1980). Role clarity is clearly as important for an expatriate as it is for someone taking a new role in their home country. In the context of expatriate adjustment, Forster (1997a) highlights the importance of clear job descriptions and statements of objectives, and Kealey & Protheroe (1996) identify the significance of an understanding of the realities of the post in influencing expatriate adjustment. With specific reference to expatriate development workers, McFarlane (2004) found that uncertainty and a lack of role clarity could be linked with pre-departure anxiety and distress whilst Hechanova (2003) went further in suggesting that a lack of role clarity was a precursor to less effective adjustment. Linked to this is the role of idealistic, romanticised notions of humanitarianism held by inexperienced development workers. This leads to emotional conflict and disappointment when these images are dispelled by the realities of the experience. This, it is suggested by McFarlane (2004) leads to disappointment and later to psychological distress.

The extent to which the respondents had clearly defined roles varied. Whilst some respondents appeared to have quite clearly defined roles (e.g. Michelle, Mia, Gwion), others found themselves in more dynamic situations (e.g. Mark, John, Sue, Sheila). Michelle in particular had a very clear role – to design and deliver a distance learning programme providing specialist training for African health professionals in caring for terminally ill patients. Her professional experience appeared to help her to plan her role in advance of departure;

*"I think from my own background, in specialist palliative care and education in the UK, I knew some of what would be involved in setting up a course. I knew what sort of groundwork I needed to do, I knew who I needed to meet immediately like the people at the university here, people within the hospice, people at the hospital, I knew people I needed to set down initial meetings with, and also initial documentations and papers that I needed to read to be able to start my own preparation."*

(Michelle)

This evidence of detailed planning suggests that Michelle was able to engage in a positive period of anticipatory adjustment (Black *et al.* 1991). She appeared able to add detail to the basic role description that she had been provided based on her professional experience. This experience enabled her to create realistic expectations, for example about the availability of teaching resources, which subsequently allowed her to carry out appropriate preparation before departure;

*"... I did a lot of preparation in collecting background literature to bring for the distance learning, particularly looking at literature that I knew I wouldn't be able to get hold of over here. Setting up contacts back in the UK that I would be able to get support in getting literature, because we need that very much for our course, so I set that up in place."*

(Michelle)

This supports the view in the cross-cultural training literature (e.g. Caligiuri *et al.* 2001) that information is important in creating realistic expectations, but suggests that this does not necessarily have to be provided by the sending organisation. Upon arrival in the host country, Michelle went through a short self-directed orientation period. Whilst this was independently directed, it reflects the view that expatriates undergo a period of on-site socialisation (e.g. Selmer *et al.* 1998). For Michelle, this appeared to be largely focused on her role, and involved making visits to hospitals, organising meetings with key contacts, drafting course materials, reading documentation and adding detail to her job description. So it seemed that Michelle was very task-focused both in her preparation and in-country orientation. This may have been influenced by her previous experience of the host country, supporting the value of previous host country experience as a selection criterion. Michelle's experience appeared to enable her to create mental pictures of how things might be this time, and to identify potential sources of difficulty along with possible coping strategies;

*“Just thinking about it, just running through how I felt it was going to be, thinking about things that could, and I suppose its more reflecting back over what it had been like before, and thinking about how it could be this time.”*

(Michelle)

*“... I think also spending time reflecting on how it had been before, and taking time to think about what were my expectations ... I think a lot of reflection and thinking back as to how it had been, and thinking about the things that I'd found difficult, and how I was going to cope with these when I was here this time.”*

(Michelle)

Mia was the most experienced respondent, having worked for many years for several development organisations in a number of countries. This experience seemed to lead her to feel quite comfortable in adjusting to her new role. Whilst she was not explicit in suggesting that her role was clearly defined, she noted that working for a large and established sending organisation was beneficial as it offered a degree of structure and familiarity to the experience;

*“... I've been out for many many years, so ... to come here was, I would say, not particularly difficult ... and you come into an organisation which has already been set up ... [name of sending organisation] is an old organisation with structures and procedures, and terms and conditions.”*

(Mia)

Mia reported that she was very comfortable in the host country. She attributed this to several factors, including her previous experience and knowledge of anthropology, role clarity and satisfaction, the practical support received from her sending organisation and her colleagues, and her high (relative to local) salary which enabled her to live a comfortable life which avoided many of the problems that she may otherwise have faced.

Mia made the interesting point that expatriate life, for her at least, is task-focused. She noted that expatriate life is transitory, based on a series of short term contracts, and that the reason for being in the host country is to fulfil some particular role. This task-based view offers support for the evidence presented by McFarlane (2004) and Hechenova (2003) that role clarity is significant in influencing adjustment in the development context. Mia appeared to slot easily into her role as Country Coordinator for a major international NGO. She suggested that her adjustment was much easier as she was taking on a clear role within a well-established organisation. She contrasted this with her early-career experiences in less formal roles. As well as

being very experienced in the field of international development, she had also held a number of expatriate posts of varying types. She suggested that she had received a lot of support from her sending organisation in terms of preparation and the handover of her post. Her experience highlights the role of the sending organisation in creating a set of realistic expectations, but also the influence of experience in helping an individual to create their own set of expectations.

The expatriate selection literature argues that technical competence has no influence on the ability to adjust to host cultures (e.g. Dowling *et al.* 1994). However, Mia's experience suggests that professional experience (in her case as a Country-Coordinator) contributes to effective adjustment by aiding the creation of accurate pre-departure expectations about the role. Furthermore, her general overseas experience enabled her to create accurate expectations about challenges and effective coping mechanisms. Mia's experiences consequently offer support for the use of professional and overseas experience as selection criteria. Indeed the findings presented in Chapter Five are consistent with this, showing that significant proportions of UK-based NGOs consider these criteria to be important in their selection of expatriate development workers.

Gwion was perhaps the least experienced respondent, with his current post being his first. He travelled to the host country as part of a team, and had been involved in pre-project planning. Whilst he had some idea what his role might involve, he was not entirely clear. His brief was 'to manage and supervise construction [of an incinerator] and to implement a waste management system'. He noted in particular that 'managing and supervising construction' is a very broad phrase which can mean a lot of different things. He was also not clear what stage the project would have reached by the time he arrived;

*"Before leaving I had some idea as to what the project was (i.e. constructing the incinerator and implementing the waste management system) but I wasn't perfectly clear as to what exactly my role would be, 'managing and supervising construction' is quite a broad term. I was also not perfectly clear as to exactly what stage the project would be at when I arrived."*

(Gwion)

So, although Gwion in some ways had a clear professional focus to his activity, the exact nature of his role was less clear. Although he didn't report being especially anxious because of this lack of clarity, it certainly meant that he was not in a position

to prepare fully for his role before departure. This contrasts with Michelle's ability to engage in a process of pre-departure preparation which aided her anticipatory adjustment. Indeed Gwion later noted that much of his contact with people at home during his project was to seek technical advice on aspects of the construction. Had he received a clear and accurate role description he may have been able to assemble relevant materials before departure. One may suggest also that his lack of both professional and development experience limited his ability to fill in gaps in his brief, whereas Michelle was able to use her professional experience to fill gaps in her role description.

John found himself in a very dynamic situation. He initially went out to do one job, but found that this changed very quickly due a variety of issues. He went on to suggest that this was a common problem in development due to the dynamic nature of the environment, time lags, and changes in need;

*"there is always a great difficulty between what the job is supposed to be on paper ... and what actually you find yourself doing, particularly after maybe a year in-country. It's a challenge that we're still trying to deal with, of getting accurate jobs, and that's because of an enormous number of variables, the time lag between a placement being set up and someone arriving, the different skills and experience that person will come with, the changes that might take place in the organisation mean that they ask for one thing, with a list of kind of skills and responsibilities and duties, and then you actually find you're doing something quite different."*

(John)

The significant change in John's role did not appear to affect his well-being. Indeed he was initially apprehensive about his original role, doubting whether he had the necessary skills;

*"The job that I was coming to do, I was quite worried that it was more adult literacy than English, and I'd had contacts with the employer through VSO and had been assured 'no, no your CV looks great...', but I couldn't see how an adult literacy programme was going to work ... where the language that's being taught and used to develop literacy skills is a language I have no experience of, and I'm not a particularly strong linguist, so I was really worried about how that was going to work out, and whether I'd be able to communicate. So there was quite a lot of anxiety that ... I didn't have the right skills."*

(John)

John's flexibility undoubtedly enabled him to adapt to the changes in his role. However, his experience emphasises one of the shortcomings of information-based training, especially in the dynamic environment of international development. It is

argued that information-based training contributes to the creation of accurate expectations (e.g. Caligiuri et al. 2001), and that these expectations lead to effective anticipatory adjustment (Black et al. 1991). However, the translation of effective anticipatory adjustment to effective in-country adjustment is dependent on the accuracy and completeness of the information provided (e.g. Forster 1997a; Yavas & Bodur 1999). This highlights the potential difficulty in establishing role clarity in a dynamic operating environment.

In contrast, Sue had experienced incremental changes to her role. Sue commented that although she had received a fairly clear job description, she had added to it to reflect changes that had occurred during her time in the post;

*“and I’ve written a job description for myself which was largely written before I came out but I’ve made amendments since I’ve been out here, and they’ve also asked me to come up with some sort of person specification, so what type of person as well do they need to replace me with.”*

(Sue)

However, despite having a fairly clear job description before departure, Sue suggested that she did not feel a need to prepare for her role. This was quite different to the approach taken by Michelle, who seemed to prepare thoroughly before departure. This, Sue suggested, was because she felt it was easy to gauge how things work;

*“I didn’t really do any preparation in terms of my work, because as I say I think you only need to be out here a few weeks and you can really ... gauge how it is to work out here. ...I was here in 1997 for six weeks, so it just gave me a backing, and I know people that have been out here, and I’ve met Ugandans, so in terms of how I prepared myself it was more just, getting the other things organised, like practical things...”*

(Sue)

However, Sue’s role was a general supervisory one, whereas Michelle’s was a professional one. Hence Sue’s confidence in her understanding of Ugandan approaches to work was considered sufficient preparation for her role.

Sue and John demonstrated the value of a flexible attitude together with the benefit of previous experience in supporting this flexibility. John was apprehensive about his original role, but was flexible enough to accept a substantially different role when this was offered. His previous experience in development may have helped him to

adapt to this change. Similarly Sue was confident that her limited previous experience of the host country together with her job description had prepared her adequately for her task to the point that she did not feel the need to prepare for her job.

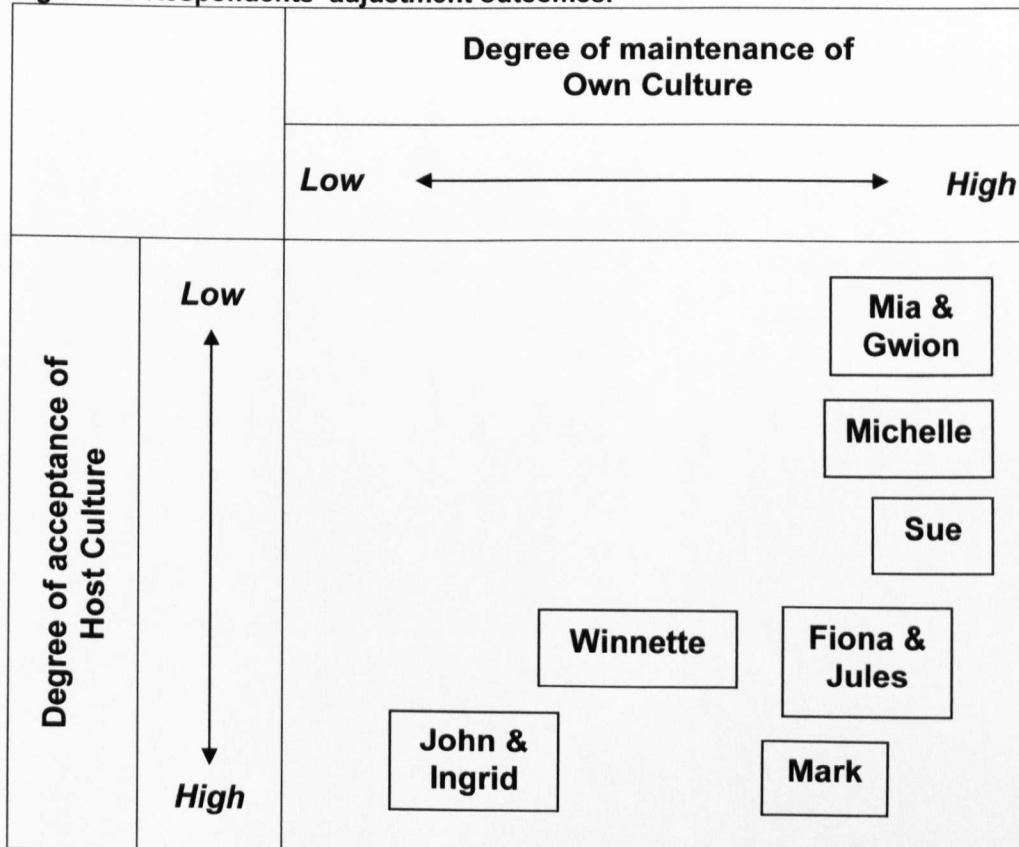
In summary, respondents that had clear roles seemed to use this to plan their activity in advance, and were able to prepare for their task more fully before arrival in the host country. The availability of such information and its subsequent use by these respondents appears to support the argument that role clarity can aid the process of anticipatory adjustment (Black *et al.* 1991). Interestingly, the experiences of Michelle and Mia seemed to suggest that role clarity could come from previous professional experience, and not necessarily from a clear job description. Indeed some respondents (Sue, Michelle) reported that part of their role had involved developing their own job description. The findings therefore suggest that role clarity is not necessarily achieved in advance of departure, nor is it necessarily developed through the provision of a written job description. Instead, it can be achieved after arrival in the host country, and can be developed informally through a professional understanding of role requirements. These findings support the value of role information in creating accurate expectations and facilitating a period of anticipatory adjustment (Black *et al.* 1991). However, the findings counter the view in the cross-cultural training literature that the provision of role information is a key component of pre-departure training programmes (e.g. Kealey & Protheroe 1996) by indicating that role information can be derived from sources other than information-based training.

These findings offer support for previous research which argues that role clarity can influence adjustment (e.g. Hechanova 2003; McFarlane 2004). However, the findings suggest that flexibility is needed in the development context as job roles can change, which can present difficulties in translating effective anticipatory adjustment to effective in-country adjustment. The findings also suggest that role clarity can derive not only from a job description or project brief, but from previous experience (of one's profession, of international development, or of the host country). Finally, the findings provide an insight into the way in which a clear role can enable an individual to prepare fully for their role before departure.

## 5.12 The adjustment outcomes of development workers

Respondents in this study had reached a variety of adjustment outcomes. All appeared to associate themselves with their own culture, the host culture, or both, suggesting that none had become marginalised. Figure 5.1 represents the adjustment outcomes of the respondents using the model introduced in Chapter Two (Figure 2.3);

**Figure 5.1 Respondents' adjustment outcomes.**



John and Ingrid had reached similar outcomes, being highly accepting of the host culture at the expense of maintaining contact with their own cultures. John described how he had been happy to leave home and had looked forward to new experiences and meeting new people. He had been active in seeking acceptance by host nationals, although he acknowledged that he had initially been naïve in his belief that full acceptance was possible. John's efforts were manifested in his avoidance of contact with other expatriates because of the negative consequences that such contact may have on his relationship with host nationals, his dislike of being labelled as an expatriate because of the connotations that this held, and his ready acceptance of local solutions to tasks such as ironing, cooking and lighting. Indeed he actively avoided trying to recreate a Western living environment, preferring

instead to adopt a local lifestyle. John did not appear to seek support from other expatriates, and instead was somewhat critical of the expatriate community (in particular those not involved in development work). Furthermore, he seemed to have distanced himself not only from other expatriates, but from his own culture too. His view of 'home' was of his family and friends, rather than material things that the culture represents, and he appeared to have no intention of returning to a life in the UK in the near future.

Similarly, Ingrid had devoted 25 years of her life to the host country and gave no indication that she intended to leave. Like John, she had reached a high level of acceptance of the host culture at the expense of maintaining contact with her own culture. Ingrid had initially moved to the host country at a time when there were few expatriates, and had consequently learned to live without this source of support. Indeed she noted how at the time there had been no email, poor telephone facilities, and that letters took three weeks to arrive. Against this backdrop, Ingrid had learned to be independent and to not rely upon expatriates for support. She initially made cultural mistakes, some of which had significant consequences for her future in the host country. However, she overcame these and learned from such mistakes to work successfully with host nationals on collaborative projects. She is now very selective about her contact with expatriates, citing differences in attitudes between herself and some other types of expatriate. Indeed she derided expatriates that seek to recreate their Western lives within the host country. It was clear that Ingrid saw her life in the host country and made no reference to a 'home' anywhere else.

Mark had spent eight years in the host country. His anthropological background led him to spend a lot of time and effort learning about the host culture, and he was particularly successful in doing so. As part of this process he wrote reports on different aspects of the host culture, spent the first three years learning one of the local languages, wrote a book in one of the more obscure local languages, spent time living in rural areas, and built his own hut. He had become fluent in one of the local languages, and was able to laugh and joke with host nationals in their own language. He accepted the host culture, and was able to reflect positively on why host nationals behaved in the ways they did. However, in contrast to John and Ingrid, Mark's understanding and acceptance of the host culture had not been at the expense of maintaining contact with his own culture. Contact with his own culture may have been facilitated by his circumstances. He had travelled to the host country with his wife and four other families, which created a ready-made expatriate support

network. Mark's home (where our interview took place) had a strong Western feel to it, and it was clear that he and his family had been quite focused on maintaining this environment. At the time of interview Mark was preparing to return to his home country. Although he did not articulate this directly it was evident that his time in the host country had been a life experience, but one that was never intended to be permanent.

Winnette had reported experiencing culture shock soon after arrival, and had withdrawn from the host culture. This resulted in her staying indoors and trying to recreate a Western world in her house in order to maintain contact with a familiar environment. However, over time she recognised that this was not sustainable, and began to expose herself to the host culture. She did this by seeking opportunities to spend time with host nationals including inviting people to her home. During this time, she maintained contact with her own culture by seeking support from other expatriates and by using visits to friends in the more Westernised capital city as a way of 'escaping' from the host culture. However, she later reported feeling that she did not like being in her own culture that much. Consequently, she began to limit contact with other expatriates whilst continuing to recognise the value of the support that they could provide. As a result, Winnette had reached an adjustment outcome that saw a fair degree of acceptance both of the host culture and her own culture.

Fiona and Jules had reached similar levels of integration. Both demonstrated strong motivation to integrate with the host culture, to break down cultural barriers, and to live and work closely with host nationals. Indeed their original voluntary placements in the host country were based on these principles, and this is what had attracted them to the sending organisation. Jules in particular had worked hard to integrate, initially limiting her contact with other expatriates to facilitate this process. She later recognised the need to maintain contact with other expatriates, citing inherent differences in backgrounds and interests that would always limit mutual understanding. Both Jules and Fiona appeared to be highly accepting of the host culture. Neither was critical of the host culture, despite reflecting on adjustment challenges that they had experienced. Nevertheless, both sought to maintain contact with other expatriates and regularly socialised within the expatriate community as they felt more comfortable in that social environment. Consequently, both had maintained strong links with their own culture whilst developing a good degree of acceptance of the host culture.

Sue reflected on the temporary nature of her time in the host country. She reported feeling as though she was on holiday, and suggested that she had put parts of her life on hold whilst in the host country. This short term view is perhaps consistent with the anticipated duration of her post, together with her motivation to treat the post as a life experience rather than the beginning of a career in international development. Consequently there was a degree of superficiality to Sue's life in terms of her relationship with host nationals. Knowing that she was going to return home drove her to maintain strong contact with her own culture, in particular through the local expatriate community. Simultaneously Sue identified several barriers to her understanding of the host culture, and although she had made efforts to reconcile these, the barriers appeared to remain. Consequently Sue had appeared limited in her acceptance of the host culture whilst maintaining clear links with her own culture, leading to an adjustment outcome between separation and integration.

Similarly, Michelle's adjustment outcome may be described as between separation and integration. Michelle was very work-focused, and this seemed to influence her relationship with host nationals. Whilst she reported having both expatriate and host national friends, she appeared quite distant from the host culture. In particular, Michelle continually emphasised the need to maintain contact with other expatriates as a mechanism for dealing with frustrations and adjustment challenges. She was also dismissive of learning a local language, and was seemingly unwilling to recognise the symbolic value of making this effort to engage with the host culture. As a result she took a somewhat transactional approach to life in the host country rather than seeking to learn about, and be accepted by, host nationals.

Gwion was working on a short term project with two other expatriates, and as a result was living in a hotel / conference centre which had several Western luxuries including a bar, Sky Sports and a widescreen television. He appeared to be quite remote from host nationals, describing few encounters outside the work context. Given that Gwion's exposure to host nationals was principally in the work context it was significant that he identified this as an 'employer-employee' relationship, with himself as the 'employer'. He reflected on how this had created a barrier between himself and his host national colleagues. Although he reported efforts to change this perception of his role, he found this to be ineffective. This had the effect of limiting his acceptance of the host culture as he found it difficult to engage socially with host nationals. Further, the short term nature of his post suggested that he had no real

need to seek further integration and that it was necessary to retain a clear sense of his own culture for his impending return home.

As with Michelle and Gwion, Mia took a work-oriented approach, and presented herself as having no adjustment difficulties. She appeared to live a relatively Western expatriate life, and reported having a large house, her own car and domestic staff to organise her life. This perhaps contributed to her feelings of being well-adjusted, although it is more likely that this had hindered her adjustment by insulating her from the host culture. Having day-to-day transactions carried out by her domestic staff significantly reduced the need for Mia to engage with host nationals outside the workplace, thereby enabling her to function largely outside the host culture. This suggests that Mia had reached a separation adjustment outcome.

In summary, none of the respondents had become marginalised, retaining an association either with the host culture, their own culture, or both. John and Ingrid had reached a state of assimilation, appearing to fully accept the host culture at the expense of maintaining contact with their own. For Ingrid this was the result of 25 years in the host country, whilst there was evidence that John had a similar level of commitment. Winnette had reached a similar outcome, although she continued to maintain some contact with her own culture and recognised the value of doing so. Mark had reached a high level of integration. He appeared to be fully comfortable in the host culture, but maintained clear links with his own culture. Fiona and Jules had reached a lower state of integration, demonstrating a sound degree of acceptance of the host culture whilst continuing to be active in the local expatriate community. Sue, Michelle, Gwion and Mia all took a work-oriented approach, and saw their time in the host country as temporary. This led to varying degrees of acceptance of the host culture together with strong maintenance of their own culture, thereby leading to a separation outcome.

### **5.13 Chapter summary**

This chapter has examined empirical data on the sociocultural adjustment experiences of expatriate development workers. Analysis identified the difficulty of balancing the need for contact with other expatriates with the effect of this on the ability to integrate with the host community. Some respondents appeared motivated to work closely with host nationals, in a manner consistent with the participative development philosophy. However, they found this to present challenges due to the

way in which host nationals related to expatriates, differences that created barriers to mutual understanding and limited opportunities to interact, and the effect of maintaining contact with other expatriates. The findings therefore contribute to understanding of expatriation by suggesting that sociocultural adjustment is more complex in a context where there is a desire and a need to integrate with host nationals in a manner that moves beyond the formation of effective transactional relationships. Consideration was also given to the adjustment outcomes reached by respondents.

The findings must, however, be considered in the context of limitations in the methodology employed. The principal limitation is the nature of the sample. The sample is small, and is not intended to be representative of the expatriate development worker population. The effect of this is to preclude application of the findings to other development workers. As a result the experiences examined in this chapter should be considered to only reflect the individuals that participated in this study.

In examining the sociocultural adjustment of development workers, the role of the individuals' sending organisations emerged as a salient theme. The next chapter explores this theme, beginning with the participants' reflections of the contribution of their sending organisation before proceeding to explore the extent to which their experiences were typical of wider NGO practice.

# CHAPTER SIX

## RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND TRAINING OF EXPATRIATE DEVELOPMENT WORKERS

A predominant theme in the expatriation literature emphasises the importance of the sending organisation in the adjustment process. The contributions of recruitment, selection and cross-cultural training in particular are seen as crucial in preparing the individual and easing the adjustment process. However, the experiences of development workers in this study highlight drawbacks in the normative literature, suggesting that the process is more opportunistic in nature. The empirical work suggests that individual agency may be a stronger influence on the adjustment process than the role played by the sending organisation. To pursue this issue further, the research was broadened to consider the nature and scope of the role of NGOs as sending organisations. In doing so the chapter addresses the third and fourth research objectives;

*RO3: How do expatriate development workers perceive the role of their sending organisation in their adjustment?*

*RO4: How do NGOs recruit, select and train their expatriate development workers?*

By linking the experiences of development workers with current NGO practice this chapter enables conclusions to be drawn about the role that sending organisations have in this expatriation context. This supports the development of recommendations about the way in which NGOs can contribute to the sociocultural adjustment of their expatriate development workers. The chapter begins by evaluating the way in which development workers perceive the role of their sending organisations in their adjustment, before proceeding to consider recruitment, selection and training practice in a broader sample of NGOs.

### **6.1 Reflections on the role of sending organisations**

The previous chapter (Chapter Five) concluded that sociocultural adjustment presents a series of challenges in the international development context. These challenges centre on the demands of balancing the need for contact with other expatriates against the consequences of this for the relationship that was possible with host nationals. Although sociocultural adjustment was found to be both complex

and challenging, all participants had adjusted to the host culture, albeit to varying degrees. According to the expatriation literature, the role of sending organisations is a key determinant of effective adjustment. This suggests that the variation in adjustment between the respondents in this study may be explained by an attendant variation in the role of their sending organisations. The following two sub-sections examine respondents' reflections on the role of their sending organisations.

### **6.1.1 Recruitment and selection experiences**

Experiences of recruitment and selection varied considerably as a result of the different routes that participants had taken to their present posts. One consistent observation, however, was that respondents were proactive and opportunistic in identifying and securing their posts. This was indicative of a peripheral role being played by sending organisations. In particular recruitment was flexible and ad hoc, with informal methods being common. Similarly, respondents were typically selected as a result of their track record as evidenced by professional and/or international experience.

Michelle had travelled independently, having identified an opportunity directly with an organisation in the host country. It was not clear how she was recruited, but her qualifications and professional experience together with prior experience of the host country appeared to be important factors. The importance of professional competence has long been acknowledged in the expatriation literature (e.g. Kealey & Protheroe 1996), although the more recent view is that this does not influence the ability to adjust to the host culture (e.g. Dowling *et al.* 1994). Michelle did not report any general international experience in addition to her previous experience of the host country. Michelle was clear that her previous experience of the host country had helped her to form accurate expectations about her current role. This is consistent with research suggesting that experience facilitates the formation of accurate expectations (e.g. Selmer 2002; Ward & Searle 1990). Similarly, Takeuchi *et al.* (2005a) concluded that culture-specific experience could influence general adjustment, and Black *et al.* (1992) found that the relevance of prior experience moderates its effect on adjustment.

Similarly, Winnette was professionally qualified and experienced, and although she did not have any international development experience she had lived and worked overseas before. Winnette therefore had what Takeuchi *et al.* (2005a) referred to as

'culture non-specific' experience – experience of a country other than the host country. Such experience has been found to be of limited value. Selmer (2002) concluded that culturally-unrelated experience does not assist psychological or sociocultural adjustment, which is consistent with Winnette's reflections. Similarly, Michelle and Jules reflected on how their general international experience had not helped them to adjust to their present host country. Their experience offers support for the view that general international experience can result in the creation of inaccurate expectations which can consequently hinder effective adjustment (e.g. Caligiuri *et al.* 2001). This was particularly emphasised by Jules, who noted that her experience in India had not prepared her at all for her current post in Africa.

Mia could perhaps be described as a 'professional' development worker. She had worked extensively in international development for a number of years both in governmental and non-governmental organisations. She recounted her experiences of recruitment and selection as being very formal and rigorous processes concerned with identifying candidates with the 'right' personality to deal with adjustment challenges. Her experiences are consistent with the senior roles to which she has been appointed during her career, and with the major international NGOs that she has worked in. The emphasis on personality traits identified by Mia is consistent with research that examines the relationship between personality traits and adjustment ability (e.g. Caligiuri 2000b; Harrison *et al.* 1996; Ones & Viswesvaran 1999). Mia was the only participant to refer to personality traits as a selection criterion. This is perhaps a function of the senior roles that formed her recent experience in large international NGOs.

Two of the younger respondents (Fiona and Jules) had been recruited internally for their current posts. Both had previously undertaken a voluntary international placement with a 'gap-year' organisation, and had subsequently been appointed to paid posts with the same organisation. Fiona's experience of the host country was gained during her voluntary placement year, whilst Jules had additional prior experience in Asia and India. Experience of the host country and understanding of the work of the sending organisation were felt by these respondents to have contributed to their selection as well as to their adjustment. Marchington & Wilkinson (1998) suggest that internal recruitment is especially useful as candidates are already familiar with the organisation, a view supported by the experiences of Fiona and Jules.

Similarly, John had been recruited internally. He initially worked as a volunteer with VSO in the host country. This role evolved, and eventually he was offered a paid role working directly for VSO. As with Jules and Fiona, John had been able to demonstrate his competence to the sending organisation as well as having gained direct host country experience.

Sue was highly opportunistic, making effective use of word of mouth to secure her post in the host country. Although she had very limited experience of the host country and no clear professional experience, she did have a keen interest in international development. She contacted her local church, whom she knew to be working on a small scale in the host country, and was offered a post. The post was not clearly defined, and was not due to be advertised, so Sue's timing and persuasiveness together with being known by the sending organisation were key to securing her post. Recruitment by word of mouth is especially effective in small organisations (e.g. Carroll *et al.* 1999), and it is therefore not surprising to find this method in use here.

Ingrid and Mark had both travelled independently to the host country. Ingrid had devoted her life to development work in the host country, having been there for around 25 years. Ingrid had travelled alone, and had established her own programmes rather than working in existing NGOs. Consequently, issues of recruitment and selection did not apply to her. Although Mark travelled as part of a group of five families, the group was only loosely connected to a church as the sending organisation. As with Ingrid, members of the group had largely self-selected rather than being selected by a sending organisation.

In summary, the respondents' experiences examined here suggest that development posts are often filled in a flexible and ad hoc manner. The experiences provide fairly clear evidence of informal methods of recruitment and selection being employed, with several respondents having been recruited internally or through word-of-mouth communication. There is some evidence to suggest that selection decisions were made on the basis of professional and / or international experience. Such informality is consistent with practice in small organisations, but is inconsistent with the literature that advocates a comprehensive approach to expatriate selection. This raises questions about the extent to which these participants' experiences are typical of NGO recruitment and selection practice more broadly. These questions were addressed through the collection of supplementary data from UK-based

NGOs, the results of which are examined in Sections 6.2.1 and 6.2.2. The following section reviews participants' experiences of cross-cultural training and in-country orientation provision by their sending organisation.

### **6.1.2 Cross-cultural training experiences**

Participation in cross-cultural training by respondents was complex and variable as a result of the ways in which individuals had been appointed to their present posts. Indeed in contrast to implicit assumptions in the extant literature, expatriate posts in this context do not appear to be discrete projects with clearly defined start and end points. Instead, the experiences of participants in this study were of evolving roles and moves designed to continue working in the host country.

John had perhaps received the most comprehensive cross-cultural training, having initially been recruited as a VSO volunteer before being appointed to a paid post with the same organisation. VSO's training is widely recognised for its excellence, and covers information-, awareness- and skills-based aspects of life and work overseas in a development context. However, John reflected on the difficulties presented by changes to his job role both prior to departure and shortly after arrival in the host country that for him created discrepancies between the preparation and the in-country reality. This supports the view (e.g. McCaffery 1986) that skills-based training is more useful than specific information as skills are transferable to different situations, with John adding that this aspect of the training fostered a flexible and adaptable approach that enabled him to deal with change and uncertainty. This also endorses the argument that the effectiveness of information-based training is inherently limited by the extent to which the information is complete and up-to-date (e.g. Forster 1997a; Yavas & Bodur 1999).

Fiona and Jules had also received formal pre-departure training, and had participated in an in-country orientation as part of their voluntary placement with the sending organisation. As with John, this was not designed for their current post, but was nevertheless considered important in aiding their adjustment. The pre-departure training was principally information-based, and was not considered to be very helpful. In particular it was suggested that it was difficult to relate to information about the host country and culture as it was being provided out of context. Indeed Jules had subsequently become responsible for redeveloping the pre-departure training for future volunteers. The in-country orientation was found to be more

useful, focusing on awareness and skills delivered through structured interactions with host nationals. These experiences counter the intuitive need for pre-departure training by suggesting that in-country approaches can be more effective, thereby supporting the findings of Selmer (2001c).

Consistent with this suggestion, Winnette did not receive any pre-departure training, but instead participated in a one-month in-country orientation programme. In common with several respondents, Winnette carried out independent pre-departure preparation which included extensive reading about the host country and the experiences of other expatriates, and speaking with other people with relevant experience. Self-directed preparation of this kind was evident in several participants. However, this does not appear to be typical of commercial expatriates, with Waxin and Panaccio (2005) noting that only a small number of managers in their study compensated for limitations in training provision by seeking to prepare themselves. Waxin and Panaccio (2005) also cited Cerdin (1996) as finding that just 1.7% of French managers in their study attempted to train themselves independently of their sending organisation. However, Winnette reflected on the inadequacy of her independent preparation as the in-country reality was found to differ from the information that she had obtained before departure. This offers further support for the view that information-based preparation relies upon that information being complete, current and relevant (Forster 1997a). Nevertheless, the process of engaging in such preparation doubtless aids the reduction of uncertainty and thereby contributes to the creation of conditions that serve to enhance the effectiveness of subsequent training (Kealey & Protheroe 1996). For Winnette, and other respondents, a particular challenge both for obtaining relevant information and for the effectiveness of the in-country orientation was the cultural distance between urban and rural areas in the host country (see Chapter Five, Section 5.9). Winnette's in-country orientation was carried out in the capital city, which was relatively Westernised and therefore offered a different view of the host culture to that which was subsequently experienced in the rural area that Winnette was to later work in. Fiona and Jules' experience of in-country orientation was perhaps more positive as this took place in rural areas, which was consistent with where they were to later work.

Michelle did not receive any formal pre-departure or post-arrival support as she travelled independently to the host country. Instead she carried out her own preparation, apparently focusing almost entirely on work issues. Michelle used her

professional experience to plan her work and to gather resources that she would need for her role, as well as making practical arrangements for travel to the host country (e.g. organising vaccinations). This approach is consistent with information-based training in that Michelle was seeking to reduce uncertainty by creating accurate expectations about her role (e.g. Caligiuri *et al.* 2001). In contrast to Winnette, Michelle did not acknowledge any limitations in her independent preparation. Gwion took a similar approach in trying to reduce uncertainties, but did so by researching the host country using the internet and by speaking to colleagues with international experience. He found this approach to independent preparation to be satisfactory.

Sue did not receive any formal support from her sending organisation, probably as a result of its size and very limited use of expatriate staff. However in contrast to other respondents she did not engage in extensive research about the host country, although she did acknowledge carrying out practical preparations such as organising a work permit and vaccinations. She justified her approach by referring to her prior knowledge of the host country. This was gained during a six-week visit, and seemed to have given her confidence rather than in-depth knowledge of the host country and culture. Nevertheless, she reflected on her approach, suggesting that it had been largely effective as it did not take long to learn how to function in the host country. She did, though, acknowledge that with hindsight her adjustment may have been quicker if she had received some form of induction.

Mia did not report receiving any formal preparation from her current sending organisation. However, she was highly experienced, and was perhaps assumed to be capable of adjusting effectively to the host culture. This is consistent with the argument earlier in this chapter that sending organisations may seek to appoint experienced development workers in order to minimise the need to provide cross-cultural training. Her sending organisation did, though, provide practical support for example in arranging visas, accommodation and hiring domestic staff. Such support may be argued to contribute to the reduction of pre-departure anxieties as it serves to remove some sources of potential concern.

Ingrid also did not receive pre-departure training for her current role. This is perhaps not surprising as she had travelled independently to the host country 25 years ago. Reflecting on the value of cross-cultural training for others she noted that such training could be useful, but only if the individual has the right attitude to be able to

apply the knowledge gained. This view makes a useful contribution to the nature-nurture debate (see Chapter Three, Section 3.3) in suggesting that the effectiveness of even information-based training may be dependent on the ability of the individual to apply the information to the adjustment process.

In summary, the experiences of respondents suggest that cross-cultural training is not commonly provided by sending organisations before departure even when the individual is inexperienced. Where respondents had received such training this tended to have been associated with voluntary roles earlier in their development careers. Instead, individuals appear to have taken responsibility for their own pre-departure preparation. This was principally information-based, with individuals researching the host country and culture through a combination of published information and the experiences of others. There was more evidence of the provision of in-country orientations, and these were reported to be relatively useful as they took place within the host culture. However, difficulties were also reported with in-country orientations. These were associated with the cultural distances observed between urban and rural areas, suggesting a need to carry out orientations in locations that reflect the actual location in which the individual will work. These findings address the third research objective by exploring the way in which participants had been supported by their sending organisations. The limited exposure of these participants to formal cross-cultural training together with a reliance on self-directed, independent preparation is inconsistent with the expatriation literature that advocates a comprehensive approach to training. This raises questions about the extent to which the experiences of these participants are typical of wider NGO training practice. These questions were addressed through the collection of supplementary data from UK-based NGOs, the results of which are examined in Section 6.2.3.

## ***6.2 Recruiting, selecting and training development workers***

As already noted, examining the recruitment, selection and cross-cultural training experiences raised questions about the extent to which the experiences of participants in this study were typical of wider NGO practice. This led to the development of the fourth research objective (RO4). This section introduces supplementary empirical data from a survey of reported recruitment, selection and cross-cultural training practice in UK-based NGOs. The first sub-section examines the use and reported effectiveness of alternative recruitment sources.

### 6.2.1 Recruiting expatriate development workers

Chapter Three argued that recruitment plays an important role in minimising expatriate failure by ensuring that selection decisions can be made from a suitable pool of candidates (e.g. Watson 1994). However, it was also suggested that there has been almost no research attention paid to the recruitment of expatriate staff. This, it was suggested, is a result of expatriate posts often being used either as part of career development programmes (e.g. Mendenhall *et al.* 1987), or to exert control over overseas business units (e.g. Adler & Ghadar 1990), both of which suggest an emphasis on selection from existing staff. In Section 6.1.1 internal recruitment was found to be common to several participants, with the less-experienced individuals having undertaken voluntary placements before being offered a paid role with the same sending organisation. However, it was not clear how all participants were recruited to their current post. NGOs do not use expatriates for the same reasons as commercial organisations, which raises questions about the extent to which the experiences of these participants are typical of broader NGO recruitment practice.

Respondents to the survey of UK-based NGOs were asked to rate the effectiveness of each source of candidates for expatriate development worker posts that they use on a 7-point Likert-style scale (1= not effective, 7= very effective). Table 6.1 summarises the reported use and effectiveness of the recruitment sources.

**Table 6.1 Summary of use and reported effectiveness of recruitment sources.**

Recruitment source	Proportion of NGOs using this source	Proportion of NGOs using the source reporting it as <b>ineffective</b>	Proportion of NGOs using the source reporting it as <b>satisfactory</b>	Proportion of NGOs using the source reporting it as <b>effective</b>	Mean rating by those using the source (scale 1-7)
Word of mouth	96%	25%	4%	71%	5.0
Advertising specific posts	88%	10%	24%	67%	5.0
Internal recruitment	81%	29%	0%	71%	4.8
Speculative applications	81%	50%	20%	30%	3.4
External database (eg. RedR)	46%	64%	27%	9%	3.2
Other	0%	-	-	-	-

n=26

### **Word of mouth**

As NGOs often have limited resources and therefore may seek to minimise the cost of recruitment by using informal methods, respondents were asked about the effectiveness of word of mouth communication in recruiting staff for overseas assignments. Almost all respondents (96%) reported using this as a source of candidates. Of those that reported using word of mouth, nearly three-quarters (71%) rated it as effective, whilst one-quarter (25%) rated it as ineffective. One respondent rated word of mouth as satisfactory. For those that reported using word of mouth, the mean rating on a 7-point Likert-style scale was 5.0. These findings show word of mouth to be the most widely used source of candidates for expatriate development worker posts amongst the sample. This source was also reported to be effective by a large proportion of the respondents.

It is not surprising to find that word of mouth recommendation is a popular source of candidates which is rated as being very effective by respondents. Closed search techniques such as this are suggested to be particularly effective in small and close-knit sectors (Marchington & Wilkinson 1998), offering an easy and cost-effective method of locating suitable candidates. Such techniques therefore allow NGOs to use the knowledge and contacts of their existing staff to identify suitable candidates based on their understanding of the sector and role requirements. There are relatively few appropriately qualified and experienced development workers, perhaps as a result of the transient nature of much development work and the difficulty that newcomers have in ‘breaking into’ the sector. The size of this specific labour market, together with its close-knit nature consequently supports the use of word of mouth recommendation.

Resource availability is also relevant here. Word of mouth is a recruitment tool that does not have a direct cost to the organisation. This makes it particularly well-suited to the needs of NGOs whose primary concern is to maximise the proportion of their resources that go directly to their beneficiaries. Word of mouth recommendation also has the benefit of bypassing unsuitable applicants, thus minimising expenditure on processing such applications. This is of particular importance in NGOs as they are reported to receive a large quantity of applications from unsuitable candidates (People in Aid 1997).

The use of informal, closed search techniques is also consistent with the short notice with which some development posts must be filled. In addition to resource implications, formal open search approaches take time to complete. Where a post must be filled quickly, such approaches may not be feasible and so more informal methods are used. Word of mouth allows the NGO to bypass much of the search process by utilising knowledge and contacts held within the organisation to quickly identify suitable candidates.

### ***Advertising specific posts***

However, not all expatriate development posts do need to be filled quickly, so the use of advertising was examined. As advertising is one of the most popular sources of candidates for all kinds of posts, respondents were asked about their use of advertisements to recruit candidates for specific expatriate development posts. A large proportion (88%) reported that they do advertise specific expatriate posts. Of those that do advertise specific posts, two-thirds (67%) rated this source of candidates as effective. One-quarter (25%) rated this source as satisfactory, whilst one tenth (10%) rated it as ineffective. This shows advertising to be the second most widely used source of candidates for expatriate development worker posts. For those that reported advertising specific expatriate posts, the mean rating on a 7-point Likert-style scale was 5.0, showing a similar level of effectiveness as word of mouth.

The widespread use of advertising is perhaps surprising as it is recognised as being potentially expensive and difficult to target effectively (e.g. Armstrong 2003). Certainly, of the five main sources of recruitment reported by respondents, this is the only one that has a direct cost to the organisation. The cost of recruitment methods is important for NGOs. The cost of advertising, though, should be balanced against the performance consequences of not attracting candidates with suitable qualities. Such a failing would be likely to impact on the achievement of project and programme objectives, with a potential subsequent effect on the NGO's ability to attract future funding. Hence the costs associated with the use of advertising should perhaps be viewed as an investment which will provide returns in the form of project performance. The widespread use of advertising and its reported effectiveness perhaps reflects recognition of the contribution that this 'paid for' form of recruitment can play.

Ensuring that advertisements are sufficiently targeted is difficult in this context, although it is possible. Targeting is important in order to maximise the number of suitable applicants whilst minimising the number of applicants without the necessary skills, qualifications and experience. Generating an excessive number of unsuitable applicants places a strain on the resources of the recruiting organisation. This is a particular issue for NGOs seeking to fill expatriate posts, as they are often inundated with applications from unsuitable candidates (People in Aid 1997). Poorly targeted recruitment efforts may contribute to this problem, and it may therefore be expected that NGOs would pay particular attention to this. However, this does not appear to be reflected in the almost universal use of advertising by the respondents, although the level of reported effectiveness does suggest some concern about the ability of advertising to elicit applications from suitable candidates.

### ***Internal recruitment***

Respondents were asked about whether existing staff provide a source of candidates for expatriate posts. Around four-fifths (81%) reported that they do use existing staff as a source of candidates for expatriate posts. Of those that do use existing staff as a source of candidates, nearly three-quarters (71%) rated this source as effective, whilst around three-tenths (29%) rated this source as ineffective. For those that reported using existing staff as a source of candidates, the mean rating on a 7-point Likert-style scale was 4.8. This shows internal recruitment to be used by a large proportion of respondents. However, there is a clear distinction in terms of its reported effectiveness, with respondents either rating it as effective or ineffective with none rating it as satisfactory.

Marchington and Wilkinson (1998) suggest that recruiting from existing staff is effective in making use of knowledge and skills that are already held in the organisation. The findings from this study suggest that these benefits are not universally available amongst the sample, with respondents either rating internal recruitment as effective or ineffective. One respondent reported that their expatriate development workers all worked for the organisation for several years before going overseas. In doing so, they have the opportunity to develop their familiarity with the NGO, its mission and methods of working, and its projects. This serves to prepare them professionally for the overseas post, although it does not of course prepare them in relation to cross-cultural adjustment. Another respondent noted that their expatriate staff often moved from one country to another with the same NGO and therefore knew how the NGO operated. This again suggests that internal

recruitment is used because staff are already integrated into, and are familiar to, the organisation.

However, not only does internal recruitment allow for the identification of staff that are familiar with the NGO and its operations, but it also allows the NGO to evaluate the suitability of the individuals. Overseas posts influence the operational success of most NGOs, and it is therefore important that the right staff are recruited into these posts. By recruiting internally, individuals can perhaps be evaluated in the 'safe' home environment whilst also learning about the organisation, its work, its values and so on, providing what in effect could be described as an extended induction and pre-departure training programme. This is reflected in the comments of one respondent who noted that all of their project workers had worked for the NGO for 2-3 years before going overseas. Thus it may be suggested that some NGOs require a level of familiarity with their operations that only an internal candidate could possess.

### ***Speculative applications***

Anecdotally, speculative applications are widely used by less experienced individuals seeking to find opportunities to develop their skills and experience. However, such an approach may not be particularly fruitful in identifying opportunities in development work. Although around four-fifths of respondents (81%) reported using speculative applications as a source of candidates for expatriate posts, less than one-third (30%) of these rated this source as effective, whilst one-fifth (20%) rated it as satisfactory. Half (50%) of respondents reported that speculative applications were ineffective. For those that reported using speculative applications to identify candidates for expatriate posts, the mean rating on a 7-point Likert-style scale was 3.4. These findings show speculative applications to be widely used, but not particularly effective. This is reflected in the high proportion of respondents rating this source as ineffective.

Speculative applications are another source of candidates that does not have a direct cost to the recruiting organisation. The absence of a direct cost suggests that this source may be suited to the needs of NGOs. Speculative applications do however incur indirect costs associated with the processing of the applications. The fact that the applications are speculative suggests that many of these may be from unsuitable candidates, which places a burden on the NGO. Indeed a study by People in Aid (1997) found that NGOs complain of receiving a high number of

speculative applications from individuals without the necessary skills, experience and qualifications. This, they feel, places a strain on their already limited resources. The findings from this study support this, suggesting that whilst many respondents acknowledge using speculative applications, relatively few find them to be an effective source of candidates for filling expatriate posts.

### ***External databases***

On the basis that experience and being an established professional (e.g. an engineer, manager etc.) is considered to be important in recruiting expatriate staff (Kealey & Protheroe 1996), respondents were asked about their use of external databases such as the RedR ‘Register of engineers for disaster relief’. Less than half (46%) of respondents reported using external databases as a source of candidates. Of those that did report using this source, only one tenth (9%) rated it as effective. One-quarter (27%) rated external databases as satisfactory, whilst nearly two-thirds (64%) rated this source as ineffective in identifying candidates for expatriate development roles. For those that reported using external databases, the mean rating on the 7-point Likert-style scale was 3.2. These findings show external databases to be used by a limited number of respondents. Furthermore, this source is rated as ineffective by a significant number of respondents.

In theory external databases should be attractive to NGOs. They allow the recruiting organisation to interrogate a ready-made pool of suitable candidates who have undergone some form of preliminary screening. This should speed up the recruitment process, as unsuitable candidates should not be contained on the database. However, the results from this study show that the use of external databases such as that provided by RedR is limited compared with the other sources of recruitment, and the reported effectiveness is very low. One possible explanation is that this recruitment source has resource implications. NGOs wishing to use an external database are likely to incur costs, either in the form of an ongoing subscription to allow access or a charge per use. This may be a cost that NGOs do not feel able to justify when there are other sources of recruitment that may be perceived to offer better value.

Although the effective use of resources is important to NGOs, there may be actual or perceived limitations to the available databases that dissuade NGOs from using them. The databases may focus on professions that the NGO does not require, or may not contain individuals with development experience. For example, the well-

known RedR database only contains engineers, which are not required by all NGOs. Further, it is possible for an individual to be listed on the database with little or no development experience – it simply contains a list of qualified engineers who are willing to take overseas development posts. There may also be limited awareness of suitable databases by NGOs, with the result that this source of candidates is dismissed in favour of other more widely understood sources.

In summary, of the five recruitment sources reported by respondents, word of mouth is the most widely used. Advertising of specific posts is the second most widely used, and both of these sources are reported to be effective by a large proportion of respondents. Recruiting from current staff is also reported to be effective by a high proportion of respondents, although several respondents report not using this source. A similar number of respondents report that they do not use speculative applications, and those that do use them report that they are not very effective in recruiting candidates for expatriate posts. Similarly, a high proportion of respondents do not use external databases, and those that do report that these are not very effective.

This section has introduced empirical data which identifies the use and reported effectiveness of recruitment sources by UK-based NGOs in the sample. Previous expatriation research has tended to neglect the role of recruitment, perhaps because the majority of studies focus on the MNC context. Here, expatriate posts are often used either as part of career development programmes (e.g. Mendenhall *et al.* 1987), or to exert control over overseas business units (e.g. Adler & Ghadar 1990). Both of these uses suggest an emphasis on selection from existing staff. The findings presented in this section show that NGOs make use of a range of recruitment sources, with informal sources reported to be the most effective. The findings contribute to understanding of expatriate recruitment practice in this context, and are broadly supportive of the experiences of the participants examined in Section 6.1.1. In particular, the informal methods reported to be in use appear to suggest that candidates may have a clear understanding of the demands of an expatriate role in international development, and may consequently be in a position to formulate accurate pre-departure expectations which have been shown to contribute to effective adjustment in the host country.

The next sub-section examines the use and reported importance of selection criteria.

## 6.2.2 Selecting expatriate development workers

Once a pool of suitable candidates has been recruited, it is necessary to select the most appropriate candidate(s) for the available post(s). The important issue here is the criteria on which the selection decision is made. Chapter Three (Section 3.3) examined selection criteria in relation to expatriate staff. There, it was argued that there has been a shift away from technical competence as the key selection criterion, and toward the use of factors associated with effective cross-cultural adjustment. It was suggested that this is consistent with the changing role of development workers as the nature of international development evolves (see Chapter Two for a discussion of the international development context). Section 6.1.2 examined the way in which participants had been selected for their current posts, and concluded that professional and international experience were key criteria. However, Mia in particular referred to comprehensive selection processes used by larger NGOs. NGOs do not necessarily have the time, resources or expertise to adopt the approaches advocated in the literature and may instead have to rely upon surrogate measures. This section introduces empirical data on the selection criteria used by UK-based NGOs.

Respondents to the survey of UK-based NGOs were asked to rate the importance of each selection criterion on a 7-point Likert-style scale (1= unimportant, 7= very important). Table 6.2 (next page) summarises the use and reported importance of the selection criteria. The selection criteria examined were identified from the expatriation literature (see Chapter Three, Section 3.3). It is acknowledged that the mechanisms for evaluating the possession of these characteristics in candidates are also important, but this is outside the scope of this thesis. The emphasis on selection criteria is consistent with the extant literature.

**Table 6.2 Summary of the use and reported importance of selection criteria.**

Selection criterion	Proportion of NGOs using this criterion	Proportion of NGOs using the criterion reporting it as <b>unimportant</b>	Proportion of NGOs using the criterion reporting it as <b>neutral</b>	Proportion of NGOs using the criterion reporting it as <b>important</b>	<b>Mean rating</b> by those using the criterion
Previous overseas experience	96%	29%	4%	67%	4.6
Host country experience	100%	64%	20%	16%	2.9
Suitable social skills	100%	8%	8%	85%	5.7
Suitable personality traits	100%	4%	12%	85%	5.8
Professional qualifications	100%	12%	8%	81%	5.5
Professional experience	100%	8%	12%	81%	5.5
Other	0%	-	-	-	-

n=26.

### ***Previous overseas experience***

One approach to expatriate selection has been to focus on the level of previous overseas experience that a candidate has (Kealey & Protheroe 1996). This experience is perhaps being used as a surrogate measure of a candidate's ability to adapt to unfamiliar living and working environments. However, such an approach does assume that the previous experiences were successful. A further complication is that of cultural difference. Although previous experience may be suggestive of an individual's ability to adapt, the ability to operate effectively in one culture does not necessarily mean that the individual can do so in other cultures. Indeed Katz & Seifer (1996) argue that effective adjustment is contingent on the degree of cultural distance between the home and host cultures. This suggests that experience gained in one culture may not be an effective preparation for work in another. Despite this, however, Yavas & Bodur (1999) did find evidence that longer previous overseas experience contributed positively to cross-cultural adjustment. Kealey (1989) had earlier found limited evidence to support this. The evidence should therefore be considered inconclusive as to whether previous overseas experience is an appropriate selection criterion to use.

In this study, nearly all respondents (96%) reported taking account of previous overseas experience when selecting candidates for overseas assignments. Of those that reported using this criterion, two-thirds (67%) rated it as important. Less than

one-third (29%) rated this criterion as unimportant, whilst 4% rated it as neither important nor unimportant. For those that reported using previous overseas experience the mean rating on the 7-point Likert-style scale was 4.6, suggesting that this criterion is considered to be moderately important by respondents.

These findings show that previous overseas experience is used as a selection criterion by nearly all respondent NGOs, and is considered to be important by a significant proportion of these. This use and reported importance of previous overseas experience is consistent with Yavas & Bodur's (1999) findings insofar as that the respondents would appear to believe that this criterion is effective in contributing to the identification of suitable candidates for overseas assignments. The data do not consider the motivations behind this practice. However it is possible to suggest several potential explanations for the use of this criterion by NGOs. As has been noted elsewhere in this thesis, NGOs often have limited resources. Thus it is reasonable to anticipate that these organisations will seek to use simple and cost-effective recruitment and selection methods. Previous overseas experience is a selection criterion that is quick and easy to assess, and can be objectively 'measured' without the need for specialist skills or tools. It also has logical appeal in that an individual with overseas experience might be expected to be effective in a subsequent overseas post as they have 'proven' themselves in the previous post.

Resource considerations may again be significant in that the selection of staff with overseas experience may allow the NGO to minimise (or even eliminate) the provision of cross-cultural training;

*"... successful candidates are usually well-experienced re. working overseas, so only 'preparation' is organisation and project induction."*

(NGO ID-23)

This respondent appears to suggest that previous overseas experience is considered to have prepared the individual for life and work overseas. The respondent therefore appears to believe that this eliminates the need for any form of cross-cultural or country-related preparation to be provided by the NGO. This view, however, is not supported by Katz & Seifer (1996) who argue that adjustment is contingent on the degree of cultural difference between home and host cultures, which suggests that experience in one culture will not necessarily prepare someone for life and work in other cultures. Katz & Seifer's (1996) argument would therefore

seem to support the use of previous experience in the host culture (or another similar culture) as a selection criterion. The following section examines this criterion.

### ***Host country experience***

The literature on expatriate selection has paid only limited attention to the value of previous overseas experience (e.g. Kealey 1989; Kealey & Protheroe 1996; Yavas & Bodur 1999). None of this research addresses the value of overseas experience gained specifically in the host country, although Katz & Seifer's (1996) work on cross-cultural adjustment can be used to argue that host country experience may be more valuable than experience gained in a different country. This view reflects an argument that the ability to work effectively in a host country requires both generic adjustive skills but also culture-specific knowledge and sensitivities. Hence, adjustment may be quicker if prior host-country experience is held.

The results from this study show that all respondents (100%) reported using previous host country experience as a selection criterion. However, in contrast to general overseas experience, nearly two-thirds (64%) rated host country experience as unimportant. One-fifth (20%) rated this criterion as neither important nor unimportant, whilst one-sixth (16%) rated it as important. The mean rating on the 7-point Likert-style scale was 2.9, suggesting that respondents do not consider specific host country experience to be especially important.

These findings show that whilst all respondents report using previous host country experience as a selection criterion, a significant proportion do not consider it to be an important part of their selection decision. One possible explanation is that respondents may not perceive there to be any additional value in specific host country experience as compared with general overseas experience. Therefore the respondents may be satisfied with using general overseas experience as a selection criterion. One respondent, whilst talking about cross-cultural training, raised an interesting point that might explain the low levels of importance placed on specific host country experience;

*“Also a lot of the countries we work in are huge ... you could give a cultural specific for Delhi, which is completely off the planet to giving what’s specific for living in Pradesh or wherever.”*

(NGO ID-7)

This suggests that Katz & Seifer's (1996) concept of cultural distance extends beyond 'macro' notions of culture to incorporate sub-cultures within broader national groupings. Thus, the value of host country experience may depend on where in that country the experience was gained. To use the example given by the respondent above, previous experience of living and working in Delhi would not prepare an individual for life and work in the Pradesh region (and vice versa). This perhaps begins to explain why so many respondents do not consider host country experience to be an important selection criterion.

### ***Suitable social skills***

Social skills are considered to be significant in influencing adjustment to the host culture (e.g. Kealey & Protheroe 1996). Cross-cultural adjustment has been conceptualised in several ways. One such model, adopted in this study, distinguishes between psychological and sociocultural aspects of adjustment (e.g. Searle & Ward 1990). Sociocultural adjustment is concerned with how an individual adapts to interactions with host nationals. As such, there may be argued to be a need for an individual to possess appropriate social skills in order to facilitate this form of adjustment. An important distinction, however, must be made between generic skills that can help to facilitate cross-cultural adjustment and host culture-specific skills which reflect norms of behaviour in that culture.

Social skills which are specific to the host culture are argued to be transitory. These skills, it is suggested, can be learned like a language and discarded when no longer needed (e.g. Furnham & Bochner 1986; Selmer 2001b). Furthermore it is argued that these skills result from social learning, which requires interaction with the host culture. It may therefore be expected that these skills are not an important criterion for expatriate selection as they are best acquired in-country through immersion in the host culture. Indeed discussion in the previous section (on host country experience) noted that cultural differences within host countries may mean that finding staff with culture-specific skills relating to a specific part of a specific host country is difficult. Thus a focus on generic adjustive skills as a selection criterion may be more effective.

Generic skills may be argued to be more deeply held and more closely associated with an individual's personality. Such skills include an ability to communicate freely with a range of different people, to empathise with people with different backgrounds, beliefs, and personalities, and an ability to cope with different and

challenging circumstances. Whilst these may be considered to be skills, they are also related to personality traits such as openness, extroversion and resilience (e.g. Caligiuri 2000b; Yavas & Bodur 1999). Thus it may be anticipated that similar results would be obtained for the use and reported importance of social skills and personality traits in this study.

Data from this study shows that all respondents (100%) reported using the possession of suitable social skills as a selection criterion. Around five-sixths (85%) of respondents rated this criterion as important. Less than one tenth rated it as neither important nor unimportant (8%), and less than one tenth (8%) rated it as unimportant. The mean rating on the 7-point Likert-style scale was 5.7, identifying this as the second most important selection criterion for NGOs in the sample.

These findings show that the possession of suitable social skills is considered to be an important selection criterion by a large proportion of respondents. This offers support for the argument that generic adjustive skills are necessary in order to facilitate the process of sociocultural adjustment (Kealey & Protheroe 1996). The importance placed on the possession of suitable social skills again emphasises the desire of NGOs to select 'ready-made' expatriates rather than to allow scope for professional development. However, these findings do not support the view that host country-specific skills are best learned through immersion in the host culture. Whilst this mode of learning may indeed be more effective, the operational needs of NGOs may preclude this, placing an emphasis on the possession of skills in advance of the assignment.

The desire to select 'ready-made' individuals is reflected in the comments of one respondent, who highlights the degree of expectation that the NGO has of potential expatriate development workers;

*"A lot is expected of the expat [sic], such as awareness of the humanitarian world and issues involved, and also self-development and adapting."*

(NGO ID-2)

This reinforces the view that NGOs prefer to select individuals with the skills to adapt to host cultures. Such an approach to selection reflects a desire to avoid providing cross-cultural training, whilst also supporting the earlier argument that adjustive skills are important for expatriates to possess.

### ***Suitable personality traits***

Calls for more comprehensive approaches to expatriate selection have resulted in a growing number of studies focusing on the role of personality traits in cross-cultural adjustment. Caligiuri (2000b) examined the relationship between the 'Big Five' personality traits and adjustment as measured by desire to prematurely terminate the expatriate assignment. She found that extroversion, agreeableness and emotional stability were predictive of a desire to remain in the overseas post. Similarly, Yavas & Bodur (1999) found that an outgoing personality could be linked with effective adjustment, whilst Selmer (1999b) concluded that extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and intellectual openness were associated with effective cross-cultural adjustment.

Whilst such studies suggest that it is possible to define the 'ideal' personality for successful expatriation, Ward & Chang (1997) argue that a contingency approach is more appropriate. Here, it is suggested that rather than there being an 'ideal' personality, the ability to adjust is influenced by the degree of difference between the expatriate's personality and that of the 'typical' host national. This is supported by Jordan & Wright (1998), who concluded that the contribution of extroversion to effective adjustment was contingent on host culture personality norms. Notwithstanding this debate, there is substantial evidence that personality traits can influence cross-cultural adjustment.

The results from this study show that all respondents (100%) reported using the possession of suitable personality traits as a selection criterion. Five-sixths of respondents (85%) rated this criterion as important, whilst just over one-tenth (12%) rated it as neither important nor unimportant. Less than one-twentieth (4%) rated the possession of suitable personality traits as unimportant in their selection decision. The mean rating on the 7-point Likert-style scale was 5.8, identifying this as the most important selection criterion for NGOs in the sample.

These findings are similar to those for social skills (discussed in the previous section). They show that all respondents use personality traits in their selection decision, and that a large proportion considers this to be an important selection criterion. One respondent specifically commented on the role of personality traits in their selection process;

*"We look at personal qualities, things like adaptability, sensibility and confidence ..."*  
 (NGO ID-7)

This quote illustrates that personality traits are taken into consideration in the selection process. It also suggests a link between traits and effective cross-cultural adjustment by identifying traits that may be associated with effective adjustment. Hence, although this study does not seek to identify specific personality traits used by respondents to select expatriate development workers, the findings are nevertheless consistent with the growing body of literature that examines the relationship between personality traits and effective cross-cultural adjustment. For example, these findings support the work of Caligiuri (2000b), Selmer (1999b) and Yavas & Bodur (1999) in suggesting that personality traits are sometimes considered to influence cross-cultural adjustment. The use and reported importance of personality traits therefore suggests that the respondents believe that personality traits do contribute to effective cross-cultural adjustment.

### ***Technical competence***

The traditional ethnocentric approach to expatriation was based on the view that technical competence is the only characteristic required for successful expatriation. This school of thought was supported by the argument that the same skills and qualities are needed to carry out the same job, regardless of location (e.g. Lanier 1979). However, this view apparently ignores the need to adjust to the host culture (e.g. Dowling *et al.* 1994), as well as cultural differences which can influence the way in which similar jobs are undertaken in different locations (e.g. Simintiras & Thomas 1998). Dowling *et al.* (1994) neatly summarise this counter argument by suggesting that although technical competence is important, it has no effect on the ability to adapt to new cultures or to deal effectively with colleagues. Nevertheless, the use of 'technical competence' remained popular in HR departments despite having been discredited in the academic literature (Mendenhall & Oddou 1985).

In this study, technical competence was examined in terms of professional qualifications and professional experience. The findings show that both criteria exhibit almost identical response patterns. All respondents (100%) reported using both of these selection criteria, and four-fifths (81%) rated both criteria as important. Just under one-tenth (8%) rated professional qualifications as neither important nor unimportant, whilst just over one-tenth (12%) gave this rating for professional experience. Just over one tenth (12%) rated professional qualifications as

unimportant, with just under one-tenth (8%) rating professional experience as unimportant. The mean importance rating of both professional qualifications and professional experience on the 7-point Likert-style scale was 5.5, identifying technical competence as one of the most important selection criteria for respondents.

These findings reflect Kealey & Protheroe's (1996) suggestion that technical competence has traditionally been used to select expatriates. The findings also offer support for Mendenhall & Oddou's (1985) argument that this criterion continues to be embedded in HR practice. Three respondents emphasise the importance of technical competence;

*"All the people we send abroad are qualified opticians."*

(NGO ID-20)

*"We use specialist consultants for most assignments."*

(NGO ID-26)

*"... most jobs you need at least 5 years post-qualifying experience, we would rarely take people or we wouldn't take anyone just with a degree. They have to have either a professional qualification or a post-degree qualification. Not necessarily that you have to have a degree, but you have to have at least worked within your skill area for 5 years ..."*

(NGO ID-7)

The first two respondents clearly express the requirement that their expatriates must possess appropriate professional expertise. The third respondent is more specific, suggesting that both professional qualifications and experience are required.

This study, however, suggests that the respondents do not subscribe to the 'universalist' view of expatriation. Although the two criteria relating to technical competence are widely used and rated as important by respondents, findings reported earlier suggest that they are used alongside criteria relating to cross-cultural adjustment. Thus there is evidence that the respondents believe that technical competence alone is insufficient as a selection criterion for expatriate development workers.

This argument has been advanced by Baliga & Baker (1985), Mendenhall & Oddou (1988) and Tung (1981), all of whom suggest that whilst technical competence is

important, it should be used as a prerequisite for continuation of the selection process. Dowling *et al.* (1994) are more explicit in suggesting that technical competence, although important, has no effect on the ability to adapt to new cultures, to deal effectively with colleagues, or to embrace foreign norms of behaviour.

The use of criteria relating to technical competence reflects NGOs' values in that expatriates must make a contribution to the host community to justify their presence there. Thus relevant technical expertise (either in the form of professional qualifications and / or experience) appears to be used as a prerequisite for continuation of the selection process. The reported use of other criteria relating to cross-cultural adjustment indicates that respondents do not believe that technical expertise enables an individual to adjust effectively to a host culture, and that suitable social skills and personality traits are important for participative development.

This section has introduced empirical data that identifies the use and reported importance of criteria for the selection of expatriate development workers by a sample of UK-based NGOs. Of those examined, social skills and personality traits were the most widely used and most important selection criteria. Professional experience and qualifications were next, followed by overseas experience, although interestingly not specific host country experience. These findings are broadly consistent with the experiences of participants in Section 6.1.1, although the use of social skills and personality traits was not evident in the experiences reported. However, the adjustment experiences of these individuals examined in Chapter Five suggested that they did nevertheless possess suitable traits and skills. The findings contribute to understanding of expatriate selection in this context, and serve to contextualise the exploration of adjustment experiences in Chapter Five and to support the development of recommendations for NGOs. In particular, the criteria reported to be in use support the argument that expatriates in this context are selected on the basis of their readiness to fulfil operational requirements with minimal training and support. The use of these criteria suggests that expatriate development workers may be expected to possess the qualities and experiences necessary to adjust effectively to the host culture even if the sending organisation provides limited cross-cultural training or in-country support.

The following section examines cross-cultural training. Empirical data is introduced which considers the use and reported effectiveness of cross-cultural training inputs amongst the sample of UK-based NGOs.

### **6.2.3 Cross-cultural training for expatriate development workers**

Chapter Three argued that cross-cultural training is an important part of the process of preparing an expatriate for an overseas assignment. It was argued that in common with expatriates in other contexts, development workers have training needs relating to the sending organisation and the role for which they have been recruited, the international development community, and knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for effective cross-cultural adjustment. Chapter Two contributed to this argument by examining the challenges faced by expatriate development workers. This identified challenges relating to the development task, development work locations, social interactions and risks to health. The challenging nature and location of international development work suggests that a comprehensive approach to cross-cultural training would be evident. However, the experiences of participants examined in Section 6.1.2 do not support this. Instead, there was strong evidence that individuals were responsible for self-directed preparation that tended to focus on information gathering. Some participants had received more comprehensive cross-cultural training earlier in their development careers. These experiences raise questions about the extent to which NGOs provide cross-cultural training. This section therefore contributes to the fourth research objective (RO4) by examining the use and reported effectiveness of cross-cultural training provided by UK-based NGOs.

Respondents to the survey of UK-based NGOs were asked to indicate their use of each of the training inputs identified. They were also asked to rate the effectiveness of each one that they reported using on a three-point scale (ineffective, neutral, effective). Consequently it is acknowledged that these are personal assessments of training effectiveness made by the respondents. It is also noted that the effectiveness of the training provision is influenced by the training methods used. However, a more detailed examination of training provision to include training methods is outside the scope of this thesis. The results from this study extend previous research by providing an insight into the types of cross-cultural training that UK-based NGOs provide for their expatriate development workers, and the extent to which these inputs are considered to be effective.

### ***Information-based training***

In Chapter Three (Section 3.4.3) information-based training was defined as comprising the provision of information about the job role and the host country context. The purpose of this form of training is to contribute to the creation of accurate pre-departure expectations and to reduce the anxieties that can result from a lack of information.

It has been suggested that orientation sessions for expatriates often focus on the provision of information (Forster 1997a). This form of training is perhaps popular as it is similar to the kinds of induction provided to staff in the home country. However, although information-based training is in widespread use, Selmer *et al.* (1998) and Kealey & Protheroe (1996) argue that there is limited empirical evidence to demonstrate its effectiveness. Nevertheless, Caligiuri *et al.* (2001) found that realistic pre-departure expectations created by the provision of information contributed to effective cross-cultural adjustment. Similarly, Bird *et al.* (1993) found that the provision of country information enabled trainees to develop a better understanding of appropriate behaviours, whilst a study by Earley (1987) linked the provision of information with effective overseas performance. However, other studies have concluded that information-based training can be ineffective, identifying limitations in the accuracy and completeness of the information provided in some programmes (e.g. Forster 1997a; Yavas & Bodur 1999).

**Table 6.3 Use and reported effectiveness of information-based training.**

Training inputs	Proportion of NGOs providing this training input	Proportion of NGOs providing the input reporting it as <b>ineffective</b>	Proportion of NGOs providing the input reporting it as <b>neutral</b>	Proportion of NGOs providing the input reporting it as <b>effective</b>
<b>Information-based training</b>				
Organisation induction	95%	5%	53%	42%
Detailed job description	90%	0%	72%	28%
NGO's host country goals	89%	6%	63%	31%
Project objectives	85%	6%	47%	47%
Project reporting procedures	79%	20%	60%	20%
Day-to-day situations	94%	13%	69%	19%
Health issues	85%	0%	71%	29%
Host country living conditions	95%	0%	74%	26%

n=26.

The results from this part of the study show that collectively, information-based training inputs are the most widely reported form of cross-cultural training provided by the respondents (Table 6.3). An organisational induction was reported to be provided by 95% of respondents, of which 42% rated this as effective, 53% rated it as neutral and 5% rated it as ineffective. Information relating to host country living conditions was provided by 95% of respondents. Of these, 26% rated this input as effective and 74% rated it as neutral. Nine-tenths (90%) of respondents reported providing a detailed job description to their expatriates. Of these, 28% rated this input as effective and 72% rated it as neutral. Information about the NGO's goals in the host country was reported to be provided by just under nine-tenths (89%) of respondents, of which 31% rated this input as effective, 63% rated it as neutral and 6% rated it as ineffective. Project objectives were explained by 85% of respondents. Of these, 47% rated this input as being effective, 47% rated it as neutral and 6% rated it as ineffective. Information about health issues was reported to be provided by 85% of respondents, of which 29% rated this input as effective and 71% rated it as neutral. Less than four-fifths (79%) of respondents reported providing information about project reporting requirements. Of these, 20% rated this input as effective, 60% rated it as neutral and 20% rated it as ineffective.

The findings suggest that whilst respondent NGOs almost universally provide an organisation induction, and a briefing on host country living conditions and how to deal with day-to-day situations, the provision of a detailed job description, the NGO's goals in the host country, health issues, project objectives and reporting requirements was less widespread. However, despite the variability in the provision of each element of information-based training, it must be noted that this form of training input was still more widely provided than awareness-based and skills-based training.

In this study, the provision of each element of information-based training is reported by at least four-fifths of respondent NGOs. The results particularly highlight the provision of information relating to the sending organisation and the project on which the expatriate will be working. The widespread provision of this element of cross-cultural training is consistent with Forster's (1997a) suggestion that expatriate orientation sessions often focus on the provision of information. The results, however, go further than this by suggesting a distinction between information relating to the sending organisation and the expatriate assignment, and information relating to the host country. Whilst respondents appear to be willing to provide information about the organisation and the project, there seems to be less support for the need to provide information about the host country. This approach is contrary to the findings of Bird *et al.* (1993) who found evidence that the provision of country information contributed to a better understanding of appropriate behaviours.

The distinction between organisation and project information, and host country information is consistent with the recruitment and selection methods reported by respondents earlier in this chapter. In the earlier discussion (Sections 6.2.1 and 6.2.2) it was suggested that some respondent NGOs appear to exhibit a preference for expatriate staff with a proven track record both in their profession and in international development. There was also evidence that some respondents have an expectation that their expatriates will carry out their own research about the host country, and that through their experience they already possess an understanding of the adjustment process and the skills to learn quickly about appropriate behaviours once in the host country. The findings therefore suggest that the NGOs aim to place responsibility for specific host country preparation with the individual, an assertion supported by the recruitment and selection approaches reported in Sections 6.2.1

and 6.2.2 and endorsed by approaches to cross-cultural training reported in this section.

### ***Awareness-based training***

Chapter Three (Section 3.4.4) examined the nature and contribution of awareness-based training. This form of training sits between pure informational methods and experiential approaches to cross-cultural training (Kealey & Protheroe 1996). It incorporates elements of both of these, providing cultural information whilst also allowing trainees to get a ‘feel’ for the host culture. The purpose of awareness-based training is to personalise the host culture by engaging the trainees through the use of training mechanisms which allow them to experience aspects of the host culture in a controlled setting (Kealey & Protheroe 1996).

There is a good degree of support for the effectiveness of awareness-based training in the literature (e.g. Fiedler *et al.* 1971; Kealey & Protheroe 1996; Worchsel & Mitchell 1972). The literature particularly emphasises the value of linking didactic and experiential methods, suggesting that it is beneficial to use a combination of information- and awareness-based techniques (Earley 1987; Harrison 1992, 1994; Selmer *et al.* 1998). However, a number of criticisms have been raised of the value of cultural assimilators, the main tool for delivering awareness-based training (McCaffery 1986). These include the suggestion that cultural assimilators can not reflect intra-cultural differences, and that they overemphasise cultural difference rather than focusing on finding areas of commonality.

**Table 6.4 Use and reported effectiveness of awareness-based training.**

Training inputs	Proportion of NGOs providing this training input	Proportion of NGOs providing the input reporting it as <b>ineffective</b>	Proportion of NGOs providing the input reporting it as <b>neutral</b>	Proportion of NGOs providing the input reporting it as <b>effective</b>
<b>Awareness-based training</b>				
Host country history & development	71%	8%	92%	0%
Host country norms of behaviour	75%	8%	83%	8%
Host country social structures	63%	10%	80%	10%
Host country political / econ. structures	56%	0%	78%	22%
Identifying & reducing anxieties	63%	0%	70%	30%
Identifying & reconciling expectations	71%	0%	70%	30%
Evaluation of own culture	47%	0%	43%	57%
What to expect when living overseas	73%	0%	64%	36%
What to expect when working overseas	80%	0%	83%	17%
Awareness of the adjustment process	57%	0%	75%	25%
Professional ethics	78%	7%	57%	36%

n=26.

The results of this part of the study show that collectively, awareness-based training inputs were less widely provided by respondents than information-based inputs (Table 6.4). Of the awareness-based inputs, training on what to expect when working overseas was the most widely offered, with four-fifths (80%) reporting that they provide this. Of those that reported providing this training, 17% rated it as effective and 83% rated it as neutral. Training in professional ethics was reported as being provided by just under four-fifths (78%) of respondents. Of those that reported providing this training, 36% rated it as effective, 57% rated it as neutral and 7% rated it as ineffective. Three-quarters (75%) of respondents reported providing training in host country norms of behaviour. Of these, 8% rated this training as effective, 83% rated it as neutral and 8% rated it as ineffective. Training in what to expect when living overseas was reported to be provided by just under three-quarters (73%) of respondents. Of these, 36% rated this training as effective and 64% rated it as neutral. Training in the history and development of the host country was reported to be provided by 71% of respondents, of which 92% rated its effectiveness as neutral and 8% rated it as ineffective. Training in the identification

and reconciliation of expectations was reported to be provided by 71% of respondents. Of these, 30% rated it as being effective and 70% rated it as neutral.

Training in host country social structures was offered by less than two-thirds (63%) of respondents. Of those that reported providing this training, 10% rated it as effective, 80% rated it as neutral and 10% rated it as ineffective. Training in the identification and reduction of anxieties was also reported to be provided by less than two-thirds (63%) of respondents, of which 30% rated this training as effective and 70% rated it as neutral. Training in awareness of the adjustment process was reported to be offered by less than three-fifths (57%) of respondents. Of these, 25% rated this training input as effective and 75% rated it as neutral. Similarly, training in the political and economic structures of the host country was provided by 56% of respondents, with 22% rating this training as effective and 78% rating it as neutral. Training in the evaluation of one's own culture was provided by less than half (47%) of respondents. Of these, 57% rated this training as effective and 43% rated it as neutral.

Extending previous research by examining cross-cultural training practice in the NGO context, the results from this part of the study show that awareness-based inputs relating to the creation of basic expectations were provided by around three-quarters of respondent NGOs. As with information-based training inputs, these findings again suggest that a number of respondent NGOs leave preparation relating to the host country and the adjustment process to the expatriate. Hence although previous research has identified the value of awareness-based training in exposing the trainee to the host culture in a controlled environment (e.g. Kealey & Protheroe 1996), this does not appear to be reflected in the training practices of the respondent NGOs.

Indeed, these findings are to a certain extent consistent with the findings relating to recruitment and selection practices examined earlier in this chapter (Sections 6.2.1 and 6.2.2). These findings suggested that respondent NGOs appear to prefer expatriate development workers to be experienced and self-sufficient in terms of preparation for the overseas assignments. The results in relation to awareness-based training suggest that although a number of respondents report that they provide basic inputs relating to the host country, the deeper forms of this type of training are provided by fewer respondents. For example, awareness of the adjustment process, the identification and reduction of anxieties and evaluation of

one's own culture were the least provided forms of awareness-based training. These findings are consistent with the suggestion that some NGOs seek experienced expatriates who have adjustive skills and are therefore able to adjust effectively to new host cultures. Thus, some NGOs appear to feel that they do not have to provide deeper forms of training, instead focusing on the provision of information (discussed earlier in this section) and some basic training on the host culture. The findings are therefore consistent with the experiences reported by participants in Section 6.1.2 which indicated that much preparation is self-directed.

### ***Skills-based training***

Although the provision of information has been shown to offer benefits to the trainee in terms of enhanced knowledge about the host culture, the success of such training is inherently reliant upon the accuracy of the information provided (e.g. Yavas & Bodur 1999). Chapter Three (Section 3.4.5) argued that an effective alternative is the development of adjustive skills. Here, a trainee is equipped with the skills to operate independently and to learn about appropriate behaviours in the host culture (e.g. McCaffery 1986). Skills-based training has also been linked with the changing role of expatriates, with Kealey & Protheroe (1996) suggesting that expatriates are increasingly required to work collaboratively with host nationals. This requires skills associated with communication, participation and collaboration.

The effectiveness of skills-based training has not been explicitly examined in the cross-cultural training literature, although some evidence may be drawn from studies carried out in the domestic context (e.g. Scorcher & Spence 1982). Scorcher & Spence (1982), in their study of white supervisors and black employees in a South African pharmaceutical factory, concluded that a programme of behaviour modelling contributed to improved attitudes and cultural sensitivity, especially if this was preceded by awareness-based training.

**Table 6.5 Use and reported effectiveness of skills-based training.**

Training inputs	Proportion of NGOs providing this training input	Proportion of NGOs providing the input reporting it as <b>ineffective</b>	Proportion of NGOs providing the input reporting it as <b>neutral</b>	Proportion of NGOs providing the input reporting it as <b>effective</b>
<b>Skills-based training</b>				
Developing partnership skills	53%	0%	63%	37%
Developing cross-cultural comms. skills	56%	11%	78%	11%
Reinforcement of relevant social skills	50%	14%	86%	0%
Coping strategies	60%	0%	100%	0%
Adaptation skills	50%	0%	71%	29%
Language training	47%	0%	78%	22%
Task-specific skills	75%	7%	67%	27%

n=26.

The results from this part of the study show that collectively, skills-based training inputs were the least widely reported by the respondents (Table 6.5). Of the skills-based training inputs, the provision of task-specific skills was the most widely reported, with three-quarters (75%) of respondents reporting that they provide this. Of those that reported providing task-specific skills training, 27% reported that it was effective, whilst 67% rated it as neutral and 7% rated it as ineffective. Three-fifths (60%) of respondents reported providing training relating to the development of coping strategies. Of those that reported providing this form of training, all (100%) rated its effectiveness as neutral. Training in cross-cultural communication skills was offered by less than three-fifths (56%) of respondents. Of those that reported providing this training, 11% reported that it was effective, whilst 78% rated it as neutral and 11% rated it as ineffective. Partnership skills training was provided by just over half (53%) of respondents, with 37% of these rating this training as effective and 63% rating it as neutral. Training in relevant social skills was offered by half (50%) of respondents, with 86% rating it as neutral and 14% rating it as ineffective. Training in adaptation skills was provided by half (50%) of respondents, with 29% of these rating this training as effective and 71% rating it as neutral. Language training was provided by less than half (47%) of respondents. Of those

providing language training, 22% of these rated this training as effective and 78% rated it as neutral.

These findings offer further support for the suggestion that NGOs appear to focus their training efforts on immediate short term need rather than on supporting the expatriates to develop transferable skills in cross-cultural adjustment. Hence inputs can be seen to focus on the specific project (e.g. the provision of task-specific skills) and short term needs (e.g. development of coping strategies) rather than taking a longer term perspective as advocated in the cross-cultural training literature. This is perhaps consistent with the short notice with which some expatriate development posts must be filled. In these circumstances, it is highly likely that training is limited by practical constraints to the provision of basic information about the organisation, the project and the host culture. A short term focus is perhaps also consistent with the limited resources that NGOs often have. Having access to limited resources may be one of the drivers for NGOs to seek experienced expatriate staff. The effect of actively recruiting experienced staff for expatriate posts is that less cross-cultural training is thought to be required as the individual is assumed to be capable of adjusting effectively to the host culture, and to be able to carry out their own preparation for the assignment. Indeed, self-directed preparation was evident in the experiences of individual development workers examined in Section 6.1.2.

In summary, the results from this part of the study contribute to understanding of cross-cultural training by examining practice in UK-based NGOs. Cross-cultural training practice has not hitherto been examined in this organisational context, and this supplementary data therefore offers a valuable insight into the training inputs that UK-based NGOs provide for their expatriate development workers as well as the reported effectiveness of these inputs. The results suggest that the cross-cultural training practices of the respondent NGOs focus on the needs of the project for which the expatriate has been recruited. In particular, the findings offer evidence that the respondents favour the provision of information (about the organisation, the project and to a lesser extent the host country) rather than providing awareness- and skills-based training which are argued to enhance the long term ability of the expatriate to adjust to different host cultures. This practice is consistent with the experiences of individual development workers. NGO practice reported here differs from the approaches advocated in the cross-cultural training literature which emphasise the development of transferable skills in cross-cultural adjustment. It was suggested that such an emphasis may be explained firstly by the short notice with

which some expatriate development posts must be filled, and secondly that limited resources encourage NGOs to seek experienced development workers which consequently reduces the need for awareness- and skills-based training inputs.

### **6.3 Chapter summary**

This chapter introduced empirical data to address the third and fourth research objectives;

***RO3: How do expatriate development workers perceive the role of their sending organisation in their adjustment?***

***RO4: How do NGOs recruit, select and train their expatriate development workers?***

These objectives extend the study's main purpose by situating the sociocultural adjustment experiences of development workers within the context of the sending organisation. In doing so, this chapter supports the contribution that this study makes to practice by facilitating the development of recommendations for NGOs.

The findings from this chapter suggest that development careers are quite flexible and opportunistic, with word of mouth and internal recruitment being evident both in the experiences of individual development workers and reported NGO practice. Some development workers reported having moved from a voluntary placement to paid employment with the same sending organisation, indicating a specific application of internal recruitment reflective of this expatriation context. Broader open search recruitment techniques were also evident both in reported NGO practice and some development workers' experiences. Development workers reported that their professional and international experience was important in their selection and subsequent adjustment to the host culture, with just one participant noting the use of personality traits as a selection criterion. This differs slightly from reported NGO practice which indicated that personality traits and suitable social skills were the most important selection criteria. Nevertheless, NGOs also reported that both professional competence and international experience informed their selection decisions. Development workers reported that much of their preparation was self-directed, with independent information searching appearing to be a key feature of their pre-departure routine. This is consistent with NGOs' apparent preference for experienced development workers, whereby preparation is considered to be the individual's responsibility. Development workers reported

participating in in-country orientations, although the effectiveness of these was dependent on the location in which these took place. In contrast to the experiences of development workers, NGOs' provision of information-based training was widespread. However, the provision of awareness- and skills-based training was less common, again reflecting the preference for experienced development workers with minimum training needs. Time and resource constraints were noted to be influencing factors in the preference for experienced development workers and the attendant range of cross-cultural training provision.

It must be noted, however, that this analysis has several limitations. First, the sampling frame used for the survey was known to contain non-operational NGOs that do not use expatriate staff. It was not, however, possible to identify and remove these in an objective manner, and therefore the decision was taken to use the sampling frame in its entirety. The result was an apparently low response rate, although the true response rate from operational NGOs is unknown as the number of operational UK-based NGOs remains unknown. As a consequence, the sample achieved must be considered to be unrepresentative of the population of interest (operational UK-based NGOs) and therefore the findings must be viewed on this basis.

The next chapter extends discussion of the findings from the empirical work in the context of the extant literature, and develops a model of sociocultural adjustment in development workers.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

# **DEVELOPING A MODEL OF SOCIOCULTURAL ADJUSTMENT IN EXPATRIATE DEVELOPMENT WORKERS**

This chapter discusses the research findings in the context of the extant literature and synthesises these into a model of sociocultural adjustment in expatriate development workers. In doing so the study's four research objectives are addressed;

- RO1: How does the international development context influence the way in which expatriate development workers experience processes of sociocultural adjustment?***
- RO2: What adjustment outcomes are realised by expatriate development workers?***
- RO3: How do expatriate development workers perceive the role of their sending organisation in their adjustment?***
- RO4: How do NGOs recruit, select and train their expatriate development workers?***

The research findings contribute to our understanding of how the specific set of features that characterise expatriation in the international development context combine to influence the process and outcome of sociocultural adjustment. Understanding of adjustment in expatriate development workers is thereby significantly extended. In particular the empirical work shows how development workers are often motivated to learn about and to interact with host nationals, and that although this encourages contact with the host culture, the positive effect of this on social learning can be limited by a combination of transient and more enduring barriers. Such barriers were found to include the attitudes of host nationals toward development workers, and manifestations of cultural difference including differing frames of reference, social interests and approaches to work and time. Cultural differences between urban and rural areas were also identified, with sociocultural adjustment found to be more challenging in rural locations. This has consequences for the location in which in-country orientations are delivered, with some development workers reporting that receiving an orientation in an urban area before working in a rural area created a two-stage process of adjustment. Connected with the urban-rural divide, living conditions were found to influence adjustment by challenging the ability to recreate the home environment and to re-establish familiar

routines. Indeed the findings indicated that negative consequences could arise from trying to recreate the home environment as this served to build a barrier between the development worker and host nationals.

The findings significantly extend understanding of the role of host nationals and other expatriates in supporting sociocultural adjustment. The findings endorse the value of other expatriates as a support mechanism that allows for the sharing of experiences and informal debriefings, but indicated that excessive contact with the expatriate community could associate development workers with negative stereotypes of commercial expatriates held by host nationals. Nevertheless, some development workers reported receiving preferential treatment from host nationals. Whilst superficially positive, such treatment was found to have an adverse effect on sociocultural adjustment as it limited the extent to which the development worker was accepted as an equal. Understanding of the role of sending organisations in this context is also extended. Whilst the expatriation literature emphasises the central role of sending organisations, the findings in this study indicated that they played a more limited role and that development workers took a more proactive approach to their preparation.

The model proposed in Section 7.3 makes a key contribution to knowledge by identifying the way in which interdependent context-specific factors simultaneously influence the relationship with host nationals and with other expatriates, thereby shaping the sociocultural adjustment experience and outcome realised by development workers.

## ***7.1 Influence of context on sociocultural adjustment***

In relation to the first research objective (RO1), the findings provide a rich insight into how the specific set of features that characterise expatriation in the international development context combine to influence the way in which processes of sociocultural adjustment are experienced by development workers.

Sociocultural adjustment is based on social learning theory (Bandura 1977), linking contact with host nationals to learning opportunities that facilitate the observation and subsequent modelling of culturally appropriate behaviours (Ward *et al.* 2001). The prevailing participative philosophy of development demands close working between development workers and host nationals (e.g. Willis 2005). This study

found evidence that this is indeed taking place. Although the sample is not representative, respondents were found to be living and working in close proximity to host nationals, which in theory provided plentiful opportunity for social learning to take place. Indeed, several respondents were explicit in stating their intention to limit contact with other expatriates in order to become part of the host community. Such motivation is supportive of a positive sociocultural adjustment outcome. For example, Allport's (1954) 'contact hypothesis' contends that the more interaction between an individual and a specific cultural group, the more positive the individual's attitude toward that group. This is endorsed by Aycan (1997) who suggests that an expatriate's willingness to interact with host nationals demonstrates their desire to learn about the host culture, which engenders positive responses from host nationals that ultimately contribute to effective sociocultural adjustment. However, this study found several contextual factors that served to challenge the social learning process, including financial differences, differences in social interests, frames of reference and approaches to work, the role of language, the urban-rural divide, living conditions, and the degree of role clarity. Social learning was influenced by the way in which these factors affected the relationship that the development worker had with other expatriates as well as that which was possible with host nationals. In this sense, the findings reflect Triandis' (1994) argument that differences between expatriates and host nationals can inhibit interactions, which in turn can have an adverse effect on sociocultural adjustment. Similarly, Navara and James (2002) note that more contact with host nationals can present greater adjustment challenges. The factors evident in this study are discussed more fully in the following paragraphs.

Several respondents had been viewed positively by host nationals, and for some this had extended into receiving preferential treatment. Examples of preferential treatment were of not having to queue at the bank, being offered the front seat in cars, and not being stopped at police checkpoints. Others noted that the presence of an expatriate raised the profile of projects, whilst one respondent reported being embarrassed at receiving too much credit for his achievements. The literature suggests that positive host national attitudes toward expatriates have a positive effect on adjustment. For example, Danieli (2002) argues that adjustment can be aided by positive host national attitudes toward development workers, whilst Toh and Denisi (2005) contend that a lack of host national support can hinder adjustment. Similarly, Florkowski and Fogel (1999) found lower levels of commitment and adjustment when expatriates felt rejected by host nationals. Thus it

may have been expected that the positive treatment reported in this study would aid adjustment. However, this was not borne out by the respondents' experiences. Instead, this treatment was found to embarrass, to frustrate, and to create a barrier between the development workers and host nationals. These reactions can be attributed to the development workers' desire to integrate with the host community and to be accepted as equals. Thus the findings are more consistent with Toh and Denisi (2007) who found that the status of expatriates as outgroup members was a key issue in determining the extent to which host nationals were willing to act as socialising agents. In their study the labelling of expatriates as outgroup members was influenced by ethnicity, evidenced by such features as skin and eye colour, hair, dress norms, physical build and spoken language. In this study the development workers were all of a different ethnicity to that dominating the host culture. Thus the development workers were readily identifiable as expatriates, and therefore as outgroup members. Their status as outgroup members was exacerbated by the differential treatment that they received. Consequently, host nationals did not appear to act as socialising agents which, according to Toh and Denisi (2005), may have hindered sociocultural adjustment. Indeed the desire to be treated as equals by host nationals led development workers to challenge preferential treatment. This behaviour may be viewed as recognition that although preferential treatment may be 'nice' in the short term, it does not lead to effective sociocultural adjustment. Indeed by challenging this treatment, some respondents in this study were able to form closer friendships with host nationals, although other issues presented difficulties in this regard.

One such issue was cultural distance, which in this study was manifested in different frames of reference, social and leisure interests, financial differences, and approaches to work and time. The effect of cultural distance on adjustment has been recognised in previous studies (Redmond 2000; Ward & Chang 1997). Both of these studies contend that a greater degree of cultural distance between home and host cultures leads to greater adjustment difficulty. Chapter Two contended that in the context of international development, expatriates are likely to experience a greater cultural distance between home and host cultures. This was attributed to differences in the level of development of the home and host countries, together with the remote rural locations in which much development work takes place (Knowles 1998). Previous research has failed to adequately recognise expatriation to less developed countries, with most studies examining expatriation between industrialised countries. One exception is a study by Florkowski and Fogel (1999)

that found a greater intention to prematurely terminate an assignment amongst expatriates working in less developed countries. In this study cultural distance was manifested as differences in frames of reference and social / leisure interests which served as barriers to the formation of close friendships. As noted earlier, development workers in this study were motivated to learn about the host culture, and sought to integrate with the host community. Most sought to achieve this by trying to obtain a degree of balance between socialising with host nationals and other expatriates.

In seeking to get to know host nationals, some respondents found a lack of shared social and leisure interests. For example, development workers reported enjoying sunbathing, swimming and whitewater rafting – three activities that host nationals did not typically wish to engage in. Differences were also noted in attitudes toward smoking and drinking alcohol. Such differences are manifestations of cultural, religious and social norms, the evaluation of which is outside the remit of this thesis. Nevertheless, these differences made it difficult for the development workers to simultaneously socialise with host nationals and other expatriates, reinforcing the status of expatriates as outgroup members. In addition, there was some evidence to suggest that these differences reduced the willingness of development workers to interact with host nationals outside formal environments. This resulted from a feeling that socialising with host nationals involved sacrificing the opportunity to engage in activities of interest. Consequently, opportunities for social learning were reduced, with development workers less able to observe and mirror culturally-appropriate behaviours (Selmer 2002). The effect of this is again supportive of Allport's (1954) 'contact hypothesis'. More recently, Mendenhall and Oddou (1985), Black (1990) and Triandis (1994) have reinforced the argument that limiting contact with host nationals inhibits sociocultural adjustment. The findings from this study extend previous research by identifying how seemingly trivial differences between expatriates and host nationals can adversely affect sociocultural adjustment.

In a similar manner, financial differences were also found to act as a barrier to integration. Whilst differences in social interests presented a barrier, so too did the ability to afford to engage in certain activities. One example was the ability to eat out, which the development workers considered to be a normal social activity. However, host nationals viewed this as an unnecessary extravagance reserved for special occasions. Previous research on the effect of financial issues on adjustment has tended to focus on host national attitudes to expatriate pay policies (Toh &

Denisi 2003). However, in this study financial differences were not manifested in resentment toward expatriates, despite development workers being (and in some cases being perceived to be) significantly more wealthy than the host nationals that they had regular contact with. Instead, these differences served to further distance development workers from host nationals with the perception of wealth making development workers a target for requests for money. This had an adverse effect of sociocultural adjustment as development workers were unable to achieve the degree of integration to which they aspired. This is supportive of early research by Smalley (1963) who found that American missionaries found it difficult to identify with poor and marginalised host communities as a result of their elevated financial and social position in many Asian and African countries.

The value of support mechanisms in expatriation is acknowledged in previous research (Kraimer *et al.* 2001; Ward *et al.* 2001), with such support potentially available from both host nationals and other expatriates. When development workers began to form closer friendships with host nationals, they found that this could be inhibited by limited mutual understanding. This was attributed to having had different life experiences. Consequently, even when there was a desire to form such friendships a barrier remained based on limited mutual understanding. This limited the extent to which host nationals were able to provide the kind of support that was available from other expatriates. Thus, in line with previous research, contact with other expatriates was found to be important as a coping mechanism (e.g. McFarlane 2004), providing opportunities for the relief of tension and stress (e.g. Thompson 1997). However the findings go further in identifying negative consequences of excessive contact with other expatriates. Excessive reliance upon this support mechanism served to distance the development worker from the host community. Host nationals were reported to be generally positive toward development workers, with respondents citing examples of how their presence had raised the profile and success of community projects. Conversely, host nationals often held less positive attitudes toward other types of expatriate. Thus development workers that engaged excessively with the expatriate community became associated with those negative stereotypes. This is supportive of work which argues that a lack of host national support can hinder adjustment (Toh & Denisi 2005). Similarly, Florkowski and Fogel (1999) found that expatriates reported lower levels of commitment and adjustment when they felt rejected by host nationals. The findings therefore suggest a need to balance the benefits of obtaining support from

other expatriates with the adverse effects of becoming associated with negative expatriate stereotypes.

Another area of difference between expatriates and host nationals centred on attitudes toward work and time. Yavas and Bodur (1999) previously identified the effect of differential approaches to work on adjustment, with McFarlane (2004) presenting specific examples from the development context. In this study development workers were found to have a clear 'task-oriented' approach to work. This contrasted with the people orientation held by host nationals. Tensions were reported to result as expatriates were viewed as insensitive and uncaring due to their focus on efficiency and target setting. Similarly, expatriates were initially frustrated by host nationals' relaxed attitudes toward time and work. Different attitudes to time have previously been linked to feelings of exasperation and frustration amongst expatriates (Nash 1967) leading to criticism of host nationals for 'wasting time'. In this study, development workers initially reported feeling frustrated, but quickly accepted that this relaxed approach to work and time was the norm in the host country and resolved to adapt their behaviours accordingly. Indeed the adaptation process in this regard appeared to be aided by development workers' enjoyment of the slower pace of life outside the work environment.

The level of development of the host country was examined earlier in the context of its effect on the degree of cultural distance between home and host countries. Another aspect of moving to a less developed country is the effect of this on living and working conditions. Indeed one of the key contributions made by NGOs is their focus on the poorest and most marginalised communities. Many such communities are located in remote rural areas, isolated from communications and other infrastructure (Knowles 1998; Willis 2005). Thus development workers may find themselves living and working in a very different environment to that of their home country. When access to taken-for-granted resources (e.g. electricity and running water) is limited it can be more difficult to re-establish familiar routines, which according to Brett (1980) can aid adjustment by contributing to feelings of normality. More specifically, Aycan (1997) notes that adjustment to some changes in living conditions can influence an expatriate's intention to remain in the host country. In this study some development workers experienced limitations in the availability of basic resources. For some, efforts were made to recreate the home environment (e.g. by obtaining magazines and videos from home, or by setting up their home in a Western style). However, such an approach was later found to be ineffective as it

served to isolate the development worker from host nationals. Further, it led to frustrations as it was sometimes necessary to battle to do things in a familiar way when resources did not support this. For example one development worker initially struggled to iron his clothes with an electric iron and to read using an electric light in an environment where the electricity supply was unreliable. He later accepted local solutions, and adapted to the use of a charcoal iron and a storm lantern for these activities. Thus whilst establishing familiarity was initially considered to be beneficial, it was ultimately concluded that this was ineffective as it did not lead to feelings of comfort and indeed served to distance the development worker from host nationals. Consequently the findings challenge Brett's (1980) view that adjustment is facilitated through the recreation of a familiar environment and the adoption of familiar routines. Instead, the findings extend understanding of the adjustment process by indicating that adjustment may be better served by accepting local solutions which bring the expatriate closer to host nationals. Such behaviour demonstrates a willingness to integrate and to learn about the host culture, thereby supporting the work of Aycan (1997) that identifies the benefits of this in terms of engendering positive responses from host nationals.

However, it is not appropriate to make generalisations about living conditions in less developed countries. The experiences of development workers in this study emphasised the distinct difference between urban and rural areas, and the effect of this on their adjustment. Previous research has considered the effect of cultural distance on adjustment (e.g. Ward & Chang 1997), but has done so at the country level. However this study provides evidence to suggest that cultural differences within countries can be significant and that this can have consequences for adjustment. Specifically, the findings indicate that urban areas were found to be more developed and 'Westernised' in their environment and inhabitants. Conversely, the host culture was found to be much stronger in rural areas, with significant differences in living conditions, resource availability, use of local languages, and expression of cultural traditions. Thus development workers reported greater difficulty in adjusting to rural areas than to urban areas. This was found to be a particular problem when in-country orientations were delivered in an urban area before the development worker went to live and/or work in a rural area. In this regard, development workers reported experiencing a two-stage adjustment process, adapting first to the urban areas and later to the rural area. The findings therefore contribute to understanding of the effect of cultural distance on adjustment by suggesting that the concept of cultural distance should be applied more precisely

than in previous work (e.g. Babiker *et al.* 1980; McFarlane 2004; Ward & Chang 1997).

In relation to the second research objective (RO2), the findings identified sociocultural adjustment outcomes reached by development workers. Respondents had reached different adjustment outcomes (Chapter Five, Section 5.12), suggesting that the process of adjustment is uneven and multifaceted, mediated by a number of factors including the relationship with other expatriates and host nationals, different frames of reference, social interests, financial differences and different approaches to work and time. The findings therefore suggest that variables such as age (e.g. Selmer 2001d), time in host country (e.g. Ward *et al.* 1998), previous international and specific host country experience (e.g. Aycan 1997; Black *et al.* 1992; Takeuchi *et al.* 2005; Ward & Searle 1990; Yavas & Bodur 1999), and receipt of cross-cultural training (e.g. Kealey & Protheroe 1996) may not be as important as predictors of effective adjustment as suggested in the literature. This suggests that other characteristics may be more important as selection criteria, for example a commitment to international development and the motivation to learn about and to integrate with the host community. This is examined in the subsequent sections.

## **7.2 *The role of sending organisations***

A key theme in the expatriation literature is the contribution of sending organisations to the adjustment process. The argument is usually based on the assertion that the expatriate failure rate is high (e.g. Tung 1981; Yavas & Bodur 1999), and that this has significant consequences both for the individual (e.g. Ward & Chang 1997) and the sending organisation (e.g. Caligiuri 2000b; Shaffer & Harrison 1998). The main line of argument is that sending organisations can facilitate effective expatriate adjustment through the recruitment and selection of appropriate candidates (e.g. Caligiuri 2000b; Selmer 2002; Ward & Searle 1990) and the provision of a comprehensive programme of pre-departure preparation and in-country support (e.g. Kealey & Protheroe 1996; Mendenhall *et al.* 1987). The findings relating to the first two research objectives (discussed in Section 7.1 above) indicate that in the context of a range of challenges all participants had adjusted to the host culture, albeit to varying degrees. This raises the question of whether their adjustment was, as the literature suggests (e.g. Kealey & Protheroe 1996; Mendenhall *et al.* 1987), facilitated by their sending organisations. This was initially examined through the

third research objective (RO3) that considered development workers' perceptions of the role of their sending organisations, before the fourth research objective (RO4) took a broader perspective by examining recruitment, selection and cross-cultural training practice amongst a wider sample of NGOs. The findings in this regard serve to support the development of recommendations about the way in which NGOs can contribute to the sociocultural adjustment of their expatriate development workers. In doing so, the findings also enhance understanding of the role of sending organisations in this under-researched expatriation context.

### 7.2.1 Recruitment and selection

Previous research on the recruitment of expatriate staff has tended to focus on the MNC context. When MNCs do use expatriates to staff their international operations, internal recruitment is emphasised as expatriate posts are often used as part of management development programmes, to exert control over international business units, or to transfer or reinforce organisational culture (Shen & Edwards 2004). The broader recruitment literature suggests that closed search techniques including internal recruitment and recommendations from existing staff, characterised by their informality and restricted scope, may be well-suited to the needs of NGOs when seeking to fill expatriate posts (Carroll *et al.* 1999; Fowler 2000; Tanova 2003). In particular, the discussion in Chapter Three noted the need for recruitment methods to be flexible, quick to initiate, and cost effective in order to meet NGOs' requirements. The experiences of development workers were supportive of this argument, reflecting the use of informal 'closed search' methods of recruitment.

Armstrong (2003) and Carroll *et al.* (1999) advocate the use of internal recruitment as the starting point for the recruitment process due to its ease of use and low cost. Internal recruitment was evident in the experiences of some development workers, with around three-quarters having been recruited in this way. Internal recruitment was also reported as being reported as an effective method by NGOs. In this context internal recruitment appeared to be beneficial as it enabled the NGOs to identify candidates that had proven their commitment to international development. This benefit is consistent with the findings of a People in Aid study (1997) which found that NGOs were frequently inundated with interest in expatriate posts from unsuitable individuals. In addition, internal recruitment enabled the identification of candidates with some experience and understanding of the NGO's operations which would subsequently limit their training needs as they had already been socialised

into the sending organisation (Tanova 2003). Similarly, some individuals recruited in this way had existing contact with colleagues in the host country which would later ease the adjustment process. In this regard, the findings are consistent with previous research that identifies the benefits of internal recruitment (e.g. Carroll et al. 1999; Tanova 2003) and indicate that such benefits remain relevant in this expatriation context.

Word of mouth communication was also evident as a recruitment method both in the experiences of individual development workers and in reported NGO practice. This endorses Fowler's (2000) observation that NGOs frequently identify candidates through informal methods. The recruitment literature suggests that informal methods are driven by the recruiting organisation, making use of staff and organisational contacts, speculative applications, and previous applicants (e.g. Carroll et al. 1999). However, the development workers' experiences of recruitment indicated a more proactive approach, with individuals having secured posts through their own efforts in approaching NGOs. This adds to our understanding of recruitment in this context. First, it indicates that NGOs make use of a range of recruitment methods to fill expatriate posts. Such variety appears to be less evident in other contexts, where internal recruitment dominates as a consequence of the purpose of commercial expatriate posts (Shen & Edwards 2004). Second, in taking a different (candidate-centred) perspective these findings recognise the role of word of mouth as a proactive, candidate driven method of recruitment. The findings therefore indicate that candidates are not passive participants in the recruitment process, but rather that they can play a proactive role in the process. This would appear to be more relevant in this expatriation context where suitably qualified and experienced development workers are in short supply. There is, however, an apparent discrepancy between the experiences of development workers and reported NGO practice. The balance of ownership of the recruitment process is an unresolved issue that further research could fruitfully examine.

Processes of recruitment and selection were found to merge as a result of the informal and ad hoc approaches evident in the experiences of development workers. Candidates appeared to be recruited and selected simultaneously, rather than undergoing a competitive selection process. Rather, there was evidence that selection criteria were applied in a flexible manner, with individuals selected on the basis of 'adequacy' rather than being the 'best' available candidate. This is consistent with the closed search approach to recruitment discussed earlier.

However, such informality is inconsistent with the approaches advocated in the expatriation literature. Thus in contrast to normative models suggesting that recruitment and selection should be a structured and systematic process, the findings in this study illustrate that many of the stages are often skipped. Thus in practice recruitment and selection were found to be opportunistic, characterised by a high degree of informality in process and method.

Dowling *et al.* (1994) highlight the importance of selection, contending that along with training and socialisation, it is a key contributor to expatriate success. It is possible to categorise selection criteria according to their focus on technical competence (e.g. Remenyi 2004; Tung 1981), prior overseas experience (e.g. Selmer 2002; Ward & Searle 1990), individual circumstances (e.g. Caligiuri *et al.* 1999; Selmer 2001d), and personality characteristics (e.g. Caligiuri 2000b; Ward & Chang 1997). It may generally be concluded that a combination of factors should be considered in order to match the individual with the expatriation opportunity, with Mendenhall & Oddou (1985) having proposed a multi-dimensional model of expatriate selection. Development workers in this study were able to articulate some of the reasons that they believed they had been selected for their present posts, whilst NGOs reported on their use and perceived importance of selection criteria. Four broad selection criteria emerged from the empirical work as being of particular significance; technical competence (measured as the possession of professional qualifications and / or professional experience), international experience (regardless of whether it was domain- or culture-specific), commitment to international development (evidenced by having undertaken some kind of voluntary placement with the sending organisation or other relevant organisation), and personality characteristics (the identification of specific characteristics was outside the scope of this thesis).

The findings offer evidence to suggest that 'traditional' criteria (i.e. technical competence and international experience) continue to be used in this context. For several respondents, track record was important. This related both to prior experience of development work and experience within their profession. Technical competence is clearly important as development workers must make a contribution to the host community (Remenyi 2004). NGO practice reflected this, with professional experience and professional qualifications being rated as important in the selection decision. However, on its own, technical competence has limitations as it does not contribute to adjustment capability (Dowling *et al.* 1994).

NGOs appeared to recognise this, seeking candidates with additional qualities. In particular, some level of prior international experience was often sought. In some cases this experience was evidenced by having undertaken a voluntary development post, whilst in other cases this was interpreted more broadly. For example some respondents had experience of living overseas, whilst one had simply visited the host country for six weeks prior to securing their present post. It has been argued that international experience demonstrates the capability to work in an unfamiliar environment (Selmer 2002; Yavas & Bodur 1999). Ward & Searle (1990) are more specific in suggesting that experience aids the formation of accurate expectations, whilst Aycan (1997) acknowledges its value in enabling the development of coping mechanisms. However, some studies have questioned the universal value of prior international experience. In an early study, Black *et al.* (1992) contended that the contribution of international experience to adjustment is moderated by the relevance of that experience. More recently, Takeuchi *et al.* (2005a) examined the effect of different types of international experience on adjustment, differentiating between domain-specific and culture-specific experience. Their findings offered partial support for the argument that specific host country experience aids adjustment, whilst recognising that any international experience can still be beneficial in some respects. In a similar study, Selmer (2002) concluded that host country experience contributed to sociocultural adjustment, whilst unrelated international experience did not. The experiences of development workers in this study suggested that their sending organisations had not considered the relevance of their previous international experience, instead appearing to value any international experience regardless of whether it was domain- or culture-specific. Reported NGO practice was consistent with this, indicating that general international experience was considered more important than specific host country experience in the selection decision. One NGO offered a plausible explanation for this, citing significant cultural differences within countries that can render host country experience less useful.

A commitment to international development was also evident as a selection criterion. This has some resonance with Selmer's (2001d) suggestion that willingness to expatriate should be considered a key selection criterion as it may be linked with a commitment to make the assignment a success. In this study, commitment was principally evidenced through having prior experience of development work, often through a voluntary placement. Indeed there was evidence

to suggest that voluntary placements may be an important part of development careers. In some cases a voluntary placement led directly to a paid post with the same NGO through a process of internal recruitment. In this way the individuals had proved themselves to the sending organisation and were familiar with the work and operations of the NGO. For other individuals, voluntary placements had been undertaken earlier in their development career. For them, the placement appeared to have provided valuable and relevant experience, whilst also offering cross-cultural training that could be applied to subsequent development posts. Some development workers appeared to demonstrate their commitment to international development through their proactive and persistent approach to identifying and securing their post. Others did so by travelling independently of a sending organisation.

Miyamoto & Kuhlman (2001) identify the role of commitment in adjustment, suggesting that expatriates who focus on returning home experienced greater culture shock as they were less open to the host country experience. This suggests that commitment to international development may be a valuable selection criterion as it may act as a measure of the extent to which the individual is motivated to learn about the host culture and to pursue a degree of acceptance by host nationals. Indeed this desire was evident in all development workers in this study, with some explicitly stating their desire to be accepted as part of the host community. This led to efforts to learn about the host culture, to seek contact with host nationals and to be conscious of the effect of excessive contact with other expatriates, thereby supporting processes of sociocultural adjustment (Ward *et al.* 1997). This study contributes to our knowledge of sociocultural adjustment as commitment in this expatriation context is linked with mechanisms supporting adjustment in a way that may not be evident in other contexts. Specifically, a commitment to international development is a commitment to learn about host nationals and the host culture, and to pursue a degree of integration with the host community.

The expatriation literature has long emphasised the importance of personality characteristics in the adjustment process (e.g. Arthur & Bennett 1995; Black 1990; Caligiuri 2000b; Church 1982; Ones & Viswesvaran 1999). There was little direct evidence in the development workers' experiences of personality characteristics having been used as selection criterion by their sending organisations. This is perhaps reflective of the informal selection process experienced by these individuals, and it may be that personality characteristics were assessed informally, although the data does not enable this to be investigated fully. Indeed NGOs

reported making use of personality traits in their selection decision, rating these as the most important criterion along with suitable social skills. This practice is reflective of the extensive body of literature that links personality characteristics with the ability to adjust to the host culture (e.g. Church 1982; Caligiuri 2000b). NGOs therefore appear to recognise the value of selecting candidates with appropriate personality characteristics, although the data did not examine which personality characteristics were considered suitable in this context. The extent to which NGOs use personality characteristics as selection criteria, and the characteristics that they emphasise, therefore remain unresolved issues that future research could usefully examine.

### **7.2.2 Cross-cultural training**

There has been extensive research on the contribution of cross-cultural training to adjustment (e.g. Black & Mendenhall 1990; Brislin *et al.* 1983; Fiedler *et al.* 1971; Mendenhall *et al.* 1987; Tung 1981; Waxin & Panaccio 2005). The training experiences of development workers were complex and varied as a result of the different routes that they had taken to their present posts. Difficulties also arose because their posts tended not to be discrete projects but instead were more flexible and evolutionary in nature. The findings point to a limited role being played by sending organisations. Consequently, the individuals were frequently seen to take responsibility for their own preparation. This contrasts with the expatriation literature that emphasises the central role of the sending organisation in preparing and supporting expatriate staff (e.g. Forster 1997a; Kealey & Protheroe 1996).

Some development workers had received quite comprehensive cross-cultural training, mainly as part of a voluntary placement earlier in their career rather than in connection with their current post. Those that had received such training were generally positive about its value. None had reported receiving pre-departure training in relation to their present post. Instead, there was clear evidence of self-directed preparation having been carried out. This preparation was principally information-based, with individuals gathering information from sources including the internet, books and journals, and speaking with experienced colleagues and contacts. Such extensive reliance upon self-directed preparation is not evident in the expatriation literature. Waxin and Panaccio (2005) found that only a small proportion of managers in their study reported addressing shortcomings in the training provided by their sending organisations. The findings in this study are therefore reflective of

the proactive approach that development workers took to identifying and securing their posts. Indeed with no evidence of pre-departure training having been offered by the sending organisations, it is perhaps unsurprising that development workers would seek to carry out some form of preparation in order to reduce uncertainties. Indeed the principal benefit of information-based training is its contribution to the resolution of anxieties and the creation of accurate expectations (Caligiuri *et al.* 2001). The experiences of development workers conflicted with reported NGO practice in relation to information-based training. Whilst the development workers had undertaken this themselves, nearly all NGOs in the sample reported providing information-based training. Nevertheless, some NGOs also indicated that they expected development workers to carry out independent preparation. The findings therefore expand understanding of the role of NGOs as sending organisations in pre-departure training by indicating that self-directed preparation was more prevalent in this context than suggested by Waxin and Panaccio's (2005) work.

Interestingly, as an information-based form of preparation, the self-directed preparation suffered from the same limitations as formal information-based training provided by sending organisations. Some development workers reflected on limitations in the accuracy and relevance of some of the information that they had gathered prior to departure. This is consistent with findings from Yavas & Bodur (1999) and Forster (1997a) who concluded that the value of information-based training is inherently determined by the currency and completeness of the information provided. Some development workers also noted the difficulty in making sense of information prior to departure as it was being processed out of context. Indeed Selmer (1998) argues that training is more effective when provided in-country as the trainee is geographically, psychologically and chronologically closer to the host culture and is therefore more receptive to the inputs. The self-directed preparation nevertheless appeared to have benefitted the development workers by reducing pre-departure anxieties, even when it ultimately failed to create accurate expectations.

Some development workers reported receiving some form of in-country orientation, although the duration and location of these orientations varied. Nevertheless they were generally satisfied with the value of their in-country orientations, which included the provision of information (often by host national colleagues), visits to different parts of the host country and structured interactions with host nationals. Consequently, the orientations reflected a move from information-based approaches

toward awareness- and skills-based training (Kealey & Protheroe 1996). The main benefit of these orientations was reported to be that country and cultural training made more sense when delivered in the host country. Indeed some development workers made a comparison between pre-departure and in-country training, noting in particular that host country information provided before departure was difficult to understand as it was delivered out of context. These reflections are supportive of Selmer's (2001c) argument that cultural proximity is an important contributor to the effectiveness of in-country orientations. This may also be linked to the timing of the orientations, with them taking place when the information is needed rather than in advance where its relevance may not be fully appreciated. Selmer *et al.* (1998) refer to this as psychological receptivity, contending that the degree of receptivity to cross-cultural training varies throughout the expatriation process and that training is more effective when receptivity is high. Receptivity is high upon arrival as the reality of being in the host country sets in, limitations in the individual's preparation may become evident, and adjustment challenges begin to emerge.

One context-specific limitation of in-country orientations emerged as a result of the location in which the orientations took place. Chapter Two examined the international development context, and contended that much development work takes place in rural areas where the poorest and most marginalised communities tend to be located (e.g. Knowles 1998; Willis 2005). A majority of the development workers in this study were indeed found to be working in rural areas. Chapter Five reported that development workers in this study experienced a significant degree of cultural distance between urban and rural areas in their host country. However, whilst some orientations took place in rural areas, others were delivered in the capital city. Thus, whilst the orientations were found to be useful at the time, those that took place in the capital city did not adequately prepare the individuals for life and work in rural areas. These individuals consequently reported a two-stage adjustment process, adjusting first to the capital city and then to the rural location in which they were ultimately to work. In-country orientations were therefore found to play only a partial role in supporting adjustment when delivered in a different location to that in which the development worker would finally be based. The findings therefore extend understanding of cultural distance by suggesting that the concept should be applied at the intra-country level as a result of the degree of cultural difference between different parts of the host country.

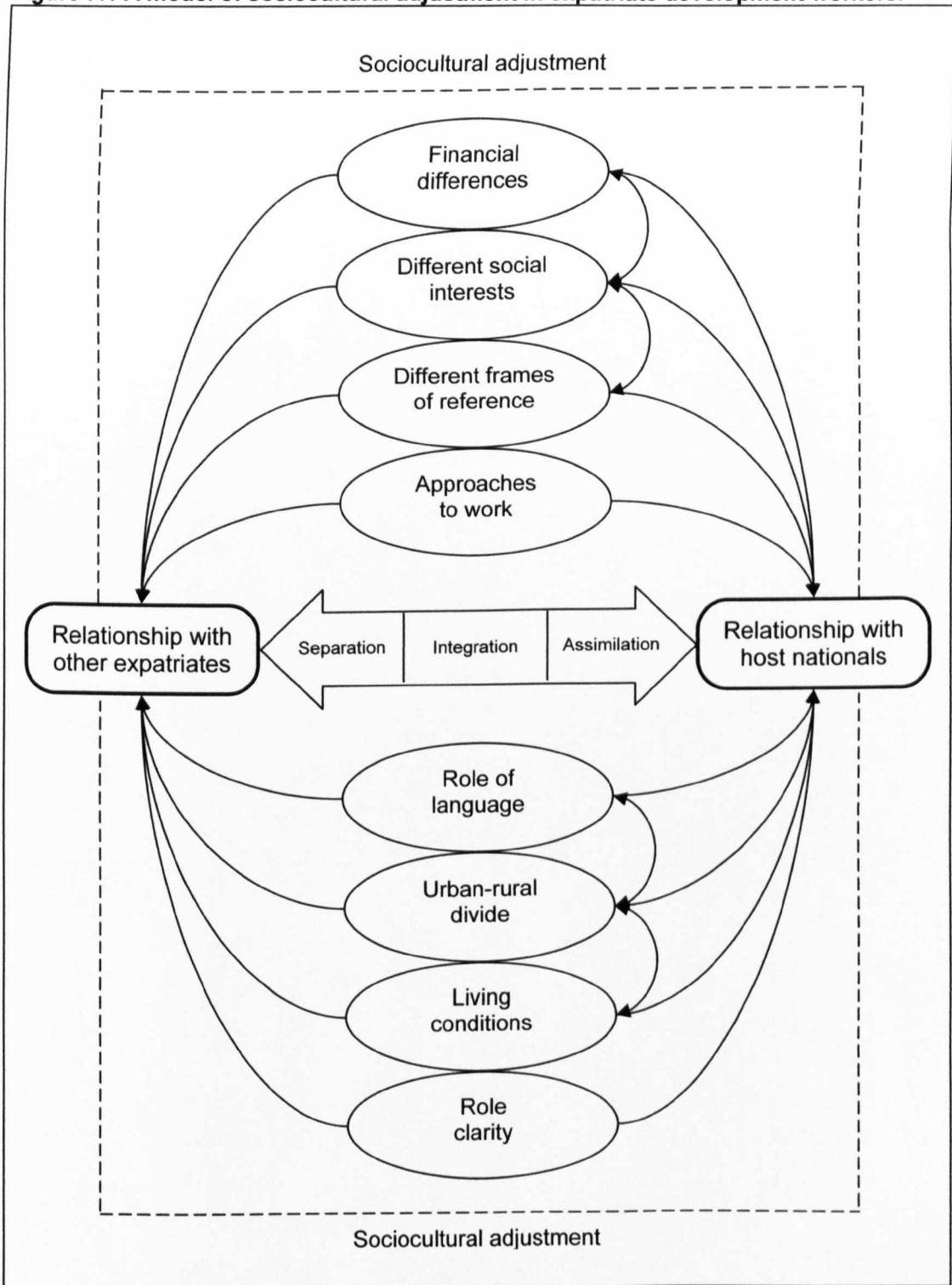
In summary, development workers' experiences of recruitment, selection and cross-cultural training add to our knowledge of the role of sending organisations in this expatriation context and inform understanding of the effectiveness of these interventions. The experiences indicate that recruitment is largely internal, as suggested in the limited literature on expatriate recruitment. However, there is evidence that external recruitment using closed search methods is also used. Recruitment to international development posts was characterised by flexibility, opportunism and ad hoc activity. This is broadly consistent with recruitment practice in SMEs and some industry sectors, whilst being contrary to the approaches advocated in the expatriation literature. The predominance of flexible and ad hoc recruitment and selection practice can be explained by the specific needs of NGOs, whereby posts must be filled quickly and cheaply without burdening the NGO with a large number of applications from unsuitable candidates. The experiences of development workers suggested that recruitment, and to a lesser extent selection, was more candidate-driven than anticipated. Here, candidates were more proactive and opportunistic in identifying and securing posts rather than passively responding to communications from the sending organisation. There was evidence to suggest that recruitment and selection began to merge in this context, occurring simultaneously as individual candidates were assessed for their suitability rather than participating in a competitive selection process. This is reflective of the operational needs of NGOs to fill posts quickly rather than waiting for the 'best' candidate. Development workers were conscious of the role of experience (both professional and international) in their selection, reflecting traditional approaches to the selection of expatriate staff. Commitment to international development also appeared important, which can be argued to be a key context-specific criterion as it represents a commitment to learn about and be accepted by host nationals which subsequently aids sociocultural adjustment. Development workers were not conscious of having been selected on the basis of personality characteristics, although it may be that these were assessed informally rather than as part of a formal process typical of the MNC context.

Development workers had largely taken responsibility for their own pre-departure preparation, and appeared satisfied with having done so although they did acknowledge some limitations in the relevance of information gathered prior to departure. In-country orientations were experienced by some development workers, and these were found to be effective due to their timing and delivery within the host country. However, it was also found that orientations delivered in the capital city

were less effective when the development worker was to ultimately work in a rural area as a result of the cultural distance between urban and rural areas in the host country. This study therefore extends understanding of the way in which expatriate development workers are recruited, selected and trained by NGOs. In particular the flexibility and informality of recruitment and selection were identified, as was the limited role played by pre-departure training, with individuals more likely to engage in independent preparation. Understanding of cultural distance is extended, with the findings suggesting that the concept should be applied within host countries as well as between the home and host countries. Issues that remain unresolved relate to the balance of ownership of the recruitment process, with the literature suggesting that individuals take a passive role whilst the research findings indicate a more proactive approach. Questions also remain around the extent to which processes of recruitment and selection merge as a result of the flexibility that the findings suggest, whilst NGOs' use of personality characteristics as selection criteria also remain unresolved.

### ***7.3 A model of sociocultural adjustment***

Chapter Five examined the sociocultural adjustment experiences of expatriate development workers, and the adjustment outcomes that were realised. Figure 7.1 introduces a model of sociocultural adjustment developed from the analytical work in Chapter Five. The model demonstrates the complexity of sociocultural adjustment, and illustrates the central importance of the relationship that the expatriate simultaneously has with other expatriates and with host nationals. The model depicts how the sociocultural adjustment of expatriate development workers is influenced by context-specific factors that form the expatriate experience, and recognises the way in which adjustment experiences link to adjustment outcomes.

**Figure 7.1 A model of sociocultural adjustment in expatriate development workers.**

**Note:** The use of arrows indicates associations, not causal links.

The heart of the model illustrates the importance of balancing the relationship with other expatriates and with host nationals, and the way in which this is linked with adjustment outcomes. Previous research on adjustment outcomes has modelled these in terms of two variables; the degree of acceptance of the host culture, and the degree of maintenance of the home culture (Ward *et al.* 2001). This model is

consistent with existing research in this regard, and develops it by identifying context-specific factors that simultaneously influence both of these variables. The factors identified thereby form the adjustment experience and shape the adjustment outcome realised by the expatriate development worker. The model contributes to existing knowledge of adjustment by identifying the way in which interdependent context-specific factors combine to simultaneously influence the relationship with host nationals and with other expatriates and thereby shape the adjustment outcome that is realised. Thus, the model identifies the factors influencing sociocultural adjustment in this expatriation context and represents the central importance of the relationship with host nationals and with other expatriates.

### ***Relationship with host nationals***

Sociocultural adjustment is concerned with the way in which an expatriate adjusts to interactions with host nationals, and their ability to fit in (e.g. Ward & Kennedy 1996). The relationship with host nationals is clearly significant in the adjustment process, and development workers are generally committed to a participative philosophy of development that espouses the value of working closely with host communities (e.g. Willis 2005). The respondents in this study reflected this, expressing a desire to get to know host nationals and to integrate into the local community. The extent to which this was possible varied between respondents, and was found to be influenced by the way in which host nationals related to expatriates (Chapter Five, Section 5.3) as well as by the benefits of maintaining contact with other expatriates (Chapter Five, Section 5.2.1). The attitudes that host nationals hold towards expatriates and the extent to which the expatriate is able to assume a degree of acceptance by host nationals is consequently argued to influence sociocultural adjustment.

The findings from this study found that expatriate development workers were easily identifiable due to the colour of their skin and were often treated differently by host nationals (Chapter Five, Section 5.3.3). Some such treatment was superficially positive and may therefore have contributed to feelings of acceptance, consistent with work by Danieli (2002). Differential treatment, however, (whether superficially positive or negative) created a barrier which affected the ability of the expatriates to interact with host nationals on equal terms, thereby affecting their sociocultural adjustment. Differential treatment was manifested in examples which included not being stopped at checkpoints, being given the front seat in cars, and not having to queue for services. Such treatment, whilst superficially positive, ran counter to the

respondents' desire to integrate with the host community and may therefore have contributed to a degree of discomfort.

In a more positive sense the involvement of a White expatriate was found to bring benefits to projects, especially in rural areas. Chapter Five (Section 5.3.1) argued that their presence raised the profile and perceived importance of projects, contributing to community involvement and the ability to secure funding for the activity. This, it was suggested, contributed to feelings of satisfaction and achievement. This is consistent with earlier work by Danieli (2002) which concluded that adjustment can be influenced by a positive perception of, and attitude toward, expatriate development workers by host nationals.

### ***The relationship with other expatriates***

The relationship with other expatriates was found to be a significant one which had both positive and negative consequences for adjustment. Previous research has identified the importance of maintaining contact with other expatriates to aid wellbeing (e.g. Davidson *et al.* 1991; McFarlane 2004; Thompson 1997). This study provides additional insights into the role of other expatriates, identifying them as an invaluable support mechanism, providing opportunities to share experiences with individuals from similar backgrounds and who understand the issues involved in expatriation (Chapter Five, Section 5.2.1). Perhaps specific to the international development context, some respondents reflected on how they had initially intended to socialise only with host nationals in order to integrate with the local community. This is again consistent with the participative philosophy of development (Willis 2005). However these respondents quickly realised that this was not possible, and that they needed to maintain contact with other expatriates. This conclusion suggests that, for these respondents at least, assimilation (Bochner 1994) was a difficult adjustive outcome to achieve, although two respondents appeared to have reached this stage. This offers an interesting insight into the experiences of individuals that have explicitly attempted to avoid contact with other expatriates. The need for support from other expatriates was linked to several factors that contributed to the creation of barriers between the development worker and host nationals. This was reported to affect the nature of the relationship that could be formed, which resulted in the suggestion that whilst close friendships could indeed be formed with host nationals there would still be issues that could not be dealt with in the same way as with another expatriate. However, there were limited examples of such friendships within the sample, and therefore further research could provide a greater

insight into the nature of the friendship that can be formed between expatriates and host nationals.

However, excessive contact with other expatriates was found to have potentially negative consequences for the sociocultural adjustment of development workers (Chapter Five, Section 5.2.2). Some respondents were aware of negative expatriate stereotypes being held by host nationals. Being linked with the expatriate community was found to be a concern for some respondents as this associated them with these negative stereotypes, thereby affecting the extent to which they were accepted by host nationals. This was a particular concern for these development workers as they reported a desire to integrate themselves as far as possible with the host community. The principal concern was the need to achieve a balance between the desire to integrate with the host community and the need to obtain support from the expatriate community. The extent to which this balance was achieved served to shape the adjustive outcome that was realised.

The following sections explain the context-specific factors identified in the model and the way in which they were found to shape processes of sociocultural adjustment through their influence on the relationship with host nationals and with other expatriates.

### ***Financial differences***

Respondents found that both real and perceived differences in relative wealth had a significant influence on their relationship with host nationals. This influence was manifested in several ways. Some respondents found that modest salaries by their home country standards provided them with significant spending power in the host country (Chapter Five, Section 5.4.1). This was reported to be difficult to reconcile as they were able to lead a lifestyle that was significantly different to that which was possible in their home country. Consequently some respondents experienced a change in lifestyle caused not by cultural difference but by an increase in spending power. Related to this, the possession of certain items considered to be 'normal' in the home country exacerbated the financial difference between the expatriates and host nationals. Similarly, certain social activities that were affordable by expatriates were considered by host nationals to be expensive and unnecessary luxuries. The perception of wealth also made expatriates a target for financial requests. Consequently, financial differences had the effect of creating a barrier which made it difficult for the expatriate to be accepted as an equal by host nationals.

Simultaneously, this issue contributed to the creation of conditions whereby the expatriate would seek contact with other expatriates as this relationship could be maintained on a more equal financial basis. Spending time with other expatriates was found to serve as a temporary escape from the effects of financial differences. Although being constantly targeted for money by host nationals (as discussed above) was reported to be merely an irritation by respondents, it resulted in a desire to spend more time with other expatriates in order to avoid such requests. This consequently affected processes of sociocultural adjustment by reducing opportunities for social learning.

### ***Different social interests***

The ability to engage in social activities of choice was also found to influence the need for contact with other expatriates (Chapter Five, Section 5.6). The desire of expatriates and host nationals to engage in different social activities was found to present a practical challenge to sociocultural adjustment by limiting opportunities to socialise with each other. Furthermore, this was found to create tensions as there was a perceived need to choose between expatriate and host national friends, together with a sense that socialising with host nationals required a degree of sacrifice as preferred activities had to be put on hold. These issues served to reinforce the desire to spend time with other expatriates, limiting contact with host nationals and thereby limiting exposure to the host culture. Previous research suggests that a greater degree of host culture contact results in higher levels of adjustive difficulty (Navara & James 2002). This might suggest that factors limiting contact with host nationals may be associated with more effective adjustment. Whilst this may result in the expatriate reporting lower levels of psychological discomfort, limiting exposure to the host culture reduces opportunities to learn about the host culture and consequently is argued to have an adverse effect on sociocultural adjustment in the longer term.

### ***Different frames of reference***

One of the reasons that some respondents cited for maintaining contact with other expatriates was that host nationals had different frames of reference that limited mutual understanding (Chapter Five, Section 5.5). It was suggested that this derived from different life experiences, education and upbringing, and a lack of familiarity with each others' cultures. This was manifested in different social interests and a limited understanding of the way in which issues affected each other. This made it difficult to form and maintain the same type of relationship with host nationals as

was possible with other expatriates, thereby limiting the extent of some respondents' acceptance of the host culture. Consequently, some respondents found the need to maintain contact with other expatriates in order to be able to share their experiences with people that fully understood their perspective.

### ***Different approaches to work***

Difficulties were also evident in the work setting. Respondents reported that they were task-oriented, whilst host nationals were people-oriented (Chapter Five, Section 5.8.2). This was found to create some tensions as expatriates were viewed as being uncaring and too focused on speed and the achievement of results, thereby affecting their acceptance by host nationals. This contributed to difficulties in achieving sociocultural adjustment which were exacerbated by the need to work in a participative manner with host nationals. This difference in approaches to work offers support for the view (e.g. Dowling *et al.* 1994) that technical competence is not an adequate criterion upon which to select expatriate staff.

### ***Role of language***

Language was found to influence the relationship between expatriates and host nationals (Chapter Five, Section 5.7). Whilst the practical benefits of language skills in facilitating effective communication and providing access to social situations have previously been noted (e.g. Ward *et al.* 2001), the respondents in this study reported no need to speak a local language for such purposes. Instead, efforts to learn one of the local languages were found to foster positive responses from host nationals, and to contribute to acceptance of the expatriate. This reduced barriers between the expatriate and host nationals. Language therefore took on a symbolic importance, with efforts to speak a local language providing tangible evidence of the expatriates' commitment to understand and integrate with host nationals. The study found evidence that efforts to learn at least a few words of a local language were associated with more positive adjustive outcomes.

### ***Urban-rural divide***

The distinct difference between urban and rural areas in less-developed countries was found to influence adjustment (Chapter Five, Section 5.9). In rural areas, there was reported to be stronger evidence of the host culture, with host nationals less likely to speak English. Consequently, living and / or working in rural areas affected the ability of expatriates to communicate effectively. Host nationals living in rural areas are usually the poorest and most marginalised (Knowles 1998), and therefore have very limited financial resources. This makes the financial contrast between

host nationals in these areas and expatriates significantly greater, the consequences of which were discussed earlier (Section 7.1.1).

Taking a different perspective, the distinction between urban and rural areas was found to present a two-stage process of adjustment (Chapter Five, Section 5.9). Respondents noted how many expatriates had some form of induction upon arrival, usually in an urban area, before moving on to their place of work. They described how they experienced a process of adjustment to the urban area, but then went through a further period of adjustment when they moved to their place of work which was frequently in a rural area. Consequently they underwent two adjustment processes as the urban and rural areas were so different. This appears to be specific to the international development context, as expatriates in commercial organisations are anecdotally more likely to live and work in urban areas.

### ***Living conditions***

Associated with the urban – rural divide, living conditions were also found to influence the degree of comfort of the respondents with the host culture (Chapter Five, Section 5.10). Living conditions were reported to vary between urban and rural areas, with the lack of access to resources in rural areas being found to affect the ability to re-establish familiar routines. Whilst adjustment has been defined as the re-establishment of familiar routines (Brett 1980), findings in this study suggest that effective adjustment can result from developing new routines that accept resource constraints and local ways of doing things rather than trying to recreate the familiar home environment. Indeed seeking to recreate a familiar environment appeared to be connected with a desire to maintain a degree of distance from the host culture, and was associated with separation outcomes. Necessary security precautions were also discussed, with the need to take such precautions reported to add to a sense of anxiety for some respondents.

### ***Role clarity***

Differing approaches to work between expatriates and host nationals were discussed earlier. However, a second aspect of the work environment was also found to be associated with adjustment. The degree of role clarity was found to be important for respondents (Chapter Five, Section 5.11). This appeared to be problematic for some respondents who acknowledged that development work is inherently dynamic, resulting in limited role clarity. This was found to have negative consequences for the ability of some respondents to prepare for their role and to

create accurate expectations in advance of departure. The findings here are consistent with earlier research which has linked role clarity with the ability to form accurate pre-departure expectations, thereby aiding the process of anticipatory adjustment (Black *et al.* 1991; Caligiuri *et al.* 2001).

## 7.4 Chapter summary

This chapter has discussed the research findings in the context of the extant literature, and has synthesised these findings into a model of sociocultural adjustment in expatriate development workers. The model makes a significant contribution to existing knowledge by identifying the way in which interdependent context-specific factors simultaneously influence the relationship with host nationals and with other expatriates, thereby shaping the sociocultural adjustment outcome that is realised by the development worker.

The model, however, can only be considered to reflect the experiences of the development workers that participated in this study. Consequently, it is not reasonable to assume that the model is more widely applicable. Future research should seek to build upon this study to examine other development workers in different settings. For example, future research should examine the sociocultural adjustment experiences and outcomes of a larger number of development workers, in different host countries, and those not engaged with an established expatriate community. Such research could thereby contribute to the advancement of a generalisable model of adjustment in this expatriation context.

The next chapter is the final one of this thesis. The chapter summarises the key findings from the study, before emphasising the contributions of this thesis. The limitations of the study are revisited, and directions for future research are proposed.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

## CONCLUSIONS

This thesis contributes to understanding of expatriation in the context of international development by evaluating sociocultural adjustment in expatriate development workers. It was demonstrated in Chapter One that existing expatriation research has not paid sufficient attention to the specific type of expatriate being examined. Furthermore, despite a growth in expatriation within the field of international development, this context in particular has received limited research attention (see Kealey 1989; McFarlane 2004; Navara & James 2002 for exceptions) even though it can be argued to present an especially challenging environment both for expatriates and their sending organisations.

This chapter concludes this study by first summarising the major findings, and then by explaining the value of the research in terms of its contributions to theory, practice and method. As with all research studies, this thesis must be considered within the context of its limitations and restricted scope. Thus the chapter continues with a consideration of the study's limitations, together with an explanation of issues that the findings leave unresolved. These issues are explained in Section 8.3.3 and provide opportunities for future research. The chapter concludes by discussing some of the author's future research plans which seek to build upon the foundation that this thesis has provided. These plans are not intended to be an exhaustive list, but rather an indication of the way in which this thesis aims to mark the beginning of a sustained programme of research focusing on expatriation in the international development context. In line with the apprenticeship model of the Doctoral process, a personal reflection on the research process is also provided.

### ***8.1 Summary of findings***

In contributing to understanding of expatriation in the context of international development, this study has explored the sociocultural adjustment experiences of expatriate development workers and the role of sending organisations. The following two sub-sections summarise the main findings in relation to each of these perspectives.

### **8.1.1 Sociocultural adjustment experiences of development workers**

A failure to adjust effectively to the host culture can have damaging consequences for the individual expatriate (e.g. Caligiuri 2000b; Yavas & Bodur 1999). Previous research highlights the importance of support mechanisms, notably contact with other expatriates, in facilitating adjustment (e.g. McFarlane 2004; Davidson *et al.* 2001; Thompson 1997).

The development workers in this study were all found to have adjusted to the host culture, albeit to varying degrees. Nevertheless, they had experienced a range of challenges to their sociocultural adjustment. These challenges were examined in Chapter Seven and synthesised into a model of sociocultural adjustment in development workers. The model contends that sociocultural adjustment in this context is influenced by the interdependent relationship that expatriates have with other expatriates and with host nationals. These relationships are simultaneously influenced by several factors associated with differences between the expatriates and host nationals. The findings support previous research by endorsing the view that contact with other expatriates is indeed beneficial, offering the opportunity to share experiences, to learn from each other's cultural mistakes, and to discuss frustrations arising from intercultural encounters (e.g. Thompson 1997). However development workers were found to have a need and desire to be accepted by host nationals, and the degree of acceptance possible was found to be influenced by their ability to balance their relationship with host nationals and other expatriates. The findings go further than previous work in identifying how several factors can simultaneously create tensions between the expatriate and host nationals whilst driving the expatriate to seek further contact with other expatriates, thereby shaping the sociocultural adjustment experience as well as the outcome that is realised. In the development context of this study, being too closely associated with other expatriates, especially non-development workers, was found to have an adverse effect on the relationship possible with host nationals.

In summary, the factors found to influence sociocultural adjustment were;

- i. Actual and perceived financial differences that resulted in development workers being targeted for money and being unable to integrate with the host community as fully as they had intended.

- ii. Differences in social interests that served to limit opportunities for social learning whilst also fostering a sense of having to choose between engaging in preferred social activities and socialising with host nationals.
- iii. Different frames of reference that limited mutual understanding and reduced the ability of host nationals to act as a support mechanism, thus driving development workers to seek support from other expatriates.
- iv. Different approaches to work that created tensions as the development workers took a task orientation that conflicted with the people orientation that was the norm in the host culture.
- v. Efforts to learn and use one of the local languages were found to break down barriers and demonstrate a commitment to integrate with the host community.
- vi. The cultural distance between urban and rural areas created a two-stage adjustment process for development workers participating in orientation programmes in the capital city before proceeding to work in a rural area.
- vii. Living conditions including access to basic resources had an effect on the ability of development workers to re-establish familiar routines but ultimately forced the acceptance of local solutions.
- viii. Role clarity was difficult to establish due to the flexible nature of roles in this context, adversely affecting adjustment to work whilst spilling over into sociocultural adjustment.

### **8.1.2 Recruitment, selection and training of development workers**

There is widespread agreement that expatriate failure is damaging to the sending organisation (e.g. Black & Mendenhall 1991; Copeland & Griggs 1985; Caligiuri 2000b). The sending organisation therefore has both a vested interest, as well as a responsibility, to take appropriate action to minimise the risk of expatriate failure.

Empirical evidence examined in Chapter Six concluded that recruitment, selection and cross-cultural training practice in UK-based NGOs appeared to be shaped by pragmatic considerations. The IHRM literature emphasises the importance of selecting for expatriate posts on the basis of personality traits (e.g. Caligiuri 2000b), and on the value of awareness- and skills-based cross-cultural training in preparing individuals for the sojourn (e.g. Kealey & Protheroe 1996). This study found that sending organisations in this context sought to recruit qualified and experienced candidates in order to minimise training requirements and to enable expatriates to

be deployed into the field quickly, although there was also evidence of less-experienced individuals having been selected.

In relation to recruitment, this strategy was reflected in a preference for informal recruitment sources that appear to target those already working in development organisations. Informal sources were found to enable the identification of qualified and experienced candidates quickly and efficiently, without attracting large numbers of unsuitable applicants. However, such sources can be criticised for reflecting a short term approach which limits the ability of inexperienced candidates to build their experience.

Similarly, there was an emphasis on selection criteria that focus on professional expertise and previous overseas experience. Such criteria are again reflective of a preference for candidates with minimal training needs that can be deployed into the field quickly. The desire to select candidates with minimal training needs was also reflected in the types of cross-cultural training provided. Whilst the extent of training provision was variable amongst the sample, there was a clear preference for providing only information-based training, principally in the form of project and organisation inductions. Expatriate development workers' reflections of the role of their sending organisations were broadly consistent with the IHRM practices reported by the NGOs in the sample, although there was also evidence that individuals took responsibility for their own pre-departure preparation.

## **8.2 *The contributions of this thesis***

This section discusses the contributions that this thesis makes to theory, practice and method.

### **8.2.1 Contributions to theory**

Although the importance of context has long been recognised (e.g. Harris & Brewster 1999; Shaffer *et al.* 1999; Tung 1981, 1982), most previous research has focused on the expatriation of managers in commercial organisations. This study makes its overall contribution by furthering understanding of how the specific set of features that characterise expatriation in the international development context combine to influence the process and outcome of sociocultural adjustment. In doing so, the study responds to calls for research that focuses on specific and clearly

defined types of expatriate, and does so by examining a hitherto under-researched group. The findings thereby principally contribute to theory in the area of sociocultural adjustment, whilst making a secondary contribution to the literature on expatriate recruitment, selection and cross-cultural training. Analysis shows sociocultural adjustment to be a complex, multi-layered and mediated process in which a number of factors (both individually and in combination) impact the process and effectiveness of adjustment. The key theoretical contribution of this thesis rests in the development of a conceptual model of the sociocultural adjustment process.

### ***Sociocultural adjustment***

The issue of cross-cultural adjustment has received a great deal of research attention (see Chapter Two for a review). However, most studies have focused on expatriate managers in MNCs, and on expatriation between industrialised nations. A limited number of studies have examined alternative expatriation contexts, notably Kealey's (1989) study of staff working for government international development departments, Navara & James' (2002) study of missionaries, and Yavas & Bodur's (1999) study of expatriate managers in Turkey. In addition, several studies have examined psychological wellbeing in expatriate relief workers (e.g. Barron 1999; Ehrenreich & Elliott 2004; McFarlane 2004).

Chapter Two reviewed the adjustment literature and contended that expatriation in international development is challenging due to a number of contextual factors. The research findings provide evidence that these challenges were indeed experienced by development workers, although they were ultimately overcome. Specifically, our knowledge of sociocultural adjustment in development workers is extended in the following ways;

- i. The study found evidence that development workers were motivated to learn about the host culture and to pursue varying degrees of integration with the host community. This motivation is consistent with the participative philosophy of international development (Willis 2005), and resulted in efforts to seek contact with host nationals. In line with the contact hypothesis (Allport 1954) the findings indicate that greater contact with the host community led to more positive attitudes toward that community. However, the study also suggests that positive attitudes could be held prior to establishing contact with the host community. Black (1988) argues that positive attitudes toward host nationals are beneficial to adjustment. Whilst this makes intuitive sense, this study

suggests that this alone is insufficient. Although positive attitudes toward host nationals seemed to encourage contact, various practical barriers were found to hinder the relationship that was possible. Such barriers included limited mutual understanding, financial differences and differences in social interests. This is consistent with Triandis' (1994) view that differences between expatriates and host national can initially inhibit interactions. However, this study indicates that whilst some such barriers can be overcome, others can be longer-lasting leading to a sense of disappointment that the expatriate can not achieve the degree of integration to which they initially aspired. The findings therefore synthesise previous research by suggesting that a motivation to integrate with the host community encourages contact that facilitates a process of social learning, although that process can be hindered by a combination of transient and more enduring barriers.

- ii. The study identified specific challenges to the sociocultural adjustment of development workers, which are illustrated in the model of sociocultural adjustment proposed in Chapter Seven. Consistent with previous research (e.g. Toh & Denisi 2003) financial differences were found to affect the relationship between expatriates and host nationals. The findings support Toh and Denisi (2003) in that expatriates did not appear to be seen as a relevant reference group for financial comparison by host nationals. Thus the issue was not one of equity between expatriates and host nationals doing similar work, but rather that expatriates were viewed as being wealthy. Possession of certain items and engagement in some social activities perpetuated this perception. The effect was a barrier that affected the expatriate – host national relationship by limiting the extent and nature of contact between the expatriate and host nationals.

The effect of cultural distance has long been recognised in the literature (Ward & Chang 1997). The findings endorse this, but contribute to understanding of sociocultural adjustment by identifying the way in which specific cultural differences are manifested in this expatriation context. Differences in leisure interests were found to be important as they hindered the social interaction that contributes to social learning. Expatriates felt a degree of sacrifice when socialising with host nationals as this was often at the expense of participating in activities of their choice. This also led to a sense of having to choose between expatriates and host nationals for social activity which reinforced the

division between these groups. Previous research has identified the role of host nationals as a support mechanism. Toh and Denisi (2005) argue that a lack of host national support can hinder adjustment, whilst Florkowski and Fogel (1999) found that expatriates reported lower levels of commitment and adjustment when they felt rejected by host nationals. This study found that even when host nationals try to offer support to expatriates, the value of this can be limited by different frames of reference. Such differences were attributed to different backgrounds, education levels, and life experiences, and meant that it was difficult to communicate in the same way as with another expatriate. Another manifestation of cultural difference emerged in a work setting, with expatriates having a task-orientation whilst host nationals tended to have a people-orientation. This caused a degree of friction as expatriates were viewed as being uncaring and excessively focused on efficiency, whilst host nationals were viewed as inefficient and lazy. Different attitudes to time reinforced these approaches to work, endorsing Nash's (1967) conclusion that challenges can arise when moving from a country where efficiency is central to one where time receives less emphasis. Language was found to be important, although not in a functional sense as argued by Ward *et al.* (2001). Instead, efforts to learn and use a local language were found to break down barriers by demonstrating the expatriate's intention to seek acceptance by host nationals. This extends Toh and Denisi's (2007) argument that expatriates' status as outgroup members is reinforced by surface level attributes including spoken language by suggesting that outgroup membership can be made less obvious by modifying use of language.

Previous research examining the effect of cultural distance on adjustment has considered this at country level (e.g. Ward & Chang 1997), a perspective which assumes that national culture is uniform. However, in less developed countries there can often be significant differences between urban and rural areas (Knowles 1998; Willis 2005). In this study urban areas were reported to be more Westernised, whilst the host culture was much stronger in rural areas where many development workers ultimately live and work. Development workers found it more difficult to adjust to rural areas than urban areas as the degree of cultural distance between their home country and each location was different. This extends the concept of cultural distance by contending that the unit of measurement in this regard should be more precise than simply identifying the home and host countries. Further, development workers

receiving in-country orientations in an urban area before working in a rural area reported a two-stage adjustment process as they adjusted first to the urban area and then to the rural area. This was reported to be unexpected, and indeed the initial experience in the urban area gave a misleading indication of the degree of adjustment difficulty that would be faced later in the rural area.

Related to the urban-rural divide, living conditions were found to influence the adjustment of development workers. This endorses Aycan's (1997) conclusion that having to adjust to certain changes to living conditions can influence an expatriate's intention to remain in the host country. Similarly, Brett (1980) implies that adjustment is the reestablishment of familiar routines, something that may be more difficult if living conditions are substantially different to those in the home country. Florkowski and Fogel (1999) are more specific in suggesting that expatriates are more adjusted when they are paid enough to maintain their existing standard of living. However, this may not be possible or desirable in the international development context. In rural areas access to basic resources such as electricity and running water can be limited, which can make it impossible to replicate the home environment. Further, efforts to do so may result in conspicuous consumption that can exacerbate the perceived financial differences between expatriates and host nationals, the effects of which were discussed earlier. Adjustment in this context, therefore, may be based on learning and accepting local solutions rather than trying to replicate the home environment.

Finally, role clarity was found to influence adjustment in this context, and was manifested in a similar way to that found in previous studies (Barron 1999; Hechanova *et al.* 2003). However, the degree of role clarity that is possible in this context is limited by the flexibility of development roles. Roles were found to be ill-defined, to change between appointment and arrival in the host country, and to change once in the host country. This had an adverse effect on the ability of development workers to engage in effective pre-departure preparation, although the need for flexibility appeared to be recognised by the individuals in the study.

- iii. The findings extend understanding of the role of other expatriates as a support mechanism. Previous research has highlighted the positive contribution that

support mechanisms make to the adjustment process (e.g. Kraimer *et al.* 2001; Thompson 1997; Toh & Denisi 2007; Ward *et al.* 2001). Other studies, however, have suggested that excessive contact with other expatriates may be symptomatic of culture shock (e.g. Nash 1967; Smalley 1963). This study brings both perspectives together, identifying both benefits and limitations of maintaining contact with other expatriates. In a positive sense, development workers reported that other expatriates were an essential support mechanism that provided opportunities for informal debriefing and sharing frustrations with others from a similar background without offending host nationals. However, rather than being a symptom of culture shock, excessive contact with other expatriates was found to affect the relationship with host nationals. Such contact associated the individual with negative expatriate stereotypes held by host nationals, presenting a barrier to acceptance and subsequently to sociocultural adjustment.

- iv. Previous research has suggested that host nationals' attitudes toward expatriates can influence adjustment and commitment (Danielli 2002; Florkowski & Fogel 1999; Toh & Denisi 2005). Despite the effect of excessive contact with other expatriates on the relationship with host nationals, some development workers in this study reported receiving preferential treatment. Such treatment was superficially positive as it was indicative of acceptance by host nationals. However, contrary to previous research this treatment was recognised as potentially damaging as it reinforced barriers between the expatriate and host nationals. Consequently it limited the degree of integration that development workers sought, making it difficult to be accepted as an equal. These findings contribute to understanding of this issue by identifying overt evidence of preferential treatment that has not been previously observed. Further, the findings illustrate how positive treatment of expatriates by host nationals can have an adverse effect on sociocultural adjustment.
- v. The expatriation literature emphasises the central role of sending organisations in facilitating cross-cultural adjustment. Consequently, comprehensive approaches to recruitment, selection and cross-cultural training are frequently advocated (e.g. Black & Mendenhall 1990; Mendenhall & Oddou 1985). This study found that sending organisations had played a more limited role than advocated in the literature, and that their inputs were flexible and informal. Nevertheless, development workers had all reached positive

adjustment outcomes. The findings therefore contribute to the debate on the role of sending organisations by questioning the necessity of comprehensive approaches to recruitment, selection and cross-cultural training in this context. In particular the findings indicate that development workers may be more autonomous, taking a proactive approach to the identification of posts and assuming responsibility for their own preparation.

### **8.2.2 Implications for practice**

As this study is based upon a specific expatriation context, the findings will be of interest and relevance to several stakeholder groups within the international development community. However, application of the findings must be undertaken within the context of the study limitations. The principal limitation is the extent to which it is reasonable to generalise from the findings as a result of the samples used.

#### ***NGO managers***

The findings from this study will be of use to managers in NGOs that employ expatriate development workers to carry out their fieldwork. In particular the findings will inform approaches to selection and cross-cultural training.

In relation to selection, the findings indicate that the use of international experience as a selection criterion may not be as important as suggested in the literature. In this study both experienced and inexperienced development workers adjusted effectively to the host culture. It appeared that commitment to international development and a motivation to integrate with the host community were important influencers of sociocultural adjustment capability. In this regard these qualities encouraged contact with host nationals and acted as drivers to overcome adjustment challenges. Thus, NGO managers may be advised to examine the presence of these qualities as selection criteria and to place less emphasis on the possession of international experience as a surrogate measure of the ability to adjust to the host culture. However the sample limitations explained in Section 8.3.1 mean that this is considered an unresolved issue that would benefit from further research.

In relation to cross-cultural training, the findings indicate that development workers are motivated to carry out independent preparation prior to departure. This preparation often involved information-gathering, and suffered from the same

limitations as information-based training (e.g. the information being incomplete, irrelevant or out-of-date). Information-based training was particularly problematic in this context due to the flexibility of development worker roles and changing circumstances in the host country. Nevertheless development workers benefitted by having taken ownership of the process and reported feeling well-prepared for their assignment. NGOs may be advised to limit their pre-departure training to the provision of NGO-specific information, whilst supporting development workers in their independent preparation by providing access to resources and contacts in the host country. Contact with those already in the host country is especially pertinent due to the dynamic nature of the operating environment.

In-country orientations were found to be useful by development workers. The benefits of awareness- and skills-based training being delivered in-country were consistent with the literature, with cultural and temporal proximity in particular being identified by development workers as aiding their receptivity to such training. NGOs would therefore be advised to focus their limited resources on the provision of in-country orientations to which development workers were found to be more receptive. The effectiveness of such provision was, however, found to be influenced by the specific location in which it takes place. NGOs must therefore ensure that orientations are delivered in locations reflective of the final location in which the development worker will operate. In particular, the practice of delivering orientations in a capital city when the development worker will live and work in a rural area was found to be problematic due to the cultural distance between urban and rural areas in less developed countries.

Finally, the findings identify specific challenges to sociocultural adjustment that can be used to inform the design of training content. NGOs would be advised to ensure that their training includes coverage of the following issues;

- i. The consequences of excessive contact with other expatriates, especially those that are not development workers.
- ii. The consequences of trying to recreate the home environment.
- iii. Awareness of the elevation of the individual's social and financial status and the effects of this on the relationship with host nationals.
- iv. The effect of different work orientations on the relationship with host nationals.
- v. The difficulty in achieving full integration and acceptance by the host community.

### ***Expatriate development workers***

New and inexperienced expatriate development workers can use these findings to better understand the adjustment process that they are about to experience, which may help them to make sense of the experiences that they subsequently have in the field. Indeed some research participants reported that an awareness of the adjustment process was a significant contributor to their effective adjustment. This objective and rational study of cross-cultural adjustment in the context of international development will be more useful to new or inexperienced development workers than either personal accounts or studies carried out in different expatriation contexts.

New and inexperienced development workers can make use of the insight offered into the recruitment and selection practices of NGOs. This will enable them to prepare themselves thoroughly with respect to the criteria used by NGOs to select candidates for expatriate posts. They will also be able to maximise their exposure to NGOs seeking to fill expatriate posts by making use of the insight offered into the sources of recruitment used by NGOs for this purpose. This may also benefit the NGOs, as potential applicants will be better informed and prepared. This may serve to reduce the number of unsuitable applicants that NGOs are reported to receive (People in Aid 1997).

The findings may also benefit experienced development workers. They can use the findings to help make sense of their experiences, and to understand the ways in which they can enhance their adjustment to host cultures. They can also use the findings to enhance their employability by developing a better understanding of the expectations that NGOs have of prospective expatriate staff.

### ***Independent trainers & training providers***

The findings will benefit trainers and training organisations involved in offering training and short courses to potential and current expatriate development workers. Such training providers include RedR, BOND and Intrac. The findings support the contribution of independent training courses in filling the gaps left by the limited training provided by NGOs. In particular, the findings highlight the limited provision of awareness- and skills-based cross-cultural training by NGOs. The findings therefore not only endorse the existence of these independent training providers, but also help these providers to develop their training courses to address the specific

gaps in NGO provision identified in this thesis. Furthermore, the adjustment experiences explored in this study will help training providers to structure their training provision, and to inform the development of their training materials.

### **8.2.3 Contribution to method**

The empirical work for this thesis used a qualitative approach to evaluate the adjustment experiences of expatriate development workers in an effort to overcome the limitations of the structured approaches that dominate the literature. In doing so, practical problems arose in meeting respondents face-to-face. This prompted an assessment of alternative methods, and resulted in the adoption of email interviews in order to obtain the benefits of semi-structured interviews whilst not requiring the researcher and respondents to physically meet. This study therefore contributes to the methods used in adjustment research by using a qualitative approach, and by making use of email interviews. Each of these contributions is now discussed.

#### ***A qualitative methodology to examine adjustment experiences***

The majority of studies on cross-cultural adjustment use quantitative methods, with questionnaires asking respondents to rate the degree of difficulty that they have with various pre-defined issues. Quantitative approaches that have been used in previous research were discussed in Chapter Four, Section 4.4.1. Whilst such structured approaches do have benefits, for example in facilitating comparison between studies and over time, they suffer from inherent limitations. This thesis therefore makes a methodological contribution to the study of cross-cultural adjustment by examining the issue using a qualitative approach. The thesis was consequently able to offer a rich insight into the adjustment experiences of a sample of development workers that would not have been possible using the structured methods that dominate the adjustment literature.

#### ***Semi-structured email interviews***

Initially the researcher made a field visit to Uganda during which a number of face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with expatriate development workers. To supplement the data gathered during the field visit, semi-structured email interviews were subsequently carried out with additional respondents. The use of email interviews does not appear to have been used in previous adjustment research.

Email interviews were found to be especially effective in the development context, where it is comparatively uncommon for groups of expatriates to be located in the same area. This approach therefore enabled contact to be made with individuals operating in areas where there was no group of development workers to justify a personal visit. The feasibility of this method was confirmed by the researcher's field visit, during which it was observed that development workers sought out internet access in order to maintain contact with friends, family, colleagues and their sending organisation. Email interviews were also found to be effective as they allowed the participants to consider their responses. The experience from this study suggested that the comments, reflections and examples provided by respondents were as detailed as those received during the face-to-face interviews. The semi-structured approach involved the researcher asking a small number of questions each time, which allowed for questions of clarification and expansion to be asked in relation to earlier responses.

The asynchronous approach adopted meant that the respondents did not require additional internet time, which minimised the burden of participation. Additionally, the use of email did not require any special software or skills. The researcher benefited by eliminating the time and cost implications of further field visits as well as those associated with transcription. However, limitations are also evident in the use of such methods. These are discussed in Section 8.3.1.

#### **8.2.4 Summary of contributions**

The following table (Table 8.1, next page) provides a summary of the contributions made by this thesis.

**Table 8.1 Summary of thesis contributions.**

	<b>Supported</b>	<b>Added</b>	<b>Challenged</b>	<b>New</b>
<b>Contribution to theory</b>	The psychological – sociocultural model of cross-cultural adjustment (e.g. Searle & Ward 1990).  The need for studies to focus on specific expatriation contexts (e.g. Harris & Brewster 1999; Navara & James 2002).	Understanding of how specific issues affect the sociocultural adjustment of expatriate development workers.  The effect of cultural differences within host countries on sociocultural adjustment.	The focus on commercial and educational expatriation contexts.  The focus on expatriation between industrialised countries.  The view that sending organisations play a key role in facilitating adjustment.	Model of sociocultural adjustment in expatriate development workers.
<b>Contribution to practice</b>	The use of in-country orientations.  The limitations of information-based training.	Insight into the adjustment experiences of expatriate development workers.  Understanding of issues to cover in in-country orientations.	The focus on international experience as a key selection criterion.  The need for NGOs to provide information-based training.	Identification of factors influencing the adjustment of expatriate development workers.  The need to carry out in-country orientations in the right part of the host country.
<b>Contribution to method</b>	The emerging use of qualitative methods to examine cross-cultural adjustment (e.g. Zimmerman <i>et al.</i> 2003)	Use of semi-structured email interviews as a method of gathering data on adjustive experiences.	The use of quantitative methods to examine cross-cultural adjustment.	

**Source:** Compiled by author using the framework from Langley (2005).

## **8.3 Revisiting the research limitations**

As with all research studies, the findings from this thesis must be taken within the context of its limitations. This section examines these limitations, outlining the nature of each limitation and its effect on the findings.

### **8.3.1 Limitations in the method**

The contribution made by this thesis derives from its focus on a specific expatriation context. However, limitations arose in relation to gaining access to both expatriate development workers and sending organisations which affected the ability to generalise from the findings.

#### ***Sociocultural adjustment experiences of development workers***

The population of interest for this part of the research was expatriate development workers. After extensive efforts, it proved impossible to establish contact with suitable individuals through sending organisations (UK-based operational NGOs). Consequently, a field visit was organised during which contact was established directly with expatriate development workers using a snowballing method. This visit was for practical reasons relatively short, and as a result a limited number of development workers were interviewed.

The result of the limited sample size and the method of sample identification is that the extent to which the sample is representative of the expatriate development worker population is unknown. The effect is to limit the extent to which it is reasonable to apply these findings to other expatriate development workers. Consequently, the experiences examined in this thesis must be considered only to be reflective of the specific research participants. This, however, is consistent with qualitative approach taken, and the exploratory objectives of the study. Subsequent research may usefully extend this study to examine the adjustment experiences of more development workers, working in different locations, in order to increase the body of knowledge in this area and to move toward a generalisable model of adjustment in this context.

#### ***Recruitment, selection and training of development workers***

The population of interest for this part of this thesis was UK-based NGOs that use expatriate development workers. After extensive searching, it was established that

no accurate sampling frame was available which matched this population of interest. The best sampling frame available was known to contain NGOs that did not use expatriate development workers. However, there was no objective way of removing these NGOs from the sampling frame. Together with the relatively small number of NGOs in the available sampling frame, this led to a census approach being adopted.

The effect of this response to the limitations in the sampling frame is twofold. First, the reported response rate to the questionnaire is of limited relevance as it is not known how many recipients did not respond because the questionnaire was not relevant to them (i.e. they do not operate by using expatriate development workers). Hence the actual response rate is likely to be higher than that reported, although of course it is not possible to know what proportion of the population of interest (NGOs that use expatriate development workers) actually responded. Second, as a result of the unknown response rate, the representativeness of the sample can not be established. This reduces the ability to generalise to the population of interest, with the result that the findings had to be reported in a more descriptive manner than intended. The findings nevertheless provide a useful insight into the recruitment, selection and cross-cultural training practice in a context that has thus far been under-researched. Future research may achieve a better response by making use of a more resource-intensive approach such as the use of telephone interviews, which would enable reasons for non-response to be established.

### **8.3.2 Boundary limitations**

The aim of this thesis was to contribute to understanding of expatriation in the context of international development by evaluating sociocultural adjustment in expatriate development workers, and the empirical data therefore reflected this. However, respondents were working in one region, in a safe area that was not experiencing ongoing civil or military conflict. This setting differs from those examined by researchers such as McFarlane (2004) and Thompson (1997) who appeared to focus on development workers operating in conflict zones. This again limits the ability to generalise from these findings as such factors may be expected to influence the expatriation experience.

It has been suggested that some development workers operate in isolated rural communities (Knowles 1998). However, the snowball sampling method used in this study, whilst effective in identifying participants, resulted in the identification of

members of an established expatriate community. This may have resulted in similar issues being raised by respondents as they had confided in each other as a support mechanism. It also excluded expatriates that did not engage with the expatriate community, and who may therefore be expected to have a different adjustment experience.

### **8.3.3 Issues that remain unresolved**

Discussion of the study limitations earlier in this section identifies several questions that remain unresolved. These are outlined below;

- i. The majority of development workers in this study were working in a single host country. It is therefore not clear which parts of their sociocultural adjustment experiences were influenced by the host country context and which were shaped by the international development context. Further research involving development workers in different host countries is needed to explore this. A mixed methodology maybe beneficial in order to allow cross-national comparison whilst retaining the flexibility to capture country-specific issues.
- ii. The study highlighted that there are different 'types' of development worker, operating at different levels which influence where they are located and the nature of the contact that they have with host nationals. Further research may usefully develop a categorisation of development worker 'types' before examining whether sociocultural adjustment experiences and outcomes differ for each type.
- iii. This study focused on sociocultural adjustment, a behavioural form of adjustment that can be learned and discarded like a language (Furnham & Bochner 1986; Selmer 2001). Psychological adjustment, in contrast, is concerned with subjective wellbeing (Ward & Chang 1997). The study found some evidence to suggest that it is possible for an individual to feel psychologically adjusted to the host culture by distancing themselves from host nationals. Such a strategy would suggest less effective sociocultural adjustment. The remit of this study did not allow this to be examined. Further research could fruitfully examine the psychological adjustment of development workers.

## **8.4 Future research plans**

The author intends that this thesis will mark the beginning of a sustained programme of research aimed at building our understanding of expatriation through NGOs. Whilst existing research has focused almost entirely on MNCs, the findings from this thesis support the argument that context plays an important part in our understanding of expatriation. It is therefore proposed that more needs to be done to advance our understanding of expatriation in international development. This section discusses some of the researcher's future research plans which seek to build upon the foundation provided by this thesis.

### **8.4.1 Host nationals' experiences of working with expatriates**

There was general agreement by respondents in this thesis that it was their responsibility to adjust to the host culture. However, some also noted that adjustment is a two-way process, and that both they and their host national colleagues had to develop a mutual understanding to facilitate effective collaborative working. Existing research predominantly focuses on the adjustment of the expatriate to the host culture, and on the preparation and support provided for the expatriate. The assumption appears to be that successful expatriation is dependent only on the role of the expatriate and the sending organisation. However, it may be argued that the way in which host national colleagues relate to the expatriate, the extent to which they adjust to the expatriate's culture and approaches to work, and their general acceptance of the expatriate could also influence the success of the assignment. Hence, effective management of the expatriation process may have to involve the preparation and support of host national colleagues as well as the expatriate. The role of host nationals in expatriation has been considered in a limited number of previous studies. Toh & Denisi (2007) considered the role of host nationals as socialising agents, whilst in an earlier study they examined host nationals' attitudes toward expatriate pay policies (Toh & Denisi 2003). An early study by Zeira (1979) considered the effect of host nationals' degree of ethnocentrism on their attitudes toward expatriate managers. However such research does not appear to have considered this issue in the international development context. This proposed research would explore the experiences of host nationals in working with expatriate development workers in order to address this gap in the expatriation literature.

### **8.4.2 Comparing adjustment experiences of development workers with other types of expatriate**

This thesis found that several issues identified by respondents as influencing their adjustment were different to those reported in studies on the adjustment of MNC managers. However as this thesis did not have a comparative remit, such comparisons can only be speculative.

The rationale for this thesis argued that the context in which expatriation takes place is important, and that it is therefore necessary for research to focus on specific types of expatriate. The approach taken in this thesis reflects this view, focusing on a specific type of expatriate. Whilst such an approach is valuable, comparison of findings between studies remains problematic due to differences in methodology and host country context. Apparently alone in the literature, Navara & James (2002) explicitly compared different types of expatriate in the same host country. Their study compared the adjustment of missionaries and other expatriates in Nepal. Such an approach addresses the difficulties of cross-study comparison, whilst seeking to build evidence to support the argument that expatriation context influences cross-cultural adjustment. This proposed research would compare the adjustment of expatriate development workers with that of other types of expatriate in the same host country. In doing so this research would seek to verify whether the issues raised by respondents in this thesis were indeed specific to development workers.

## **8.5 Personal reflection on the research process**

The idea for this thesis is based on an area of interest that I have held for around 12 years. My first degree is in disaster management, which examined the political, social, geological and technical aspects of international development. Through this, my interest in international development and in particular the role of NGOs in this process, was fuelled. I developed this interest in NGOs through my Masters degree, taking the opportunity to examine Oxfam in detail as part of my final project. My interest began to focus on the transfer of commercial concepts and practices to the non-profit sector, which led me to consider issues of performance and accountability in NGOs. This line of thinking and investigation ultimately led me to focus on expatriation in NGOs.

Completing this thesis represents the beginning of my research career. I therefore think that it is important to reflect on my experiences in order to record the lessons that I have learned during the process. I completed this thesis on a part-time basis alongside a full time academic post. This has proven to be a very challenging experience, from which I learned a great deal. Perseverance and self-motivation have been particularly important. These qualities have enabled me to maintain progress when other more urgent tasks have vied for my attention, although my progress has not always been as quick as I had hoped. The resilience and at times selfishness to defend my 'PhD time' has also been an enduring challenge. These qualities will, I feel, be valuable as I continue to develop my academic career. They will help me to manage my multiple responsibilities, whilst continuing with the research that this thesis has begun.

Whilst the part-time mode has been both physically and emotionally challenging, I believe that it also has benefits. There has been more time to develop ideas, and to reflect on the research which may otherwise have been rushed. Having time to do this is, I believe, an important part of the doctoral process. This mode has also enabled me to develop my academic career alongside the PhD research.

The experience that I have gained during this thesis has been used in my supervision of undergraduate and postgraduate dissertations, and will, I believe, help me to supervise doctoral students effectively. At the beginning of my research I was encouraged to draft discussion papers based on reviews of different bodies of literature. I found this a very useful process which helped me to refine my thinking and to develop a clear direction for the research. It also helped me to get into the habit of writing, and provided me with a lot of useful material that ended up in this final thesis. Taking opportunities to present my work to others was initially daunting, but was ultimately invaluable and a good introduction to academic process. I took such opportunities both internally and externally, at research degree training events and at national and international conferences and workshops. These experiences gave me confidence that the focus of my work was of interest and relevance to others, and that my work was of an appropriate professional standard. The opportunity to explain my work helped me to communicate my ideas effectively, and without doubt improved the final form of this thesis. Meeting peers with similar research interests will also be useful for my research career.

In a more practical sense, the benefits of good file management including version control and backing up have been clear. Although I have been lucky enough not to need my back-ups, this process also enabled me to return to *earlier versions of work* which did prove useful.

## **8.6 Chapter summary**

Previous research on expatriation has focused almost entirely on managers in multi-national corporations. There is however an acknowledged need to disaggregate the expatriate population in order to recognise the different contexts in which expatriation takes place. This study drew its theoretical basis from a variety of sources to examine expatriation within the context of international development, and the findings support the view that context is significant in our understanding of expatriation. In particular, the findings highlighted the influence of pragmatic considerations in the role played by the sending organisations in this context. The model of sociocultural adjustment proposed contributes to existing knowledge of adjustment by identifying the way in which interdependent context-specific factors simultaneously influence the relationship with host nationals and with other expatriates and thereby shape the adjustment outcome that is realised. The study therefore suggests that we can, as Scullion & Brewster (2001) argue, learn a lot about expatriation by examining this nonprofit context.

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# **APPENDIX ONE**

## **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR EXPLORATORY INTERVIEWS WITH NGO STAFF RESPONSIBLE FOR PERFORMANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

- 1. Introduction**
  - Who I am, the nature of my research
  - Purpose of the interview – to explore issues of evaluation, performance and accountability
  - Interviewing a number of NGOs to explore evaluation generally within this context
  - Permission to record the interview? (Outline ethics issues: transcript will be anonymised. Material used from the interview will be used on a non-attributable basis)
- 2. Current engagement in and approaches to evaluation**
  - Which areas of activity are currently evaluated? (note for later)
  - For what purposes are evaluations carried out (eg. internal management, funders)
  - How are the activities evaluated?
  - When are the activities evaluated? (eg. times, frequencies)
  - What determines the methods used (eg. best practice, funder requirements)
  - Who is responsible for the evaluations?
  - Who else is involved, and what is their role?
  - How are the findings / outputs reported? In what form? To whom?
  - How is the implementation of recommendations monitored?
- 3. Areas of activity that are not currently evaluated**
  - Which areas of activity are not currently evaluated? (note for later)
  - Why do you think these activities are not evaluated?
  - Do you envisage that these activities may be evaluated in the future? Why (not)?
- 4. Performance, accountability and evaluation in the NGO sector**
  - What factors influence NGOs to evaluate their activities?
  - What is the balance between of accountability to funders and beneficiaries?
  - What trends have you observed in NGO performance, accountability, evaluation during the past five years?

(Closure)

## APPENDIX TWO

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR EXPLORATORY INTERVIEWS WITH FORMER VSO VOLUNTEERS

#### 1. Introduction (Unrecorded)

- Who I am
- What I'm doing
- (Aiming to develop a method for evaluating the effectiveness of the pre-departure training provided for expatriates working in the field of overseas development / relief).
- What I'm seeking from the interview?
- (Seeking background information to help me get a feel for the type of preparatory training provided by different development organisations, and the type of issues that arise from this).

#### 2. Demographic data

- Name & current occupation?
- Current age-band (Show list)?
- When was your overseas placement / project involvement?
- Organisation through which the placement was arranged?
- Nature of the placement - type of work undertaken?
- Any relevant prior experience?

#### 3. What were your expectations of the preparation session(s) prior to attending them?

- What did you feel you wanted or needed to know?
- What skills, what information?

#### 4. What did your sessions actually include?

- What types of information, what skills?
- General topics are sufficient if detail can't be recalled.

#### 5. How do you feel your pre-departure sessions affected your performance in the field?

- What did you think when you first arrived in the field?
- What did you need to find out or learn during your first few days in the field?
- What was the high point of the trip?
- What was the low point?

#### 6. In hindsight, what would you have liked to have known before you departed?

#### 7. What do you feel you gained from your placement / project involvement?

(Closure)

## APPENDIX THREE

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR EXPLORATORY INTERVIEWS WITH NGO HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGERS**

Four topics that I'd like to cover;

- Background, to set comments in context.
- Pre-departure training.
- Post-arrival (in-country) training.
- Repatriation & debriefing.

#### **Context**

1. How many expatriate workers do you have?
2. What roles are your expatriate workers engaged in? At what level?
  - Professions?
  - Managerial / supervisory?
  - Skilled labour?
3. What is the typical demographic profile of your expatriate workers?
  - Age?
  - Level of experience?
  - Qualifications?
4. Are your expatriate workers recruited for specific projects?
  - Permanent employees?
  - Fixed term contracts?
5. For how long do your expatriates work overseas?
  - For duration of project?
  - For fixed / agreed term?
6. Describe your selection process?
7. At what points do your expatriate workers receive training or briefings?
8. What forms of communication are available to staff when overseas?

#### **Pre-departure**

9. Describe the content of the pre-departure training, where this is provided?
  - Topics covered - culture, language, project specific skills?
  - Standard content or bespoke for needs of participants?
10. At what point is this training delivered?
  - How long before departure?
11. How frequently do sessions run?
  - Set frequency?
  - As required?

**12. Who conducts the training?**

- In-house trainers?
- Returned expatriate staff?
- External consultants?

**13. What are your objectives in providing pre-departure training?**

**14. How is the training evaluated?**

- Feedback from participants?
- Comments from trainers?
- Monitoring of staff in the field?

**15. Do you believe that there is a link between pre-departure training and staff performance in the field?**

**16. What impact does your current pre-departure training provision have on staff performance?**

### **Post-Arrival**

**17. Describe the content of any post-arrival training?**

- Where this is provided?
- How formal or informal are the sessions?
- Topics covered - culture, language, project specific skills?
- Standard content or bespoke for needs of participants?

**18. At what points is this training delivered?**

- How long after arrival?

**19. How frequently do sessions run?**

- Set frequency?
- As required?

**20. Who conducts the training?**

- Peers?
- Local staff?
- Managers or supervisors?

**21. What are the objectives for your post-arrival training?**

**22. How is the training evaluated?**

- Feedback from participants?
- Comments from those providing the training?
- Monitoring of staff in the field?

**23. Do you believe that there is a link between post-arrival training and staff performance in the field?**

**24. What impact does your current pre-departure training provision have on staff performance?**

**25. Which do you believe is more effective - pre-departure or post-arrival training? Why?**

## **Repatriation**

- 26. How do you prepare your staff for returning to the UK?**
- 27. How are staff debriefed on return to the UK?**
  - Who conducts debriefings?
  - Duration of sessions?
  - At what point are staff debriefed?
  - How are the resulting comments used?
- 28. How else are the experiences of your newly-returned staff utilised within the NGO?**
  - Act as trainers in pre-departure training session?
  - Give seminars / talks to other staff?
  - Write reports for dissemination?

**(Closure)**

# **APPENDIX FOUR**

## **QUESTIONNAIRE TO COLLECT DATA ON RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND CROSS-CULTURAL TRAINING PRACTICE IN UK-BASED NGOs**



### **Selection & Training of Aid Workers**

An international survey of current practice

This survey asks you about the ways in which your organisation selects, trains, and evaluates the training of individuals for overseas relief and development assignments. I am interested in all UK-based staff that you have working overseas, both paid and voluntary, regardless of the level at which they work.

The results will form part of a larger PhD research project which seeks to identify and evaluate the selection, training and training evaluation practices of aid agencies in order to develop models of best practice in these areas.

Your answers are essential in building a full and accurate picture of current selection and training practice in aid agencies. Please answer the questions as fully and accurately as you can. Your answers will be treated in the strictest confidence.

**All the information you provide will be treated in the strictest confidence.**

Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey. If you have any queries or comments about this survey, please contact me by any of the methods below.

Thank you for your help.

Mark Cusiter  
Nene Centre for Research  
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#### **Prize Draw!**

Each completed questionnaire received within **one month** of the date shown on the postmark will be eligible for entry into a prize draw. The prize is a £50 donation to your organisation. To enter, please complete the following details:

Organisation: .....  
Contact Name: .....  
E-mail Address: .....

## Your Organisation

To put the findings of this research into context, I first need to know a little about the participating organisations. The information you provide in this section will help me to identify any links between selection and training practice, and organisational characteristics.

Please answer the following questions about your organisation.

**1. In which of the following regions is your organisation currently engaged in relief or development activities?**

(Please tick *all* that apply)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Central & Eastern Europe      | <input type="checkbox"/> South & Central Asia      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> East & Central Africa         | <input type="checkbox"/> East & South-East Asia    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> West Africa                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Latin America & Caribbean |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Southern Africa               | <input type="checkbox"/> Pacific Rim & Australasia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Middle East & North Africa    |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Others (Please specify) _____ |  |

**2. In which of the following types of activity is your organisation currently engaged?**

(Please tick *all* that apply)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advocacy & rights                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Natural resources & agriculture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community & personal development         | <input type="checkbox"/> Health & nutrition              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conflict, disasters & emergencies        | <input type="checkbox"/> Technology                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education & communications               | <input type="checkbox"/> Water & sanitation              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Governance & institutional strengthening | <input type="checkbox"/> Economic development            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business development                     |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Others (Please specify) _____            |  |

**3. Please estimate the relative proportion of relief and development activities undertaken by your organisation.**

(Please circle *one* number to indicate your estimate)

100% Relief					About Equal					100% Development				
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10				

**4. Please describe briefly what you consider to be the main focus of your organisation's activities.**

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All information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence

1

5. What was the total income received by your organisation; (Please give £ sterling)

(Please write a figure on each line)

- a) during the financial year 2000-2001? £ \_\_\_\_\_  
b) during the financial year 2001-2002? £ \_\_\_\_\_

6. How much of this income was received from official (government-based) sources (eg Government, EU, UN, World Bank);

(Please write a figure on each line)

- a) during the financial year 2000-2001? £ \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ % of total  
 b) during the financial year 2001-2002? £ \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ % of total

**7. How many people work for your organisation?**

**How many people work for your organization?**  
*(Please write a figure in each box, putting "0" if appropriate)*

Paid Staff		Voluntary Staff	
Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time

**8. Does your organisation ever recruit individuals from the UK to work on projects or programmes overseas?**

9. To enable me to keep track of which organisations have completed a questionnaire, and so that I may contact you to discuss your answers if necessary, please complete the following details.

Organisation: .....

Contact Name: .....

E-mail Address .....

Telephone: .....

If you do not send staff overseas, then I would like to thank you for your time in completing this section of the questionnaire.

The information that you have provided is an important part of my research, and I would be grateful if you would return the questionnaire in the pre-paid envelope provided.

If you do send staff overseas, please continue with the questionnaire.

All information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence

## Recruitment & Selection

I would now like to ask about the ways in which you recruit and select staff for overseas assignments. Please answer the following questions about current practice in your organisation.

### 10. How effective is each of the following sources in attracting applications for overseas assignments?

(Please circle one number for each method)

	Not Effective					Very Effective		Not used
By word of mouth	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
From an external database (eg RedR)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
By advertising specific posts/assignments	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
From an internal database (eg of previous applications)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
From amongst current staff	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
From speculative applications	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
Other (Please specify and rate)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
Other (Please specify and rate)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0

### 11. How important is each of the following methods when you are assessing the suitability of a candidate for an overseas assignment?

(Please circle one number for each method)

	Not Important					Very Important		Not used
Word of mouth recommendation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
Written application	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
One-to-one interview	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
Panel interview	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
Personality assessment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
Group activity(ies) / exercise(s)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
Skills test / assessment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
Work-simulation assessment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
Other (Please specify and rate)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
Other (Please specify and rate)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0

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**12. When you are making your selection decisions, how important is it for a candidate to possess each of the following attributes?**  
*(Please circle one number for each attribute)*

	Not Important					Very Important		Not Used
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
Previous overseas experience								
Suitable social skills	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
Professional qualifications	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
Experience within their own profession	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
Previous experience of the host country	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
Relevant language skills	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
Suitable personality traits (eg. adaptability)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
Other (Please specify and rate)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
Other (Please specify and rate)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
Other (Please specify and rate)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0

**The questionnaire continues on the following page.**

## Training & Preparation

I would now like to ask you about the ways in which you train and prepare staff for overseas assignments. Please answer the following questions about current practice in your organisation.

**13. For each of the following training inputs, please indicate when you usually deliver them.**

(For each training input, please circle all that apply)

		Pre-departure	Post-arrival	Not Provided
<b>Practical Information</b>				
13a.	Language training	1	2	0
13b.	Health issues	1	2	0
13c.	Living conditions in host country	1	2	0
13d.	Induction to your organisation	1	2	0
13e.	Provision of detailed job description	1	2	0
13f.	How to deal with day-to-day situations	1	2	0
<b>Project-related Information</b>				
13g.	Project reporting procedures	1	2	0
13h.	Project objectives	1	2	0
13i.	Task-specific skills	1	2	0
13j.	Organisational goals in host country	1	2	0
13k.	Professional ethics	1	2	0
<b>Country-related Information</b>				
13l.	History & development of host country	1	2	0
13m.	Norms of behaviour in host country	1	2	0
13n.	Social structures of host country	1	2	0
13o.	Political & economic structure of host country	1	2	0
<b>Adjustment-related Information</b>				
13p.	Identifying & reducing anxieties	1	2	0
13q.	Coping strategies	1	2	0
13r.	Developing cross-cultural communication skills	1	2	0
13s.	Development of partnership skills	1	2	0
13t.	Reinforcement of relevant social skills	1	2	0
13u.	What to expect when living overseas	1	2	0
13v.	What to expect when working overseas	1	2	0
13w.	Evaluation of own culture / self-awareness	1	2	0
13x.	Identification & reconciliation of expectations	1	2	0
13y.	Adaptation skills	1	2	0
13z.	Awareness of the adjustment process	1	2	0
Other (Please specify and indicate when it is delivered)		1	2	0
Other (Please specify and indicate when it is delivered)		1	2	0

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**13a. Please explain the reasons for your particular pattern of pre-departure and post-arrival training.**

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**14. For each of the following types of training input, please indicate who usually delivers them.**

*(For each type of input, please circle all that apply)*

	In-house trainers	Externally-provided course(s)	Returned expatriates	Local staff in host country	Mentor	Other (Please specify)	Not Provided
Practical information	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
Project-related information	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
Country-related information	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
Adjustment-related information	1	2	3	4	5	6	0

**14a. Please explain the reasons for your particular mix of training providers.**

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5. There are many ways of training and briefing staff for overseas assignments. Some of these are more successful than others. I would like to know which method(s) you use to deliver each type of training, and whether the method is successful or not.

**For each of the following training inputs, please indicate how they are usually delivered and how successful they are.**

All information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence

All information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence

**16. There are a number of different indicators that can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of training, and this data can be collected in a number of ways.**

**Thinking about the evaluation data that you may collect before, during and after an individual's overseas assignment, please indicate how you gather data on each of the following indicators.**

*(Please circle all that apply)*

		Written / practical tests	Observation	Self-assessment / feedback sheets	Monitoring of performance indicators	No data gathered
<b>Pre-departure</b>						
16a.	Changes in trainees' skills	1	2	3	4	0
16b.	Changes in trainees' knowledge	1	2	3	4	0
16c.	Changes in trainees' attitudes	1	2	3	4	0
16d.	Changes in trainees' behaviours	1	2	3	4	0
16e.	Trainees' perception of the course(s)	1	2	3	4	0
16f.	Trainees' perception of the trainers	1	2	3	4	0
<b>After arrival in host country</b>						
16g.	Changes in trainees' skills	1	2	3	4	0
16h.	Changes in trainees' knowledge	1	2	3	4	0
16i.	Changes in trainees' attitudes	1	2	3	4	0
16j.	Changes in trainees' performance	1	2	3	4	0
16k.	Trainees' perception of the course(s)	1	2	3	4	0
16l.	Trainees' perception of the trainers	1	2	3	4	0
<b>After return to UK</b>						
16m.	Changes in trainees' skills	1	2	3	4	0
16n.	Changes in trainees' knowledge	1	2	3	4	0
16o.	Changes in trainees' attitudes	1	2	3	4	0
16p.	Changes in trainees' performance	1	2	3	4	0
16q.	Trainees' perception of the course(s)	1	2	3	4	0
16r.	Trainees' perception of the trainers	1	2	3	4	0

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**17. Who is responsible for collecting and analysing information on training effectiveness before, during and after overseas assignments?**  
*(Please circle all that apply)*

	Pre-departure		Post-arrival		Post-return	
	Collect	Analyse	Collect	Analyse	Collect	Analyse
Individual trainers	1	2	3	4	5	6
Your training manager (or equivalent)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Local manager / project manager	1	2	3	4	5	6
External training provider	1	2	3	4	5	6
External evaluator	1	2	3	4	5	6
External funding body	1	2	3	4	5	6
Other (Please specify and circle your responses)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Other (Please specify and circle your responses)	1	2	3	4	5	6

**18. Who is training evaluation information (or reports) made available to?**  
*(Please circle one number for each)*

	Yes	No
Trainees	1	2
Trainers	1	2
Your training manager (or equivalent)	1	2
Local manager / project manager	1	2
Your HR director (or equivalent)	1	2
External training provider	1	2
External evaluator	1	2
External funding body	1	2
Other (Please specify and circle your response)	1	2
Other (Please specify and circle your response)	1	2

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**19. How much involvement does each of the following have in determining your training evaluation strategy?**

(Please circle one number for each)

	No Involvement			Sole Responsibility			Not Applicable	
Trainers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
Your training manager (or equivalent)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
Your HR director (or equivalent)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
External training provider	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
External evaluator	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
External funding body	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
Other (Please specify and circle your response)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
Other (Please specify and circle your response)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0

**20. Please use the space below to make any comments about the ways in which you ensure the effectiveness of your training provision.**

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**The questionnaire continues on the following page.**

All information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence

11

## The Overseas Assignments

I would now like to know a little about the nature of the overseas assignments. Please answer the following questions about the assignments undertaken by your staff.

### 21. How many staff from the UK do you currently have working overseas?

(Please write a figure in each box, using "0" if appropriate)

Paid Staff	Voluntary Staff

### 22. At which of the following levels do UK staff work when overseas?

(Please tick all that apply)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regional co-ordinator | <input type="checkbox"/> Field worker                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Country co-ordinator  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Programme manager     | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Project manager       |   |

### 23. Please estimate the typical duration of assignments during each phase.

(Please write a figure on each line, or tick the appropriate box)

- |                          |             |    |  |
|--------------------------|-------------|----|--|
| a) Emergency relief      | _____ weeks | or | <input type="checkbox"/> We don't use UK staff in this phase |
| b) Recovery / transition | _____ weeks | or | <input type="checkbox"/> We don't use UK staff in this phase |
| c) Development           | _____ weeks | or | <input type="checkbox"/> We don't use UK staff in this phase |

### 24. Please estimate how much notice staff might receive before departing on an assignment.

(Please write a figure on each line, or tick the appropriate box)

- |                          |             |    |  |
|--------------------------|-------------|----|--|
| a) Emergency relief      | _____ weeks | or | <input type="checkbox"/> We don't use UK staff in this phase |
| b) Recovery / transition | _____ weeks | or | <input type="checkbox"/> We don't use UK staff in this phase |
| c) Development           | _____ weeks | or | <input type="checkbox"/> We don't use UK staff in this phase |

### 25. For which of the following reasons have staff reported having left an overseas assignment prematurely?

(Please tick all that apply)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No staff have left an assignment prematurely       | <input type="checkbox"/> Changed programme priorities    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unable to speak / attempt to speak host language   | <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of project funding         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unable to cope with job role / responsibilities    | <input type="checkbox"/> Security reasons                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unsuitable personality / emotional characteristics | <input type="checkbox"/> Unable to adapt to host culture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify) _____                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Domestic commitments in UK      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify) _____                       |  |

## Your Views About Training

I would now like to know about your opinions of the training that you provide for staff going on overseas assignments, and the ways in which you evaluate this training.

- 26. Consider the following statements about training and training evaluation, in the context of preparing staff for overseas assignments.**

**Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.**  
*(Please circle one number for each statement)*

	Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree	Don't Know
26a. The training we provide is as comprehensive as we would like	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
26b. Our training improves the performance of our staff on overseas assignments	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
26c. We would like to be able to spend more on training staff for overseas assignments	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
26d. We are not able to use the training methods that we feel would be most effective	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
26e. Training staff before overseas assignments enhances the success of our projects	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
26f. The skills needed to be successful on overseas assignments can not be taught	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
26g. Individuals with the right personality traits do not need to be trained	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
26h. Training helps our staff to adjust more quickly to the host country environment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
26i. We spend too much on training staff for overseas assignments	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
26j. Our training reduces the likelihood of our staff returning home prematurely	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
26k. Training prepares our staff personally for their overseas assignment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
26l. Training enables our staff to become effective overseas more quickly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
26m. Training prepares our staff professionally for their overseas assignment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
26n. We do not have the resources to evaluate our training as fully as we would like	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
26o. We try to tailor our training to reflect the needs of individual trainees.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
26p. We use the results of training evaluations to improve our training provision	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0

		Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree	Don't Know
26q.	There is not always enough time for us to provide as much training as we would like	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
26r.	If we sent more staff overseas, we would enhance our training provision	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
26s.	We use a range of training methods to achieve our objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
26t.	We prefer to evaluate our training informally	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
26u.	Our staff seem happy with the training we provide	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
26v.	We think it is important to prepare our staff for overseas assignments	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0

**27. Training staff for overseas assignments can be difficult. However, some things are harder than others to train people in.**

a) Please list four things that you find easy to train people in.

i. \_\_\_\_\_ iii. \_\_\_\_\_  
ii. \_\_\_\_\_ iv. \_\_\_\_\_

b) Please list four things that you find difficult to train people in.

i. \_\_\_\_\_ iii. \_\_\_\_\_  
ii. \_\_\_\_\_ iv. \_\_\_\_\_

**This is the end of the questionnaire.  
Thank you for your time and effort in answering the questions.**

**Please now return your completed questionnaire to me  
using the pre-paid envelope provided.**

All information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence.

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## **APPENDIX FIVE**

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR INTERVIEWS WITH EXPATRIATE DEVELOPMENT WORKERS**

1. Introduction
  - Who I am
  - Nature of my research
  - Ethics issues
2. Personal background
  - Previous professional experience / qualifications?
  - Previous overseas experience (living or working)?
  - Previous development experience?
  - Motivation / reasons / background to being in this post / host country?
3. Their current post in the host country
  - What is their job?
  - What is the organisation?
  - How long have they been in the post, in the host country?
4. Preparation for post
  - Sending organisation – training, briefing, pre-departure, post-arrival?
  - Personal preparation?
5. Initial reactions on arrival in host country
  - On arrival, now, have views changed, why?
  - Host nationals, in and out of work?
  - General environment, living conditions?
6. Adjustment experiences
  - Things found easy?
  - Things found hard?
  - What has gone well?
  - What has gone badly?
  - Any anecdotes of challenges and breakthroughs?
  - Contact with expatriates?
  - Relationship with host nationals?
  - Contact with friends and family at home?

[closure]

## APPENDIX SIX

### SAMPLE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

"Sue". Busoga Trust, Jinja, Uganda.

We used to have two water engineers, and they'd obviously trained in water engineering working for companies in the UK, and I don't think they had training before they came out here in terms of Uganda, they probably would've had meetings to learn about Uganda from Andrew, our UK Director. And then we just, had various people doing similar jobs, often through those contacts, it would be a succession of different people, and then it stopped with our main funding, so we couldn't really afford to have the water engineers, and also there was a change in ethos that we should use Ugandans more, there are many qualified people here. But about two, getting on three years ago, they employed someone to try and help internal funding, raise internal funding out here as Chief Exec., and then since then they had a young guy doing his Masters, because he'd come out here as a gap year to teach and said 'oh I really enjoyed it, can I come back?'. And you know, they had a couple of meetings, said 'he's sensible, intelligent, send him out here'. And it did cause some problems because, culturally some problems with staff, you know people upsetting staff because you don't really understand the way things work out here, you have to have a lot of patience. So since him its been me, and I think its probably helped that I'm a Christian because working in the environment here perhaps it makes you a bit more, you try not to rock the boat as it is anyway, and me as a person I have found it frustrating, but you just have to be accepting that in our position, my position as a liaison officer you're not in charge. So you come here, there's a lot of inefficiency and systems that need improving, lack of enforcement of current procedures they already have, and slowness in the way people work. *But you can't come in and say 'right I'm going to change it over night'*, you have to do it, its taken me eleven months to do a few things [laughs], and also working as a manager, you do it kind of in an indirect way rather than coming in and taking over. It seems to have worked well. I think what's helped me personally to adapt to working out here is two things. I came out here in 1997 to do research for my dissertation, and I'd also met quite a few Ugandans in the UK in-between because my church has a link out here with the Parish. So I've met people, and I've met people that have worked out here. And I think quite soon you do realise, quite soon, it doesn't take long, a few weeks to realise how things are out here, be it corruption, be it slowness, be it what we would probably deem laziness, but the pace of life is slower, and values are very different. And there doesn't seem so much urgency in things, and I suppose what makes you work well out here is your ability to adapt to that and accept these things rather than wanting to change things too soon. So it can be frustrating, but, if you get too frustrated and too angry and shout at people, its not so good. I think many Ugandans are used to that, and sometimes when we've have male employers here, using White people, well from the UK, old-school Colonial-type workers, that's how they're used to talking to people, you know, shouting and bawling and getting things done. And some people respond to it, some Ugandans do respond to that, but these days I don't think they want that. I think, they won't question authority, that's the sad thing, you have to find out perhaps via someone else that you've upset someone. I think if you're a bit more gentler in your approach, then you hopefully won't upset people in the first place! [laughs]

*So by the sounds of it, its quite hard to know whether you have upset people...*

Yeah, well its difficult, but I think that's why it's a good thing that NGOs are run by people from the local country because of language basically, unless you're fluent in the local language its very difficult to pick up on, like back home you take up office gossip, you know, being quiet perhaps before you walk in the, all those little things you can sense that something's not right. Or the way someone treats you, but here, unless you've really upset someone, which I haven't experienced myself, but I think they would perhaps be abrupt with you, but people would never tell you because there is this respect, too much respect for authority and they don't question things. But then you get the other staff, that sometimes people, much fewer, but perhaps, we had one staff member who was quite reserved with me, I think perhaps maybe due to the way previous expats had treated them. Or just in general, a kind of nervousness or apprehension that they don't wan to be treated as lower or

inferior, so they were a bit cautious of how they deal with you and what information they give you. So you have to kind of build up that relationship. I have certain staff that chat with me and let me know how things are going [laughs], that I'm friends with, you know. But yeah, its difficult, its difficult to find out. And then we once, we had a staff meeting recently, big staff meeting, where I'm writing a human resources policy, and it was written before me, largely, I've made quite a few changes and done more research. And it's really enforcing procedures we already have but making it a little bit more business-like. And you know, large parts of the meeting I was quiet because they then had to explain to some people that English wasn't so good, that they started off in Lusaka or Buganda and you know, let them talk for five minutes, and someone will translate. But obviously you only get part of the, you know the main bits translated. I think sometimes perhaps there was, a view that again it was the expat forcing this, but in fact it was work that was done in the year 2000 by a Ugandan and we formed a management committee of me, two managers in Jinja, two managers in [untranscribable, town name], and so there's five of us, and at every stage we agreed this policy before we went to the staff, but I still think they perhaps thought it was me as the main pusher of some of the perhaps harsher things that we introduced, the stricter things, but it wasn't like that. But people seem happy if they're consulted and they, they can, feel that they can influence it aswell.

*Could you tell me a little bit more about your role, you're saying that perhaps because you're an expat you're viewed as having more authority than locals.... Is that part of your role...?*

Am I meant to have authority? This is why its been slightly changed. Since we had this Chief Executive that came out here, a) I don't think there's the money to fund it any more, and I think there was a feeling that there wasn't a need for that role out here any more. And then we had this student-volunteer person for a few months, and then I took over from that. So there wasn't any particular role, and I think that person was doing a lot of finance stuff, setting up systems. So before I came out, they just said really what they want is 'the eyes and the ears of the trustees'. They trust people, but they still feel that they need someone on their level, able to communicate and just feed back what's going on, keep them informed, advise them, and kind of make the decisions that they would do if they were here I suppose. So we came up, my title is 'Liaison Officer', so I was very much told before I came out that I'm not in charge, they have project managers here, I'm just here to assist, advise, consult, feed back to the Trustees, that kind of thing. And I really, made that really clear when I first came, especially as that was the Trustees' wishes, and I didn't want to rock the boat, so I kept saying 'I'm not in charge'. But then lots of people, some people said to me afterwards, 'well what's the difference, we see you as the same as the CEO?'. Well, big difference, you know, I'm not the one that has the overall financial responsibility, personnel responsibility for running the Trust here, the project managers do. But I think they just see 'oh its another expat', and over the months I probably have had, my role has changed slightly, and whether its down to personalities, or whether its just because you've been here longer and you've established relationships with the staff, that I am more involved in the management. And I felt a) the need to, and b) the natural progression, because I found that, I suppose its maybe unfortunate that things here aren't quite ready to be run completely by Ugandans. Not if the Trustees want to continue to have the hands-on approach they do. If it was a bigger international organisation like Oxfam, where you have a country director here that's Ugandan, well qualified, well experienced, and the responsibility is given fully to him then that would be fine. But our situation, again Church-based, the history of the organisation, and the Trustees are kind of okay, we don't have so much contact with them, but the Reverend who set it up is our UK Director, that's his new title, and he quite likes to have a hands-on approach. So I report to him weekly, he tends to ring me weekly, whereas if there's a Ugandan here that was a director that just sent monthly reports and then more a level of handing over it might be slightly different. But then again I can understand why they have the hands-on approach, because its little funding from links and churches and schools for a water source. So they need to make sure there is real efficiency in the way the money's spent. Its not like we've got a million pounds turnover each year and we can afford the odd loss here and there. Because who knows what happens in these big organisations anyway [laughs], because there's corruption everywhere, and mis-management. So I felt there was the need to become a bit more involved in management and luckily its transgressed like that because our project manager here has now got involved in local politics, so he's gone part-

time, so we had to employ like a middle management. I got on with them very well, and on a day-to-day basis we consult each other on everything, how much petty cash we have, what's the expenditure for this week, he'll come to me say 'Sue, this is what we need to do', you know so we'll work quite closely together. And we've formed this management group where we meet regularly, and I found that there's a need for someone like myself to kind of oversee the management / personnel side of things, that's why I've taken on this human resources policy. Because the managers here are largely qualified in their technical expertise, some of them have management experience but, they haven't actually been managers perhaps of personnel in their previous jobs although they've worked for people like Oxfam, ActionAid, WaterAid, they've had the experience of an international NGO, but I think sometimes when you come to a smaller NGO and there isn't the strict guidelines in place and a Country Director, who may be Ugandan, but he is going to say 'No' and he has the purse strings, that perhaps unintentionally things slip. You know, the odd vehicle gets used for personal use, and before you know it they're always out, being used, or loans are given and there's real criteria, to people, and there's no perhaps limit on the loan. Its like, well he has school fees to pay, or he needs to build a house, we know that he's really needy, and I think Ugandans find it difficult to say no to their own, because they know that they might be in the same situation a few months down the line. And, but there's very much a feeling of, you help your brothers and you help each other, which is great, but sometimes you have to be business-like and you have to say no. And I think that's what I've tried to introduce, and I do that. And now the managers'll often say 'ah, a loan, an advance, go and see Sue', so they pass the buck. They know they should say no, but they don't feel as though they can. But hopefully with this policy it will stop. What I want to try and stop is when the expats change or when there's a three-month gap we stop going in this cycle of things being organised and things going slightly downhill. So that its in the policy what the procedures are. How it'll be enforced when I leave, I don't know. We'll see [laughs].

*So you're going to be leaving soon?*

I was initially here for a year, just because I said I'll come out for a year, because again it was me approaching the Trust saying I'd like to work for an NGO abroad. I know the Trust because I based my dissertation on it, they know me, or they know of me, and they know my church, its one of the ones raising money for the Trust. And I'm out here as a volunteer, I'm paid, my accommodation, my flight and an honorarium rather than being an actual contracted employee. So I've just said that I'd like to stay on longer, maybe [untranscribable] to do a year, but I think maybe just seven or eight months, because I think I want to do a Masters in September. But we'll see. So, again its perhaps the way we recruit people, we don't have an advertisement in the paper and say 'we need a liaison officer, this will be the salary, these are the qualifications' its more, things just seem to happen. And if you perhaps talk to someone from [untranscribable, a Christian NGO] again it's a Christian-based organisation so its, trust and faith and prayer that someone will come up. So they do want to replace me, but they're not sure who, there's even talks that its someone younger, even less experienced, which I would be a bit hesitant about, from what they've had before, I'm 25, at least I've had three years' work experience in the UK, been out here once before, but going for, we tend to go for, well they're 20, they're 21, they've just finished university, they've been out here in their gap year, they seem fairly competent, but it must be a bit demoralising for the managers here when someone even too young comes in with no experience. Because often all you need is a bit of common sense sometimes, and experience of how work, and how offices are run in the UK, but if they don't even have office experience, it may be that, a bit of a bad choice. We don't have any real recruitment process, its just..

*It just happens through word of mouth...*

Through word of mouth, connections, when I came out here they'd made no concerted effort to replace the person that I replaced, and it was like 'it just so happens...' when I phoned up, so that's how it worked out for me. But they've been pleased, positive, they've been pleased with the way I've worked, and they are now realising they need a bit of continuity, and I've written a job description for myself which was largely written before I came out but I've made amendments since I've been out here, and they've also asked me to come up with some sort of person specification, so what type of person as well do they need to replace me with.

*So you think there might be a bit more continuity when you leave, and it seems you're trying to encourage that.*

Yeah, trying to encourage that, definitely.

*So, thinking back to when you first came out here, how did you prepare? You said there wasn't any training, but what did you do as an individual before you came out, or did you just turn up and see what happened?*

I didn't really do any preparation in terms of my work, because as I say I think you only need to be out here a few weeks and you can really kind of gauge how it is to work out here. Like, within your two weeks here you'll go back with a fairly good impression of what its like to work out here. So I was here in 1997 for six weeks, so it just gave me a backing, and I know people that have been out here, and I've met Ugandans, so in terms of how I prepared myself it was more just, getting the other things organised, like practical things like I bought a laptop, I knew that there were two computers but I knew that I would probably need to use it for personal, private, confidential things, just be useful, things like that. You know, the Malaria, those kind of things. I found I didn't get a lot of support in that, getting my work permit and things, I think for a big organisation they'd probably perhaps do everything for you, or give you a list of, tips for coming out here, and I've also formed a sheet for the next person with things you need to do. Although, there's confusion or, not enough meetings, maybe that, perhaps if I'd asked enough questions, one thing I did is I had two meetings with Andrew the Director before I came out here. Firstly for him to meet me, and secondly after that when we met for my questions aswell. Actually I've just remembered something I did do for preparation, I met the previous guy who was out here, the younger one, the student, because I also met him in '97 when he was a gap year. He was the one who came out last year for three, four months. So I went and met him, and he gave me the lowdown on the staff, some of the bigger issues that are going on, he showed me a website that he'd saved a lot of his work onto for me to refer to, but to be honest, its all, 'oh so-and-so's like this, you need to treat that man as you would, this is how to treat that person'. But you don't remember until you meet people.

*Was this before you left?*

This was before I left. Yeah, I think ideally what you need, you need handover in-country because then you can meet people, and face, perhaps you remember a little bit more, you can make notes, and you're here. Whereas, I mean I didn't feel particularly nervous but I was a bit worried how my first day would go because I was thinking well I'm just going to have to turn up and go 'Hi', you know [laughs], and introduce myself, and induct myself, there's no-one to do it, now as it happens the old CEO had left by about seven months, six months by the time I arrived, but he was back on holiday when I arrived. So he, I was with him for maybe a day, or half a day before he left for the airport, and he, at least it was, in a way it was nice of him to come in, introduce me to the staff, say well, this is my office, I think they've reserved this office for you, showed me a little bit around Jinja, some of the new places to go and eat, you know where expats go, and that was about it [laughs]. Luckily some of the younger staff here were very friendly. One guy in particular came and visited me in the evenings, and was very friendly, tried to introduce me to places in Jinja, and then it just happened very slowly, that's why I felt I've needed, a year is not enough, maybe, I think two years is probably a good time for anyone to come out here, but I perhaps could have found my feet earlier if I'd had someone to help me induct. But I also found it difficult to know, I was asking for information from people, and perhaps, it was quite slow coming, I think, that was partly due to the way things work out here and the fact that, well someone's asked me for something, oh I'll get it maybe today or tomorrow, you know there's not the urgency. And partly, there was one staff member who was a bit reserved in kind of new people, and you know what, her expectations of me I suppose. But now I feel, eleven months down the line, I've got good working relationships with most people and quite a good working grasp of how things run out here, and the Trust, a bit of history, going to meetings and conferences within the water sector has helped greatly aswell. Network, and find out about the water sector as a whole rather than just our work in isolation.

*So have those meetings and conferences helped you to meet other expats that are doing similar work, or was it more about finding out about the water sector?*

Both, and meeting other Ugandans. So I first of all went to a meeting in February called, run by UWASNet, which is Uganda Water and Sanitation Network, so it's a network of all NGOs working in water and sanitation. And I went to the, it was the annual general meeting with someone else here, a Ugandan, and she became elected onto the executive committee, so there I didn't really meet any expats, but I met quite a few Ugandans, and just heard about what's going on, some of the bigger issues, finding out that other NGOs are experiencing similar problems, talking to people, and I found that I was able to contribute, largely through, yeah just even though I don't have the experience in the water sector, I found a lot of it was more common sense. You know, how do we, we need to improve our marketing, what our ideas, things like that, they were talking about NGOs' problems and things. And it was also an introduction to African time, and how everything over-ran [laughs]. It was a good introduction to the way things are run out here, because we tend to rush about, timing, and urgency, and there I found that everyone likes to have a say in the meeting. If you attend a meeting and there's question and answer time, they won't just say 'well we have no more time for questions' when there's still five people with their hands up. They will answer every question, and it will always be a five minute answer for each. Then it also helps you realise that people, Ugandans place a lot of importance on that, having input. Sometimes you find they're all repeating each other in their questions, just wording it slightly, but, you know, they like to voice their opinions, so that was useful to know. And then, when my, one of the Chairmen of the Trustees came over, and the Director, in the summer, we arranged meetings with DfID who used to be our main funders, and people in the Ministry of Water Land and Environment, so that was useful from their, there was an expat who was a German guy working for GTZ, the German equivalent of DfID in terms of the practical work they do. And you do tend to, in a meeting, say its all Ugandans and you're an expat and they're an expat, you do tend to kind of, at the end of the meeting, go up to them and say 'Hi' and you exchange business cards, there is this kind of sense of belonging in a way. Which sometimes I think its good to go to these meetings with Ugandans and if there's an expat, you know, but a mixture as well, because Ugandans can chat to the Ugandans easier as well. So from all of these meetings we got invited to the, the main Government of Uganda, and donor, water sector review conference, and that was huge, there was only a few NGOs, literally five NGOs invited, and other than that it was donors, embassies, you know the Danish embassy are big donors, it was all people from various ministries within Uganda, that kind of thing, so there we made lots of contacts, Ugandan, non-Ugandan, lots of Europeans. So you definitely have to get out, its definitely about, working out here is definitely about networking, meeting people, making contacts. And that's why it's a good thing our Project Manager is a Ugandan, because now we don't have big funding and we decide our own programme, we have to, because of the way funding has changed in Uganda as a whole, the UK government will no longer fund projects via DfID to NGOs like ourselves, but its all called 'budget support' now. And what with debt-release money, and it all goes via the Ugandan government, there's been decentralisation to the districts, districts get allocated grants, some of them conditional, some of them unconditional. The districts then say okay, well we need ten water sources in that area, ten springs there, they'll advertise in the paper for tenders and we apply, and that's how we get our work and our income. Now to do that, you need Ugandans to negotiate getting that work because its all about backhanders, its all about chatting to the district water officer, getting friendly with them, making sure we get the work. And some of that, some of what goes on is probably against what as a Trust we would want to do, but we find we're having to do it to get work, and also me as a person, obviously we're not used to bribing, but here it's a way of life, so its better than a Ugandan deals with it [laughs].

*So is that something you're not comfortable with...*

Yeah, I'm still not comfortable with that. The people that you meet, the white Africans that you meet, they like it often because its all about give-and-take, its all about 'I'll scratch your back, you scratch mine', so you may pay them one month, but then you {untranscribable} the favour the next, you know, whereas when its totally against what you're used to, I have to

make sure I don't speak to the water officers, not in a rude way, but otherwise I'd be so tempted to say 'how do you feel when you take these bribes into your personal pocket' [laughs], and saying something like that would be, I'm sure it wouldn't do us any good in terms of the work we get. Now at this conference I went to they talked loads about value for money, of course now UK government isn't funding NGOs direct now, its going to the Ugandan government, so there's a big lot of trust and they're talking millions of pounds each year. So they need to know that they're getting value for money. Now in the water sector, income has tripled, but the sources have stayed that same. So it means there's big inefficiency, its largely probably to do with this, now that its been, we obviously never take bribes, and never give bribes, when we got the money direct, but now its coming via the District so not [untranscribable] money, so there's big inefficiencies, but they don't seem to be tackling, I think they acknowledge it but maybe they don't acknowledge how big a problem it is, I don't know. Yeah, its certainly something that I find difficult, but now I do realise that it has to be done, certainly in the foreseeable future, 'cause if we said, well, say if I was manager, and it was two years ago at the start of this new system, I may have said 'well lets not pay any bribes, lets see how we go with our good work and our good reputation, and see how far we got'. And we probably wouldn't have got anywhere to be honest. Whereas the Ugandans realise that from the start, and this is how it works. And even our Trustees, you know they're Christians and they've discussed it, and they've just decided that we have to pay it, otherwise we fold and all these people lose their jobs and also we don't do the work, and we know we do high quality, good work in the community, so we pay it, but yeah its difficult to accept I suppose.

*Is there anything else about the culture, the way of life, the way of doing things, that you're still not comfortable with?*

Its mainly the frustrations. It seems to be quite generic, and I think if you're not careful it can become too 'us and them' because how ever much you come out here with good intentions and you want to be equal with Ugandans, and whatever your perhaps moral beliefs, you know you don't have to be religious or Christian, you will, personally, if you're honest you will after not very long find out that, a lot of frustrations. People perhaps always aren't so honest, they're not perhaps always so hard-working, like all the time. You know you're not, back home you know you'd want to look, what can I, you know perhaps if you haven't got roles to do, you'd go and ask your employer, or you'd just sit back and assess your role and think, well I haven't done that for a while, or maybe that can be tidied, you know, even if you're a driver, well I'll go and wash the vehicles, you'd do something rather than sit and read a newspaper all afternoon. I'm just trying to think, there's quite a few, but you know its difficult to think, and remember exactly what [laughs nervously], its difficult. I don't know, I suppose the corruption is like on a bigger level, not necessarily within our own organisation as such. The speed of work, sometimes I think, that I'm more used to that because that's the difference between the pace of life, but still sometimes you do have to remind people quite a few times to get work done. [long pause] Sometimes people don't always ask for help. Perhaps its pride, I don't know, but one of the biggest things, it may not be just, its not just within here, but I find in general that people as I've said don't tend to question authority. And I find that especially within the Church as well, even when it doesn't make sense, you know, they'll just accept it, or grumble about it to themselves rather than do anything about it. And I think back home, we would go and see our supervisor, and say 'I'm not happy with this working environment or the way you talked to me, or the way this happens' or something, you would maybe be nervous about it, but I think we do talk to our employers, 'cause I think here its more a case of, well you know, someone big, they can easily give you, make you redundant, and here you don't have so many rights, where back home you would take them to the small tribunals or go and see a lawyer, but what are you going to do here with no money? That kind of thing, perhaps that's what they're nervous about.

*Is that the same, the not questioning authority, does that go for expats and other Ugandans, its authority regardless of who holds that?*

Yeah, yeah, because they've always had staff meetings, its not as though I've introduced anything new, but again it tends to not happen perhaps when there's not an expat here. Why I don't know, maybe its because there's not the importance placed on that, whereas I came

from the public sector, worked for the NUS, we had a big staff union, so staff participation in decisions was quite important to us. So I tried to instil a bit of that ethos here, and for example, when we were trying to be a bit more stricter with the private use of vehicles, and then eventually a Trustee came in August and wrote a final decision on it, which helped me 'cause I would say 'well this came from the Trustees, this is it, no more private use, unless [untranscribable] your request at my discretion could be agreed'. But when I would say, speak to the drivers and say 'but when someone just comes and picks the key, you should just question them, or say let me get Sue or something', they say 'oh I can't'. And even, if its the manager you can understand it, but even if it's a fellow employee who perhaps is a driver or someone who has to deal with the vehicles they still find it difficult. It could be personalities, but I think there is a difference in questioning these things. And that's why we're doing appraisals, and people in the structure are supervising other people, like the finance person supervises finances, but I do wonder how it would work when the appraisal system is run by other than the main manager, because we would see it as quite a big role, being a supervisor of someone, and making sure they are doing their work, it'd be quite, I don't know, a bit of enthusiasm because you think 'I may not have had a massive pay rise, but I've been given this extra responsibility. There doesn't seem to be so much, I don't think people think about the bigger context, personnel, HR issues aren't so much, like, I must really watch how I speak to my co-workers because I may really offend them, and the working environment, you know, I don't think there's so much of that. And the managers will often say, talk about employees as subordinates, quite an old-fashioned word....

[Break as Sue answers a phone call from the Trust Director in London]

Some of the things I wrote about the more negative aspects, is corruption, bribery, and some of the strict views, like dancing is very un-Christian, at a Christian wedding you won't have dancing or alcohol, but I think that's largely to do with the fact that here there isn't a lot of maturity when it comes to things like alcohol, so you don't just have a drink, you get drunk, and then its linked to promiscuous sex, and also the high HIV prevalence, and then beating women, so you can kind of understand why its taught out here, that maybe we should teach them more about maturity, and having it in moderation. Having to constantly question whether someone is genuine or not, in a work environment and in a personal environment. Because bartering is part of everything, from, right from prices, you always have to question prices, which is a good thing, that I don't have a problem with, it's a nice thing to be able to do. But here, I do get quite regularly people coming in for financial help, people that I've never met before. Some people, because they've been here for twenty years knew past employers, employees, expats, and they say 'oh I knew so-and-so', maybe I knew them aswell, I know a lot of the names and I've met some of the previous people. And they see that as a way of you helping them, but then its so difficult when they just see them, but you see someone every week, and people coming to the guesthouse, or people that you help, you know you see can't help everyone, so its very difficult to make decisions. And I do get, I've had conmen come in here aswell, they even start crying, they name names of previous people, and I'm like 'oh they sound so genuine', and then I, luckily I said well come back tomorrow, I'll think about it, and I asked my staff, and they said 'oh he's a conman', 'why did you let him in my office then?' [laughs]. It's a bit difficult having to constantly question everything aswell, you can't really take anything, much at face-value, which is a bit, something to get used to I suppose. And, something I wrote is that I have to keep checking myself to remain humble, and not become, feeling superior, because perhaps yes, we do have a bit more, business sense, or because our life, our world is more developed back home my experiences are broader, you know, my knowledge is broader. So, but you shouldn't necessarily think that you're better for that. Because also you do get treated differently, like the advantage is that you go into banks, and in our bank we go round the back to see the bank manager, there's some banks that you queue but normally they're perhaps Western-owned banks and they're perhaps more efficient in the first place, whereas some of the banks here don't have computers so its all hand ledgers, you're quite welcome to go and get your money quickly. You don't get stopped at Police checks or revenue checkpoints, and I went to the doctors the other day there was an hour queue, I was happy to wait actually, and I went and sat down, and then ten minutes later she looks at me and says, 'quick, you know, I can work you in'. So those sorts of things you also have to keep remaining humble, else you begin to expect these, superior ways that you get treated. And I

presume that dates back to Colonial days, and the fact that then managers would get better treatment linked to not questioning authority. Some of the frustration perhaps is initiative and creativity, but I think, having been here a bit longer now, that it goes back to education, they're taught very 'chalk and talk', very old-style wrote learning, in their English lessons they're not encouraged to be creative, essay writing, when you speak to people out here that are teaching. So then how do they expect to be creative, and have initiative when they're older, when it wasn't instilled from a young age. But things like, 'well I haven't got a lot to do, what can I give myself?', or things that have been, you've mentioned but never really get done. Some staff here do show it, and I'm really impressed and its really good to see that, but some staff don't. And you especially find that in the villages, creativity and initiative is lacking, again probably because of their, their education and their experience that they have, so its not necessarily their fault. So that's why I can understand expats coming over wanting to, you can easily say 'well I just need to take control of this situation because I can do it a lot better'. But I think its then a lot for me to learn that I can't do that, and you have to just slowly influence, advise, that sort of thing.

*Did you ever go through a stage where you felt that you wanted to take control of events?*

Yeah, I knew I couldn't, which was probably a good thing, and I knew I didn't want to, I knew it was really important that the Trust, this Trust, had moved away from that, expats being involved, so we need to maintain this. So you tend just to in the evenings meet up with other expats, and have a bit of a whinge, which again can become a bit of a dodgy thing to do I suppose, but, I've never let it get too big a thing. I have days that I'm really frustrated, but then you have days the same at work, anywhere you work, whether its back home or what.

*Do you find it useful to be able to get together with other expats?*

Yeah, yeah, you do. And its funny, a friend of mine, he works at one of the places you'll go to, we talked a lot about this, and then we talk about the guilt of why we come here, and in the evenings we, before you know it, you're only socialising with expats, and about this, you know, you don't just see Africa in rose-tinted spectacles any more, there is a lot of, okay there's a lot of things that isn't their fault, and are different, and you've got to respect that. But there's also some things that you can just see should be different, you know, it doesn't make sense the way things are, that kind of thing. Then you feel a bit guilty for just socialising, but I think you need, just to have a break perhaps from work and the frustrations you've had, and the fact that you understand people a bit more, and you have to be realistic, you have to be realistic ...

[interruption from one of Sue's colleagues]

... I think the need for hanging out with other expats is largely you're from a similar culture, you've had similar experiences in your work, in the day, you're like 'oh, I know I had the same' or 'this happened to me'. Because you obviously can't talk like that with Ugandans because, they, in a way you're talking about their culture and their way of life, in fact how it differs from yours, sometimes it isn't necessarily whether its better or worse, its just comparing things, and sometimes you are having a moan about it, and you don't necessarily want to do it, make a big issue of it, but you just need to say 'oh I'm finding it difficult getting used to this, or the way this happens, this works'. Now in my first three months I didn't meet many expats, and I had some gap year students staying at the guesthouse, so I'd go out with them, I would also mix with, perhaps take some people out from work for the odd drink or dinner, and I have a Ugandan family that I'm very close to in Kampala, so I was doing quite a mixture. And then as I met more expats, you find yourself before you know it you are only socialising with them, and it happens really without thinking about it, its not as though you think this is 'I don't want to socialise with Ugandans', and I still do mix more than perhaps some people do, perhaps people from NGOs do, because they're here for slightly different reasons, whereas perhaps business people don't tend to bother as much. So I still have my Ugandan friends in Kampala, and I stay with them, they have a family so it's a kind of, a good place to go and hang out with their kids. But again I probably get on with them very well because they're quite Westernised, they've been to the UK and America a lot, so we understand each other's cultures a bit more, we get on, we do the movies and things, the

other problem is money. Many people here don't have, they don't have money to spend on going out, or going for a meal, why would they go out for a meal when they could cook at home, and its twice the price, unless its a treat. And also unless they're younger, and they do want to go out for a beer or something, so disposable income is a problem, and after a while you feel, you don't, sometimes you would like to go out with friends that you're not always paying for. Because if I invite someone out from work for a drink I know that they would expect me to pay for them, so you have to make sure you have the money and things. Whereas its nice to go out with a friend that you don't have to, or you treat eachother, and also I try not, I've decided not to socialise too much with people from work because of favouritism, and in the past, I've learnt over the months I've been here that some staff were favouritised by previous employees, expats, and people don't really say much, but you can tell, they must feel a bit left out, when this person still gets things sent in the post, always getting nice things from the UK, so its not good to do it too much.

*So that's kind of similar to the UK, trying to separate your home life and you work life.*

But you would go out with colleagues, I used to go out and socialise with my fellow colleagues a lot at work, because you're not favouritising anyone, but because they see me in management, so say if a manager is always going out with one of their people they supervise, then that would be perhaps slightly different. But I think you can perhaps accept it a bit more, but again, its, you wouldn't always be paying for that person necessarily. Now I have been accused slightly of favouritising some people at the guesthouse because I live with them, I'm more friendly with some of the staff there, but also because we get on. But I don't make it so known, because perhaps we watch videos together there, so its not necessarily going out. And so there's that aspect of wanting to separate work, wanting to meet with other expats who are of a similar background, because often if you go out here, even if you go out here, with some Ugandans that I've gone out for drinks with, via perhaps the gap year students when they come they teach in schools they go out with teachers I may join them, and you do largely talk about perhaps England, and oh, they ask you questions, its not quite so on a level, whereas if you go out with expats its more of an equal type of conversation, you're talking about feelings, how you feel today, what shall we do at the weekend, and you don't make those plans necessarily, and some of the places expats go to Ugandans don't feel comfortable going to even if they are welcome. Perhaps if its full of white people.

*And are there places like that?*

Yeah, yeah.

*Even in smaller towns like this?*

Even in smaller towns like this, like for example, the Backpackers have a bar, and there's two campsites up at Bujagali, and that tends to be perhaps where we hang out and there's parties and things. I'm not saying there's no Ugandans there at all, there are, that work there, and they're all friends with the expats that work there aswell, but perhaps outsiders, unless they feel, unless they are quite, perhaps well-to-do by Ugandan standards, then they don't feel, they have more confidence in themselves. Like in Uganda, in Kampala there's a sports bar, which is probably majority Ugandan, but when there's a big event, well expats go there regularly, but when there's a big event more come out I suppose in their numbers, and its very mixed. But then you get the people that can afford to go out and waste their money on alcohol or a night out. And in Jinja you don't find they can do that, especially families, small income, and the Christian thing aswell, if you're Christian you don't drink at all. So, that sometimes stops if you meet a lot of Christians. One of the differences as well is not wanting to talk too much about my social life at work as well, talking with my friend we both agreed that because people don't have the disposable income, you don't have holidays, if people take their annual leave, you sometimes have to push people to take their annual leave, its mainly just to go at home, do something around the home, visit relatives, whereas back home, we have much more disposable income, we enjoy breaks, we enjoy holidays, which only the more affluent can do really here.

[break as cassette is turned over]

*Do you feel guilty at being able to socialise, being able to afford to socialise?*

In a way, but in a way not, 'cause I'm also here to enjoy myself. I suppose I just, I don't tend to think about it so much now because I've kind of just got into my routine of what I do. I think in a way you just kind of accept that you are from very different lives, you know, very different worlds. So its harder, to find Ugandans that are equal in terms of, they're not coming out with you because they want assistance or money. Sometimes you need a break from that, you just want to go out and socialise. I'm not saying it doesn't happen, its just harder to find that. And, perhaps, yeah, things that you have in common, you know to chat with, and even out here I find it easier to get on with British expats than I do others, you know, meeting Americans and Australians, you know you get on, but I always quite like it when I meet another British person, and they often find it's the same. That's interesting.

*Do you think being able to do that has been something that's helped you adjust and feel settled? Do you think you'd miss that if there wasn't the opportunity to meet other expats?*

And now I'm, now you get used to it, now I've made quite a big network of people working out here, and they're all different people, some people are the type that don't mix with Ugandans, they're just your old-school colonial-type thinkers, you know. But there are also people that are here working in orphanages, but everyone enjoys a night out with people in their own, probably just as much as when people, you know, go to the UK in search of work from whichever country, they could be Ugandans, then they feel terribly lonely unless they have people, you know they tend to group together, or join an association of Ugandan residents, there's the same here for British residents and American residents in Kampala, but I think, and I think its just to be expected, you need that support. A bit of escapism aswell, I suppose! [laughs]

*So you would never really see yourself being totally independent here, you'd always perhaps see the need to have that link back to the UK via expat groups.*

I'd never thought of it like that, that its my link, but I suppose it is.

*Because I'm researching how people adapt to a different culture, and the impression is that you can go over to a different culture and be quite happy there...*

I think you do, you like, I think what it is with people that settle here, perhaps from Britain, that perhaps weren't brought up here, that they like it because they like aspects and they like the culture, the country and the people, but you still don't exactly feel on the level with some Ugandans, and you just need that, yeah to get on with people. But, and there are people that do, there's people here that marry Ugandans, and there's people that perhaps have been brought up here, and there's also people that stay here and love it, love the culture and everything, but I can almost guarantee you talk to any of them, they'd still have their frustrations in the way things work out here. I met a couple recently at the guesthouse who were staying, working in Gulu in the north where there's a lot of war places, and they came away for a weekend partly to get away from that, but as an expat couple, to have a break, perhaps treat themselves to a nice meal in Jinja, you know, and I think most people would at least have frustrations about things out here. But within that there's degrees of how people merge themselves into the culture, I suppose, some people like, oh, they get very frustrated, and they're just here for a short while. Or there's some people that get very frustrated and they hate things, but they enjoy the work that they're doing, and they enjoy the sun, and the opportunities that they've got out here, and to live a better life than you do, expats live better lives out here than they do back home. But they mainly just socialise with expats, but they get a lot of frustrations, and then you get the others that are frustrated, but they have many Ugandan friends, and they are a lot more mixed. And you probably find more of those within NGOs I would expect, mainly due to the reasons of why people came out here I suppose. And also you probably find perhaps more people that are living perhaps in more rural areas, 'cause if people totally submerge themselves in the culture then they tend to do it out of the towns, and they can live that basic lifestyle I suppose.

*So where do you think you fit in ...*

I think I mentioned four people, I'd be that third one, so the NGO worker that has frustrations, I feel, yeah, I feel as though I do need expat contact and my luxuries in life, you know, relatively speaking, but I still mix with Ugandans, and get on with them, I have some friends. But probably I, we do have more expat friends than I do Ugandan friends, but when I was upset, once I actually called my Ugandan friends in Kampala and they came and took me out, so I don't always turn to expats, kind of a mixture. But I definitely need that, and even if I go to Kampala I don't always see my Ugandan friends, 'cause you know you just do different things. The same as if, the same people from here, if you put a Ugandan in a town that was all expats they would be looking to visit the town that had Ugandans in, because you're more [untranscribable] friends now and then. Sounds really odd explaining it to other people, because it sounds as if you're being separate. But merging, completely merging into a different culture, it happens to different people at different stages, and I know my life's not out here, some people come out here and they think 'I want to stay out here', but for me its very, its lots of reasons, personal reasons, family back home, various reasons why I know ultimately I need to go home. It's a) I need to, I would like, thinking about furthering my education, so I can only do that back home, and b) for the expats living here that I've met its very much a party atmosphere, unless you're perhaps the missionary workers, so, and when you speak to people it just seems that that's the same, probably, I don't know maybe throughout Africa, I mean I don't know. Because life's so much easier, you have your houseboy, your housegirl to do your cooking, your washing, you have a guard, because labour's so cheap, and also there's that need for employment so it'd be a sad thing if all that labour was stopped in a way, makes a lot of people, puts a lot of people in employment, that you do have much more fun time, and back home, I don't know why it is, but back home we do worry and stress a lot more, and I'm still trying to figure out what's the difference, 'cause as a person I still feel like I'm vaguely on holiday, you know its a) the weather, and b) life does seem much easier, but maybe its because I've put my life on hold, and I'll return to it, now maybe if I decided to live here than I would want to start thinking about, well I need to set up a pension, and think about buying property. But here you don't, many people, most people don't buy property, property just doesn't tend to be for sale, 'cause largely Ugandan property owners earn good incomes so they don't want to sell, they'd rather have income, rental income. So most expats don't buy, they rent. And you don't worry about, people I seem to think, don't make so many plans for later on in life, just kind of know they'll be fine, there's always ways of making money, running your own business is easier out here, not so many rules and regulations, or if there is you know how to get around it by paying the right people. I don't know, it just seems, life does seem easier out here, I think that's what attracts people, whereas for me its, I feel a bit uneasy about it, because I'm so used to the, it doesn't feel like I'm really living my full life here, I'm just doing certain aspects, I'm gaining experience, things like that, rather than, yeah. I still feel this is home, certainly. I went back for a holiday and I came back here, went back to the UK for two weeks, and when I came back I was 'oh, its good to be back', you know, but I still feel that my stressful, my normal life is back home! [laughs]

*That's quite interesting, how did you feel when you went back home, going back for a few weeks is like a holiday, so how did you feel when you got back...*

Well, again that felt like home, just simple things with my parents I felt like I'd never been away from them. So people that you generally get on with. I found that I slipped back quite easily, and perhaps, not too easily, but I think I'll adjust quite easily when I go back, but I will, but it was different, it was two weeks, I had two weeks of rushing around, seeing everyone, buying things. Whereas when I go back for good, although I'm sure I'll come back out here for visits, but when I go back for good, I'm sure I'll find it a lot harder to readjust. Because you'll miss things you've seen out here, whereas I knew I was only there for two weeks I knew I was coming back to the people here and the way of life, and, I'm very fond of the people I work with, and, the weather is a bonus, the country is beautiful, the people are friendly, on the whole, you don't. And I think, I've been here once before, so back in 1997 I was more mentally affected then, emotionally affected, I think once you've done something perhaps more than once, you know going back and just, talking to others as well, they feel

the same that going back to England is more of a culture shock than when they first come to Africa, 'cause you can kind of accept things perhaps more here, you're still shocked, but sometimes people find things are better than what they'd expected, because they see starving children in Ethiopia still from the 80s, that's their mind of Africa, whereas especially when you come to Uganda, its green, its luscious, its growing, its got quite a fast economic growth rate here, but when you go back you're hit by the money-grabbing, how we're just, our society is very much a throw-away society. And its all about, consumables, and buying new clothes, and you know, without really any thought about 'do I need this, and am I not just being a bit extravagant', and the other, the rest of the world, the developing world, and the needs that there is. So that is quite difficult I suppose, but I think it will always be with you and you'll just change slightly, and you'll change a lot when you go back, but you will soon slip back to the way you are in the UK, spending a bit more, treating yourself a bit more, whereas I think when you go back you're more conscious of it, but I think its inevitable that you'll slip back a bit, but you'll always keep that element within you that parts of you will be permanently changed and parts of you will perhaps go back to the UK but influenced by your experience out here. Things like that.

*Can you think of any specific things that you think will stay with you and will change the way you behave or the way you view things when you go back?*

I think buying things basically, like out here, out here, things like clothes, back home I'd love to buy new clothes quite regularly, whereas out here I don't. When I do buy, I buy them in the market and they're second-hand, and they've been from the UK or America! [laughs]. So you know, being so conscious about money and, designer labels, but you know you can just see yourself, because you have the money still treating yourself, but I don't think, there's some things that would change. But I think some things that would change for good, but they've already started to since my first visit, are things like, trying to buy Fair Trade products, you know like coffee and things like that which you can get in the supermarkets now. And in my own time helping with charities, and also giving to charities, and maybe there's something I can do for the Trust in the UK, like going round doing talks in schools, you know things like that, always keeping the importance of what is needed out here, I think, will stay with me. But hopefully I'll think more about things, that we buy new TVs because we're bored with our new one we want a bigger one, whereas I just see, they make use of everything, its quite amazing, old tyres, plastic water bottles. I put it in the bin, I find the guard has collected all my water bottles 'cause they can get a few Shillings from the local manufacturers, you know anything can be used. A tin of tomatoes, that can be made into a paraffin lamp, you know, everything is reused here. We're very much a throw-away society, so I think that will change, but then, I've been, I was like that before, maybe that's why I wanted to come and work for an NGO, maybe it's a bit of both, you were like that to start with, but here it compounds it. So I've always turned off the lights when I leave a room, recycled my paper, I don't, wouldn't probably buy a power shower because they waste water, those little environmental things as well. Changes, well indirect really isn't it, indirect to your life here but that's just, still related I suppose. I don't know how it would change me for good in terms of the people I've met and things, but just make me more understanding I think, like when you, when you do studies, when you work for an NGO, how does it really work out here, I don't think you can know until you've worked out here. I understand now why big NGOs, they would like you to have work experience, but its Catch 22, 'cause those big NGOs aren't sending expats anymore, because they want to use local people, which is why this was a great opportunity for me, 'cause its smaller, but yeah...

*So would you ...*

Perhaps generosity aswell. Because here, however little they have, they will struggle and pay school fees, and they'll take in children that aren't theirs, it could be family's, could be orphans. And we are very much centred on, 'well lets make sure we're okay first, and then we'll see who we can help'. So I hope I can try to instil some of that into my life, and its not just about giving to charity every month, its about just how you deal with people and help people, and welcome them into your home...

*I suppose that's probably the harder side, its easy to give money because its not personal...*

Yeah, definitely. I mean I'm sure as well there will be people that will contact me when I'm back as well, for perhaps assistance out here, but I think its about helping to raise money, or sell things, you know these Fair Trade things, or even in your own friends, you know there tends to be a stress at Christmas time, or there's a meal, 'oh how much is it going to cost and how many people', and maybe its my family [laughs], but its, visitors are seen as enjoyable but a hassle, the house has to be clean, and new bed sheets in the rooms. Here it's a bit more carefree, you know you'll go into a village, they have nothing but they are so proud to take you into their mud hut and give a Coke or something, and they have nothing. So maybe just to be a bit more relaxed, and not so worried about other people and what they think. Because they, rather than, I sometimes thought they would feel a little bit embarrassed about taking you into their home because knowing, they must know that you have more money, they have no idea what our homes look like, but, but they feel the complete opposite. They're proud, they feel honoured that you visited their home, it means a lot to them. So that would be a good thing to take back as well. Ugandan hospitality.

*Just a final question then. Given that you're planning on leaving soonish, what sort of advice would you give to your replacement, what things have you learnt that you would like to pass on to somebody else coming out here?*

To be patient, in a) the way of life here, its slower, and b) you won't come in and get all what you want to achieve in the first few months. I think that's something that you have to really learn to work out here. Unless, you know, especially in the NGO environment, which we are talking about, I think its slightly different in the business environment. And especially working here maybe as well, and you need to build up relations with staff, you need to learn about the work here, and you need to gain respect, you know, rather than coming in and taking over. So that people will perhaps open up to you, because I think people do as time goes on, and you want to be able for them to say, to disagree with you. You know, I'll try to say that 'well this is my view, what do you think?' to the other managers, rather than you come in and your quite authoritarian and so right from the word go people don't want to talk to you, or give you advice, or give their opinion 'cause a) they're a bit nervous, or b) they don't like you. So there's that aspect of patience. I think you just need to get used to the way of life before, you need to induct yourself into Uganda as well as into working out here, as well as into living out here, there's so many things, so you can't expect to change things quickly, and change doesn't come easily. It's a bit like, we'd look like our older generation, and change doesn't come easily to them, it's a bit like here you can't instil all your Western values and ideas overnight. And there's some things that you might come out here with ideas of doing, and you think 'actually its not practical'. But there's some things that you think 'now this is going to work', and I think its for the better, but its just going to take time for them to realise that, and it does have to come from them as well. I've had that experience of, suggesting even job titles, and new job descriptions to try and, I don't know, modernise things a bit here. And there was disagreement, and then we had, well lets have a meeting about this, and we got a flipchart, and we talked about their job, what words described it, and we came up with the exact same thing that I had suggested, but at least they felt that they came up with it rather than me. And just be prepared to learn things, and not take things for granted, and even now I sometimes take people for granted and I make assumptions from what I've learned so far and I'm still proved wrong, so people do surprise you. [long pause] They're the kind of key things, other than the practical things, you know, about living out here, really practical things like mosquitoes and that kind of thing.

*So you said earlier on that you'd prepared some sort of briefing sheet for your successor. What kind of things, did that include these kinds of things?*

No it was more practical things because I wrote it fairly early on when I first arrived, I though while I'm still remembering it, let me write some of these things down. Yeah, very practical things like a mobile phone, the fact, everyone here has a mobile phone now, I mean this is why Africa isn't going to develop like us, its going to jump a few steps. You know they've gone almost from landlines, hardly any landlines, to everyone, so many people having a mobile phone. Where I get internet access, you know, just so they feel a bit more, when they arrive they don't have to look around and ask the questions that everyone does, makes it an

easier process to go out. Money, where to exchange money, things like that. If I was adding onto that, I would want to add on about some of the things I've discussed with you, but I also think its also easier to do that in person, and again when people are out here, because I sometimes think people think you're being a bit judgmental and a bit superior to Ugandans when you say 'well there's no initiative, you know, there's a lot of sitting round', and they think 'well I won't think like that when I come out here, I want to work with Ugandans and be on the same', whereas its inevitable for you to see the differences and get frustrated with things. It would take a real saint not to, I think. So sometimes its easier to discuss it in person, and perhaps when they've arrived aswell.

*So you would advocate some kind of hand-over period?*

Yeah, definitely. Because also, it is a Trust issue aswell, and I want to tell them many things, like the human resources policy, there is a human resources policy, that's agreed, you know, so any questions to do with holiday, loans, anything, its all in there. So you don't, because sometimes these things can perhaps slip, you know, and people do come to you with heart-wrenching stories, you know like, their mother was ill, I need to take money. Now sometimes you need to have a bit of give-and-take, and we are a small Christian NGO, and there has to be a bit of flexibility, but on the whole its for the better good. Like I've stopped people's advances, when, and I've talked to them about it, and I've said 'well its because you're already paying back a loan, so that's X amount of your salary you won't be seeing at the end of this month, now you've already had an advance at the beginning of this month and if I give you an advance now for your sick mother, which is very unfortunate obviously, then it means you're going to get 30,000 for the month as your salary, after taxes, how are you going to survive on that? You'll come back to us'. So I'm trying to, because there isn't the financial management and planning in a lot of these people, that you have to try and help them to help themselves in a way, and you need to, its like being cruel to be kind. In actual fact it turned out this guy didn't need the money in the end, when he admitted it wasn't so urgent, but because we've got into the situation where we give that out, well we used to give it out quite freely, and they'd begun to expect it, we're the first person people turn to. Whereas if you push them a bit, and say 'no', then they do find other alternatives because there's the extended family system, people will help them, and I don't think its good for them to always come to their employer, 'cause we're not a bank, and they need to respect that there's rules and regulations to a point, and they need to learn to be able to plan their finances better than they do. Some people do that better than others. So things like that, in case that had slipped, say before someone had arrived, just so they know, but again you wouldn't be able to come in on day one and say 'what's been happening, this is terrible, Sue said loans have stopped, so why are you giving', you know, ways you have to go round it and who you talk to, things like that. So yeah, definitely a hand-over is needed, preferably in-country. Unless you are a big NGO and there's lots of expats there to induct you, say if the person you were taking over from couldn't be there it'd be slightly different. But in a situation like this it'd be easier to.

*Okay, we've talked for far too long!*

[End of Tape]