In Touch with the Dutch

A longitudinal study of the impact of a local host on the success of the expatriate assignment
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A longitudinal study of the impact of a local host on the success of the expatriate assignment

Een wetenschappelijke proeve op het gebied van de Letteren

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Challenges and rewards of expatriation

For some people a dream comes true when they get the opportunity to work abroad for a couple of years. They see it as a challenge. Others are less enthusiastic about immersing themselves in a new culture. A move abroad not only entails having to establish a new life in unfamiliar surroundings, but also dealing with other norms and values that might impact on the way in which people live and conduct business. One does not always realise that there are cultural differences, nor does one always know how to handle them. These cultural differences – large and small – might cause difficulties and make life in the new country harder.

“The challenge is to understand and manage contact between culturally diverse people and groups in order to reduce the stresses and difficulties that are a normal aspect of such encounters, as well as to enhance the positive effects that cross-cultural encounters can bestow on the participants” (Ward et al., 2001: p. 18).

The present study focuses on ways to make it easier for people who move abroad for their work to settle into a new country. This chapter gives an overview of the challenges and rewards of working abroad. Section 1.1 presents the reasons why expatriates are sent abroad and the associated costs, section 1.2 focuses on the barriers that might prevent successful expatriate assignments1. This chapter ends with a short overview of expatriate failure, and possible solutions to this problem (1.3).

1.1 Expatriate assignments in a globalising world

1.1.1 The world in our backyard

Due to globalisation the world is currently becoming more internationalised than ever. Tomlinson (1999, p. 2) sees globalisation as complex connectivity, referring to the “rapidly developing and ever-densening network of interconnections and interdependences that characterise modern social life”. In comparison to most of the 20th century, the world is more and more in our backyard. These stronger ties between different parts of the world have also had effects on the business world. A growing number of companies have started to look beyond their domestic boundaries, and have opened up offices in other countries. Expatriates play an important role in this internationalised business world for various reasons that will be elaborated in section 1.1.3.

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1 The terms expatriate assignment and international assignment will be used alternatively for stylistic reasons.
European multinational enterprises\(^2\) were the first to internationalise (Yip, 1997), and they have a longer history of sending employees on expatriate assignments than multinationals from other regions (Scullion & Brewster, 2001). With the development of the European Union and other international organisations it became much easier to conduct international business, especially within the European Union. Nowadays most companies consider the whole European Union as one market, for which production, marketing and human resource strategies are regionally determined (Scullion & Brewster, 2001). This is also reflected in the fact that European multinational enterprises increasingly consider intra-European assignments as “quasi-domestic” instead of “international” relocation (Hippler, 2000). Whether this is a sensible approach remains to be seen (Hippler, 2010). The European market as compared to, for example, the large domestic market of U.S. American multinationals is more diverse, which is one of the reasons why Scullion and Brewster (2001) emphasise the importance of a research focus on Europe in the area of expatriate management – a research area which has been dominated by U.S. American research. Other important differences between U.S.A. and Europe that might impact on expatriation include differences in organisation structure and management processes, and possibly more successful management of the expatriation process by European multinationals compared to North American firms (Scullion & Brewster, 2001).

Scullion and Brewster (2001) also note that the types of assignments are changing: fewer Europeans are sent to developing countries, instead more and more expatriate assignments take place between developed countries in Europe and elsewhere. Although in more recent years assignments to China, Singapore and India have increased greatly, intraregional transfers are on the rise, with 49% of expatriate assignments taking place within Europe (Brookfield Global Relocation Services, 2010b)\(^3\). This is corroborated by the finding of the Economist Intelligence Unit (2010) that about half of the surveyed expatriates were relocated within the developed world (North America and Western Europe), making relocation to developed countries an important area for study.

The unique characteristics of the European market and the large number of transfers within the developed world show that it is relevant to study international assignments between developed countries in Europe and elsewhere. A third reason to study such assignments is that organisations often assume that expatriates sent on such assignments do not need cross-cultural preparation to be successful. For as many as 57% of the companies that offer cross-cultural training to some of their employees the decision

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\(^2\) This study uses the term *multinational enterprise* instead of *multinational corporation*, because the first term also includes international organisations such as NGOs and government institutions.

\(^3\) To illustrate several issues in this chapter the annual Global Relocation Trend Surveys (GRTS) of Brookfield Global Relocation Services (called GMAC Global Relocation Services until 2008) are used as reference material, together with a report of the Economist Intelligence Unit (2010) about new trends in expatriation. The GRTS cover more than a decade and sample between 100 and 200 senior human resource professionals and managers of international relocation programmes of small, medium, and large international organisations. The Economist Intelligence Unit survey (2010) is based on 418 executives who were or had recently been expatriates, or were responsible for them.
whether or not to provide it depends on the destination (Brookfield Global Relocation Services, 2010b). This echoes a well established idea in the literature that the greater the cultural distance between two countries is, the more difficult adjustment will be, and, consequently, the better the expatriate should be prepared. Froese and Peltokorpi (2011, p. 50) conceptualise cultural distance as “differences between any two countries with respect to the level of development, education, business and everyday language, cultural values, and the extent of connections between these countries”. The difficulty is that it is not certain that intra-European expatriates experience less acculturative stress than those who are sent outside Europe (Hippler, 2000). The similarities between “psychically close cultures” (O’Grady & Lane, 1996) are often only superficial, and this could lead to the unrealistic expectation that the cultures do not differ at all (Martin & Harrell, 2004). There might be many differences at a deeper level in the structuring of time, space, materials and relationships that often result in the distortion of meaning regardless of mutual good intentions (Hall, 1966). For that reason assignments to cultures that are psychically close can pose unexpected problems, because of a lack of cultural awareness of differences between these cultures (Brewster & Pickard, 1994). O’Grady & Lane (1996) term this the “psychic distance paradox”. For example, their study of Canadian retail companies showed that it is not as easy as supposed for Canadian companies to do business in the United States (O’Grady & Lane, 1996). Another study, reported by Martin and Harrell (2004), found that U.S. American students had more problems in the United Kingdom than in Italy or France because they underestimated the cultural differences between the United Kingdom and the United States due to the fact that they have the same standard language – English. The famous quote states that “the US and the UK are two countries separated by a common language”. Hall (1966, p. 129) concludes: “Ours [America] is a very different culture”. For these reasons, several authors advocate the importance of examining transitions to psychically close cultures (Brewster, 1995b; O’Grady & Lane, 1996; Selmer, 2007). These assignments are central to the present study.

### 1.1.2 Expatriates defined

The original meaning of the word *expatriate* is someone who lives outside his or her home country – *ex patria*. Nowadays this term is mostly used for an employee of an internationally operating company who has been sent to a foreign country, such as in the definition of Aycan and Kanungo (1997, p. 250) – expatriates are “employees of business or government organisations who are sent by their organisation to a related unit in a country which is different from their own to accomplish a job or organisation related goals for a pre-designated temporary time period of usually more than six months and less than five years in one term”. The present study employs a somewhat broader definition, to also include what Suutari & Brewster (2000) call “self-initiated foreign work experience” or what McKenna and Richardson (2007) call the “independent internationally mobile
professional” (IIMP), individuals who make their own arrangements to find temporary work abroad. Although expatriates differ from the independent internationally mobile professional in certain respects (e.g. motivation, repatriation and future career) and Suutari & Brewster (2000) advocate caution in applying the expatriate literature to independent internationally mobile professionals, both groups are presented with the challenge to adjust to a new host country in which they plan to stay temporarily. For that reason, the present study will apply the definition by Cascio (2006, p. 176): “An expatriate is anyone who works outside of his or her home country, with a planned return to that or a third country”.

**Numbers of expatriates**

Surveys that monitor global relocation trends have shown that over the years many companies expected an increase in the number of expatriates for the following year (Brookfield Global Relocation Services, 2009, 2010b; GMAC Global Relocation Services, 2008), although the financial crisis in autumn 2008 caused a drop in the expectations from an optimistic 68% of respondents expecting an increase in 2008 (GMAC Global Relocation Services, 2008) to only 33% expecting an increase in 2009 (Brookfield Global Relocation Services, 2009). The expectations began to recover slowly, with 44% of respondents expecting an increase in the expatriate population in 2010 (Brookfield Global Relocation Services, 2010b). These tendencies are confirmed by the report of the Economist Intelligence Unit (2010), showing that although 39% of the companies planned to send more expatriates abroad over the next five years, only 13% have done so over the last two years (2008-2010).

Exact numbers of expatriates are hard to pin down. Several sources such as The Holland Handbook (Dijkstra, 2005) and the website Expatica.nl estimate the number of expatriates in the Netherlands at 250,000. Examining the available figures at the website of Statistics Netherlands (www.cbs.nl), one would arrive at a number of about 300,000. These statistics, however, do not discriminate between those who are on a temporary assignment and those who have decided to remain permanently in the Netherlands. For that reason, the actual figure of expatriates is probably lower.

**Expatriate profiles**

The traditional expatriate typically has been male, married, with children, accompanied on the international assignment by a spouse who does not work, but this has changed.

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4 This figure was estimated by deducting the number of Dutch nationals (between 20-65 years old) with a second nationality (175,434) from the number of people living in The Netherlands (between 20-65 years old) with one or both parents born abroad (480,067). This results in 304,633 non-Dutch nationals between 20–65 years old and living in the Netherlands. Only people from ‘Western’ descent were included; this definition of Statistics Netherlands being very broad and including for example, eastern Europe, Japan, and Indonesia. This calculation is a very rough approximation of the number of expatriates in the Netherlands, based on the available data of Statistics Netherlands.
somewhat in the past decade. The figure of married expatriates has decreased from 70% before 2002 to 60% in the 2008 survey (GMAC Global Relocation Services, 2008). Fewer expatriates have children; this figure decreased from 59% in 2002 to 52% in the 2008 survey. The number of female expatriates was on the rise at the beginning of this century, but since 2005 has stabilised at around 20%, and was 19% in the 2008 survey. The 2008 survey showed that almost three quarters of the spouses were employed before his or her partner was sent on the assignment, but only 20% managed to find a job abroad. More than half of the spouses (54%) who had a job before the assignment did not work during the assignment. This dual-career issue (section 1.2.1) has become more relevant over time because the gap between pre-assignment employment and employment during assignments was only 29% in the 2001 report. More than two thirds of the expatriates were between 30 and 49 years old and only 9% of the expatriates had already been on an international assignment according to the 2008 survey.

The financial crisis in autumn 2008 has caused companies to be more cautious in their selection process, reverting to a more traditional expatriate profile, which is shown when the 2008 survey is compared to the 2010 survey (Brookfield Global Relocation Services, 2010b; GMAC Global Relocation Services, 2008). At present, expatriates are slightly older; in the 2008 survey 36% of the expatriates were between 30-39 and 32% between 40-49 years old, against respectively 32% and 40% in the 2010 survey. The number of married expatriates increased again to 70% in the 2010 survey; the number of male married expatriates (63%) being higher than at any time since 1999. The percentage of female expatriates decreased somewhat to 17% in the 2010 survey. Also, the financial crisis has aggravated the dual career issue in making it more difficult for spouses to find a job during the assignment: only 9% were employed both before and during the assignment in the 2010 survey, against 20% in the 2008 survey.

It is important to bear in mind that these figures are applicable to expatriates that are sent abroad by a company. Independent internationally mobile professionals are generally slightly younger, more often single, and more often female than employees who are sent on expatriate assignments (Suutari & Brewster, 2000).

Recent developments

As companies are slowly moving away from the traditional expatriate, they are also exploring alternative forms of international assignments. Scullion & Brewster (2001) note that multinational enterprises will be more critical in the future about the use of expatriates, because of the high costs (see section 1.1.4) and because of the difficulty of measuring the result of an expatriate assignment. They predict that solutions other than the traditional expatriate assignment, such as the commuter assignment and extended business travel, will become more common. While being virtually non-existent ten years ago (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2010), the percentage of companies that employed commuters was 29% in 2008 and even rose to 35% in 2009 (Brookfield Global Relocation Services, 2010b); the
latter number is possibly also driven by the financial crisis leading to a replacement of more expensive expatriates by cheaper commuters. More prevalent even is extensive business travel, with 44% of the companies making use of it according to the 2010 survey (Brookfield Global Relocation Services, 2010b). Scullion & Brewster (2001) see the potential for these alternatives especially in Europe because of the high density of populations and industrialised countries in a smaller geographical area than anywhere else in the world.

Even though assignments seem to become shorter and alternatives such as commuting and extensive business travel are becoming more popular, expatriate assignments of two to five years remain popular. More than half of the companies surveyed by the Economist Intelligence Unit (2010) typically send their staff on an international assignment of two to five years, and another 17% usually send them abroad for one or two years. Alternative forms of international assignments seem to develop alongside long-term assignments (Hippler, 2009). The traditional expatriate assignment with its difficulties (section 1.2) is far from gone, and for that reason it remains important to study ways in which to improve these assignments.

1.1.3 Deciding on expatriation: the organisation vs. the expatriate

Why do organisations use expatriates?

Edström and Galbraith (1977) have proposed a typology of transfer policies that has been much used in the International Human Resource Management literature: 1. fill a position (transfer of technical and managerial knowledge), 2. management development and 3. organisation development. Reiche and Harzing (2011) conclude that this typology still stands and is corroborated by a great deal of literature, although they contend that the third category would be more aptly named “coordination and control”, because organisation development is a result of all three motives. Harzing (2001) describes three distinct elements of the coordination and control motive. The expatriate assumes a “bear-role” if a HQ-manager is sent abroad for direct surveillance of the subsidiary (formal direct control), a “bumble-bee-role” if the control is based on socialisation (shared values), and a “spider-role” if they create informal communication networks (Harzing, 2001).

The Economist Intelligence Unit survey (2010) asked respondents about their company’s strategy with regard to the reasons for sending expatriates abroad. Their findings emphasise the importance of the first category: expatriates are sent abroad to train local managers (32%), they are sent to emerging markets where business and management skills are lacking (30%), or otherwise sent abroad to fill skills gaps (26%). The second category “management development” is reflected in this survey as well: 25% of the respondents (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2010) indicate that foreign postings are an essential part of a manager’s career development. This opinion might be more salient in Europe, because according to Selmer (1995, p. 4) the development of the European Union and the increased need for “Euromanagers” has fuelled the belief that international
experience through expatriate assignments is essential for the development of effective global leaders for European firms.

When a company needs to fill a post in one of its subsidiaries, it has three options – someone from headquarters (parent country national), an expatriate from another country (third country national), or a local employee (host country national). Reiche and Harzing (2011) list the various advantages and disadvantages of these three groups. For example, a parent country national is familiar with headquarters, which facilitates the transfer of the company’s culture to the subsidiary. On the other hand, a parent country national has to adjust to life in a foreign country, whereas the host country national does not need to do so, and is knowledgeable about local market conditions. Third country nationals might be better informed about the host environment than parent country nationals, but companies have to be careful to avoid host country’s sensitivities with regard to nationals of certain countries (Reiche & Harzing, 2011).

Traditionally, much use has been made of parent country nationals, but the focus has shifted in favour of third country nationals and host country nationals. This reflects a change in staffing policy of the multinational enterprise, from mostly ethnocentric in staffing parent country nationals, to polycentric, geocentric or even regiocentric, using more and more host country nationals and third country nationals. The role of parent country nationals, however, remains substantial with 40.8% of the subsidiaries still having a parent country national as managing director (Reiche & Harzing, 2011, p. 188).

The viewpoint of the expatriate

A desire for adventure, travel and life change might be important reasons for someone to accept an international assignment (Inkson, Arthur, Pringle, & Barry, 1997; Richardson & Mallon, 2005). Dickmann, Doherty, Mills and Brewster (2008) list motivations for employees to accept an expatriate assignment. In their review of the literature they conclude that these motivations pertain to the job itself, the opportunity for new learning experiences, a desire to have international experience, family and domestic issues, the location of the assignment, and the overall offer including the repatriation package and financial impact of working abroad. Their research suggests the prevalence of considerations with regard to the job, personal development and the career, and it challenges the view that financial considerations are the most important motive for expatriates to accept an assignment. Similarly, Hippler (2009) found both personal and professional motives at the top of the list in his inductive study. In the private domain the most important motive was to broaden horizons through new experiences, whereas career considerations and development and acquisition of knowledge, skills, abilities and insights were the most important professional motives to accept an assignment. Work/life balance issues might also be important factors influencing the decision to go, something reflected in the 2010 Global Relocation Trends Survey (Brookfield Global Relocation Services, 2010b): family issues and partner’s careers were two of the three most important reasons to turn down an international assignment.
1.1.4 Costs of expatriates

In section 1.1.2 it was mentioned that high costs might be a reason for organisations to look for alternatives to long-term expatriate assignments (Scullion & Brewster, 2001). Such “permanent” assignments – as opposed to, for example, commuting assignments – entail international compensation packages. Expatriates are some of the most expensive employees of a company (Scullion & Brewster, 2001), because these packages contain three other key components on top of base salary – premiums, allowances and benefits (Burnett & Von Glinow, 2011). In their study of the expatriate management policies and practices of 29 large multinational corporations, Peterson, Napier and Shim (1996) found that the average costs for an expatriate are between $150,000 to $300,000, including all four elements of the international compensation package.

Burnett and Von Glinow (2011, pp. 476-488) give an overview of the four elements of the international compensation package. Base salary takes up the largest part of the compensation package, although the distributions might differ depending on location of headquarters (e.g. India vs. Australia) and on the level of the expatriate (management vs. professional). The base salary might also be adjusted in accordance with the expatriate’s enthusiasm in accepting the assignment, their willingness to move to another location and hardships they might encounter. The second component of the international compensation package is premiums. Burnett and Von Glinow (2011) distinguish four types of premiums. The first two types, foreign service and mobility premiums, stimulate international mobility by encouraging expatriates to accept an international assignment or to move between two foreign posts. The third type of premium, hardship premiums, compensates expatriates for difficult conditions, such as tough or unhealthy living conditions, that they might experience during their posting. The fourth type is danger pay, specifically focusing on those situations in which expatriates are exposed to danger during their work. Allowances make up the third component of the international compensation package and these aim to promote well-being among expatriates and their families, maintain their standard of living and prevent decline of purchasing power. Examples are a cost-of-living allowance (COLA), houses and utilities allowance and education allowance for expatriate’s children. Fourth, the international compensation package might contain certain benefits, such as paid time-off, pension contributions, and other benefits such as contributing to saving and investment plans, or paying insurance premiums.

1.2 Challenges to successful expatriation

Living and working abroad is for many people a wonderful, enriching experience. They get the opportunity to live in a new country, learn about a new culture and a new language, and travel. Not all international experiences, however, go as smoothly as one would want them to go. Some of the main challenges will be sketched on the basis of the expatriate-cycle
Challenges and rewards of expatriation

(Figure 1.1): recruitment, selection, preparation, sojourn and repatriation (e.g. Scullion & Brewster, 2001).

The section starts out with recruitment and selection (1.2.1), then continues with preparation (1.2.2), the sojourn (1.2.3) and finishes with a short overview of the difficulties experienced during repatriation (1.2.4).

1.2.1 Recruitment and selection

Compared to the domestic selection process, international selection processes face a number of additional challenges, for example expatriates need to be able to function effectively in another culture. Even though Tung (1981) showed more than 30 years ago in her literature review that personal traits or relational abilities, ability to cope with environmental variables and family situation also seemed to be important variables for the success of the international assignment, technical competence remains one of the primary criteria for recruitment and selection of expatriates (Harris & Brewster, 1999). Bonache and Fernandez (1999) suggest that the emphasis on technical competence is due to the fact that it is easier to use as a selection criterion than other criteria such as cultural sensitivity. Although the importance of such other criteria has since been shown (Caligiuri, 2000a; Mol, Born, Willemsen, & Van der Molen, 2005; Shaffer, Harrison, Gregersen, Black, & Ferzandi, 2006; Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000), companies often still assume that if someone does a good job at home, he or she will also do a good job abroad. It is important for companies to realise that technical competence is only the starting point of selection for international assignments (Caligiuri, Tarique, & Jacobs, 2009, p. 252). The essence of international assignment selection is to single out the person from a pool of qualified individuals who is best suited to deal effectively with the challenges presented by international assignments.

When deciding on criteria, it is important to take the type of assignment into account. Technical competence plays a larger role when the main objective of the assignment is to
transfer knowledge and skills, whereas interaction skills are more important to assignees in a networking or in a boundary spanning role (Caligiuri et al., 2009). In the latter case the expatriate crosses the boundary between the organisation and the environment to provide information for internal users (Au & Fukuda, 2002). In addition, non-work factors come into play when sending an expatriate on an international assignment. Issues with partner and children (see section 1.2.3), while crucial for assignment success, are often not taken into account during the selection process because of privacy considerations (Caligiuri et al., 2009). An important aspect that might cause difficulties is the dual career issue. Dual-career couples, defined as both partners having a future career orientation and being psychologically committed to their work (Harvey, 1995), are becoming more common. Unwillingness of partners to give up their career for an international assignment is an important reason for potential expatriates to refuse the assignment (Harvey, 1995). Selection is further complicated because Human Resource departments usually have difficulty in constituting a pool of candidates that is large enough for international staffing needs (Harvey & Moeller, 2009).

Organisations often lack a formal and structured selection process for international assignments (Caligiuri et al., 2009), which is clearly shown by Harris and Brewster (1999) in their study of selection of expatriates in English multinationals. Expatriates are often selected by what they term “the coffee-machine-system” – spontaneous, informal conversations between managers at the coffee machine that highlight a certain individual who might be able to do the job. This individual is then invited to a meeting – if he or she is interested – which is usually not so much an interview as a conversation in which job conditions are negotiated. Harris and Brewster (1999, p. 494) define this system as a “closed-informal” selection system, in which candidates are identified solely by networking and there is no open debate about selection criteria. In such cases there is no formal selection procedure, even though a rigorous procedure is especially important when selecting employees for international assignments that are of strategic importance to the company (Caligiuri et al., 2009).

Effective selection could help increase the chances of a good person-environment fit; its importance is recognised in Brookfield’s Future Spotlight report (2010a), which highlights linking talent management and employee mobility as one of the key areas of interest for global leaders. This short review highlights the importance of a rigorous and tailored international recruitment and selection process that uses other criteria than just technical competence. Being able to adjust to other cultures in the sojourn phase is one of the most important skills needed for successful international assignments (Andreason, 2003; Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer, & Luk, 2005; Forster, 2000). Section 1.2.3 will examine these adjustment issues in more detail.
1.2.2 Preparation

When the decision is taken to send an employee on an international assignment, the next step in the expatriate cycle is to prepare him or her for what is coming (see Figure 1.1). An important instrument in this regard is cross-cultural training, defined as “an educative process focused on promoting intercultural learning through acquisition of behavioural, cognitive, and affective competencies required for effective interactions across diverse cultures” (Littrell, Salas, Hess, Paley, & Riedel, 2006, p. 356). In their review of 25 years of research on cross-cultural training Littrell et al. (2006) conclude that it is effective in facilitating the success of the international assignment, although training programmes should be designed with caution until more knowledge is available about the many moderators that might affect the effectiveness of the training (Morris & Robie, 2001).

Although cross-cultural training could play an important role in preparing the expatriate for the assignment in a foreign country (Forster, 2000; Littrell et al., 2006), one should realise that it takes a very long time to internalise a new culture. For that reason, cross-cultural training aims to familiarise expatriates with the concept of culture and make them sensitive to cultural differences (Forster, 2000). This can be done in several ways. Littrell et al. (2006, pp. 369-372) review six types of cross-cultural preparation to be found in the literature. First, in Attribution training the expatriate learns to explain behaviour from the point of view of the host culture. Second, Cultural awareness training focuses on the culture of the expatriates themselves so that they will become aware of cultural differences when they encounter them. The third type, Interaction training, is “on-the-job-training” where the expatriate learns from his predecessor during an overlap in their assignments. Fourth, Language training is important to gain skills in the host language and learn about the host culture. The fifth type of preparation, Didactic training, is more informational in nature and provides the expatriate with a framework that he or she can use to interpret experiences in the host country. Such a framework does not necessarily need to be taught in a formal training environment (e.g. cultural assimilator); it can also take place in the form of an informal briefing, such as information booklets or conversations with other expatriates. The sixth form of training is Experiential training that enables the expatriate to develop the necessary skills to work and interact effectively with the host country national workforce. This type could include role-playing and look-see visits, so that the expatriate can visit the country of assignment before being relocated there.

Cross-cultural training before departure could help set realistic expectations, increasing the likelihood that these expectations will be met during the assignment (Littrell et al., 2006). Caligiuri, Phillips, Lazarova, Tarique and Burgi (2001) found that tailored and relevant cross-cultural training created accurate expectations prior to the assignment, which then promoted adjustment after arrival. An interesting example of setting expectations is a predeparture training given to Swedish expatriates who were about to embark to Saudi-Arabia (Grove & Torbiörn, 1985). The participants were told how extremely difficult the
assignment was going to be, and in the end the group had very few premature returns or problems during the sojourn. This might be an example of setting realistic expectations, although it remains to be seen how much of this effect is due to the predeparture training, and how much to the excellent expatriate compensation package that was provided (Grove & Torbiörn, 1985). Timing of the training is important as well. Nowadays, the focus on predeparture training is shifting towards post-departure training (Selmer, 2001), because there is increasing awareness that it is also important to offer help to the expatriate when he or she is actually abroad (Selmer, Torbiörn, & De Leon, 1998).

Not every expatriate, however, receives cross-cultural training. Even though 83% of the respondents of the 2010 Global Relocation Trends Survey (Brookfield Global Relocation Services, 2010b) believe in the value of cross-cultural preparation, only 27% of the companies offered it for all their assignments in 2009 (against 35% in 2008). More than half of the organisations (53%) offered cross-cultural training for certain assignments only, and in 57% of these cases the decision whether to offer it depended on the destination country. In addition to face-to-face programmes, 35% of the companies surveyed in 2009 also offered media and web based programmes (Brookfield Global Relocation Services, 2010b). When cross-cultural preparation was offered, almost all programmes were also targeted at the spouse and even the entire family.

The figures above show that in spite of a belief in the added value of cross-cultural training by a large group of respondents, this is not always realised in practice by offering those programmes to assignees. Littrell et al. (2006) cite a number of reasons why companies hesitate to implement cross-cultural preparation for their expatriates, the first one being that companies are still not convinced of the effectiveness of such training. This is not in line with the positive view of the respondents of the Brookfield survey (2010b), and therefore other reasons for not offering cross-cultural training might be more important nowadays. As was touched upon in section 1.2.1, technical competence is still a very important selection criterion, and if one believes that this is the main determinant of success, one is not likely to spend money on an expensive cross-cultural preparation programme; nor does one do so when one thinks that well-functioning employees are effective no matter where they are located. Yet omitting cross-cultural training when expatriates are sent to psychically nearby countries might be counterproductive in the light of the psychic distance paradox (O’Grady & Lane, 1996) (see 1.1.1). The cost of the programmes in itself is also a motive for ignoring cross-cultural preparation. Furthermore, the time between selection and departure is sometimes too short to allow cross-cultural training to take place (Littrell et al., 2006).

1.2.3 Sojourn: new country, new culture

Adjustment to life in the new country is essential when moving abroad because it affects the success of the international assignment (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005). A survey
conducted by the Economist Intelligence Unit (2010) reports that inability to understand the local culture is seen as one of the greatest difficulties. This has a negative impact on expatriate performance (Andreason, 2003). Adjustment to life in a new country is important not only for the expatriate, but also for the partner and children, because their attitudes and behaviours might influence those of the expatriate (Takeuchi, Yun, & Tesluk, 2002). If the partner is unhappy and wants to return home, this might push the expatriate into deciding to return home early. Spouse or family adjustment is often listed as one of the most important non-work factors that impact on adjustment (Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991; Shaffer & Harrison, 2001). The case of dual-career couples is even more complicated because the partner has to give up his or her career to move abroad for the career of the expatriate. It is generally not easy to find a job abroad for partners, especially to find one that fits within their career prospects. These partners might struggle with feelings of loss of self-esteem and worth because they are at home and not working.

Depending on the country of assignment, one might have to get used to a different standard of living and different living conditions, which also have an impact on adjustment, especially if one has fewer resources in the host country than one has in the home country (Harrison, Shaffer, & Bhaskar-Shrinivas, 2004). The Economist Intelligence Unit survey (2010) indicates that 10% of the respondents think that “inadequate standard of living or quality of life” is a problem for expatriates. Another aspect of settling into a new country is whether one speaks the local language (Suutari & Brewster, 1998). Inability to speak the local language might lead to important problems according to 33% of the respondents of the Economist Intelligence Unit survey (2010), and Selmer (2006) shows that the ability to speak the host language could facilitate interaction adjustment to the host country. According to Oberg (1960, p. 182) learning the local language is a key to recover from “culture shock” as quickly as possible, because it facilitates getting to know the people of the host country. Furthermore there are the many practical issues to arrange upon arrival, such as housing, insurances and school for the children. Companies can hire relocation agencies to help arrange all these logistical issues; larger companies such as Shell offer extended support through their own relocation office (e.g. Shell Outpost). Although logistical support during the sojourn has been found to impact on adjustment (Harrison et al., 2004), many expatriates have to deal with these issues by themselves, especially if they have relocated abroad on their own initiative. As the expatriate jumps right into the new job, many of these tasks become the burden of the partner.

The expatriate also needs to adjust to a new job and a different company culture. According to The Economist Intelligence Unit (2010), 42% of respondents thought “different working styles and office norms” presented great difficulties for expatriates. Expatriates face a loss of daily routines in their new job, and “the greater the degree of discontinuity, the greater difficulty the employee will have making the adjustment” (Feldman & Tompson, 1993, p. 513). Harrison et al. (2004, p. 226) have summarised the major job stressors on international assignments: lack of role clarity (unambiguous
conveyance and understanding of assignment requirements), lack of role discretion (decision-making autonomy), role conflict (incompatible cues regarding job expectations), and role novelty (differences between host and native country work roles). Expatriates who are sent from headquarters to a local subsidiary face the additional challenge of determining where their loyalty lies (Black, Gregersen, Mendenhall, & Stroh, 1999, p. 131; Van Oudenhoven, Van der Zee, & Van Kooten, 2001). They face different, sometimes contradictory, interests of headquarters and local subsidiary, for example when headquarters would like to standardise a product, whereas the local subsidiary would like to take specific wishes and needs of the local market into account (Reesink, 1997). This is supported by the Economist Intelligence Unit (2010) survey finding that 59% of the respondents think that headquarters “does not sufficiently grasp the nature of the local business environment”.

1.2.4 Return to home country

The final stage of the expatriate cycle is the return to the home country – repatriation or re-entry. Recently, there has been more and more interest for this neglected part of the expatriate cycle, although the challenges of re-adjustment to home were already recognised in the sixties (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963). This is also called reverse culture shock, extending the well-known U-curve (section 2.4.1) into a W-curve. Szkudlarek (2010) provides a comprehensive overview of the literature on re-entry, and discusses the main problems that returning individuals face. These problems will be briefly rendered here to complete the overview of the expatriate cycle (see Figure 1.1 on page 19). Szkudlarek’s review is not restricted to corporate expatriates, but also includes other repatriates such as spouses, students and missionaries.

A returning individual faces challenges because of unexpected difficulties, lack of preparation and regret for the lost expatriate life. These individuals often do not realise that home has changed during their absence. The expatriate has changed too, which might affect their cultural identity as well as their sense of belonging, a potential cause of difficulty in re-establishing themselves in the home country. Furthermore, during the assignment the expatriate has acquired a new set of behaviours, and upon return to the home country he or she has to relearn appropriate social skills for the home country, as well as familiarise him- or herself again with life at home.

Successful repatriation is important for companies to make sure that they benefit from the acquired knowledge and skills in the long term. The transfer of knowledge upon return is strategically important for the multinational enterprise as the expatriate has acquired specific knowledge about the local market environment (Szkudlarek, 2010). As many as 61% of repatriates, however, leave the company within two years after returning from their international assignment (Brookfield Global Relocation Services, 2010b). An important reason for this is a lack of career prospects. Although international experience is often cited
as an important requisite for top managers, international assignments are rarely part of career planning (Szkudlarek, 2010), and it is not uncommon that an expatriate returns to the home country without having a job waiting for him or her. Only 12% of the companies had a clear statement about the duties the expatriate would perform after returning from the international assignment (Brookfield Global Relocation Services, 2010b). To complicate matters further, when the expatriate is sent on an international assignment he or she is often “out of sight, out of mind” (Osland, 1995, p. 216), which makes it even more difficult to influence decision makers at headquarters and to find a suitable job upon return.

These high turnover rates might have additional impact as well because the knowledge and skills the expatriate acquired at the cost of the company could be benefiting a competitor instead (Lazarova & Caligiuri, 2001). Also, if many repatriates leave the company this is hardly encouraging for other employees to accept future international assignments (Reiche & Harzing, 2011), making the international selection process even more complicated.

1.3 Dealing with expatriate failure

At several points throughout the expatriate cycle (see Figure 1.1) difficulties could occur that hinder the success of an expatriate assignment and lead to additional costs for the organisation. The present section will show first in more detail that these barriers are not imaginary and indeed lead to expatriate failure and extra costs (1.3.1). Then, the section will turn to ways to solve these difficulties, introducing the approach examined in this study – contact with a local host (1.3.2). The section finishes with an outline of the scope of this study (1.3.3).

1.3.1 Expatriate failure

The exact failure rates of expatriate assignments have been debated at some length (Forster, 1997; Harzing, 1995; Harzing & Christensen, 2004). In her review of expatriate failure rates, Harzing (1995) concludes that high expatriate failure rates are often reported, although there is not much empirical evidence for these assertions. She argues that if expatriate failure is conceptualised as early return, “we can state with some confidence that West European and notably British expatriate failure rates lie somewhere around 5% on average” (Harzing, 1995, p. 471). This is corroborated by the 7% premature return rate found in the 2010 Brookfield survey (2010b). Scullion (1999) reports even lower rates for the Irish companies in his study. Evidence from Rosalie Tung’s study, reported in several of her articles (e.g. Tung, 1987) indicate that the rate seems to be higher for American companies than for European and Japanese companies.

The percentage of expatriates that returns early from the assignment, however, gives an incomplete picture as it does not take underperformance into account. It can even be argued that expatriates who remain on their assignment while not performing to standard,
are more detrimental for the future business success of the company in the host country
than expatriates who return early (Harzing, 1995). When one takes this broader definition
of failure into account, figures range between 8% and 28% for British expatriates and their
partners (Forster, 1997, p. 430). Although these rates might be lower nowadays due to, for
example, increased experience with international operations, an international assignment
is still a job change across national borders that warrants as much research attention as
domestic turnover and performance management.

Unsuccessful expatriate assignments entail many direct and indirect costs, which are
usually larger than for turnover in a domestic context (Naumann, 1992). Section 1.1.4
showed the expense of sending expatriates abroad due to the extra ingredients of an
international compensation package (premiums, allowances and benefits) in addition to
base salary, and which are estimated to be between $150,000 to $300,000 (Peterson et al.,
1996). Also, the expense of cross-cultural preparation is wasted if the expatriate fails in his
or her assignment. A failed assignment also entails indirect costs for the company, such as
damage to the image of the company in the host country, which might be even more
important than the monetary expenses involved. As expatriates fulfil more and more
strategic roles, they can harm their company’s future global business if they are not
successful (Caligiuri, 2000b; Van der Bank & Rothmann, 2006). Naumann (1992, p. 500)
cites reduced productivity and efficiency, lost sales, market share and competitive position,
unstable corporate image, and tarnished corporate reputation as indirect costs at company
level. Expatriate failure not only leads to indirect costs for the company, but also to
consequences for the expatriate. A failed assignment can lead to disappointment, a loss of
self-esteem and self-confidence, and a loss of prestige for the expatriate (Black, Gregersen,
& Mendenhall, 1992; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Tung, 1987). In addition, a failed
assignment might impact on the relationship with host national colleagues of the expatriate,
which could present immediate difficulties for the next expatriate to step into the shoes of
the one who failed.

Even if an expatriate is up to the job, it might take time before he or she is able to meet
the company’s expectations, resulting in additional costs also known as “downtime costs”
(Black et al., 1992, p. 11). Expatriates rarely hit the ground running; they have to adjust not
only to new work roles but also to new living environments (Brewster, 1995a). The longer
it takes to reach proficiency, the greater the costs for the organisation (Pinder & Schroeder,
1987). The reduction of the “time to proficiency” is an additional motivation for companies
to prepare and manage their expatriate workforce so that they perform according to
standard as soon as possible.

1.3.2 A local host

The strategic role of expatriates, the high direct and indirect costs associated with expatriate
failure, and the importance of reducing time to reach proficiency, show that it is important
Challenges and rewards of expatriation to pay attention to all facets of the expatriate cycle. Carefully selected individuals who are well prepared for the challenges that lie ahead are more likely to take a shorter time to reach proficiency (Brewster, 1995a) and to function well throughout their assignment. Organisations might show support before, during and after the assignment through offering cross-cultural training, keeping in touch with the expatriate and assuring the expatriate they have a job after returning home. This support could help expatriates succeed in their assignment and retain their knowledge and skills for future benefit of the company.

A critical phase of the expatriate-cycle is the sojourn itself, when expatriates need to adjust to the new host culture because this is central and critical for expatriate assignments (Andreason, 2003; Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Forster, 2000). Pre-departure training sessions for the expatriate and the partner, or look-see visits to the host country before being sent abroad could offer help with problems caused by cultural differences. As was shown in section 1.2.2, many expatriates do not receive pre-departure cross-cultural training and for that reason much of the acquisition of culturally appropriate behaviours occurs in the host country itself: “The ‘trainers’ will be the host nationals themselves: and the venue for the training will be their daily interactions with their host national colleagues, neighbours, friends etc. The expatriates’ cultural swimming lessons [...] start in the host country’s deep end” (Caligiuri, 2000b, p. 64).

Contact with nationals of the host country could help to deal with difficulties associated with cross-cultural transition as they appear (Brewster & Pickard, 1994; Church, 1982; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Parker & McEvoy, 1993). Increased interaction with host nationals is another way to acquire skills (Ward, 2004, p. 189) and the present study aims to investigate whether facilitating interaction with host nationals through putting expatriates and their partners in touch with a local host would indeed help them to deal with the difficulties of the sojourn. The local host can be a family, a single person, a couple or two friends, with whom the expatriate and partner have contact on a regular basis (e.g. to go for a drink). The contact could offer help to the expatriate and partner in two ways. First, the host can help the expatriate and partner to learn about cultural rules and conventions of the host country. The more contact with host nationals, the sooner expatriates will learn new, appropriate behaviours (Black & Mendenhall, 1991). Second, a local host can provide social support when stress occurs due to cultural or non-cultural issues. Host nationals could be an essential source of support because of their familiarity with the local culture and environment (Wang, 2002). As such, this study examines a possible solution to difficulties experienced during the sojourn phase of the expatriate cycle (Figure 1.1 on page 19).

Black et al. (1999) argue that one of the strategies to maximise the chances of successful adjustment is to encourage host national employees as much as possible to provide support for the expatriate and his or her family. Systematically putting expatriates in touch with a local host fits in this perspective. Contact with a local host might be especially important for
assignments with high “communication toughness” (Black et al., 1992, p. 99), for example managerial assignments where expatriates have “greater frequency, intensity and variability of interpersonal interactions with host national stakeholders”, compared to technical assignments (Harrison et al., 2004, p. 206).

This study examines first whether putting expatriates in touch with a local host contributes to the success of the international assignment. Subsequently the research concentrates on how to improve such an intervention so that a local host can contribute optimally to expatriate success. As expatriate assignments between developed countries are studied here, the Netherlands is taken as host country for practical reasons, namely being the home country of the researcher. Interestingly, the recent Expat Explorer Survey (HSBC, 2010) shows that expatriates find it very difficult to make friends in the Netherlands. Europe in general is perceived as the most difficult region, but the Netherlands comes out at the bottom of the list with only 36% of expatriates finding it easy to make friends here (HSBC, 2010). This suggests that particularly expatriates in the Netherlands could use the help of a local host.

1.3.3 Scope of the study

Intercultural communication is at the heart of this interdisciplinary study that puts expatriates and partners in touch with a local host and examines the impact of this contact on the success of the international assignment. The present study integrated scientific literature on intercultural communication, international human resource management and cross-cultural psychology to form a comprehensive framework in order to examine the possible impact of a local host on the success of the expatriate assignment. In examining the effect of this intervention, the present study also has a practical orientation that fits well within the field of international human resource management. Organisations could use contact with a local host as a tool to support expatriates while they are on their international assignment.

Chapter 2 elaborates on what constitutes the success of an expatriate assignment and which factors determine this. Chapter 3 focuses on the benefits of contact with a local host, leading to three research questions. After outlining the quantitative and qualitative methodology used in this study in Chapter 4, in Chapters 5-7 I will examine whether putting expatriates in touch with a local host helped the success of the international assignment and how the impact of a local host can be maximised. Chapter 8 will then give conclusions with regard to the benefits of contact with a local host and describe how to improve this intervention. This dissertation ends with an overview of practical recommendations to enhance the success of the expatriate assignment through contact with host nationals not only for organisations that employ expatriates, but also for expatriates and partners themselves (Chapter 9).
Chapter 2

Determinants of expatriate success
adjustment

Chapter 2

Chapter 2
Determinants of expatriate success

This chapter will have a closer look at what the success of an expatriate assignment entails (2.1), to which end the concepts of job performance (2.2) and cross-cultural adjustment (2.3) are described. Chapter 2 also discusses several models that outline the determinants of expatriate success (2.4) and finishes with an overview of possible adjustment outcomes (2.5).

2.1 Expatriate success defined

Even though expatriates comprise only a small part of the multinational enterprise workforce, they are a very important group because of their strategic importance for the organisation and their high cost, and this is especially relevant if they do not succeed. For this reason, it is important to gain insight into the determinants of expatriate success or failure.

A move to another country – as does any job move – generates stress that might affect both the professional and personal life of the expatriate if the level of stress becomes too high (Forster, 1997). Moreover, an international assignment is an important life change with an intercultural component (Ward et al., 2001), and cultural differences seem to be an important source of problems for expatriates (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005). Inability to adjust to life in the new country is a significant contributor to ineffective job performance and premature return (Andreason, 2003). After transition to a foreign country, expatriates enter an unfamiliar environment with which they have to become familiar in order to be able to function well. As early as 1960 Oberg (1960, p. 180) states that “until an individual has achieved a satisfactory adjustment he is not able to fully play his part on the job or as a member of the community”. As Wang (2002, p. 333) puts it: “it is obvious that if the expatriate can adjust to the local environment [...], he or she will be able to develop his or her full potential to perform well both technically and contextually”. Numerous studies confirm that the professional and private domain are linked and that cross-cultural adjustment is positively related to job performance or other work outcomes (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Caligiuri et al., 2001; Cui & Awa, 1992; Hechanova, Beehr, & Christiansen, 2003; Kraimer, Wayne, & Jaworski, 2001; Mol, Born, Willemsen et al., 2005; Tucker, Bonial, & Lahti, 2004).

Studies on the success of an international assignment, also called expatriate effectiveness, often focus only on cross-cultural adjustment, and not job performance. Such studies usually assume that adjustment has an impact on expatriate job performance instead of empirically investigating this (Mol, Born, & Van der Molen, 2005). Since, from the point of view of the sending organisation, optimal job performance of the expatriate is the ultimate goal of the international assignment, it is important to include performance measures in
research examining the determinants of successful expatriate assignments (Mol, Born, & Van der Molen, 2005).

Although job performance should be a central concept in research on the success of expatriate assignments, it should not be the only aspect taken into account. Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al. (2005, p. 271) emphasise the “centrality and criticality” of expatriate adjustment for successful expatriate assignments, based on their meta-analysis of 66 studies. Adjustment is not only necessary in the workplace, but also in private life. Since these two domains are neither isolated nor independent of each other, spill-over might occur (Takeuchi et al., 2002). It is therefore important to include both cross-cultural adjustment and job performance in studies concentrating on how to increase the success of expatriate assignments. In sections 2.2 and 2.3, these two concepts will be elaborated.

2.2 Performance

The present section first reviews job performance in a domestic setting (2.2.1), for which a wide base of literature is available. It then discusses job performance in the context of an expatriate assignment (2.2.2).

2.2.1 Job performance in a domestic setting

For an organisation to survive and realise its goals, it is important that its employees have a reasonable level of job performance. Job performance is a set of behaviours that is relevant for the aims of the organisation (Campbell, 1990). It is a central concept in Human Resource Management (HRM) literature: the aim of selection procedures is to predict performance, while other organisational interventions are implemented to measure or improve job performance (Ones & Viswesvaran, 1997). The criterion of job performance, however, has not been conceptualised structurally neither in domestic HRM nor in international HRM (Spector, 2000).

Job performance can only be attained when two requirements are met: 1. the employee needs to have the necessary ability, and 2. the employee needs to be motivated to do his or her job well. Constraints such as organisational practices and job conditions can either stimulate or hinder job performance (Spector, 2000). This model is shown in figure 2.1.

![Figure 2.1 Requirements and constraints of job performance (Spector, 2000, p. 224)](image)
Although ability and motivation are two separate concepts contributing to job performance, their effect is often mixed to the degree that it is impossible to define clearly which concept has led to which effect on job performance (Spector, 2000). Ability is described by the knowledge, skills, ability and other personal characteristics (KSAOs) that are necessary for the job. This is where selection and training play a key role. Motivation can be intrinsic as well as extrinsic. In the first case the motivation lies within the person and should therefore be an important element in the selection process when organisations want to stimulate the motivation of their employees. Extrinsic motivation could be influenced through enhancing environmental conditions such as incentive systems or structure of jobs (Spector, 2000).

There are two basic methods for assessing job performance. Objective measures result from companies tracking the behaviour of employees, such as turnover and absenteeism. Subjective measures are based on ratings by supervisors or other people who should have an overview of what the job entails and the job performance in question (Spector, 2000). Both methods have their advantages and disadvantages. For example, an objective measure such as the number of sick days is not always appropriate for all jobs, and it is sometimes unclear where the threshold lies that indicates satisfactory job performance. Therefore, companies generally use subjective measures to assess the performance of their employees. For managers 360 degree feedback has become a frequently proposed measure to evaluate performance from more than one perspective – not only from the perspective of the supervisor, but also from that of peers and subordinates (Spector, 2000). In addition, a multiple perspective evaluation will reduce the rating biases and rating errors that every individual makes almost unavoidably.

In order to assess job performance it is important to have sound criteria against which to judge the performance (Spector, 2000). For example, a good weather forecaster should predict the weather accurately, and to assess his job performance one can compare his predictions to the actual weather. This is an example of a theoretical criterion – accurate predictions – that is operationalised by an actual criterion – the comparison of the predictions with the weather. When designing criteria for job performance, it is important that the actual criterion does not cover only part of the theoretical criterion (which is called criterion deficiency), that it does not cover other elements than that it was designed to measure (criterion contamination) and that the actual criterion measures what it is supposed to measure (criterion relevance) (Spector, 2000, p. 79). Job performance can be assessed as a whole, but when a job comprises multiple functions it is advisable to develop several criteria for individual tasks. Taking into account that most tasks can be evaluated from several perspectives, this means that criteria can become very complex, making domestic job performance appraisal more difficult.
2.2.2 Job performance on an international assignment

A change of jobs brings about uncertainty and ambiguity, even when this occurs in the same country, or in the same city or company. When the job change includes a different country, a level of complexity is added because most domestic relocations do not involve major changes in the nonwork environment (Black et al., 1991). Factors such as cultural differences come into play. These circumstances add to the constraints that can hinder – or stimulate – job performance, as shown in the model in Figure 2.1 (Spector, 2000). Transition to a new country for a job can be classified as a job stressor, which is a condition or situation at work that requires an adaptive response on the part of the employee (Spector, 2000, p. 258). Stressors can lead to job strains, which is a potential aversive reaction of an employee to a stressor. A job strain can be physical (e.g. headaches), psychological (e.g. anxiety) and behavioural (e.g. substance use) in nature (Spector, 2000, p. 258). For these reasons, expatriates might have a harder time performing well on their international assignment (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005).

For companies it is more difficult to determine performance on international assignments than in the domestic context “owing to the subjectivity and the diversity of environments, both external as well as internal” (Harvey & Moeller, 2009, p. 283). Harvey and Moeller (2009) advocate a separate performance appraisal process for expatriate assignments for several reasons. First, when organisations employ expatriates from several nationalities those expatriates might be more diverse than domestic employees. The performance appraisal process should take this diversity into account. Second, it often occurs that expatriate performance is influenced by events in the external environment that are beyond the control of the manager. A third reason for a separate performance appraisal for expatriates is that the raters might not be able to provide fair assessments of expatriate performance if they are not familiar with the unique aspects of expatriate assignments. Fourth, differences between domestic headquarters and international subsidiaries, such as different goals and strategies, might influence performance appraisal as well. A fifth reason is that expatriate performance appraisals are usually not comparable to domestic ones, and for that reason standardised performance appraisals do not apply. Finally, Harvey and Moeller (2009) cite time, cost and distance issues, and the need for information to develop expatriate managers and thereby improve expatriate performance as reasons to create a separate international performance appraisal process.

Some of these reasons also make it more difficult for researchers to study expatriate job performance. Performance management systems at headquarters are often not applicable to the specific expatriate’s environment; supervisors might be too far away to be able to evaluate expatriate performance, or there might be other practical constraints. In addition, it is also possible that there are cultural differences in performance assessment. Abe and Wiseman (1983, p. 62) found, for example, that Japanese and Americans had different

When examining the criteria used in the expatriation literature, an objective criterion that has been very popular is *early return* from the assignment, which pertains to behavioural job strains; however, it sheds only a limited light on the actual performance of the expatriate because it only takes into account extreme cases (Shaffer & Harrison, 1998). The performance criterion “early return” suffers from criterion deficiency: it does not cover adequately the entire theoretical criterion because it leaves out the situation in which an expatriate remains on the assignment but does not function well. There are other criteria to be considered, such as low performance, which can entail both direct and indirect costs as well, for example through damage to the relations with the customers in the host country. Harzing (1995) advocates the view that these assignments should be counted as failure as well.

Criteria that aim to sample more accurately the whole concept of job performance focus on psychological job strains such as *psychological withdrawal*. Although these criteria do not measure actual turnover and are more subjective, they do include expatriates who do not function well but remain on their assignment. For example, Shaffer and Harrison (1998, p. 91) use “psychological withdrawal” (thoughts and plans to quit the assignment) as a criterion for the failure of an international assignment. Similarly, Caligiuri (2000a) and Garonzik, Brockner and Siegel (2000) use the term “desire to prematurely terminate the assignment”. Other criteria that have been used to measure expatriate job performance are more positive concepts such as adjustment and job attitudes, such as commitment and job satisfaction (Thomas & Lazarova, 2006).

Mol et al. (2005, p. 343) are much more rigorous and dismiss many of these criteria “because evidently they do not sample performance nor are they perceived to be valuable by organisational constituencies”. They state that a measure of expatriate job performance should reflect behaviours that are relevant to the organisation’s goals, and that variables that are measured thus far could be used as potential mediators between their predictors and actual expatriate job performance.

In short, the international context of expatriate assignments presents additional complications to the already complex subject of domestic performance appraisal, for organisations and researchers alike. In studies of expatriate effectiveness it is important to go beyond the criterion of early return to assess expatriate job performance more accurately, even though practical considerations might constrain the opportunities to do so.

## 2.3 Cross-cultural adjustment

Chapter 1 discussed the crucial role of adjustment to a new culture for the success of an international assignment: but what is culture? The present section will outline briefly the main definitions and theories of culture (2.3.1). As the present study examines a specific
way to facilitate life in a new country, the section then continues with some definitions of
the key concept of cross-cultural adjustment, a concept that is often also called adjustment,
adaptation or acculturation (2.3.2).

2.3.1 Culture

Definitions of culture
As early as the 1960s Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1963, p. 291) cited 164 definitions of culture –
close to 300 if additional definitions in footnotes etc. are counted as well – and conclude,
although avoiding a new formal definition, that:

“Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired
and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human
groups, including their embodiments in artefact; the essential core of culture
consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially
their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as
products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of further action”
(Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1963, p. 357).

In a more concise way, Bennett and Castiglioni (2004, p. 251) present a typical definition
that is found in both anthropology and intercultural communication: “the pattern of beliefs,
behaviours, and values maintained by groups of interacting people”. Probably the most
widely known definition of culture is by Hofstede (2001), one of the most influential social
psychologists in the study of cultural differences (Claes & Gerritsen, 2002, p. 44). He defines
culture as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one
group or category of people from another” (Hofstede, 2001, p. 9).

The anthropologist Edward T. Hall is seen as one of the founders of research into
intercultural communication (Claes & Gerritsen, 2002, p. 44). His definition of culture is
interesting because it shows why cultural differences might cause problems in intercultural
encounters. He states, when referring to culture: “those deep, common, unstated experiences
which members of a give culture share, communicate without knowing, and which form the
backdrop against which all other events are judged” (Hall, 1966, p. X). He posits that in
intercultural interactions, even though there can be many superficial similarities, numerous
differences exist on a deeper level which might lead to miscommunication. This idea has
been captured in the image of an iceberg, of which only 1/9 is visible, the rest being
concealed under water. Another often used graphic representation of culture is the onion
(Hofstede, 2001, p. 11) with four levels of culture from superficial symbols such as the flag
of a country, to deep and invisible values (Figure 2.2).

Values are the core of culture: a value is a “broad tendency to prefer certain states of
affairs over others” (Hofstede, 2001, p. 5). Symbols, heroes and rituals are together called
“practices”: they are visible to external observers, but their cultural meaning is invisible and depends on interpretation (Hofstede, 2001). When communicating with people from other cultures, as happens on a daily basis when working abroad, it is important to be aware that cultural differences – both on a superficial and on a deeper level – might play a role in everyday interactions.

![Figure 2.2 The “onion diagram” (Hofstede, 2001, p. 11)](image)

Theories of culture

Several disciplines, such as anthropology and psychology, have developed theories to explain the concept of culture. Social psychologist Geert Hofstede (e.g. 2001) has attained world fame with his four (and later five) dimensions of culture, based on extensive quantitative research within IBM. The dimensions of individualism/collectivism, power distance, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance and long term/short term orientation are familiar to most, if not all, of us, and are widely used in business and management studies (Schwartz, 2007).

Other scientists have designed theories too, with Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck being pioneers in this field (Claes & Gerritsen, 2002, p. 42). They defined six basic values regarding time, space, the relationship between humanity and its natural environment, the relationship with others, the prime motivation for behaviour and the nature of human beings, for which each culture has to choose between three possible orientations (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961). Another important research effort is the World Values Survey, “the world’s most comprehensive investigation of political and sociocultural change” according to their website (www.worldvaluessurvey.org). Ronald Inglehart is one of the principal investigators of this international network of social scientists, and has used the World Values Survey data to map countries on two particularly important dimensions of cultural variation out of the many that exist: 1. traditional vs. secular-rational dimension, and survival vs. self-expression dimension (e.g. Inglehart, 2007). These two dimensions explain more than 70 percent of the cross-national variance in a factor analysis of ten indicators, demonstrating the importance of these two dimensions.

Somewhat later than the initial formulation of the two dimensions by Inglehart, social
psychologist Shalom Schwartz (1997; 1999; 2007) theorised seven fundamental values that could be clustered around three fundamental problems faced by mankind:

1. Nature of the relationship between the individual and the group (intellectual or affective autonomy vs. embeddedness);
2. Preservation of social fabric (egalitarianism vs. hierarchy);
3. Relationship of people to their natural and social world (harmony vs. mastery).

A third discipline that has offered a theory of culture is the study of management. A renowned comprehensive study in this area is that of House and colleagues (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004), the Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness research programme (GLOBE). This study conceptualises nine core attributes of societal and organisational cultures: 1. uncertainty avoidance, 2. power distance, 3. institutional collectivism, 4. in-group collectivism, 5. gender egalitarianism, 6. assertiveness, 7. future orientation, 8. performance orientation and 9. humane orientation. GLOBE used the dimensions of Hofstede as theoretical input for their study (House et al., 2004, p. 13), which accounts for the similarity of both models.

Another well-known author in the management discipline is Fons Trompenaars (1993) who categorises fundamental problems mankind faces under three headings: 1. relationships with people, 2. attitudes to time, 3. attitudes to the environment. The first category contains five orientations with regard to how people behave towards each other: 1. universalism vs. particularism, 2. individualism vs. communitarianism, 3. neutral vs. emotional, 4. specific vs. diffuse, and 5. achievement vs. ascription. These dilemmas are solved differently in each culture, explaining cultural differences. Together with the other two categories they form the seven key dimensions of business behaviour.

Each of these theories has been criticised. Although acknowledging GLOBE as an impressive international research effort, Hofstede’s (2006) main criticism is that the questionnaire items, especially at the country level, do not capture completely what they are supposed to capture according to the researchers. In turn, Hofstede himself has also been criticised (e.g. Baskerville, 2003; McSweeney, 2002), although his model continues to be widely used, especially in business-related and sociological research (Baskerville, 2003). In addition, each of the disciplines criticises each other’s approach. For the anthropologist the reduction of cultural complexity to a couple of dimensions is not doing justice to the phenomenon. On the other hand, management experts prefer cultural dimensions over extensive anthropological descriptions, because these dimensions can be measured and used to analyse cultures in a systematic way.

Cultural boundaries
Cultures are often defined along national boundaries, indicated by someone’s nationality. The research of Hofstede and that of Schwartz are good examples. However, as Hofstede (1991, p. 23) remarks, the creation of nation states is a recent development in the history of mankind, while culture has been around for at least ten thousand years, if not longer. The
boundaries drawn by these nation states are not always identical to the cultural boundaries in that area. For example, regional differences often exist within a nation, and it is possible that one culture is located on two sides of a national border. An example of the last instance is Belgium, whose culture is in many respects similar to French culture, even the Flemish part (Claes & Gerritsen, 2002, p. 23). It is important to be careful when selecting a criterion to study culture, although employing the criterion of nationality is sometimes a matter of necessity or convenience as it is often the only kind of unit available for comparison (Hofstede, 2001, p. 73). In addition, anyone dealing with culture has to realise that within a given culture other cultures exist along the lines of gender, profession, social class, etc. (Claes & Gerritsen, 2002). All these cultural boundaries are not set in stone; cultures change and therefore people can not be put into the same category for all time. In the words of Berry (2004, p. 171): “[…] cultural boundaries, characteristics, and membership are in constant flux”.

2.3.2 Adjustment, adaptation and acculturation

The overview of definitions, theories and boundaries of culture in the previous section (2.3.1) shows that much work has been done over the years to grasp the nature of culture. Many of these theories are used in a more practical way to help prepare individuals who have to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds, whether as immigrants, tourists or international business people. All these groups need to adjust to a certain extent when they are faced with cultural differences, but what exactly is cross-cultural adjustment?

Adjustment, adaptation and acculturation are terms that are often used interchangeably in the literature on expatriate adjustment (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008; Searle & Ward, 1990; Thomas & Lazarova, 2006), and definitions abound. One uses these terms, generally, to indicate the “process and result of change induced in individuals by the move into an unfamiliar cultural environment” (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008, p. 326). Although many articles do not discriminate between these three terms, Harrison et al. (2004) stress the importance of distinguishing three concepts. They see acculturation and adaptation as a process and adjustment as a (psychological) state. Acculturation seems to be a term that is more often used in psychology, and Ward et al. (2001, p. 43) follow Redfield, Linton and Herskovits’s 1936 definition: “changes that occur as a result of sustained first hand contact between individuals of differing cultural origins”. This definition emphasises the dynamic nature of acculturation, which is why Harrison et al. (2004) classify acculturation as a process. Harrison et al. (2004) further distinguish acculturation from adaptation, seeing acculturation as broadly applicable in many contexts and as a two-way process, while adaptation focuses specifically on those who go abroad and who need to “alter their behaviours to achieve a degree of fit with different aspects of the environment” (Harrison et al., 2004, p. 210).
Haslberger and Brewster (2008) and Anderson (1994) also make a distinction between adjustment and adaptation, although each in a different way. Haslberger and Brewster (2008) see the distinction in the scale of the changes that need to be made, whereas Anderson (1994) separates adjustment and adaptation based on time frame. The former (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008) state that adjustment results in minor changes to cope with new situations, while adaptation is large-scale change and major realignment following a serious crisis, whereas Anderson (1994, p. 300) explains that adjustment refers to the satisfaction of short-term drives and adaptation pertains to “that which is valuable for (long-term) individual or racial survival”. It is open to question, however, whether adjustment and adaptation actually are two different concepts. According to Lazarus (1976, p. 3), the biological concept of adaptation was renamed adjustment by psychologists to emphasise the individual instead of the species. This suggests that adaptation and adjustment are similar concepts but applied to different levels of analysis: group vs. individual.

The literature also features numerous definitions that cover only one aspect of adjustment. Many authors focus on the affective aspect: according to Black and Gregersen (1991a, p. 498) adjustment is generally defined as “the degree of a person’s psychological comfort with various aspects of a new setting”. On the other hand, Briody & Chrisman (1991, p. 264) lean more toward the behavioural aspect and emphasise the importance of contact with host nationals in their definition of adaptation: “adjustment to a new cultural environment through involvement with individuals in that environment”. Interestingly, they use the term “adjustment” to define “adaptation” – to add to the confusion.

As confusion over terms remains, this study will use the most popular term of adjustment, using a definition similar to Haslberger and Brewster’s (2008, p. 326) summary of what all three concepts of adjustment, adaptation and acculturation are about: “the process and result of change induced in individuals by the move into an unfamiliar cultural environment”. This definition not only provides room for affective outcomes of cross-cultural transition such as psychological comfort, but also for behavioural and cognitive changes associated with such a transition (see also section 2.4.2).

2.4 Models of adjustment

Just as theories abound to classify cultures, many models attempt to describe the process through which sojourners adjust to a new foreign environment. To provide a historical context, this section will outline the classical model of culture shock (2.4.1), before highlighting the more contemporary and comprehensive “Model of the Acculturation Process” of Ward and colleagues (e.g. Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward et al., 2001), which takes affective, behavioural and cognitive elements of adjustment into account (2.4.2). This model is widely applicable to situations of intercultural contact and often used in psychology. Homing in on the expatriate context, section 2.4.3 offers more details on the most popular
model of adjustment in international HRM, the “Framework of International Adjustment” of Black and colleagues (e.g. Black, 1988; Black et al., 1991). While the Model of the Acculturation Process is helpful to guide research because it offers a broad overview of the process of cross-cultural transition, the Framework of International Adjustment is added because it focuses specifically on expatriates and adds organisational factors that might impact on expatriate adjustment. The section concludes with a model (Wang, 2002) that puts expatriate adjustment in a social network perspective, especially relevant for the present study that examines the possible impact of contact with a local host on expatriate success (2.4.4).

2.4.1 Culture shock

The earliest theories on intercultural contact came out of studies on mental health of migrants, focusing on the negative effects that were often experienced (Ward et al., 2001, p. 33). Studies on international students and their adjustment further propelled development of the field (Ward et al., 2001). An important, early concept is the U-curve, which consists of an initial “honeymoon” phase, a crisis which is often called “culture shock”, a transition stage where one starts to feel better again, and a final period of adjustment (Lysgaard, 1955; Oberg, 1960). Oberg (1960, p. 179) saw the whole process as an occupational disease, with the second stage of culture shock as the “crisis in the disease”. While these authors focused on the time abroad, Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) advocated an extension of this curve into a W-curve, taking into account the adjustment process upon return to the home country as well.

Black and Mendenhall (1991) reviewed the literature with regard to U-curve adjustment and concluded that there is only limited support for the model because the available studies lack methodological rigour. More importantly, they stated that the model lacked a theoretical framework, and for that reason in their article they underpinned culture shock theoretically from a social learning perspective, formulating a research agenda to guide research in this area. Some years later, Ward, Okura, Kennedy and Kojima (1998) “put the U-curve on trial” again in their longitudinal study of international students, and concluded that it was not present in the data. No evidence was found for a honeymoon phase; on the contrary, students experienced most distress at the beginning of their stay, but this decreased gradually over time.

Nowadays, models of adjustment have evolved from the “pseudo-medical” model of culture shock to models that emphasise learning experiences and management of stress-provoking life changes (Ward et al., 2001, p. 45). In their landmark book The Psychology of Culture Shock, Ward et al. (2001, p. 270) conceptualise the process of settling into a new country as a more “active process of dealing with change” and delineate affective, behavioural and cognitive components of this process, which will be the subject of the following section (2.4.2).
2.4.2 A Model of the Acculturation Process (Ward and colleagues)

The ABCs of the adjustment process

Ward et al. (2001, p. 47) distinguish affective, behavioural and cognitive aspects – the “ABCs of human interactions” – of the adjustment process and have used these concepts to organise theoretical approaches to culture shock. This contention is supported by Cox (2004, p. 204) who states that most theories of adjustment incorporate these three elements. Ward et al. (2001) discuss these three major theoretical approaches extensively, each emphasising different aspects of the adjustment process.

A model that treats the affective component of adjustment is the stress and coping framework. This model draws attention to the emotional impact of culture contact (Ward et al., 2001), and relies on adjustive resources such as social support, personality and knowledge and skills, which results in psychological adjustment (Ward et al., 2001). Many of the early, more medical, studies on adjustment can be put under the stress and coping heading (Ward et al., 2001). Behavioural models focus on the interaction processes during adjustment. Although encounters between persons from different cultural backgrounds, in principle, are not different from other social meetings, both participants might find that they lack sufficient social skills in this particular setting (Ward et al., 2001). Culture learning is the process whereby sojourners acquire culturally relevant social knowledge and skills in order to survive and thrive in their new society, so leading to sociocultural adjustment (Ward et al., 2001). These models became in vogue in the 1980s, when a sojourn abroad was perceived more and more as a learning experience instead of as an occupational disease. The cognitive view is a third approach that has been influential (Ward et al., 2001) and which focuses on cultural identity and intergroup relations. According to Ward et al. (2001, p. 46) the processes of psychological and sociocultural adjustment also entail changes in the cognitive domain. For example, the sojourner might interpret their intercultural experiences differently, or might experience a change in his or her cultural identity after being in the host country for a while.

A Model of the Acculturation Process

Ward et al. (2001, p. 42) observe that many of the existing models of adjustment have both an affective and a behavioural component, emphasising psychological well-being and satisfaction, as well as effective relationships with members of the new culture as important components of adjustment. In their book The Psychology of Culture Shock, Ward et al. (2001) introduce a model of the acculturation process that comprises affective, behavioural and cognitive elements (Figure 2.3), conceptualising cross-cultural transition as “a significant life event involving unaccustomed changes and new forms of intercultural contact” (Ward et al., 2001, p. 43).

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The authors spell “sociocultural adjustment” without hyphen, and for that reason, this spelling has been used throughout this dissertation. The same is applicable for “openmindedness” (section 3.3.3).
The Model of the Acculturation Process is widely applicable to situations of intercultural contact – not only for expatriates but also, for example, for immigrants. Especially in the initial stages of the transition an individual might experience stress and realise that he or she has insufficient skills to deal with the new situation. “Individuals are seldom equipped, at least in the earliest stages of transition, to manage or cope effectively with a broad spectrum of demanding situations and novel and unfamiliar patterns of social interaction” (Ward et al., 2001, p. 43). The individual needs to deal with these situations and can select affective, behavioural or cognitive responses. For example, he or she might choose to look for social support (affective), acquire social skills that are appropriate in the host country (behavioural), or change their perception of themselves or the new culture (cognitive). These responses lead to intercultural adjustment, which may be divided into psychological and sociocultural component, originally conceptualised by Searle and Ward (1990) based on a review of the literature. Psychological adjustment comprises “feelings of well-being
and satisfaction”, whereas sociocultural adjustment is the “ability to ‘fit in’ and negotiate interactive aspects of the new culture” (Searle & Ward, 1990, p. 450). This distinction offers a “fairly comprehensive yet parsimonious overview of intercultural outcomes” (Ward et al., 2001, p. 42). This process of acculturation is influenced by individual level variables and societal level variables. The first group of variables could be further divided into characteristics of the person, such as personality and training and experience, and characteristics of the situation, such as social support and length of the cultural contact. Societal level variables include economical, political and cultural variables of both the country of origin and the country of settlement (Ward et al., 2001, p. 44).

The strength of the model is that it integrates stress and coping and culture learning perspectives, while also considering cognitive responses to stress experienced through intercultural contact. This model shows the various ways in which contact with host nationals might have an impact on the success of the international assignment. Host nationals could provide social support to the expatriate and partner, which might increase psychological adjustment (affective aspect). Also, contact with host nationals could help expatriates and partners to acquire the necessary social skills, stimulating sociocultural adjustment (behavioural aspect). Although stress and skills deficits call for affective, behavioural or cognitive responses the model only contains affective and behavioural outcomes, because Ward et al. (2001) contend that the cognitive aspect blends in with the affective and behavioural aspect. For that reason, although contact with host nationals might also affect the cognitive aspect of adjustment, the focus in this study will be on the impact on the affective and behavioural aspects. The possible impact of contact with host nationals is discussed in more detail in section 3.1.

Another strong point of the model is that it is not only applicable to expatriates, but also to many other situations of intercultural contact (e.g. immigrants, refugees or tourists). A disadvantage of such a broadly applicable model is that it does not focus specifically on transition to another country for work purposes, and that it does not specifically include work factors that might have an impact on expatriate adjustment. As the present study examines expatriates and their partners specifically, the next section (2.4.3) discusses a model that is explicitly designed for expatriates, and also highlights job factors that might affect adjustment during a cross-cultural transition.

2.4.3 Framework of International Adjustment (Black and colleagues)

The most important model of adjustment in international Human Resource Management is the Framework of International Adjustment (Black et al., 1991) that puts cross-cultural transition in the work-related context of an expatriate assignment. According to Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al. (2005, p. 257) this model is “the most influential and often-cited theoretical treatment of expatriate experiences”.

For their framework, Black et al. (1991) summarise both the international and the
domestic adjustment literature which led to a comprehensive model encompassing both anticipatory and in-country adjustment. They state that the literature on domestic transfers and adjustment to a new organisational setting is much richer than the specific international adjustment literature (Black, et al., 1991), and in order to theoretically underpin international relocation they draw on organisation socialisation literature, literature on career transitions and sense making in the adjustment process, work role transition literature and relocation literature. They argue that the international relocation process is similar in many respects to relocation in a domestic context, except for extra changes in the non-work context (Black, et al., 1991). This might result in new variables influencing the relocation process, as well as the possibility of different relationships among the variables.

Figure 2.4 on page 46 shows the Framework of International Adjustment (Black, et al., 1991, p. 303). Starting at the left side of the model, the concept of anticipatory adjustment focuses on the accuracy of expectations that expatriates have about the job, the organisational culture, host country nationals, the general culture and daily life in the foreign country (Black, et al., 1991, p. 305). Previous international experience could play an important role in forming these accurate expectations, especially if this experience has taken place in a country that is similar to the new host country. Also, cross-cultural training might create these accurate expectations. The framework also emphasises the importance of appropriate selection criteria and mechanisms. These factors either increase or reduce uncertainty, which then hinders or stimulates adjustment.

Factors that impact in-country adjustment can be divided into five types according to this model (Black, et al., 1991). The first type are individual factors, among which are self-efficacy, which is “the ability to believe in oneself and one’s ability to deal effectively with the foreign surroundings, even in the face of great uncertainty” (Black, et al., 1991, p. 307), relational skills that could increase useful feedback on one’s actions and perceptual skills that might help select appropriate behaviour in the host country. Second, job factors play a role. Greater role clarity and role discretion, which is the autonomy to adapt the new role to oneself instead of the other way around, reduce uncertainty and thereby stimulate adjustment. On the other hand, the amount of conflicting messages with regard to what the new role entails (role conflict) and the degree of role novelty might both increase uncertainty and make adjustment more difficult. Third, organisational culture factors are important for adjustment. The degree to which the organisational culture is new relates to the amount of uncertainty experienced and hence adjustment. Social support by colleagues and supervisors in the host country and logistical support offered at the beginning of the assignment could help reduce uncertainty and stimulate adjustment. The fourth type of factor is those of organisational socialisation, which include organisational socialisation tactics and content, and focus mainly on the impact on the mode of adjustment (see next paragraph). The final type of factor is non-work factors. Black et al. (1991) list cultural distance and family adjustment, which were treated more extensively in sections 1.1.1 and 1.2.3 respectively.
Figure 2.4 Framework of International Adjustment, adapted from Black et al. (1991, p. 303)

Numbers in parentheses indicate the numbered facet(s) of adjustment – General (1), Interaction (2), or Work Adjustment (3) – to which the specific variable is expected to relate.
These five types of factors affect the mode and degree of adjustment, terms that are borrowed from the work role transition literature. With the mode of adjustment, Black et al. (1991, p. 299) adopt Dawis and Lofquist’s (1984) distinction of an active mode when the expatriate changes the environment, and a reactive mode when the expatriate changes him- or herself. For example, the expatriate might be able to change his or her role in the organisation to fit his or her abilities more closely (active mode), or he or she might concentrate on learning about the host environment to be better able to function in it (reactive mode).

Degree of adjustment is also a concept from the work role transition literature and reflects "the gap between the extent to which the work environment meets the needs of the individual (termed satisfaction) plus the gap between the extent to which the individual’s abilities meet the demands of the work role (termed satisfactoriness)” (Black et al., 1991, p. 300). The individual is considered more adjusted the smaller the total gap is. In addition, Black et al. (1991, p. 304) state that adjustment is not a one-dimensional construct, but is composed of three facets – adjustment to the general environment (General Adjustment), adjustment to interacting with host nationals (Interaction Adjustment) and adjustment to work (Work Adjustment). The aforementioned different antecedents of adjustment are hypothesised to have different impacts on each facet of adjustment; for example, work-related antecedents such as role conflict would be most strongly related to Work Adjustment.

In the present study the model’s distinction of three facets of adjustment (General, Work and Interaction Adjustment) is adopted. This will be elaborated in section 2.5. When comparing these three facets of adjustment (see Figure 2.4) with the two outcomes of intercultural contact of Ward and colleagues (see Figure 2.3), the question arises what exactly is the nature of Black et al.’s three facets of adjustment. Are these more affective or behavioural in nature, or do they sample both affective and behavioural aspects of adjustment? The model is differently interpreted in the literature, because Harrison et al. (2004, p. 211) give affective definitions of General, Interaction, and Work Adjustment, while Ward et al. (2001, p. 42) put the model in the behavioural approach. Interestingly, in their article Black et al. (1991) do not specifically define international adjustment. In an earlier article in which General and Work Adjustment are first mentioned, Black (1988, p. 278) distinguishes “subjective” and “objective” adjustment. His definition of subjective adjustment – “degree of comfort the incumbent feels in the new role and the degree to which he or she feels adjusted to the role requirements” – suggests a more affective nature by emphasising the psychological comfort and the individual’s feeling of adjustment. His definition of objective adjustment has a more behavioural flavour in focusing on behaviours that would prove adjustment, the “degree to which the person has mastered the role requirements and is able to demonstrate that adjustment via his or her performance” (Black, 1988, p. 278). Although the Framework of International Adjustment contains aspects from both approaches, such as organisational social support (affective) and
relational skills (behavioural), Black himself views adjustment as an affective phenomenon (Black, 1988; Black & Stephens, 1989, p. 530) and this impression is strengthened because the instrument to measure the three aspects, introduced in Black (1988), also seems to enquire into the feeling of adjustment to several facets of life in the host country.

Another shortcoming of the Framework of International Adjustment is that social support is only considered as a resource within the context of the organisation, while it could also be provided outside of the workplace, as by a local host. In general, research on expatriate adjustment often leaves the expatriate social network outside their scope, which is why we now turn to a model that explicitly takes the social environment into account. As Johnson, Kristof-Brown, Van Vianen, De Pater and Klein (2003, p. 277) state: “social ties can provide expats with information about the host country, relieve stress and anxiety, and improve communication with, and understanding of, host country nationals”. The social network of the expatriate is the more relevant here because the present study specifically aims to help expatriates and partners through adding a local host to their social network.

2.4.4 Expatriate adjustment from a social network perspective

Because the importance of the social network of expatriates was usually neglected in studies on expatriate adjustment, in 2002 Wang (2002) published an article specifically focusing on this aspect. Expatriates who move abroad leave part of their social network behind and consequently also many sources of social support. They need to address this issue to be able to cope effectively with the demands of the new environment. Wang (2002, p. 322) proposes that “social resources conveyed through expatriate social network channels will promote expatriate psychological well-being and thereby influence expatriate performance”. This ties in with the stress and coping model, which states that social support is an important resource for dealing with stress resulting from intercultural encounters. The model is depicted in Figure 2.5.

Wang (2002, p. 324) conceptualises a social network as a “finite set or sets of actors that are connected by one or more specific types of relational ties”, and focuses on the expatriate’s personal network, which is formed by “a focal actor (i.e. the expatriate) and a set of partners who have ties to the focal actor”. These ties are the vehicle for social support. Social networks might be characterised by size, diversity, density, closeness and frequency (Wang, 2002). Furthermore, the model contains cultural, organisational and individual factors, which might be moderated by the network characteristics of the expatriate. For example, the impact of role conflict and role novelty could be reduced if the expatriate has close and frequent ties with host nationals, because these will provide the expatriate with more confidence in the roles he or she has taken on (Wang, 2002). All these aspects have an impact on the expatriate’s psychological well-being, which is seen as an indicator of expatriate adjustment (Wang, 2002, p. 323), in line with the affective nature of the stress and coping model. Wang (2002) also includes expatriate performance in the model, and
hypothesises that the impact of cultural, organizational and individual factors on performance is mediated by psychological well-being.

When expatriates move abroad, there is a distance from their home network that necessitates forming a new social network in the host country, so that they may access social support to reduce the stress experienced after cross-cultural transition. Wang’s framework (2002) highlights the possible contribution of a local host: a host could increase the size and diversity of the social network and contribute to the overall closeness if the tie develops into high quality contact. In such a case there could be more opportunities for the host to offer social support, especially if the expatriate meets his or her host frequently. Another strong point of Wang’s social network model is that it does not stop at adjustment or psychological well-being as outcomes, as is the case in the model of Ward and colleagues and that of Black and colleagues, but also includes expatriate performance as the ultimate criterion.

2.5 Dimensions of adjustment

The models presented in section 2.4 provide an overview of what happens when individuals relocate abroad, and which factors determine their adjustment to life in the new country. In terms of outcomes, both the acculturation literature and the expatriation literature conceptualise adjustment as a multidimensional concept, composed of several dimensions. The Framework of International Adjustment of Black and colleagues (e.g. Black, 1988;
Black et al., 1991), which is the most used in international Human Resource Management, contains three dimensions: General Adjustment, Interaction Adjustment and Work Adjustment. This model has been tested in a number of studies, resulting in the firm establishment of these three dimensions. The model, however, has also received some criticism, notably with regard to conceptualisation and the actual items of the measuring instrument. Thomas and Lazarova (2006, p. 251) list a number of criticisms raised in the literature, for instance, that the items in the General Adjustment scale are disproportionate to the Work and Interaction scales, and that in some aspects the categories overlap and might not be exhaustive. Hippler (2006) traced back the origins of the 14 items to assess whether these items reflect the most salient or important aspects of the expatriates’ host environment and concluded that the selection of at least some items seems to be “somewhat arbitrary” (p. 66).

The Model of Acculturation of Ward and colleagues (Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward et al., 2001) distinguishes between Psychological and Sociocultural Adjustment as outcomes. Searle and Ward (1990) reviewed two decades of publications on the contact between expatriates, immigrants, refugees and sojourners with the host culture and the subsequent effect that it had on their adjustment. On the basis of this review, they proposed the distinction between Psychological and Sociocultural Adjustment in order to distinguish between the “feelings of well-being and satisfaction” and the “ability to ‘fit in’ and negotiate interactive aspects of the new culture” (Searle & Ward, 1990, p. 450). These two facets are widely used in acculturation research, but are not as popular as the model of Black and colleagues in expatriation literature (Thomas & Lazarova, 2006, p. 251).

Although the distinction between Psychological Adjustment and Sociocultural Adjustment is theoretically sounder than that between General, Interaction and Work Adjustment, Thomas and Lazarova (2006, p. 252) identify some limitations, such as the actual measurement of Psychological and Sociocultural Adjustment. For example, Ward and colleagues conceptualise Psychological Adjustment as well-being and satisfaction, but measure it through an established depression inventory. In order to explain why some studies do not find a separate set of predictors for each type of adjustment, as originally proposed by Ward and colleagues (e.g. Searle & Ward, 1990), Oguri and Gudykunst (2002) suggest that it makes a difference whether Psychological Adjustment is measured in a negative way (as depression) or in a positive way (as satisfaction). For example, the predictor “host language fluency” is related to Psychological Adjustment only when it is conceptualised in a positive way (satisfaction) and not when it is measured as depression (Oguri & Gudykunst, 2002, p. 592).

Thomas and Lazarova (2006, p. 252) conclude in their review of expatriate adjustment and performance that both models contain useful aspects and insights for the study of adjustment. For that reason, the present study uses both models to complement each other, conceptualising Psychological Adjustment in a positive way because this resonates well
The present chapter gave an overview of the determinants of successful expatriate assignments. The two main models of the adjustment process, that of Ward and colleagues (e.g. Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward et al., 2001) and that of Black and colleagues (e.g. Black, 1988; Black et al., 1991), have been briefly described. A third model (Wang, 2002), focusing on the social network of the expatriate, was presented to add this often forgotten aspect to the study of the adjustment process, especially relevant in a study in which expatriates were put in touch with a local host, which might enlarge their social network. Chapter 3 will outline more specifically the possible contributions of a local host to the success of the international assignment, formulate hypotheses with regard to the impact of a local host on the success of the international assignment and explore how the impact could be maximised.
Chapter 3

Possible benefits of contact with a local host

Research questions and hypotheses
Chapter 3

host
contact
expatriates
nationals
local
communication
research
quality
support
mentoring
mentors
new
life
attitude
partner
international
adjustment
learning
role
students
assignment
relationship
competence
present
question
important
assignment
research
quality
skills
well
found
country
study
knowledge
success
high
example
impact
friends
partners
also
mentoring
intercultural
expertise
expatriate
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Possible benefits of contact with a local host: research questions and hypotheses

The previous chapters showed the importance of successful expatriate assignments and ways to influence adjustment and performance in order to increase the chance that companies reach their goal in sending expatriates abroad. It is equally crucial for the expatriates themselves to function well and to be able to manage life in a new country. The present chapter outlines the importance of contact with host nationals and the ways in which such contact can contribute to the success of the expatriate assignment (3.1). The reality of expatriate life shows that it is not always easy to get in touch with host nationals and for that reason the present study tests whether putting expatriates in touch with a local host can help (3.2). The chapter continues with formulating research questions and hypotheses with regard to the effect of contact with a local host (3.3), the importance of the quality of the contact (3.4), and the development of the contact (3.5). Together, these sections outline the framework of the present study.

3.1 Benefits of contact with host nationals

“What can you do to get over culture shock as quickly as possible? The answer is to get to know the people of the host country” (Oberg, 1960, p. 182).

Ward et al. (2001, p. 43) consider a cross-cultural transition as a significant life event that brings along new forms of intercultural contact. The new setting is unfamiliar and disrupts routines, creating psychological uncertainty that individuals strive to reduce as much as possible through various means (Black et al., 1991). One possibility is to get in touch with host nationals, which is a strategy that has been used by international students and expatriates with positive results.

Historically, international students have received much early research attention (Ward et al., 2001), and the literature about their adjustment is unequivocal in pointing to the importance of social interaction, and specifically of interaction with host nationals (Cushner & Karim, 2004). For example, Westwood and Barker (1990) show in their study that contact with host nationals is related positively to academic success and lower dropout rates. Similar results are found by Abe, Talbot and Geelhoed (1998), Trice (2004) and Ramsay, Jones and Barker (2007).

A number of studies have also shown that contact with host nationals plays an important role in the adjustment of expatriates, thereby contributing to the overall success of the international assignment. Furnham and Bochner (1986, p. 251) suggest that expatriates who have “some intimate contact” with host nationals seem to be more satisfied in their private and professional lives and are more successful than expatriates who do not have
this kind of contact. Brewster and Pickard (1994) state that a high level of interaction with host nationals is associated with easier adjustment to the new environment. Johnson et al. (2003) showed that the more contact expatriates have with host nationals the better they are adjusted to interaction with host nationals as well as to the workplace. Also, expatriates who receive a great variety of resources from host nationals (e.g. non-work information and social support) have better general adjustment. Similar results have been found by Black (1990), Briody and Chrisman (1991) and Searle and Ward (1990). The support of host nationals is also found to correlate positively with spousal adjustment (Shaffer, Harrison, Luk, & Gilley, 2000, p. 30) and spousal interaction adjustment (Black & Gregersen, 1991b), which in turn influences positively expatriate adjustment (Takeuchi et al., 2002). These studies show that interaction with host nationals can be related to the success of the international assignment.

Section 2.4 listed briefly two psychological models, the stress and coping model and the culture learning model, that describe the ways to deal with the new situation. The stress and coping model focuses on, among other things, the importance of social support for psychological adjustment (Ward et al., 2001), whereas the culture learning model contends that contact with host nationals can help expatriates to learn about cultural rules and conventions and result in a smoother sociocultural adjustment (Ward et al., 2001). This distinction is made in other disciplines as well, for example in Human Resource Development (Osman-Gani & Rockstuhl, 2008). The role of contact with host nationals in both psychological models is discussed in section 3.1.1 and 3.1.2.

3.1.1 Stress and Coping Theory

Informal relationships play an important role as expatriates and their partners cope with the problems they face on their international assignment (e.g. Briody & Chrisman, 1991; Copeland & Norell, 2002). The stress and coping model focuses on the importance of life changes during cross-cultural transitions, the appraisal of these changes and the selection and implementation of coping strategies to deal with them (Ward et al., 2001). Resources such as social support and social skills could help a person to cope effectively with the difficult demands of an international assignment (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Following Albrecht and Adelman (1987a, p. 19) social support is defined as “verbal and nonverbal communication between recipients and providers that reduces uncertainty about the situation, the self, the other, or the relationship, and functions to enhance a perception of personal control in one’s life experience”. Social support can consist of giving care, love, information, technical assistance and tangible help (Wang, 2002).

The fact that expatriates inevitably leave behind a great part of their social network, and consequently their sources of social support, when they move to another culture is a complicating factor (Copeland & Norell, 2002; Fontaine, 1986; Wang, 2002). Fischer and Phillips (1982) found that geographical relocation leads to social isolation and loneliness
in the first year after relocation. Although times have changed since the nineteen-eighties – it has become much easier to stay in contact with friends and family via internet (Farh, Bartol, Shapiro, & Shin, 2010) – expatriates and their partners have fewer people available to provide support when undergoing adjustment to a new culture than they would have had in their home country (Adelman, 1988).

A life stressor such as moving increases the need for support while often limiting the number of people one can turn to for support (Leatham & Duck, 1990). Ryan, Sales, Tilki and Siara (2008) show that social networks are crucial in the management of cross-cultural transition because they allow an expatriate to access social support, which is related positively to the success of the international assignment (Aycan & Kanungo, 1997; Black et al., 1992; Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2002; Ramsay et al., 2007). For example, according to Copeland and Norell (2002) women with higher adjustment lost fewer friends and had access to more types of social support, such as emotional support and social companionship. As the social support network in their home country is less readily accessible for expatriates they need to locate and draw on sources of support in the host country. As with international students (Bochner, McLeod, & Lin, 1977), three sources are available to the expatriate: 1. co-nationals, 2. host country nationals (host nationals, in short) and 3. expatriates from other nationalities. Copeland and Norell (2002) show that women who receive most of their social support in their host country – either from fellow expatriates or host nationals – have a higher adjustment than those who receive the greater part of their support from family and friends in their home country. For these reasons, it is important for expatriates to establish a new social network in the host country. Host nationals, whether at work or elsewhere, can offer social support that could help coping with the stress that is caused by the transition to a new country both in professional and in private life. Social support from host nationals might have an impact on psychological adjustment.

3.1.2 Culture Learning Theory

Apart from being a possible source of social support, host nationals are also an important source of information about the host culture (Johnson et al., 2003). Culture learning is “the process whereby sojourners acquire culturally relevant social knowledge and skills in order to survive and thrive in their new society” (Ward et al., 2001, p. 51). Social rules tend to operate below the level of consciousness (Ward et al., 2001): breaking such rules can make them apparent, but these rules can also become clear by observing host nationals and discussing the observations. For that reason, host nationals might play an important role in culture learning since contact with them could give room for such discussions. Caligiuri and Lazarova (2002) emphasise the importance of social interaction in their model of female expatriates’ cross-cultural adjustment because the more interaction a female expatriate has with host nationals, the more she learns culturally appropriate norms and behaviour. Interaction with host national colleagues seems especially relevant at the
beginning of the assignment when the expatriate enters a new organisational environment. Host nationals then function as socialising agents and offer, amongst other things, role information, which will affect the adjustment of the expatriate (Toh & DeNisi, 2007). Interaction with host nationals might also affect attitudes, according to the association hypothesis (Church, 1982). This hypothesis contends that more social interaction with host nationals leads to a more positive attitude towards them. Westwood and Barker (1990, p. 255) cite a number of studies that found support for this hypothesis.

Through contact with host nationals expatriates have the opportunity to learn about the host culture and acquire a more positive attitude towards them, which could have a positive impact on the sociocultural aspect of adjustment. The culture learning approach places intercultural interaction problems within the general literature on communication theory (Ward et al., 2001), with intercultural communication competence – usually composed of knowledge, attitude and skills – as the central concept (see 3.3.3).

3.1.3 Host Country Liaison Role

The previous two sections (3.1.1 and 3.1.2) show the role that contact with host nationals can play in the success of the expatriate assignment; this is not only important for expatriates themselves but also for the organisation that invests a great deal in sending them abroad. In addition, contacts with the local community could have other beneficial effects for the company. Au and Fukuda’s (2002) research on boundary spanning activities – the “amount of cross-boundary information that managers exchange” (Au & Fukuda, 2002, p. 286) – suggests that contacts with locals in general can be profitable for the multinational corporation. Vance, Vaiman and Andersen (2009) have called this the vital liaison role of host nationals for knowledge management within multinationals. They distinguish five roles that a Host Country National Liaison (HCNL) could perform that might be catalysts for knowledge transfer and promote overall effectiveness of the subsidiary.

First, a HCNL can be a Cultural Interpreter when clarifying communication and providing cultural guidance for both the expatriate and other host national employees, thereby supporting effective two-way knowledge transfer. In the second role as Communication Facilitator, the HNCL could remove barriers for communication flows within the foreign subsidiary as well as with the local external environment by promoting a general climate of trust and acting as an interpreter if the expatriate does not speak the local language. This way, essential information is more likely to reach the expatriate. Third, the HCNL can be an Information Resource Broker in providing the expatriate with a selection of the available information needed to make sound business decisions as well as formal and informal organisational knowledge. This HCNL-role is also important to ensure continuity by transmitting essential experience and knowledge when an expatriate is replaced. The fourth role is Talent Developer, in which the HCNL acts as trainer or on-the-job-coach for expatriates and other host national employees to stimulate and enhance knowledge transfer
and skill development. The final and fifth role is *Change Partner*, because a HCNL could be a credible communication source for host national colleagues about a change process, and at the same time stimulate openness to change amongst the local host national workforce (Vance et al., 2009).

These HCNL-roles promote the overall effectiveness of the subsidiary, but they also have consequences for the success of the expatriate assignment. Some of these roles, for example the *Cultural Interpreter* and *Talent Developer*, stimulate adjustment by enabling the expatriate to learn the appropriate norms and behaviours. All five HCNL roles contribute to the performance of expatriates by facilitating effective knowledge management, as Vance et al. (2009, p. 651) contend: “each of these components serves as a bridge for relaying critical knowledge and information between the expatriate and the local HCN employees as well as other factors in the host country environment”. According to Vance et al. (2009) this liaison role is vital because the expatriate is not the only player in knowledge management within multinational corporations: host nationals are a crucial source of knowledge and information in the local field.

Contact with host nationals has several advantages for expatriates on both a personal and a professional level by stimulating psychological and sociocultural adjustment, which in turn could have an impact on the performance of the expatriate. In addition, companies can improve their overall effectiveness if their expatriates communicate effectively with their host national colleagues, facilitating effective knowledge transfer. For these reasons, organisations should encourage their expatriates to get in touch with the locals.

### 3.2 Reality of expatriate life

Expatriates often find it difficult to make contact with host nationals:

> “Here in Holland, we’ve not been asked to do anything with anybody, even not with my colleagues”. [E26]

The Expat Explorer Survey (HSBC, 2010) highlights that, before the assignment, expatriates are mostly concerned about re-establishing a new life. Making new friends is an obvious solution, but this is not always easy. According to the survey, Europe is the hardest region in which to make friends, with Belgium, Switzerland, UK, Germany and the Netherlands as most difficult countries. Why do expatriates experience this problem and how can they solve it? That is the focus of this section.

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6 The source of each quote is indicated, where I = interview, DW4 = diary week 4, E = email, Q2 = questionnaire after five months and Q3 = questionnaire after nine months.
3.2.1 Pricking the expatriate bubble

When having moved abroad it is natural to look for support from other expatriates. They are the ones who have undergone the same experience and are able to help the newly arrived expatriate with all kinds of difficulties with which the expatriate is faced upon arrival, thereby “providing a safe bubble” (Geeraert, Demoulin, & Demes, 2008). The same is the case for new immigrants (Kim, 1987) and international students (Bochner et al., 1977; Furnham & Alibhai, 1985). Many expatriates gravitate towards co-nationals. Not only do they have the same experience, a network of co-national friends also functions to affirm and express the culture of origin (Bochner et al., 1977). In the case of international students Furnham and Alibhai (1985) found that 54% of their reported best friends were of the same, similar or neighbouring country. Brewster and Pickard (1994) found that 42% of spouses included scarcely any host nationals in their social activities. The Expatriate Explorer Survey (HSBC, 2010) found that 58% of expatriates were more likely to go out with expatriate friends rather than with local friends. In some countries, for example Qatar, Hong Kong and Saudi Arabia, this figure is much higher (up to 85% for Qatar).

Some expatriates feel very comfortable in this expatriate bubble and are reluctant to make contact with host nationals because these contacts are usually more stressful and uncertainty-prone than contacts with fellow-expatriates, and especially co-nationals with whom they share a cultural frame of reference as well as a language (Fontaine, 1996; Gudykunst, 1986; Kim, 1987). Furnham and Bochner (1982, p. 190) showed that establishing and maintaining personal relationships with host nationals were the most difficult social situations for international students.

The fact that in many locations around the world expatriates are surrounded by other expatriates, sometimes even living away from the local population in expatriate compounds, makes it more difficult to reach out to the people of the country in which they now live, even if they want to. Another reason why it is difficult for expatriates to make contact with host nationals could be that host nationals are part of an established circle of friends and consequently are not in search of new friends. Sovic (2009, p. 754) shows that this issue is highly relevant for international students in the UK, who find it difficult to “penetrate [...] already existing circles of English friends”. In addition cultural differences between host nationals and expatriates could complicate making contact: who should initiate the contact, who should issue the first invitation, and whom and when should one meet? One example of this sort of cultural difference is that many expatriates in the Netherlands expect to be invited for drinks or dinner by their colleagues; however, this is not usual in Dutch culture where there is a fairly strict boundary between work and private life. One of the expatriates in this study had this experience:

“[…] especially at the beginning, because the only people you know are the people you work with and you never get invited out with them. That’s just really… If you
didn’t know that was just part of the culture you would almost feel as ‘they must not like me’, ‘what I am doing wrong’ or… this is really jarring.”

For these reasons, it is not surprising that expatriates tend to receive more support from co-nationals than from host nationals (Johnson et al., 2003). Research shows, however, that it is essential to associate with host nationals as well. Kim (1987b, p. 201) shows that in the case of immigrants co-nationals play an important role in providing social support in the period just after arrival, but that this support is regarded as “either insignificant or dysfunctional” to adjustment in the long term. Parker and McEvoy (1993) and Geeraert et al. (2008) found a similar pattern for expatriates: any social support of expatriates has a positive impact on adjustment at the start, but a co-national expatriate bubble has a negative effect in the long run. Church (1982) argues that having only superficial contact with host nationals can also be less positive in the long run. Furthermore, Podsiadlowski, Spieß, Stroppa and Vauclair (2009) show that of the two sources of support available in the host country – support of host nationals and support of co-nationals – only support of host nationals was related positively to psychological well-being and overall satisfaction with the sojourn. Their finding that support from co-nationals was not related positively with these feelings lends support to the idea that it is important for an expatriate to establish a new social network in the host country by getting in touch with host nationals, and not just with expatriates of the same nationality.

3.2.2 A local host

The studies mentioned above indicate that contact with host nationals plays an important role in the adjustment of the expatriate because those host nationals are an important source of information about the host culture, its values, norms and communicative conventions (Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Kim, 1987). Host nationals might also offer social support at a time when this is lacking because of the transition to the new country (Ryan et al., 2008), and they play a pivotal role in effective knowledge management within the context of the workplace (Vance et al., 2009), which could improve expatriate performance.

Since it appears to be difficult for the expatriate and his or her partner to make contact with host nationals (Ryan et al., 2008), it is important to find ways to facilitate these contacts so that they do not confine themselves to expatriate gatherings and become less well-adapted in the long-term. The contact with host nationals does not develop by itself, as Olaniran (1993) showed for international students: those who stayed longer in the country did not have more contact with host nationals. Moreover, mere exposure to locals is not enough: Groeppel-Klein, Germelmann and Glaum (2010) found in the case of international students that the contact needed to be stimulated in order for positive effects to show.
Several authors point out the need for organisations to promote contact of their expatriates with host nationals (Black, 1990; Caligiuri, 2000b; Hechanova et al., 2003) and their suggestions range from installing mechanisms to develop friendships with host nationals to encouraging expatriates to live outside of the expatriate compound. Hechanova et al. (2003, p. 229) propose to provide the expatriate with a host national sponsor and, based on respondents’ suggestions, Olaniran (1993) recommends putting international students in touch with a host family. The present study has followed this line of reasoning. Whether putting expatriates and partners in touch with a local host has the effects that can be expected from contact with host nationals was examined in a field experiment, following the theory outlined in this chapter. According to McEvoy and Parker (1995), frequent interaction with locals might be “the key to appreciating the culture of the host country and, in turn, open the door to long-term adjustment of both the expatriates and their family”. Parallels can be drawn with on-site mentoring, peer-pairing programmes, post-departure training and host country national liaison roles, all of which are discussed in the present section.

On-site mentoring
A local host could be seen as a type of on-site mentor. Feldman and Bolino (1999) advocate that on-site mentoring should be studied more often, in addition to having a mentor back home. In general, mentors can help with career coaching and social support (Kram, 1985), which leads, among other things, to career advancement, job satisfaction, lower turnover intentions and work stress, increased work adjustment and organisational socialisation (Carraher, Sullivan, & Crocito, 2008). In the case of expatriates, on-site mentoring could also help them adjust to the new local environment and stimulate their organisational socialisation (Feldman & Bolino, 1999; Harvey, Buckley, Novicevic, & Wiese, 1999).

Although there are some similarities between an on-site mentor and a local host, as proposed in the present study, there are also some important differences. The main difference is that a mentor is usually someone within the same organisation, as is clear from Kram’s definition (1985): “mentors are individuals who support, guide and counsel less experienced colleagues in order to facilitate their career development”, whereas for several reasons the present study chose to put expatriates in touch with a local host outside the workplace. First, as was outlined in section 2.1, adjustment to working and living in a new country is important for the success of the international assignment. Where a mentor would specifically focus on the challenges at work, a local host outside the workplace can also support the expatriate with the difficulties that they experience in their personal life. This difference between a mentor and a local host is not clear-cut: mentors can also discuss personal difficulties that the mentee experiences, but the emphasis probably lies more on the professional sphere (Harvey et al., 1999). In the same way, an expatriate can also discuss situations at work with their local host. Second, contact with a local host could be beneficial for both expatriate and partner. The partner of the expatriate is very important for the
success of the international assignment and a local host outside the workplace is an intervention that targets partners as well as expatriates. Third, information of a sensitive nature exchanged between the expatriate and local host would not be able to find its way into the organisation, something that could potentially strain the relationship between them and reduce its impact.

A second difference between a traditional mentor and a local host is that a mentor is usually a person that is superior to the mentee in some way, whether in hierarchy or in experience. This element is also present in Kram's definition (1985) and is also very apparent in the definition of Harvey et al. (1999, p. 808): “one-to-one relationships between a mentor with advanced experience and knowledge and a protégé (mentee) with less experience and knowledge”. The conventionally defined mentor, however, is not the only relationship that might stimulate an employee's development. Kram and Isabella (1985) suggested that peer relationships have the potential to serve some of the same critical functions as mentoring relationships and that the lack of hierarchy might even make it easier to communicate and achieve mutual support and collaboration. Eby (1997) distinguishes two forms of the mentor–protégé relationship, namely hierarchical mentoring or lateral mentoring, which is also called peer mentoring. The latter type of mentoring can take place within one organisation, but also between individuals that work in different organisations. An example of lateral or peer mentoring is a “buddy”, something that Nigah, Davis and Hurrell (2010) conceptualise as a job resource that could help with the socialisation of newcomers in the organisation.

Where hierarchical mentoring offers vocational support as well as (certain aspects of) psychosocial support, peer mentoring is more appreciated as a source of psychosocial support, personal feedback and information in uncertain situations (Mezias & Scandura, 2005). For that reason, Mezias and Scandura (2005) suggest that informal peer mentoring relationships are more effective than formal, hierarchical relationships in dealing with on-site host country adjustment needs. A local host might be seen as a form of peer mentoring. Although the host has more experience living in the host country than the expatriate, a hierarchical element is absent. A local host may be seen as a buddy but outside the workplace, helping with socialisation in the new country as opposed to socialisation in the new organisation.

**Peer pairing programmes**

In schools and other settings peer pairing has been found an effective means to improve social interactions for various age groups (Mervis, 1998). Putting expatriates in touch with a local host is a form of peer pairing. Some studies have concentrated on the effectiveness of peer pairing programmes or other interventions to stimulate social ties for international students. Four are discussed here.

Westwood and Barker (1990) studied the effect of a peer-pairing programme on academic achievement and drop-out rates of international students in Australia and Canada.
In this programme international students were paired with a local student who was screened and instructed about possible problems such as culture shock, but also about practicalities such as information on community resources. The local student agreed to contact the international student at least twice per month during the eight months of the association; activities could range from study-related activities such as writing papers to leisure activities such as travel or recreation. The results show that those who participated in the peer-pairing programme had overall higher achievement rates and lower drop-out rates. Unfortunately, as they point out in their conclusion, Westwood and Barker (1990) did not study precisely which aspect of the peer pairing programme helped the international students. The effect might be caused by learning the appropriate behaviours from the local student (culture learning) or having better access to community and university resources, but as the groups were not randomly assigned, the effect might also have been caused by a selection bias. A later study by Westwood (Quintrell & Westwood, 1994) also showed some positive effects of first year international students being paired with a host national student. For example, the language fluency of participants increased more and they were better able to find campus services than non-participants. Interviews that were held with the participants also indicated that those students paired with a host had an increased knowledge of Australian culture and dealt more easily with the environment. However, no effect on academic performance was found. Another similar study was carried out by Abe et al. (1998), who studied a semester long international peer-pairing program. They compared a group of international students who participated in the programme to a similar control group, and found that those who had a local peer had higher social adjustment scores, confirming the importance of social interaction with host nationals for social adjustment to academic life.

Sakurai, McCall-Wolf and Kashima (2010) have taken a slightly different approach to examine ways in which to stimulate social interaction of international students by examining the impact of a one-day bus excursion to a popular Australian tourist spot on the development of social ties, cultural orientation and psychological adjustment. Their longitudinal study compared international students who participated in the excursion with a similar group of non-participants and found that the participants developed more social ties in general than the non-participants. Interestingly, even though no local students joined the bus excursion, the international students who participated were particularly successful in making local friends in the four months after the excursion took place. To explain this finding, Sakurai et al. (2010) hypothesise that the excursion might have resulted in psychological changes such as interest in new experiences and confidence in forming new ties, which together with an enhanced interest in local participation, might explain the increase in local ties after four months. An alternative explanation is that there was a selection bias and that the participants of the bus excursion were more interested in connecting with the host country than non-participants. These students would be more likely to create social ties with locals throughout the year, explaining the reported finding.
Peer-pairing and other multicultural interventions seem to have positive effects for international students on social adjustment and formation of new social ties, specifically with locals. These studies support the contention that contact with a local host might also help expatriates. As far as known, no such study is done for expatriates.

Post-departure training
From a culture learning perspective, a local host can also be seen as a specific form of post-departure training of the expatriate. Kealey and Protheroe (1996, p. 135) give a somewhat broader definition of training than the one provided in section 1.2.2: “any intervention aimed at increasing the knowledge or skills of the individual”. This definition includes interventions that are not embedded in an organisational or educational context, such as contact with a local host. Cross-cultural training is often used to prepare expatriates for living and working in another culture. Although expatriates are usually trained before departure for the international assignment some authors advocate that cross-cultural training should take place after arrival, and even after return to the home country (Selmer et al., 1998). Only after arrival do the expatriates experience life in the new host country and can relate the learned theory to the experiences of everyday life, which might stimulate in-country adjustment. In addition, post-departure training can be tailored to the difficulties that expatriates experience at that particular moment. As is explained in section 3.1.2 expatriates can learn from their host about the appropriate norms and behaviours in the new host country, as well as discuss problems that they encounter in their work and/or everyday life. An additional advantage of a local host compared to pre-departure training programmes is that a local host knows his or her own society and its recent developments, whereas a pre-departure training is sometimes out of date or does not feature enough local information (Forster, 2000, p. 72).

Host Country National Liaison (HCNL)
A local host can also partly fulfil host country national liaison roles, most of all the Cultural Interpreter role. However, in this capacity the local host would not be an intermediary between the expatriate and the host national workforce, because the host is not a colleague, although by providing cultural guidance and clarifying puzzling interactions if the expatriate recounts such incidents, the host could still function as a Cultural Interpreter to some extent. The local host can also partly assume the Communication Facilitator and the Information Resource Broker role by being a gateway to information that is available in the local external environment, for example about local market conditions. Finally, a local host can also be a Talent Developer in supporting the expatriate and enhancing his or her knowledge, which comes close to the mentoring role. Moreover, it is possible that learning how to interact with a local host can also be extrapolated to contacts with host national colleagues, thereby facilitating knowledge flows within the organisation. This could have additional beneficial
effects for expatriate adjustment and performance, as well as for overall performance of the firm.

In conclusion, a local host can offer social support and help expatriates to learn about cultural differences and practical matters in the foreign country, which might specifically be applicable to the workplace. Furnham and Bochner (1982, p. 171) state that “if sojourners are carefully introduced into a new society by close, sympathetic host-culture friends, the evidence indicates that they may encounter fewer problems than if they are left to fend for themselves”. Therefore it is plausible that a local host has an impact on the affective and behavioural aspects of expatriate adjustment. If this spills over to the workplace (Takeuchi et al., 2002) and if the contact with the host facilitates effective knowledge management, it could also have a positive effect on expatriate work performance. This is supported by research on the effects of (peer) mentoring, peer-pairing and (post-departure) cross-cultural training, which are in some aspects similar to the intervention of a local host. This leads to the first research question:

RQ1 Does contact with a local host contribute to the success of an expatriate assignment?

3.3 Impact of contact with a local host

The present study examines the impact of contact with a local host on the success of the international assignment. Not only the expatriates themselves were taken into account in this research, but their accompanying partners as well. Section 1.2.3 outlined the importance of the adjustment of the partner for the success of the expatriate assignment. One of the most important reasons for early return of expatriates is a partner who does not feel at home in the new country and, for that reason, it is important to take partners into account.

This section presents the hypotheses and research questions with regard to the effect of a local host on Adjustment and Performance (3.3.1), Social Support (3.3.2) and Intercultural Communication Competence (3.3.3). Hypotheses are based on previous research and research questions are added when the study takes on a more explorative nature because of the innovativeness of the intervention undertaken.

3.3.1 Adjustment and Performance

As was outlined in section 3.2, contact with a local host might have an impact on both the affective and the behavioural aspect of Adjustment. If a local host offers social support, it might contribute to the psychological adjustment of expatriates and their partners, leading to Hypothesis 1:
H1 The psychological adjustment of expatriates and partners with host increases more over time than the psychological adjustment of those without host.

If a local host helps the expatriate and partner learn about appropriate norms and behaviours in the host country, then the contact might add to the sociocultural adjustment of expatriates and partners. This leads to Hypothesis 2:

H2 The sociocultural adjustment of expatriates and partners with host increases more over time than the sociocultural adjustment of those without host.

The present study used both the model of Ward and colleagues (Psychological and Sociocultural Adjustment – see section 2.4.2) and the model of Black and colleagues (General, Interaction and Work Adjustment – see section 2.4.3). It should be noted here that there is a question as to the nature of the three facets of adjustment of Black and colleagues, whether they reflect aspects of psychological or sociocultural adjustment. It was argued in section 2.4.3 that the instrument of Black and colleagues (see Black & Stephens, 1989) seems to sample affective aspects of adjustment. For that reason, the present study will consider the three Adjustment facets of Black and colleagues as affective in nature. This means that they will be considered under Hypothesis 1 (Psychological Adjustment).

The second concept that is part of the success of the international assignment in the present study is expatriate job performance. In terms of the job performance model of Spector (2000) outlined in section 2.2.1, a local host might contribute to the KSAOs (knowledge, skill, ability and other personal characteristics) that are necessary for doing the job well. Knowledge and skills learned in interaction with the local host might spill over to the workplace and be useful when working with host national colleagues or clients. A local host might also provide the social support needed to cope not only with the difficulties of life abroad, but also with specific challenges in the workplace. Furthermore, a host might assume one or more HCNL-roles (Vance et al., 2009), which might affect job performance through more effective knowledge management. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H3 The performance of expatriates with host increases more over time than the performance of those without host.

3.3.2 Social support

The new situation in which the expatriate finds himself poses great demands that could trigger a crisis when resources and capabilities are insufficient. Social support could help by providing clues on how to handle such situations as well as by providing emotional support to help the expatriate deal with the situation. Arranging for a local host could create a new tie for the expatriate whose social network has been left behind in the home
country. This intervention could help them expand their social network in the host country and, as a result, increase the chance of receiving social support when needed. Increasing network size is one of the aspects from which the expatriate can benefit (Froland, Brodsky, Olson, & Stewart, 1979; Osman-Gani & Rockstuhl, 2008). This leads to Hypothesis 4.

H4 Expatriates and partners with host acquire more access to host nationals than those without host.

There are several forms of social support. A frequently used classification is that of Cohen and Wills (1985, p. 313), who define four types:

1. Emotional support – information that a person is esteemed and accepted;
2. Informational support – help in defining, understanding and coping with problematic events;
3. Social companionship – such as spending time with others in leisure and recreational activities;
4. Instrumental support – the provision of financial aid, material resources and required services.

These four types usually go hand in hand. A local host can offer social support in several ways. At the start of the contact a local host can offer informational support (2) about settling in the new country and understanding the new culture. Also, the host can accompany the expatriate on all kinds of activities, thereby offering social companionship (3). After a while, when the contact is established and has deepened, a host can also offer emotional support (1) and instrumental support (4) (Cutrona, Suhr, & MacFarlane, 1990). Through offering social support in these various ways, it is expected that expatriates who are put in touch with a local host receive more social support from host nationals, leading to Hypothesis 5.

H5 Expatriates and partners with host receive more social support from host nationals over time than those without host.

A social network can be divided into strong ties such as family and friends, and weak ties such as the bus driver and the hairdresser (Adelman, 1988). This distinction is important with regard to the amount of support a local host can give because strong ties usually offer more social support than weak ones (Kim, 1987); they are found to have increased disclosure breadth and intimacy (Berg & Piner, 1990). Weak ties can eventually develop into strong ties, as Adelman, Parks and Albrecht (1987, p. 129) put it: “our weaker relationships contain the seeds of stronger, more intimate relationships”. In the case of putting expatriates in touch with a local host, the question arises whether a local host can develop into a strong tie, a friend. This leads to the following research question:
RQ1a  *Can a local host become a strong tie within a period of nine months?*

To summarise, through putting expatriates in touch with a local host, it is expected that they will have more access to host nationals and that a host can provide social support, either as a weak or a strong tie. This might help the expatriate to deal better with the uncertainty and anxiety that are a consequence of working and living in a foreign country.

### 3.3.3 Intercultural communication competence

**Terms and definitions**

According to culture learning theory, expatriates might learn appropriate norms and behaviours through contact with their local host, which could help their adjustment. Intercultural communication competence is an important concept in this respect, because of the focus on communication between individuals with different cultural backgrounds. The concept of intercultural communication competence is sometimes also known as intercultural competence, cross-cultural competence, cultural competence or cultural intelligence; since intercultural communication competence is the most often used term (e.g. Chen, 1987; Collier, 1989; Dinges & Lieberman, 1989; Imahori & Lanigan, 1989; Wiseman & Koester, 1993) this term will be used here.

Terms that are very close to the concept are intercultural effectiveness (Hammer, 1987), multicultural effectiveness (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000), cross-cultural effectiveness (Ruben, 1989) and intercultural sensitivity (Bennett & Bennett, 2004). Chen (1987) states that intercultural effectiveness is sometimes equated to intercultural communication competence; for example, Gertsen (1990, p. 341) defines intercultural competence as “the ability to function effectively in another culture”. This is understandable considering that effectiveness – the achievement of goals or objectives – is one of two major criterions of intercultural communication competence (Koester, Wiseman, & Sanders, 1993). Appropriateness – “what is regarded as proper and suitable in a given situation within a particular culture” (Koester et al., 1993, p. 6) – is the second criterion. Effectiveness seems to be the most universal criterion, because what is appropriate is different in each culture (Koester & Olebe, 1988).

Not only the labels for the concept of intercultural communication competence vary, there has also been much discussion about its conceptualisation and definition (Hammer, 1989; Koester et al., 1993; Morley & Cerdin, 2010). In essence, intercultural communication competence is conceptualised as communication competence with emphasis on environmental factors (Chen, 1987). Kim (1993) concludes that it can be characterised as a general impression of the quality of communication in intercultural situations. Bennett and Bennett (2004, p. 149) propose the following general definition, reflecting both criteria of intercultural communication competence: “the ability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations and to relate appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts”.

*Possible benefits of contact with a local host*
Although conceptualisation and definition of intercultural communication competence remain problematic, most authors include knowledge, attitude and skills as components of intercultural communication competence (e.g. Collier, 1989; Gertsen, 1990; Gudykunst, 1993; Imahori & Lanigan, 1989; Johnson, Lenartowicz, & Apud, 2006; Lustig & Spitzberg, 1993; Wiseman, Hammer, & Nishida, 1989). It is still undecided, however, which of these three components is most important. For example, some authors state that knowledge is the most important element of intercultural communication competence (e.g. Beamer, 1992), others emphasise skills (e.g. Gudykunst, 1993; Ruben, 1976). Also, it remains unclear whether competence generalises across situations or is situation-specific (Martin, 1993).

**Conceptualising intercultural communication competence**

Someone who is perceived to have a high level of intercultural communication competence might have a great deal of knowledge of the language and the culture concerned, an open attitude towards other cultures and numerous skills that enable him or her to communicate effectively with someone from another culture (Lustig & Spitzberg, 1993). Therefore, it is expected that someone with a high intercultural communication competence will function better in a foreign culture than someone with a low intercultural communication competence. Scoring high on one component, however, does not necessarily mean that one would also score high on the other two components (Gudykunst, 1993). For example, an expatriate who is very good at “reading a specific culture” (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000, p. 293) might not be willing to do so, or lack knowledge of a specific culture in which he or she has to work. This makes it difficult to measure intercultural communication competence as a whole, and for that reason, the present study makes a distinction between the three components – knowledge, attitude and skills.

**Knowledge**

Measuring the knowledge aspect of intercultural communication competence is a greater challenge than the measurement of the attitude and skills components. If one takes a culture-specific approach, then what knowledge of the host culture is essential for expatriates to be competent? When taking a more culture-general approach the question arises which concepts are universally applicable to intercultural encounters (Koester et al., 1993). For this reason, the present study takes a qualitative approach to the knowledge component. Instead of examining the impact of a local host on ‘knowledge’, which would then need to be defined beforehand, whether the expatriates and partner themselves think they have learned something about Dutch culture from the contact with their host is explored. This leads to the following research question:

**RQ1b** Do expatriates and partners think they learned about Dutch culture from their host?
**Attitude**

The second component of Intercultural Communication Competence is attitude. As discussed in 3.1.2 the association hypothesis states that social interaction with host nationals leads to a more positive attitude towards these host nationals (Church, 1982). In the case of international students, Sellitz and Cook (1962) showed that having one or more close American friends was associated with more favourable attitudes towards the US. Kamal and Maruyama (1990) found a similar result for having American friends and time spent with Americans in general. Unfortunately these studies did not discriminate between whether having a friend led to favourable attitudes, or the other way around, and therefore Kamal and Maruyama (1990) called for experimental studies to disentangle cause and effect. Contact with a local host might similarly affect the attitudinal aspect of intercultural communication competence, leading to the following hypothesis:

**H6** *Expatriates and partners with host acquire a more open attitude towards different cultural norms and values than those without host.*

**Skills**

Thirdly, Intercultural Communication Competence is comprised of skills. Following culture learning theory expatriates might learn appropriate behaviours from their hosts, leading to an increase in intercultural skills. This leads to the following hypothesis:

**H7** *Expatriates and partners with host acquire higher levels of intercultural skills than those without host.*

**Measuring the attitude and skills components**

The present study attempts to gauge the attitude and skills component with the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ) of Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven (2000), which was developed to measure what they term “multicultural effectiveness”. This is in essence similar to effectiveness, one of the two criteria of intercultural communication competence – the other being appropriateness (Koester et al., 1993). The MPQ consists of five dimensions: *Openmindedness*, *Social Initiative*, *Cultural Empathy*, *Flexibility* and *Emotional Stability* (see also section 4.2.2.5 for definitions and operationalisation). The MPQ might help with the selection of expatriates or be used as a diagnostic tool to assess training needs of international employees (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000, p. 292).

The MPQ was chosen to measure attitude and skills because from a comparison with other literature it appeared that the dimension *Openmindedness* covers (part of) the attitude component (Imahori & Lanigan, 1989; Wiseman et al., 1989), and that the other four dimensions may be classified as skills (Gudykunst, 1993; Imahori & Lanigan, 1989; 7 The authors spell “Openmindedness” without hyphen, and for that reason, this spelling has been used throughout this dissertation.

**Possible benefits of contact with a local host**
Ruben, 1976). Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven (2000, p. 294) include the word “attitude” in their definition of Openmindedness: “an open and unprejudiced attitude towards outgroup members and towards different cultural norms and values”, which suggests that this dimension may be used to represent the attitude component. With regard to intercultural skills, the remaining four MPQ-dimensions, or aspects thereof, can be found in classifications of intercultural skills of other authors. First, Cultural Empathy is similar to “empathy” and “ability to empathise” which are listed as part of the skills-component of Intercultural Communication Competence by Ruben (1976) and Gudykunst (1993) respectively. Second, Emotional Stability – the tendency to remain calm in stressful situations (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000) – is similar to Ruben’s Tolerance of ambiguity, defined as “the ability to react to new and ambiguous situations with little visible discomfort” (Ruben, 1976, p. 341). This definition is adopted by Gudykunst (1993), who also lists Ability to tolerate ambiguity as intercultural skill. Third, Flexibility – the ability to “switch easily from one strategy to another, because the familiar ways of handling things will not necessarily work in a new cultural environment” (Van Oudenhoven & Van der Zee, 2002, p. 681) – is echoed in Gudykunst’s Ability to adapt our communication. In his view, it is a necessary skill to be able to “adapt and accommodate our behaviour to people from other groups if we are going to be successful in our interactions with them” (Gudykunst, 1993, p. 60). Finally, Social Initiative – “the tendency to approach social situations in an active way and to take initiatives” (Van Oudenhoven & Van der Zee, 2002, p. 681) – approaches what Hammer, Gudykunst and Wiseman (1978) and Abe and Wiseman (1983) term the “ability to establish interpersonal relationships”, which they see as behaviour necessary for intercultural effectiveness (i.e. a skill).

An essential aspect of Intercultural Communication Competence is that it is a dynamic concept. Knowledge and skills might be acquired and attitudes might be changed, which is relevant for the present study because it hypothesises that expatriates and partners with host will acquire a more open attitude and develop higher levels of intercultural skills than those without host. In this respect, it must be noted that Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven (2000) called their questionnaire the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire. Since personality traits are usually seen as stable, the question arises whether the MPQ is a proper instrument to measure the supposedly dynamic attitude and skills component of Intercultural Communication Competence.

This question is answered affirmatively in the present study because it seems that some of the dimensions of the MPQ are more dynamic than others. The MPQ may be used as a tool to establish training needs (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000), suggesting that cross-cultural training might influence the MPQ-dimensions. Van Oudenhoven (2002, p. 223) states that even though the dimensions represent relatively stable individual differences, they are trainable to a certain extent. This is especially the case for Openmindedness, Social Initiative and Cultural Empathy, because, as Herfst, Van Oudenhoven and Timmerman (2008, p. 69) argue, these three dimensions are “more easily trainable
because of their social component”. For this reason, they call these three dimensions “competences” in their article (p. 69). Also, the view that personality is fixed after the age of 30 is challenged, for example by Ardelt (2000). An important factor is the stability of the social environment. As this environment changes radically for most expatriates who are sent abroad, their personality may be subject to change as well. For these reasons, this study considers the MPQ as a reasonable representation of the attitude and (personality-based) skills components of intercultural communication competence, although, as Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven (2000, p. 307) point out, “there will be limits to the trainability of the personality dimensions of multicultural effectiveness that are distinguished here”. The study includes all five “dimensions of intercultural effectiveness” (Herfst et al., 2008, p. 69) to get a complete picture.

3.4 The role of the quality of the contact with the host

Once it is established whether contact with a local host contributes to the success of an international assignment (RQ1), it is worth examining whether the quality of the contact also plays a role. It is plausible that expatriates with high quality contact benefit more from the contact with their host than expatriates with low quality contact. Strong ties usually offer more support than weak ties (Kim, 1987, p. 203) and a local host who has a good contact with his or her expatriate might offer more social support than a local host who remains a weak tie. Varma, Pichler, Budhwar and Biswas (2009) found that host nationals’ perception of the quality of the relationship with the expatriate had a significant impact on their willingness to provide assistance. Also, expatriates who have better contact with their host are likely to be in touch with them more frequently, and so have more opportunities to learn appropriate norms and behaviours than expatriates with lower quality contact with their host. This leads to the following research question:

RQ2 To what extent does quality of contact between expatriate, partner and local host have an effect on the success of the expatriate assignment?

As with the first research question (RQ1: Does contact with a local host contribute to the success of an expatriate assignment?), this question is examined for the four main concepts in this study – Adjustment, Performance, Social Support and Intercultural Communication Competence. While expatriates are the main focus of this study, partners are also taken into account, and, if possible, they are included in the second research question.

One of the possible roles of the quality of the contact is that the expatriate and partner experience more benefits when the quality of the contact with the host is higher (linear pattern). This option is further elucidated in 3.4.1. It could also be that the quality of the relationship between the expatriate, partner and host needs to pass a certain threshold for the expatriate and partner to really benefit from it (curvilinear pattern, 3.4.2). A third
option is that the quality of the contact does not play a role and that expatriates and partners with high and low quality contact benefit equally from the contact with their host (3.4.3).

### 3.4.1 Linear effect of contact quality

A linear relationship of quality of contact with the local host and the success of the international assignment would mean that the higher the quality of contact with the host, the greater the benefit experienced by the expatriate and partner. For example, Ragins, Cotton and Miller (2000) report that the quality of the mentoring relationship showed a significant positive correlation with job attitudes such as job satisfaction and organisational commitment. The study of Nigah et al. (2010) also indicates that satisfaction with the buddy is correlated positively to work engagement and psychological capital.

A linear relationship suggests that expatriates with low quality contact would also benefit from the contact, but to a lesser extent than those with high quality contact. Adelman (1988) states that weak ties are especially important in times when strong ties such as family and close friends are disrupted. Even when a local host is not yet a strong tie (or never becomes one), the host can still support the expatriate during the initial stages of the cross-cultural transition. These arguments support the hypothesis that the higher the quality of contact with the host, the greater the benefit experienced by expatriates and partners.

### 3.4.2 Curvilinear effect of contact quality

A second possibility is that the contact with the host is beneficial only if sufficiently high quality contact between the expatriate, partner and the host is established, which would mean that contact quality has a curvilinear relationship – i.e. not following a straight line – with the success of the expatriate assignment. In this case expatriates with low quality contact would not benefit from the contact with their host. In section 3.3.2 the four types of Social Support were highlighted and the case was made that a local host can provide all four types of support, although emotional and instrumental support are usually offered when the contact has deepened. It is possible that especially those types of support make the difference rather than informational support (e.g. recommendation of a restaurant) and social companionship, and so contact with a local host is only beneficial if the expatriate has established high quality contact with his or her host. Moreover, when an expatriate meets his or her host only once or twice, this provides very little opportunity to learn appropriate norms and behaviours, which sheds some doubt on whether significant culture learning can occur in situations of low quality contact between expatriate, partner and host. It is possible that the contact needs to be of a certain level for culture learning to take place. This hypothesis is supported by the findings of the study of Ragins et al. (2000, p. 1190), who studied whether highly satisfying formal mentoring relationships were more
effective than dissatisfying informal relationships. Their finding that “attitudes of those in
dissatisfying or marginally satisfying relationships were equivalent to those of non-
mentored individuals” supports the hypothesis that expatriates with low quality contact
with a host would not benefit from the contact at all.

Contact with a local host might also be dysfunctional. Ragins et al. (2000) set the quality
of a mentoring relationship on a “continuum of effectiveness” ranging from highly satisfying
to dysfunctional. The quality of the contact with a local host could be seen on the same
continuum. When the contact with the local host remains at a superficial level, the expatriate
might be strengthened in the idea that all Dutch people are the same, and for that reason
would not acquire a more positive attitude towards them. In the worst case scenario, the
expatriate could even acquire a more negative attitude if the contact with the host does not
turn out well. The mentor literature shows that mentoring can have negative effects (Eby,
McManus, Simon, & Russell, 2000; Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Scandura, 1998), such as
loss of self esteem, more stress and more turnover intentions. In the case of contact with a
local host, the expatriate has to deal with a host who has a different frame of reference,
which might cause extra stress. It is possible that low quality contact with a local host has
a counterproductive effect and that expatriates with low quality contact with their host are
worse off than expatriates without host.

In this scenario a curvilinear pattern would be applicable: expatriates and partners
could benefit from the contact only if sufficiently high quality contact is established;
expatriates with low quality contact would either not benefit or even experience a
detrimental effect.

3.4.3 No impact of contact quality

The third and final option is that the quality of the contact does not play a role in the impact
of a local host on the success of the international assignment and that expatriates benefit
from their local host, regardless of the quality of the contact. It is possible that the very
presence of a local host conveys a perception of social support, that knowing that one can
get support from one’s host already helps the expatriate on their international assignment.
Albrecht and Adelman (1987a, p. 19) state that the availability of social support might even
be more beneficial than the actual use of the support, because “the belief that one has
support available if needed raises self-confidence and a greater sense of mastery than
would have occurred had one actually used the support”. However, this alternative is less
plausible considering the arguments made in sections 3.4.1 and 3.4.2. The mentor literature
places great emphasis on the quality of the contact, investing a considerable amount of
time and effort in the matching process (Cox, 2005). More specifically, Ragins et al. (2000)
show that satisfaction with the mentor was more important for job and career attitudes
than having a mentor, which shows the significance of the quality of the relationship rather
than the mere presence of a mentor. The same could be the case for the relationship between
the expatriate, partner and host, which would indicate that the quality of the contact does play a role with regard to the success of the expatriate assignment.

3.5 Development of the contact

After examining whether the quality of the contact is important for the impact of a local host on the success of the expatriate assignment, and if so, to what extent, how the quality of the contact might be enhanced is explored. To this end, a third research question has been formulated:

RQ3 Which aspects promote high quality contact between expatriate, partner and host?

The social penetration theory of Altman & Taylor (1973) provides a framework for the development of interpersonal relationships. They hypothesise that social interaction is “generally predicted to proceed only gradually and systematically from superficial to intimate topics” (p. 29) and they distinguish three categories of factors that affect relationship development – personal characteristics of participants, outcomes of exchange and situational context (Altman & Taylor, 1973).

Personal characteristics

First, Altman and Taylor (1973) list biographical properties, personality and social needs characteristics as personal characteristics that are important for the development of the contact. As the present study actually creates relationships between expatriates, partners and hosts the matching of personal characteristics of both parties seems to be important. A theory that sheds more light on this aspect is the similarity-attraction hypothesis (Byrne, 1971). Similarities between the expatriate, partner and host might promote the quality of the contact. Warren (1966) concludes that research has consistently shown that people tend to associate with others who are similar to themselves, and that people who are friends or spouses resemble each other more than randomly paired couples (e.g. with regard to age, education and religion). The similarity-attraction hypothesis posits that individuals with similar attitudes are more attracted to each other. Moreover, research has shown that this positive relationship between similarity and attraction also holds for individuals with the same abilities, opinions, emotional states, self-description, economic status, behavioural similarity and personality (Byrne, Griffitt, & Stefaniak, 1967, pp. 82-83). For this reason, it is plausible that similarities between expatriate and host would promote the development of high quality contact, pointing to the importance of matching both parties to each other on a number of aspects.

Which aspects are most important to take into account? That is very difficult to establish. A field in which some indications could be found with regard to matching is the mentor and
Possible benefits of contact with a local host

coaching literature. Although this literature suggests that matching is important (e.g. Fletcher, 1998; Wycherley & Cox, 2008) Hale (2000, p. 225) concludes that there is no evidence of “a consistently reliable approach” to matching even though it is “one of the major pitfalls of company mentoring”. For example, Forret, Turban and Dougherty (1996) outline several approaches to matching based on interviews in five organisations with a formal mentoring programme, but merely conclude that it is safe to assume that anything else than random assignment of mentors to mentees would result in more satisfactory relationships. Murray and Owen (1991) emphasise the developmental needs of the mentee and pinpoint the ability of mentors to act as resources for fulfilling those needs as the most important criterion for the match. This view is seconded in Hale’s overview (2000), in which it is stated that this seems to be the only determinant that is universally acknowledged to be important for matching.

Matching is difficult, as is shown in the studies of Karcher, Nakkula and Harris (2005) and of Cox (2005). In the first case, as much as 50% of the mentor matches in communities and schools terminated within the first or second month (Karcher et al., 2005). Cox (2005) studied a community mentoring project for single parents wishing to return to work and concludes that formal matching between mentors and mentees is superfluous, “except perhaps by geographical location and time availability” (p. 403), because she found that usually totally unpredictable coincidences influenced the continuation of the mentor relationship. Cox (2005) allocates an important role to serendipity or “fortuitousness”: the ability to create situations in which fortunate discoveries happen that then confirm the compatibility of the mentor and the mentee and solidify the relationship. For example, one pair discovered that they both had a (ex-)husband who was an alcoholic. These things are very difficult to predict beforehand, and for that reason Cox (2005, p. 409) advocates training mentors and mentees in discovering these fortuitous circumstances instead of spending too much energy on the matching process, because “trying to second-guess whether two people will get on is a very precarious task”.

The mentoring and coaching literature also claims the importance of “chemistry” (Wycherley & Cox, 2008), although further research needs to be done to know more about its role in the matching process. Some light on this interesting issue is shed by Brafman and Brafman (2010) who have written a book called The Magic of Instant Connections in which they document their scientific search for factors that promote instant connections in everyday life. They argue the importance of similarities – in the light of the similarity-attraction hypothesis (Byrne, 1971) – and cite some interesting research that shows that incidental similarities such as having a birthday in common might already lead to surprising effects on compliance (Burger, Messian, Patel, Del Prado, & Anderson, 2004). Interestingly, Byrne (1997) showed that it was the amount of similarities that was important for attraction, not the importance of the topics. It did not matter whether the subjects were similar with regard to superficial topics such as music or with regard to political opinions
or way of life. This suggests that a matching process should try to match expatriates and hosts on as many characteristics as possible.

In the mentor literature it is suggested that personality or similar interests are not very relevant because it does not matter if the mentor and mentee like each other, as long as they can learn from each other. Learning knowledge and skills or achieving insights is usually the object of mentoring (Hale, 2000) and there should be differences in personality and experience that provide opportunities to develop (Wycherley & Cox, 2008). This might be slightly different in the case of the intervention of a local host as examined in this study. Although culture learning is one way in which a local host might contribute to the success of the expatriate assignment, another important way is the provision of social support. For that reason the avowed emphasis of the project to the participants was to establish an enjoyable social contact between the expatriate, partner and host, in order to examine both culture learning and social support benefits of such a contact. To enhance chances of such contact the present study sought to match expatriates and hosts. Section 4.2.3 will elaborate on the matching criteria chosen in the present study.

Finally, among this first category of factors, Altman and Taylor (1973) mention social needs as possible fuel for the development of the contact, which is also relevant for this study. Expatriates and partners would only sign up for this project if they feel the need to meet host nationals; for that reason this social need is a prerequisite for relationship development in the present study. Furthermore, a wish to share their experiences and solicit social support might lead to development of the contact during the project. Karcher et al. (2005) found that support seeking behaviour of mentees positively affects the quality of the mentoring relationship in developmental mentoring (youth-with-child mentoring).

Outcomes of exchange
Second, Altman and Taylor (1973) define the outcome of the exchanges as important for the development of the contact. Participants continually evaluate the rewards and costs of interactions, looking at the pleasures, satisfactions, gratifications and fulfilment of needs, but also at the costs of these interactions. Behaviours might cost physical or mental effort, anxieties might need to be overcome or conflicting interests might need to be resolved; the greater the inhibition that must be overcome, the greater the costs (p. 31). The participants then make forecasts of future interactions, resulting in judgments of whether they liked each other and would like to meet again. In these evaluations they balance both immediate and future rewards and costs. Especially the estimation of future rewards is important because if one expects rewards if the exchange were to become more intimate, the relationship would be propelled to move to new and potentially more satisfying interactions (p. 39). In the present study, expatriates might derive benefits in the areas of social support and culture learning, and expect even more rewards if the contact continues and deepens, which then might stimulate the development of the contact.
Situational context

Third, situational factors might play a role according to Altman and Taylor (1973). The fact that the contact took place in the context of a longitudinal research project over nine months might have effects on the development of the contact. Although participants could withdraw at any time without specifying a reason for doing so, the contact was expected to last at least nine months. This research context might have stimulated meeting and developing high quality contact with the host. Another situational constraint might be the geographical distance between expatriate and host. Altman and Taylor (1973, pp. 158-159) cite several studies which highlight the proximity-association relationship: the closer people lived to one another, the more they interacted. Living near one’s host makes it easier to meet.

To shed more light on the aspects that helped or hindered the development of the contact, the present study includes a qualitative analysis of the various catalysts and barriers to the contact between expatriates, partners and hosts. This exploratory analysis is reported in Chapter 7, so as to be able to answer the third and final research question of this study (RQ3: Which aspects promote high quality contact between expatriate, partner and host?).

3.6 Conceptual model

This study examines the impact of a local host on the success of the expatriate assignment (RQ1: Does contact with a local host contribute to the success of an expatriate assignment?). More specifically, seven hypotheses (H1-7) and two additional research questions (RQ1a+b) were formulated to study the impact of a local host on Adjustment (H1-2), Performance (H3), Social Support (H4-5 and RQ1a) and Intercultural Communication Competence (RQ1b and H6-7). As the quality of the contact between expatriate and host might be relevant in the context of this study, a second research question was formulated that focuses on the role of the quality of contact (RQ2: To what extent does quality of contact between expatriate, partner and local host have an effect on the success of the expatriate assignment?). Furthermore, the study explores some aspects that might influence the quality of the contact (RQ3: Which aspects promote high quality contact between expatriate, partner and host?). The three main research questions (RQ1-3), seven hypotheses (H1-7) and two additional research questions (RQ1a+b) are visualised in the conceptual model depicted in Figure 3.1.
The present chapter outlined the theoretical underpinning of the three main research questions of this study. In the next chapter the methods used to answer the three research questions are discussed. Chapter 5 presents the results of the tests of Hypotheses 1-7 and RQ1a+b in order to answer the first research question about the impact of a local host on the success of the expatriate assignment (block A). Chapter 6 focuses on the second research question in examining the role of the quality of the contact between the expatriate, partner...
and host (block B). The third research question is explored in Chapter 7, which concentrates on how high quality contact between expatriate, partner and host might be promoted (block C).
Chapter 4

Methodology
Chapter 4
Methodology

The previous chapters showed the importance of facilitating international assignments, focusing on contact with host nationals as a way to cope with a major life event such as transition to a foreign country. The present chapter outlines the combination of quantitative and qualitative methodology used in this study; this research approach is outlined in section 4.1. Section 4.2 describes the randomised controlled experiment that was used to measure the longitudinal impact of contact with a local host (RQ1: Does contact with a local host contribute to the success of an expatriate assignment?) and discusses how the quality of the contact with the host was measured to answer the second research question of this study (RQ2: To what extent does quality of contact between expatriate, partner and local host have an effect on the success of the expatriate assignment?). The qualitative methodology used to answer the third research question (RQ3: Which aspects promote high quality contact between expatriate, partner and host?) is addressed in section 4.3.

4.1 Research approach

The present study used a randomised controlled experiment to assess the longitudinal impact of contact with a local host and added qualitative methodology to explore how to maximise the impact of such an intervention. These methods were chosen for several reasons.

First, this study set out to investigate whether a local host would affect positively the success of the expatriate assignment (RQ1: Does contact with a local host contribute to the success of an expatriate assignment?). This first research question called for longitudinal research in order to explore the effect of a local host over time as the contact between the expatriate, partner and host developed, rather than taking only a “photograph” of this process as is done in cross-sectional research (Ruspini, 2002, p. 28).

Second, based on the literature several hypotheses were formulated (section 3.3) with regard to the effect of contact with a local host. A field experiment was set up to test these hypotheses in a natural setting. A control group was added and participants were randomly assigned to either the experimental or the control condition (section 4.2.4.1) to rule out alternate explanations of experimental results other than contact with a local host. Although random assignment eliminates systematic sources of bias in creating the experimental and control groups (Levin, 1999) it does not guarantee that these groups are exactly alike. For that reason the experiment was set up according to a pre-test – post-test design (Campbell & Stanley, 1963), so that baseline level could be taken into account in the analyses and differences in baseline level should not have influenced the results. The methodology of the randomised controlled longitudinal experiment is discussed in section 4.2.
Third, since the intervention under study – contact with a local host – has not yet been tried out among expatriates, as far as is known, the present study also used qualitative methodology to gain insight into the aspects that enhance the quality of the contact between the expatriate, partner and host. These results might help to maximise the effect of such an intervention in the future. To explore the role of the quality of the contact with regard to the impact of a local host (RQ2: To what extent does quality of contact between expatriate, partner and local host have an effect on the success of the expatriate assignment?) a combination of a randomised controlled experiment and qualitative methodology was used. Based on qualitative data from three sources, expatriate, partner and host, the experimental group was divided into high and low quality contact (section 4.2.2.6). This retrospective division brings with it an important limitation with regard to the interpretation of the findings vis-à-vis the quality of the contact: since the groups were not randomly assigned to high or low quality contact it is more difficult to distinguish cause and effect in the results. The third research question (RQ3: Which aspects promote high quality contact between expatriate, partner and host?) focuses on the aspects that might influence contact quality between expatriates, partners and hosts. Qualitative methodology, such as open-ended questions in the questionnaires, interviews, diaries and emails from expatriates, partners and hosts, was used to gain more insight in the catalysts and barriers that either stimulated or hindered the development of the contact (4.3).

4.2 Randomised controlled experiment

The main part of this longitudinal study consisted of a randomised controlled experiment, in which expatriates were put in touch with a local host and compared to a control group to test whether a local host contributed positively to the success of an international assignment. The following subsections describe the participants (4.2.1), instruments (4.2.2), procedure (4.2.3) and design and data analysis (4.2.4) of the experiment.

4.2.1 Participants

Inclusion criteria for expatriates, partners and hosts

Expatriates were included if they met three criteria. The first criterion limited participation to Western expatriates with English or French as first language. Three considerations that make transitions between developed countries an important area for study were outlined in section 1.1.1 – the unique characteristics of the European market, the large number of transfers within the developed world and the psychic distance paradox (O’Grady & Lane, 1996), which is also applicable to the selected countries in this study. Practical

8 In this study the term ‘Western’ refers to cultures of European origin. Expatriates from the U.K., France, Ireland, U.S.A., Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the French-speaking part of Belgium and Switzerland were included.
considerations with regard to language fluency of the researcher restricted the sample
to those with English and French as first language. Furthermore, even though a relatively
homogeneous sample might limit the generality of the results, Levin (1999, p. 13) states that
it is a good research strategy to “maximize the chances of demonstrating an experimental
effect by initially focusing on a homogeneous study”.

The second criterion required that the expatriates were on a temporary job assignment
of at least ten months, so that they would have been in the Netherlands for a sufficient
length of time to be able to participate in the nine month project. It was also important that
expatriates had not come to the Netherlands on a permanent basis, because this would
have given a different mindset with regard to integrating into the host culture, especially
with regard to forming new ties in the host country (Jones-Corley & Van Oudenhoven,
2002).

Thirdly, the participants could only join the project if they had not been staying in the
Netherlands for more than twelve months and if they did not have a Dutch partner. This
criterion excluded those expatriates who were already well acquainted with Dutch culture
through their stay in the Netherlands or through their Dutch partner. In such cases it was
unlikely that a local host would contribute much and these expatriates, therefore, were
excluded from the study. Initially, the restriction on participation was six months of
residence in the Netherlands at the time of registration. This limit was increased to twelve
months when it became clear that the first few months are usually needed to arrange
practical matters associated with relocating to a new country, which made it more difficult
to find participants who had only been in the Netherlands for less than six months. Partners
of selected expatriates were also invited to join the study.

For Dutch hosts two inclusion criteria were formulated. First, it was important that the
host and their partner had the Dutch nationality, so that they were members of Dutch
society and would qualify as being a local host. Second, students were excluded from
participation because similarity in life phase was seen as an important matching criterion
(section 4.2.3). Expatriates were graduates and often in mid-career; and therefore students
were not seen as suitable hosts. One exception was made for an expatriate who had just
finished studying and for whom this was the first job. This expatriate was paired to a Dutch
student in her final year.

Expatriates
Table 4.1 on page 88-89 contains an overview of the sample characteristics of expatriates.
Appendix 1 contains the sample characteristics split into the experimental and control
group. Sixty-five expatriates participated in this research project. French (31%), U.S.
American (25%) and British (22%) were the top three nationalities represented in the
sample.

Fifty-seven percent of the expatriates were accompanied by their partner on their
assignment, 11 percent had a partner back home, and 32 percent did not have a partner.
Almost half of the expatriates (48%) had children; 73 percent of the expatriates with a partner had children. Sixty percent of the expatriates were male. The age of the expatriates ranged from 23 to 56 years (M (SD) = 35.2 (7.99)) and most of the expatriates lived in the western part of the Netherlands. The expatriates were generally highly educated (89% had received higher education). The first language of the majority was English (65%); the remainder spoke French as their mother tongue. The French-speaking expatriates spoke English well (M (SD) = 4.26 (.81) on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high proficiency)); very few of the expatriates spoke any Dutch (M (SD) = 1.12 (.38) on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high proficiency)). These proficiency scores are based on self-assessment.

The expatriates had been in the Netherlands for six and a half months on average when they started in the project. In terms of international experience, half of them had been abroad for twenty-three months or more at the time of their arrival in the Netherlands. A quarter of the expatriates were on their first international assignment, and almost three quarters were planning on staying at least two years in the Netherlands. They worked for a large variety of companies, of which the main five were Shell (15%), American International School of Rotterdam (5%), European Patent Office (5%), Gaz de France (5%) and NXP Semiconductors (5%). More than a quarter (31%) were managers, presidents or directors, whereas 17% were engineers. Another 9% worked in academia. Only 6% of expatriates received cross-cultural training prior to departure, this ranging from 3 to 20 hours.

Table 4.1 Sample characteristics of the expatriates (N = 65)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample characteristics of expatriates</th>
<th>N = 65</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nationality</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. American</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Partner</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes (on assignment)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes (not on assignment)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No partner</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M (SD) = 35.2 (7.99)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 – 29 years</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 – 40 years</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 – 56 years</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Place of residence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hague &amp; Rotterdam</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nijmegen</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.1 Sample characteristics of the expatriates (N = 65) (continued from previous page)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample characteristics of expatriates</th>
<th>N = 65</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Schooling</strong>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M (SD) = 4.38 (.68)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college or post secondary school classes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduate</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate or beyond</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Native language</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proficiency English</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(for non-native speakers)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficiently well to be understood /</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reasonably well</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluently</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M (SD) = 4.26 (.81)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proficiency Dutch</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficiently well to be understood</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasonably well</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M (SD) = 1.12 (.38)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of stay in NL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(before participation)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 ≤ 6 months</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 ≤ 12 months</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 12 months</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M (SD) = 6.72 (4.20)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>International experience</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No international experience</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to two years (1 – 24 months)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two – four years (25 – 48 months)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than four years (&gt; 48 months)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M (SD) = 41.45 (74.37) months</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median = 23 months</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duration of assignment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 1 year</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 2 years</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 3 years</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 4 years</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not defined</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cross-cultural training</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(pre-departure)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| * on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)

**Partners of expatriates**

The defining characteristic of the partner sample in this study was that partners did not spend a large part of their week at a job in the Netherlands; four dual-career couples who had both found a job in the Netherlands signed up for the research project, and these eight individuals were all considered as expatriates, taking the definition of this study into account: “an expatriate is anyone who works outside of his or her home country, with a planned return to that or a third country” (Cascio, 2006, p. 176)⁹. Consequently, these eight

⁹ The results were also analysed when removing one individual of each dual-career couple from the sample (N = 4) to see whether this changed the findings. This was not the case, and for that reason, all dual-career expatriates were included in the expatriate sample. See section 8.5 for more details.
expatriates were not considered in the partner sample, reducing the number of individuals who could participate in this project as ‘partner’ and not as ‘expatriate’.

Twenty-three partners actually participated in the present study. Table 4.2 contains an overview of the sample characteristics of the partners. These characteristics split into the experimental and control group can be found in Appendix 1. Most of the partners were female (91%) and the majority had children (83%). The top three nationalities were similar to those of the expatriates: French (35%), U.S. American (30%) and British (22%). With an average of nearly 37 years the partners were comparable to the expatriates, although the age range of the partners (27 – 48 years) was more restricted than that of the expatriates (23 – 56 years). The majority of the partners lived in The Hague and Rotterdam (70%). The education level of the partners was slightly lower than that of the expatriates (75% had received higher education), but they spoke somewhat better Dutch\(^{10}\) ($M (SD) = 1.3 (.56)$ on a scale of 1 (low) – 5 (high proficiency)). The English proficiency of the French partners\(^{10}\) was not as good as that of the French expatriates ($M (SD) = 3.38 (1.06)$ on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high proficiency)). Sixty-one percent of the partners had been in the Netherlands for six months or less at the time of participation. Almost one third of the partners were on their first assignment; 83% intended to stay at least two years in the Netherlands. Most of the partners did not receive pre-departure cross-cultural training (91%). The two partners who were trained received respectively three and six hours of training.

Table 4.2 Sample characteristics of the partners (N = 23)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample characteristics of partners</th>
<th>N = 23</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nationality</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. American</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M (SD) = 36.91 (6.19)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 – 29 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 – 40 years</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 – 48 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Place of residence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hague &amp; Rotterdam</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{10}\) Based on self-evaluation
Table 4.2 Sample characteristics of the partners (N = 23) (continued from previous page)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample characteristics of partners</th>
<th>N = 23</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Schooling</strong>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary school graduate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college or post secondary school classes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduate</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate or beyond</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Native language</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proficiency English</strong> <strong>(for non-native speakers)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficiently well to be understood</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasonably well</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluently</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proficiency Dutch</strong> <strong>(based on self-evaluation)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficiently well to be understood</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasonably well</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length of stay in NL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(before participation)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 ≤ 6 months</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 ≤ 12 months</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 12 months</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>International experience</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No international experience</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to two years (1 – 24 months)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two – four years (25 – 48 months)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than four years (&gt; 48 months)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duration of assignment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 1 year</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 2 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 3 years</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 4 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not defined</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cross-cultural training</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(pre-departure)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)
** based on self-evaluation, on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)

Hosts

Thirty-three hosts participated in the study\(^{11}\). Table 4.3 on page 92 contains an overview of the sample characteristics of the hosts. Less than half of the hosts participated as a couple (46%) and of them only the host who registered was used in the analyses, because this

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\(^{11}\) Both expatriates of a dual career couple had the same host; as these expatriates were considered individually in this study, their hosts were counted twice so as to be able to take the respective host characteristics for each expatriate into account. This resulted in statistics for 33 hosts in section 4.2.1.
person took the initiative to sign up for the project and for that reason was likely to be the one that was most in touch with the expatriate.

Most of the hosts had a partner (73%); 33% had children. The hosts were highly educated, almost all of them (97%) received higher education. The age of the hosts ranged from 21 to 62 years (M (SD) = 35.4 (10.54)) and they mostly lived in the western part of the Netherlands, just like the expatriates and partners. The hosts spoke English well (M (SD) = 4.30 (.73) on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high proficiency)), more so than French (M (SD) = 2.36 (1.45) on a similar scale). The hosts were internationally oriented: almost two third of the hosts (64%) had lived abroad in the past for more than six months for study or work purposes. Hosts were volunteers, not working for the same company as the expatriate.

| Table 4.3 Sample characteristics of the hosts (N = 33) |
|---------------------------------|-------|-----|
| **Sample characteristics of hosts** | N = 33 | %   |
| **Sex** | | |
| Male | 10 | 30% |
| Female | 23 | 70% |
| **Partner** | | |
| Yes (participating) | 15 | 46% |
| Yes (not participating) | 9 | 27% |
| No partner | 9 | 27% |
| **Children** | | |
| Yes | 11 | 33% |
| No | 22 | 67% |
| **Schooling*** | | |
| Some college or post secondary school classes | 1 | 3% |
| College graduate | 9 | 27% |
| Postgraduate or beyond | 23 | 70% |
| **Age** | | |
| 21 – 29 years | 10 | 30% |
| 30 – 40 years | 15 | 46% |
| 41 – 62 years | 8 | 24% |
| **Place of residence** | | |
| The Hague & Rotterdam | 17 | 52% |
| Amsterdam | 8 | 24% |
| Nijmegen | 3 | 9% |
| Other | 5 | 15% |
| **Proficiency English**** | | |
| Sufficiently well to be understood | 1 | 3% |
| Reasonably well | 2 | 6% |
| Well | 16 | 49% |
| Fluently | 14 | 42% |
| **Proficiency French**** | | |
| Poorly | 13 | 40% |
| Sufficiently well to be understood | 8 | 24% |
| Reasonably well | 3 | 9% |
| Well | 5 | 15% |
| Fluently | 4 | 12% |
| **International experience** | | |
| < 6 months residence abroad | 12 | 36% |
| ≥ 6 months residence abroad | 21 | 64% |

* on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)
** based on self-evaluation, on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)
Drop-out
A total of 102 expatriates registered for the project. Sixteen expatriates did not meet the inclusion criteria and were excluded from the study. The remaining 86 expatriates were admitted and entered the registration procedure. During the registration process 16 expatriates dropped out, mainly due to their lack of time to participate (50%). Other reasons were sudden relocation to another country (19%) or a change of mind about participating in the project (13%); others did not reply to the reminders (19%).

Seventy expatriates actually started the project and were assigned to either the experimental or the control group. Five expatriates (7%) dropped out before filling in the second questionnaire. In these cases no post-test was available and for that reason they were also excluded from the study. One of these expatriates was put in touch with a host and relocated unplanned to another country one month after starting the project. The other four expatriates were part of the control group and were either unwilling or too busy to continue filling in the questionnaires.

Six expatriates, equally divided over the experimental and control groups, dropped out after filling in the second questionnaire, due to relocation to another country or not answering the requests to fill in the questionnaire. However, they were still included in this study because at least one post-test was available. In section 4.2.4.5 the approach to missing values is explained. A total of 65 expatriates, therefore, were included in the study.

4.2.2 Instruments
This section gives an overview of the instruments used to measure the main concepts in this study (Adjustment, Performance, Social Support and Intercultural Communication Competence) for expatriates and, except for Performance, partners. Each of the four main concepts is operationalised through more than one instrument that covers either the concept as a whole or a part of it. Church (1982) states that there is a considerable advantage to using multiple instruments to measure one concept, especially if it has been operationalised differently in the literature, which is especially the case for Adjustment and Performance.

Reliability coefficients are listed for each data wave (Cronbach’s $\alpha^0$, $\alpha^5$ and $\alpha^9$ for respectively the data at 0, 5 and 9 months), if relevant. Table 4.4 on page 94 contains an overview of instruments per data wave and per group (expatriates, partners and hosts). As can be seen, reliabilities for most of the scales were above $\alpha = .70$, which is acceptable according to George and Mallery (2006, p. 231). In the other cases the reliability coefficient approached .70, which was still seen as satisfactory. The analyses reported in Chapters 5 and 6, therefore, use the summated data. Appendix 2 contains the instruments used in the questionnaires for expatriates, partners and hosts in the present study.
Table 4.4 Overview of dependent variables per data wave (0, 5 and 9 months) for expatriates and partners with Cronbach’s alpha, if relevant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Expatriates</th>
<th>Partners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 months</td>
<td>5 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjustment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with Life</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Health</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Health</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociocultural Adjustment</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Adjustment</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction Adjustment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Adjustment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to Terminate the Assignment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assess own Performance</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most Recent Actual Performance Evaluation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Host National Access</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Host National Social Support</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercultural Communication Competence</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openmindedness</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Initiative</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Empathy</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Stability</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

x = the reliability coefficients were not computed because it is a composite scale (e.g. Host National Social Support) or it is simply not relevant in that specific case (e.g. Friendship); - = variable was not measured at that particular data wave
4.2.2.1 Pre-test of questionnaires

Expatriates and their partners filled in three questionnaires in the course of the research project (Appendix 2a). Most of the selected instruments were existing scales in English. If the scales were not also available in French, they were translated into French by the researcher in cooperation with a native speaker, who was fluent in English. The advantage of such a bilingual team is that the quality of the translation can be improved by discussing alternative options (Harkness, Van de Vijver, & Mohler, 2003). The questionnaires were then pre-tested in both languages. Six native speakers of English were involved in pre-testing the first and second questionnaire, which resulted in some small changes. The French questionnaires were pretested by nine native speakers to ensure correct translation. This pre-test also resulted in some minor changes. The third questionnaire was very similar to the first and the second questionnaire, and for that reason, no pre-tests were done for this.

At the end of the project the local hosts filled in a questionnaire, containing questions about the contact with the host (Appendix 2b).

4.2.2.2 Adjustment

The model of Ward and colleagues (Psychological Adjustment and Sociocultural Adjustment) and the model of Black and colleagues (General, Interaction and Work adjustment) are both used as guidelines to measure Adjustment.

Psychological adjustment: Following Van Oudenhoven, Mol and Van der Zee (2003, p. 160) psychological adjustment was operationalised through positive concepts such as Satisfaction with Life, Physical and Psychological Health. Satisfaction with Life Scale (expatriates: $\alpha^0 = .85$, $\alpha^5 = .85$, $\alpha^9 = .88$; partners: $\alpha^0 = .89$, $\alpha^5 = .92$, $\alpha^9 = .86$) was composed of five items on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), e.g. “In most ways my life is close to my ideal”, and “If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing” (Appendix 2a, items 2-6). No items had to be reverse coded. Physical Health (expatriates: $\alpha^0 = .76$, $\alpha^5 = .70$, $\alpha^9 = .68$; partners: $\alpha^0 = .79$, $\alpha^5 = .80$, $\alpha^9 = .88$) was assessed by two questions assessing the general health on a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent) and the amount of time the physical or emotional health interfered with social activities (1 = none of the time; to 5 = all of the time) (Appendix 2a, items 7-12). To complete the list with regard to Physical Health, respondents reacted to four statements such as “I seem to get sick a little easier than other people” and “My health is excellent” on a scale of 1 (definitely false) to 5 (definitely true). Items 8, 9 and 11 were reverse coded. Psychological Health (expatriates: $\alpha^0 = .81$, $\alpha^5 = .84$, $\alpha^9 = .84$; partners: $\alpha^0 = .90$, $\alpha^5 = .91$, $\alpha^9 = .89$) consisted of nine items on a scale of 1 (none of the time) to 5 (all of the time). The scale started with the phrase: “How much of the time during the past four weeks”, and was followed by items such as: “have you felt calm and peaceful” or “did you
feel worn out” (Appendix 2a, items 13-21). Five items were reverse coded (items 14, 15, 18, 19 & 21).

**Sociocultural Adjustment:** As this aspect of adjustment focuses on the quality of the interaction with people in the host country, a short version of the 41-item Social Support List Interaction (Van Sonderen, 1993) was used, similar to the study of Van Oudenhoven et al. (2003) (Appendix 2a, items 36-50). Fifteen items on a scale of 1 (*seldom or never*) to 4 (*very often*) assessed the number of times respondents experienced that people “were affectionate towards you”, “ask you for help” or “blame you for things” (expatriates: $\alpha^0 = .83$, $\alpha^5 = .81$, $\alpha^9 = .85$; partners: $\alpha^0 = .87$, $\alpha^5 = .89$, $\alpha^9 = .82$). Four items were reverse coded (items 46, 47, 48 and 49).

**General, Interaction and Work Adjustment** was measured by 14 items on a scale of 1 (*unaccustomed*) to 7 (*accustomed*), similar to the measure developed by Black and Stephens (1989) (Appendix 2a, items 22-35). The first seven items regarded **General Adjustment** (e.g. “living conditions in general”), followed by four items focusing on **Interaction Adjustment** (for example “socialising with host nationals”). The final three items assessed **Work Adjustment** through items such as “specific job responsibilities” and “supervisory responsibilities”. Reliability coefficients for all three variables were generally very high (**General Adjustment**: expatriates: $\alpha^0 = .85$; $\alpha^5 = .81$ $\alpha^9 = .81$; partners: $\alpha^0 = .87$, $\alpha^5 = .89$, $\alpha^9 = .89$; **Interaction Adjustment**: expatriates: $\alpha^0 = .88$, $\alpha^5 = .95$, $\alpha^9 = .90$; partners: $\alpha^0 = .96$, $\alpha^5 = .97$, $\alpha^9 = .97$; **Work Adjustment**: expatriates: $\alpha^0 = .94$, $\alpha^5 = .85$, $\alpha^9 = .89$). As was noted in 3.3.1 these three facets of adjustment are considered under the first Hypothesis (H1 Psychological Adjustment) in this study.

**4.2.2.3 Performance**

Performance was measured by three instruments. As was suggested in 2.2.2 this study goes beyond the criterion *early return* and attempts to cover the concept of job performance through a combination of subjective (**Desire to Terminate the Assignment** and **Assess Own Performance**) and more objective assessments (**Most Recent Actual Performance Evaluation**).

**Desire to Terminate the Assignment:** the instrument of Caligiuri (2000a) was used to assess the desire to terminate the expatriate assignment (Appendix 2a, items 55-57). The instrument contains three items on a scale of 1 (*no, definitely not*) to 5 (*yes, definitely*) ($\alpha^0 = .83$, $\alpha^5 = .82$, $\alpha^9 = .85$). A sample item is: “Would you like to terminate this expatriate assignment early?” The advantage of this criterion is that it selects more precisely than does the criterion *early return* who does not function properly. Using the desire to terminate the assignment as criterion also encompasses those expatriates who do not function well, but who want to finish their assignment at all costs.

**Assessment of own Performance** ($\alpha^0 = .69$, $\alpha^5 = .67$, $\alpha^9 = .72$) was measured with four items that asked the expat to assess their own performance on a scale of 1 (*poor*) to 5 (*excellent*)
Methodology

in areas such as the “ability to get along with others” and the “ability to complete assignments on time” (Parker & McEvoy, 1993) (Appendix 2a, items 51-54). Even though the reliability coefficients did not exceed .70 in all three instances, the coefficients were very close to the norm and therefore judged to be sufficiently high.

Most Recent Actual Performance Evaluation: the instrument of Black & Porter (1991) showed where expatriates’ most recent actual performance evaluation would place them, relative to their peers, on a percentage basis with regard to five items such as “completing tasks on time” and “achievement of work goals” (α = .67) (Appendix 2a, items 59-63). Most Recent Actual Performance Evaluation was assessed only after nine months because the performance evaluation that was reported after nine months could be the same as after five months. Also, after nine months the probability would be higher that this performance evaluation had actually taken place during the project (assuming that most performance evaluations take place only once a year). This instrument added a valuable angle to the measurement of performance, because the performance evaluation is done by the organisation and not by the expatriate himself.

4.2.2.4 Social Support

Host National Access was measured by one item derived from the Frequency of Contact scale used by Bakker (2005, p. 119) (Appendix 2a, item 81). This item measured the expatriates’ amount of contact (in person, by phone, email or in writing) with Dutch nationals on a scale of 1 (never) to 5 (very often). A low score indicates limited Host National Access; a high score shows that the expatriate had frequent access to host nationals (Host National Access).

Host National Social Support was measured with sixteen items of the Interpersonal Relations scale (Searle & Ward, 1990, p. 454) (Appendix 2a, items 64-79). These sixteen items assessed the frequency of and satisfaction with a certain type of contact with host nationals on a scale of 1 (never / not at all satisfied) to 5 (very often / very satisfied). These items were applied only at five and nine months due to practical constraints with regard to the length of the questionnaires, and the items were rephrased to fit the present study. Mean scores were computed for the frequency of and satisfaction with contact with host nationals (expatriates: frequency: α = .76, α = .77; satisfaction: α = .90, α = .95; partner: frequency: α = .77, α = .79; satisfaction: α = .90, α = .97). The value for Host National Social Support was then created by multiplying the satisfaction score by the frequency to create a variable that takes both frequency of and satisfaction with the contact with host nationals into account. This resulted in a variable ranging from 1 (low) to 25 (high).

Friendship was measured through the Friendship instrument used in Bakker (2005, p. 119). The participants were asked to think about the five friends or acquaintances who were, in general, most important to them. For each of these friends, information about nationality, closeness and frequency of contact in person, by phone or email was reported.
For the latter three variables, a scale of 1 (not very close / never) to 5 (very close / more than 6 times per month) was used (Appendix 2a, item 80). Table 4.5 gives an example of the answers of one of the expatriate participants on the instrument Friendship.

Table 4.5 Example of the answers of an expatriate on Friendship. The expatriate indicated the initials of the five most important friends and acquaintances, their nationality, closeness of friendship and frequency of personal and other contact per month

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Friends</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Closeness of friendship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initials</td>
<td>compatriot</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. E.H.</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. G.L.</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. M.Z.</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. T.P.</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. O.B.</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Friends</th>
<th>Frequency of personal contact per month</th>
<th>Frequency of contact per month by phone, email and/or letters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initials</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1-2 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. E.H.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. G.L.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. M.Z.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. T.P.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. O.B.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.2.5 Intercultural Communication Competence

Section 3.3.3 showed that Intercultural Communication Competence is composed of knowledge, attitude and skills. The attitude and skills components were measured through the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ) of Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven (2000) that measures Openmindedness, Social Initiative, Cultural Empathy, Emotional Stability and Flexibility. The MPQ contains 91 items (Appendix 2a, items 82-172) and was administered only at 0 months and 9 months in order to not overburden the participants, who already had to fill in a questionnaire that took about 25 minutes three times. The MPQ consists of the following five dimensions:

1. **Openmindedness** (18 items) is seen as “an open and unprejudiced attitude towards outgroup members and towards different cultural norms and values” (expatriates: $\alpha^0 = .87$, $\alpha^9 = .83$; partners: $\alpha^0 = .90$, $\alpha^9 = .93$). Example items are “Is fascinated by other people’s opinions” and “Is looking for new ways to attain his or her goal”.

2. **Social Initiative** (17 items) is “the tendency to approach social situations in an active way and to take initiatives” (expatriates: $\alpha^0 = .88$, $\alpha^9 = .81$; partners: $\alpha^0 = .90$, $\alpha^9 = .91$). Example items are “Takes initiative” and “Keeps to the background”.

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12 Not all items per dimension can be reproduced because copyright issues prevent the complete reprint of the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire in Appendix 2.
3. **Cultural Empathy** (18 items) is “the ability to empathise with the feelings, thoughts, and behaviours of members from different cultural groups” (expatriates: $\alpha^0 = .88$, $\alpha^9 = .88$; partners: $\alpha^0 = .87$, $\alpha^9 = .89$). Example items are “Tries to understand other people’s behaviour” and “Takes other people’s habits into consideration”.

4. **Emotional Stability** (20 items) is “the tendency to remain calm in stressful situations versus a tendency to show strong emotional reactions under stressful circumstances” (expatriates: $\alpha^0 = .88$, $\alpha^9 = .89$; partners: $\alpha^0 = .91$, $\alpha^9 = .90$). Example items are “Is afraid to fail” and “Is nervous”.

5. **Flexibility** (18 items) is “the ability to switch easily from one strategy to another, because the familiar ways of handling things will not necessarily work in a new cultural environment” (expatriates: $\alpha^0 = .77$, $\alpha^9 = .71$; partners: $\alpha^0 = .81$, $\alpha^9 = .71$). Example items are “Likes low-comfort holidays” and “Looks for regularity in life”.

The items were answered on a scale of 1 (totally not applicable) to 5 (totally applicable). A total of 31 items across the five dimensions (except Openmindedness) were reverse coded. Analyses were done with each of the five dimensions.

**Knowledge**: Qualitative methodology was used to find an answer to research question 1b (*Do expatriates and partners think they learned about Dutch culture from their host?*). In the qualitative data (section 4.3) it was examined whether expatriates and partners mentioned spontaneously that they learned about Dutch culture during the contact with their host. In particular two open ended questions in the questionnaires (Appendix 2a, items 176 & 177) enquired into why the expatriate and partner enjoyed the contact, whether they thought the contact had contributed anything, and if that was the case, in what way. Furthermore, the interviews (section 4.3.1) also probed into the question whether expatriates or partners thought the contact had helped them. Finally, the information contained in the diaries and emails (sections 4.3.2 and 4.3.3) might also contain mentions of learning about Dutch culture. If participants mentioned having learned about Dutch culture, it was taken as an indication that their knowledge had increased. This approach was preferred to adding an item in the questionnaires because a spontaneous mention that one learned about Dutch culture would indicate a more substantial increase in knowledge than if one would only answer ‘yes’ to an item in the questionnaire.

Two raters went through all the qualitative information independently and assessed for each match whether expatriates and partners mentioned having learned about Dutch culture (‘yes’ or ‘no’). Interrater agreement was relatively high (Cohen’s $K = .75$) – “substantial” according to Landis and Koch (1977, p. 165). To be able to answer RQ1b it was necessary to select only one rating of Knowledge, which presented several problems. First, it was not possible to use the average of the two original ratings because of the categorical nature of the variable. Second, the two raters were equally important and choosing between them would mean that the analysis would lean heavily on this one random choice. Mood, Graybill and Boes (1974) advocate a more random procedure, and for that reason a new set of rater-scores was created by mixing the two raters: for each case the new score was chosen at
random from the two available scores. This procedure was evaluated by repeating it four times and calculating Cohen’s $K$ between the created sets and the original raters. These interrater agreements were high, indicating that the original information was well represented in the new sets. From the new sets one was chosen at random to be used in subsequent analyses (interrater agreement of this mix with both original raters: Cohen’s $K$ = .87 – “almost perfect” in the words of Landis and Koch (1977, p. 165)).

4.2.2.6 Contact Quality

The quality of contact between expatriate and host was examined in order to answer the second research question of this study: To what extent does the quality of contact between expatriate, partner and local host have an effect on the success of the international assignment? Both quantitative and qualitative methodology was used to assess the perception of the quality of contact with the host from various viewpoints. First, to obtain a subjective view from the participants themselves, the parties concerned could be asked what they thought of the contact (Rating of Contact Quality). Second, more objective measures could also be used, such as the frequency of face-to-face contact between expatriate, partner and host (Frequency of Contact). A third approach is to construct an outsider perspective of the quality of the contact (Impression of Contact Quality and Contribution of the Contact) through examining the available qualitative information in this study (open-ended questions, interviews, diaries and emails; see section 4.3 for more information on these instruments). This study takes all these approaches into account to validate the measurement of contact quality that is used in this study. For reasons of convenience, in the rest of this study the term quality of contact will be used instead of the perception of the quality of contact. The variables used to measure the quality of the contact with the host are summarised in Table 4.6 and are explained below.

Table 4.6 Type of variable and measurement per data wave (0, 5 and 9 months) of Rating of Contact Quality, Frequency of Contact, Impression of Contact Quality, and Contribution of the Contact for expatriates, partners and hosts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of variable</th>
<th>Expatriates</th>
<th>Partners</th>
<th>Hosts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rating of Contact Quality</td>
<td>scale</td>
<td>- x x</td>
<td>- x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Contact</td>
<td>scale</td>
<td>- x x</td>
<td>- x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impression of Contact Quality*</td>
<td>nominal</td>
<td>- x x</td>
<td>- x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution of the Contact*</td>
<td>nominal</td>
<td>- x x</td>
<td>- x x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* This index was based on qualitative information, among which the open ended questions of the questionnaires after 5 and 9 months. x = reliability coefficients were not computed because the variables were either categorical or consisted only of a single item. - = variable was not measured at that particular data wave.
Rating of Contact Quality

Expatriates with a local host were asked to assess the quality of the contact with their host after five and nine months on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high) (Appendix 2a, item 173). The same question was included in the questionnaires of the partners (five and nine months) and hosts (nine months; Appendix 2b, item 8). If the local host was a couple, a mean score of their two ratings at nine months was computed to indicate the quality of contact as perceived by the host. The ratings were all strongly correlated, especially between expatriates and their partners after nine months (see Table 4.7), showing that expatriates, partners and hosts assessed similarly the quality of their contact. As indication of the final judgment of the contact by the expatriate and partner (if available), a composite score of their assessment of the quality of contact after nine months was created. The score at five months was used if the expatriate nor partner provided a score after nine months (for missing values, see 4.2.4.5). The resulting variable is called Rating of Contact Quality, still on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high). This variable was not normally distributed but clearly divided the experimental group into those who highly appreciated the contact (≥ 7 on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high)) and those for whom the contact was less successful (≤ 5 on a similar scale).

Table 4.7 Correlations between ratings of contact quality by expatriates, partners and hosts after five and nine months

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Expatriates (5 months)</th>
<th>Expatriates (9 months)</th>
<th>Partners (5 months)</th>
<th>Partners (9 months)</th>
<th>Hosts (9 months)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expatriates (5 months)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expatriates (9 months)</td>
<td>.68*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners (5 months)</td>
<td>.87**</td>
<td>.90**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners (9 months)</td>
<td>.67*</td>
<td>.92**</td>
<td>.84**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosts (9 months)</td>
<td>.77**</td>
<td>.72**</td>
<td>.88**</td>
<td>.63*</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at the .05-level
** Significant at the .01-level

Frequency of Contact

The amount of face-to-face contact with the host is another way to examine the quality of the contact. Although expatriates and partners also kept in touch with their host via email or telephone, face-to-face meetings were the main channel of contact. Each questionnaire contained questions about the number of times that the expatriate and partner had met their host and the kind of activities that were undertaken (expatriate & partner: Appendix 2a, items 174 and 175; host: Appendix 2b, item 4 and 7). For each expatriate the rating rendered at item 174 ("How many times have you seen the host?") was checked with the reported activities to ensure a correct measuring of the frequency of face-to-face contact.

Methodology
Outsider perspective of contact quality

The outsider perspective on the quality of the contact was constructed based on the open-ended questions in the questionnaires, the interviews, diaries and emails (section 4.3). Two raters reviewed independently of each other all the information of the 33 expatriates and assessed the quality of the contact (Impression of Contact Quality) and whether the contact had contributed anything (Contribution of the Contact).

Impression of Contact Quality: the raters divided the expatriates into three groups – 1. high quality contact, 2. medium quality contact and 3. low quality contact. This assessment was based on issues such as how the expatriate described the meeting with the host and the host him- or herself, whether the contact would be continued after the project and their overall opinion of the project as a whole (e.g. “Together we had some great fun” [E46Q2]13 and “I’m not sure whether we’d stay in touch though if it weren’t for the project” [E1Q2]). Interrater agreement based on the first assessment was high (Cohen’s K = .79).

In a way similar to Knowledge in section 4.2.2.5, four new sets of rater scores were created by mixing the two original raters, of which one mix was randomly chosen to be taken into account. Interrater agreement of this random mix with both original raters was very high (with rater 1: Cohen’s K = .95; with rater 2: Cohen’s K = .84) – “almost perfect” according to Landis and Koch (1977, p. 165). Because the number of expatriates with low quality contact was too small to merit its own category (N = 3), the second category ‘medium quality contact’ was merged with ‘low quality contact’. For this reason, the final variable Impression of Contact Quality contained two categories – ‘high quality contact’ and ‘medium or low quality contact’.

Contribution of the Contact: the raters also assessed whether the contact with the local host was said to have contributed to the international assignment (‘yes’ / ‘no, or very little’), e.g. through becoming friends or learning about Dutch culture. A contact was assessed as contributing ‘nothing or very little’ when, for example, the host had only once or twice recommended a restaurant or a museum, whereas the contact was assessed to have contributed if the expatriate became friends with their host or learned a great deal about the Netherlands. Interrater agreement was high (Cohen’s K = .88). Again, four new sets of rater scores were created based on the original ratings, of which one was randomly chosen for the analyses. As for Impression of Contact Quality, interrater agreement was computed between this set and the two original raters. This interrater agreement was high (with rater 1: Cohen’s K = .82; with rater 2: Cohen’s K = 1), indicating the validity of using this random mix.

Creating the variable Contact Quality

The measures reported above approach the quality of contact between expatriate, partner and host from different perspectives. The next step was to compare the various viewpoints

13 The source of each quote is indicated, where I = interview, DW4 = diary week 4, E = email, Q2 = questionnaire after five months and Q3 = questionnaire after nine months.
with each other in order to see whether they show a similar perception of the quality of the contact. It was already shown that the perception of the quality of the contact of the participants themselves was very similar (see Table 4.7 on page 101). Is this perception also supported by more objective measures? For example, it is likely that expatriates who enjoyed the contact with their host also met them more frequently. Table 4.8 shows the relationships of the Rating of Contact Quality with the more objective Frequency of Contact and the two variables that reflect the outsider opinion (Impression of Contact Quality and Contribution of the Contact). This comparison sheds light on which variable can be used best in the analyses in order to answer the second research question of this study.

Table 4.8 Relationships of Rating of Contact Quality (RCQ) with the continuous variable Frequency of Contact and the two nominal variables Impression of Contact Quality and Contribution of the Contact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Contact</th>
<th>Impression of Contact Quality</th>
<th>Contribution of the Contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>scale</td>
<td>nominal</td>
<td>nominal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high quality contact</td>
<td>medium or low quality contact</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>no, or very little</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RCQ (scale)</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.42 (2.95)</td>
<td>(r_s = .61, p &lt; .001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8.14 (1.82)</td>
<td>(U = 22.5, p &lt; .001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.37 (2.74)</td>
<td>(U = 34.0, p &lt; .001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.97 (1.91)</td>
<td>(U = 34.0, p &lt; .001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.32 (2.84)</td>
<td>(U = 34.0, p &lt; .001)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First, the relationship between the quality of the contact as perceived by the participants and the frequency of the contact was examined. A bivariate Spearman correlation analysis showed a strong and positive correlation between the Rating of Contact Quality and the Frequency of Contact (\(r_s = .61, p < .001\)). A high rating of the contact was associated with a high frequency, which indicates that the effects of frequency and appreciation of the contact were intertwined in this study. This is understandable because contact with a local host is a new tie that needed to be established. For that reason, it is likely that the more frequent the contact became, the more the contact developed, and the higher it was rated on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high). It is impossible, however, to state anything with regard to cause and effect of the quality and frequency of the contact, because it is also plausible that a positive perception of the contact lead to more frequent encounters, or that they mutually influenced each other.

Second, it was examined whether the participant perception of the quality of the contact (Rating of Contact Quality) was confirmed by the outsider perspective, represented by the categorical variables Impression of Contact Quality (‘high quality contact’ vs. ‘medium or low quality contact’) and Contribution of the Contact (‘yes’ vs. ‘no or very little’). A Mann-Whitney \(U\)-test was done to check whether expatriates who were seen by two independent raters as having high quality contact would rate the contact significantly higher than expatriates who were assessed as having medium or low quality contact (see Table 4.8). A similar
analysis was done for *Contribution of the Contact* (‘yes’ vs. ‘no, or very little’): would expatriates who indicated that the contact had contributed to the assignment rate the contact with their host significantly higher than expatriates who did not signal a contribution of the contact to their assignment? Both questions can be answered affirmatively. When the *Impression of Contact Quality* was high, the *Rating of Contact Quality* was also significantly higher than when the *Impression of Contact Quality* was low ($U = 22.5$, $p < .001$). The same was the case for *Contribution of the Contact*. If the contact was assessed as having contributed to the international assignment, the *Rating of Contact Quality* was significantly higher than if the contact was assessed as contributing nothing or very little ($U = 34.0$, $p < .001$). In conclusion, these results show that the participants’ perception of the quality of the contact was confirmed by the outsider perception.

The above findings show that the three approaches to the quality of the contact between the expatriate and the host were strongly related and all conveyed a similar indication of the quality of the contact. If the expatriates scored the contact with their host at the top end of the 10-point scale in the questionnaires, then the raters also had the impression that the contact was good and that it contributed to the assignment. In these cases the frequency of the contact was usually also high. This shows that the participants’ perception of the quality of the contact, *Rating of Contact Quality*, may be used as an indication of the quality of the contact between expatriates, partners and hosts.

For that reason, *Rating of Contact Quality*, which clearly divided the experimental group into two (‘high quality contact’ and ‘medium or low quality contact’), was used to create the new variable *Contact Quality*. The latter variable also took the control group into account as being ‘without host’, resulting in three categories: 1. High quality of the contact, rating ≥ 7 ($n = 21$); 2. Low quality of the contact, rating ≤ 5 ($n = 12$); and 3. Without host ($n = 32$). *Contact Quality* was used to assess to what extent the quality of the contact between expatriate, partner and host was related to the success of the international assignment (RQ2). This variable served as basis for the analyses reported in Chapter 6 ‘Does the quality of the contact matter?’

### 4.2.3 Procedure

The participants who were put in touch with a host were asked to meet their host regularly, at least once a month, preferably twice in the first month to get to know each other. A number of activities were suggested on the website of the project to indicate what was expected and to offer ideas. The activities suggested ranged from having dinner or going to the cinema to more touristic outings such as a visit to Keukenhof¹⁴. The general message was that the expatriates should have a good time with their hosts, emphasising the quality

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¹⁴ *Keukenhof* is a historic park with tulips and other flowers in the west of the Netherlands ([www.keukenhof.nl](http://www.keukenhof.nl))
of the contact, working on the assumption that a local host would have more impact if the contact was good, or at least that an effect would then be more clearly visible.

To thank the participants and to stimulate their commitment to the project, several small tokens of appreciation were sent throughout the project. Expatriates, partners and hosts received a handwritten postcard of a Dutch museum to thank them for their effort each time they had filled in a questionnaire. After one month the expatriates and partners also received a voucher for a discount on a hotel stay in the Netherlands. Also, four Dutch recipes – translated into English and French – were sent to the expatriates and their partners, one for each season. After four months of participation in the project the local hosts received a Dutch shopping guide of one of the main cities in the Netherlands.

Participants could register from October 2005 until April 2008, and for that reason the financial crisis of autumn 2008 did not impact on the present study because the data collection had finished.

Sample
The expatriate participants of the study were solicited through a variety of channels. An important means were the expatriate fairs that are organised every autumn in The Hague and Amsterdam, such as the Welcome to The Netherlands fair (The Hague) and the I Am Not a Tourist fair (Amsterdam). These resulted in a large number of new registrations. In addition, the information was spread through various institutions and associations – expatriate associations and (online) networks such as Access and the British Society, multinational companies and international schools. Information about the project was placed on various websites (such as www.thehagueonline.com), in company newsletters and in local newspapers such as Statenkoerier in The Hague. Some companies forwarded the information to their expatriates (e.g. Radboud University Nijmegen Medical Centre). Also, social networking sites such as Facebook were used to approach expatriates.

Hosts were found mainly through personal networks and through snowball sampling. Some participants were reached through an Immigration fair in Utrecht, the Netherlands, which also attracted Dutch people who wished to go abroad for study or work purposes.

Registration
Expatriates could register through a website that was specifically set up for this project15. Upon receiving this registration form (Appendix 3 Registration form), a letter thanking them for their interest in the project was sent to their home address. This letter contained an enclosure with more detailed information about the project as well as a letter of informed consent, which needed to be sent back to confirm their participation in the project. At this point in the registration process, the expatriate was randomly assigned to one of the conditions to facilitate finding a suitable host as soon as the expatriates confirmed their

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15 Interestingly, in the case of couples, it was often the partner who registered (66%), indicating their need for such a project. In most of these cases the partner was female.
participation. If the participant did not confirm or dropped out at a later stage, his or her place in one of the groups was reassigned to the first newly registered expatriate at that particular time. The participants were then asked by email to fill in a form with questions (e.g. about hobbies) that could help to match the expatriate to a suitable host (Appendix 4 Matching form). This same email contained a request to fill in the first questionnaire of the project. These letters and emails can be found in Appendix 5a (Participant communication – communication with expatriates and partners).

Each confirmed participant was assigned a personal code to be able to link all the questionnaires to the same participant, making it possible to analyse their progress during the project (e.g. E7 for an English expatriate and P7 for his or her partner). The questionnaires were administered through the internet, unless someone preferred to receive the questionnaire on paper at home, which was the case for 15% of the expatriates (n = 10) but for none of the partners. In the latter case, a stamped addressed envelope was included so that they could send back the questionnaire free of charge. The online questionnaires were password protected, to make sure participants would not fill in the wrong questionnaire. Some participants took more time to fill in the questionnaires than others, and for that reason reminders were sent out each week, if necessary. When one did not reply to the first reminder, a hard copy of the questionnaire was sent to the expatriate (0 months: 8%; 5 months: 15%; 9 months: 5%), the partner (0, 5 and 9 months: 14%) and the host (9 months: 3%) to facilitate the process.

The registration procedure for hosts was similar to that of expatriates (Appendix 5b Participant communication – communication with hosts). Hosts also received a letter of informed consent which they needed to sign to confirm their participation in the project. Upon receipt of this letter hosts were asked to fill in a matching form (Appendix 4) with questions to be able to match them with an expatriate. They then received an email thanking them for this information and informing them that the researcher would be in touch again as soon as a suitable expatriate was found.

About 50 hosts registered for the project. As the registered expatriates were immediately assigned to the experimental or control group, it was possible to establish whether there was a need to search for new local hosts or whether the existing registrations would suffice. In the first case, an email with an anonymous description of the expatriate was sent to the personal networks to look for suitable hosts. As soon as the expatriate had confirmed and was asked to fill in the first questionnaire, the intended hosts were informed of this by email. Not all registered hosts could be put in touch with an expatriate, usually because of the remoteness of their location (e.g. in the north or south of the Netherlands) that was not near to any of the expatriates participating in this project. Matched hosts lived 10 km on average from their expatriate, and never more than 50 km.
Matching expatriates and partners to local hosts

After completing the first questionnaire, the participants were informed either that they would immediately be put in touch with a host (this became the experimental group), or after a delay of nine months (this became the control group). This was done to ensure that knowledge of whether one would have immediate contact with a host or not would influence the scores on the first questionnaire. For expatriates in the control group the nine months of the project were counted from the date on which they had filled in the first questionnaire. The starting date of the experimental group, however, was the date on which the expatriate and partner were put in touch with the host so as to avoid delays in filling in the questionnaire on either side, which would result in less than nine months of contact with the local host.

The researcher tried to find a suitable host within a reasonable amount of time, matching primarily for age, family situation and place of residence. The matching process was mostly guided by pragmatic considerations such as closeness of place of residence, as was suggested by Cox (2005), and by the similarity-attraction hypothesis (Byrne, 1971). This theory suggests that the more similar the expatriate, partner and host are, the more their contact will develop. For that reason, expatriates, partners and hosts were matched as closely as possible with regard to age and family situation and, if possible, similar interests. The limited database of available hosts meant that it was not possible to match in more detail. Another issue, which is consistently pointed out in the mentor literature (Kram, 1985; Noe, 1988; Wycherley & Cox, 2008), is that a male-female mentoring dyad may be less effective because of stereotypes, a preference to mentor someone from the same sex, and the possibility that the relationship could be perceived as sexual in nature. As a local host was not intended to be a love match and the study did not want to give this impression, the same reasoning was followed here in adopting the principle of not matching single expatriates to single hosts from the other gender if it could be avoided.

Expatriates in the experimental group were put in touch with their host through an email in English, containing a short introduction of both parties to facilitate the first contact. The participants could then decide in which language they would communicate. The dominant language of the exchanges was English because French participants were sufficiently fluent in English. Two French expatriates did not speak English very well, and therefore they were matched with a host who spoke good French. To monitor the contact during the project, the researcher enquired of the host about every four or six weeks via email how the contact was going. This contact was kept with the hosts rather than with the expatriates in order to minimise the possible effects of this contact. At the end of the project participants in the control group were asked whether they were still interested in being put in touch with a host. For less than half of these expatriates (41%) this was indeed the case. They were put in touch with a host using the same procedure as described above. They were no longer research subjects and did not have to fill in any more questionnaires.

16 The fact that not all of the expatriates and partners would immediately be put in touch with a host was pointed out several times before one started in the project.
4.2.4 Design and data analysis

The present section outlines the procedure with regard to the random assignment to the experimental and control groups (4.2.4.1), the statistical analyses that were done in this study (4.2.4.2), the moderating variables (4.2.4.3) and covariates (4.2.4.4) that were taken into account and the treatment of missing values (4.2.4.5).

4.2.4.1 Random assignment

Expatriates were randomly assigned to the experimental group and control group. Since the project ran for two and a half years, random assignment was done in blocks of ten, of which five expatriates were assigned to the experimental group and the other five to the control group. This was done to ensure an equal distribution of both groups over time.

The aim of random assignment is to create two groups whose attributes are equivalent, so that any effect found is due to the experimental manipulation and not to characteristics of individuals in the group. Random assignment eliminates systematic sources of bias, but it does not guarantee that the experimental group and the control group are completely alike (Levin, 1999, p. 13). This was checked by one-way ANOVA-analyses comparing expatriates and partners with host to those without host. These showed that the experimental and control groups did not differ significantly on most of the dependent variables at baseline (0 months). The only exception was that expatriates with host scored significantly higher on Psychological Adjustment at baseline than expatriates without host ($F(1,63) = 4.54, p < .05$) (see Appendix 6 for the descriptives of expatriates and partners on the dependent variables).

4.2.4.2 Statistical analyses

This experimental study was set up with a pre-test – post-test design (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). The first post-test was scheduled after five months to ensure that at this point of time expatriates would have met their host at least a couple of times so that a possible effect would be distinguishable. The final post-test was done after nine months. Almost half of the expatriates (48%) started in the four months between mid-August and mid-December; the other half was distributed over the rest of the year.

To determine the impact of a local host on the dependent variables over time (RQ1: Chapter 5) Repeated Measures analyses (within-subject MANOVAs) with Time and Host (yes, no) as factors were conducted for expatriates and partners. It has to be noted that sometimes only two levels of Time were available. Similar Repeated Measures analyses were performed to analyse the impact of Contact Quality (High quality, Low quality, Without host) between the expatriate and the host (RQ2: Chapter 6).
Chapter 6 first compares 1. High quality vs. Without host, and then if relevant also 2. Low quality vs. Without host and 3. High quality vs. Low quality. This was done because the quality of the contact can play three roles (see section 3.4), which are depicted visually in Figure 4.1:

1. **Linear effect of Contact Quality**: It is possible that the higher the quality of contact with the host, the greater the benefit experienced by the expatriates. This might be the case if both the comparisons High quality vs. Without host and Low quality vs. Without host are significant. In these cases the third comparison, High quality vs. Low quality is also examined to see whether expatriates with high quality contact also benefited more than expatriates with low quality contact, which would indicate a linear effect of Contact Quality (Figure 4.1 A).

2. **Curvilinear effect of Contact Quality**: Contact with a host would be beneficial only if high quality contact is established. This conclusion might be drawn if only the first comparison, High quality vs. Without host, is significant, suggesting a curvilinear effect of Contact Quality (Figure 4.1 B).

3. **No effect of Contact Quality**: Expatriates would benefit equally from the contact with the host, regardless of the quality of the contact. This might be the case if the first two comparisons High quality vs. Without host and Low quality vs. Without host are significant, but the third comparison, High quality vs. Low quality, is not. This would indicate that there is no effect of Contact Quality (Figure 4.1 C).

![Figure 4.1 Three possible roles of Contact Quality](image)

The reader may have noticed that I have outlined possibilities, not certainties. An important observation in this regard is that the data in this study was collected to answer the first research question *(Does contact with a local host contribute to the success of an expatriate assignment?)*. Although it was clear at the outset that the quality of the contact between

**Methodology**
expatriate and host might play an important role (hence RQ2), it was impossible to foresee how this would play out in the experiment. The main problem this presented was the limited sample of the group with low quality contact (n = 12). Reduced statistical power heightens the chance of falsely accepting the null-hypothesis (Cohen, 1988). For example, when comparing Low quality (n = 12) with No contact (n = 32), it is possible that the null-hypothesis \( H_0 \) (Expatriates with low quality contact do not differ from expatriates without host) is falsely accepted because the difference is not statistically significant. For that reason, the results reported in Chapter 6 should be interpreted with caution. The analyses with \textit{Contact Quality} were not performed for partners, because the sample size \( (N = 23) \) was too small to allow useful analyses.

In three cases, the available data warranted other techniques. First, when only one measurement was available, as was the case with \textit{Most Recent Actual Performance Evaluation}, a univariate General Linear Model with \textit{Host} (yes, no) as fixed factor was performed. Second, in the case of \textit{Host National Social Support}, no baseline level (0 months) was available. Since expatriates were randomly assigned to the experimental and control groups, it can be assumed that both groups had the same level of \textit{Host National Social Support} at the start of their participation in the study (0 months). Therefore, univariate General Linear Models were performed for each of the available data waves (5 and 9 months) to compare the experimental and control groups on the dependent variable. In addition, Repeated Measures analyses with \textit{Time} and \textit{Host} or \textit{Contact Quality} were done to analyse the development of \textit{Host National Social Support} between five and nine months. A third exception was \textit{Friendship}: in order to answer the question whether the contact with a host can develop into a strong tie (RQ1a), whether the expatriates and partners reported their host as one of their five most important friends or acquaintances after five and nine months was examined.

For each quantitative analysis three moderating variables, \textit{Sex} (male, female), \textit{Partner} (yes, no) and \textit{Children} (yes, no), were added to the analyses to see whether they would obscure a possible effect of a local host (4.2.4.3). This was reported if it was indeed the case. In addition, covariates were added to the analyses when they were found to be related to a particular dependent variable, because in such a case they may be a confounding factor (4.2.4.4).

The level of significance throughout this study is \( p = .05 \). In view of the relatively small sample \( (N_{\text{expatriates}} = 65; N_{\text{partners}} = 23) \), it is possible that interesting effects were not significant at a .05 level due to insufficient statistical power (Clark-Carter, 2003; Cohen, 1988). For that reason, this study also examined patterns that are theoretically plausible because they could add important insights with regard to the first and second research question. Furthermore, Clark-Carter (2003, p. 638) advocates the use of effect size \( (\eta^2) \) to be able to interpret statistically significant findings, which has been done in this study. Boundary values for small, medium, and large effect sizes in the present study are .01, .06, and .14 (Cohen, 1988, p. 283).
4.2.4.3 Moderating variables

Three moderating variables, *Sex* (male, female), *Partner* (yes, no) and *Children* (yes, no) were added to each analysis (Appendix 3 Registration form, items 7, 10, 11, 14 and 15). *Sex, Partner* and *Children* might moderate the effect of a local host on the dependent variables: for example, the effect of a local host on adjustment could be different for male and female expatriates. Research on female expatriates (Caligiuri & Tung, 1999) focuses mostly on the question whether female expatriates can function as well as male expatriates on international assignments. Some of these articles also highlight differences between male and female expatriates. For example, Caligiuri and Tung (1999) found sex differences for cross-cultural adjustment and Selmer and Leung (2003) showed that female expatriates score even better than male expatriates with regard to *Interaction* and *Work Adjustment*. Also, having a partner or a family might change the way in which one handles the transition to a new country. Family in general, and having a partner specifically, are important factors for the success of the international assignment. Black et al. (1991, p. 295) list the adjustment of the spouse and family of the expatriate as the second major non-work factor, after cultural novelty, for the adjustment of the expatriate. A spouse is one of the most important strong ties and is an important source of social support (Adelman, 1988; Ward et al., 2001). Expatriates without a partner do not have this source of support and will need to find other ways to cope and, for that reason, contact with a local host might be especially important for them. For these reasons, *Sex, Partner* and *Children* were taken into account in the analyses to check for possible moderating effects. The variables *Partner* and *Children* were taken into account separately, even though there was 73% overlap between the two variables, because merging them into one variable would result in a loss of information.

4.2.4.4 Covariates

A list of covariates was included in this study to control for possible differences between the experimental and the control group that could occur despite the random assignment to both conditions (section 4.2.4.1). First, controlling for covariates ensures that the effect that is found is actually a real effect and not caused by the covariate. Second, controlling for covariates could reveal more clearly the effect of a local host. Covariates were entered only in the analyses if an indication was found that these covariates were related to a change between baseline level and nine months of the relevant dependent variable (p < .10), which suggested that a particular covariate might possibly be a confounding factor. Table 4.9 and 4.10 on pages 112 and 113 contain the overview of the moderating variables and covariates and their relationship with the dependent variables.

The following covariates were taken into account:

- *Length of Stay in the Netherlands before Participation* in months. Not every expatriate participated upon arrival; some only found out about the project after almost a year. To
Table 4.9 Overview of moderating variables and covariates and their relationship to a change over time (0 – 9 months) of the dependent variables for expatriates

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For nominal and ordinal variables t-tests or ANOVAs were performed (e.g. with Sex (male, female) or Partner (yes, no) as independent variable), whereas Pearson correlations (Spearman for not normally distributed variables) were computed for continuous variables. Significance is indicated when p < .10.
Table 4.10 Overview of moderating variables and covariates and their relationship to a change over time (0 – 9 months) of the dependent variables for *partners*

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Abbreviations: 'Length' = Length of Stay in the Netherlands before Participation; 'Language' = Native Language; 'Internat. Exp.' = International Experience; 'Relocation' = Relocation Assistance; 'nom.' = nominal; 'ord.' = ordinal; 'cont.' = continuous; 'Intercultural Comm. Competence' = Intercultural Communication Competence.

For nominal and ordinal variables *t*-tests or ANOVAs were performed (e.g. with Sex (male, female) or Children (yes, no) as independent variable), whereas Pearson correlations (Spearman for not normally distributed variables) were computed for continuous variables. Significance is indicated when *p* < .10.
control for possible effects of this lapse of time, *Length of Stay in the Netherlands before Participation* was included (Appendix 3, Registration form, item 8).

*Age at the Start of the Project* in years (Appendix 4, Matching form, item 4 and 5). It seemed important to take age into account because older expatriates might perform better because of their more extensive work experience. For example, Van Bakel (2002) showed that older expatriates were more successful in the workplace and less homesick than younger expatriates.

*Schooling* of the expatriate was also assessed on a scale of 1 (*Some secondary school or less*) to 5 (*Postgraduate or beyond*). The expatriates scored mainly in categories 4 (*College graduate*) and 5 (*Postgraduate or beyond*), and for that reason *Schooling* was treated as a dichotomous covariate with the following two categories: “College graduate or below” and “Postgraduate or beyond” (Appendix 4, Matching form, item 7 and 8).

*Native Language* split the expatriates into two groups – expatriates with English or with French as a first language. This variable split the expatriates into an Anglo-Saxon and a Latin-European group, where the Anglo-Saxon cluster is closer to the Nordic cluster to which the Netherlands belongs, than the Latin-European group (Ronen & Shenkar, 1985; Ronen & Shenkar, 2010). This might cause more adjustment difficulties for the Latin-European group. Also, an additional barrier for expatriates with French as their first language in the Netherlands might be that English is the first foreign language of the Netherlands; fewer Dutch speak French, which might make adjustment more difficult.

*Nationality* of the expatriate and the partner was assessed by an open-ended item in the registration form (Appendix 3, Registration Form, item 12 and 13). This information was converted into a dichotomous variable with the categories “European” and “non-European” to express geographical proximity to the country of assignment, the Netherlands, which might make it easier to adjust.

*International Experience* is thought to facilitate adjustment (Black et al., 1991). It was measured by one item in the first questionnaire, asking how many months the expatriate had lived abroad before the present assignment (Appendix 2, Questionnaires, item I).

*Relocation Assistance* (‘yes’ or ‘no’): Research shows that support with administrative procedures can reduce uncertainty and stimulate general expatriate adjustment (Black et al., 1992). In the present study, expatriates were deemed to have had relocation assistance when their employer had hired a relocation agency or when they had used the relocation office within the company (e.g. Shell Outpost) (Appendix 2, Questionnaire, item II).

Finally, *Dutch Language Skills* (Appendix 4, Matching form, items 9 and 10), *Pre-departure Training* (Appendix 2, Questionnaires, item III) and *Duration of Assignment* (Appendix 3, Registration form, item 9) were also measured, but these covariates were excluded from the analyses. The first two were not taken into consideration because they showed too little variation: 89% of the expatriates spoke very little Dutch and only 6% received pre-departure training. *Duration of Assignment* was excluded because it was measured through an open-ended question that elicited answers that made it impossible to
Methodology

4.2.4.5 Missing values

Many studies have some missing observations; especially in the case of longitudinal research missing values are almost inevitable because participants may drop out during the project (Fitzmaurice, Laird, & Ware, 2004). The expatriate data in the present study (65 expatriates and 18 dependent variables) had 6% missing values. The data of the partner sample (23 partners and 15 dependent variables) was almost complete: only one response at one variable at the second data wave was missing (0.1%). The missing data of the expatriates can be attributed to four patterns:

1. Drop out: Drop out after five months due to relocation to another country or simply not answering the requests to fill in the questionnaire (missing: n = 6 at 9 months for 18 variables: 3.6% of responses missing on all the instruments over three data waves).

2. Most Recent Actual Performance Evaluation: Only 33 expatriates of a total of 65 had had a performance evaluation during the course of the project (missing: n = 32 at one variable at nine months: 1.1% of responses missing of all the measures over three data waves).

3. Random missing values: Some values were missing randomly across the sample and across the data waves (22 responses were randomly missing across a total of 18 variables and 3 data waves: 0.7% of responses missing on all the instruments over three data waves).

4. Missing at 0 months: In first instance Desire to Terminate the Assignment was not added to the baseline questionnaire because expatriates could participate initially only if they had arrived in the Netherlands less than six months ago, and it was regarded as too early in the assignment to assess this variable. When the criterion of inclusion in the project was extended to one year maximum in the Netherlands (see section 4.2.1), it was decided to add this variable to the first questionnaire (missing: n = 17 at one variable at the first data wave: 0.6% of responses missing on all the instruments over three data waves).

In addition, some of the covariates were missing for both expatriates (1.5%) and partners (1.1%). The missing values of the expatriates occurred at Relocation Assistance (n = 7) and International Experience (n = 1). The partners (1.1%) also had one missing value at International Experience (n = 1), as well as at Schooling (n = 1).

Following the suggestions of Fitzmaurice et al. (2004, p. 392), the missing values of the dependent variables were considered as Missing At Random (MAR) and not Missing Completely at Random (MCAR), because it could not be assumed that the missing cases were a random subset of the sample. One approach to missing data is complete case analysis.
in which only the participants who have filled in all three questionnaires are included in the analyses. However, this is usually the least efficient method (Dow & Eff, 2009, p. 206; Fitzmaurice et al., 2004, p. 392), especially in research with small samples. Therefore, the best approach to handle missing values in this study is Multiple Imputation, which substitutes the values that were not recorded with imputed values. This approach takes into account the inherent uncertainty caused by the missing values and tests several possibilities, had they been filled in. According to Rubin (1987, p. 2) these values are “acceptable values representing a distribution of possibilities”. A set of ten plausible values were imputed, which is sufficient to obtain realistic estimates of the sampling variability (Fitzmaurice et al., 2004, p. 393). Consecutively, for each analysis mean $F$, $p$ and $\eta^2$ scores were calculated over the ten sets, which are reported in the following chapters.

4.3 Qualitative exploration

The previous section focused on the quantitative methodology which was used to examine whether a local host had a positive impact on the success of an international assignment (RQ1) and the role of the quality of the contact between the expatriate and the host (RQ2). We now turn to the methodology that is used to gain more insight into the way in which a local host contributed and how the effect can be maximised (RQ3). A variety of sources were used to gain insight into these aspects. Appendix 7 contains an overview of participants in this research project and their participation in the interview and diary part of this study. Section 4.3.1 focuses on the interviews that were held with expatriates, partners and hosts, while section 4.3.2 explains the methodology of the weekly diary that was kept by most of the partners. Section 4.3.3 elaborates on the remaining qualitative methodologies, such as the open ended questions in the questionnaires. The chapter finishes with an overview of the qualitative data analysis (4.3.4) that is used to answer the third research question of this study: Which aspects promote high quality contact between expatriate, partner and local host?

4.3.1 Interviews

An important way to gain more insight into how the contact with a local host worked out is to ask the participants how they experienced it. A semi-structured interview offers the possibility of probing beyond superficial answers to search for in-depth explanations.

Participants
As the goal of the interviews was to focus on the contact with a host, only expatriates and partners who were put in touch with a host either during the project or after completion of the project were interviewed. The participants were selected in such a way that the sample consisted of participants with different characteristics and different situations with regard
to the contact with the host: participants with high quality contact as well as low quality contact, participants from different countries, single or with family and living in The Hague or elsewhere in the Netherlands, were incorporated in the sample. The hosts were also taken into account, because they could throw light on the other side of the picture. Sometimes several participants of one match were interviewed to see the same contact from different perspectives: in three cases both the expatriate and the partner were interviewed separately, and in one case the expatriate and her host.

A total of ten expatriates, four partners and five Dutch hosts were interviewed (N = 19). Most of the 14 expatriates and partners were part of the experimental group; only one couple was put in touch with their host after completion of the project and was interviewed three months later. French (n = 5), U.S. American (n = 4) and British (n = 2) expatriates and partners were the top three nationalities that were interviewed. Most of these participants had a partner (84%) and two-third also had children (63%). More than three quarters (79%) of the interviewees lived in the western part of the Netherlands – The Hague (47%), Amsterdam (21%) or Rotterdam (11%). The participants were highly educated with an average of 4.21 on a scale of 1 (Some secondary school or less) to 5 (Postgraduate or beyond).

**Instrument**
The semi-structured interviews were conducted with the help of an interview guide, outlining important topics to be addressed (Appendix 8). Similar guides in French and Dutch were used for the interviews with French expatriates and partners and Dutch hosts.

**Procedure**
Directly after filling in the third and last questionnaire, some of the expatriates, partners and hosts were asked for an interview about their experiences in the project. None of them refused to participate in this part of the project. The participants were interviewed within two months after completing the last questionnaire of the project. The interviews were held at a time and place that was most convenient for the interviewee, which usually was at the workplace or at the home of the expatriate, partner or host. The interviews were conducted in the first language of the participant; they were taped with the permission of the interviewee. Subsequently, the interviews were transcribed word for word by the researcher and an assistant. A third person, native speaker of French, was asked to clarify some portions of the French interviews that were difficult to understand. Certain parts of the interviews were edited grammatically for clarity. French quotes used in this dissertation were translated by the researcher and corrected by two bilingual English-French speakers. A similar procedure was used for French quotes from the diaries, questionnaires and emails.
4.3.2 Diary

If the expatriate had a partner, the partner was asked to keep a diary during their participation in the project to gain insight into the process of adjustment to a new country on a week-to-week basis. Most of the partners did so (74%; 17 of 23 partners) and even some of the expatriates volunteered (11%; 7 of 65 expatriates). To answer the third research question (*RQ3: Which aspects promote high quality contact between expatriate, partner and host?*), only the diaries of the experimental group were taken into account, because in those cases the diaries provided additional information on the content and the quality of the contact with the host. The diaries kept by expatriates (n = 4) and partners (n = 9) of the control group were used to illustrate the findings of expatriates without host in Chapters 5 and 6. These diaries are not taken into account in the present section.

**Participants**

Eight partners (90%) and three expatriates (9%) of the experimental group agreed to keep a weekly diary chronicling their participation in the project. Only ten percent of the partners who were asked to participate refused to do so. Almost everyone completed the diary during the nine months of the project; only one partner dropped out after 15 weeks. Almost half of all participants were French and filled in the diary in French, whereas the other two main nationalities were U.S. American and British (each 25%). The participants were all female; 67% had children. Their age was almost identical to the age distribution of the expatriate sample: the diary participants were 34 years old on average. Half of the participants lived in The Hague (50%), with another 25% in Amsterdam. Most of the diary participants had some form of higher education or beyond (83%).

**Instrument**

A diary outline with prompting questions was created (Appendix 9) for this study. Of the five prompting questions included in the diary outline, one was important to answer the third research question (*Which aspects promote high quality contact between expatriate, partner and host?*): “Have you met the host the past week? If so, what have you done and what was your impression?” The participants could take as much space as they would like to answer this question.

**Procedure**

After the partner had filled in the first questionnaire of the project, he or she was asked to also participate in the diary part of the project. The email explained that this would entail the participant sending an email, facilitated by some prompting questions, once a week during the nine months of this project. This email could be as long (or short) as the participant wanted. If no reply to this proposal was obtained, a second email was sent out, this time featuring a quote from one of the diaries that had already been filled in and
Methodology

stressing the value of the information that could be obtained through such a diary. As soon as the partner or expatriate agreed to participate, he or she received the first outline by email (Appendix 9). The participant was asked to fill in the diary until the project ended officially with the third and last questionnaire. The number of weeks that the diary was kept ranged from 34 to a maximum of 40 weeks, depending on how fast the participant replied to the request to participate in this part of the project.

On Thursday of each week, a new outline was sent out asking the participant to reply the next Monday at the latest. A reminder was sent out each Tuesday, asking the participant to reply to the email before Thursday morning, when the new outline for that current week would be sent out. Some participants replied every weekend, others needed the reminder almost every week. Also, all participants were abroad at least once during the project, in which case they would not fill in the diary for a number of weeks as the diary focused on their life in the Netherlands. Other reasons why a diary would not be filled in were illness, or a family visit which took up too much time to be able to reply to the diary outline. The diaries also varied in the amount of information they contained, some participants being more diligent than others. Also, some participants started out enthusiastically, but gradually their stories became shorter until in the end only a ‘yes’ or a ‘no’ was answered to some of the questions.

4.3.3 Additional qualitative information

Apart from interviews and diaries some other qualitative information was gathered during the study. First, the questionnaires filled in by expatriates, partners and hosts featured some open-ended questions. Second, the researcher kept in touch with the hosts by email to monitor the contact, as was explained in section 4.2.3. Occasionally an expatriate or partner would email the researcher without being prompted and these emails were also taken into account. These two methods are described in the present section.

Participants

For a detailed description of the participants, please see section 4.2.1. Most of expatriates, partners and hosts filled in all the questionnaires and replied to the monitoring emails.

Instruments and procedure

Questionnaires

In the second and third questionnaire of the expatriate and partner and in the questionnaire of the host some open-ended questions were added enquiring into the frequency of the contact with the host, the type of activities and whether the participant appreciated the contact with the host and thought it was helpful (Appendix 2a, expatriates and partners:
About every four to six weeks the researcher sent an email to the host asking how the contact was progressing. The researcher endeavoured to make this email as casual as possible, for example by asking about a recent holiday, so as not to create the impression of monitoring too strictly. The purpose was twofold: not only could this email stimulate the host to get in touch again with the expatriate and meet up, it could also provide valuable information about the contact between the expatriate, partner and the host.

4.3.4 Data analysis

The qualitative information gathered in the interviews, diaries, questionnaires and emails was used in two ways. First, it was used to construe the outsider perspective on the quality of the contact between the expatriate and the host (RQ2: To what extent does quality of contact between expatriate, partner and local host have an effect on the success of the expatriate assignment?), which was used in the quantitative analyses (see section 4.2.2.6 for a detailed explanation). Second, this information was used in a case study to explore how to improve the intervention of putting expatriates in touch with a local host, thereby answering the third research question of this study (RQ3: Which aspects promote high quality contact between expatriate, partner and host?).

The core strength of case study method is exploration and description (David, 2006), which is why this method was chosen for the third research question. The subject of the case study was the experimental group; a case study method may be applied to organisations or communities as well as individuals, as long as the object of study is a “coherent entity” (David, 2006, p. XXV). The analysis focused specifically on the catalysts and barriers to illustrate what facilitated or hindered the development of the contact between expatriate, partner and host. Also, as similarity and geographical proximity were important aspects taken into account during matching (section 4.2.3), expatriates were compared with their hosts on three aspects:

- **Age** was measured in years between the age of the expatriate and the host.
- **Family Situation** measured the dissimilarity with regard to having a partner and children, resulting in two categories: 1. similar and 2. not similar. If the expatriate had a child and the host did not, or if the expatriate had a partner and the host did not – or the other way around – then the expatriate was assigned to the category “not similar”.
- **Proximity** was measured in kilometres between the addresses of the expatriate and host.

To be able to use the available qualitative data for this case study, the interviews were transcribed and the qualitative information was extracted from the diaries, open-ended
questions and emails, and was gathered together in a document for each expatriate and partner.

Moreover, in order to examine whether some catalysts and barriers were more important than others, the pairs with the highest and lowest quality contact were described (section 7.3). These cases were selected by taking a maximum of five highest and lowest scores based on a composite rating by the expatriate, partner (if applicable) and host after nine months. This composite score showed the end evaluation of all parties involved in the contact. This yielded four expatriates with the highest quality contact, rating the contact a 9 or higher on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high), and four expatriates with the lowest quality contact, assessing the contact lower than 4 on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high). The selection of the fifth highest and lowest quality contact was not possible, because numbers 5, 6 and 7 of highest quality contact and numbers 5, 6, 7 and 8 of lowest quality contact had the exact same score (respectively 8.75 and 4), making it arbitrary to determine based on these scores which of these cases would be fifth in rank. For that reason, the present study examined only the eight cases with the highest and lowest quality contact in more detail. These eight expatriates are shown in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11 Highest and lowest contact quality from the combined perspective of expatriate, partner and host on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Rating*</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Rating*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>E2 + P2</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>E25 + P25</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>E46</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>E50 + P50</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>E59</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>E49</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>E57 + P57</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>E18</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* based on the final judgement of the expatriate, partner and host after nine months

This chapter discussed the methodology used to answer the research questions of this study. The experiment was set up to answer the first research question (RQ1: Does contact with a local host contribute to the success of an expatriate assignment?), for which hypotheses 1-7 and RQ1a+b were formulated. These results are reported in Chapter 5. The experiment in combination with qualitative methodology was used to answer the second research question (RQ2: To what extent does quality of the contact between expatriate, partner and local host have an effect on the success of the expatriate assignment?), which is dealt with in Chapter 6. The qualitative analysis is used to answer the third research question of this study (RQ3: Which aspects promote high quality contact between expatriate, partner and host?). These results are presented in Chapter 7 and could provide suggestions on how to maximise the impact of a local host on the success of an international assignment.
Chapter 5

Does a local host matter?
Chapter 5

Host expatriates without contact with locals increase expatriate openness. Social support measures showed significant effect on measured impact with males and one female. Analysis of female partner data showed Social Support effect on measured impact. Analysis of Social Support interaction with Emotion shown in admission analysis for improved performance. Table 5.1 shows admission analysis with significant impact of Social Support during first six months.
Does a local host matter?

The present chapter seeks to answer the first research question: Does contact with a local host contribute to the success of an expatriate assignment? Following the arguments of chapter 3, it is expected that a local host has a positive impact on the success of an international assignment (H1–3), social support (H4–5 and RQ1a) and intercultural communication competence (RQ1b and H6–H7). A host can offer social support and also help expatriates and partners to learn about cultural differences and practical matters in the foreign country. It is plausible that this will help the expatriate adjust, which in turn could have a positive effect on their job performance. The following quote reveals that for this expatriate the contact with his host contributed to his well-being. This chapter reports whether the randomised controlled experiment also shows this, both for expatriates and their partners.

[1] “I would say so [that the contact with the host helped]. Having another friend and doing the stuff we do [...] contributes to my overall well-being which has meant I felt settled and secure and happy here.” [E46]17

The chapter starts with a short description of the type of activities that hosts undertook with their expatriates (5.1). Section 5.2 deals with the results with regard to the success of the international assignment (Adjustment and Performance), followed by the impact of a local host on Social Support (5.3) and Intercultural Communication Competence (5.4). Section 5.5 gives an overview of the results for both expatriates and partners and these are summarised in Table 5.13 at the end of this chapter (page 159).

5.1 Contact with a local host: activities

Thirty-three expatriates were put in touch with a local host and they undertook a great variety of activities together (see Table 5.1 on page 126). Many went for drinks or had dinner, either in a restaurant or at home; some also took the opportunity to explore the Netherlands. Expatriates, partners and hosts visited cities together or undertook activities such as wadlopen18 or a visit to a whisky brewery or the floral park Keukenhof. One host organised a Spanish cooking workshop for the expatriate, another host took the expatriate and partner to the local club to watch the Netherlands play soccer, and yet another host invited the expatriate to celebrate carnival in the south of the Netherlands. The expatriates sometimes also took the initiative: one expatriate took his host flying over the Netherlands in his own small plane. The contact took place mainly between expatriate, partner and host,

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17 The source of each quote is indicated, where I = interview, DW4 = diary week 4, E = email, Q2 = questionnaire after five months and Q3 = questionnaire after nine months.
18 Crossing the mud-flats of the Waddensea, a World Heritage site (www.dutch-frisian-islands.com)
but sometimes other people were present as well. Some hosts invited other friends for a meeting or an activity, or they invited the expatriate to a birthday party. In one case the expatriate and partner, whose parents were visiting, invited the hosts as well as the hosts’ parents to a barbecue at their house.

Table 5.1 Activities reported by expatriates, partners and hosts

| Flying, concerts, drinking and clubbing, shopping, cinema, boating, film at home, walks on the beach, watching tennis/football, ballet, parties, carnival, pancake party, raclette party, squash, sightseeing, cycling, dancing, playing tennis, playing the game Catan, birthday party, Spanish cooking workshop, World Press Photo exhibition, visit to museums by night during Museumnacht, Shakespeare Festival, museum Mauritshuis, lecture on the highlights of Dutch painting, royal palace ’t Loo, celebration of Guy Fawkes Night, museum Panorama Mesdag, Albert Cuyp market, Amsterdam Historical Museum, whiskey tasting, floral park Keukenhof, ecological market, Festival aan de Werf in Utrecht, Queen’s Day, Amersfoort, Gouda, Katwijk, Japanese garden, climbing St. Martin’s Cathedral in Utrecht, Delta Works, Boom Chicago, guided tour of Amsterdam, weekend on the island Ameland, and very many walks, dinners – both in restaurants and at home – and drinks. |

Overall, many of the contacts between expatriates, partners and hosts went well, although not all contacts established high quality contact (see 6.1). As every expatriate in the experimental group has been in touch with their local host at least once, it can be concluded that the experimental manipulation (contact with a local host) has succeeded for the expatriate sample. In the partner sample, two participants were excluded from the study because they had never met their host.

5.2 Adjustment and Performance

Does a local host impact on the success of the international assignment? This section reports the impact of a local host on Adjustment and Performance, together forming the success of the expatriate assignment (see 2.1). Appendix 6 provides the descriptives of the Adjustment and Performance variables for both expatriates and partners, split into with and without host.

The present study distinguishes between the affective and behavioural aspects of Adjustment, as was outlined in 3.3.1. The contribution of a local host to the affective aspect of Adjustment fits in a stress and coping perspective because a local host might provide social support that would help the expatriate and partner cope with the challenges of their international assignment and thereby benefit their Psychological Adjustment. A local host might also affect the behavioural aspect of Adjustment through exposure to the ways things

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19 Part of the results presented in this section is published in Van Bakel, Gerritsen and Van Oudenhoven (2011).
are done in the host country, which could increase Sociocultural Adjustment. Some of these benefits might pertain to the workplace and for that reason, expatriates might also improve in Performance.

Three hypotheses are tested in this section, of which the first two examined the affective and behavioural aspects of Adjustment:

**H1** The psychological adjustment of expatriates and partners with host increases more over time than the psychological adjustment of those without host.

**H2** The sociocultural adjustment of expatriates and partners with host increases more over time than the sociocultural adjustment of those without host.

The third hypothesis focused on the professional domain:

**H3** The performance of expatriates with host increases more over time than the performance of those without host.

In order to test these hypotheses, Repeated Measures analyses with *Time* (0, 5 and 9 months) and *Host* (yes, no) as independent variables were done for the Adjustment variables for expatriates and partners and for two of the three Performance variables for expatriates. As was explained in section 4.2.4.2, each analysis checked for possible moderating effects of *Sex, Partner* and *Children*; other covariates were added to refine the model only if they were relevant for that particular dependent variable (see Table 4.9 and 4.10 on pages 112 and 113). Some of the figures in this chapter might show a difference in baseline level of expatriates and partners with and without host. One-way ANOVA-analyses showed, however, that at the outset (0 months) those with host did not differ significantly from those without host on the dependent variables, except for *Psychological Health*.

No significant interaction effects of *Time* and *Host* were found for six of the seven adjustment variables (*Satisfaction with Life, Physical Health, Psychological Health, Sociocultural Adjustment, General Adjustment* and *Work Adjustment*) nor for two Performance variables (*Assess Own Performance* and *Desire to Terminate the Assignment*). Nor did a univariate General Linear Model for the third Performance variable, *Most Recent Performance Evaluation*, render a significant effect of a local host for expatriates. For these reasons, Hypothesis 2 and 3 were not supported. However, a local host had an effect on *Interaction Adjustment*, supporting Hypothesis 1. This result is discussed in section 5.2.1.
5.2.1 Interaction Adjustment

Interaction Adjustment is one of the three adjustment variables of the model of Black and colleagues (e.g. Black & Stephens, 1989), focusing on the psychological comfort with interacting with host nationals. It is expected that expatriates and partners who were put in touch with a local host adjusted more easily to this aspect of the psychological domain than expatriates and partners who were not put in touch with a host (H1).

A Repeated Measures analysis with Time (0, 5 and 9 months) and Host (yes, no) as factors showed a two-way interaction effect of Time and Host, controlling for the effects of Partner (yes, no), as well as a significant three-way interaction effect of Time, Host and Partner on Interaction Adjustment. The latter finding indicated a moderating effect of having a partner on Interaction Adjustment. Both effects are discussed below.

Effect of a local host on Interaction Adjustment of expatriates

Table 5.2 shows the Estimated Marginal Means of Interaction Adjustment for expatriates with and without a local host. A Repeated Measures analysis with Time (0, 5 and 9 months) and Host (yes, no) as independent variables showed that expatriates with a host increased more on Interaction Adjustment than expatriates who did not have a host \( (F(2,122) = 4.17, p < .05, \eta^2 = .06) \), controlling for the effects of Partner (yes, no). The difference between expatriates with and without host was significant when comparing 5 months with the baseline of 0 months \( (F(1,61) = 4.63, p < .05, \eta^2 = .07) \), and it was even clearer when the scores at 9 months were compared with the baseline level \( (F(1,61) = 8.62, p < .01, \eta^2 = .12) \). Both analyses controlled for the effects of Partner (yes, no).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>With host (n = 33)</th>
<th>Without host (n = 32)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 months</td>
<td>3.27 (.25)</td>
<td>3.52 (.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 months</td>
<td>4.30 (.30)</td>
<td>3.68 (.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 months</td>
<td>4.45 (.23)</td>
<td>3.70 (.24)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When examining the development over time for expatriates with and without host, separate Repeated Measures analyses with Time (0, 5 and 9 months) as factor, controlling for the effects of Partner (yes, no), showed that expatriates with a host increased significantly over time \( (F(2,62) = 17.55, p < .001, \eta^2 = .36) \), whereas the Interaction Adjustment of expatriates without a host did not show a significant increase. In short, a local host had a positive effect on Interaction Adjustment.

\[ \eta^2 \text{ is the partial eta squared, indicating the effect size. Boundary values for small, medium and large effect sizes are } .01, .06 \text{ and } .14; \text{ (Cohen, 1988, p. 283) (see 4.2.4.2).} \]
The moderating effect of having a partner

The Repeated Measures analysis reported above also revealed a significant three-way interaction effect of Time, Host and Partner ($F(2,122) = 3.42, p < .05, \eta^2 = .05$) that showed that the effect of a local host was different for expatriates with partner than for single expatriates. Having a partner or not moderated the impact of a local host on Interaction Adjustment. The Estimated Marginal Means of this analysis, split into Host and Partner, are shown in Table 5.3 and Figures 5.1 and 5.2 show the development over time on Interaction Adjustment of expatriates with partner and expatriates without partner.

Table 5.3 Interaction Adjustment of expatriates split into partner and host after 0, 5 and 9 months on a scale of 1 (low) to 7 (high) with Estimated Marginal Means and Standard Errors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Partner</th>
<th>Without partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With host (n = 20)</td>
<td>Without host (n = 22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 months</td>
<td>3.53 (.32)</td>
<td>3.11 (.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 months</td>
<td>4.29 (.37)</td>
<td>3.93 (.35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 months</td>
<td>4.65 (.29)</td>
<td>4.00 (.27)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For expatriates with partner a Repeated Measures analysis showed no significant interaction effect of Time (0, 5 and 9 months) and Host (yes, no). This indicates that expatriates with partner with and without host developed in a similar way on Interaction Adjustment, regardless of whether they had a host or not. These results are visualised in Figure 5.1, which shows that expatriates with partner, both with and without host, increased in Interaction Adjustment.
over time. This is confirmed by a Repeated Measures analysis with only Time (0, 5 and 9 months) as factor \((F(2,82) = 11.60, p < .001, \eta^2 = .22)\).

When turning to expatriates without partner (single expatriates), Figure 5.2 shows a different pattern for the group with host than for the group without host. A Repeated Measures analysis with Time (0, 5 and 9 months) and Host (yes, no) as factors showed a significant interaction effect of Time and Host \((F(1,20) = 6.28, p < .01, \eta^2 = .38)\). When examining the development over time, separate Repeated Measures analyses with only Time (0, 5 and 9 months) as factor revealed that single expatriates with host increased significantly on Interaction Adjustment \((F(2,24) = 9.30, p < .001, \eta^2 = .44)\), whereas single expatriates without host did not show an increase. These results show that a local host had a positive impact on the Interaction Adjustment of single expatriates.

The results reported so far show that a local host contributed positively to the Interaction Adjustment of expatriates, and specifically to expatriates who did not have a partner. Does a local host also have an impact on the Interaction Adjustment of partners? This question will be answered in the following subsection.

**Effect of a local host on Interaction Adjustment of partners**

Figure 5.3 pictures Interaction Adjustment of partners with and without host and Table 5.4 reports the Estimated Marginal Means. This data shows a similar pattern for partners as that reported for expatriates in Table 5.2: those with host seemed to increase more on Interaction Adjustment than those without host. The latter group even seemed to decrease somewhat on Interaction Adjustment. Although Figure 5.3 shows that partners with host started slightly higher than partners without host, an ANOVA-analysis with Host (yes, no) as factor showed that both groups did not differ significantly on Interaction Adjustment at that point in time (0 months).

**Table 5.4 Interaction Adjustment of partners with and without host after 0, 5 and 9 months on a scale of 1 (low) to 7 (high) with Estimated Marginal Means and Standard Errors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>With host ((n = 10))</th>
<th>Without host ((n = 13))</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 months</td>
<td>3.57 (.60)</td>
<td>3.18 (.91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 months</td>
<td>3.72 (.61)</td>
<td>3.17 (.92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 months</td>
<td>4.46 (.63)</td>
<td>2.60 (.95)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Does a local host matter?

Figure 5.3 Interaction Adjustment for partners with and without host after 0, 5 and 9 months on a scale of 1 (low) to 7 (high)

Whether the difference between partners with host and partners without host was significant was tested by a Repeated Measures analysis with Time (0, 5 and 9 months) and Host (yes, no) as independent variables and controlling for the effects of having Children (yes, no). The difference was not significant ($F(2, 18) = 2.43, p = .12, \eta^2 = .21$). A local host did not have a significant impact on the Interaction Adjustment of partners. However, further Repeated Measures analyses with only Time (0, 5 and 9 months) as factor did show a difference between the groups: partners with host increased significantly on Interaction Adjustment ($F(2, 8) = 5.72, p < .05, \eta^2 = .59$), while partners without host did not show an increase in Interaction Adjustment. This suggests that a local host did have an impact on the Interaction Adjustment of partners, which is further supported by an additional finding from the first Repeated Measures analysis of this paragraph: partners with host increased more in Interaction Adjustment specifically between five and nine months than partners without host ($F(1, 19) = 4.75, p < .05, \eta^2 = .20$) (see Figure 5.3). This indicates an effect of a local host in the longer term.

In view of the small sample, one should consider the possibility that the effect of a local host on the Interaction Adjustment of partners is not significant due to the limited sample of the study ($N = 23$). This idea is supported by the difference reported in the previous paragraph with regard to the development over time of each group: partners with host increased significantly on Interaction Adjustment over time, while partners without host did not. The sample is too small, however, to draw firm conclusions about whether the effect of a local host on Interaction Adjustment is indeed present for partners as well.

To summarise, a local host contributed positively to the Interaction Adjustment of expatriates, and a similar pattern was found for their partners, although the difference between partners with and without host was not significant. Contact with a local host facilitated the adjustment to interacting with host nationals, thereby supporting Hypothesis 1.
(The psychological adjustment of expatriates and partners with host increases more over time than the psychological adjustment of those without host). A U.S. American expatriate expressed how he learned from his Dutch host as follows:

[2] “I think that, you know, when I go back and tell people stories about the Dutch and I certainly do tell things about the office, but a lot of things I’ve learned about the Dutch I learned more from watching how the host family interacts with their kids, how they interact with their neighbours, how they serve their meals and have coffee, and snap the cookie jar shut.”

Interestingly, the findings also suggest that the host was not the only way to learn how to interact with host nationals and feel at ease doing so; having a partner was important as well. Expatriates with partner also increased in Interaction Adjustment if they did not have a local host, although the pattern is less pronounced than that of expatriates with partner who did have a local host (see Figure 5.1). For that reason, a host was especially beneficial for expatriates who did not have a partner because single expatriates only increased in Interaction Adjustment if they had a host (see Figure 5.2).

A possible explanation for the increase in Interaction Adjustment if the expatriate had a partner is that the partner might be an extra source of information about how to interact with host nationals, and so expatriates could also learn how to interact with host nationals from their partner and as a result feel more comfortable with them. Partners of expatriates become often more immersed in the local culture (Shaffer & Harrison, 2001) because they are the ones that arrange all kinds of practical matters while the expatriate is at work, which is often a very international environment. It is plausible that partners shared their experiences and the lessons that they learned when interacting with Dutch people with the expatriate, who then also learned about dos and don’ts in the interaction with host nationals.

5.2.2 Impact of a local host on Adjustment and Performance

The present section gives an overview of the impact of a local host on the success of the international assignment (Adjustment and Performance). Some support was found for Hypothesis 1 (Psychological Adjustment), but Hypotheses 2 (Sociocultural Adjustment) and 3 (Performance) were not confirmed.

Hypothesis 1 focused on the affective aspect of adjustment (Psychological Adjustment): if one had a host a larger increase over time in Psychological Adjustment was expected than if one did not have a host (H1). It was hypothesised that a local host could support the expatriate and partner and thereby could contribute to a sense of well-being. The positive impact of a local host on Interaction Adjustment supported this hypothesis. A local host, however, did not have an impact on the other variables of Psychological Adjustment.
Does a local host matter?

(Satisfaction with Life, Physical Health, Psychological Health, General Adjustment and Work Adjustment). For that reason, Hypothesis 1 was only partially supported. A possible explanation of the limited impact of a local host on Psychological Adjustment is that the stress & coping model (3.1.1) not only relies on adjustive resources such as social support, but also, for example, on personality. As the intervention of a local host specifically targeted the interaction with host nationals, it is not surprising that only an effect on Interaction Adjustment was found and not on the other variables.

Hypothesis 2 examined the behavioural aspects of Adjustment (Sociocultural Adjustment). An increase over time in sociocultural adjustment of expatriates and partner with host was expected compared to those without host (H2). This hypothesis was not supported, because no effect of a local host was found for Sociocultural Adjustment. This lack of effect might be explained by the fact that the instrument that measured Sociocultural Adjustment did not focus specifically on contact with host nationals, but on all the people with whom the expatriate associated, e.g. relatives, friends, acquaintances and colleagues (Appendix 2a, items 36-50). Furthermore it is possible that the culture learning that took place during the contact with the host was not substantial enough to result in an increase in Sociocultural Adjustment.

Hypothesis 3 concentrated on the professional aspect of the expatriate assignment (Performance): The performance of expatriates with host increases more over time than the performance of those without host. No effect of a local host was found for the three Performance variables (Assess Own Performance, Desire to Terminate the Assignment and Most Recent Actual Performance Evaluation) and for that reason, Hypothesis 3 was not confirmed. Although it was hypothesised that a local host might affect job performance – for example, the expatriate might have learned about appropriate norms and behaviours which he or she could apply to the workplace – it seems that many other factors that have an impact on Performance outweighed the possible contribution of a local host. After all, the contact with the local host took place outside the workplace and focused on the social life of the expatriate, which could explain that no effect of a local host was found on Performance.

5.3 Social Support

Expatriates inevitably leave behind a great part of their social network and consequently their sources of social support when they move to another culture. It is expected that a local host offers social support, and for that reason several aspects of social support were taken into account in this study (section 4.2.2.4). Appendix 6 provides the descriptives of the Social Support variables for both expatriates and partners, split into with and without host.

First, by putting expatriates and partners in touch with a local host, they would have more access to host nationals (Host National Access). A local host is a new tie that would
enlarge the social network in the host country \( (H4: \text{Expatriates and partners with host acquire more access to host nationals than those without host}) \). Second, a host could provide social support, either as an acquaintance or a friend, which could help the expatriate deal better with the uncertainty and anxiety that are consequences of working and living in a foreign country \( (H5: \text{Expatriates and partners with host receive more social support from host nationals over time than those without host}) \). Furthermore, if a host were to become a strong tie – a friend – it would enlarge the potential of such an intervention \( (RQ1a: \text{Can a local host become a strong tie within a period of nine months?}) \).

Section 5.3.1 reports the effect of a local host on the degree of access to host nationals \( (\text{Host National Access}) \). The effect of a local host on \( \text{Host National Social Support} \) is examined in 5.3.2, and the question whether a host can become a friend is answered in section 5.3.3. For each quantitative analysis the possible effect of the three moderating variables \( \text{Sex}, \text{Partner} \) and \( \text{Children} \) was examined; other covariates were added to show the effect of a local host more clearly only if they were related to that particular dependent variable (see Table 4.9 and 4.10 on pages 112 and 113). The section ends with a short overview of the results with regard to Social Support (5.3.4).

### 5.3.1 Host National Access

Expatriates and partners need to have access to host nationals to be able to receive social support from them. For that reason, it is expected that a local host contributes to \( \text{Host National Access} \) simply by being a host national. In addition, a local host can provide access to even more host nationals by introducing the expatriate and partner to friends and/or family. This led to Hypothesis 4: \( \text{Expatriates and partners with host acquire more access to host nationals than those without host} \).

A Repeated Measures analysis with \( \text{Time} \) (0, 5 and 9 months) and \( \text{Host} \) (yes, no) as independent variables did not show a significant effect on \( \text{Host National Access} \). This means that Hypothesis 4 is not confirmed. When checking for possible moderating effects (section 4.2.4.3), a Repeated Measures analysis with \( \text{Time} \) (0, 5 and 9 months), \( \text{Host} \) (yes, no) and \( \text{Sex} \) of the expatriate (male, female) as independent variables and controlling for the effects of \( \text{Partner} \) (yes, no), indicated a marginally significant three-way interaction effect of \( \text{Time}, \text{Host} \) and \( \text{Sex} \) on \( \text{Host National Access} \) \( (F(2, 114) = 3.67, p = .06, \eta^2 = .06) \), indicating that the effect of a local host was different for male expatriates than for female expatriates. The moderating effect of \( \text{Sex} \) is described below.

**Moderating effect of Sex**

Table 5.5 shows the Estimated Marginal Means for male and female expatriates with and without a local host. When examining male and female expatriates separately (see Figure 5.4 and 5.5), Repeated Measures analyses with \( \text{Time} \) (0, 5 and 9 months) and \( \text{Host} \) (yes, no) as independent variables, and controlling for the effects of \( \text{Partner} \) (yes, no), showed that
a local host had a great impact on Host National Access of female expatriates \( F(2,44) = 5.83, p < .01, \eta^2 = .22 \), but not of male expatriates. Female expatriates with host especially benefited in the long-term (9 vs. 0 months: \( F(1,22) = 10.97, p < .01, \eta^2 = .33 \)) compared to female expatriates without host.

Table 5.5 Host National Access of expatriates split into Sex and Host after 0, 5 and 9 months on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high) with Estimated Marginal Means and Standard Errors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With host (n = 19)</td>
<td>Without host (n = 20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 months</td>
<td>3.59 (.36)</td>
<td>3.85 (.34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 months</td>
<td>3.96 (.31)</td>
<td>3.67 (.29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 months</td>
<td>3.61 (.33)</td>
<td>3.99 (.31)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When investigating the development of female expatriates over time (Figure 5.5), separate Repeated Measures analyses with only Time (0, 5 and 9 months) as independent variable and controlling for the effects of Partner (yes, no), showed no significant effect for female expatriates with host, whereas female expatriates without host decreased significantly \( F(2,20) = 5.19, p < .05, \eta^2 = .34 \). Contact with a local host acted as a buffer against a decrease in Host National Access for female expatriates.

In conclusion, contact with a local host made a positive contribution to Host National Access, but only for female expatriates. Female expatriates decreased in their access to host nationals unless they had a host. A possible explanation for this finding is that female expatriates...
expatriates might have found it hard to break into the new society and get in touch with host nationals in the Netherlands. These kinds of difficulties might have resulted in a withdrawal from these contacts – hence the decrease in Host National Access over time. Contact with a local host would act as a confirmation that it is possible to get in touch with host nationals and that this contact could be rewarding. This realisation might have stimulated female expatriates with host to keep reaching out to Dutch nationals during the research project, resulting in a stable level of Host National Access over time.

Male expatriates, however, maintained more or less the same level even if they did not have a local host. Why would male expatriates without host not decrease in their access to host nationals as was the case with female expatriates? This difference might be caused by a different construal of the concept ‘contact’ by male and female expatriates. Some evidence for this different construal can be found in the tentative finding in this study that male expatriates had more access to host nationals at baseline than female expatriates ($F(1,63) = 2.79, p = .10$). Host National Access enquired into the amount of contact one had with Dutch nationals on a scale of 1 (never) to 5 (very often), and the higher baseline level of male expatriates might indicate that they included more host nationals than female expatriates did in their assessment of access to host nationals. Male expatriates might have counted all their contacts with Dutch nationals, including Dutch colleagues they only greet in the lift or at the coffee machine. Female expatriates, on the other hand, might have the quality of the contact with Dutch nationals in mind and count only those with whom they have established a certain level of contact – and, for example, not the local shopkeeper unless they know that person well. Berg and Piner (1990, p. 148) state that loneliness of men is more affected by the amount of social contact, whereas that of women is influenced mostly by the intimacy of the contact. In a similar vein, it might be that men are more alert to the amount of contact with the Dutch and women to the quality of that contact, resulting in them having different conceptualisations of ‘contact’. Following this logic, access to host nationals would decrease for female expatriates if they withdrew from contact with host nationals, whereas male expatriates would continue to see the same number of host nationals in their daily life, even if they shied away from establishing more profound contact with them.

No significant effect on Host National Access was found for partners of expatriates. Although the reduced sample size of partners (N = 23) might have played a role in the lack of result for Host National Access of partners, a more general explanation might be that the intervention as designed in this study did not suit partners of expatriates optimally. An important difference between the expatriates and partners in this study is that partners did not have a job in the Netherlands, and consequently spent much of their week at home. Although expatriates with partners were often matched to host couples (matching for Family Situation; section 4.2.3), thus offering the opportunity for the partner to meet one of the hosts separately, the contact usually took place with all four present:
“J. normally works a bit less, so only the two of us should have met up, but she was very busy with the house and her son, so in fact we didn’t see each other that much. I think we’ve seen each other four or five times. And each time it was with the four of us. Sometimes with the children, sometimes in a restaurant.” [P23]

This might have reduced the impact of contact with a local host for partners because it is possible that partners would need other types of support to benefit significantly from the contact with the host than that offered during meetings at which the expatriate and both the host couple are also present. For example, social companionship might be especially important for partners who do not work and lead a more isolated life than expatriates who see their colleagues all day. It could be that a partner would benefit especially from the contact if the host offered frequent social companionship, which is something that is difficult to do when having to take into account the busy schedules of four participants. Also, meetings of only the partner and one of the hosts might offer more opportunities for the host to provide emotional support to the partner with regard to sensitive topics as feeling a lack of purpose or uselessness, such as one partner experienced [P4]. A dinner for four might not be the best time to discuss such issues.

In short, contact with a local host buffered a decrease in access to host nationals, but only for female expatriates. For this reason, Hypothesis 4 (Expatriates and partners with host acquire more access to host nationals than those without host) is not confirmed.

5.3.2 Host National Social Support

Access to host nationals having been examined, we now turn to the actual social support that the expatriates and partners received in the host society. The hypothesis this study tested is whether expatriates and partners who were put in contact with a local host received more social support from host nationals than those who did not have a host (H5). It is likely that a local host, being a host national, had an effect on Host National Social Support.

As was explained in 4.2.2, Host National Social Support was not measured at baseline level, but since the expatriates and partners were randomly assigned to the experimental and control condition, it can be assumed that the experimental and control groups showed the same level of Host National Social Support at baseline level (0 months). Some extra support for this assumption can be derived from the fact that the experimental and control group did not differ statistically on Host National Access at baseline level, but it is important to bear in mind that Host National Access throws only a partial light on Host National Social Support, because Host National Access only takes the frequency of contact with host nationals into account whereas Host National Social Support specifically examines the occurrence and quality of social support offered by host nationals (Appendix 2, items 64-79).

The lack of baseline measurement led to slightly different statistical analyses for Host National Social Support (section 4.2.4.2). First, the groups were compared at two points
in time – after five and nine months – to test whether expatriates with host received more Host National Social Support over the course of the project than those without host. Second, a Repeated Measures analysis was performed taking into account the scores at five and nine months. Table 5.6 and Figure 5.6 show the Host National Social Support of expatriates with and without host at five and nine months.

**Table 5.6 Host National Social Support of expatriates with and without host after 5 and 9 months on a scale of 1 (low) to 25 (high) with Estimated Marginal Means and Standard Errors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>With host (n = 33)</th>
<th>Without host (n = 32)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 months</td>
<td>9.93 (.67)</td>
<td>9.12 (.68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 months</td>
<td>10.87 (.64)</td>
<td>8.32 (.65)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Graph showing Host National Social Support](image)

**Figure 5.6 Host National Social Support for expatriates with and without host after 5 and 9 months on a scale of 1 (low) – 25 (high) (no measure available of 0 months)**

A univariate General Linear Model with Host National Social Support at five months as dependent variable, and Host (yes, no) as fixed factor, revealed no significant difference between expatriates with host and without host after five months. A similar univariate General Linear Model with Host National Social Support at nine months as dependent variable, and Host (yes, no) as fixed factor, showed that expatriates with host received significantly more Host National Social Support than expatriates without host ($F(1,63) = 8.04, p < .01, \eta^2 = .11$). Since the difference between expatriates with and without host was not yet significant after five months, these results suggest that the impact of a local host needed more time to manifest itself. When comparing the development of both groups between five and nine months, a Repeated Measures analysis with Time (5 and 9 months) and Host (yes, no) as factors showed a significant effect of a local host on Host National Social Support ($F(1,63) = 6.50, p < .05, \eta^2 = .09$). When examining the development over time of each group, separate Repeated Measures analyses with only Time (5 and 9 months) as independent variable showed a marginally significant increase over time for expatriates with host.
Does a local host matter?

\[ F(1,32) = 3.51, \ p < .10, \ \eta^2 = .10 \] whereas expatriates without host did not show an increase, rather seemed to show a tendency to decrease. These findings show that expatriates with host increased more in Host National Social Support between five and nine months than expatriates without host, supporting the conclusion that a local host had a positive impact on Host National Social Support in the long term.

These findings indicate that a local host contributed positively to the social support offered by host nationals, especially in the long run. A plausible explanation of the reported results is that a local host offered social support to the expatriate. An additional explanation is that through the contact with their host expatriates felt more confident in soliciting support from other host nationals in their surroundings, which might have resulted in an increase in Host National Social Support. Whether it is the local host or other host nationals that offered the support, the fact is that expatriates with host received more social support from host nationals than expatriates without host.

No significant effect of a local host on Host National Social Support was found for partners of expatriates, and for that reason, Hypothesis 5 (Expatriates and partners with host increase more over time in the social support they receive from host nationals than those without host) is confirmed only for expatriates. The lack of finding for partners might be due to the limited sample (N = 23), or to the fact that the intervention as designed in the present study might not have been optimally designed for partners who did not have a job in the Netherlands (see 5.3.1).

5.3.3 Friendship

The findings in the previous section suggest that a local host offered social support to their expatriate, especially in the long term. This suggests that the relationship between expatriate, partner and host needed to develop because it started out as a weak tie. The question in this section is whether a local host could become a strong tie, a friend, in nine months (RQ1a).

Six of the 33 expatriates (18%) and three of the ten partners (30%) who were put in touch with a local host reported their host as one of the five most important friends or acquaintances. Table 5.7 on page 140 presents the data for these expatriates and partners and shows that after five months some hosts were already reported as third, fourth or fifth friend or acquaintance.
Table 5.7 Cases in which the host was reported by the expatriate or partner as one of the five most important friends or acquaintances after five and nine months, with rating of rank, closeness and amount of personal and other contact

| Expatriate / partner | After 5 months | | | | | After 9 months | | | |
|----------------------|---------------|---|---|---|---|---------------|---|---|---|---|
|                      | Rank*         | Closeness˚ | Personal contact˚ | Other contact˚ | Rank* | Closeness˚ | Personal contact˚ | Other contact˚ |
| E9                   | 3 (of 5)      | 4 2 3     |               |               | 1 (of 5) | 4 4 4       |               |               |
| E22                  | 3 (of 5)      | 1 1 2     |               |               | 3 (of 5) | 1 2 2       |               |               |
| E27                  | 5 (of 5)      | 2 2 2     |               |               | -       | - -        |               |               |
| E40                  | -             | - - -     |               |               | 3 (of 3) | 3 2 -       |               |               |
| E46                  | 5 (of 5)      | 3 3 5     |               |               | 2 (of 5) | 3 3 3       |               |               |
| E57                  | 3 (of 5)      | 3 2 2     |               |               | -       | - -        |               |               |
| P2                   | 5 (of 5)      | 3 3 1     |               |               | 2 (of 5) | 3 3 3       |               |               |
| P23                  | 4 (of 5)      | 3 3 2     |               |               | -       | - -        |               |               |
| P57                  | 3 (of 5)      | 3 3 1     |               |               | -       | - -        |               |               |

* Rank indicates the position in which the host was mentioned with regard to the number of other reported friends and acquaintances (maximum of five).˚ On a scale of 1 (not very close / never) – 5 (very close / >6 times).

That a host can become a friend is exemplified by the following comments of a British expatriate, after five [4] and nine [5] months:

[4] “Together we had some great fun and will continue to be friends.” [E46Q2]
[5] “C. became a trusted friend also.” [E46Q3]

The participants who included their host as one of the five most important friends or acquaintances after both five and nine months, usually reported an increased closeness. This might also be expressed in the reported ranking of ties or in an increased frequency of the contact.

Contact Maintenance
Another way of looking at friendships between expatriates, partners and hosts is whether these continued to exist after completion of the research project. About two years after the data collection finished (March 2010), the researcher managed to contact either the expatriate, the partner or the host of 88% of the experimental group (n = 29) to enquire whether they were still in touch with each other. Almost one third of these expatriates (31%; n = 9) at that point in time was still in contact with their host (Table 5.8), which means that these contacts were maintained for over two years. Four of the nine contacts were even established in 2005 or 2006, spanning more than three years.
Table 5.8 Overview of expatriates and partners who maintained the contact with their host up to March 2010, with start and end date of the research project and total length of contact up to March 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Start of project</th>
<th>End of project</th>
<th>Length of contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E2 + P2</td>
<td>December 2005</td>
<td>September 2006</td>
<td>4 years and 3 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E3 + P3</td>
<td>March 2006</td>
<td>December 2006</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E4 + P4</td>
<td>April 2006</td>
<td>January 2007</td>
<td>3 years and 11 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E11 + P11</td>
<td>November 2006</td>
<td>August 2007</td>
<td>3 years and 4 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E23 + P23</td>
<td>June 2007</td>
<td>March 2008</td>
<td>2 years and 9 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E29</td>
<td>July 2007</td>
<td>April 2008</td>
<td>2 years and 8 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E46</td>
<td>November 2007</td>
<td>August 2008</td>
<td>2 years and 4 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E57 + P57</td>
<td>January 2008</td>
<td>October 2008</td>
<td>2 years and 2 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E61 + P61</td>
<td>February 2008</td>
<td>November 2008</td>
<td>2 years and 1 month</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The length of these contacts suggests that some real friendships came out of the project. This is supported by several remarks that participants who were still in touch with their host emailed:

6. “We have become friends and share our social circles.” [E46]
7. “We left the Netherlands two weeks ago and are still in touch with our Dutch friends (emails, cards).” [P2]
8. “A good, warm relationship has grown up between us.” [H61]

Although ranking the host on the instrument Friendship suggests that the host took up an important place in the social circle of the expatriate or partner, it does not necessarily mean that the host also became a friend because the instrument asked about friends and acquaintances. For example, two expatriates and two partners listed their host as a strong tie only in the short term (five months), which suggests that the strength of the tie can also become weaker over time. On the other hand, omission from the list of five most important friends and acquaintances does not necessarily mean that the host did not become a friend. One of the partners [P57] reported her host as one of five most important friends or acquaintances only after five months, but she did keep the contact with her host alive after completion of the research project (Table 5.8) and she had one of the four highest quality contacts established in this study (section 4.3.4). Also, E3 and P3 maintained the contact with their host after completion of the project for more than three years (Table 5.8), but did not report them as one of five most important friends and acquaintances during the project (Table 5.7).

In summary, the findings with regard to Friendship and Contact Maintenance suggest that the tie with a local host can become stronger over time. Some expatriates and partners stated that they became friends with their host, sometimes already within the scope of this project, thereby affirmatively answering RQ1a Can a local host become a strong tie within a
period of nine months? The potential of contact with a local host was shown through the fact that for some expatriates and partners this friendship continued beyond the nine months of this project. Grossman & Rhodes (2002) found support for their hypothesis that mentoring relationships provide more benefit the longer they are maintained and report that “most of the positive effects emerged in relationships that persisted for a year or longer” (p. 213). This might be the case for local hosts as well.

5.3.4 A local host as support system

The present section gives an overview of the impact of a local host on the Social Support variables. First, contact with a local host seemed to contribute positively to Host National Access, but only for female expatriates. Female expatriates with host remained at the same level of Host National Access, whereas female expatriates without host experienced a decrease. Male expatriates also maintained the same level of Host National Access during the nine months of the project. As was suggested in section 5.3.1, gender differences in perception of ‘contact’ might play a part in this finding. No effect of a local host on Host National Access was found for partners. For these reasons, Hypothesis 4 (Expatriates and partners with host acquire more access to host nationals than those without host) is not supported.

Second, the study showed that expatriates with host received more social support from host nationals than those without host. No such effect was found for partners and for this reason Hypothesis 5 is confirmed only for expatriates (Expatriates and partners with host increase more over time in the social support they receive from host nationals than those without host). One Canadian expatriate described it as follows:

[9] “Meeting with the host meant caring stimulating encounters and it made me feel welcome and cared for. There was someone to listen to me. It is a very meaningful connection.” [E9Q2+3 items 176 & 177]21

The effect of a local host on expatriate’s Host National Social Support needed some time to become manifest, since the difference between expatriates with host and those without host was only significant after nine months and not after five months. This is understandable because local hosts were weak ties at the beginning of the project and it takes some time for a weak tie to develop into a strong tie that offers more support (Kim, 1987). The possible role of quality of contact between expatriate, partner and host is examined in Chapter 6.

Third, the present study showed that a local host can become a strong tie for expatriates as well as partners, and sometimes as quickly as within five months of meeting each other, thereby affirmatively answering RQ1a. Although it is difficult to create friendships, it is

21 This quote is composed of the answers of the expatriate to items 176 and 177 of the second and third questionnaire
possible to stimulate their formation through putting expatriates and partners in touch with a local host, as exemplified by the following remarks from a U.S. American expatriate:

[10] “I think for us it worked because we became friends very quickly; we have a lot in common; we enjoy each other’s company a lot and did quite a few things together very early on. In the first few weeks, we met up about twice a week.” [E46]

The findings in this section showed that a local host can function as a support system for expatriates on international assignments, and that companies can support their expatriate employees in a very practical way by organising contact with a local host. With regard to partners, although it was shown that hosts can become a strong tie for partners as well, no effects were found with regard to partner’s Host National Access and Host National Social Support. This lack of effect might be due to the small partner sample. Alternatively, the way in which the present study set up the contact between expatriates, partners and hosts, might have been more tailored towards the needs of expatriates than to those of partners, resulting in more benefits of contact with a local host for expatriates than for partners.

5.4 Intercultural Communication Competence

Host nationals are an important source of information about the host culture and expatriates and partners could benefit from contact with them by learning how to behave in the new culture. An important concept in this respect is Intercultural Communication Competence, which consists of knowledge, attitude and skills (section 3.3.3). The present section examines whether contact with a local host led to more knowledge about Dutch culture (RQ1b). Furthermore it was expected that contact with a local host contributed positively to the attitude and skills components of Intercultural Communication Competence of expatriates and partners (H6 and H7).

Appendix 6 provides the descriptives of Openmindedness (attitude), and Social Initiative, Emotional Stability, Flexibility and Cultural Empathy (skills) for both expatriates and partners, split into with and without host. The three moderating variables Sex, Partner and Children were added to each Repeated Measures analysis. The analyses controlled for the effect of other covariates only if they were significantly related to that particular dependent variable (see Table 4.9 and 4.10 on page 112 and 113).

Repeated Measures analyses with Time (0 and 9 months) and Host (yes, no) as independent variables showed no significant effects of contact with a local host for Flexibility and Cultural Empathy for both expatriates and partners. The findings with regard to Knowledge (5.4.1), Openmindedness (5.4.2), Social Initiative (5.4.3) and Emotional Stability (5.4.4) are reported in the sections below.
5.4.1 Knowledge

In the present study, the knowledge component of Intercultural Communication Competence focused on whether expatriates and partners think they learned from their host about Dutch culture. As was pointed out in 3.3.3 the knowledge component of Intercultural Communication Competence is difficult to measure, therefore the present study intends to establish only whether culture learning has taken place, hence the following research question (RQ1b): *Do expatriates and partners think they learned about Dutch culture from their host?*

Almost two thirds of the expatriates with host (64%) learned about Dutch culture during the contact with their host. As each match was examined as a whole – data of both expatriate and partner were taken into account in the analysis (section 4.2.2.5) – this includes 80% of the partners of the experimental group. The following quote – the answer to the open-ended question about how the host had helped – illustrates this:

[11] “Gave me more insight into Dutch culture and ways of thinking” [E4602]

The fact that the assessment of an increase in Knowledge was based on information provided by the expatriates and partners in the qualitative data strengthens the conclusion that the culture learning was substantial enough to be spontaneously mentioned when asked about the benefits of contact with a local host. This shows that RQ1b was answered affirmatively: expatriates and partners thought they learned about Dutch culture from their host, although it is unclear to what extent they acquired knowledge. The following quote suggests how this increase in knowledge could help expatriates:

[12] “Just getting a reliable ‘Dutch’ opinion about aspects of other Dutch people’s behaviour helps to break down mental barriers (prejudices, misunderstandings due to stress and everyday hassles” [E6102]

5.4.2 Openmindedness

Openmindedness is defined as “an open and unprejudiced attitude towards outgroup members and towards different cultural norms and values” (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000, p. 294) and constituted the attitude aspect of Intercultural Communication Competence. It was predicted that expatriates and partners with host would acquire a more positive attitude towards different cultural norms and values than those without host (H6).

A Repeated Measures analysis with Time (0 and 9 months) and Host (yes, no) as factors showed a two-way interaction effect of Time and Host on Openmindedness, controlling for the effects of Children (yes, no) (F (1,61) = 5.80, p < .05, η² = .09). However, when checking for possible moderating effects of having a Partner, as was done in each analysis (see 4.2.4.3),
A Repeated Measures analysis with Time (0 and 9 months), Host (yes, no) and Partner (yes, no) showed a significant three-way interaction effect on Openmindedness ($F(1,61) = 4.98, p < .05, \eta^2 = .08$), indicating that the effect of a local host was different for expatriates with partner than for single expatriates. The following subsection investigates the impact of a local host for expatriates with and without partner.

The moderating effect of having a partner

Figures 5.7 and 5.8 show the different development over time on Openmindedness of expatriates with partner and of single expatriates. The Estimated Marginal Means are shown in Table 5.9.

Table 5.9 Openmindedness of expatriates split into Partner and Host after 0 and 9 months on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high) with Estimated Marginal Means and Standard Errors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Partner with host (n = 20)</th>
<th>Partner without host (n = 22)</th>
<th>Without partner with host (n = 13)</th>
<th>Without partner without host (n = 10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 months</td>
<td>3.72 (.10)</td>
<td>3.80 (.09)</td>
<td>4.06 (.12)</td>
<td>3.87 (.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 months</td>
<td>3.71 (.09)</td>
<td>3.51 (.08)</td>
<td>3.76 (.11)</td>
<td>3.62 (.13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Repeated Measures analysis with Time (0 and 9 months) and Host (yes, no) as factors showed that a local host had a significant impact on the Openmindedness of expatriates with partner ($F(1,40) = 10.36, p < .01, \eta^2 = .21$) (Figure 5.7). When examining the development over time, separate Repeated Measures analyses with only Time (0 and 9 months) as factor revealed that expatriates with partner and host maintained the same level of Openmindedness throughout

Does a local host matter?

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the project, whereas expatriates with partner but without host showed a decrease ($F(1,21) = 20.18, p < .001, \eta^2 = .49$). Contact with a local host acted as a buffer with regard to a decrease in Openmindedness for expatriates with partner.

Another Repeated Measures analysis with Time (0 and 9 months) and Host (yes, no) as independent variables showed that contact with a local host did not have an impact on the Openmindedness of expatriates without partner (Figure 5.8). A Repeated Measures analysis with only Time (0 and 9 months) as factor revealed that single expatriates decreased on Openmindedness ($F(1,22) = 22.24, p < .001, \eta^2 = .50$).

The findings above indicate that contact with a local host only buffered the decrease on Openmindedness for expatriates with partner.

It is important to note that a Repeated Measures Analysis with Time (0 and 9 months), Host (yes, no) and Children (yes, no) found a very similar pattern on Openmindedness ($F(1,61) = 4.31, p = .06, \eta^2 = .07$) as previously noted for Time, Host and Partner. The Estimated Marginal Means of this analysis are reported in Table 5.10. This finding indicates that the local host affected the Openmindedness of expatriates who had a partner and/or children. The similarity of the effect of Children and Partner can be explained by the fact that these variables overlap for 73%, as was noted in 4.2.4.3. It seems that contact with a local host only acted as a buffer for a decrease on Openmindedness for expatriates with partner and/or children. Remarkably, no significant effect of a local host was found for partners.

Table 5.10 Openmindedness of expatriates split into Children and Host after 0 and 9 months on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high) with Estimated Marginal Means and Standard Errors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>With host (n = 13)</th>
<th>Without host (n = 18)</th>
<th>With host (n = 20)</th>
<th>Without host (n = 14)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 months</td>
<td>3.74 (.12)</td>
<td>3.81 (.11)</td>
<td>3.93 (.10)</td>
<td>3.83 (.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 months</td>
<td>3.76 (.11)</td>
<td>3.50 (.09)</td>
<td>3.71 (.09)</td>
<td>3.59 (.11)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In summary, contact with a local host buffered a decrease on Openmindedness for expatriates with a family. Expatriates with a partner and/or children did not become less openminded when they were put in touch with a local host. The other expatriates – even single expatriates with host – all decreased in Openmindedness. Although this finding indicates a beneficial impact of contact with a local host, it was not as was predicted. Expatriates with a host did not acquire a more open attitude over time. Moreover, no significant effect was found for partners. Hypothesis 5 (Expatriates and partners with host acquire a more open attitude towards people from other cultures than those without host) was not supported.
These results are striking for three reasons. First, the general tendency that expatriates decreased in *Openmindedness*, with the only exception of expatriates with partner who were put in touch with a host, was not expected (section 3.3.3). A possible explanation is that the expatriates came to the Netherlands with an open mind, ready to establish a life there and make contact with the Dutch, and then found the reality more difficult than expected. Their expectations might have been too optimistic, resulting in a decrease in *Openmindedness*. One partner, who was part of the control group, talked about this process in her interview, explaining how they came to the Netherlands full of enthusiasm and the expectation of making the Netherlands their home. Over time, she came to realise that she did not like many small things of daily life in the Netherlands:

> “And I’ve noticed more and more [these little things] and I think ‘is it me?’ am I doing something that is pissing them off? Or is it just how people are here? Because I don’t understand them. I don’t know if they do it to me, or if they do it to themselves as well. Because if I would understand Dutch, I could see ‘oh, they do it between themselves as well, it’s fine.’ But I don’t know.” [P26]

Ultimately, they decided they did not want to stay in the Netherlands and they would leave as soon as the contract expired.

> “I said to my husband, I don’t want to live here, I just don’t, I don’t want my kids to be raised like here in schools. I just don’t want to live in a society that doesn’t accept me. And I know it will not accept me, it doesn’t matter what I do. So after that, we know that we’re leaving when the contract is over. So now I feel, okay we’re good, I’m fine. [...] I just do my thing, but I don’t worry anymore about integrating in the society.” [P26]

A local host might counteract this decrease in *Openmindedness*:

> “But if you have that family contact, a normal family, whether it’s a guy with his girlfriend or just a guy that takes you to meet his parents one day for a weekend, you go bowling or whatever, where you see normal Dutch people interacting I think you get a different perspective of their cultures, not to see the negatives that you see here by yourself.” [E17]

The second surprising finding is that contact with a local host only buffered the decrease in *Openmindedness* for expatriates with partner. It seems plausible that contact with a local host could counterbalance negative experiences by providing an example of Dutch people who are willing to get in touch with expatriates, especially if the contact between expatriates, partners and host is good (the role of the quality of the contact is examined in Chapter 6).
Why would this not work for expatriates without partner? A possible explanation is that the matching process focused, among others, on family situation (section 4.2.3), and tried to match expatriates who had a partner as much as possible to a host whose partner also signed up for the project and actively participated. As a result, expatriates with partner were more often matched to host couples than single expatriates: 65% against 15% respectively. Being matched to a host couple meant that there was not just one Dutch person willing to meet the expatriate and partner, but two. This might have made the difference in preventing a decrease on *Openmindedness*. In addition, the interaction is richer with a host couple because there are more persons involved. This suggests more opportunity for positive examples and corrective feedback, which could prevent a decrease on *Openmindedness*. This would also explain the similar effect that was found for expatriates with children: there is a 73% overlap between these variables (section 4.2.4.3): also expatriates with children were more frequently put in touch with a host with partner.

Another explanation might be that single expatriates cannot share their experiences with a significant other. If an expatriate has been in touch with their host, it is likely they will talk about it with his or her partner, especially if this partner was also included in the contact. This is called capitalisation, which is likely to increase the positive effect of the event (Gable, Reis, Impett, & Asher, 2004; Langston, 1994). For example, reliving the event through retelling could make the experience more salient and easily accessible in retrospect. Disappointing experiences the expatriate might have had with the Dutch might then be more successfully counterbalanced, preventing a decrease in *Openmindedness*, whereas single expatriates might benefit from this capitalisation to a lesser extent as they did not have a significant other with whom to share the experiences with the host.

The third surprising finding was the lack of effect for partners. As with *Host National Access* (5.3.1) and *Host National Social Support* (5.3.2), no effect was found for *Openmindedness* of partners. The explanations given for *Host National Access* and *Host National Social Support* are relevant here as well: it might be due to the limited sample size or the less than optimal design of the intervention for partners. The lack of finding for partners is more surprising here because it was only expatriates with partner who benefited from the contact, and for that reason partners in this study – who also had a partner (i.e. the expatriate) – would be more likely to benefit as well. This, however, was not the case.

### 5.4.3 Social Initiative

We now turn from the attitude component to the skills component of Intercultural Communication Competence. *Social Initiative* is one of four intercultural skills defined as part of Intercultural Communication Competence in the present study, for which the following hypothesis was formulated: *Expatriates and partners with host acquire higher levels of intercultural skills than those without host* (H7). *Social Initiative* focuses on actively approaching social situations and taking initiatives. It is expected that contact with a local
host positively affected *Social Initiative* because the undertaking of all kinds of activities lay at the core of the contact with the local host.

A Repeated Measures analysis with *Time* (0 and 9 months) and *Host* (yes, no) as factors showed a significant interaction effect on *Social Initiative* ($F(1,61) = 6.81, p < .05, \eta^2 = .10$), controlling for the effects of *Children* (yes, no). When examining expatriates with and without host, separate Repeated Measures analyses with only *Time* (0 and 9 months) as factor and controlling for the effect of *Children* (yes, no), revealed that expatriates who did not have a Dutch host decreased on *Social Initiative* ($F(1,30) = 5.93, p < .05, \eta^2 = .16$) during the nine months of the project, while expatriates with host did not show a decrease (see Figure 5.9). Table 5.11 shows the Estimated Marginal Means of *Social Initiative* for expatriates with and without host. The findings show that a local host acted as a buffer for a decrease in *Social Initiative* of expatriates.

No significant effect of a local host was found on *Social Initiative* of partners.

**Table 5.11 Social Initiative of expatriates with and without host after 0 and 9 months on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high) with Estimated Marginal Means and Standard Errors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>With host</th>
<th>Without host</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n = 33)</td>
<td>(n = 32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 months</td>
<td>3.57 (.09)</td>
<td>3.59 (.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 months</td>
<td>3.63 (.08)</td>
<td>3.43 (.08)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Figure 5.9 Social Initiative for expatriates with and without host after 0 and 9 months on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)](image)

The effect of a local host on *Social Initiative* was similar to that on *Openmindedness* for expatriates with partner in that it buffered a decrease on the variable, showing a benefit of contact with a local host for expatriates. Since expatriates did not increase in *Social Initiative*, the seventh hypothesis (*H7: Expatriates and partners with host acquire higher levels of intercultural skills than those without host*) was not confirmed. The decrease in *Social Initiative* for expatriates without host should probably be seen in the same light as
the decrease in Openmindedness reported in section 5.4.2, being the result of too optimistic expectations with regard to trying to make contact with the Dutch upon arrival in the Netherlands. If expatriates cannot get in touch with the Dutch as easily as they expected, then they might take fewer initiatives to meet Dutch people and decrease in Social Initiative. Also, a local host did not have an effect on the Social Initiative of partners in this study, which might be due to the limited sample size or to the fact that the contact with a local host, as designed in this study, might have been more effective for expatriates than for partners (see 5.3.1).

5.4.4 Emotional Stability

Emotional Stability, which is the tendency to remain calm in stressful situations (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000), is a second skill that is part of Intercultural Communication Competence (3.3.3) in the present study. As with Social Initiative, the hypothesis that expatriates and partners with host acquire a higher level of Emotional Stability than those without host (H7) was tested.

A Repeated Measures analysis with Time (0 and 9 months) and Host (yes, no) revealed no significant effect for expatriates, although a similar analysis discovered an interesting effect for partners, which is reported in the following subsection.

Effect of a local host on Emotional Stability for partners

A Repeated Measures analysis with Time (0 and 9 months) and Host (yes, no) as factors, controlling for Length of Stay in the Netherlands before Participation (see Table 4.10 on page 113), showed a significant effect of a local host on partners’ Emotional Stability ($F(1,19) = 8.04, p < .05, \eta^2 = .30$). Table 5.12 shows the Estimated Marginal Means of this analysis for partners with and without a host.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>With host (n = 10)</th>
<th>Without host (n = 13)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 months</td>
<td>3.02 (.19)</td>
<td>3.11 (.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 months</td>
<td>3.02 (.18)</td>
<td>3.31 (.16)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.10 depicts the development over time on Emotional Stability for partners with and without host. Repeated Measures analyses with Time (0 and 9 months), done for each group separately, and controlling for Length of Stay in the Netherlands before Participation, indicated that partners with host maintained the same level, whereas partners without host significantly increased on Emotional Stability during the nine months of the project ($F(1,11) = 13.92, p < .01, \eta^2 = .56$). This suggests that, contrary to the expectations, partners
did not benefit from the contact with a local host with regard to their Emotional Stability. It is even the case that partners became emotionally more stable over the course of the project if they did not have a host.

![Figure 5.10 Emotional Stability for partners with and without host after 0 and 9 months on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)](image)

In conclusion, the results with regard to Emotional Stability showed that partners did not benefit from the contact with a host. In fact, contrary to the expectations, partners without host increased in Emotional Stability, while those with host remained at the same level. In addition, no effect of a local host on Emotional Stability was found for expatriates. For these reasons, Hypothesis 7 (Expatriates and partners with host acquire higher levels of intercultural skills than those without host) was not confirmed.

The result for partners is very intriguing and not easy to explain for two reasons. First, the question arises why an effect of a local host was found for partners, but not for expatriates. Second, the effect found for partners is contrary to the expectations because partners without host became more emotionally stable.

With regard to the first question, gender might have played an important role because most of the partners were female (91%), whereas the majority of the expatriates (60%) were male. The literature shows some differences between men and women on Emotional Stability. Goldberg, Sweeney, Merenda and Hughes (1998), for example, report that the literature has found a consistent tendency for women to score slightly higher with regard to anxiety, a central facet of Emotional Stability. Emotional Stability might be a more dynamic competence for women than for men, which would explain the lack of finding for expatriates. Furthermore, Hay and Ashman (2003) showed a gender difference with regard to what affects adolescent Emotional Stability, suggesting that contact with a local host might also have differential impact for men and women, regardless of whether they are an expatriate or a partner. To further explore this issue, the impact of a local host on Emotional Stability was analysed for female expatriates and female partners together. The pattern
reported above was still present \( F(1,42) = 7.54, p < .01, \eta^2 = .15 \), suggesting that gender did play a role with regard to the impact of a local host on Emotional Stability.

The second question is why women increased in Emotional Stability if they did not have a host whereas women with host remained emotionally stable? A possible explanation might be found in general self-concept, especially confidence and self-worth, which was found to be reciprocally related to Emotional Stability (Hay & Ashman, 2003). Women without host did not have that support and back-up and needed to deal with stressful situations by themselves. The quote below shows that this female partner felt isolated and far away from her support system:

[16] “I wish I could say that contacts with the Dutch are progressing well, but they aren’t really any different than in previous weeks. If I had more Dutch contacts, I think I would feel more at home here, but I’m not very good at making that happen. I feel that where I live is a bit isolating - people don’t circulate like they do in some of the older neighbourhoods, and neighbours don’t seem to mingle that much. Maybe in summer that will be different.” Three weeks later she also wrote: “I do still miss being in the US, but more for the companionship of my friends, for the ease of contacting family (no six hour time difference to deal with).” [P33DW18 & DW21]

The confidence and self-worth of this woman might have increased if she were able to cope with the challenges of the international assignment all by herself. In turn this might have led to an increase in Emotional Stability. Future research should examine the validity of this explanation.

5.4.5 Culture learning through contact with a local host

Contact with a local host had an impact on Intercultural Communication Competence in several ways. First, through the contact with their host expatriates and partners were able to acquire Knowledge about the host culture, thereby positively answering RQ1b (Do expatriates and partners think they learned about Dutch culture from their host?). The following quote taken from a diary of one of the partners illustrates that this couple learned about Dutch culture from the contact with their host:

[17] “I think we benefit from knowing a Dutch family, especially one that knows the little things about their country. We are very interested in everything about where we now live and to share it with our other expat friends.” [P11DW34]

Second, a local host acted as a buffer for a decrease on Openmindedness for expatriates with a partner. Hypothesis 6 (Expatriates and partners with host acquire a more open attitude...
towards different cultural norms and values than those without host) was not confirmed, because expatriates did not acquire a more positive attitude: contact with a local host buffered a decrease in Openmindedness. In addition, no effect was found for partners. The finding for expatriates suggests that expatriates who come to the Netherlands start out very openminded, but gradually find out that they had unrealistic expectations. They become somewhat less openminded, although their level still remains moderately high (around 3.7 on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)). The contact with a local host was beneficial only for expatriates with partner and not for all expatriates together. It seems that the buffering effect of a local host on Openmindedness is only activated if the expatriate has a couple as host instead of one host, or if the expatriate can capitalise on the experiences with the host through talking about them with his or her partner (Gable et al., 2004).

Third, a similar effect was found for Social Initiative, one of the skills of Intercultural Communication Competence: a local host buffered a decrease on Social Initiative. As this was contrary to the increase that was expected and no effect was found for partners, Hypothesis 7 (Expatriates and partners with host acquire higher levels of intercultural skills than those without host) was not supported. The expatriates did not increase in Social Initiative if they had a host, but remained at the same level whereas expatriates without host decreased. This also seems to reflect a disappointment in their contacts with the Dutch. A partner in the control group expressed this as follows:

[18] “No more progress in Dutch “contacts” but I’ve quit expecting that to change - whether it is where I live or how this culture is, I don’t know, but I don’t think I will make any close Dutch friends here. Just can’t seem to get beyond the very basics with the neighbours, and we don’t meet anyone new who is Dutch probably because the people at our school are from everywhere since it is an American International School. Oh well.” [P33OM33]

Fourth, with regard to Emotional Stability it was found, unexpectedly, that partners without local host increased in Emotional Stability, while those with host remained at the same level of Emotional Stability. Hypothesis 7 was not confirmed (Expatriates and partners with host acquire higher levels of intercultural skills than those without host). This is the only instance in this study where participants without host had a better score on one of the dependent variables than participants with host. Since partners with host did not decrease in Emotional Stability, a local host did not have a detrimental effect on Emotional Stability. No effect of a local host was found for expatriates. This difference between expatriates and partners might be attributed to gender differences in Emotional Stability (section 5.4.4), as the majority of the expatriates were male and most partners were female. Future research should further explore this issue and shed more light on the relevance of contact with local host for Emotional Stability of men and women.
No effects of a local host were found for Cultural Empathy and Flexibility of both expatriates and partners, which was contrary to what was expected in 3.3.3. Hypothesis 7 was not confirmed for this subset of intercultural communication skills. For Cultural Empathy, which is the ability to empathise with the feelings, thoughts and behaviours of members from different cultural groups, it is plausible that expatriates with host would learn about Dutch cultural norms and values and that the local host therefore could contribute to their ability to empathise (Cultural Empathy). Although it was shown in section 5.4.1 that expatriates and partners did indeed acquire knowledge about Dutch culture, a positive impact of a local host on Cultural Empathy was not found in the quantitative analyses. A possible explanation is that learning about cultural differences is not enough to increase one’s Cultural Empathy, but that this knowledge needs to be translated into behaviour. After all, Cultural Empathy is an ability, a skill, and it is usually easier to acquire knowledge than to acquire a new skill. The following quote shows the struggle between the knowledge that behaviour could be culturally determined and the initial behavioural reaction (to become angry):

[19] “I had a very interesting experience with the Dutch at [floral park] Keukenhof. I was waiting in the queue to pay for our tickets when a large crowd of Dutch came into line behind me. They were all standing very close to me and when I went to purchase tickets a few were standing so close they were touching my back as I went to pay. I did not have enough cash so I had to use pin. After I entered in my pin-code the man who was standing very close behind me told me I should be more careful entering in my pin-code. When I asked him why he said that he now knew my pin and he showed me how I should use my hand to hide the keys when I enter the code. At first this man made me very mad. I kept thinking about how in the US people allow much more distance between each other when they wait in line. It is an unspoken rule that you do not touch people when waiting in line and therefore I would not have to hide entering my pin because there would be enough distance between me and the person behind me to protect this information. After a few deep breaths and some logical thinking, I remembered that I am a guest in another country and that in this country lines are very different and that the man behind me was giving me good advice based on the unspoken rules of this country.” [P56_DW15]

A similar case can be made for Flexibility, which is the ability to switch easily from one strategy to another; because the familiar ways of handling things will not necessarily work in a new cultural environment. During the contact with the local host, expatriate and partners might have learned new strategies that could work in the new cultural environment, or they learned why some of their familiar strategies did not work anymore. However, this knowledge does not necessarily affect the ability to switch easily between strategies, which is the core of Flexibility. This would suggest that Cultural Empathy and Flexibility are more
stable competencies, as Herfst et al. (2008) stated, and that they were not affected by contact with a local host.

5.5 Impact of a local host on expatriates and partners

This chapter started by asking the question whether putting expatriates and partners in touch with a local host would have an impact on the success of the international assignment (RQ1). To this end, the significant effects of a local host on Adjustment, Performance, Social Support and Intercultural Communication Competence of expatriates and partners were studied in sections 5.2 – 5.4 (see Table 5.13 on page 159 for an overview of the results of both expatriates and partners). In short, beneficial effects of a local host were found for Adjustment (Interaction Adjustment, part of H1), Social Support (H4: Host National Access, H5: Host National Social Support, and RQ1a: Friendship) and Intercultural Communication Competence (RQ1b: Knowledge, H6: Openmindedness, and Social Initiative, part of H7). The present section summarises these findings to answer the first research question of this study: Does contact with a local host contribute to the success of an expatriate assignment? (RQ1).

First, H1-3 focused on the impact of a local host on Psychological Adjustment (H1), Sociocultural Adjustment (H2) and Performance (H3), hypothesising a greater increase over time on these variables for expatriates and partners with host than for those without host (3.3.1). For the first hypothesis it was found that expatriates and partners became more comfortable interacting with host nationals through the contact with their host. Interestingly, expatriates did not necessarily need a host for this increase in Interaction Adjustment: having a partner also caused this effect, possibly because he or she might be an extra source of information about the host culture. Contact with a local host did not produce any other effects on Psychological Adjustment (H1), nor on Sociocultural Adjustment (H2) or Performance (H3).

Second, H4-5 and RQ1a tested the influence of contact with a local host on Host National Access (H4), Host National Social Support (H5) and Friendship (RQ1a), again hypothesising that expatriates and partners benefited over time from the contact with their local host (3.3.2). It was found that contact with a local host buffered a decrease in Host National Access for female expatriates (H4), and a local host produced an increase in Host National Social Support for expatriates (H5). Moreover, a local host could become a strong tie, a friend, for both expatriates and partners even within five months after being put in touch with each other (RQ1a). In some cases, the contact was maintained up to four years.

Third, the effect of contact with a local host on the three aspects of Intercultural Communication Competence was examined in RQ1b and H6-7 – Knowledge (RQ1b), Attitude (H6) and Skills (H7). The findings show that expatriates and partners think they learned about Dutch culture from their host (RQ1b). With regard to Attitude (H6) and Skills (H7), it was found that a decrease on Openmindedness (H6) and Social Initiative (part of
H7) was buffered by the contact with the local host. In the case of Openmindedness, this buffering effect only occurred if the expatriate had a partner, which might be due to the fact that expatriates with partner were more often matched to a host couple. Having a host couple might counteract a decrease more forcibly than if there is just a single host. Another possible explanation is that sharing experiences with a partner might have reinforced the positive consequences of contact with a host (Gable et al., 2004), thereby increasing the benefit.

In addition, a local host was found to have an impact on the Emotional Stability of partners (part of H7), although this effect was contrary to the expectations because partners with host maintained the same level of Emotional Stability throughout the nine months, whereas partners without host became more emotionally stable. A possible explanation offered in section 5.4.4 was that gender might play an important role in this respect, because the same result was found when analysing the data for female partners and female expatriates together. Being able to cope with the challenge of finding your way in a new culture without having a local host as support might increase one’s confidence and self-worth, which in turn might have an impact on Emotional Stability (Hay & Ashman, 2003).

No effects were found for the two remaining intercultural skills Cultural Empathy and Flexibility (part of H7). Although expatriates who were in contact with a local host think they learned about Dutch culture (Knowledge, RQ1b), no effect of a local host was found for the skill Cultural Empathy. It seems that more than just learning about the host culture is necessary for someone to become more culturally empathic. It is also possible that Cultural Empathy, together with Flexibility, are relatively stable competences that cannot easily be changed (Herfst et al., 2008).

The findings reported in this Chapter show that a local host offered social support and that expatriates and partners learned about Dutch culture from their host. According to the stress and coping perspective (3.1.1) and culture learning model (3.1.2) this should lead to psychological and sociocultural adjustment respectively. This study, however, found an impact of a local host only on a specific aspect of Psychological Adjustment, namely Interaction Adjustment. Apparently the support received was not enough to produce an increase in other aspects of Psychological Adjustment. The existence of many other factors that might influence psychological adjustment could account for this lack of findings. Similarly, job performance is influenced by many other factors, which might explain the lack of impact of a local host on the Performance variables in this study. With regard to the behavioural aspect of Adjustment (Sociocultural Adjustment), an explanation of the lack of finding might lie in the instrument that measured the variable Sociocultural Adjustment, because it focused on sociocultural adjustment in general, with regard to all the people the expatriate associated with (e.g. relatives, friends, acquaintances and colleagues) and not specifically with regard to host nationals. Also, it is possible that the culture learning was not substantial enough to have an impact on Sociocultural Adjustment as measured here.
Partners

The partners of the expatriates were also taken into account. Because this sample was very small (N = 23), only very limited conclusions can be drawn from the results. In the case of Interaction Adjustment (part of H1) the pattern found for partners supported the effect found in the expatriate sample. Furthermore, partners were found to benefit from the contact with their host with regard to Friendship (RQ1a) and Knowledge (RQ1b). The qualitative information confirmed that some of the partners benefited from the contact with their host, as the quotes below show:

[20] “Yes, to feel less isolated, and in first instance, less closed up in our French (-speaking) relations.”[P30]

[21] “We obtained a lot of practical information for everyday life, and excellent information about Dutch culture and mentality.”[P23]

For 66% of the expatriate couples who subscribed for this project it was the (usually female) partner who filled in the registration form, suggesting their wish and need to contact locals. The lack of significant effects of a local host for partners on the variables where a local host was found to have an impact on the expatriate might be explained by the limited partner sample (N = 23), which makes it more difficult to find a significant effect. Another possible explanation is that the intervention as designed in the present study was not as beneficial for partners as it was for expatriates. Partners in this study did not have a job in the Netherlands and spent much of their week at home, whereas the contact with the host couple usually took place with all four participants present. It is possible that contact with a local host would contribute more for partners if the intervention was differently designed; for example, if the partner was able to meet up more easily with only one of the host couple during the day, when the expatriate was at work. This would also open up opportunities for the host to provide emotional support with regard to more sensitive issues that are not as easily discussed when all four participants are present. Future research should further explore how contact with a local host can contribute optimally to the well-being of accompanying partners on expatriate assignments.

Did contact with a local host contribute to the success of an expatriate assignment? This chapter reported some positive effects and some buffering effects of a local host on Adjustment, Social Support and Intercultural Communication Competence of both expatriates and partners. No effect was found on expatriate job performance. Surprisingly, in the case of the partners, partners without host increased in Emotional Stability whereas partners with host remained at the same level. Even if partners without host were better off in this case, a local host did not have a detrimental effect in destabilising the partner. It
can be concluded that contact with a local host contributed to several, but not all, aspects of the international assignment of expatriates, and possibly also of their partners.

[22] “I had an excellent evening, we had a good dinner and we conversed a lot. J. and R. told us many anecdotes and gave a lot of explanations about Dutch mentality and answered all our questions. They are funny, very interesting and really very nice. I can’t wait to spend more time with them, and I am very happy to have met them, it’s a great piece of luck!” [P23OW15]
Table 5.13 Summary of the impact of a local host on Adjustment (H1-H2), Performance (H3), Social Support (H4-H5 & RQ1a) and Intercultural Communication Competence (RQ1b & H6-7) of expatriates (E) and partners (EP)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ1</th>
<th>Does contact with a local host contribute to the success of an expatriate assignment?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H/RQ</td>
<td>Variables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1</td>
<td>Psychological Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfaction with Life</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General Adjustment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interaction Adjustment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work Adjustment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2</td>
<td>Sociocultural Adjustment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3</td>
<td>Assess Own Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Desire to Terminate Assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Most Recent Performance Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4</td>
<td>Host National Access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(comparison H+ vs. H- at 5 &amp; 9 months, and between 5-9 months)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5</td>
<td>Host National Social Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(comparison H+ vs. H- at 5 &amp; 9 months, and between 5-9 months)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ1a</td>
<td>Friendship (incl. Contact Maintenance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ1b</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6</td>
<td>Openmindedness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emotional Stability (ES)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural Empathy (CE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flexibility (FL)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001; η² = effect size; ↑ = increase on dependent variable; ↑ = theoretically plausible pattern; → = buffering effect (group with host maintained same level); ∨ = partners without host increased (but host did not have a detrimental effect); E = expatriate; EP = partner; P+ = with partner; P- = without partner; H+ = with host; H- = without host; η = female; η = male; all = all expatriates/partners in that particular group
Chapter 6

Does the quality of the contact matter?
Chapter 6
Does the quality of the contact matter?

We have seen in Chapter 5 that a local host has an impact on some but not all aspects of the success of the international assignment. This chapter focuses on the second research question: To what extent does the quality of the contact between expatriate, partner and local host have an effect on the success of the expatriate assignment? Section 6.1 starts with an overview of how the participants assessed the quality of the contact with their host. The chapter then examines to what extent the quality of contact with a host was related to Adjustment and Performance (section 6.2), Social Support (section 6.3) and Intercultural Communication Competence (section 6.4). The chapter concludes with an overview of the results (6.5), which are summarised in Table 6.8 at the end of this Chapter (page 185).

6.1 Quality of the contact with the host

Expatriates and partners who were put in touch with a local host faced the challenge of building a relationship with their host. Almost two thirds of the experimental group (64%) succeeded according to their own assessment of the relationship: they assessed the contact with the host as a 7 or more on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high). This group was labelled 'High quality contact' (section 4.2.2.6). The remaining third of the expatriates (36%) was less successful, evaluating the contact with their host as low quality (≤ 5 on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high)). The mean ratings of the contact between the expatriate, partner and host are presented in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Overall Rating of Contact Quality, Rating of Contact Quality by expatriate, partner and host after 9 months and Frequency of Contact split into high quality contact and low quality contact (M (SD))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High quality (n = 21)</th>
<th>Low quality (n = 12)</th>
<th>With host (n = 33)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Rating of Contact Quality (E+P)</td>
<td>8.50 (.82)</td>
<td>2.79 (1.20)</td>
<td>6.42 (2.95)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rating of Contact Quality by expatriate (9 months)</td>
<td>8.59 (.87)</td>
<td>2.55 (1.04)</td>
<td>6.21 (3.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rating of Contact Quality by partner (9 months)</td>
<td>8.88 (1.36)</td>
<td>2.00 (1.41)</td>
<td>7.50 (3.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rating of Contact Quality by host (9 months)</td>
<td>7.83 (1.40)</td>
<td>5.50 (1.55)</td>
<td>7.00 (1.82)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Contact</td>
<td>7.14 (4.15)</td>
<td>2.92 (1.93)</td>
<td>5.61 (4.04)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first four ratings are on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high), the Frequency of the Contact is the number of face-to-face meetings; E+P = combined rating of expatriate and partner after 9 months (5 month scores were used if none were available at 9 months)

More than half of expatriates with high quality contact (55%; n = 11) thought the contact with the host was very good, labelling it a 9 or higher on a scale of 1 (low) and 10 (high). Especially partners with high quality contact were enthusiastic after nine months of contact:

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50% even thought the contact rated a score of 10 on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high). The hosts of the high quality contact group had a slightly lower idea of it than the expatriates and partners, but on average they still rated the contact at 7.83 on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high). The expatriates with high quality contact met their host more than seven times on average during the nine months of the project (M = 7.14, SD = 4.15), while almost half of them (48%) met their host at least nine times, as was requested of them. One example was a U.S. American couple who met their host about once a month and who were very enthusiastic about the contact:

[1] “They are very nice people and are as interested in showing us the Netherlands as we are in seeing it. We have really enjoyed meeting our host family and doing things with them.” [P11 Q2 items 193 & 195]

A group of 36% had low quality contact with their host, which means that only about two in three matches led to high quality contact. As it remains unclear as yet how best to achieve successful matches as pointed out in 3.5, this is considered a satisfactory score. This suggests that the matching criteria as employed in this study were useful.

Expatriates and partners with low quality contact scored the contact with their host on average 2.79 (SD = 1.20) on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high), with their hosts (M = 5.50) being considerably more positive. Expatriates and partners with low quality contact had a much lower frequency of contact with the host than those with high quality contact: they met on average less than three times (M = 2.92, SD = 1.93) over nine months, with half of the expatriates (50%) meeting their host only once or twice. One example is a French expatriate who met the host only once:

[2] “Interesting project. Unfortunately, because I work fulltime, I did not have the time to develop the contact with the host.” [E25 Q2]

This quote also highlights a specific reason why the contact between this expatriate and the host did not develop: a lack of time on the part of the expatriate. Chapter 7 explores the reasons why the quality of the contact between expatriates, partners and hosts was assessed as either high or low by unravelling the catalysts and barriers to the contact.

6.1.1 Role of Contact Quality

We have seen that the experimental group can be divided into two groups according to the quality of the contact between expatriate, partner and host (High quality vs. Low

22 The source of each quote is indicated, where I = interview, DW4 = diary week 4, E = email, Q2 = questionnaire after five months and Q3 = questionnaire after nine months. In the present case, the quote is composed of the answers at two items in the questionnaire.
quality). As was explained in section 3.4 it is possible that only expatriates who managed to establish high quality contact with their host would benefit from the exchanges with the host. Another possibility is that the higher the quality of the contact, the more benefit expatriates derived, so that even expatriates with low quality contact would derive some benefit from contact with a local host. On the other hand low quality contact with a local host might also have a counterproductive effect in making the expatriate feel worse. The following research question focused on this issue:

**RQ2** To what extent does quality of contact between expatriate, partner and local host have an effect on the success of the expatriate assignment?

To answer this question expatriates with high quality contact and those with low quality contact were compared in two separate analyses with the control group who did not have a host (section 4.2.4.2). This logic is followed in the analyses reported in sections 6.2 – 6.4, which summarise the impact of **Contact Quality** on the four main concepts in this study: Adjustment and Performance (6.2), Social Support (6.3) and Intercultural Communication Competence (6.4). The chapter ends with an overview of the impact of quality of contact on the success of the international assignment, thereby answering RQ2.

The remainder of this chapter focuses exclusively on expatriates, as the partner sample (N = 23) was too small to allow useful analyses with regard to the role of quality of the contact. As was explained in section 4.2.4.3, each analysis checked for possible moderating effects of **Sex**, **Partner** and **Children**; other covariates were added to refine the model only if they were relevant for that particular dependent variable (see Table 4.9 on page 112). Although the three groups (High quality, Low quality and Without host) showed differences at baseline level on some dependent variables, one-way ANOVA-analyses showed that the groups were not significantly different at the outset (0 months) on these dependent variables.

After having elucidated what high quality and low quality contact between expatriate, partner and local host entailed, we analyse the extent to which the quality of the contact had an effect on the success of the international assignment of Western expatriates in the Netherlands.

### 6.2 Impact of Contact Quality on Adjustment and Performance

This section examines to what extent the quality of the contact is important for Adjustment and Performance, the first two main concepts in this study. Since a significant effect was found only for **Interaction Adjustment** for the concept of Adjustment and none for the other Adjustment variables nor for Performance, the next section deals only with **Interaction Adjustment** (6.2.1). Section 6.2.2 presents conclusions based on these findings.

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6.2.1 Contact Quality and Interaction Adjustment

In Chapter 5 it was found that contact with a local host facilitated the adjustment to interacting with host nationals in general, particularly for expatriates who did not have a partner (5.2.1). It is plausible that if the expatriate had high quality contact with the local host, the expatriate would learn more about interacting with host nationals and feel more comfortable with them. As a consequence the impact of a local host on Interaction Adjustment could be greater. This section analyses whether this statement holds and starts with the comparison between the groups High quality contact and Without host, and then moves on to compare expatriates with Low quality contact with those Without host before reaching a conclusion on whether Contact Quality matters for the impact of a local host on Interaction Adjustment.

A Repeated Measures analysis with Time (0, 5 and 9 months) and Contact Quality (High quality vs. Without host) as independent variables showed a marginally significant two-way interaction effect of Time and Contact Quality on Interaction Adjustment \( (F(2,98) = 3.04, p < .10, \eta^2 = .06) \), controlling for the effects of Partner (yes, no), as well as a significant three-way interaction effect of Time, Contact Quality and Partner \( (F(2,98) = 3.75, p < .05, \eta^2 = .07) \). The latter finding pointed to a moderating effect of having a partner on Interaction Adjustment, similar as was reported in section 5.2.1. For this reason, expatriates with and without partner were examined separately to test whether the relationship of Contact Quality and Interaction Adjustment was different for these groups.

The moderating effect of having a partner

The Estimated Marginal Means of these analyses, split into Contact Quality and Partner, are shown in Table 6.2 and visualised in Figures 6.1 and 6.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>With partner</th>
<th>Without host</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High quality</td>
<td>Low quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 months</td>
<td>3.73 (.43)</td>
<td>3.28 (.48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 months</td>
<td>4.16 (.51)</td>
<td>4.44 (.56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 months</td>
<td>4.74 (.39)</td>
<td>4.53 (.43)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.2 Interaction Adjustment of expatriates split into Partner and Contact Quality after 0, 5 and 9 months on a scale of 1 (low) to 7 (high) with Estimated Marginal Means and Standard Errors

23 As was explained in Chapter 4, \( \eta^2 \) is the partial eta squared, indicating the effect size. Boundary values for small, medium and large effect sizes are .01, .06 and .14; (Cohen, 1988, p. 283).
First, expatriates with partner were analysed (Figure 6.1). A Repeated Measures analysis with Time (0, 5 and 9 months) and Contact Quality (High quality vs. Without host) for expatriates with partner showed that expatriates with high quality contact did not differ significantly on Interaction Adjustment from expatriates without host. A similar analysis comparing expatriates with Low quality contact with those Without host neither yielded a significant impact of Contact Quality on Interaction Adjustment. These results suggested that expatriates with partner developed in a similar way on Interaction Adjustment regardless of quality of contact. An analysis of the development over time of this group, through a Repeated Measures analysis with only Time (0, 5 and 9 months) as factor, showed that expatriates with partner increased in Interaction Adjustment ($F(2,82) = 11.60, p < .001, \eta^2 = .22$) during the nine months of the project. Figure 6.1 indeed suggests that all three groups increased in Interaction Adjustment, regardless of the quality of the contact.

Second, we focus on expatriates without partner (Figure 6.2). To compare the Interaction Adjustment of the group High quality contact with the group Without host, a Repeated Measures analysis with Time (0, 5 and 9 months) and Contact Quality (High quality vs. Without host) was done. This analysis showed a significant difference on this dependent variable between single expatriates with high quality contact and those without host ($F(2,17) = 7.43, p < .01, \eta^2 = .47$). Consecutively, a similar Repeated Measures analysis was done to compare the Interaction Adjustment of expatriates with Low quality contact with those Without host, which did not reveal a significant difference between these two groups without partner.

These results showed that the quality of the contact was relevant only for expatriates without partner. This echoes the finding reported in Chapter 5 that a local host was especially important for single expatriates (5.2.1). The data suggest that expatriates without partner
only benefited if the quality of the contact with their host was high. This is confirmed by separate Repeated Measures analyses with Time (0, 5 and 9 months) done for each of the three groups without partner (High quality, Low quality and Without host), which showed that single expatriates with high quality contact were the only expatriates without partner to have increased in Interaction Adjustment between 0 and 9 months ($F(1,9) = 24.66, p < .01, \eta^2 = .73$). Single expatriates with low quality contact and those without host did not increase or decrease significantly on Interaction Adjustment.

Interestingly, the reported finding that single expatriates with low quality contact did not increase or decrease on Interaction Adjustment is in contrast to the pattern of this group, shown in Figure 6.2. This graph suggests that single expatriates with low quality contact follow a similar pattern as single expatriates with high quality contact, although the pattern seems to be somewhat weaker. The figure suggests that single expatriates with low quality contact with their host benefited at least to some extent from the contact with their host with regard to their Interaction Adjustment. The statistical tests, however, indicate that this group did not benefit significantly from the contact. In this light it is important to note the extremely small size of the group of single expatriates with low quality contact ($n = 3$), which severely limits the robustness of the conclusions that can be drawn from this data.

In conclusion, the fact that single expatriates with low quality contact did not benefit from the contact with the host according to the statistical tests, supported the conclusion that contact with a host was beneficial only for single expatriates with high quality contact. However, if one takes the pattern of single expatriates with low quality contact (Figure 6.2) into account, it suggests that this group did benefit to some extent from the contact with the host, and that expatriates experienced more benefits the higher the quality of the contact. Unfortunately, the results reported in this section are insufficient to reach a firm conclusion as to whether the contact with a host was beneficial for expatriates without partner only if high quality contact was established, or whether expatriates experienced more benefits the higher the quality of the contact with the host. One conclusion that can be inferred from the results reported in this section is that in the case of Interaction Adjustment, low quality contact with a host was not counterproductive. Expatriates with low quality contact with their host were not worse off with regard to their Interaction Adjustment than expatriates without host.

Another striking result is that expatriates with partner but without host also increased in Interaction Adjustment during the project. A similar result was found in section 5.2.1, which showed that expatriates with partner and without host significantly increased in Interaction Adjustment over time. The explanation offered here is similar to the one in Chapter 5: a partner might be an extra source of information about host nationals. Expatriates could have learned from their experiences and as a consequence feel more comfortable in their interaction with host nationals.

This section ends with a short note on causality of the findings. In Chapter 5 the experimental design guaranteed that the effects found were due to contact with a local
host. This is not the case with regard to the results reported in the present chapter, because contact quality was not manipulated as was the case with contact with a local host. After completion of the study, expatriates were assigned to a high quality and low quality contact group, based on the rating of the contact with their host. For that reason, Contact Quality cannot be identified as cause of the increase in Interaction Adjustment. High quality contact was associated with the highest increase in Interaction Adjustment during the project for single expatriates; however, it is also possible that a high level of Interaction Adjustment led to high quality contact with a host, or that a third variable, for example social skills, led to both an increase in Interaction Adjustment and high quality contact with the host. For that reason it cannot be concluded that high quality contact led to higher increase in Interaction Adjustment for expatriates without partner, it can only be stated that the highest increase in Interaction Adjustment was associated with high quality contact. This caution with regard to causality is applicable for all the results reported in this chapter.

6.2.2 Impact of Contact Quality on Adjustment and Performance

Section 6.2 examined the results of the study of the impact of the quality of contact on Adjustment and Performance. Contact Quality had an impact on the Interaction Adjustment only of expatriates without partner; expatriates with partner increased in Interaction Adjustment regardless of the quality of the contact with their host. Regarding expatriates without partner, only those with high quality contact with their host increased in Interaction Adjustment during the nine months of the research project, although the pattern present in the data suggests that expatriates with low quality contact also benefited to some extent from the contact. This pattern, however, was not significant. Unfortunately, it is impossible to be certain about the exact role of Contact Quality on Interaction Adjustment due to the small sample size. Furthermore, no causal relationship can be inferred as to whether high quality contact with the host caused the increase in Interaction Adjustment for expatriates without partner.

Quality of the contact between the expatriate and the host did not have an impact on Performance and the other variables of Adjustment (Satisfaction with Life, Physical Health, Psychological Health, Sociocultural Adjustment, General Adjustment and Work Adjustment).

6.3 Impact of Contact Quality on Social Support

Social Support is the third major concept in the present study, along with Adjustment, Performance and Intercultural Communication Competence (6.4). For this concept it is especially relevant to investigate the impact of the quality of the contact between expatriate, partner and host, because strong ties usually give more support than weak ties (see 3.3.2). Over the course of the nine months the tie between the expatriate, partner and
host developed, and it is interesting to examine whether the quality of the contact indeed had an impact on the amount of social support that was received by the expatriate.

This section starts by examining the impact of quality of the contact on social support offered by host nationals (*Host National Social Support*; 6.3.1), and then turns to examining the *Friendships* that were established during the project (6.3.2). For each quantitative analysis the possible effect of the three moderating variables *Sex*, *Partner* and *Children* was examined; other covariates were added only if they were related to that particular dependent variable (see Table 4.9 on page 112).

### 6.3.1 Contact Quality and Host National Social Support

Chapter 5 highlighted the fact that expatriates with a local host received more social support from host nationals than expatriates without a host (section 5.3.2). The quality of the contact could play a role here, because it is plausible that those expatriates who established high quality contact with their host received more social support than expatriates with low quality contact. It could even be that expatriates benefited from the contact with the host with regard to social support *only* if they assessed the quality of the contact as high. This section compares expatriates with high and low quality contact with expatriates without host in order to examine whether the quality of the contact plays a role in the social support offered by host nationals (*Host National Social Support*). Table 6.3 and Figure 6.3 show *Host National Social Support* at five and nine months, because this variable was not measured at baseline level (section 4.2.2.4).

**Table 6.3 Host National Social Support of expatriates with high quality contact, low quality contact and without host after 5 and 9 months on a scale of 1 (low) to 25 (high) with Estimated Marginal Means and Standard Errors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High quality (n = 21)</th>
<th>Low quality (n = 12)</th>
<th>Without host (n = 32)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 months</td>
<td>10.11 (.85)</td>
<td>9.61 (1.12)</td>
<td>9.12 (.68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 months</td>
<td>11.57 (.79)</td>
<td>9.65 (1.04)</td>
<td>8.32 (.63)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
First, expatriates with high quality contact were compared with expatriates without host both in the short term (five months) and the long term (nine months). A univariate General Linear Model with Host National Social Support at five months as dependent variable, and Contact Quality (High quality vs. Without host) as fixed factor, revealed no significant difference between expatriates with high quality contact and those without host. A similar univariate General Linear Model with Host National Social Support at nine months as dependent variable, and again Contact Quality (High quality vs. Without host) as independent variable, showed that expatriates with high quality contact with their host received significantly more Host National Social Support in the long term than expatriates without a host \(F(1,51) = 10.63, p < .01, \eta^2 = .17\). When examining the development over time between five and nine months, a Repeated Measures analysis with Time (5 and 9 months) and Contact Quality (High quality vs. Without host) as factors showed that expatriates with high quality contact with their host increased significantly more on Host National Social Support between five and nine months than expatriates without host \(F(1,51) = 7.86, p < .01, \eta^2 = .13\). Separate Repeated Measures analyses with only Time (5 and 9 months) for expatriates with high quality contact, low quality contact and those without host showed a marginally significant increase over time on Host National Social Support of expatriates with high quality contact \(F(1,20) = 4.30, p < .10, \eta^2 = .18\), whereas expatriates without host did not show an increase, and even showed a tendency to decrease in Host National Social Support. Expatriates with low quality contact maintained the same level. These results show that expatriates with high quality contact did not receive more Host National Social Support in the short term (five months) than expatriates without host; however, between five and nine months expatriates with high quality contact increased more in Host National Social Support, which amounted in a significant difference after nine months between expatriates with high quality contact and those without host.
Second, expatriates with low quality contact were compared to expatriates without host. The same Repeated Measures and Univariate GLMs with Time (5 and/or 9 months) and Contact Quality (Low quality vs. Without host), as reported above, were done. No significant difference in Host National Social Support was found between expatriates with low quality contact with host and expatriates without host, neither when comparing both groups after five or nine months (univariate GLM) nor when comparing the development of Host National Social Support of both groups between five and nine months (Repeated Measures analyses). These results suggested that expatriates with low quality contact did not receive more social support from host nationals as a consequence of the contact with their host. Both expatriates without host and those with low quality contact did not show a significant increase in Host National Social Support during the whole duration of the project.

These results indicate that contact with a host only had an impact on the Host National Social Support received by expatriates if they had established high quality contact with their host. Figure 6.3 shows, however, that, as in section 6.2.1, expatriates with low quality contact occupy an intermediate position between expatriates with high quality contact and expatriates without host, which suggests that expatriates experienced more benefit the higher the quality of the contact was. This is also what would be expected based on the literature: strong ties usually offer more social support than weak ones (Kim, 1987), but weak ties might still fulfil an important supportive role (Adelman, 1988).

Another interesting aspect of the result reported in this section is that the difference in Host National Social Support between expatriates with high quality contact and those without host was significant only after nine months; no significant difference was found after five months. This suggests that expatriates with high quality contact received significantly more Host National Social Support only after being in touch with their host for more than five months. This is plausible since all hosts started out as a weak tie, and it takes some time for this to develop into a strong tie.

Alternatively, the explanation offered in 5.3.2 could be valid here as well: it is also possible that contact with a local host brings along contact with other host nationals or stimulates expatriates to get in touch with other host nationals in their surroundings (e.g. at work). These other host national contacts might also offer social support.

In conclusion, although it is clear that the quality of the contact was related to Host National Social Support, the results reported in this section cannot give a definite answer with regard to the exact role of the quality of the contact. It is possible that contact with a host was beneficial for expatriates only if they had established high quality contact with their host, or that expatriates experienced more benefits the higher the quality of the contact with a host. In any case it is clear that low quality contact with a local host was not associated with a decrease in social support received from host nationals.
6.3.2 Contact Quality and Friendship

A local host started out as weak tie and it was found in section 5.3.3 that a local host could develop into a strong tie, a friend. The importance of the quality of contact for the development of friendship with a local host is examined in the present section.

Section 5.3.3 showed that 18% of the expatriates and 30% of the partners reported their host as one of their five most important friends and acquaintances, indicating that a local host can become a strong tie, a friend, even within five months for both expatriates and partners. In light of the present chapter, it is interesting to see that most of the expatriates (n = 5) and all three partners who reported their host as friend had established high quality contact with their host. This is elucidated in Table 6.4, which is an extension of Table 5.7 of section 5.3.3. Only one expatriate with low quality contact with the host reported one of his hosts as one of his five most important friends and acquaintances. The reported closeness (1 on a scale of 1 (low) – 5 (high)) and frequency (2 on a scale of 1 (low) – 5 (high)) of this contact is an indication that the tie was not very strong. Moreover, this tie was of lower strength and frequency as compared with the other expatriates who reported their host as one of the five most important friends or acquaintances.

Table 6.4 Cases in which the host was reported by the expatriate or partner as one of the five most important friends or acquaintances after five and nine months, with rating of rank, closeness, and amount of personal and other contact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expatriate / partner</th>
<th>After 5 months</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>After 9 months</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rank*</td>
<td>Closeness*</td>
<td>Personal contact*</td>
<td>Other contact*</td>
<td>Rank*</td>
<td>Closeness*</td>
<td>Personal contact*</td>
<td>Other contact*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E9</td>
<td>3 (of 5)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 (of 5)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E22</td>
<td>3 (of 5)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3 (of 5)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E27</td>
<td>5 (of 5)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E40</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3 (of 3)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E46</td>
<td>5 (of 5)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2 (of 5)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E57</td>
<td>3 (of 5)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>5 (of 5)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 (of 5)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P23</td>
<td>4 (of 5)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P57</td>
<td>3 (of 5)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Rank indicates the position in which the host was mentioned with regard to the number of other reported friends and acquaintances (maximum of five) * On a scale of 1 (not very close / never) – 5 (very close / >6 times). Bold numbers indicate that the contact was assessed as high quality (Rating of Contact Quality)

The data presented in Table 6.4 suggests that expatriates with high quality contact were three times more likely to rank their host as one of five most important friends and acquaintances (5 of 21 expatriates: 24%) than expatriates with low quality contact with

Does the quality of the contact matter?
their host (1 of 12 expatriates: 8%). All three partners who listed their host as one of five most important friends or acquaintances had high quality contact with him or her. This suggests that the quality of the contact did play a role in the establishment of friendships between expatriates, partners and hosts, which is plausible as friendship usually entails good quality contact between the parties concerned.

**Contact Quality and Contact Maintenance**

Section 5.3.3 also reported on the maintenance of the contact between expatriates, partners and hosts after the project was finished, and showed that almost one third of the expatriates (31%; n = 9) kept the contact alive until at least March 2010. Some of these nine contacts spanned several years (see Table 5.8 on page 141). Interestingly, these nine expatriates all belonged to the group High quality contact, or, to put it in a different way, 43% of the expatriates with high quality contact maintained the contact with their host up to March 2010, compared to none of the expatriates with low quality contact. Quality of the contact between expatriate, partner and host played a major role in the maintenance of the contact beyond the project.

This data also provided some insight into other factors that have stimulated the maintenance of the contact. First, as being based in the Netherlands makes it easier to keep the contact with the host alive, it was also asked whether the expatriates were still in the Netherlands. About half of those who replied to this question had left the Netherlands at the time of enquiry. This increased the likelihood that the contact with the host was broken off, because less than a quarter of the expatriates (23%) who had left the country were still in touch with their host, compared to 50% for those who were still in the Netherlands. This suggested that the fact that the expatriate, partner and host were able to see each other on a regular basis played an important role in keeping the contact. Second, it seems that participating together with a partner also encouraged the maintenance of the contact. Seventy-eight percent of the expatriates who were still in touch with their host in March 2010 participated in the project together with their partner, compared to only about half of the experimental group overall. This suggested that participating together with a partner promotes the establishment of a long term friendship.

These results suggest the importance of high quality contact for the establishment of friendship for both expatriates and partners. Moreover, it is clear that at the time of the extra data collection in March 2010, only expatriates and partners with high quality contact had maintained the contact with their host. This shows that high quality contact was an important stimulus for keeping the contact alive over a longer period than just the nine months of the project.
6.3.3 Social Support benefits of high quality contact

The results reported in 6.3.1 and 6.3.2 show that the quality of the contact played an important role for expatriates in receiving Host National Social Support and developing Friendship. Expatriates with high quality contact received more social support from host nationals than those without host. Expatriates with low quality contact seemed to take up an intermediate position. The following quote shows an example of social support given by a host:

[3] “At one point I was feeling concerned about my work and I talked openly with them [the hosts] about it. They provided me with some websites that might be helpful – and listened when I needed to talk.” [E45⁰²]

Expatriates with high quality contact were also more likely to consider their host as one of five most important friends and acquaintances: this was also true for partners. These patterns in the data suggested that expatriates experienced more benefits with regard to receiving social support and friendship with their host the higher the quality of the contact (linear relationship). With regard to Contact Maintenance, the nine contacts that were still established in March 2010 all came out of the group of expatriates with high quality contact during the project, suggesting that expatriates benefit in the long term only if they had high quality contact with their host (curvilinear relationship). One expatriate with high quality contact noted in the final questionnaire:

[4] “Yes, we have really enjoyed meeting the host and we will definitely stay in contact with them once the project is over. It has been great to meet Dutch people who are not part of the expat world. They are a very lively couple and have been extremely welcoming.” [P4⁰³]

Finally, the sample of female expatriates was too small to allow testing of importance of Contact Quality for Host National Access (5.3.1). Only eight female expatriates had high quality contact, six had low quality contact with their host, and the control group numbered twelve female expatriates. Future research should incorporate a larger sample of female expatriates so as to be able to examine the role of contact quality in Host National Access.

6.4 Impact of Contact Quality on Intercultural Communication Competence

The fourth and final concept that was considered is Intercultural Communication Competence, which was composed of Knowledge, Openmindedness, Social Initiative, Emotional Stability, Cultural Empathy and Flexibility. Contact with a local host offered the opportunity to learn about the new culture, and we saw an impact of a local host on

Does the quality of the contact matter?
Knowledge (5.4.1), Openmindedness (5.4.2) and Social Initiative (5.4.3). Here again, it is interesting to examine the role of the quality of the contact between expatriates, partners and hosts on these aspects, because it is very possible that good quality contact with a host offers more opportunities to learn about the host culture.

The results with regard to the impact of the quality of contact on Knowledge are reported in 6.4.1, followed by Openmindedness (6.4.2) and Social Initiative (6.4.3). As with the results presented in Chapter 5, no impact for expatriates was found for Emotional Stability, Flexibility and Cultural Empathy. The sample of partners was too small to allow useful analyses with regard to the quality of the contact. The three moderating variables Sex, Partner and Children were added to each quantitative analysis, whereas the analyses controlled for the effect of other covariates only if they were significantly related to that particular dependent variable (see Table 4.9 on page 112).

6.4.1 Contact Quality and Knowledge

An important element of Intercultural Communication Competence is knowledge about appropriate norms and behaviours in the host culture. Section 5.4.1 showed that 64% of the expatriates learned about Dutch culture from the contact with their host. The question was whether expatriates with high quality contact with their host were more likely to learn about Dutch culture than those with low quality contact. This question is examined in the present section.

When looking at expatriates with high quality contact it became clear that three quarters (76%; n = 16) spontaneously mentioned having learned about the Dutch. An expatriate with high quality contact said the following in answer to the question how the contact with the host had helped him:

[5] “A lot of important information on the Dutch and the Netherlands which supports integration.” [E6102]

Expatriates with low quality contact were less likely to have learned about the Dutch: only 42% of these expatriates learned enough from their host to spontaneously mention it in the questionnaires, interviews, emails or diaries. This showed that expatriates with low quality contact could still benefit to some extent from the contact with their host with regard to the knowledge component of Intercultural Communication Competence, which is illustrated by the following quotes of expatriates with low quality contact with their host:

[6] “We had a lot of really good conversations about how Holland, the US and the rest of the world relates to one another, and those kinds of things” [E221]
These findings showed that expatriates with high quality contact were almost twice as likely to learn about Dutch culture through contact with their host (76% vs. 42%). Expatriates with low quality contact benefited to some extent – some of them still acquired knowledge about Dutch culture from the contact with their host – suggesting that expatriates experienced more benefits the higher the quality of the contact.

6.4.2 Contact Quality and Openmindedness

Section 5.4.2 showed that a local host buffered a decrease on Openmindedness – an open and unprejudiced attitude towards outgroup members and towards different cultural norms and values (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000, p. 294) – for expatriates who had a family. The same pattern is found for the extent to which the quality of contact is related to Openmindedness. A Repeated Measures analysis with Time (0 and 9 months) and Contact Quality (High quality vs. Without host) as independent variables only showed a marginally significant two-way interaction effect ($F(1,51) = 3.55, p < .10, \eta^2 = .06$) when comparing expatriates with High quality contact with those Without host, whereas a Repeated Measures analysis with Time (0 and 9 months), Contact Quality (High quality vs. Without host) and Partner (yes, no) showed a significant three-way interaction effect on Openmindedness ($F(1,49) = 6.36, p < .05, \eta^2 = .11$). This showed that the relationship between Contact Quality and Openmindedness was different for expatriates with partner than for single expatriates. For this reason, expatriates with and without partner were examined separately.

Moderating effect of having a partner

Figures 6.4 and 6.5 show the development over time of expatriates with and without partner. The Estimated Marginal Means of this analysis are shown in Table 6.5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Partner</th>
<th>Without host</th>
<th>Without partner</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High quality (n = 11)</td>
<td>Low quality</td>
<td>Without host</td>
<td>High quality</td>
<td>Low quality</td>
<td>Without host</td>
<td>High quality</td>
<td>Low quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(n = 9)</td>
<td>(n = 22)</td>
<td>(n = 10)</td>
<td>(n = 3)</td>
<td>(n = 10)</td>
<td>(n = 10)</td>
<td>(n = 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 months</td>
<td>3.58 (.13)</td>
<td>3.89 (.14)</td>
<td>3.80 (.09)</td>
<td>4.01 (.14)</td>
<td>4.22 (.25)</td>
<td>3.87 (.14)</td>
<td>3.70 (.12)</td>
<td>3.98 (.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 months</td>
<td>3.64 (.12)</td>
<td>3.79 (.13)</td>
<td>3.51 (.08)</td>
<td>3.70 (.12)</td>
<td>3.98 (.23)</td>
<td>3.62 (.13)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Does the quality of the contact matter?
First, expatriates with partner were examined (Figure 6.4). A Repeated Measures analysis with Time (0 and 9 months) and Contact Quality (High quality vs. Without host) as factors showed that high quality contact with a host buffered a decrease on Openmindedness ($F(1,31) = 11.81, p < .01, \eta^2 = .27$). When comparing expatriates with low quality contact to expatriates without host, a Repeated Measures analysis with Time (0 and 9 months) and Contact Quality (Low quality vs. Without host) as factors did not reveal a significant effect on Openmindedness.

Second, when turning to expatriates without partner, a Repeated Measures analysis with Time (0 and 9 months) and Contact Quality (High quality vs. Without host) did not yield a significant effect. The development over time of single expatriates is depicted in Figure 6.5. A separate Repeated Measures analysis with only Time (0 and 9 months) as factor showed that single expatriates decreased on Openmindedness, regardless of the quality of the contact ($F(1,22) = 22.24, p < .001, \eta^2 = .50$). These analyses show that Contact Quality was not relevant for the development over time on Openmindedness of expatriates without partner.

In addition, a Repeated Measures Analysis with Time (0 and 9 months), Contact Quality (High quality vs. Without host) and Children (yes, no) found a very similar, marginally significant, three-way interaction effect of a local host on Openmindedness ($F(1,49) = 4.52, p < .10, \eta^2 = .08$). This might be explained by the fact that the variables Partner and Children overlap to a large extent (73%). The Estimated Marginal Means of this analysis are reported in Table 6.6.
Table 6.6 Openmindedness of expatriates split into Children and Contact Quality after 0 and 9 months on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high) with Estimated Marginal Means and Standard Errors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Children</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Without host</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High quality</td>
<td>Low quality</td>
<td>Without host</td>
<td>High quality</td>
<td>Low quality</td>
<td>Without host</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n = 6)</td>
<td>(n = 7)</td>
<td>(n = 18)</td>
<td>(n = 15)</td>
<td>(n = 5)</td>
<td>(n = 14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 months</td>
<td>3.52 (.18)</td>
<td>3.93 (.17)</td>
<td>3.81 (.11)</td>
<td>3.89 (.11)</td>
<td>4.03 (.20)</td>
<td>3.83 (.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 months</td>
<td>3.63 (.16)</td>
<td>3.88 (.15)</td>
<td>3.50 (.09)</td>
<td>3.69 (.10)</td>
<td>3.79 (.18)</td>
<td>3.59 (.11)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The analyses pointed out that the quality of the contact was related to Openmindedness only for expatriates with partner, and suggested that only those with high quality contact benefited from the contact with their host in the sense that their Openmindedness did not decrease. However, when examining the development over time of the three groups with partner (Figure 6.4), it seemed that expatriates with low quality contact take up an intermediate position, as in Figure 6.2 for Interaction Adjustment and Figure 6.3 for Host National Social Support. Expatriates with low quality contact with their host did not seem to decrease as much as expatriates without host. This was confirmed by separate Repeated Measures analyses with only Time (0 and 9 months) as independent variable, which showed that only expatriates without host decreased significantly on Openmindedness ($F(1,21) = 20.18, p < .001, \eta^2 = .49$). Expatriates with partner and high or low quality contact did not show a significant decrease, suggesting that both groups benefited to some extent from the contact with the host.

Interestingly, not only expatriates with partner but without a host decreased on Openmindedness, also single expatriates with high quality or low quality contact with their host showed this pattern. Even high quality contact with a host did not counterbalance the decrease in Openmindedness that single expatriates experienced. The explanation offered in section 5.4.2 could hold here as well: expatriates with partner were more often paired with host couples, which meant that there was not just one host national willing to get in touch with them, but two, which might have made the difference. Also, with two hosts, the interaction was richer because there were more persons involved, which offers more opportunity for corrective feedback, possibly leading to a change in attitude. A third explanation was that contact with the host might be more salient for expatriates who were able to talk it over with their partner – this is called capitalisation (Gable et al., 2004) – and that for that reason, the buffering effect of a local host was only activated when an expatriate had a partner.

One may also argue that chances were higher for expatriates to establish high quality contact with their host if their host was a couple, because if there were two hosts to relate to, it might be more likely that the contact would develop with at least one of them than if the host was single. This higher quality contact would then explain the effect found for expatriates with partner. However, this possibility was ruled out by evidence from
this study. A t-test comparing Rating of the Contact Quality\textsuperscript{24} for expatriates matched to a host couple as compared to expatriates matched to a single host showed no significant difference between these two groups, nor did a similar test for expatriates with partner and expatriates without partner. Being matched to a host couple did not promote the quality of the contact as compared to being matched to a single host, nor did having a partner.

Again, it is important to bear in mind that the sample of expatriates without partner and with low quality contact was very small (n = 3), and this limited the certainty of the conclusions that can be drawn from the statistical analyses for this group, so it has to be concluded that, also with regard to Openmindedness, it is not possible to give a definite answer as to the exact role of the quality of the contact. The results and the pattern that was present in the data suggested however, that the quality of the contact was related to Openmindedness, and that for expatriates with partner the contact with a host seemed to be more beneficial the higher the quality of the contact. Expatriates with high quality contact experienced more benefits than expatriates without host, and there were indications that expatriates with low quality contact also benefited to some extent. In any case these expatriates did not experience a sharper decrease on Openmindedness, suggesting that low quality contact with a host was not counterproductive.

### 6.4.3 Contact Quality and Social Initiative

Social Initiative focused on actively approaching social situations and taking initiatives. Section 5.4.3 showed that a local host acted as a buffer for a decrease in Social Initiative of expatriates: expatriates with host remained socially active whereas expatriates without host showed fewer initiatives and were less active in their approach to social situations. The question arose whether the local host acted as a buffer regardless of the quality of the contact between expatriate and host, or whether expatriates remained socially active only when the quality of the contact with their host was high. This section focuses on this issue and compares expatriates with high and low quality contact with expatriates without contact to examine the role of the quality of the contact. The Estimated Marginal Means of the analyses are reported in Table 6.7 and Figure 6.6 shows the development over time on Social Initiative.

\textsuperscript{24} The combined end evaluation of the quality of contact of expatriates and their partners (if present) (4.2.2.6)
Table 6.7 Social Initiative of expatriates with high quality contact, low quality contact and without host after 0 and 9 months on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high) with Estimated Marginal Means and Standard Errors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High quality (n = 21)</th>
<th>Low quality (n = 12)</th>
<th>Without host (n = 32)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 months</td>
<td>3.49 (.13)</td>
<td>3.62 (.15)</td>
<td>3.59 (.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 months</td>
<td>3.60 (.10)</td>
<td>3.61 (.13)</td>
<td>3.43 (.08)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6.6 Social Initiative for expatriates with high quality contact, low quality contact and without host after 0 and 9 months on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)

First, expatriates with high quality contact were compared to expatriates without host. A Repeated Measures analysis with Time (0 and 9 months) and Contact Quality (High quality vs. Without host) as independent variables showed that high quality contact buffered a decrease in Social Initiative and controlling for Children ($F(1,49) = 6.87, p < .05, \eta^2 = .12$). Second, when comparing expatriates with low quality contact with the control group a similar Repeated Measures analysis with Time (0 and 9 months) and Contact Quality (Low quality vs. Without host) as factors did not find a significant effect.

These results suggested that the quality of the contact was related to Social Initiative because only expatriates with high quality contact benefited from the contact with their local host compared to expatriates without host. This finding indicated that expatriates benefited regarding Social Initiative only if the quality of the contact with their host was high. However, when exploring the development over time of each individual group, separate Repeated Measures analyses with only Time (0 and 9 months) as factor showed that expatriates with high quality contact as well as those with low quality contact did not show a significant change, whereas expatriates without host decreased on Social Initiative ($F(1,30) = 5.93, p < .05, \eta^2 = .16$; see 5.4.3). This suggested that the decrease on Social Initiative was buffered for both expatriates with high quality contact and those with low quality contact. Figure 6.6 shows that expatriates with low quality contact occupied a position between expatriates with high quality contact and those without host. These findings supported the
conclusion that expatriates experienced more benefits when the quality of the contact was high. Expatriates with low quality contact also seemed to benefit to some extent from the contact, as with Interaction Adjustment for single expatriates (6.2.1), Host National Social Support (6.3.1), Friendship (6.3.2), Knowledge (6.4.1) and Openmindedness for expatriates with partner (6.4.2). Due to the small sample of expatriates with low quality contact, it is difficult to draw a definite conclusion as to the exact role of the quality of the contact for the Social Initiative of the expatriate. It remains to be seen whether expatriates benefited only if the quality of the contact with their host was high, or whether they experienced more benefits the higher the quality of the contact was, but it is clear that low quality contact with a host was not associated with a steeper decrease than expatriates without host. Low quality contact with a host, therefore, was not counterproductive.

6.4.4 Culture Learning benefits of high quality contact

Section 6.4 listed the results found for the impact of Contact Quality on Knowledge (6.4.1), Openmindedness (6.4.2) and Social Initiative (6.4.3), indicating that the quality of contact between expatriate, partner and host played an important role in these three aspects of Intercultural Communication Competence.

With regard to Knowledge, expatriates with high quality contact were almost twice as likely as expatriates with low quality contact to spontaneously mention that they learned about the Dutch. The fact that expatriates with low quality contact still benefited to some extent from the contact suggested that Contact Quality had a linear relationship with Knowledge, although the comparison to expatriates without host could not be made. No data was available for this group because the research question (RQ1a) focused on whether expatriates could learn from their host, not whether they learned more about Dutch culture than those without host.

In the case of Openmindedness and Social Initiative, the decrease that expatriates experienced – as reported in section 5.4.2 and 5.4.3 – was buffered only when the quality of the contact with the host was high. Contact with a local host might help balance overly optimistic expectations on coming to the Netherlands, which might otherwise result in expatriates becoming less openminded and less socially active. The findings of sections 6.4.2 and 6.4.3 suggested that this buffering effect took place only if the quality of the contact was high. More specifically, with regard to Openmindedness this buffering effect was present only for expatriates with a family: only those expatriates with high quality contact and a family benefited from the contact with their host. It is important to realise though, that the precise impact of low quality contact was impossible to define in the present study due to the limited sample of expatriates with low quality contact. A possible explanation of the fact that this effect occurred only for expatriates with family might be that they were more often matched to a host couple instead of to a single host. This doubling of the number of Dutch nationals reaching out to them might have influenced their perception of the
Dutch and, hence, helped in maintaining their *Openmindedness* (see section 5.4.1). Another possibility is that expatriates with partner could share their experiences with their partner, so that these gained more impact (Gable et al., 2004).

For *Emotional Stability*, *Flexibility* and *Cultural Empathy* no effects of *Contact Quality* were found. In section 5.4.5 I speculated on the possible explanations of this lack of effect of a local host on these aspects.

### 6.5 Does the quality of the contact matter?

Chapter 6 focused on answering the second research question of this study: *To what extent does quality of contact between expatriate, partner and local host have an effect on the success of the expatriate assignment?* Since the variable *Contact Quality* clearly divided the group in two (see section 4.2.2.6), the experimental group followed this division – expatriates with high quality contact with their host and those with low quality contact. These two groups were then compared to expatriates without host. Table 6.8 on page 185 contains an overview of the findings of this chapter and resulting tentative conclusions.

The results reported in sections 6.2 – 6.4 showed that quality of the contact between expatriate, partner and host played a role in a number of important aspects of the international assignment. There are two options with regard to the nature of the relationship between contact quality and the dependent variables. First, expatriates might experience *more* benefits the higher the quality of the contact. In this case, expatriates also would derive some benefit from the contact if the quality of the contact was low. Second, it is also possible that contact with a host was beneficial *only* if high quality contact was established; expatriates with low quality contact with their host would then not benefit; they might even be adversely affected by the contact.

The findings showed that high quality contact was associated with the highest benefit in *Interaction Adjustment* (for single expatriates), *Host National Social Support*, *Friendship*, *Knowledge*, *Openmindedness* (for expatriates with partner) and *Social Initiative*. It was also shown that expatriates with low quality contact were not adversely affected, which indicated that contact with a local host did not have a detrimental effect if the expatriate did not manage to develop high quality contact with his or her host.

The central question is whether or not expatriates with low quality contact also benefited to some extent from the contact with their host. The problem in the present study is that the experiment was not set up to test the role of *Contact Quality*, and for that reason the sample size of both the group with high and the group with low quality contact was too small to draw solid conclusions with regard to the exact role of the quality of the contact. As is summarised in Table 6.8, the comparisons between expatriates with low quality contact and those without host were never significant. This did not mean, however, that expatriates with low quality contact did not benefit at all from the contact with their host. For example, in the case of *Knowledge* it was clear that expatriates with low quality contact...
also benefited to some extent from the contact with the host through learning about the host culture. The lack of statistically significant findings with regard to the expatriates with low quality contact as compared to expatriates without host might be due to the reduced sample size of this group (n = 12).

When examining the patterns that were present in the data it was striking that in all the cases where \textit{Contact Quality} had an effect, expatriates with low quality contact took up an intermediate position between expatriates with high quality contact and those without host. This recurring intermediate position suggested that expatriates with low quality contact did benefit to some extent from the contact with the host and that expatriates with high quality contact benefited even more: the higher the quality of the contact, the more benefits the expatriates derived. These findings offered some interesting practical implications and suggestions for future research, which are explored in Chapter 8 and 9.

In addition, one should keep in mind that it is not possible to state that the quality of contact led to the reported benefits in this study because the expatriates were divided in a high quality and low quality contact group after completion of the project and not in an experimental design. For that reason, it is possible that high quality contact led to the reported benefits, but it might also be the other way around, or both the benefits as well as the high quality contact might be caused by a third factor.

The findings in this chapter showed the added benefits of high quality contact with a local host, as was experienced by this expatriate:

\begin{quote}
[8] “[…] overall it went well, and I was glad to have participated, I think it is helpful. I think anything that helps the expats feel more secure in what is – I won't call it an alien environment but a very different environment, and it is a different culture, and helps them understands that, get better insight, it’s positive, it’s a good thing.” [E46]
\end{quote}

The next chapter will explore why some contacts never got off the ground, whereas others developed into long term friendships.
Table 6.8 Summary of the impact of Contact Quality on Adjustment, Performance, Social Support and Intercultural Communication Competence of expatriates

### RQ2 To what extent does quality of contact between expatriate, partner and local host have an effect on the success of the expatriate assignment?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>High Quality vs. No Host ($\eta^2$)</th>
<th>Low Quality vs. No Host ($\eta^2$)</th>
<th>High vs. Low Quality ($\eta^2$)</th>
<th>Time effect ($\eta^2$)</th>
<th>Pattern</th>
<th>Conclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adjustment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Health</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>No impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Health</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>No impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with Life</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>No impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Adjustment</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>No impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction Adjustment</td>
<td>Partner+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>** (.47)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Linear or curvilinear impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partner-</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Adjustment</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>No impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociocultural Adjustment</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>No impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Performance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assess Own Performance</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>No impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to Terminate Assign.</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>No impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most Recent Perf. Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>No impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Support</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Host National Access</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>No impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Host National Social Support</td>
<td>(at 5 &amp; 9 mths &amp; between 5-9 mths)</td>
<td>5 -</td>
<td>** (.17)</td>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>** (.13)</td>
<td>Linear or curvilinear impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship (F = Friendship;</td>
<td>C = Contact Maintenance)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercultural Communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>↑ 2x more likely</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>Linear or curvilinear impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Openmindedness</td>
<td>Partner+ → ** (.27)</td>
<td>Partner+ -</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Partner+ H&amp;L -</td>
<td>Linear or curvilinear impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Partner- -</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Partner+ N ↓ ** (.49)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Partner- all</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Partner- all ↓ ** (.50)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Initiative</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>H&amp;L -</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Linear (6.4.3)</td>
<td>Linear or curvilinear impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N ↓ * (.16)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Stability</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>No impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Empathy</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>No impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>No impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .10; *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001; $\eta^2$ = effect size; ↑ = increase on dependent variable; ↑ = theoretically plausible pattern; → = buffering effect (group with high quality contact maintained same level); Partner+ = with partner; Partner- = without partner; all = all expatriates in that particular group; Pattern = pattern in Figure; H = High quality contact; L = Low quality contact; N = No host; n.a. = not applicable (no Figure available for this variable).
Chapter 7

Catalysts and barriers
Chapter 7

contact

expatriate

host

Chapter 7
Catalysts and barriers

So far Chapters 5 and 6 have reported the results of quantitative analyses that illustrated the importance of contact with a local host for the success of an international assignment (RQ1) and the role of quality of contact between expatriate and host (RQ2). Chapter 6 showed that expatriates with high quality contact benefited from the contact with the host compared to expatriates without host. Those with low quality contact seemed to occupy an intermediate position. The focal point of the present chapter is to explore why certain expatriates developed high quality contact with their host and others did not, thereby providing an answer to the third research question of this study:

RQ3 Which aspects promote high quality contact between expatriate, partner and host?

This analysis is conducted through listing the various catalysts (7.1) and barriers (7.2) for the development of the contact that were highlighted by the expatriates, partners and hosts in interviews, diaries and emails, and also in the answers to the open ended items in the questionnaires. This chapter focuses exclusively on expatriates and partners who were put in touch with a host. Although the factors are divided into catalysts and barriers, one should realise these two categories cannot always be distinctly separated because in some cases they are two sides of a single coin. Section 7.3 describes the pairs with highest and lowest quality contact to analyse what worked well and what went wrong in these specific cases so as to shed some light on which factors override others in the development of high quality contact. The chapter concludes with an overview of the factors helping or hindering the contact with the host (7.4).

To illustrate the richness of the data, Table 7.1 shows the words that the expatriates and partners used in the questionnaires to describe their hosts.

Table 7.1 Overview of the words the expatriates and partners used in the questionnaires to describe their host

| Friendly, fun, active, outgoing, lively, warm, good company, welcoming, interested in us, nice, interesting, good, pleasant, easy to talk to, kind, welcoming, very flexible with us, open mind, lot of fun to talk with, approachable | Sympathique, dynamique, curieux, partage goût de voyage, ouverts, intéressant, accueillant, disponible, agréable, instructif, décontracté, intelligent, chaleureux, drôle, chaleureux, simplicité, ouverture d’esprit, authenticité, adorable, super active, extraordinaire, spontané, cultivés, polis, gentils, charmant, cœur sur la main |

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25 The source of each quote is indicated, where I = interview, DW4 = diary week 4, E = email, Q2 = questionnaire after five months and Q3 = questionnaire after nine months.
7.1 Catalysts of the contact

An important catalyst for the contact appears to be the similarity between expatriate and host in terms of age, family situation and interests (7.1.1). The motivation on both sides to make the contact work might also have encouraged the contact (7.1.2). Furthermore, the contact also appeared to develop toward high quality contact when it was seen as enriching (7.1.3), benefiting adjustment (7.1.4) or contributing social support (7.1.5). Finally, proximity between places of residence of the expatriate, partner and host (7.1.6) and the fact that the contact took place in a research context (7.1.7) might also have helped the development of the contact.

7.1.1 Similarity

Based on the similarity-attraction hypothesis (Byrne, 1971; Byrne et al., 1967) it may be expected that some common ground between expatriate, partner and host might have been important to establish the contact. The question is how much similarity is necessary to establish high quality contact, and with regard to which aspects. One expatriate expressed this as follows:

[1] “I think you need to have enough communality for people to at least [...] find some common ground to have a relationship, and then some differences too, make the other person go outside of their normal comfort zone. So they try something new or extend a little bit.” [E46]

Matching criteria

As outlined in section 4.2.3 the matching process paired expatriates with hosts who were similar in age and in family situation (partner and /or children), which may be ranged under the category personal characteristics of the social penetration theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973), thus hoping to increase the success of the intervention of contact with a local host. For this reason expatriates and hosts were relatively similar with regard to age and family situation (Table 7.2). This low variation on these two variables made it more difficult to test whether these variables are important for the establishment of high quality contact between expatriate, partner and host, as is discussed below.

Table 7.2 Comparison of expatriates and hosts with regard to age and family situation (M (SD))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Similarity in:</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>High quality contact (n = 21)</th>
<th>Low quality contact (n = 12)</th>
<th>Comparison High vs. Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (in years)</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
<td>6.38 (4.84)</td>
<td>4.75 (6.06)</td>
<td>$t(31) = .85, p = .21$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family situation</td>
<td>Dichotomous</td>
<td>13 identical 8 dissimilar</td>
<td>7 identical 5 dissimilar</td>
<td>$\chi^2(1) = .041, p = .84$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

190
Similarity in age: Age was taken into account in the matching process, so that expatriates were put in touch with hosts in more or less the same age range. For three quarters of the expatriates the age gap was less than eight years; the maximum age difference was 23 years. The qualitative data shows that age might play a role in the development of the contact, but that it can also be overcome by other factors. In two cases the age difference was suggested by the participants as a reason for the lack of the development of the contact:

[2] “G. is the same age as my own parents, which is nice but it doesn’t feel as comfortable as being with people my own age.” [H55q] [age gap: 23 years]

[3] “The contact itself was fine, but we didn’t really ‘click’ (maybe due to the age difference?).” [H10q] [age gap: 10 years]

Other participants did not consider the age difference as a factor hindering the contact. For example, one expatriate with high quality contact, when asked about the age gap of ten years with her host, said that she is open to meet people from different ages [E54i]. In another case, where the age difference was sixteen years and high quality contact was established, the host said when asked whether this age difference would be a problem:

[4] “Age is only a problem if we make it a problem. [...] for a 40 year old someone of 56 is past it. [...] I think we should just make contact and see if we can get on.” [H9e] [age gap: 16 years]

The following partner is another case in which the age gap was not considered a hindrance:

[5] “They are a bit older than us, but that doesn’t bother me, so it’s alright.” [P57i]

[age gap: 17 years]

When comparing the average age difference of expatriates with high quality contact (a little over six years) to that of expatriates with low quality contact (almost five years) a Student’s t-test did not find a significant effect between the groups (Table 7.2): neither was the correlation between Rating of Contact Quality (see 4.2.2.6) and Age significant. This indicates that age difference – within the range in this study – did not play a role in the establishment of the contact. If similarity in age has any importance for the establishment of high quality contact – which cannot be proven in this study – it suggests that the application of the age criterion as was done in the present study worked out well.

It is also possible that it is not so much about age, but more about the life stage one was in. One expatriate, whose age differed only three years from that of his host, cited the fact that the host was finishing her studies whereas he had recently started to work was an
important reason why the contact did not really develop [E58]. Another important life stage is whether one has children or not. This brings us to the second criterion used in the matching process: family situation.

Similarity in family situation: This criterion focuses on two elements that entail a different life style – partner and children. As one expatriate stated:

[6] “It would be useful for people to be in the similar stages in their lives. And that’s difficult, but I think [...] having children really changes you, makes you completely different.” [E43]

One should keep in mind that life style also depends on the person and not only on whether one is single or has a partner. The expatriates were matched as much as possible to a host in a similar situation with regard to having partner and children (4.2.3). If an exact match (n = 20) was not possible, then single participants were matched only to participants with partner (n = 7), and participants with partner and children only to participants with partner (n = 5). The only exception is an expatriate with partner and children who was matched to a single host (n = 1), thus representing a greater dissimilarity than in the other cases.

When examining the relationship between similarity of family situation and contact quality, a Chi-square test showed that the difference between expatriates with high and low quality contact was not significant (Table 7.2). The thirteen cases that were not exactly matched were equally distributed over the group high quality and low quality contact, suggesting that dissimilarity in family situation, as it occurred in this study, did not necessarily lead to low quality contact. This was confirmed by the lack of significant difference when comparing the average Rating of Contact Quality (see 4.2.2.6) for similar and dissimilar matches with a Student’s t-test. In some cases, however, the dissimilarity was felt to be a problem, for example in the case of an expatriate with partner and child who was matched to a host couple. She indicated that the match was ill-suited:

[7] “Very open, young, same education but it would have been better if they had a child of the same age because of the life style (different from that of a couple without children).” [E25]

Some expatriates indicated that it would have been better if a couple had been the host. For expatriates with partner this would mean that both expatriate and partner would have a counterpart in the host couple. In one case where an expatriate couple was matched to a single host, the partner said that the fact that the host was single was the main reason why the expatriate was not very involved in the contact [P50]. For a single expatriate being put in touch with a host couple or family would mean a broader range of options because there would be more persons in the host unit with whom he or she could “strike some kind of relationship […], on some other level and say, ok, it’s still worthwhile I think” [E46]. It remains to
be seen whether this is indeed the case for single expatriates, because it was found in this study that expatriates – either single or with partner – who were put in touch with a host couple did not establish higher quality contact than expatriates who were put in touch with a single host (section 6.4.2).

Quote seven already suggested that it is especially important to match expatriates with children to hosts with children, although in some cases, again, the barriers could be overcome by, for example, a willingness to make it work. One expatriate said that initially the establishment of the contact was more difficult because the host did not have children but that “a lot of flexibility on both sides made it possible to get over this quickly” [E61Q3]. Even if both expatriate and host had children, their age might be important:

[8] “What I found inconvenient [...] is that our children were not the same age as theirs. It doesn’t need to be a perfect match, but roughly the same would be great because the differences can be huge for children in different phases.” [H42]

In short, it is advisable to match expatriates to host couples in a similar life phase as the expatriate, especially with regard to children. In these cases it is also important to take the age of the children into account, so that there is not only a match between parents but also between children.

**Does it “click”?**
The elements that have been mentioned here so far, age and family situation, provide a basis for the development of the contact, but they are not necessarily the most important element. A popular expression that was used in this context, especially among the Dutch hosts, was “clicking” with the other person:

[9] “In the beginning we were sounding each other out, but from the first meeting we really ‘clicked.’” [H3Q]

In eight cases either the host or the expatriate said there was a click with the other, whereas in four cases the host said that they did not really feel a click. What is necessary to have this “click” with the host? The first quote of this chapter already hinted at the importance of “having enough communality to [...] find some common ground to have a relationship” [E46]. Another expatriate said that it is important “having the same type of people meeting each other... I think that makes getting to know people easier.” [E58]. A lack of similar interests might hinder the development of the contact, as this host found:

[10] “I think she had different interests; the initiative always came from my side; and it dampens the enthusiasm when your ideas are greeted with a ‘no’ too often.” [H18]

_Catalysts and barriers_
The qualitative data shows that having some common ground to establish the relationship was indeed important. For seventeen pairs either the expatriate or host (or sometimes even both) said something in the questionnaires, interview, diary or emails about having “a lot in common”, “common interests” or “a click”. In three cases they only “shared some interests” or “had two or three things in common”, and in five cases it was reported that there was “not much in common”. In only one case the expatriate and the host did not have the same opinion: the expatriate thought they had “quite a bit in common”, whereas the host did not really feel a “click”. The remaining pairs did not specifically say anything about common interests, which does not mean, however, that these were necessarily lacking.

The matching process in the present study did not specifically take the interests of both parties into account, and for that reason it is interesting to note that many pairs still found common ground to establish their relationship. An important reason might be that most hosts had also lived abroad or had travelled abroad extensively:

[11] “They [the hosts] already have an open mind and already know what it means to change countries.” [E57]

[12] “They [the hosts] have both lived abroad, I think that is really useful.” [P23]

The desire to make a connection with the other person could also help to establish the contact, as the following host expressed: “I don’t play golf, but I can get really enthusiastic about my weekly horse rides. In short, I think it could work well” [H11]. Another factor that might override a lack of similarities, is interest expressed by the host:

[13] “I would apply emphasis to real genuine interest. And to help a fellow human being out. Simply to express empathy, that’s really what it’s about. You could have hooked us up with a nice couple 65 years old, and if they wanted to express empathy and be inclusive, then it doesn’t matter.” [E26]

7.1.2 Motivation

Motivation could be seen as another personal characteristic (Altman & Taylor, 1973) that might influence the development of the contact between the expatriate, partner and host. When an expatriate was put in touch with a host it was important that both parties were open to meet the other and motivated to make it work, as in this case: “The family is [...] very keen to meet me.” [E54]. On the part of the host, participation in the project meant that they would have to make time in their everyday life to meet the expatriate. Some of the expatriates and partners greatly appreciated this very fact:

[14] “We really appreciate it that they take their time to meet ‘foreigners’, because this is not easy with their work, their family, and their friends...” [P3]
It would seem self-evident that participants would like to invest time and energy in the contact because the participants signed up for this research project on a voluntary basis. Unfortunately this was not always the case, both on the part of the host, and the expatriate and partner:

[15] “Neither of us made enough effort to keep up the contact.” [H58] 

[16] “I have not felt a need [of friends] nor a lack [of them]. That’s to say, we managed to find other friends by ourselves, above all a Belgian couple who have a child the same age as E. They speak French and Dutch and live nearby [...] and we’ve become close to them. [...] So we are no longer looking for friends or acquaintances.” [E25]

Enthusiasm to share one’s culture on the part of the host or, on the part of the expatriate, to learn about the host culture could act as a stimulant for the contact:

[17] “Their desire to show us things, to make conversation, to explain things to us. They were very... They really wanted to [...] help us understand their country, their life, you see.” [E23]

[18] “They [expatriate and partner] were very enthusiastic and curious about what the Netherlands had to offer.” [H2]

Even if participants make the conscious decision to participate in such a project, it is important to make sure that they know what they are taking on, because if the other party makes an effort it is disappointing for them if the effort is not mutual. In some cases it is one of the couple who took the initiative to sign up for the project, whereas the other might be less interested in making an effort. This might also have inhibited the development of the contact:

[19] “… but I think that if he [her partner] had been completely open and all I might have pushed a bit more...” [E25]

7.1.3 Enriching contact

An important catalyst for the contact is that the contact was perceived as enjoyable, or “very good”:

[20] “If you think that it’s a very good contact, automatically you make more effort. But if you think, well, they are nice but there’s nothing really special in for me, then it all falls apart a bit.” [H43]
Except suggesting the importance of appreciation of the contact, quote 20 also hints that it was important that the contact contributed something. The qualitative data provided a wealth of information on benefits that were derived from the contact with the host, which will be listed in this section as well as in section 7.1.4 (adjustment) and 7.1.5 (social support). These benefits may be categorised as “rewards” according to the social penetration theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973).

**Feedback**
Especially in the early stages of the contact it is important that both parties show each other that the contact is appreciated, which will stimulate the desire to meet again:

[21] "We thought it was a very nice evening. I have the impression that she also thought it was a great evening. She sent us an email to thank us the next day, and suggested doing something together again." [H27]

Positive feedback may be seen in the context of the reinforcement model of attraction that states that “stimuli with reinforcing properties can, through association with neutral stimulus objects, determine evaluative responses toward those objects” (Byrne, 1971, p. 306). This model focuses on the effect of stimuli such as feedback about success or failure in a specific task with regard to the attitudes towards the one giving feedback. An experiment showed that one had more positive attitudes towards someone who gave positive feedback about their performance in a task than towards someone who gave negative feedback. This might also be the case when the positive feedback concerned the relationship between two parties, and these more positive attitudes towards each other might stimulate the development of the contact.

Enthusiasm can also be shown during the contact itself:

[22] “What I really liked about A. […], you saw him really enjoy G. when we met, and that was really very nice. I thought it was really great too that we celebrated carnival and he loved it, everybody was in fancy dress and I told him to get dressed up too. […] So, yes, I really liked his enthusiasm.” [H29]

**Discovery**
The contact with the host could be very enriching for the expatriate and the partner because it offered the opportunity to discover new places, foods and undertake new activities:

[23] “She took me to museums that I didn’t really know and to places in the city that I didn’t know at all, and to exhibitions […]. Knowing her helped me to discover new things, because I would never have gone to Museumnacht by myself, I would never have done that Spanish workshop…” [E54]
In addition, a Dutch host can offer a different perspective, as the English expatriate who went to a historical museum was interested to find out when looking, together with his host, at the displays about the wars between the Dutch and the English [E17].

On a more personal level the contact made it possible to get to know a new person and have good discussions not only about life in the Netherlands, but in general:

[24] “Our family [...] is open and interested in things. We can have conversations that lead to something.” [P61]

**Other benefits**

Before turning to the two main categories of benefits, in the area of adjustment and social support, there were other enriching elements that have not yet been mentioned. For example, one host was able to answer some content-specific work related questions of the expatriate because they both worked in the same field [H29]. For others the contact with the host increased the confidence needed to interact with Dutch people in general:

[25] “And maybe it made us more confident to do it in other groups as well. To sort of get to know Dutch people. Because we felt that we had a positive experience with one couple who, you know very friendly, very nice, easy to talk to and, so that’s good as well.” [E43]

Another partner felt that the contact with her host enabled her to contradict her fellow-expatriates when they were generalising about the Dutch:

[26] “What I like as well, we see a lot of French people and the French tend to say things about the Dutch, sometimes criticism, generalisations and all that. The fact that we’ve met J. and R. has allowed us to say ‘no that’s not true’ or ‘we know a Dutch couple who are not like that, and who told us that...’” [P23]

In short, these findings suggest that enriching aspects could encourage the development of the contact between an expatriate and a local host. Other than simply being enjoyable, the contact might be enriching in many ways: it offers an opportunity for discovery of the country in which the expatriate lives, but also of a new person or a new perspective. It could also make the expatriate or partner more confident in dealing with other Dutch people or with situations in which people talk about Dutch culture. Furthermore, knowing that the other party appreciated the contact might also have stimulated its development.

In addition to these enriching elements, expatriates and partners could also have derived benefits from the contact with their host with regard to their adjustment and social

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26 During **Museumnacht** activities are organised in several museums during the evening, usually between 7pm and 2am.
support that they received. These two areas are the topic of sections 7.1.4 (adjustment) and 7.1.5 (social support).

### 7.1.4 Adjustment

The contact between expatriate, partner and host might help the expatriate and partner to settle in, as one expatriate expressed it:

> “[27] "The project helped me understand to what extent such contacts (all being well) can facilitate integration into the host country." [E61Q3]"

The reader might remember that the concept of Adjustment consists of three aspects (section 2.4). First, the affective aspect is conceptualised in the stress & coping framework and focuses on the feelings of well-being and the emotional impact of culture contact. Second, the behavioural aspect concerns the adjustment to the new culture with regard to social interaction, which fits in the culture learning model. Third, the cognitive aspect focuses on information about the new culture, ethnic identity and the way in which sojourners perceive and interpret their intercultural experiences. This aspect often blends in with the other two aspects (Ward et al., 2001). The qualitative data also reflected these three aspects.

The host was a local contact for the expatriates, sometimes being the first or even only Dutch contact that the expatriate had (see also section 7.1.5). For that reason, a local host could contribute to the affective aspect of adjustment, which focuses on the feeling of well-being. Knowing that there was a Dutch person who was interested in them, feeling welcomed, might have stimulated the development of the contact:

> “[28] “F. sent me a note and a picture, and the note was very nice and I really felt like I had gotten home.” [E22I]"
> 
> “[29] “I was asked questions. Nobody from Holland had asked me questions about anything. […] So it’s brilliant just to sit down and be asked questions. And feel like I was being included in something.” [E26I]"

The contact with the local host could also have contributed on a behavioural level. Five expatriates and one partner recounted an anecdote about what they learned about how to behave in the Netherlands. Some expatriates learned by observing, for example through sitting down with the host and seeing how they eat Dutch food [E43I] or by visiting the host at home, which then helped the expatriate when he visited another Dutch person in a similar environment [E22I]. Other expatriates learned by discussing with the host the way in which it is best to behave in the Netherlands. One host emailed about a discussion on
cultural differences that she had had with her expatriate, which then resulted in a change in behaviour on the part of the expatriate:

[30] First email: “For example if H. compliments people at work. THAT IS NOT ALLOWED. The men get nervous. Act normal, that’s more than enough [“doe maar gewoon dan doe je al gek genoeg”]. In Canada they have employee of the month, etc. There it is easier to be judged on merit.” [H8]

[31] Second email: “The story had a sequel. This time H. wanted to compliment someone for their effort, and she did so privately in her office. She bought a bottle of champagne and thanked him. The man was clearly happy with the gift. H. could see for herself how much more she benefited by doing it this way.” [H8]

Most of all, the expatriates learned a great deal about the Netherlands and Dutch culture through the contact with their host, which touches upon the cognitive aspect of adjustment. As was noted in section 5.4.1, in twenty-one of the thirty-three cases (64%) the expatriates expressed the opinion that they had gained more insight into Dutch culture and ways of thinking or had practiced their Dutch. Some partners also expressed this:

[32] “We have obtained a lot of practical information for our daily lives, and detailed information about the culture and the Dutch mentality.” [P23]

For five expatriates and two partners the data showed evidence that they took the opportunity to increase their Dutch linguistic skills. One host was particularly facilitating, as this expatriate recounted:

[33] “Friday evening with our host family at the tennis club was the most interaction I’d had with Dutch people and the most Dutch I’d spoken as O. made everyone speak Dutch with me, which was good.” [P4]

The affective, behavioural and cognitive domains are not always easy to separate. Especially the cognitive aspect blends in with the other two aspects, according to Ward et al. (2001). This is showcased in the following quote, where the expatriate stated that knowledge and comprehension of the culture is essential for developing positive feelings towards the new host country:

[34] “If you’re not familiar with the culture the first thing you need to do is, is have some insights to the culture. You’re just left on your own, with no context to put the Dutch culture into, it’s really easy to become depressed and very anti Dutch. Because if all you do is go to work and when you come home and have your own little world, you never really understand why all this stuff is happening around
you. Why everyone acts this way and why this happens. [...] But if [...] you see normal Dutch people interacting I think you get a different perspective of their cultures, not to see the negatives that you see here by yourself.” [E17]

Contact with a local host provided benefits in the affective, behavioural and cognitive domains of Adjustment. When expatriates experienced these benefits, they might have been more likely to keep in touch with their host because the contact helped them adjust to life in their new country of choice.

7.1.5 Social support

As was explained in section 3.1.1 social support might help expatriates cope with the difficulties associated with their transition to a new country. A local host could play an important role in this respect, because the expatriate left a large part of his or her social network behind and has to build up a new one. First of all, for six expatriates and two partners the contact with a local host offered an opportunity to access social support in general, regardless of nationality:

[35] “Really, it’s like when I came back from H. [previous posting] I found myself a bit alone here. I wanted, really, to meet people.” [P57]

In many other cases it was important that the host was Dutch. Adding a local contact would diversify their social network, not only offering the opportunity for social support, but also for learning about Dutch culture as was outlined in section 7.1.4. Twelve expatriates and seven partners mentioned that participating in the project was a way to meet Dutch people, because they found it difficult to do this on their own, especially outside the workplace:

[36] “It has helped us because we have found it difficult to meet Dutch people socially outside my husband’s work. We are on friendly terms with our neighbours but that is really just saying hello in the street. My Dutch is not very good and my husband does not speak any Dutch so we are restricted in the social activities we can do with Dutch people.” [P4]

For two expatriates and four partners, the local host was the only Dutch person that they knew well:

[37] “Regarding my Dutch contacts, except for H. who we get on with very well, she’s the only person from the Netherlands we know.” [E40]
“I am very very happy [with the contact with the host]. Why, because in the end they are almost the only Dutch we have met outside of work. [...] Maybe our neighbours, who are also very nice, but that’s all.” [E57']

As was explained in section 3.3.2 a local host can offer four types of social support (Cohen & Wills, 1985, p. 313), which were also present in the qualitative data – social companionship, informational support, emotional support and instrumental support.

*Social companionship* is defined by spending time together in leisure or recreational activities:

“It gave me an opportunity to socialise and share some plans to see people at the weekends. It has taken a long time to settle in and we haven’t made a lot of friends yet.” [E43]

Section 5.1 listed the activities that were undertaken by expatriates, partners and their hosts, which ranged from having a drink to a Shakespeare festival. Social companionship was probably one of the types of social support that was offered most by the hosts in this study, because this can be done right from the start, when the relationship has not yet been able to grow into something more. Social companionship is part of normal interaction and offers the opportunity to learn about specific problems the other might have, triggering the provision of other types of social support because these occur in response to learning about such a specific problem (Rook, 1985, p. 246). As such, social companionship is a prerequisite for the occurrence of other types of support.

*Informational support* is a second category of social support, and is the process through which other persons might provide information, advice and guidance (Cohen & Syme, 1985), which helps in defining, understanding and coping with difficulties (Cohen & Wills, 1985):

“I’ve asked him for advice on various things in terms of dealing with the Dutch systems and that kind of stuff. Asking for, if he knows a plumber, that kind of things, recommendations for all sorts of things. Otherwise I might have struggled, or find a bit more difficult having to search through the yellow pages that kind of stuff.” [E46]

In 11 of 33 cases the qualitative data offered evidence that the local host offered informational support to the expatriate. This could range from advice on restaurants, shops and museums, but also on buying a house and giving birth in the Netherlands. As this kind of support offered by a local host focused mostly on dealing with situations with a ‘Dutch flavour’, this category is closely linked to the contribution of a local host to the cognitive element of adjustment (section 7.1.4), where the expatriate learned to better understand Dutch
culture. This close link is echoed in the definition of informational support by Cutrona et al. (1990, p. 39). They also comprise “teaching” as informational support, defining it as provision of detailed information, facts or news about the situation or about skills needed to deal with the situation.

Informational support is also closely linked to a third category of social support, namely emotional support, sometimes also called esteem support (Cohen & Syme, 1985, p. 67). Emotional support is information that a person is esteemed and accepted, and is often conveyed by offering the opportunity to talk about problems. Emotional support contains elements such as sympathy, listening, understanding and encouragement (Cutrona et al., 1990, p. 39). This category often occurs simultaneously with informational support because, for instance, expressing advice may be interpreted as emotional support as well.

[41] “At one point I was feeling concerned about my work and I talked openly with them about it. They provided me with some websites that might be helpful – and listened when I needed to talk.” [E45Q2]

One expatriate felt that the encounters with her host were “caring and stimulating”, which made her “feel welcome and cared for” [E9Q3], another expatriate discussed with his host some of the frustration he felt with living in the Netherlands so far [E26I], as did this expatriate:

[42] “We have been able to exchange what I was experiencing in the Netherlands without prejudice and without criticism, just sharing our experiences.” [E54Q3]

The qualitative data suggests that at least in seven cases emotional support was given by the host, but it is likely that this has occurred more often, for example when the expatriate stated that the host was seen as a friend (section 5.3.3).

The final category of social support that a local host can offer is instrumental support. As this is the provision of financial aid, material resources and needed services, it is more likely that this occurred when the contact developed into high quality contact. In the present study there is some evidence that services have been rendered to the expatriate. For example, one host helped translate some Dutch documents, whereas another host helped to call veterinarians to find one that was open on a Sunday to help the dog of the expatriate. And a third expatriate said:

[43] “We met so that I could become a typical Dutch woman, that is, buying a bike – here that’s a real sign of integration.” [E40Q4]
Finally, it is interesting to note in this section of social support that in one case it was enough that the expatriate knew the host was available and that it was possible to ask questions if needed:

[44] “Well it was kind of a peace of mind thing. It’s not that you used it but it was nice to know if you needed to use it there was someone you can call. If you got some letter in the mail, with something you needed to understand what they were saying I could just mail him and he will tell me oh this is a tax for this, this and this so stuff like that. It was just nice knowing in the back of my head that if it happened yeah I could call someone.”[E17]

This could already have had a positive effect, because if one believes that social support is available when necessary, one might increase in self-confidence and sense of mastery if one does not actually have to use this support (Eggert, 1987, p. 102).

These results show that a local host can be an important means to enlarge and diversify the expatriate’s social network, and that a local host can offer all four types of support, thereby stimulating the development of the contact towards high quality.

7.1.6 Proximity

The matching process also paired expatriates and partners with hosts who lived near to them (4.2.3) so that it would be easier to meet. More frequent meetings make it more likely that an expatriate benefited from the contact with the host. As was shown in section 6.1 the frequency of the contact was positively correlated to the quality of the contact. Although it is impossible to say whether frequent contact led to high quality contact or the other way around, living close to the host might result in more frequent encounters, which are associated with higher quality contact. For that reason, the environmental factor Proximity could have stimulated – or hindered – the development of the contact (Altman & Taylor, 1973).

In this study, the average distance between places of residence of expatriates and hosts was 10 km (M (SD) = 10.13 (11.32)). In fact, more than three quarters of the hosts (76%) lived less than 10 km away, which makes it difficult to establish whether the distance between places of residence of expatriates and hosts indeed had an impact on the quality of the contact. Table 7.3 on page 204 shows that the expatriates with low quality contact seemed to live somewhat further away from their host than expatriates with high quality contact; however, a Student’s $t$-test shows that this difference was not significant.
Table 7.3 Comparison of expatriates and hosts on distance between their places of residence (M (SD))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>High quality contact (n = 21)</th>
<th>Low quality contact (n = 12)</th>
<th>Comparison High vs. Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proximity (in km)</td>
<td>Continuous 8.25 (10.69)</td>
<td>13.42 (12.09)</td>
<td>$t(31) = -1.27, p = .40$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More detailed information is available when taking into account the Rating of Contact Quality on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high), on which the division into High and Low quality contact was based (see 4.2.2.6). When correlating Rating of Contact Quality to Proximity a marginally significant effect is found ($r_s = -.337, p = .055$), suggesting that expatriates with lower quality contact lived further away from their host than expatriates with higher quality contact. A partner in this study, who had low quality contact with their host, said:

> “[…] and then just the fact that […] she lived in a different city, even though it’s not that far away, getting on the train is not impossible. I think that just made it little more difficult, just to be able to say hey on Thursday evening do you want to go meet and have a cup of coffee.” [P50]

Geographical distance between expatriates, partners and hosts does not necessarily preclude high quality contact. As one host noted, it is more practical if you live near each other [H27], but it also depends on whether there is a ‘click’ and whether one wants to make an effort or not [H43]. The expatriate who lived furthest away from his host in this study (50 km) still managed to establish high quality contact during five encounters throughout nine months. When asked whether the geographical distance was acceptable, the host replied: “yes, I also work in W. [where the expatriate lives] and I have a car, which is handy. And if you don’t have that, then public transportation is not such a problem either” [H29]. Although this case shows that other factors, such as having a link with the place of residence of the expatriate, can overrule the geographical distance, the data suggests that it is advisable to facilitate their meetings by matching expatriates to hosts who live nearby.

7.1.7 Research context

Another environmental factor (Altman & Taylor, 1973) impacting on the development of the contact is the fact that the expatriates were put in touch with their host in the context of a research project. This might also have stimulated the contact:

> “But it is funny because, […] although we had a very nice time, in a way it was imposed, because we have to meet, for x reason. If we didn’t have to meet because you arranged that, I don’t know if we would have wanted to meet, do you know what I mean? Maybe neither would have been interested. But we did have a very, very good time [...].” [P26]
The participants were informed that they were expected to meet at least once a month during the nine months of the project. Also after five and nine months expatriates and partners had to fill in a questionnaire that contained questions about the contact with their host. These questionnaires, as well as the tokens of appreciation that were sent to the participants (section 4.2.3), might have served as reminders if they had not had had contact with their host for a while. Another important measure was the regular enquiries that were made via email to the host – not the expatriate (4.2.3) – about how the contact was going. Other than a way to get information on how the contact was developing, this could also have served as a reminder for the host to get in touch with their expatriate:

[47] “Maybe I initiated the contact a bit more often once in a while, often after reminders from your side, but overall we both tried.” [H49]

An indication of the importance of the research context can be found when examining those of the control group who were put in touch with a host after they had finished the research project (n = 13). Of these 13 expatriates, in more than half of the cases the contact was even never established (n = 7). In these thirteen cases, there were no follow-up questionnaires and only once was there an enquiring into how they were doing within three months after the participants were put in touch with each other. It is impossible, however, to wholly subscribe the difference in success rate between this group and the experimental group to the absence of the research context. Another important reason for the difference could be that the control group by then had been nine months longer in the Netherlands, which might have reduced the need for a host and, consequently, their motivation to establish the contact.

It is also possible that the research context hindered the development of the contact between the expatriate and host. If the research was perceived as too demanding it might have led to participants giving up altogether. Although some interviewees noted that the questionnaires were somewhat long, no evidence was found that this was a reason to withdraw from the contact with the host.

The present section listed various factors that might stimulate the development of the contact between expatriate and host, such as similarity between expatriates and their hosts, motivation to establish the contact, various types of benefits that are derived, proximity and the fact that the contact takes place in a research context. We now turn to the factors that might have been a barrier to the contact.
7.2 Barriers to the contact

Among the factors that slow down the development of the contact between expatriate and host are anxiety about the contact (7.2.1), different expectations (7.2.2), busy schedules (7.2.3), suboptimal timing (7.2.4), communication breakdown on a technical or personal level (7.2.5) and cultural differences (7.2.6).

7.2.1 Anxiety

Interacting with culturally dissimilar people might cause anxiety (Neuliep & Ryan, 1998), which could make people apprehensive about intercultural contact. In addition, participation in a project in which one is put in touch with a local host might bring with it anxiety about how the contact with this host will work out, whether one will make a good first impression, and whether one has sufficient language skills if the contact takes place in a language other than one’s native tongue. These anxieties might slow down the development of the contact between the expatriate and the host, because in Altman and Taylor’s social penetration theory (1973, p. 31) overcoming anxiety is a cost factor, which might inhibit the development of interpersonal relations if they are not balanced by enough current and expected rewards.

Artificiality
When signing up for a project in which an expatriate is put in touch with a host, it is always the question whether one will get along with the other person:

[48] “There was a bit of anxiety as to whether I would get on with this person or people, whoever they were going to be.” [E46]

Two expatriates, two partners and one host commented on the artificial aspect of their encounters, because they would never have met if it were not for this project:

[49] “It went well, […] in fact it was slightly peculiar because we didn’t know these people at all; we had never even met them before. We had to spend time with them, so it was a bit strange. A bit… not exactly stressful but not really comfortable either.” [E23]

[50] “It’s true that when you start this kind of project you are afraid it will be artificial. I was afraid it would be artificial, and I think my husband was too. […], that it would be a bit like ‘people thrown together who have nothing to say to each other, or find each other stupid…” [P23]
In two cases, both with low quality contact, this feeling remained during the whole nine months [E18\textsuperscript{03} and H43\textsuperscript{1}]. On the other hand, in two cases of high quality contact, an expatriate and a partner highlighted the naturalness of the contact: “Our relationship is really very natural so we talked about everything” [E40\textsuperscript{0DW15}].

A fear of artificialness could even prevent people from signing up for the project, as one of the expatriates confessed:

[51] “Personally, I would never have signed up, because it was really my wife who was the driving force [...]. It’s really my problem, something to do with my personality. I’m really thinking of the artificial aspect, the trigger. That really was a barrier for me, and in hindsight it’s stupid, but I know that I would not have taken that step.” [E23]

**First impressions**

In the present study expatriates were put in touch with a local host via email that, if available, contained an introduction to both parties. In two cases, this introduction caused some extra anxiety; once on the side of the expatriate and the other on the side of the host. In both cases one of the introductions made the impression that these persons had a much higher status than the other party, leading to extra anxiety as to whether they would get along together. Happily, in both cases this was not a problem in the end:

[52] “We had constructed an image of a sort of very classy Dutch couple; in fact they were not like that at all. They are really very approachable, super nice, like us, in fact, so that was really a nice surprise.” [P23]

[53] “When we heard what kind of job she had, we thought ‘oh dear, what should we talk about? We are not on the same level at all, but we really didn’t notice that. We talked about all sorts of things.” [H27]

The introductory email also contained the message that it was now up to the participants to get in touch and meet. Putting expatriates in touch with a local host via email and not in person might have added an extra barrier to the development of the contact. This meant the first meeting would be a sort of “blind date”, as one host called it [H43\textsuperscript{3}]. Some expatriates were nervous as to what they should do with their host, especially for the first meeting:

[54] “We had some drinks, I can’t remember, I remember I was quite nervous about what I should do. Whether I should invite them for lunch or whether I should just invite them for a cup of tea and then go for a walk.” [E43\textsuperscript{1}]

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This particular expatriate also realised that the Dutch had a different sense of hospitality than she had, which increased her anxiety about doing the right thing:

[55] “And I do find that sometimes, actually being here in the Netherlands that I don’t want to, and I really love cooking and I like doing probably what is too much, what would look like too much of an effort, or what might look extravagant, not showing off, but yeah, I suppose trying to impress people. Where actually it is just a product of a hobby I have, which is to cook things. So it’s quite difficult, and I find that because I think in Dutch culture I get the sense that maybe the concept of prudence, not overdoing things, being frugal in some ways, keeping things simple and not indulging too much in things, comes across a little bit, and I wonder whether it therefore makes me a bit more nervous when I entertain Dutch friends.” [E43]

One expatriate felt the need for a sort of handbook to make the first meeting easier for the expatriate:

[56] “If anything, you need some orientation for the expatriate. To explain to them how, enough about it, that they can feel comfortable in a social setting, that they’re not going to do stupid things. If you’ve got a little handbook or something, that would just say like making a good first impression on your host family, teaching them hello and goodbye, you know. Just so you set the expectations, especially on the expatriate side.” [E22]

Language skills
Two French expatriates and two hosts expressed some anxiety about their language skills. The language of choice of the encounters between expatriates and hosts was usually English. In only one case a Dutch host expressed anxiety about his English: “We talked about all sorts of things. I was more concerned about my poor English” [H27]. In the case of French-speaking expatriates, it was up to the participants to decide together which language they would use, although only in some cases the participants had the choice between English or French because of limited French language skills on the part of the host. In a case where, for this reason, the language of choice was English, one French-speaking partner found this difficult at times:

[57] “My only problem was that the language we used was English and not French. [...] sometimes I was too worried to say things in English.” [P61]

The artificiality of being put in contact with a local host, unfavourable first impressions, anxiety about the first meeting and insufficient language skills may be seen as costs in a
social penetration perspective. All these factors can – if not balanced by sufficient rewards – slow down the development of the contact.

### 7.2.2 Different expectations

The expatriate who proposed giving some guidelines to expatriates to better handle the first meeting, as quoted in the previous section 7.2.1 (quote 56), stated that it would help to set the expectations. This touches upon the second possible barrier to the contact: the expectations that both parties have of their participation in the project. Porter and Steers (1973, p. 152) note the importance of meeting expectations in an organisational context, because “when an individual's expectations […] are not substantially met, his propensity to withdraw would increase”. This might also be applicable to the contact with the host. The expectations of one expatriate were not met, which could be the reason why she had low quality contact with her host: “Was OK, but not what I wanted” [E18Q3].

From the qualitative data it is clear that the participants sometimes had different expectations about the goal of the project, the type of activities that should be undertaken and who should take the initiative. These are a mix of personal and situational factors that could affect the development of the contact (Altman & Taylor, 1973). Although expectations are a personal characteristic, they are affected by the context in which the contact takes place. For example, certain activities suggested at the website of the research project might have directed the expectations.

With regard to the goal of the project, some hosts thought they had to help the expatriate settle in a practical way: “I thought it was more really helping someone” [H49I], and did not realise that the host might also 'help' the expatriate by just going for a drink or having dinner together. This might have hindered the development of the contact.

In a similar vein, although participants were given a free reign – the project only suggested possible activities ranging from having a drink or dinner to more touristic outings – some hosts thought they had to explore the Netherlands together with their expatriate. Two hosts indicated that it was difficult to find activities that the expatriate had not yet done, which might have hindered more frequent meetings:

[58] “What was difficult was that whatever we wanted to do with them, they had already done it. They had gone to the Keukenhof with their family. They were very enterprising; they had already seen so many things.” [H42I]

On the other hand, having different expectations to the activities thought to be intended by the project, does not necessarily have to be a barrier:
“I realised that it’s developing more towards a friendship between women. We had to laugh about it: H. thought she would be put in touch with a family and would occasionally go to a museum. I’ll think about which typical Dutch family I can take her to eat hotpot [“stamppot”].” [H9]

A third area where the expectations of the participants differed was who would take the initiative to meet. This was not specified other than it was stated in the first email that it was up to both parties to meet, so it may be expected by the expatriate that the host – as being the one who was hosting – would take the initiatives. On the other hand, the host might expect the expatriate to initiate meetings, as the expatriate was the one who was newly arrived and would like to ‘get in touch with the Dutch’. If there was a discrepancy in this regard, it might have hindered the development of high quality contact. In the present study, only one expatriate said that the initiative was more on his side, whereas eight hosts mentioned that the initiative was mostly on their side. Six hosts said explicitly that they found this regrettable:

“I haven’t been in touch with the expatriates for a second meeting. I noticed that there is not much initiative from their side to meet again. That is a pity, because due to my busy job it has to come from both sides.” [H51]

Also, three hosts expressed their surprise about having no reaction from their expatriate to one or more of their emails:

“After the meeting there has been no reaction to the many emails that I’ve sent.” [H30]

A factor that might help in this respect is talking about the expectations of each party. Three pairs exchanged ideas about what they wanted to get out of the project, either in person or in their introduction via email:

“F. took initiative at the first meeting to say: how can we help? Do you want to keep in touch about this or that, do you want to get together? I was like, once a month, touching base, having conversations, talking about experiences, asking questions, that would be great. I really don’t want to impose on your life, but I would love to keep the relationship going. We both agreed that was good […].” [E22]

Another expatriate and partner discussed their mode of meeting with the host after a couple of months of being in touch, because it presented some difficulties:
“We decided to change our way of meeting because we have a daughter of two and a half years old. It’s almost impossible to go out on trips. [...] Together with them we decided to make short meetings, to see each other for one or two hours with our daughter, and get together in the evenings just the four of us.”

Discussing the expectations each had could help the contact, but it is not necessarily a recipe for success. Of the four pairs who discussed their mutual expectations, only two established high quality contact. It is clear that other factors played a role here too.

Another way to help form a clear image of what one can expect of the project is to talk to other participants about their experiences. It so happened that three hosts knew each other – two even organised a meeting together with their respective expatriates – which might have stimulated the development of these three contacts. All three of them established high quality contact with their host. In contrast, two other hosts also knew each other, and in the end one host tagged along with the other, who had established high quality contact, when her own contact did not develop:

“... joins us [...], she also had a person from the programme to follow [...] but if I understood correctly, they don’t see each other anymore, so she is happy to meet with us!”

Knowing another host might also work negatively if it shows a host that someone else managed to establish much better contact with an expatriate than he or she had. This depends on the reaction of the host who might either decide to make an extra effort, or not to invest anymore in their own contact but join the meetings of the other pair. As far as known, none of the expatriates in the present study knew each other.

In summary, the data showed that not all the participants had the same expectations of the contact, which in some cases might have hindered the development of the contact. Ways to counteract this barrier are discussing the expectations of both parties at the outset, or possibly giving the participants an opportunity to interact with other participants in the same role to exchange experiences and give each other tips.

### 7.2.3 Busy schedules

The barrier to the development of the contact most often mentioned was the available time of the participants, which may be seen as a situational constraint to the development of the contact (Altman & Taylor, 1973). As is shown in section 6.1 even the participants with high quality contact met only about seven times on average during the nine months, although all participants were asked to meet at least once a month. The qualitative data shows that an important reason for this lower frequency was the limited time available on both sides.
Twenty-three of the thirty-three pairs (70%) mentioned busy schedules as a reason why it was sometimes difficult to pick a date. This did not necessarily hinder the contact, because fourteen of these pairs still developed high quality contact. In these cases, the difficulties with the schedules were overcome in some way, for example by a desire to make it work:

[65] “The contact with A. and Q. is good, but they have busy lives, also as individuals. Because of that it’s not easy to make appointments, but we all try and it works out.” [H11]

In some cases the schedules were so different that there was hardly a common day available on which the expatriate could meet the host, resulting in low quality contact as in the following case:

[66] “The contact with S. disintegrated before we could make a good start. This is largely due to the fact (I think) that our schedules are not compatible. The only time we could meet was Monday evenings.” [H30]

The many trips abroad of the expatriates – either to visit friends and family back home, or for a holiday – also reduced the amount of time available to meet the host. Because the nine months of the project always included either the summer holidays or Christmas all the expatriates were abroad at least once during the nine months of the project. Having visitors over from abroad further crowded the schedules:

[67] “Unfortunately we haven’t been able to meet with R. and A., it’s a bit difficult. They were on holiday for almost five weeks. They have just got back, but now have visitors until mid-September, which limits their available time, at least in the weekends. And of course sometimes we also have other plans.” [H23]

Although high frequency contact was associated with high quality contact (section 4.2.2.6), it is a matter of perspective whether the frequency of the meetings was high enough. One host who met his expatriate about fifteen times in nine months, still remarked when asked what could have been improved about the contact that maybe they could have met more often, but that that was difficult because of busy schedules on both sides [H46].

In short, even though in more than two thirds of the cases busy schedules made it more difficult to meet, it did not always present an insurmountable barrier to the development of the contact. A desire to make it work and give the contact with the host priority could help to overcome this particular barrier.
7.2.4 Timing

The expatriates could only participate in this project if they had not been in the Netherlands for more than one year, because otherwise they would have had too much experience in the Netherlands to still benefit to a great extent from the contact with a local host (4.2.1). However, one partner and one host indicated that they felt that they or their expatriate had already been too long in the Netherlands (seven and eight months respectively) to really benefit from the contact:

> [68] “I still think this program is wonderful for those expats that have just moved, but maybe we were already a little too far in the mix to start with the program!” [P50\textsuperscript{OW17}]

Both cases ended up in the bottom four lowest quality contacts in the present study (section 7.3.2), indicating the importance of this situational constraint. However, in another case, the expatriate already knew some things about the Netherlands, but the host was still able to contribute. Interestingly, this pair was among the four highest quality contacts of this study (7.3.1):

> [69] “We had expected that the expatriate couple wouldn’t have been in the Netherlands so long, so they already knew certain things, but they didn’t know nice places to go out (restaurants) and special shops.” [H23\textsuperscript{Q}]

Timing in a different sense, namely the date on which the expatriate was put in touch with their host, hindered an early development of the contact in the following case, although it did not prevent the development altogether as this pair still established high quality contact:

> [70] “Well it took us – and now I regret this a bit – it took us some time to... because you put us in touch in June or just before the holidays, and we left for France and they left as well. [...] In September we contacted each other again, so we didn’t see each other the whole summer [...]. It really took a lot of time.” [P23\textsuperscript{I}]

The feeling that an expatriate had already established their life in the Netherlands might have inhibited the development of the contact, because it is not felt to be necessary any more. All in all, it seems that these cases were rare in the present study, due to the inclusion criterion of living in the Netherlands for a maximum of twelve months at the time of registration (4.2.1). Of course, this also ties in with the expectations that one had of the contact: if it is thought that the contact needed to contribute in a very practical way (e.g. finding a supermarket), then this would be applicable at the very beginning of the stay in

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the Netherlands. However, in a broader sense – as this project was intended – the contact could also contribute for instance by exchanging thoughts about Dutch culture or by offering social support. In this case, the contact might be helpful throughout the first year of residence, and possibly even beyond.

### 7.2.5 Communication breakdown

Another barrier to the development of the contact was communication breakdown on a technical or personal level, in which personal characteristics and situational constraints interplay (Altman & Taylor, 1973). In two cases emails did not reach their destination, thereby delaying the development of the contact because both parties were wondering whether the other party would still want to meet:

> I think initially we both felt bad at first, because we felt like we had a nice evening, we each sent letters, and for some reason it didn’t go through. So it was a month before we suddenly got a note, or sent a note, or something got through which said: why didn’t you answer mine, and the other was like, well, why didn’t you answer mine? And then we re-exchanged all the notes and it turned out that we’d each written three or four notes and they hadn’t gotten through. We had to back up and start over again. Everyone was feeling bad that they had reached out and didn’t hear anything from the other person. But I don’t think that was a big problem, once we realised what had happened. It’s one of these things you don’t want to be pushy about. I figured if I screwed up and they didn’t want to talk, I wasn’t going to chase them down.” [E22]

In one case the expatriate approached the researcher to ask whether she could “chase them and see if they are around” [E43], and it appeared that the emails had ended up in the spam-folder. For that reason, having an intermediary who can check whether the expatriate is still in touch with the host, could help overcome this particular barrier. Such an intermediary could play a pivotal role in facilitating the development of the contact between expatriate and host (see section 9.2.2).

On a more personal level, in one case an expatriate and partner were invited via email for a meeting at the host’s home, but both thought the other had replied and only found out two weeks later that they had never replied to say that they could not make it [P26]. Life events might also get in the way. In one case an expatriate was put in touch with a new host, when the host announced, not long after being put in touch with her expatriate, that she was moving in with her boyfriend who lived in a different part of the Netherlands. In another case the birth of a baby “cut off the relationship a bit” [E43Q3]. This was also true for two expatriates who were put in touch with their host after the project ended: they were
put in touch with a host, but the contact never really developed because in both cases the host had a baby [H26\(^E\) and E36\(^E\)]:

[72] “We haven’t spoken to them anymore. They invited us for a BBQ but that fell through with the birth of O.” [H26\(^E\)]

The disruption of the contact by a newborn baby might not be due only to the changes associated with a life event. In one case, cultural differences played an important role, which will be elaborated in the next section (7.2.6).

### 7.2.6 Cultural differences

Cultural differences can also be a barrier to the development of the contact, as in the case of the expatriate who had a baby after being in touch with their host for about five months. On the one hand, the host expected a card to announce the birth, which is the custom in the Netherlands. On the other hand, the expatriate waited for the host to contact her, since she was the one who had the new baby. The following two quotes from both sides express their way of thinking:

[73] “But for example when her baby was born, we didn’t get a, well, a birth card would not be really necessary, but I would have done that, if it had been me. I don’t blame her at all, but I would have done it. We only heard a month later. I understand, the first weeks are busy with so many things. I would have done it, but well, that’s me. Maybe they do it differently in England, no idea.” [H43\(^I\)]

[74] “I've been very sort of in the middle of doing my things as mother. And secretly in my mind I kind of thought well M. will get in touch because she might want to come and see the baby [...]. I was kind of hoping that she get in touch.” [E43\(^I\)]

As noted in section 7.2.5 this “cut off the relationship a bit” [E43\(^Q3\)]: the expatriate did not meet her host anymore during the remaining four months of the project. Another cultural difference was also hindering the development of this particular contact, namely hospitality and the way in which children’s birthday parties are celebrated. The expatriate threw a birthday party for her son, and also invited the host:

[75] “It was much more difficult to talk to her, because obviously I had a birthday party and I felt like I had, not like I had gone over the top, but I had invited a lot of people and the house is quite big, but it was full of people and children. It was very difficult to talk to people. So it was not easy but I think that’s normal, I think that’s the way birthdays are. Although I think I found that maybe birthday
celebrations here in the Netherlands normally for small children do seem to consist of very close friends and a few family members and that’s it. I noticed it’s not like you invite lots of acquaintances to birthday parties here, whereas in the UK it’s different. If you got children of the “kinderopvang” [day care] whose parents you know a little bit, I think okay I’ll invite them and them and them and them and they will come along.” [E43]

However, this did come across for the host as over the top:

[76] “Instinctively, for example that birthday, there is nothing wrong with that, to each his own, but they had invited the whole crèche, pulled out all the stops, puppet show and everything. I wouldn’t have made it that elaborate. It was a bit like, like it was status. To impress others, what do other people think, if only I make a good impression.”[H43]

And this was what the expatriate was worried about in the first place:

[77] “Does it matter whether I get it [hospitality] right or not, I’m not sure. Do I want to look like I’m showing off? Definitely not.” [E43]

Cultural differences in lifestyle [“rythme de vie”] made it more difficult for this French expatriate to meet with their host:

[78] “It’s true that we aren’t available before 8 or 8.30pm. When we go out, the two of us, we go out around 8 or 8.30pm. Those are not the same hours the Dutch keep. In general at 8.30pm the Dutch are already on the second part of their evening, while we haven’t eaten yet. That’s a difference.” [E25]

Another expatriate did not specify what exactly happened in the contact with his host to confirm his general opinion of the Dutch, but he remarked in the final questionnaire:

[79] “It confirmed to us that there is a large cultural gap. We now systematically avoid contact with the Dutch, who are hurtful people.” [E42]

Cultural differences are situational factors which might affect the development of the contact (Altman & Taylor, 1973), although personal characteristics are important here as well. The way one reacts to these cultural differences could decide whether these cause the breaking of the contact or not. In the first case of this section, the contact might not have been disrupted had either the expatriate or the host reached out regardless of perceived conventions.
In this section we have seen how potential barriers such as anxiety, different expectations, busy schedules, suboptimal timing, communication breakdown and cultural differences might hinder the development of the contact. It is also clear that not all barriers led to low quality contact and that not all catalysts led to high quality contact. The following section will take a closer look at the pairs with the highest and lowest quality contact to determine which factors took precedence over others in the development or breakdown of the contact, and how costs and rewards are balanced.

7.3 Overriding factors

When listing the catalysts and barriers to the development of the contact in sections 7.1 and 7.2, it was sometimes noted that a particular barrier could be overruled by another factor. To gain more insight into which factors are most important to promote high quality contact, the present section analyses the development of the contact of the four highest quality contacts (7.3.1) and the four lowest quality contacts (7.3.2). Table 7.4 lists these pairs, together with the combined rating of the quality of the contact of the expatriate, partner if available, and host (see section 4.3.4).

Table 7.4 Highest and lowest contact quality from the perspective of the expatriate, partner and host on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Rating*</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Rating*</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
<td>E2 + P2</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>E25 + P25</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>E46</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>E50 + P50</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>E59</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>E49</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>E57 + P57</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>E18</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* based on the final judgement of the expatriate, partner and host after nine months

7.3.1 Four highest quality contacts

In this section, the pairs who managed to establish the highest quality contact in the present study are described and examined – two French couples (E2 and P2, and E57 and P57) and an English and a French expatriate (E46 and E59).

E2 and P2
The French couple E2 and P2 had the highest quality contact with their host in this study, according to both parties. Not only did the expatriate and partner rate the contact 10 on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high) both after five and nine months, the hosts also gave a 9 on a similar scale. They met about fifteen times in nine months, which is the highest frequency in this study. What made this match so successful?
Several catalysts were present in this case. As for similarity, the expatriate and host couple were nearly the same age (expatriate and partner both 30 vs. host 33 and 29 years), and neither couple had children. The expatriate, partner and host all stated that there were similarities between them: “shared love of travelling” [E2Q2], “We have many interests in common” [P2Q2], and “We connect on every level. We are the same age, have very broad interests, are active” [H2Q].

It seems that the expatriate, partner and host were all very motivated to make the contact work. The host thought it was impressive how hard the expatriate and the partner were working to get to know the country and the language [H2E]. An indication of the motivation of the host also came across when the partner remarked several times that she found the host “very welcoming” [P2Q2 & Q3].

The contact was also enriching in that the expatriate felt that the host was very “nice [“sympathique”]” [E2Q2]. Also the host stated that the contact was “very nice and easy” [H2Q]. The contact also provided an opportunity for discovering new places in the Netherlands. In addition, benefits were found in both the area of adjustment and social support. In the first case, the contact with the host was beneficial on both the affective and cognitive aspects of adjustment: the expatriate and partner felt welcomed [E2Q2 and P2DW15] and better integrated [E2Q3]. The contact also enabled them to “discover other aspects of Dutch culture and society” [P2Q3]. With regard to social support, the contact with the host has permitted the expatriate and partner to meet Dutch people (diversification of social network).

One of the two environmental factors identified in this study might also have stimulated the development of the contact: this expatriate couple only lived three kilometres from their host (proximity). No evidence was found that the research context stimulated the contact.

When examining whether there were any barriers hindering the development of the contact, it became clear that none were mentioned, not even the most often named barrier of limited time available. Based on these results, it seems that the presence of so many contributing factors and no disrupting factors led to the establishment of high quality contact in this case.

E46
The English expatriate E46 had the second highest quality contact with his host of the present study, rating the contact a 9 on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high) after nine months. The host was equally enthusiastic at the end of the nine months, also rating the contact a 9 on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high). As with the previous couple, E2 and P2, they also met about fifteen times in nine months.

The expatriate and host were similar in many respects. Although the expatriate was somewhat older than the host (40 vs. 31 years), they were both single and they both said that they had similar interests [E46Q2] or that they thought alike [H46Q]. The expatriate
stated in the interview that the international background of the host was also a contributing factor:

[80] “I think it was definitely a contributing factor, yes the fact that he is pretty broadminded, he’s got that breadth to him, that he has lived in other countries, so he has that perspective and because of that he is very interested in other cultures and he has got that natural inquisitive thing…” [E46i]

The many meetings during the nine months of the project showed a motivation on both sides to meet. The contact was also enriching in that they enjoyed these meetings – “together we had some great fun” [E46g2] – as well as the discussions that ranged from “Dutch things” to “what’s the meaning of life” [E46i]. It also made the expatriate discover new areas of the city in which he lived [E46g3].

In addition, the contact contributed to the affective aspect of adjustment, in that it “helped to, kind of contribute to my overall well being which has meant I felt settled and secure and happy here” [E46i]. The contact also gave more insight into the Dutch culture and ways of thinking [E46g3], thereby having an impact on the cognitive aspect of adjustment. It also contributed in the realm of social support. Most of all, it provided the expatriate with an extra opportunity to make friends [E46i], forming a friendship with his host [E46g3]. Except for undertaking many activities together (social companionship), the host also gave advice on “various things in terms of dealing with the Dutch systems” [E46i] (informational support) and helped to translate some documents (instrumental support). Most importantly, the friendship provided emotional support:

[81] “Yes it helped, the fact that he’s Dutch so he understands local systems and all the rest of it and gave insight there, but it was more about having a good friend to confide in and discuss and all that kind of stuff, so the value of that, really. It helps that he was Dutch but it wouldn’t have mattered if he was South African.” [E46i]

The expatriate lived nine kilometres from his host, which is just below the average for proximity for the whole experimental group (M (SD) = 10.13 (11.32)). For that reason proximity might neither have specifically stimulated nor hindered this contact. The research context did not seem to specifically have stimulated the contact.

In terms of barriers to the contact, three potential ones were present. The first one was some anxiety on the side of the expatriate whether he would get along with the person with whom he would be put in touch [E46i]. Obviously, in this case this did not present a problem once they had met. The second possible barrier was with regard to the expectations of the type of activities that should be undertaken. These were different on the side of the expatriate from what the project intended, however, this did not present a problem because
the expatriate and the host did what they wanted to do together instead of keeping to a false notion of what they would be supposed to do together:

[82] “We knew we were supposed to get together at least once at month [...] I think we did once discuss going to the museum or something about that but it pretty rapidly faded away, so let’s just go and have a few beers.” [E46]

Unfortunately, it is not known what the expectations of the host were. It might have been that the expectations of the expatriate were similar to those of the host, resulting in them doing what they wanted to do.

The third barrier present was that time on both sides was limited. The host mentioned more frequent encounters as a possible improvement [H46], even though they had already met about fifteen times in nine months, which, together with E2 and P2, was the highest frequency in the present study. This shows a motivation on both sides to meet each other.

In conclusion, it can be said that this expatriate resembled his host to a great degree, that he thought the contact was enriching, and that he got much out of the contact with his host in terms of adjustment and social support. It seems that these rewards outweighed the cost of his initial anxiety and the situational constraint of the limited time available. They simply enjoyed each other’s company and were motivated to make it work.

E59
The French expatriate E59 was very content with the contact with her host, giving a rating of 9 on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high) after nine months. The host thought the same, in rating the contact a 9 on the same scale at the end of the project, even though they only met three times during nine months.

Again, the expatriate and host were similar in many respects: they were both single and were more or less of the same age, the host being five years older than the expatriate (28 vs. 23 years). The expatriate was very happy to discover that they had “the same interests and the same problems!!!” [E59]. She especially appreciated that through the project she had met “a Dutch woman who is like me...” [E59].

Both sides enjoyed the contact [E59 & H59] and the contact was enriching in that they had “interesting and personal discussions” [E59]. The contact contributed to the cognitive aspect of adjustment, because the expatriate indicated that she now better understood the culture [E59]. According to the host, the contact also diversified the social network of the expatriate, who enjoyed the Netherlands but did not have many Dutch friends [H59]. Furthermore, the expatriate lived very close to her host (3 km), although this proximity did not seem to stimulate the development of this contact as they only managed to meet three times in nine months. Research context did not seem to have played a role in this contact.
Busy schedules were the most important barrier to the contact in this case. Both the expatriate and the host stated that it was difficult to find a date to meet because they were very busy [E59q2 and H59q]. This resulted in only three meetings during nine months, but it did not prevent the development of the contact into high quality contact. Another potential barrier was the timing of the contact. The host found that the expatriate had already established her own life and that, other than a pleasant contact, she did not really contribute to that [H59q].

In this case it seems that the expatriate and the host had enough similarities to find some common ground for a relationship that was enriching and resulted in benefits in adjustment and social support for the expatriate. The frequency of the meetings was reduced by the limited time available on both sides, partly also caused by the fact that the expatriate had already established her own life in the Netherlands. No other costs or situational constraints seemed to be present. Even though the low frequency did not inhibit the development of high quality contact, it might have limited the benefits that the expatriate derived from the contact, because there were fewer opportunities to interact.

**E57 and P57**

The French couple E57 and P57 and their host all rated the contact a 9 on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high) after nine months. They met almost once a month: a total of eight times in nine months.

As compared to the previous three pairs, this pair was less similar with regard to the biographical data. First of all, the host was seventeen years older than the expatriate and partner (61 vs. 44 & 45 years), although the partner stated that she did not experience this as a problem [P57I]. Both the expatriate and the host had a partner and children, although only the expatriate still had one child living at home. The partner of the host did not officially participate in the project, but in practice she joined many of the meetings. The partner of the expatriate said that they had “a lot in common, which is really very nice” and that they clicked [P57I], which was echoed by the host, mentioning their shared interests [H59q]. Both expatriate and partner indicated the international experience of the host as a stimulating factor:

[83] “For us in the beginning I think that this fact connected us a bit, because they have already travelled a bit and we could talk about similar experiences.” [E57I]

The expatriate stressed the importance of being put in touch with agreeable people, because then “we’ll find we have things in common” [E57I].

The contact also was enriching for both sides. The expatriate, partner and host all comment on the “good times” [P57q2] and the “nice [“gezellige”] conversations” [H57q]. The expatriate concludes that “we get along very well” [E57e]. The expatriate and partner also
had the impression that their host enjoyed the contact as well, and this could have stimulated
the contact. The contact with the host also offered plenty of opportunities for discovery of
the Netherlands, because each time they met they visited a new place:

[84] “Well what is really nice about them is that each time we visit a place that is new
for us, so they teach us a lot of things about the Netherlands, and afterwards we
always have a nice dinner as well.” [E57]

In terms of benefits, the contact with the host helped with regard to the cognitive aspect of
adjustment, in changing the view of the expatriate and partner of the Netherlands [E57 and P57]. Both stated that they have learned a lot about the Netherlands and that they now
better understand the country in which they are living [E57]. The contact also provided an
opportunity to exercise their Dutch [H57]. Also, the contact with the host helped to meet
nice people and access social support, especially for the partner who said that it is not
always “easy” to make new friends on a new posting [P57]. For her, as well as for the
expatriate, it also diversified their social network, because they found it difficult to meet
Dutch people outside of work [E57]. With regard to proximity, the relatively high distance
between the places of residence (13 km) did not seem to have hindered the contact, as they
still met up eight times. Research context also did not seem to have played a role here.

The only two barriers to the contact that were found were language skills on the part of
the host, and busy schedules. The language of communication was French, because the
partner of the host spoke French fluently. The host was not necessarily anxious about his
French language skills, but he did find it difficult to speak French while acknowledging that
it was “lovely” for his wife [H57]. The second barrier might only have been felt by the host
[H57], because neither the expatriate nor the partner said anything about busy schedules
making it difficult to agree on a date for a meeting, and they were still able to meet eight
times during nine months.

The present case is an example of barriers that can be overcome, such as an age difference
of seventeen years. Facilitating factors are an open attitude towards age differences, and
similarities in other respects. The most important similarity in this case was the fact that
the host also had lived abroad so that they could talk about their respective experiences.
The contact was enjoyable for both sides, and enriching because it offered the opportunity
to discover the new host country, which the host was glad to show them. For the expatriate
and partner the host also was a way to access social support and enlarge their circle of
friends, not to mention a way to get in touch with Dutch people, whom they found otherwise
difficult to meet.
Overview

In summary, the four cases with highest quality contact presented many catalysts and few barriers, and the barriers that were present – such as busy schedules, timing and language skills – were overcome in one way or another. Each pair was similar in many respects, and where they were different, for example with regard to age, they seemed to overcome this barrier through similarity in other respects. The four expatriates with highest quality contact all found the contact enjoyable and enriching, and derived benefits in the areas of adjustment and social support, which might have contributed to the development of the contact. The fact that the contact took place in a research context did not seem to have played a role in the development of the contact: these four cases did not need encouragement.

7.3.2 Four lowest quality contacts

While the previous section (7.3.1) detailed the four most successful cases in the study, this section turns to the four cases with the lowest quality contact in order to know more about the reasons why the contact between an expatriate, partner and host did not develop. These four cases, two French expatriates (E25 and E49), an Australian expatriate (E18), and a U.S. American couple (E50 and P50) (see Table 7.4 on page 217), are described in more detail in this section.

E25

The French expatriate E25 rated the contact a 1 on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high), both after five and nine months. Her host couple was somewhat more positive in rating the contact a 4.5 on the same scale. They met only once.

The expatriate differed in some respects from her host: although she was more or less the same age as the host couple (30 vs. 31 and 26 years), the expatriate had a young child whereas the host couple did not. Although the expatriate said she and her host had found “two or three common interests” [E25], she felt that the difference in life phase was an important barrier to the development of the contact:

[85] “Maybe if we had a [host] family with a child of the same age, I may have tried a bit harder, because it’s true that for my daughter it’s nice to have friends of the same age. So I may have tried to see them, I may have made more effort.” [E25]

Something the expatriate appreciated about the project was that she would meet someone who was interested to meet a French person instead of just anyone in the streets [E25], but although the host found the one time they met “very nice” and they talked about “this, that and everything” [H25], the expatriate did not find the contact enriching and did not benefit
from it. It appeared that the expatriate was not very motivated from the start to make the contact work:

[86] “I think that if I had persisted I would have succeeded in seeing them [the hosts] again, we would have managed to set a date.” [E25']

Also, initially the partner of this expatriate (31 at the start of the project) also participated, but because he never met the host, he was excluded from the research (section 5.1). This had an impact on the motivation of the expatriate as well, who stated that if “he [her partner] was totally open and everything I may have pushed a little more” [E25']. This lack of motivation was also perceived by the host [H25']. Proximity was neither a catalyst nor a barrier to the contact, as the expatriate lived nine kilometres from the host – close to the average in this sample.

Another barrier was presented by different expectations of the expatriate and host with regard to taking initiative. The host found it regrettable that the initiative was only on their side [H25'], which ties in with the lack of motivation of the expatriate already mentioned. In addition, busy schedules caused some difficulties. The full time job of the expatriate limited the available time during the week, while they were often away during the weekend [E25']. A final complicating factor was the cultural difference in life style [“rythme de vie”], which made it more difficult to meet because when the expatriate would be ready to have dinner, the host was already on to the second part of their evening [E25'].

The fact that the expatriate was in a different life phase than the host was a very important barrier to the development of this contact. A lack of motivation to make it work, especially on the side of the partner who never even met the host, and busy schedules further inhibited the contact. There were too few similarities and rewards to overcome these barriers, resulting in a breakdown of the contact.

E50 + P50

The U.S. American expatriate and partner E50 and P50 rated the contact a 2 and a 3 on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high) after nine months. With a 4 on the same scale, the host was slightly more positive. Together, the expatriate and partner only met the host once. In addition, the partner met the host one other time.

Although the expatriate and partner were of a similar age to the host (expatriate and partner 28 and 27 years, the host 28 years), the expatriate had a partner whereas the host was single. This explained why the second meeting with the host only took place with the partner and not the expatriate. The partner stated:
[87] “I think maybe if it was a couple, he might have been a little more interested also in making more an effort to go to meet S. and since it was just a single women, he just wasn’t as interested in the programme anyway.” [P50]

The partner liked the fact that the host was “very good about getting back to me” [P50], which showed a motivation to be in touch, but acknowledged that she herself could have made more of an effort to make Dutch friends if she had lived in a smaller community with fewer Americans [P50].

Although the partner enjoyed the contact with the host and thought that they “got along really well”, they did not “necessarily become good friends” [P50]. The benefits derived from the contact were mainly on the side of the partner, and not the expatriate. The partner took the opportunity to ask the host all kinds of questions about “why do you do this and why is this done” [P50], thereby benefiting with regard to the cognitive aspect of adjustment. She also appreciated simply having the contact and being able to ask questions [P50]. Knowing that someone was there to answer any questions could have offered a feeling of social support similar as expressed by quote 44 in section 7.1.5. Also, the host offered informational support by sending information about classes that the partner could take [P50]. Furthermore, the expatriate and partner lived in a different city from the host (proximity), at a distance of 27 kilometres, which made meeting more difficult (see quote 45 in section 7.1.6). Even though the expatriate, partner and host talked about taking turns in visiting each other, this did not really work out the way they planned [P50].

When examining possible barriers to the contact, it is striking that this pair was one of the few cases in which their expectations of the project were stated beforehand, in the introductory emails:

[88] “Most of all, we enjoy learning more about Dutch culture and customs. We have not made many Dutch friends and are looking forward to this opportunity! [P50]
And: Looking forward to see and explore more of my own country together with people from another country.” [H50]

As was argued in section 7.2.2, setting the expectations at the outset might prevent early breakdown of the contact, but it does not necessarily lead to high quality contact, as this case showed.

Two other barriers to the contact were busy schedules and the timing of the contact. The expatriate said that he had been too busy to get together [E50], and the partner also said that they were not able to get together with the host as often because of frequent travelling [P50] and busy schedules on both sides [P50]. With regard to the timing, the partner said that they should have started the project earlier, because they were too settled when they started [P50]. This meant that they had many things going on, which also made it more difficult to meet the host [P50].
In summary, the main reason why this contact did not develop seems to be the timing of the project and the dissimilarity in family situation. The expatriate and the partner had already established their life in the Netherlands, which limited the time they had available to meet their host. This was further complicated by the fact that they lived in a different city. The fact that both parties expressed their expectations of the project and that the contact was very enjoyable did not counteract this barrier. A possible reason is that the host was a single woman, making the meetings especially interesting for the female partner, and less so for the male expatriate.

E49
The French expatriate E49 gave the contact with her host a 5 on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high) after five months, but lowered this to a 3 on the same scale after nine months. The host rated the contact with a 4 on the same scale. The expatriate met her host only once.

The expatriate and the host were similar in some respects. They were both single and the host had French nationality in addition to her Dutch one. On the other hand, there was something of an age gap: the host was seven years older than the expatriate (32 vs. 25 years old), and the host did not really feel a click:

[89] “Well it wasn’t that it didn’t click, but it also wasn’t like, hey, how incredibly nice I’m going to make a great effort.” [H49]

The qualitative information available of the expatriate is very limited because the expatriate was not interviewed and did not keep a diary. She only indicated that she found it interesting to discover the impressions of a person who was both Dutch and French [E49Q2], which might have contributed to the cognitive aspect of adjustment. The expatriate and host lived only five kilometres from each other (proximity), which should have made it easier to meet, although in this case there was only one meeting. Another catalyst was the research context, and more specifically the emails that were sent to the host to enquire how the contact was going, which caused the host to get in touch with her expatriate again [H49I].

Barriers to the contact were the expectations of the project, a lack of motivation, busy schedules and the timing of the project. The host thought the aim of the project was really to help someone settle in the Netherlands, this in combination with the fact that the expatriate had been in the Netherlands for seven months, the host did not really see her added value [H49I], which might have limited her motivation to make the contact work. She also stated that she did not feel that the expatriate wanted it any more than she did [H49I]. A further complicating factor was that both the expatriate and the host led very busy lives, which made it difficult to meet again [E49Q2 and H49I]. The host even indicated that she could not really handle the contact on top of everything else in her life, among other things a new job [H49I].
Even though the expatriate and host were similar in some respects, the development of the contact was blocked by the fact that the expatriate had already established her life in the Netherlands, which made the host wonder what she could still contribute to it. In combination with a very busy schedule, this could have lessened her motivation to make the contact work. Also the expatriate did not seem to be any more willing than the host to put effort in the establishment of the contact. The lack of a real click did not help either.

E18
The Australian expatriate E18 rated the contact a 3 on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high) after nine months, whereas the host rated a slightly more positive 4.5 on the same scale. They met three times, but the partner of the host only joined them once.

As in the previous case of French expatriate E49, the expatriate was similar to the host with regard to age: the host couple was somewhat older than the expatriate (44 vs. 41 years; the partner of the host, who was less involved in the contact, was 52). They also lived only six kilometres from each other (proximity). There was a difference in family situation: the expatriate was single, whereas the host had a partner. However, both the expatriate and the host indicated that they did not have much in common [E18Q3 and H18Q]. From both sides suggestions for activities were rejected because the other was not interested, which “dampens the enthusiasm” [H18Q]. At a certain point the expatriate experienced a lack of motivation, as she herself remarked after five months:

[90] “I don’t really have much contact with A., a very nice lady who is extremely helpful, but not much in common, have never met her partner, wondering if he does exist – unsure why they are part of this experiment, have lost interest myself.” [E18Q2]

A further barrier to the contact was a lack of benefits. Although the expatriate found her host very helpful, she also said that she would not participate in such a project again, because she did not benefit from it [E18Q3]. Also, when the third questionnaire asked whether she enjoyed the contact with her host, she replied that it “was OK, but not what I wanted” [E18Q3], showing that her expectations were not met. On one occasion the expatriate felt the artificiality of the meeting [E18Q3], which might also have hindered the contact. On the other hand, the host wondered whether the expatriate felt the contact to be an obligation, because the expatriate never took the initiative and her schedule was always very busy [H18E].

The similarity between expatriate and host with regard to age and the fact that they lived near each other was not enough to make the contact work in this case. A lack of common interests hindered the development of the contact, which caused a decrease in motivation to keep meeting. In the end, the expectations of the expatriate were not met – she did not benefit from the contact – leading to the contact being assessed as low quality.
Overview
The four pairs with the lowest quality contact most of all lacked a similarity in interests: they did not have enough commonalities on which to base the relationship, which might have resulted in decreased motivation to make the contact work. Although three of the cases were relatively similar with regard to the matching criteria, the contact did not develop due to the presence of too few catalysts and too many barriers. The contact was rarely enriching and the expatriates did not derive many benefits. Research context encouraged the contact in one case [E49], but was overruled by other barriers. The timing of the contact with the host and busy schedules seem to be the two main barriers to the contact. Anxiety about the artificial character of the contact also played an important role in one of the cases, and cultural differences in life style complicated another. Communication breakdown due to technical or personal reasons was not relevant in these four cases.

To determine the reason why these four cases ended up with the lowest quality contact, it does not suffice to look only at the factors that were defined as barriers. The absence of a catalyst might also be a reason for breakdown of the contact. Dissimilarity between expatriate and host, lack of motivation on one or both sides, and lack of benefits experienced by the expatriate and partner were barriers to the development of high quality contact in the cases presented in this section. Moreover, the absence of similarity of interests, motivation and rewards is especially regrettable, because these factors might have made it possible to overcome barriers such as being in a different life phase, living in different cities and not knowing how to contribute to the expatriate’s experience of living in the Netherlands.

7.4 Promoting high quality contact

A close examination of the qualitative data showed that there are several catalysts and barriers that might stimulate or hinder the development of the contact, as listed in sections 7.1 and 7.2. Not all catalysts and barriers are equally important, and some catalysts could help overcome particular barriers, as was shown in section 7.3. The present section discusses the relative importance of each catalyst and barrier, leading to a general conclusion on how to promote high quality contact between expatriate and hosts. It is important to bear in mind that not the same amount of qualitative information was available for each pair in the experimental group, because not everyone kept a diary and only a selection of expatriates, partners and hosts were interviewed (section 4.3). Therefore, possible catalysts and barriers may be missing, or the frequency with which they occur might be different than stated.

Catalysts
An important catalyst is similarity between expatriate and host, as was expected according to the similarity-attraction hypothesis (Byrne, 1971). This study specifically examined
similarity with regard to age and family situation, but also with regard to interests because it seems to be especially important that there is some common ground to establish the relationship. This could lead to a “click” between expatriate and host, stimulating the development of the contact. In many cases in the present study, this common ground might have been the international experience of the host, because many of them have lived abroad or travelled extensively. This could have provided the necessary “adjustment empathy” that makes the local host a suitable source of social support (Farh et al., 2010, p. 438).

Differences in age and family situation might pose difficulties, but they could be overcome by a “click”, an interest in the other or a strong motivation to make the contact work. In the case of family situation, specifically whether one has children or not is a barrier that might not be easily overcome because it results in different life styles that make it harder to find common ground and to meet. Although section 6.4.2 established that contact quality did not differ with regard to whether one was put in touch with a host couple or with a single host, the combination of an expatriate couple with a single host might not be the most efficient match because this could result in the local host being the host for only one person of the couple. The other way around, matching a single expatriate to a host couple, seems to encounter no specific problems. Also, the contact could work out well for single expatriates when matched to a single host as was shown by E46, E29, E9, and E59, who all established high quality contact with their host.

Motivation to make the contact work is another key element. According to Fahr et al. (2010) motivation to help is critical for the value of the support given. Also, a strong motivation could overrule potential barriers to the contact, such as different family situation, busy schedules and communication breakdown. A lack of motivation was probably the barrier that was most difficult to overcome. Even though it seems self-evident that participants who signed up for this project were willing to invest time and energy in the contact with their host, this was not always the case as was shown in section 7.1.2.

The comparison of the four highest and four lowest quality contact also showed that expatriates with high quality contact more often found the contact enjoyable and enriching – full of discoveries of new places, foods and persons – than expatriates with low quality contact. They also derived many benefits from the contact in the area of adjustment and social support, although expatriates with low quality contact benefited as well: they also learned about the Netherlands (cognitive adjustment), undertook activities with their host (social companionship) and reported that they received informational support (e.g. advice on restaurants). While the amount of these benefits might be an important reason why the expatriates assess the contact as of high or low quality, the benefits themselves may also be seen as catalysts for the contact. As was pointed out in the social penetration theory, the balance between rewards and costs of interactions is important for the development of the contact. Altman and Taylor (1973, p. 32) state that “the greater the ratio of rewards to costs, the more satisfying the relationship” and the more likely it is that the participants would like to meet again. If expatriates derive many benefits from the contact and these benefits
outweigh the costs, it may be expected that the relationship between the expatriate and the host becomes more intimate.

It is also possible that the type of benefit the participants received was essential for encouragement of the contact. Self-disclosure is a key concept here. Collins and Miller (1994) show in their meta-analysis that those who disclose at an intimate level are liked more, and also like the person to whom they disclose more as a result of these exchanges. If the expatriate discusses his or her problems and receives emotional support from the host it would probably encourage the development of the contact more than if only informational support or social companionship were offered. For example, one of the hosts said that, later on in their contact, the expatriate vented her frustrations with regard to developments at work and that they listened to her story [H27], thereby offering emotional support. This might have stimulated the development of the contact more than if the host only recommended some restaurants or explained about how things work in the Netherlands (informational support).

One of the environmental factors affecting the development of the contact was proximity: the distance between the places of residence of the expatriate and host. It was tentatively shown that expatriates who lived further away from their host developed lower quality contact, even when matched for place of residence as was done in the present study. Living in close proximity makes it easier to meet more often, which increases the opportunities for the relationship to develop. This factor does not seem to be as important for the development of the contact because it can be overcome by other catalysts, for example a strong motivation to establish the contact or rewards (benefits of the contact) that outweigh the cost (effort to meet) (Altman & Taylor, 1973). The expatriate who lived furthest from his host (50 km) still established high quality contact with his host. A final environmental factor which might act as catalyst is the research context, which played a role in some cases, but it never made the difference between high and low quality contact. The contact usually seemed to develop for other reasons.

**Barriers**

The barriers that were found in the qualitative data were anxiety about the contact, different expectations, busy schedules, suboptimal timing, communication breakdown and cultural differences. These factors might all inhibit the development of the contact to a greater or lesser degree, although the two main barriers seemed to be busy schedules and suboptimal timing of the contact.

Busy schedules were present in most cases and slowed down the development of the contact because of limiting the opportunities to meet. Even the expatriates with high quality contact met only about seven times on average during nine months, thus less than once per month. A local host might have had more impact had there been more time available. As more frequent contact was associated with higher quality contact, the quality of the contact of some pairs might have been higher had their schedules allowed them to meet more
Catalysts and barriers frequently. These more frequent meetings would have offered more opportunities for learning about Dutch culture or soliciting social support. Burleson (1990, p. 66) indicates that it is usually specific actions that provide support. This would suggest that the more actions are carried out, the more support is given. In short, more frequent meetings lead to more opportunities for deriving benefit from the contact, thereby increasing the impact of a local host. For these reasons, it could be worthwhile to take time availability into account in the matching procedure, as was suggested by Cox (2005).

In some cases busy schedules on the part of the expatriate and partner was associated with suboptimal timing of the contact. The longer an expatriate had been in the Netherlands, the more he or she had established his or her own life, which left only limited room for a new contact. The other aspect of this barrier is that the expatriate, as well as the host, might have wondered what was the use of the contact, as the expatriate had already established his or her life. This might have resulted in a possible loss of motivation on either side to make the contact work, which could have slowed down the development of the contact, as was the case for two expatriates in this study. All in all it seems that the inclusion criterion of maximum one year of residence in the Netherlands at the time of registration (4.2.1) was justified in that it limited the number of cases where the expatriate would have been too long in the Netherlands to really benefit from the contact.

A final barrier that is important to discuss here is cultural differences. Throughout this study, there were few reports of cultural differences causing problems, but in two cases they were contributory factors in the break down of the contact. There might have been more instances where cultural differences might have slowed down the development of the contact, which were not observed by the participants or simply not present in the qualitative data. Section 7.2.5 emphasised the role of an intermediary to solve communication breakdown due to technical reasons. Such an intermediary could also play a role in avoiding or solving difficulties caused by cultural differences. These and other implications are discussed in the following chapters.

The present chapter sought to answer the third research question of this study – which aspects promote high quality contact between expatriate, partner and host? The discussion presented in this section leads to a tentative hierarchy of catalysts and barriers as presented in Table 7.5 on page 232, although it is a matter of fact that the available data are too limited to underpin this list statistically. Some factors were deemed to be equally important, and were therefore put on the same level.
Table 7.5 Tentative hierarchy of catalysts and barriers based on the analysis in this Chapter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Catalysts</th>
<th>Barriers</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  Similarity – Motivation*</td>
<td>Busy schedules</td>
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<td>2 -</td>
<td>Suboptimal timing</td>
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<tr>
<td>3  Enriching – Adjustment – Social support (benefits)</td>
<td>Communication breakdown</td>
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<td>4 -</td>
<td>Cultural differences</td>
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<td>5 *</td>
<td>Different expectations - Anxiety</td>
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<tr>
<td>6  Proximity</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>7  Research context</td>
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* Some factors were seen as equally important, and therefore share a place together, consequently leaving spaces open in the Table.

With the overview of aspects that could promote high quality contact as presented in this chapter, the third research question has been explored. Chapter 8 will provide an overview of the results of all three research questions, the limitations of this study and suggestions for future research and Chapter 9 will discuss the practical implications of this study.
Chapter 8

Conclusion and discussion
Chapter 8

Contact

Expatriates

Local

Host

Partners

Research

Adjustment

Study

Quality

National

Assignment

Finding

Future

Social

Impact

Relationship

Support

Performance

Example

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Conclusion and discussion

The present study was designed to test whether expatriates and partners would benefit from contact with a local host. The research questions and accompanying hypotheses outlined in chapter 3 were answered in chapters 5 to 7. Chapter 8 will now bring these results together. Section 8.1 presents a summary of the findings with regard to the impact of a local host (*RQ1: Does contact with a local host contribute to the success of an expatriate assignment?*). Seven hypotheses and research questions 1a+b were formulated in section 3.3 to further explore this first research question. Section 8.2 focuses on the influence of the quality of the contact between expatriates, partners and hosts, which is addressed in the second research question (*RQ2: To what extent does quality of contact between expatriate, partner and local host have an effect on the success of the expatriate assignment?*). Section 8.3 offers conclusions with regard to the development of the contact, which is the focus of the third research question (*RQ3: Which aspects promote high quality contact between expatriate, partner and host?*). The research questions and hypotheses were depicted visually in section 3.6 in a conceptual model. This model is presented again in Figure 8.1 and adapted to incorporate the results of this study in the Figure. The chapter ends with general conclusions (8.4), limitations of this study (8.5) and suggestions for future research (8.6). Practical implications of the findings and recommendations for organisations, expatriates and partners are discussed in chapter 9.
The first research question of this study was “Does contact with a local host contribute to the success of an expatriate assignment?” Four concepts were studied in order to answer this research question: Adjustment and Performance, together determining the success of the international assignment (8.1.1), Social Support (8.1.2) and Intercultural Communication (8.1.3). The specific impact of a local host is indicated in brackets if the hypothesis was not fully confirmed. The adapted conceptual model based on findings in this study with RQ1 in Block A, RQ2 in Block B and RQ3 in Block C (IA = Interaction Adjustment; E = expatriates; P+ = expatriates with partner; SI = Social Initiative; only partial impact). * The specific impact of a local host is indicated in brackets if the hypothesis was not fully confirmed.

8.1 Impact of a local host

The first research question of this study was “Does contact with a local host contribute to the success of an expatriate assignment?” Four concepts were studied in order to answer this research question: Adjustment and Performance, together determining the success of the international assignment (8.1.1), Social Support (8.1.2) and Intercultural Communication (8.1.3).
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8.1.1 Adjustment and Performance

Section 2.1 showed that both Adjustment and Performance play an important role in defining the success of the international assignment because it is essential that an expatriate functions well in both the private and the professional domain for an international assignment to succeed. Furthermore, the private domain can be split into psychological and sociocultural adjustment (Searle & Ward, 1990), both of which might be affected by the contact with a local host. This led to three hypotheses for which the results are discussed below: Psychological Adjustment (H1), Sociocultural Adjustment (H2) and Performance (H3).

H1 Psychological Adjustment
According to stress and coping theory (section 3.1.1), contact with a local host might have a positive impact on the affective aspect of adjustment, Psychological Adjustment, because social support offered by a local host might help expatriates and partners to cope with the stress associated with a transition to a foreign country. This led to the following hypothesis:

H1 The psychological adjustment of expatriates and partners with host increases more over time than the psychological adjustment of those without host.

A local host only had an impact on Interaction Adjustment: expatriates and partners who were put in touch with a local host felt more comfortable interacting with host nationals than those who did not have a local host. This is in line with Brewster and Pickard's statement (1994, p. 30) that “higher levels of interaction with host nationals lead to easier adjustment to the environment” and Johnson et al.’s finding (2003) that contact with host nationals predicts interaction adjustment (section 3.1). Especially expatriates without partner felt more comfortable if they had a host; since they did not have the possibility of learning from the experiences of a partner (section 5.2.1).

Contact with a local host had a specific impact on Psychological Adjustment as it only affected the aspect which concerned interactions with host nationals and not the other aspects of Psychological Adjustment (Psychological Health, Physical Health, Satisfaction with Life, General Adjustment and Work Adjustment). For that reason H1 was only partially supported by the findings in this study. Although social support is one of the major resources in stress and coping literature (Ward et al., 2001) other factors – for example individual characteristics such as personality or international experience – might have been more important for the more general aspects of Psychological Adjustment (e.g. Psychological Competence (8.1.3)). The findings with regard to the first research question are depicted in block A of Figure 8.1.
Furthermore, the fact that a local host did not impact on General Adjustment was not in line with Johnson et al.’s (2003) finding that breadth of the relationship with host nationals (i.e. the variety of resources that are offered, such as access to new information) influences General Adjustment. Future research should examine the breadth of the relationship with the local host to determine whether this would explain why a local host did not affect General Adjustment. The lack of finding with regard to the effect of a local host on Work Adjustment may be explained by the finding of Johnson et al. (2003) that the number of host nationals with whom the expatriate had contact was related to Work Adjustment. For that reason an effect on Work Adjustment might be caused by being surrounded by a number of host nationals – both at work and outside of work – and not so much by having one particular host national as a contact outside of work. Future research should try to explore this issue in more detail.

**H2 Sociocultural Adjustment**

Another way in which a local host might have an impact on the success of the expatriate assignment is if expatriates and partners learn about the host culture from their local host. According to culture learning theory this should help Sociocultural Adjustment (section 3.1.2). This led to the second hypothesis:

\[ H2 \text{ The sociocultural adjustment of expatriates and partners with host increases more over time than the sociocultural adjustment of those without host.} \]

No empirical support was found in this study to support this hypothesis. A local host did not have an impact on Sociocultural Adjustment for either expatriates or partners. This did not confirm Abe et al.’s finding (1998) that international students who participated in an international peer pairing programme had higher social adjustment scores than those without peer. Even though some culture learning did take place during the contact with the host – expatriates and partners acquired knowledge about Dutch culture (section 8.1.3) – this however, did not lead to a significant increase in Sociocultural Adjustment as measured in this study.

**H3 Performance**

Although the contact with the local host took place outside the workplace, it might have affected expatriate job performance because a local host might offer social support for work-related issues, or because knowledge and skills learned in the contact with the host could spill over to the workplace. Also, the host might fulfil one or more Host Country National Liaison roles (Vance et al., 2009), which might help expatriate job performance. This led to the following hypothesis:
The performance of expatriates with host increases more over time than the performance of those without host.

The findings in this study showed that a local host did not have an impact on expatriate job performance, giving no support to Hypothesis 3. The present study showed that contact with a local host did not affect the professional life of the expatriate. This finding was not in line with that of Carraher et al. (2008) that having a host country mentor was correlated positively with job performance, nor with the study of Westwood and Barker (1990), which showed that international student participants in a peer pairing programme had higher overall academic averages and seemed to have lower drop-out rates – these two outcomes could be seen as equivalent to job performance for expatriates. On the other hand, the present study is not alone in failing to discover a relationship between contact with a host and performance-related outcomes. The study of the effect of peer pairing on academic performance of Quintrell and Westwood (1994) did not replicate Westwood and Barker’s finding (1990), and in the mentoring literature Nigah et al. (2010) failed to establish a correlation between satisfaction with a buddy and turnover intentions.

There are several reasons that could explain why the present study did not find an effect of a local host in the professional domain. First, a local host might only be beneficial for those expatriates whose performance depends to some extent on their ability to interact with host nationals. A promising avenue for future research is to investigate the possible influence of communication toughness, which is the amount of “interpersonal interaction that is expected between the global manager and the local populace” (Black et al., 1992, p. 99). This study showed that expatriates felt more comfortable interacting with host nationals through the contact with their host. This might spill over to the workplace and become very helpful if an expatriate is surrounded by host national colleagues and clients. Further research is needed to establish whether this is indeed the case. Second, many other factors are important for job performance, according to Spector’s model of job performance (2000), for example the knowledge, skills and motivation of the expatriate (section 2.2.1). Although a local host could offer support with work-related issues, and knowledge and skills learned during the contact with the host might spill over to the workplace, other factors might be more important in determining expatriate job performance. A final possible explanation of the lack of effect of a local host on expatriate job performance is methodological in nature: the range of Desire to Terminate the Assignment and Assess own Performance was relatively restricted. Many expatriates did not want to terminate their assignment early and assessed their own performance favourably. This might have made it more difficult to find significant relationships.

As these studies remain inconclusive about the impact of peer pairing or buddy programmes on performance outcomes, future research should examine in more detail the effect of a local host on expatriate job performance.

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8.1.2 Social Support

Hypotheses 4 and 5 and RQ1a studied the benefits of contact with a local host for expatriates and partners in the area of Social Support. The findings reported in this section are difficult to compare to other studies because none of the studies found in peer pairing and mentoring, as far as is known, examined the effect of the contact on social support variables.

H4 Host National Access

When expatriates and partners move abroad they leave behind a large part of their social network and they face the challenge of rebuilding their network in the host country. A local host could be a way to expand their social network, thereby increasing the possibility that expatriates and partners receive adequate social support. This led to the following hypothesis:

H4 Expatriates and partners with host acquire more access to host nationals than those without host.

The findings in this study presented a complex picture with regard to the impact of a local host on Host National Access. Female expatriates decreased on Host National Access unless they were put in touch with a local host: then they maintained the same level of Host National Access. This buffering effect of a local host did not occur for male expatriates and no effect was found for partners. For these reasons H4 is not supported.

In section 5.3.1 it was hypothesised that the gender difference on this variable was caused by a different construal of the concept ‘contact’; where female expatriates would have a certain quality of contact in mind, male expatriates would tend to count every host national in their surroundings, regardless of the quality of that contact. Therefore the decrease over time on Host National Access of female expatriates without host might be interpreted as a withdrawal from contacts with the Dutch when finding it difficult to establish a relationship with them. Male expatriates, on the other hand, would be more likely to continue to see the same amount of Dutch people even though the depth of those relationships might decrease, which is not caught in Host National Access. Future research should clarify this gender difference (section 8.6.4).

H5 Host National Social Support

A local host could offer several types of social support: they can accompany expatriates and partners on activities (social companionship) or simply listen when they have a story to tell (emotional support). The fifth hypothesis focused on social support offered by host nationals:
H5 Expatriates and partners with host receive more social support from host nationals over time than those without host.

The present study showed that it is possible to stimulate the amount of social support that the expatriate received, as Black et al. (1999, p. 126) suggested that organisations should do. Expatriates with a local host received more social support from host nationals than expatriates without host. Since no significant impact on Host National Social Support was found for partners, Hypothesis 5 was only partially supported.

The effect on Host National Social Support took place in the long term, between five and nine months, which suggests that quality of contact might have played a role. A local host started out as a weak tie and might need to become a strong tie to be able to support the expatriate to a significant extent. Whether a local host can develop into a strong tie was subject of research question 1a.

RQ1a Friendship
When putting expatriates and partners in touch with a local host with the aim of a supportive relationship developing, it is interesting to examine the potential of such an intervention. Strong ties have been found to offer more support than weak ties (Kim, 1987). For that reason a local host who becomes a friend could offer more benefits to the expatriate and partner than if he or she remains a weak tie. Can a local host become friend within a period of nine months? That was the focus of RQ1a and this study found empirical support to answer this question affirmatively for both expatriates and partners.

The social penetration theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973) contends that social relationships can develop from the level of strangers to that of close friends. The present study showed that this process can also be set in motion when relationships are purposefully created. In nearly one-fifth of the cases, a local host was listed as one of five most important friends and acquaintances, sometimes as quickly as within the first five months of the contact. This is especially relevant in the context of the finding of the Expat Explorer Survey that reports that only 36% of the respondents found it easy to make friends in the Netherlands (HSBC, 2010). The present study showed that it is possible to plant “seeds of stronger, more intimate relationships” (Adelman et al., 1987, p. 129) through putting expatriates and partners in touch with a host. Furthermore, the potential of the contact is shown in Contact Maintenance, which showed that almost one third of the expatriates kept contact with their host for more than two years. Some of these relationships lasted for years afterwards and it is plausible that the host continued to offer support, showing the long term potential of contact with a host.
8.1.3 Intercultural Communication Competence

The fourth concept in this study is Intercultural Communication Competence, which consists of knowledge, attitude and skills. According to culture learning theory (section 3.1.2) expatriates and partners could learn appropriate norms and behaviours during contact with host nationals so that contact with a local host might have an impact on Intercultural Communication Competence.

RQ1b Knowledge
Research question 1b concerned the knowledge aspect of Intercultural Communication Competence and enquired whether expatriates and partners think they learned about Dutch culture from their host. RQ1b was answered affirmatively: expatriates and partners stated that they learned about Dutch culture from their local host. This suggests that culture learning (section 3.1.2) has taken place and that contact with a local host can indeed be considered as a specific type of post-departure training, if training is defined in a way similar to Kealey and Protheroe (1996, p. 135) – “any intervention aimed at increasing the knowledge or skills of the individual” (section 3.2.2). Future research should determine what kind of knowledge expatriates and partners learned from their host and its importance for adjustment.

H6 Attitude
The association hypothesis (Church, 1982) states that more social interaction with host nationals leads to a more positive attitude towards them. The attitude component of Intercultural Communication Competence in this study is measured by Openmindedness (section 3.3.3). This led to the following hypothesis:

H6 Expatriates and partners with host acquire a more open attitude towards different cultural norms and values than those without host.

The findings showed a different impact of a local host than was expected because a local host buffered a decrease in Openmindedness for expatriates with partner. In general expatriates decreased on Openmindedness during the nine months of the project; only expatriates with partner benefited from the contact with a local host and maintained the same level of Openmindedness. No effect of a local host was found for partners. For these reasons Hypothesis 6 is not supported. Although expatriates with host were expected to acquire a more open attitude over time than expatriates without host, the findings were in line with the association hypothesis and the studies of Selltiz and Cook (1962) and of Kamal and Maruyama (1990) (section 3.3.3) because expatriates with host still had a more positive attitude than those without host.

Expatriates became less openminded unless they had a host. A possible explanation for
Conclusion and discussion

this decrease may be found in the fact that the present study examined the attitude towards “outgroup members” and “different cultural norms and values” in general, whereas the association hypothesis and the two studies mentioned above (Kamal & Maruyama, 1990; Selltiz & Cook, 1962) focused specifically on respectively the attitude towards locals and the attitude towards the host country. Section 5.4.2 offered the explanation that expatriates might have come to the Netherlands with very optimistic expectations and found the reality of making contact with the Dutch more difficult than expected, resulting in a loss of openmindedness. A local host could counteract this tendency by showing that there were Dutch people willing to get in touch. This, however, was only the case for expatriates with partner. Two possible explanations have been outlined in section 5.4.2. First, the matching process, taking into account family situation, resulted in expatriate couples being put in touch more often with a host couple. It is possible that the simple fact that two Dutch persons were willing to be put in touch with an expatriate helped the expatriate keep a more open mind than if there was just one host. Second, an expatriate might capitalise the contact with the host through talking about it with his or her partner, which is likely to increase the positive effect of an event (Gable et al., 2004; Langston, 1994). Future research should verify whether the decrease on Openmindedness was due to unrealistic expectations before arrival and explore what caused the difference between expatriates with and without partner. Another interesting avenue for future research is the effect of a local host on attitudes towards the host country and towards host nationals themselves.

H7 Skills

According to culture learning theory (section 3.1.2) expatriates and partners might learn appropriate behaviours from their hosts, leading to an increase in intercultural skills (Social Initiative, Cultural Empathy, Emotional Stability and Flexibility; section 4.2.2.5). This led to the following hypothesis:

H7 Expatriates and partners with host acquire higher levels of intercultural skills than those without host.

The present study only found empirical support for an impact of a local host on Social Initiative of expatriates and Emotional Stability of partners, but these findings did not support the contention that culture learning with regard to personality-based intercultural skills took place because expatriates and partners with host did not increase on these two variables. Although Ward et al. (2001, p. 66) state that more extensive contact with host nationals “facilitates skills acquisition in a new milieu”, this was not the case in the present study. First, a local host buffered a decrease in Social Initiative of expatriates, as it did for Openmindedness. Second, contrary to the expectations, partners without host increased in Emotional Stability whereas partners with host remained stable. Furthermore, no impact of a local host was found for Cultural Empathy and Flexibility for either expatriates or
partners, nor was any impact found for partners’ *Social Initiative* and expatriates’ *Emotional Stability*. For these reasons Hypothesis 7 was not supported.

As was explained in section 5.4.3 the decrease in *Social Initiative* could be seen in the same light as the decrease in *Openmindedness*: expatriates came to the Netherlands with the desire to get in touch with the locals, but then found that this was not as easy as they thought. As a result they became less socially active, unless they had a local host who proved that there were locals willing to get in touch with them. With regard to the contrary finding of *Emotional Stability*, gender might have caused the difference between expatriates, of whom 60% was male, and partners, of whom 91% was female. Section 5.4.4 delved deeper into this issue, theorising that women became more emotionally stable and stress resilient if they faced challenges by themselves and did not have a local host as support. Finally, the lack of effect of a local host for *Cultural Empathy* and *Flexibility* might lie in the fact that these variables, together with *Emotional Stability* for men, might be more stable than dynamic competences (Herfst et al., 2008) (section 5.4.5).

**Culture shock?**
Expatriates decreased on *Openmindedness* and *Social Initiative* and a similar decrease was reported for female expatriates on *Host National Access*. Intuitively, one could equate this decrease as a symptom of culture shock. However, it remains to be seen whether this is true. Culture shock, as explained in section 2.4.1, consists of four phases in the shape of a U-curve (Lysgaard, 1955). In the present study, this U-curve cannot be detected for two reasons. First, Intercultural Communication Competence was only measured at two points in time: at baseline level and nine months later. The development between these two points and beyond might have followed a U-curve, but it might also have been linear. Second, one must bear in mind that expatriates did not all sign up for this project at exactly the same time in their international assignment. Some had just arrived, others had already spent nearly a year in the Netherlands when they registered for the project. For this reason the entire sample should not be thought to be in the culture shock phase after nine months because at that point in time some expatriates had been in the Netherlands for a year, while others were there for almost two years. In general, expatriates – if they did not have a host – decreased in *Openmindedness* and *Social Initiative* during the nine months of their participation. In my opinion, this would advocate a linear descent over time on these two specific variables, which could be explained by the disappointment that is felt in the first year or two after arriving in the Netherlands with high hopes of getting in touch with the Dutch. It might very well be that this effect is specific for the Dutch context, since the Netherlands is found to be the toughest of the European countries in which to make friends, according to Expat Explorer Survey (HSBC, 2010), although it is likely that Germany, United Kingdom, Switzerland and Belgium which complete the top five countries in which it is most difficult to make friends, present similar difficulties. Another possibility is that the decrease in *Openmindedness*, *Social Initiative* and *Host National Access* (for female
expatriates only) is caused by the experiment itself because expatriates were randomly assigned to either the experimental or the control group and the control group was told after filling in the first questionnaire that they would only be put in touch with a host after nine months. This might have been disappointing although participants were informed beforehand about this possibility (4.2.3). The fact that expatriates without partner but with host also decreased on Openmindedness suggests that the explanation of having an optimistic outlook at the beginning of the assignment is more likely because these expatriates did get a host but still decreased.

8.1.4 Impact of having a partner

Partners have been identified in the literature as crucial to expatriate success because they might have a difficult time adjusting to life in the new country (Black et al., 1991; Shaffer & Harrison, 2001). As such, they have been mostly seen as a restraint for expatriate success. In line with some authors who quote the importance of the family as primary source of social support to cope with the stress caused by a cross-cultural transition (e.g. Adelman, 1988; Ward et al., 2001), the results of the present study also suggest that expatriates might benefit from having a partner. First, the explanation offered in this study for the fact that expatriates with partner but without host also increased in Interaction Adjustment is that they learned from their partner; their partner was an extra source of information which made them feel more comfortable with interacting with host nationals. Second, in the case of Openmindedness, one of the explanations offered for the buffering effect of a local host only taking place for expatriates with partner is that contact with a local host was more salient when shared or discussed with a partner (Langston, 1994). Third, expatriates who participated in the project together with their partner were more likely to maintain the contact after completion of the project and this contact is likely to continue to provide benefits to the expatriate during the remainder of his or her sojourn. For these reasons a more balanced approach to the study of the importance of partners for the success of expatriate assignments, which not only focuses on the negative aspects, seems to be appropriate.

8.1.5 Differences between expatriates and partners

Although it is possible that the intervention of a local host might be especially beneficial for partners as they are often more directly involved in the local environment and might experience an “especially frustrating and stressful” adjustment process (Shaffer & Harrison, 2001, p. 239) this was not found in the present study. Fewer effects for partners than for expatriates were found when examining whether a local host had an impact on Adjustment, Social Support and Intercultural Communication Competence of partners.

Chapter 5 offered two explanations. First, the scarcity of significant effects of a local
host on partners might be due to the reduced sample size of the partners (N = 23 in total; n = 13 in experimental condition vs. n = 10 in control condition), which could make it more difficult to find significant effects. Future research should include a sufficiently large sample to be better able to test the effect of a local host for partners. The second possible explanation is that the host system in this study might not have been optimally designed for partners of expatriates. The main difference between expatriates and partners in this study is that partners did not have a job and for that reason probably led a more isolated life than expatriates who were surrounded by colleagues for most of the week (Shaffer & Harrison, 2001). Also, partners might experience more frustrating interactions with host nationals because of having to arrange all kinds of practical matters, which could be exacerbated by not speaking the language. The matching criteria of Family Situation meant that expatriate couples were matched as much as possible to host couples. Although the expatriate and partner were free to manage the contact as they wished, many of the meetings took place with all four individuals. As a consequence, the contact with the host was to a large extent tied to the expatriate because the partner hardly ever met one of the hosts apart from the general meetings. It is conceivable that this might have reduced the impact of a local host for partners because one-on-one meetings between the partner and a host could make it possible to talk about specific challenges that the partner faced, for example feeling a lack of purpose because one did not work. It could be worthwhile to tailor future host programmes to the needs of both the expatriate and partner or to test the benefits of a specific host for partners alone, which might better support the partner than a local host matched to both expatriate and partner.

8.1.6 Conclusion: impact of a local host

Two psychological models were used to outline the possible effects of a local host – the affective stress and coping model (3.1.1) and the behavioural culture learning model (3.1.2) (Ward et al., 2001). When examining the results of this study in this light, it seemed that a local host mainly had an effect on affective aspects of the international assignment. First, expatriates and partners felt more comfortable interacting with host nationals through the contact with their host, which is part of the affective aspect of adjustment (Psychological Adjustment). Second, they received more social support from host nationals and in some cases became friends with their host. According to the stress and coping model this increased the resources an expatriate could command to cope with the transition abroad, which might affect Psychological Adjustment positively. It must be noted, however, that a local host had an impact only on Interaction Adjustment and did not affect the more general aspects of Psychological Adjustment (e.g. Psychological Health). Third, Openmindedness represented the affective aspect of Intercultural Communication Competence: contact with a local host prevented a decrease on an “open and unprejudiced attitude towards outgroup members and towards different cultural norms and values”.
Some culture learning took place as expatriates and partners stated that they learned from their host about Dutch culture, but this did not lead to an increase in Sociocultural Adjustment. Also, the finding that expatriates with host did not increase in Social Initiative but remained at the same level did not support the culture learning model (section 3.1.2) because in line with that model the expatriate was expected to acquire higher levels of intercultural skills.

It seems that the effect of a local host therefore should be seen primarily in light of the stress and coping model, although some culture learning benefits were found as well. Future research should explore the extent of these culture learning benefits, as the present study examined only whether expatriates and partners thought they had learned about the Netherlands and not what they learned. In addition, it is possible that contact with a local host would have shown to have a larger impact from culture learning perspective if other indicators of Intercultural Communication Competence were to be examined. The MPQ (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000) was chosen in the present study because it covered (part of) the attitude and skills aspect of Intercultural Communication Competence. It is, however, not an exhaustive overview of intercultural skills, nor might the MPQ-dimensions be the skills that are most easily influenced through contact with a local host because they are personality-based (section 3.3.3) and are rather used as predictors instead of as outcomes. Bird, Mendenhall, Stevens and Oddou (2010) have recently made an inventory of dimensions of intercultural competence for global leadership, which could offer a more exhaustive framework for future research of the impact of contact with a local host on intercultural skills.

The question, however, is to what extent it is realistic to expect expatriates and partners to learn skills from their host. Even though expatriates and partners can learn through observation and experience (Littrell et al., 2006), the contact with the host was not specifically designed for knowledge or skills acquisition as would be cross-cultural training. Consequently, the amount expatriates and partners can learn during the contact probably depends on the amount of “typically Dutch” behaviours the hosts display and/or the topics of discussion. Future research should study the content of the contact with the host in more detail to explore which elements determine culture learning.

The findings of this study also show that the effects of contact with a local host seemed to take place mostly in the private domain and not in the professional domain; expatriates who were put in touch with a local host did not increase in job performance. These results show that organisations should not expect that putting their expatriates in touch with a local host stimulates expatriate job performance because it is determined by many more important factors. Future research should, however, take into account the importance of the amount of interpersonal interaction with host nationals that is expected of the expatriate – “communication toughness” (Black et al., 1992, p. 99) – because it is possible that contact with a local host does affect the job performance of expatriates whose performance depends to a great extent on this interaction.
8.2 Does the quality of the contact matter?

Section 8.1 showed that a local host had an impact on some, but not all, aspects of the expatriate assignment, particularly in the private domain. The second research question focused on the quality of the contact between expatriate, partner and host (RQ2: To what extent does quality of contact between expatriate, partner and local host have an effect on the success of the expatriate assignment?). If the quality of contact is relevant for the impact of the local host this would provide a means to increase the benefits that are derived from the contact. The findings with regard to this research question are depicted in block B of Figure 8.1 on page 236.

Section 3.4 outlined three possible roles of the quality of contact with the host. First, the higher the quality of contact with the host, the greater the benefit experienced by the expatriates (linear relationship). Second, expatriates might benefit from the contact only if sufficiently high quality contact was established (curvilinear relationship). A variation of this curvilinear relationship would be if low quality contact would have a detrimental effect; that these expatriates would be worse off than expatriates without host. Third, quality of contact might not play a role (no relationship).

The findings in this study showed that contact quality played an important role in the impact of a local host on the success of the expatriate assignment. This was in line with the finding of Ragins et al. (2000) that the quality of the mentoring relationship showed a significant positive relationship with job attitudes and in line with the study of Nigah et al. (2010) in which satisfaction with a buddy was positively associated with work engagement and psychological capital. Chapter 6 showed that the quality of the contact almost always played a role when an effect of a local host on one of the dependent variables in this study was found. It was not merely the link between the expatriate and the host which had a positive impact, but it was the quality of contact that was pivotal in making the most of the experience. Expatriates with high quality contact were better off than expatriates without host with regard to Interaction Adjustment, Host National Social Support, Openmindedness and Social Initiative, whereas expatriates with low quality contact did not differ significantly from expatriates without host. In addition, with regard to Friendship and Knowledge expatriates with high quality contact experienced more benefits than expatriates with low quality contact. The fact that expatriates with high quality contact received significantly more Host National Social Support only in the long term further supports the importance of quality of contact because the contact apparently needed to attain a certain level before being able to contribute social support to a significant extent. As expatriates with low quality contact did not benefit as much from the contact with their host as expatriates with high quality contact did, the possibility that contact quality did not play a role was eliminated. This left two options – a linear or a curvilinear relationship of quality of contact between expatriates, partners and hosts.

The question then arose: to what extent did expatriates with low quality contact benefit
from the contact with their host? If expatriates with low quality contact did not benefit at all, this would be proof of a curvilinear relationship, whereas a small benefit would point to a linear relationship. Unfortunately, the data in the present study was insufficient to draw firm conclusions with regard to the exact role of the quality of contact, but the pattern in the data pointed towards a linear relationship – the higher the quality of the contact, the higher the benefit. Expatriates who had established low quality contact still seemed to be somewhat better off than expatriates without host (see Figures 6.2 (Interaction Adjustment), 6.3 (Host National Social Support), 6.4 (Openmindedness) and 6.6 (Social Initiative)), which suggests that a local host, even if he or she remains a weak tie, might be able to offer some support, which can be “particularly critical during initial cross-cultural adaptation” (Adelman, 1988, p. 194). Also, in the case of Knowledge and Friendship expatriates with high quality contact experienced more benefits than those with low quality contact, both with regard to the friendships made with the host and the maintenance of the contact beyond the scope of the project.

The findings in this study clearly show that low quality contact did not have a detrimental effect on the success of the expatriate assignment. It seems that possible negative effects as found in the mentoring literature (Eby et al., 2000; Scandura, 1998) might be avoided when putting expatriates in touch with a host. If the expatriate did not establish high quality contact with their host, they did not suffer from the contact and be worse off than if they had not had a host. For that reason, it does not seem to be as necessary as it is in youth mentoring (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002) to apply caution when putting expatriates in touch with a local host.

Frequency of the contact might play an important role here because more frequent meetings would give more opportunity for benefits to occur. For example, the expatriate and partner would have more opportunities to learn from the host.

[1] “...because the more people we meet, who we can have a real conversation with, the more likely we are to understand the Dutch culture. So for us that really contributed to that.” [E43]

It was shown in this study that the quality of the contact was strongly related to the frequency of the contact: the higher the quality of the contact, the more frequent the meetings. It has already been pointed out that it was impossible to say whether the quality of the contact or the frequency of the meetings was the cause of the increase on the other variable. However, it was clear that they were associated. This association might be tied to the specific situation of newly created contacts, as in this study, because if one has established an intimate friendship one can still have high quality contact even if the contact frequency has decreased due to, for example, a move to a different city or country. In the

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27 The source of each quote is indicated, where I = interview, DW4 = diary week 4, E = email, Q2 = questionnaire after five months and Q3 = questionnaire after nine months.
present study there were also some examples of contact that still reached a certain quality of contact even though they had been able to meet only a few times:

[2] “Although we have not seen them very often, the contact has been good because it's completely different to the rest of our life and acquaintances.” [P40c]

It is clear that the quality of the contact played an important role in the impact of a local host on the success of the expatriate assignment and that low quality contact did not have a detrimental effect. The exact role of the quality of the contact remained equivocal. Although preliminary evidence suggested a linear pattern (3.4.1), the relationship with the success of the expatriate assignment could still have been curvilinear (3.4.2). Due to the limited sample the data should be interpreted with caution but the recurring intermediate position of expatriates with low quality contact suggested a linear relationship of Contact Quality with the success of the expatriate assignment: the higher the quality of contact with the host, the greater the benefit experienced by the expatriate.

In addition, it is hard to draw conclusions as to causality for the findings with regard to the quality of the contact. The experimental design ensured that the effects reported in Chapter 5 were due to the intervention of a local host, but this was not the case for the findings with regard to the quality of the contact (Chapter 6). Expatriates were not randomly assigned to a high quality contact group and a low quality contact group; this assignment was based on the expatriate and partner's assessment of the contact after nine months of contact. For that reason it is possible that high quality contact led to the reported benefits but it might also be the other way around, or the effect might be caused by a third factor.

Furthermore, it is worthwhile to observe that the impressions of the quality of the contact of expatriate, partner and host were strongly related: if the expatriate was happy with the contact, then so was his or her partner and host. This rating was confirmed by a more objective assessment of two raters, based on the available qualitative information. This suggested that any of these assessments can be reliably used as indicator of contact quality.

Finally, the importance of high quality contact with a host was emphasised by the fact that only expatriates with high quality contact maintained the contact with their host after completion of the project. It seems to be worthwhile to encourage the quality of the contact so that a local host is more likely to keep the contact with the expatriate and partner during the remainder of the stay in the Netherlands and offer continued support with the challenges presented throughout the international assignment. The following section focuses on aspects that influence the development of the quality of the contact.
8.3 Promoting high quality contact

The importance of the quality of contact then begs the question how to improve the quality of the contact between the expatriate and host. This was the focus of the third research question (RQ3: Which aspects promote high quality contact between expatriate, partner and host?), which had a more exploratory approach. The analysis focused on the catalysts and barriers that could be identified, which could be placed within the social penetration theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973) as was outlined in section 3.5. The social penetration theory distinguished three types of factors that could influence the quality of contact between expatriate, partner and host: personal characteristics (8.3.1), outcomes of exchange (8.3.2) and situational context (8.3.3). These factors are depicted in block C of Figure 8.1.

8.3.1 Personal characteristics

As expected in section 3.5, similarities between expatriates, partners and hosts seemed to play an important role, suggesting the importance of matching expatriates to hosts on a number of criteria to ensure that they have as much common ground as possible on which to base the relationship. The similarity-attraction hypothesis states that individuals with similar attitudes are more attracted to each other (Byrne, 1971), which also holds for individuals with, for example, the same opinions, economic status or personality (Byrne et al., 1967, pp. 82-83).

Which similarities in particular should be taken into account when matching expatriates and partners with a local host? As in mentoring (Wycherley & Cox, 2008), “chemistry” seems to be important when matching expatriates, partners and hosts. The unfathomable “click” was also mentioned by some of the participants in this study, although, as outlined in section 3.5, it is difficult to pinpoint the factors that contribute to it. Brafman and Brafman (2010) dedicate a whole book to the search for the factors which stimulate the “magic of instant connections”, of which similarities are one, and Cox (2005) concludes that it may be better to minimalise the effort put into the matching process and instead train participants in recognising the fortuitous circumstances – unpredictable similarities – which might lead to a continuation of the contact. A further illustration of the difficulty of matching is provided by Newcomb (1961), who tried to create room pairs with high and low attitudinal agreement to test a hypothesis with regard to attraction level. In his famous experiment, Newcomb (1961) studied the acquaintance process with an experiment in which 17 students who did not know each other were put together in one house, in randomly assigned room pairs. The experiment was repeated a second year and this time the assignment of room pairs was based on attitudinal similarity to divide the room pairs in high and low agreement, hypothesising that the attraction level between high agreement pairs would be higher than between low agreement pairs after acquaintance. In Newcomb's (1961, p. 216) own words: “we failed, completely, to find support for the prediction”, showing the difficulty
– even with a list of 85 attitudinal items – to match pairs in order to increase chances of high attraction to each other.

Similarity in age and family situation were two starting points for the matching in this study and these factors seemed to be important for the development of the contact. It seemed important for expatriates to be in the same life phase as their host, especially with regard to having children. In addition, similar interests were often mentioned, providing participants with a base on which to build the relationship. The fact that 64% of the matches in this study developed into high quality contact although the matching only took a few criteria into account, is hopeful. A contributing factor in the present study seemed to be the fact that hosts were generally internationally oriented, highly educated and well-travelled, providing additional similarity which was not explicitly tested in this study. This underlying similarity, in combination with matching on aspects such as age and family situation, could go a long way. For these reasons contrary to Cox’ (2005) assertion, it seems worthwhile to put an effort into the matching process.

Some dissimilarity was not necessarily an insurmountable barrier. In the present study there were some cases where matches that were dissimilar on certain characteristics still worked well, as was shown in the case of a gap with regard to age [E9] and status [E27]. It might be that these relationships were complementary (Kram, 1985, p. 101). Another way to look at the matching process is not to simply compare both parties on a number of characteristics but look for what they would like to get out of the relationship. Kram (1985) states that it is important for mentor relationships to be complementary, to respond to the concerns of both individuals; the mentor should also get something out of the relationship. Although her book focuses solely on mentor relationships at work, which are in essence hierarchical, it offers an interesting take on the expatriate-host relationship, which is more equal in nature. Future programmes that would like to match expatriates to hosts could enquire into the goals of each party – what they would like to get out of the relationship – to take this into account when matching an expatriate to a host.

Two further personal characteristics that need to be mentioned were expectations and motivation. As reported in section 7.2.2, expectations sometimes differed with regard to the goal of the project, the type of activities that should be undertaken and who should take the initiative – although it must be said that these differences did not always hinder the development of the contact. Part of the difficulties reported in this study might be solved by clearer communication about the aim of the contact with a host, although the vagueness with regard to the goal of the project was intentional so as to limit as much as possible its influence on the participants. More important was the motivation of the participants because not everybody who signed up – even though participation was voluntary – was actually willing to spend the necessary time and energy to develop the contact. Moreover, it seems that this willingness to make the contact work was crucial for the development of the contact because it could help overcome potential barriers and encourage development of high quality contact.
8.3.2 Outcomes of exchange

An important mechanism of the social penetration theory is the balance between rewards and costs of the relationship (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Taylor & Altman, 1987). The qualitative data showed that most of the expatriates and partners enjoyed rewards during the contact with their host, such as the various benefits that were experienced. If the rewards outweighed the costs of the relationship with the host – for example anxiety about whether the contact would work out – then the contact might have received an impulse and developed towards higher quality contact. The comparison between the four highest and the four lowest quality contact in section 7.3 showed that the equation between rewards and costs turned out favourably in the first case and negatively in the second case. Rewards outweighed the costs and other constraints for the four cases with highest quality contact, whereas they did not for the four expatriates with the lowest quality contact.

The balance of rewards and costs might be favourably influenced if the frequency of the contact is higher. More frequent meetings would heighten the opportunity for expatriates to derive benefits from the contact with their host, and, in turn, this would stimulate the development of the contact. This suggests possibilities to influence the quality of the contact for example through organising events for expatriates, partners and hosts to attend together. One must bear in mind, however, that although the quality of the contact was correlated with the frequency of the contact (4.2.2.6), it is not possible to conclude that more frequent contact led to higher quality contact. Future research should try to determine whether promoting the frequency of the contact is a viable way to stimulate the quality of contact between expatriate, partner and host.

Although it seems clear that the benefits experienced stimulated the development of the quality of the contact, it was not clear from the present data what contributed most to the development. Were all rewards equally important for the development of the contact? Did learning about Dutch culture lead to high quality contact as much as emotional support? It is important to keep in mind that, in this particular study, the expatriates started out not knowing their host at all, so emotional support would probably not have been offered right from the start. This was confirmed by the finding that expatriates only received significantly more Host National Social Support after nine months and not after five months after being put in touch with the host. People are more likely to discuss problems with people to whom they feel particularly close (Wills, 1985). Other aspects, therefore, should be the motor of the development in the beginning of the contact.

It would be interesting to examine in more detail what exactly sets the development of the relationship in motion. For example, Brafman and Brafman (2010) distinguish showing vulnerability as another factor that promotes instant connections because being open about one’s fears and weaknesses often leads to more openness on the part of the other, which might lead to higher quality contact. This is also called self-disclosure (Collins &
Miller, 1994). Future research should delve into this issue to be able to formulate more precise recommendations to put participants on the path toward high quality contact.

### 8.3.3 Situational context

Several catalysts and barriers were listed under situational context – proximity of place of residence, research context, busy schedules, suboptimal timing, communication breakdown and cultural differences. First, living close to one another (proximity of place of residence) was a contributor to the development of the contact: even if place of residence was a matching criterion in this study, still the proximity between places of residence affected positively the quality of the contact between expatriate, partner and host. Living close to one another made it easier to meet, and for that reason proximity is an important criterion for matching expatriates, partners and hosts.

Second, the fact that the contact takes place within the context of a research project might also influence the development of the contact. For example, a sense of obligation or a wish to contribute to research might compel expatriates, partners and hosts to put more effort in the contact. However, this aspect did not seem to play a defining role in the development of the quality of contact in this study.

Third, busy schedules were an important situational constraint. The many activities both on the part of the expatriate, partner and host combined with trips home and visits from friends and family filled schedules on both sides, which made it more difficult to meet frequently. In one case it was only possible to meet on Mondays, which prevented the development of that contact. Matching procedures should, therefore, take time availability into account, as was suggested by Cox (2005).

Fourth, suboptimal timing of the contact was a barrier to the development of the contact in some cases. The longer an expatriate and partner had been in the Netherlands, the more they had established their own life, which might have left only limited room for a new contact. Also, in such a case the expatriate couple, as well as the host, might have wondered what the use of the contact was, as they had already established their life in the Netherlands. This might have resulted in a possible loss of motivation on either side to make the contact work, which could have slowed down the development of the contact. This was found to be the case for at least two expatriates in this study, who found seven or eight months of residence in the Netherlands enough to feel established. This is not necessarily the case for everyone, however, because according to Tung (1998) expatriates need up to twelve months to feel comfortable in the new position and in the foreign environment, which suggests that expatriates would also benefit from contact with a local host in the second half of the first year of their assignment. Section 9.2.2 reports what expatriates and partners themselves think is the best timing for contact with a host.

Finally, communication breakdown and cultural differences might hinder the development of the contact. These two factors seem to be a blend of situational constraints and
personal factors (e.g. an email might be caught by a spam filter but the expatriate could decide to persist and send another email).

8.3.4 Conclusion: aspects that impact on the quality of contact

The qualitative analysis, especially the analysis of the four highest and four lowest quality contacts, suggested a hierarchy of catalysts and barriers, although the data was insufficient to actually test the relationship between these aspects and the quality of the contact between expatriate, partner and host. Based on this study it is recommended to aim to establish some similarity between the participants in a matching procedure, make sure they do not live too far from each other and establish whether expatriates are willing to invest time and energy in the contact with their host, as this should not be assumed even if participation was voluntary. Such a motivation is important to overcome barriers such as busy schedules and suboptimal timing of the contact. Also, the benefits that expatriates and partners experience during the contact with their host are essential to tip the cost-reward balance to the positive side, which could induce the participants to invest more in the contact. Stimulating the frequency of the contact might be a way to do so, as might encouraging self-disclosure of the expatriate and partner to the host. Furthermore, it might be worthwhile to take a chance with a match and simply offer a second matching opportunity for those who do not hit it off with their host because sometimes matches evolve into high quality contact when not expected, due to “fortuitous circumstances” (Cox, 2005).

As the present study took an exploratory approach to the aspects that might influence the quality of contact, future research should systematically approach personal characteristics, outcomes of exchange and situational context and their relative effect on the development of the quality of the contact.

8.4 General conclusions

The present study examined the effect of a new intervention – contact with a local host – that organisations could implement to better support their expatriates. This intervention targets the social network of the expatriate and goes beyond studying social network characteristics and their antecedents through actually manipulating the social network of expatriates and partners. Osman-Gani and Rockstuhl (2008, p. 51) advocate that organisational development interventions should “target the development of diverse and sparse expatriate social networks”; the present study brought about such an intervention, but outside the workplace.

The present study took a comprehensive approach to the effectiveness of contact with a local host for the success of the expatriate assignment. A randomised controlled experiment tested the importance of contact with a local host and qualitative methods were used to shed more light on the intervention and how to maximise its success. Being longitudinal in
scope, this study filled a gap in expatriation research, documenting the development of the relationship between expatriate, partner and host and its impact on the success of the international assignment during a period of nine months. Hechanova et al. (2003) point out that only three of the 37 studies that they reviewed used longitudinal designs, indicating that a great deal of research in expatriate adjustment relies on cross-sectional research. An important advantage of the present study is that the randomised controlled experiment made sure that the effects found were due to the contact with the local host. The quasi-experimental studies of Westwood and Barker (1990) and Sakurai et al. (2010), which were discussed in section 3.2.2, did not randomly assign participants to their intervention (a peer pairing programme and a bus excursion, respectively) and to a control group, and for that reason it was not possible to ascribe with certainty the effects found in these two studies to the intervention. A selection bias might have caused the effect in those studies; for example, in the case of the bus excursion (Sakurai et al., 2010), international students might have been interested in the local culture and for that reason not only signed up for the bus excursion but also established more contact with host nationals in the months after the excursion. It is true that expatriates in the present study also showed a willingness to get in touch with the local community, however this did not affect the explanation of the findings because of the random assignment to the experimental and control group. The fact that participants showed an interest in establishing a connection with the local community by signing up for this research project does mean that one should be careful in generalising the findings in this study to the general expatriate population in the Netherlands (section 8.5).

The impact of a local host was established for several, but not all, aspects of the success of an expatriate assignment. The findings showed that contact with a local host primarily had benefits in the private domain (Interaction Adjustment, Host National Access, Host National Social Support, Friendship, Knowledge, Openmindedness and Social Initiative), which, in most cases, were higher when expatriates succeeded in establishing high quality contact with their host. Contact with a local host seemed to be especially worthwhile for those dealing with host nationals on a daily basis and for those wishing to make a connection with the host country. Qualitative methodology was added to explore this new intervention, which was useful in providing insight into how the contact played out and the ways in which the effect of contact with a local host might be maximised. For example, it seems to be important to match for similarities so that participants have something on which to build the relationship.

The present study combined concepts and perspectives from the literature on international human resource management, intercultural communication and cross-cultural psychology to examine the impact of a local host on the success of the international assignment. These multiple perspectives have shed light on the intervention under study and resulted in a better understanding of the benefits of putting expatriates and partners
in touch with the Dutch. Practical implications of this study as well as suggestions for the design of the optimal host programme are discussed in Chapter 9.

8.5 Limitations

The choice for a randomised controlled experiment with a longitudinal scope counteracted some limitations found in cross-sectional studies. Nevertheless, as with any study, the present study has limitations that are discussed in this section.

Longitudinal design
Several difficulties are connected to longitudinal studies, for example attrition and missing values (Ruspini, 2002). These two problems were tackled as well as possible in the present study: the attrition rate was relatively low (section 4.2.1) and the missing values in the study were substituted via multiple imputation (4.2.4.5). Another limitation of longitudinal studies is that the strength of the observed effect depends on the timing of the data waves in combination with the way in which the dependent variable developed over time: linear, cyclic or even more complex (Ruspini, 2002). For that reason, three points in time that were more or less equally spaced were chosen. However, the attitude and skills components of Intercultural Communication Competence were measured only at baseline and nine months later, which opens up more possible trends in the data: the development might be linear – expatriates decreased on Openmindedness and Social Initiative (sections 5.4.2 and 5.4.3) – but the development might also follow a non-linear curve: although expatriates were on a lower level after nine months than at the beginning of the study, they might have just come out of a deeper decrease and now be on their way up. More data waves would give more detailed information on the development of expatriates on these variables. A final limitation specific to this study is that Host National Social Support was not measured at baseline (0 months), due to length constraints of the questionnaire. Although random assignment to the experimental conditions meant that there was no systematic bias between the experimental and the control group on this variable (Levin, 1999), it would have been better if it had been possible to verify whether both groups indeed started out at the same level in the beginning of this project.

Sample size
Another difficulty associated with longitudinal research is to find enough participants who are willing to participate in a nine month study. Sixty-five expatriates participated in this study, which was adequate for the first research question (impact of local host) but not for the second research question (impact of Contact Quality) because for RQ2 the experimental group was divided in two groups: those with high quality contact (n = 21) and those with low quality contact (n = 12). These smaller sample sizes, especially of the group with low quality contact, made it difficult to determine the exact role of quality of contact because
effects might not be significant with such a small sample (Clark-Carter, 2003), as was pointed out several times throughout this study.

Sample size was also a limitation for the partner sample because only twenty-three partners participated in this study. Only 57% of the expatriates had a partner who accompanied them on the assignment and who, therefore, was asked to participate in this study. The already limited partner sample was further reduced by the fact that four dual career couples signed up for the project. The definition of expatriate used in this study – “an expatriate is anyone who works outside of his or her home country, with a planned return to that or a third country” (Cascio, 2006, p. 176) – encompasses both individuals of a dual career couple who are both working in the host country. For this reason, both individuals of such a couple were considered as expatriates in the present study, thereby reducing the number of “partners”.

The four dual career couples happened to be equally divided among the experimental and the control group. An important limitation is that these cases were not independent of each other. For this reason completely removing one individual of these couples from the study (n = 4) was considered, to count them neither as expatriate nor as partner. However, due to the already limited sample size of 65 expatriates it was decided to also examine the results without these individuals to see whether the results would change substantially. This was not the case, and therefore these individuals were kept in the study as expatriates because the fact that some of the cases were not independent did not influence the findings as reported in the present study (see 4.2.1).

**Self-report questionnaires**
The present study made use of self-report questionnaires and the question arises whether the self-report instruments in this study were valid. Self-report questionnaires seem to be adequate measures of concepts such as adjustment because individuals themselves are best placed to assess their “feelings of well-being and satisfaction”. For example, the Organisational Behaviour literature does not criticise self-report questionnaires as measures of “people’s feelings about and perceptions of work” Spector (1994, p. 386). Expatriate job performance is more difficult to measure with self-report questionnaires because in essence job performance is a set of behaviour patterns that are relevant for the goals of the organisation (Campbell, 1990) (section 2.2.1). These behaviours need to be evaluated according to these goals, and the question is whether expatriates can assess their reliably own performance. Instruments from other sources should be added when feasible. For that reason, Most Recent Actual Performance Evaluation was included in this study to appeal to more objective sources of job performance, as this instrument asked the expatriate to report the company’s evaluation of their performance. Unfortunately, the scope of this study did not allow the use of supervisor performance or 360 degree feedback to further increase objective assessment of expatriate performance.
Measurement of Performance

The measurement of job performance of expatriates is also difficult for other reasons. The present study sought to approach the concept from several angles (section 4.2.2.3), so as to get a more complete picture, but it is plausible that the instruments used in this study did not adequately sample expatriate job performance. For example, although psychological withdrawal seems to be an important concept for expatriate failure, it does not represent actual job performance (Mol, Born, & Van der Molen, 2005).

Another methodological problem with the measurement of performance in this study concerned Most Recent Actual Performance Evaluation, which was included to provide a more objective measure of performance. Expatriates were asked to report the most recent performance evaluation they had had from their company, however, the date of this performance evaluation was unknown. As these are usually held only once a year, it is possible that the performance evaluation was held several months previously, in which case the contact with the host might have been only in its initial stages or even not yet established. A lack of impact of a local host is then not surprising. For these reasons future research should consider using supervisor-rated performance or 360 degree feedback, even though such measurements are more difficult to include in studies of expatriates effectiveness because of practical obstacles.

Sample bias

Due to the method of soliciting participants, the sample in this longitudinal study might not be representative for the Western French-or English-speaking expatriate population in the Netherlands. For example, it is likely that those expatriates who were interested in connecting with their local community and had not yet managed to do so would have signed up more easily for this project than those who were less interested. This might make it more difficult to discern the effect of a host for this particular group than it would be for other expatriates. It is possible that contact with a host is especially beneficial for those expatriates who find it more difficult to make contact with others and who would not readily sign up for such a project. This calls for further research (section 8.6).

8.6 Future research

The previous sections in this chapter have already suggested some avenues for future research. The present section will look at these and other possibilities, listing opportunities for future research with regard to the applicability of the host (8.6.1), quality of the contact (8.6.2), the effects of contact with an expatriate for the host (8.6.3) and gender differences (8.6.4).
8.6.1 Applicability of a local host

The present study explored whether contact with a local host was beneficial for Western expatriates and partners with French or English as first language in the Netherlands. It is interesting to examine in further detail the applicability of such a support system for other groups. Several options are discussed in this section.

Other nationalities, other countries
First, it would be interesting to examine whether putting an expatriate in touch with a local host would be equally beneficial for expatriates of other nationalities working in the Netherlands (i.e. Asian, Arab or South American expatriates), or for expatriates in host countries other than the Netherlands. Since the difficulty in accessing host nationals in some Western countries is known (HSBC, 2010), it is plausible that purposefully putting expatriates in touch with a local host in these countries could be as beneficial as for expatriates in this study.

It is more uncertain – due to the many and large cultural differences that have to be bridged – whether the effects for Western expatriates who work in non-Western cultures will be similar to those found in this study. One could think of, for example, American expatriates in Africa or in Asia. Moreover, in many non-Western countries, the divide between expatriates – who usually live in compounds – and locals is much larger than in Western countries. This could present additional complications when putting expatriates in touch with hosts, although the beneficial effects of having contact with host nationals might well be stronger. The present research focused on interactions between Western expatriates and hosts. Future research is needed to determine whether such an intervention could be just as beneficial – or perhaps more beneficial – for expatriates crossing larger cultural gaps.

Other types of assignments
The present study targeted expatriates who had moved to the Netherlands for at least ten months. Nowadays, short term assignments up to one year become more and more frequent, as well as other options such as commuting and frequent flying (1.1.2). It would be of interest to examine whether contact with a local host could also benefit expatriates on these types of assignments. Especially those who commute to another country might benefit because as they fly back home (almost) every weekend it is much more difficult to establish some kind of social life in the host country. Yet this seems to be important because expatriates still spend a large portion of their week in the host country, and also have to deal with host nationals at work to a greater or lesser extent.

One of the expatriates in the present study came close to being a commuter expatriate because although she lived in the Netherlands, her husband continued to live in the UK and
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they alternated weekends to visit each other. The contact with the host, therefore, mostly took place during the week. The expatriate greatly appreciated this contact:

[4] “[…] totally removed from the work environment. Very caring and able to get a different perspective on life in NL” [E27Q3]

When setting up a host programme for commuters, an important element to take into account is their schedule. As was pointed out in section 7.4, this was one of the most important constraints in the present study for the development of the contact with the host. Also, it would be important to screen the motivation of these commuters before putting them in touch with a host because they only spend a limited amount of time in the host country and therefore they need to be motivated to put an effort in developing the contact with the host.

**Partners and children**
The present study showed that organisations can support their expatriates through putting them in touch with a local host. This contact might also help partners and children cope more easily with their life in the new environment, however, it was unclear in this study to what extent partners also benefited from the contact. The present study found some positive effects of a local host for partners, but the sample size was too small to draw definite conclusions with regard to the impact of a local host on partners. It seems likely that partners would benefit especially from contact with a local host if the intervention was more tailored to their needs (see 8.1.5). In consequence, future research should take a more rigorous approach to partners in making them the first focus of study, so as to be better able to study the benefits they might derive from the contact. Finally, contact with a local host could potentially benefit children, for example, if the host had children of the same age. Future research might also want to include the children of the expatriate and partner and examine the contact with a local host from their viewpoint.

**Repatriates**
Repatriates might also benefit from contact with a local host upon return to the home country. This host should then be a fellow repatriate in the home country who has returned more than two years ago. He or she might be able to act as kind of mentor to the new repatriate. This family has already been through the repatriation experience and could help the expatriate family to readjust and to cope with other repatriation problems, for example, possible stagnation in career development. As much as 61% of repatriates leave their company within two years after repatriation (section 1.2.4), indicating that there is a world to gain for companies who would not like to lose the built-up expertise of their repatriates.
Future research should explore whether a repatriate mentor would help life after repatriation and reduce turnover.

A local host for introverts
As was noted in section 8.4 it is likely that those expatriates who were interested in connecting with the local community registered more readily for this project than those who were less interested. It is plausible that contact with a host is even more beneficial for expatriates who find it more difficult to make contact and who will not sign up easily for such a project. In general it is not easy for expatriates to make friends in Western European countries (HSBC, 2010), and it is likely that this is even more difficult for introverted individuals. This is the more relevant because introverts are found to be happier when having established strong social relationships (Hotard, McFatter, McWhirtir, & Stegall, 1989). The other side of the coin is that for these introverted expatriates especially, contact with a local host might also be more stressful. It has already been pointed out that expatriates as well as immigrants have the tendency to continue to socialise with co-nationals because interaction with host nationals, who have a different frame of reference, can cause more uncertainty. For this very reason, one expatriate who initially signed up for the project, dropped out before even starting. Future research should determine whether positive effects of contact with a local host balance the possible negative effects for introverted individuals and whether this contact might be even more beneficial for those expatriates compared to the expatriates in the present study.

A colleague as local host
Setting up a local host system within one organisation could have additional benefits as well. The local host is part of the same organisational culture and knows his or her way around in the organisation. For these reasons a host within the same organisation could be better able to support the expatriate, especially with work-related issues, than a local host unconnected to the organisation. In such a case it is more likely to find an effect on expatriate job performance, which was not found in this study. In addition, contact with a ‘host colleague’ could have other benefits, such as increased commitment to the organisation or a more positive perception of organisational support. Other potential benefits might be found in the mentoring literature. For example, Carraher et al. (2008) showed that having a host country mentor was positively associated with organisational knowledge and organisational knowledge-sharing. Feldman and Bolino (1999) showed that on-site mentoring was related to organisational socialisation, and Nigah et al. (2010) found a positive association between satisfaction with a buddy at work and work engagement. Also, the system is probably easier to manage for organisations that then only have to look for hosts within their own organisation. Care should be taken, however, in designing such a system because factors such as hierarchy and trust come into play when the local host is
working for the same organisation. Discretion on the part of the host is then very important.

If a local host works in the same organisation, he or she would come even closer to being a peer mentor (section 3.2.2). One step further would be to appoint a colleague as Host Country National Liaison (HCNL) (Vance et al., 2009). Such a HCNL could take on all the HCNL-roles in their entirety (*Cultural Interpreter, Communication Facilitator, Information Resource Broker, Talent Developer, Change Agent*; section 3.1.3) instead of only partially as is the case when the host does not work within the same organisation (section 3.2.2). Future research should define whether a ‘host colleague’ or HCNL will indeed provide more benefits than a local host outside of work, and what exactly would be the best way to go about setting up such a system within one organisation.

### 8.6.2 Quality of contact

Section 8.2 summarised the findings in the present study with regard to the role of the quality of contact between expatriate, partner and host. Due to the limited sample the present study was unable to define the exact role of the quality of contact with regard to the success of the international assignment. Future research should include a larger sample of participants in order to find a definite answer to this question.

Future research should also examine in more detail how the quality of the contact could be promoted. The various conclusions in section 8.3 offer several suggestions for future research, for example with regard to the type of benefit that is most important for the development of the contact. In the present section some other ideas for future research are elaborated, using the social penetration theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973) as a framework that conceptualises three categories of factors that might impact on the development of the contact – personal characteristics, outcomes of exchange and situational constraints (section 3.5).

Personal characteristics such as the host’s self-efficacy – the belief that he or she can help the expatriate and partner – might encourage the development of the contact. Karcher et al. (2005) for example showed a positive correlation between self-efficacy of the mentor and mentor-perceived relationship quality. Furthermore, they showed that support-seeking behaviours of the mentee were the most important factor for mentor-perceived relationship quality. Future research could take self-efficacy of the host and support-seeking behaviours on the part of the expatriate and partner into account to examine whether these factors affect the quality of the contact. Another promising line of enquiry would be to investigate to what extent self-disclosure is important for the quality of contact between expatriate, partner and host and whether contact quality could be promoted through encouraging self-disclosure of participants (see also section 9.3.2). Research in this area (Collins & Miller, 1994) points to the importance of revealing oneself to the host, as this might lead to being liked more by the host, as well as liking the host him or herself more. This could encourage
the contact to develop into high quality contact, thereby offering potential for derivation of more benefits. However, it seems to be important to time this disclosure well because “premature and/or inappropriate disclosure intimacy is often costly” (Taylor & Altman, 1987, p. 267). According to Taylor and Altman (1987) disclosure needs to be synchronised with the stage of development to have beneficial effects for a relationship.

The reason why a local host registered for the project might be important for the outcome of the exchanges between expatriates, partners and hosts. The local host could have entered the project to be more of a guide to the Netherlands, to undertake activities together or see if they can become friends with someone from another culture even if they are temporary residents. This influences the type of benefit offered to the expatriate and partner during the contact: in the first case the emphasis would be on informational support, in the second case on social companionship and in the third case there would be more occasions for emotional support.

With regard to situational context, an important area for study is the effectiveness of training and ongoing mentoring of hosts as well as expatriates and partners. In this research project participants were not trained and only minimal monitoring was done. Karcher et al. (2005) showed that ongoing training and supervision of mentors could stimulate a mentoring programme’s effectiveness. Geelhoed, Abe and Talbot (2003) studied an international peer pairing programme for students and their study highlighted that host students would like to have more structure, more training and more guidance in communicating with their partners to help them across the initial period of discomfort. With regard to contact with a local host, participants could be prepared with regard to what is expected of them and how to manage the relationship. Cross-cultural awareness and knowledge of the culture of the other is also relevant. Geelhoed et al. (2003) offer some topics for training for students participating in a peer pairing programme: “(a) assisting students in self-assessment of their own motivations and goals for participating in the program; (b) preparing students for the initial discomfort that often occurs when meeting their partners for the first time; and (c) helping students build better interpersonal skills, especially in intercultural relationships” (Geelhoed et al., 2003, p. 16). Future research should examine whether more preparation and closer monitoring and assistance when the contact encounters obstacles could further enhance the effectiveness of having a host.

8.6.3 Effects of contact with an expatriate on the host

The present study focused exclusively on the use of contact with a local host to facilitate the assignment for expatriates and partners. On the other hand, the contact could also have effects on the local host. Geelhoed et al. (2003) investigated the impact of a peer pairing programme on host students who took part. They found that all host students developed on a cognitive level – e.g. learned about the culture of the international student – but that competence in intercultural situations was only attained after undergoing an initial period
of discomfort. Westwood and Barker (1990) also report a study which identified several benefits for host students, such as increased intercultural awareness.

This suggests that local hosts who are paired to expatriates and their partners might also gain these benefits, which could be particularly relevant if the local host him or herself is considering an expatriate assignment. Contact with the expatriate could also help the host get acquainted with the practical, psychological and social implications of living abroad and increase his or her intercultural awareness, which might help when being sent abroad him or herself. In this manner, organisations could derive double benefit from setting up a host programme if they organised this with current and future expatriates within their organisation. Future research should try to decide what benefits could be accrued to hosts who are paired to expatriates and partners.

8.6.4 Gender differences

In the present study some gender differences emerged in the results (Host National Access and Emotional Stability), which highlights the importance of checking for interaction effects according to gender when examining the effect of an intervention. Men and women react very differently in many respects and an intervention aimed at one group might not be as efficient for another. For example, the development of the relationship between expatriates, partners and hosts might be different depending on the participant’s gender. Taylor and Altman (1987, p. 270) recognise the importance of gender in the social penetration process because it has been found again and again that “females disclose more, and are more open, than males”, although this might depend on other factors as well, such as the target person’s sex and the topic of conversation. Also, it might be important whether a host is a woman, because women are “generally more socially responsive, empathic, and intimate” (Berg & Piner, 1990, p. 154). Berg and Piner (1990) conclude that women should be better at “providing various types of support to those they interact with”, suggesting that the impact of a local host could be increased if the host is a woman or if a host couple includes a woman. In addition, future research could investigate which type of social support is most helpful for men and for women because the literature suggests that men might benefit more from social companionship whereas women would be helped more through emotional support (Berg & Piner, 1990, p. 148). This could be helpful when tailoring a host system to male and female expatriates. For these reasons it is important to take gender into account in studies of the effectiveness of interventions.

Two specific findings in this study show a need for further study. First, with regard to Host National Access future research should examine whether male and female expatriates indeed construe the concept of ‘contact’ with host nationals differently, as is hypothesised as an explanation for the finding presented in section 5.3.1. Second, future research should determine whether the counterintuitive effect found for partners’ Emotional Stability –
partners without host became more emotionally stable whereas partners with host maintained the same level – was in fact a gender difference.

The present chapter summarised the impact of a local host on several aspects of the expatriate assignment and presented the conclusions with regard to the quality of contact and aspects that could promote high quality contact between expatriates, partners and hosts. The chapter further discussed some limitations of this study and suggestions for future research. The findings of this study have some practical implications which will be discussed in chapter 9. The following chapter highlights the way in which the intervention of a local host could be used best, how the impact of the contact could be maximised and gives practical recommendations with regard to contact with host nationals for organisations, expatriates and partners.
Chapter 9

Practical implications
Maximising the success of the expatriate assignment through contact with locals
Practical implications: maximising the success of the expatriate assignment through contact with locals

The present chapter highlights the practical implications of the findings of this study. Section 9.1 discusses the benefits of contact with local host, and section 9.2 focuses on how to optimise this intervention. Practical recommendations to maximise the success of the expatriate assignment are formulated for organisations who employ expatriates (9.3) and for expatriates and partners themselves (9.4).

9.1 Benefits of contact with a local host

This study set out to discover whether contact with a local host would help expatriates and partners succeed on their international assignment (RQ1: Does contact with a local host contribute to the success of an expatriate assignment?) and found that putting expatriates and partners in contact with a local host is a specific way in which companies can offer support to their expatriates. The contact with a local host, however, is not a panacea for all the difficulties expatriates face, and the findings in this study present a picture of areas in which contact with a local host could make a particular contribution.

First, it was found that expatriates and partners familiarised themselves with interacting with host nationals through the contact with their host, expressed in an increase in Interaction Adjustment. They could learn the appropriate behaviours and feel more comfortable when interacting with host nationals, supported by 64% of the expatriates and partners with a host stating that they learned about Dutch culture through the contact with their host. This could be beneficial for expatriates and partners in general, but especially so for expatriates who have many host national colleagues or clients. Harrison et al. (2004, p. 206) state that compared to technical assignments expatriates on managerial assignments have “greater frequency, intensity, and variability of interpersonal interactions with host national stakeholders”. In these cases the expatriate could transfer what he or she learned about interacting with host nationals to contacts with host national colleagues and clients. The following expatriate had such an experience:

[1] “We hired a new research director; it was really an interim position, and I wanted to be able to talk to him very honestly about the people in the department, the projects, the politics, what he had to know to jump in and function. [...] He and I agreed to meet down at his house in R., outside. And it’s just like at L. and F. [the hosts], it’s a farm house, which has been in the family for 100 years. The grandfather is like 80 years old and still working on the farm. And I could walk in there and be very comfortable and know where to stand and what to do when...”
meals came and stuff, partly because I had the experience with L. and F. of being in their home. It's a similar kind of environment, so I think it was helpful in a lot of ways [...].” [E22]

Second, a local host provided the expatriate with social support at a time when a large part of the social network has been left behind in the home country and a new network needed to be created. A local host can at least in part fill this gap. It was found that a local host was able to provide a significant amount of social support even within nine months, which can help the expatriate cope with the challenges of the international assignment. This could be especially relevant during the first year of the assignment, just after arrival in the new host country. The present study also showed the potential of putting expatriates and partners in contact with a local host, because it was found that the relationship can develop into a friendship, as exemplified by the following remarks from an American participant:

[2] “I think for us it worked because we became friends very quickly; we have a lot in common; we enjoy each other's company a lot and did quite a few things together very early on. In the first few weeks, we met up about twice a week.” [E46]

This happened for some expatriates during the nine months of the project, for others this could happen in the longer term, as in the case of a French expatriate who noted in his final questionnaire “growing friendship” [E39Q1] when asked whether he enjoyed the contact with the host. Also, nine expatriates kept the contact with their host alive up to March 2010, and at that point in time, such contact had lasted more than two years. One of those hosts stated:

[3] “We see our expats regularly, about once a month, even though they are returning to their country in a couple of months [...]. A good, warm relationship has grown up between us.” [H61]

The benefits that they derived in the first nine months probably continued in some form or other after their participation in the project had ended. Future research should confirm whether the benefits derived from high quality contact with a host continue after the first nine months of the contact, and in what way these benefits change – possibly increasing as is the case in youth mentoring relationships (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002) – as the contact develops over time.

Third, expatriates who were put in touch with a local host did not suffer from a decrease in Openmindedness, Social Initiative, and, for female expatriates, Host National Access as did expatriates without host. Expatriates and partners who signed up for this study came to the

28 The source of each quote is indicated, where I = interview, DW4 = diary week 4, E = email, Q2 = questionnaire after five months and Q3 = questionnaire after nine months.
Netherlands with a desire to make contact with the host community; get to know the
country, the language and most of all the people:

[4] “We wanted to meet people, we wanted to be part of the society. We were very
eager to get to know them.” [P261]

Contact with a local host made sure that expatriates kept an open mind and remained
socially active, whereas those without host showed a decrease in these areas: possibly they
found it difficult to establish the contact by themselves. One partner in the control group
talked about this difficulty, and even called it a disappointment:

[5] “The neighbours, they came here for barbecues, but it has been like that moment,
it was really, really nice, [...], but then that’s it. I mean, there was no continuation.
[...] Maybe with one person I met actually two or three times, one of the neighbours.
But they don’t, it seems that they’re not interested in keeping a relationship. They
came, having a great time, and that’s it. So that I found a bit... and now at this
point I don’t care anymore. But I was a bit disappointed during this last year.
Because I thought I was going to be able to have more friends, to integrate a bit
better and then eventually when I learned Dutch, things would flow easily.”
[P261]

Contact with a local host shows the expatriate and partner that there is a Dutch person who
is interested in meeting them, which could encourage them to keep reaching out to other
host nationals as well and taking initiatives to meet them, thereby buffering a decrease on
Openmindedness and Social Initiative. An example was the following quote of a partner, who
talked about her increased fear of reaching out to make contact with Dutch people, and the
welcome exception the contact with the host formed:

[6] “As I already mentioned in the diary, my contacts with the Dutch develop slowly. I
would say that the contact is “OK”, but there is not really any contact. Maybe it’s
due to the frustrating experiences I had with them during my first months here
that I’m now afraid to put myself in a situation where I would again experience
that negative feeling. In my street, there are families, but only one of them really
has looked to make contact with us (it has to be said that the husband of that
family is partly French). The ‘real’ Dutch families haven’t opened their doors.
They ask us some questions from time to time (out of curiosity??) and when they
have their information about us, it’s enough, there is no follow-up. The only
contact is our host family, who we have found thanks to your project. Thank you
very much!!!! Other than that, we are open without waiting for miracles to
happen.” [P61ΩW39]
It was also found that contact with a local host buffered a decrease on *Host National Access* for female expatriates. This finding could be seen in a similar light as the findings for *Openmindedness* and *Social Initiative*: female expatriates might find it difficult to break into the new society and, hence, withdraw from establishing contacts with host nationals. The fact that this decrease was not found for male expatriates might be attributed to a gender difference in the construal of ‘contact’ (section 5.3.1), so that their decrease would not be caught in the measure used in the present study.

**Professional domain**

Contact with a local host did not have an impact on the professional life of the expatriate. Even though the study did not indicate a direct influence of contact with a host on job performance, contacts with the local community could have other beneficial effects for the company. Au and Fukuda’s (2002) research on boundary spanning activities – the “amount of cross-boundary information that managers exchange” (Au & Fukuda, 2002, p. 286) – suggests that contacts with locals in general can be profitable, not only for the expatriate but also for the multinational enterprise. As boundary spanning activity is facilitated by an increased diversity of the social network, contact with a host provides extra access to local knowledge. This could be adapted to the global corporate context to benefit the multinational corporation (Hocking, Brown, & Harzing, 2007). Contact with a local host might help the information and intelligence dimensions in particular, these being key aspects of the expatriate boundary spanning role according to Johnson and Duxbury (2010). Future research should further examine the ways in which a local host might affect not only the various facets of expatriate job performance, but also the ways in which this contact could contribute to overall performance of the firm.

**A local host for partners**

The present study showed only limited impact of a local host on partners. One of the explanations suggested for this is that the intervention in this study was tailored more to the expatriate than to the partner. For example, most of the contact took place with all four participants, while meeting up alone with one of the hosts would have offered more opportunities to share specific problems with which the partner was struggling, for example a feeling of lack of usefulness because the partner had no job in the Netherlands. Organisations should take care to tailor contact with a local host to the partner as well as to the expatriate because family adjustment is one of the major non-work factors impacting on the success of the expatriate assignment (Black et al., 1991; Shaffer & Harrison, 2001).

In summary, a local host could be considered as an addition to other support measures that focus on improving the success of the assignment, especially for expatriates but possibly also for partners. The findings in this research suggest that it is important to consider the goal and context of the international assignment and the characteristics of the expatriate
when considering whether to include an intervention such as contact with a local host in expatriate support programmes. Contact with a host seems to be especially important for those expatriates for whom contact with host national colleagues and customers is an integral part of their job, and for those expatriates who would like to make a connection with the host country. Contact with a local host also seems to be important for expatriates without partner, because they lack an extra source of information about interacting with host nationals that helps to make them feel more comfortable, as well as a means to capitalise experiences with the host (see section 8.1.4). In general, the intervention of a local host stimulates the formation of a new social network in the host country, which could offer social support to cope with the challenges of living abroad.

9.2 Maximising the impact of a local host

The previous section (9.1) concluded that contact with a local host is a way to support expatriates. The second and third research question of this study explored ways to maximise the impact of this contact. In section 9.2.1 the role of the quality of the contact is discussed (RQ2: To what extent does quality of contact between expatriate, partner and local host have an effect on the success of the expatriate assignment?), and section 9.2.2 focuses on the aspects that promoted high quality contact between expatriate, partner and host (RQ3: Which aspects promote high quality contact between expatriate, partner and host?) so as to be able to formulate recommendations with regard to the optimal local host programme.

9.2.1 Role of quality of contact

The findings showed that the quality of contact played an important role for the impact of a local host on the success of the expatriate assignment. Expatriates with high quality contact benefited most from the contact with their host. It remained uncertain to what extent expatriates with low quality contact derived benefit from the contact with their host. The pattern in the data suggested that the higher the quality of the contact, the greater the benefit experienced by the expatriates, although the data was insufficient to draw firm conclusions with regard to the exact role of the quality of the contact. It seemed that expatriates with low quality contact still benefited to some extent from the contact with their host. They might have learned about Dutch culture during the few meetings with their host, or received some social support, for example with regard to how to deal with certain issues with which the expatriate is confronted in the Netherlands. An example is E22, who only saw his host twice because the “schedules did not work together” [E22\textsuperscript{Q3}] but who still gained a different perspective on Dutch life [E22\textsuperscript{I}]. In any case low quality contact did not seem to be detrimental to the success of the international assignment, which suggests that contact with a local host is a low-risk intervention. The findings suggested that it was better for expatriates to establish high quality contact with their host, but if this was not the case,
they were not worse off than expatriates who were not put in touch with a host. Moreover, expatriates with high quality contact were more likely to keep in contact with the host after the end of the project, opening up opportunities for benefits in the longer term.

9.2.2 Promoting high quality contact

When putting expatriates in touch with a local host, care should be taken that high quality contact is promoted as much as possible so that the impact of a local host is maximised. Building up social relationships, however, is “a tricky thing”:

[7] “The other aspect is building up some social relationships. I think that would really be great, but that’s a really tricky thing, because how willing are they to include you in their activities. How much do you like their friends? It could work out really, really well; it could be awkward if you meet people with whom you don’t really want to spend time. I think that if it worked well it would be invaluable. That’s a tough area to figure out how to set it up in a way that would work well.”

[E22]

The qualitative data from the open ended questions in the questionnaires, interviews, diaries and emails shed some light on why some expatriates and partners developed high quality contact with their host whereas others did not. This section gives an overview of what organisations could do to promote high quality contact when putting their expatriates in touch with a local host.

Matching expatriates, partners and hosts

It is recommended to establish some similarity between the participants in a matching procedure according to the similarity-attraction hypothesis (Byrne, 1971). It is, however, difficult to establish which shared characteristics participants should have for there to be enough common ground to strike up a relationship. Age and family situation seem to be good starting points, as well as international orientation. Similar interests could also help. As it is difficult to establish how much similarity is necessary and on which grounds, it is worth alerting participants to the importance of discovering “fortuitous circumstances” (Cox, 2005) which might provide the sought-after similarity on which to build a relationship. Another way to go about it is to match participants according to what they would like to get out of the contact.

There are other ways which might improve the matching process. For example, Fletcher (1998) advocates a preliminary meeting between mentors and mentees before they commit themselves to the match. The interviewees also offered some suggestions. Two expatriates would like to give the participants the choice:
“I would think what would be the best is almost have like a, it sounds silly but a speed dating thing, to choose your buddy. You have once a month, or once a quarter, all the people who volunteer to be host or buddies, they come and have all the foreigners and you just kind of mingle and then afterwards maybe you write a list of your top three people you would like to be matched with. That should naturally select the people who felt like they would be better working together.” [E17]"
Another expatriate proposed a sort of kick-off meeting in which participants can discuss together what they would like to get out of the contact, what type of activities they would like to undertake and how often they are able and willing to meet.

**Preparation and monitoring**

In the present study expatriates, partners and hosts were not specifically prepared for the contact, other than being told that they were expected to meet their counterpart once a month and were free to do whatever they wanted as long as they had fun doing it. One expatriate was of the opinion that it would be better to prepare the expatriate and partner for what is coming, to take away potential barriers:

> "If anything, you need some orientation for the expatriate. To explain to them how, enough about it, that they can feel comfortable in a social setting, that they’re not going to do stupid things. If you’ve got a little handbook or something, that would just say like making a good first impression on your host family, teaching them hello and goodbye, you know. Just so you set the expectations, especially on the expatriate side." [E22]

Such a preparation could be particularly useful for expatriates and partners crossing larger cultural gaps than in the present study because they might face greater cultural challenges than the participants in this study (section 8.6.1). It could also take away some of the anxiety expatriates and partners might feel before meeting their host. Future research should determine what kind of preparation would have the best results, although it is clear that this preparation should focus on contact with the Dutch. For example, it might be enough to provide expatriates and partners with a book such as Dutch Ditz (Van Ditzhuyzen, 2009), which has elaborate information on social etiquette in the Netherlands.

The results of this study showed that it was important for the quality of the contact that participants got something out of it. Several benefits were identified in this study – the contact could be enriching, it might help adjustment, or the host might offer social support. These benefits stimulate the development of the contact according to the social penetration theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973). As was suggested in 8.6.2 expatriates and partners could be encouraged to share their difficulties with their host because self-disclosure (Collins & Miller, 1994) could lead to higher quality contact. It is important, however, to time this
disclosure well because if one talks about problems too early in the contact it might have an adverse effect.

Another possibility to stimulate the development of the contact is to encourage the frequency of the contact. The quality of the contact with the host was found to be related to the frequency of the contact, although it is uncertain if more frequent meetings led to higher quality contact, whether it was the other way around or whether the two co-evolved. One possibility is to organise events which expatriates, partners and hosts could attend together. Future research should determine whether quality of the contact could be enhanced through more frequent meetings.

The contact between expatriate, partner and host was monitored in the context of this research project. In the present study this monitoring was fairly minimal, with the researcher contacting only the hosts (section 4.2.3) about once a month via email. In the mentoring literature, it was found that ongoing programme supervision adds to the effectiveness of the programme (Karcher et al., 2005). Future research should examine whether closer monitoring would increase the quality of the contact between expatriate, partner and host. An additional advantage is that the person who monitors the contact could be a kind of intermediary, as was pointed out in section 7.2.5. An intermediary could help solve certain problems:

[11] “I think you might have to more actively manage or at least monitor what is going on [...] so that people do not make stupid mistakes for not being able to get in contact and reading too much into the silence.” [E22]

It is important, however, to realise that participants might resist close monitoring, as was the case with one host, even with the minimal level of monitoring she encountered in this research project. She still established high quality contact with her expatriate couple.

[12] “Both F. and I are often abroad for work or friends and family who live abroad. I don’t think we’ll be able to meet once a month as officially required for the project. But I think that we’re both happy with the meetings and it is nice [“gezellig”] to see each other. Although I understand that your question arises from your commitment and great interest in the project and the participants, it gives me a little bit the feeling that we have to account for ourselves. We are doing the best we can, that’s all we can do...” [H45]

**Timing of the contact**

Another important situational constraint to the development of the contact was timing, although it is difficult to establish based on the available data what would be the best time to put expatriates and partners in touch with a local host. The interviewed expatriates and partners were asked what they thought would be the best time to be put in contact with a

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host, and their answers were very diverse, ranging from directly after arrival (or even before departure) [E26, E51, P50], to after two or three months in the Netherlands [E22, E23, E43, E57, E58], to more than six months of residence [E46, P26]. A common theme in the answers of those who advocated that the contact with a host should be established some months after arrival is that the initial bustle after arrival needs to be past:

[13] “The beginning is really, really busy. You’re setting up visas and drivers licences and apartments and all the rest. [...] I would say the first month not at all because you’re trying to find your stuff, get moved in. I would say maybe two or three months in, when you kind of gotten enough, that you camped out and then you’re starting to figure out the world around you a bit more. [...] Probably you need anywhere from six weeks to two months to get over the initial hump of just getting here and get established.” [E22]

However, opinions differ on how long it takes to settle in. Another expatriate said:

[14] “You need to give people at least six months to allow them just to acclimatise a little bit, and understand what’s going on around them. Because those first few months you try to settle into in a new work environment, which is a big change, you’re doing all the admin stuff, like registering with the “gemeente” [municipality], getting your life, getting in a routine around you. Then once you got that routine, then you start to think about the other stuff. It’s like Maslovs hierarchy of needs, you put food on the table first, you put a roof above your head, and then you start to think about self esteem and all the rest of it that comes later and I’d say, if you do that too early, if you try to introduce that stuff too early, you wouldn’t have the time to do it, to think about it, to appreciate it and enjoy it as much as... cause you’re literally running from A to B to C trying to just get some security around you, a routine, a house to live, understand what to buy in the shops, your account up on Albert Heijn, getting a bank account, all of those trivial things in themselves. You move to a new country and that’s just shiploads of them to do and it takes you a few months to wade through them all.” [E46]

On the other hand, the following expatriate in the control group found that being put in touch with a host after having completed the nine months of the project was too late. He could well imagine how the contact with their host could have changed their experience if it had taken place sooner:

[15] “I have found my experiences in Holland to be right at the bottom and I wouldn’t come back here. And I felt that my time with On. & Ol., maybe if we had it done
Although two or three months might be a helpful indication if one is setting up a host programme, it seems that the best timing depends to a great extent on the person and the situation. One expatriate suggested that the best moment to be put in touch with a host is when one is established and feels the need to make new contacts:

[16] “I would say it’s once you have settled down. Directly after arriving you have other things on your mind. For example you have to tidy the house to be able to entertain at home. It’s more once you are set up, so maybe about three months later. From the moment when you say to yourself, yes, I’m all alone now.”

Of course, this moment might come sooner for one expatriate than the other. Therefore, it seems reasonable to focus an intervention such as contact with a local host on expatriates and partners within their first year of residence in the host country, although it could be imagined that expatriates and partners who have been in the Netherlands longer than a year would still like to participate. It is advisable to try to reach possible participants as early as possible after arrival – or even before – and then establish when they would feel most comfortable with being put in touch with a host.

**Communication breakdown and cultural differences**

Finally, communication breakdown and cultural differences also need to be mentioned here. Although these two barriers occurred in some cases in this study, they were not the most important barriers to the development of the contact. In both cases an intermediary person could help with these kinds of difficulties: in the present study one expatriate applied to the researcher to see whether their host ‘was around’, which prevented a premature breakdown of the contact. It is plausible that such an intermediary could also intervene in other instances such as cultural misunderstandings. For example, if an intermediary had been in touch with either expatriate or host in the case of the misunderstanding with regard to birth announcements (the host expected a birth announcement whereas the expatriate expected the host to get in touch because she just had a baby – section 7.2.6), then the cultural differences with regard to these traditions could have been explained, which might have prevented the premature breakdown of the contact.

In summary, based on the findings in this study it is recommended to aim to establish some similarity between the participants in a matching procedure, make sure they live near each other and have compatible schedules, and to explore their motivation and expectations of the contact with the local host. The development of the contact might be encouraged
through preparation and monitoring, and since the frequency of the contact was correlated to the quality of the contact, encouraging expatriates and partners to meet their host might enhance the quality of the contact, although the direction of the relationship between frequency and quality is as yet unknown. Also, it is advisable to involve expatriates and partners in the timing of the contact, because the best time to be put in touch with a local host seems to be different in every case. Furthermore, it appears to be beneficial if participants could rely on an objective intermediary who could contact the other person to find out what is the problem if they do not reply to emails, but who could also explain puzzling episodes in the contact between expatriate, partner and host.

9.3 Recommendations for organisations

After discussing recommendations with regard to setting up a host system, we now turn to some specific recommendations for organisations with regard to tailored support (9.3.1), alternative ways to encourage expatriates to get in touch with locals (9.3.2) and some neglected issues in expatriation (9.3.3).

9.3.1 Tailored support

This research showed that contact with a local host could indeed be beneficial but that this intervention is not a cure-all for all the challenges that expatriates face during their sojourn in a foreign country. Organisations need to take care to tailor their support to the specific situation and characteristics of the expatriate and partner and the present study offers them a new tool – contact with a local host. First, this instrument is useful for expatriates on managerial assignments during which they have a great deal of contact with host national colleagues and clients. This is especially relevant if they are single. Second, because expatriates with host received more social support from host nationals than those without host, contact with a local host might be especially helpful for expatriates at risk of social isolation, as it could help them cross the barrier of making contact with host nationals and access social support. Third, contact with a local host could prevent expatriates becoming less openminded and less socially active when they have come to the host country with high expectations of getting to know the locals.

Through the contact with the host expatriates could learn about Dutch culture and how to interact with host nationals. As such, it might be an addition to pre-departure cross-cultural training programmes, because the expatriate is confronted with relatively safe, real life situations where cultural differences occur. Moreover, expatriates could discuss critical incidents they have experienced elsewhere with their host and get a local perspective. Contact with a local host is a good addition to the traditional preparation of expatriates because it ensures accurate and up-to-date support in the post-departure phase.

Organisations should not expect a direct impact of contact with a host on expatriate job
performance. It might be worthwhile to put expatriates in touch with a local host who works for the same company, because this might increase the possibility of an impact on job performance. When doing so, one has to be careful in designing such a system to avoid trust-issues. A possibility is to appoint a colleague as Host Country National Liaison (Vance et al., 2009), who could help the expatriate by, for example, providing cultural guidance, facilitating communication flows within the foreign subsidiary or making essential information available so that the expatriate can make the right decisions (see 3.1.3). The benefit of a HCNL could go two ways: not only could the expatriate benefit, but the host national colleague who is appointed as HCNL might also benefit if he or she is considering an expatriate assignment in the future (see 8.6.3).

9.3.2 Encouraging contact with locals

Implementing a system in which expatriates and partners are put in touch with a local host mostly demands time and effort. Because of its voluntary basis and the fact that it takes place outside of work, the programme is not costly, although this depends, of course, on how the system is designed. If an organisation does not have an employee who could set up and monitor such a system, it is also possible to simply encourage expatriates and partners to get in touch with host nationals (see also 9.4 for specific recommendations for expatriates and partners). However, as was pointed out in section 1.3.2, it is not easy to get in touch with locals in many European countries (HSBC, 2010). It is likely that more than just simple encouragement is necessary to stimulate expatriates and partners to breach the barrier and make lasting contact with host nationals. Another way could be for organisations to encourage the colleagues of the expatriate to invite him or her for dinner, or for another activity. Many host national colleagues will probably not realise what life is like for the expatriate and do not realise how welcome such an invitation might be.

Contacts with host national colleagues might also be established during a (social) event held by the organisation. It is then important to make sure that expatriates and host national colleagues would actually mix because otherwise it is unlikely that any contacts between expatriates and host nationals will be established. An interesting way to stimulate an interpersonal connection between expatriates and their host national colleagues is suggested by the experiment of Aron, Melinat, Aron, Vallone and Bator (1997), which follows the logic of self-disclosure (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Collins & Miller, 1994). They formed couples of students who did not know each other previously and asked them to talk about a list of questions during 45 minutes. For one group these questions got to a very personal level (e.g. “what is your most precious memory”). Weeks later, at the follow-up session, it became clear that the couples who had discussed these very personal questions were more often sitting together during lectures, and also met out of class. This suggests that it might be worthwhile at an event at which expatriates can meet host national colleagues to encourage sharing of personal information. This might be achieved, for
example, through a game. It is important, however, that the level of the information that is exchanged should gradually increase from factual (e.g. “what is your favourite colour”) to emotional (e.g. “tell me about an embarrassing situation in your life”). Future research should determine whether these ‘light’ versions have similar benefits that equally affect the success of the expatriate assignment.

### 9.3.3 Neglected issues in expatriation

Finally, it is important for organisations to pay attention to often neglected issues in expatriation. First, most cross-cultural trainings focus on cultural awareness and learning about the host culture, and neglect the importance of the social network. Fontaine (1986, p. 361) states that social support is “one of the primary strategies for coping with the stress of an overseas assignment”. The social networks that usually provide social support are not always readily available in the host country; they are left behind in the home country, or – as in the case of accompanying partner and children – they can also experience stress related to their adjustment to the new country. For these reasons, Fontaine (1996) suggests including social support as a topic in intercultural training, so that, for example, expatriates and partners are trained in re-establishing a social network in the host country.

Second, many organisations scarcely prepare expatriates who are sent to psychically nearby countries, although expatriates on such assignments could still be confronted with all kinds of difficulties. As was pointed out in sections 1.1.1 and 4.2.1 expatriates on assignments to such countries might not expect cultural differences. This lack of cultural awareness could cause problems. Moreover, expatriates still have to cope with a new work environment and have to re-establish their personal lives. It is advisable to also support these expatriates on their assignments, and contact with a local host could be a relatively easy and low-cost option as the contact is voluntary on the part of the expatriate and host, and takes place in the expatriate’s own free time.

Third, a substantial number of expatriates are no longer sent by their organisation, but look for their own job abroad (McKenna & Richardson, 2007). These so called self-initiated expatriates are usually not embedded in organisational support systems for expatriates, however; this does not mean they do not experience similar difficulties as regular expatriates. Self-initiated expatriates also need to deal with the challenges of living and working abroad, and they might be the more vulnerable because they come on their own account and are usually not supported by their organisation. For these reasons, organisations that have a large number of foreign employees should establish support mechanisms for this group to stimulate their professional success and personal well-being. Contact with a local host could be one of the tools to support this group because the advantages of contact with a host could be equally applicable to self-initiated expatriates.
9.4 Recommendations for expatriates and partners

Some of the topics highlighted in recommendations for organisations (section 9.3) are also important for individual expatriates and partners, for example not to underestimate a move to psychically close culture (section 1.1.1). Most of all, expatriates and partners should realise that the move abroad causes a significant change in their social environment for which it is important to prepare. Although family and friends who remain behind in the home country are still easy to contact via telephone, email or Skype, the nature of these contacts will probably change because of the decreased frequency of face-to-face contact. Also, family and friends back home might have difficulty imagining the daily reality of expatriate life and might not be able to provide adequate social support. For these reasons, expatriates and partners should search for sources of support in the host country. It is recommended that expatriates and partners take this often forgotten aspect into account – it is usually not treated in cross-cultural training – and establish what would be necessary with regard to their social network for a feeling of well-being in the new country. They can then take action, for example by joining an expatriate club or inviting the host national neighbours to their home.

There are two possible sources of social support in the host country, fellow expatriates and host nationals. Fellow expatriates are an easy group with whom to make friends. They are in the same situation and know how to help. Especially in cities with large expatriate communities there are many clubs and associations that offer many opportunities to build a new social network. However, research suggests that it is important for expatriates and partners to get out of this expatriate bubble and also get in touch with host nationals (Geeraert et al., 2008; Parker & McEvoy, 1993). These host nationals could teach the expatriate and partner about the host culture and they could provide social support. Getting in touch with host nationals is usually more difficult than meeting fellow expatriates, as section 3.2.1 showed, although this varies according to the host country. Western Europe seems to be especially challenging (HSBC, 2010), and the best way to establish contact with host nationals might be different for each country. For example, in the Netherlands it is not usual for colleagues to invite each other for dinner or for drinks after work, so it might not be the best approach to wait for invitations of host national colleagues. Expatriates and partners should study the host culture and translate what they read about cultural differences into the best way to meet host nationals in that particular country. For example, because of the rather strict division between work and private life in the Netherlands, an expatriate would probably be more successful in establishing contacts with host nationals if he or she joined an all-Dutch association – sports or other – provided he or she speaks Dutch. A helpful book for social etiquette in the Netherlands is Dutch Ditz. Manners in the Netherlands by Van Ditzhuyzen (2009), but also books like Dealing with the Dutch (Vossestein, 2001) and The Low Sky (Van der Horst, 1996) could help expatriates and partners learn about the Netherlands.
In general, expatriates and partners need to take the initiative and persevere. Kim (1987, p. 210) pointed out for immigrants that “self-determination in overcoming the various psychological, social and cultural barriers is crucial to maximising their chances for successful living in the host society”. Especially in countries where it is difficult to make friends it is not enough to invite someone once and expect the relationship to develop automatically, with reciprocal efforts, like it would in the home country. In contrast to expatriates who have left most of their social network behind, host nationals have their established network of friends and family and are not necessarily waiting for an addition to their social network. That is not to say they would not appreciate the contact with the expatriate and partner, but it is the expatriate and partner who need to make the most effort – at least at the beginning of the contact.

Establishing a social network seems to be the more relevant for unemployed partners, because they do not have a job to occupy them, nor colleagues who might be a starting point for building a new social network. Although the Netherlands is a country where partners might relatively easily find a job – as compared to, say, Nigeria – there are still many partners who cannot find a job and stay at home. Location is important here because in countries where expatriates live in compounds, usually an extensive network of partners exists which makes sure the expatriate and partner are welcomed to their new location. The partner can then easily join this existing social network. The situation in Western European countries is very different. Expatriates and partners live a more independent life, which makes it more difficult to meet new people than it is when living in an expatriate compound. It is important to realise in what situation a partner will find him or herself in order to prepare for the challenges that lie ahead.
9.5 Final remarks

The present study highlighted an innovative way to help expatriates cope with the challenges of living abroad – an intervention in which expatriates were put in touch with the Dutch. As far as known, no such intervention is done on a structural base for expatriates and their families. Contact with a local host might also be useful for other sojourners such as immigrants, refugees and international students. As globalisation continues and more and more people live elsewhere than their home country – whether they want to or not – a local host might provide the necessary support to deal with transition to a new country.

Contact with a local host could be a useful intervention for organisations that would like their expatriates to benefit from contact with host nationals because it helps them “prick the expatriate bubble”. The expatriates themselves expressed positive reactions to the contact with their host. These comments ranged from making daily situations easier, to helping to meet Dutch people socially outside the workplace, to learning about the Netherlands:

[17] “I have a completely different opinion on the Netherlands than in the beginning.”

Future research should further shape this intervention while tailoring to specific needs of expatriates and their families so that contact with a local host can contribute optimally to the success of the expatriate assignment.
Appendices
Appendix 1  Sample characteristics split into with and without host

Tables I and II show the sample characteristics for expatriates and partners, split into with and without host. None of the differences between the experimental and control group was significant.

Table I Sample characteristics of expatriates split into with and without host (N = 65)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample characteristics of expatriates</th>
<th>With host</th>
<th>Without host</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N = 33</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. American</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes (on assignment)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes (not on assignment)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No partner</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 – 29 years</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 – 40 years</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 – 56 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>M (SD)</em></td>
<td>34.00 (.8)</td>
<td>36.47 (7.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of residence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hague &amp; Rotterdam</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nijmegen</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schooling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college or post secondary school classes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduate</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate or beyond</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>M (SD)</em></td>
<td>4.24 (.6)</td>
<td>4.53 (.67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficiency English (for non-native speakers)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficiently well to be understood / reasonably well</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluently</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>M (SD)</em></td>
<td>4.47 (.6)</td>
<td>4.00 (1.1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample characteristics of expatriates</th>
<th>With host</th>
<th>Without host</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proficiency Dutch</strong></td>
<td><strong>N = 33</strong></td>
<td><strong>%</strong></td>
<td><strong>N = 32</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficiently well to be understood</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasonably well</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>M (SD)</em></td>
<td>1.18 (.47)</td>
<td>1.06 (.25)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length of stay in NL</strong></td>
<td><strong>(before participation)</strong></td>
<td><strong>%</strong></td>
<td><strong>%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 ≤ 6 months</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 ≤ 12 months</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 12 months</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>M (SD)</em>*</td>
<td>6.73 (3.96)</td>
<td>6.72 (4.49)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>International experience</strong></td>
<td><strong>No international experience</strong></td>
<td><strong>%</strong></td>
<td><strong>%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to two years (1–24)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two – four years (25–48)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than four years (&gt;48)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>M (SD)</em>*</td>
<td>42.42 (92.68)</td>
<td>40.42 (49.51)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Median</strong></td>
<td>20 months</td>
<td></td>
<td>26 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duration of assignment</strong></td>
<td><strong>At least 1 year</strong></td>
<td><strong>%</strong></td>
<td><strong>%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 1 year</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 2 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 3 years</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 4 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not defined</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cross-cultural training</strong></td>
<td><strong>Yes</strong></td>
<td><strong>%</strong></td>
<td><strong>%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(pre-departure)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No</strong></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Missing</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)

** in months

30 This Table is a continuation of Table I on the previous page.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample characteristics of partners</th>
<th>With host</th>
<th>Without host</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>N = 10</strong> %</td>
<td><strong>N = 13</strong> %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nationality</strong></td>
<td><strong>N = 10</strong> %</td>
<td><strong>N = 13</strong> %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>5 50%</td>
<td>3 23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. American</td>
<td>2 20%</td>
<td>5 38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British</td>
<td>1 10%</td>
<td>4 31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2 20%</td>
<td>1 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td><strong>N = 10</strong> %</td>
<td><strong>N = 13</strong> %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>10 100%</td>
<td>11 85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children</strong></td>
<td><strong>N = 10</strong> %</td>
<td><strong>N = 13</strong> %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7 70%</td>
<td>12 92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3 30%</td>
<td>1 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td><strong>N = 10</strong> %</td>
<td><strong>N = 13</strong> %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 – 29 years</td>
<td>2 20%</td>
<td>1 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 – 40 years</td>
<td>5 50%</td>
<td>7 54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 – 48 years</td>
<td>3 30%</td>
<td>5 38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>36.10 (7.11)</td>
<td>37.54 (5.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Place of residence</strong></td>
<td><strong>N = 10</strong> %</td>
<td><strong>N = 13</strong> %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hague &amp; Rotterdam</td>
<td>7 70%</td>
<td>10 77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>3 30%</td>
<td>1 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Schooling</strong></td>
<td><strong>N = 10</strong> %</td>
<td><strong>N = 13</strong> %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary school graduate</td>
<td>1 10%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college or post secondary</td>
<td>2 20%</td>
<td>2 15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school classes</td>
<td><strong>N = 10</strong> %</td>
<td><strong>N = 13</strong> %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduate</td>
<td>5 50%</td>
<td>5 39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate or beyond</td>
<td>1 10%</td>
<td>6 46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1 10%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M (SD)*</td>
<td>3.67 (.87)</td>
<td>4.31 (.75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Native language</strong></td>
<td><strong>N = 10</strong> %</td>
<td><strong>N = 13</strong> %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>3 30%</td>
<td>9 69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>6 60%</td>
<td>3 23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1 10%</td>
<td>1 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proficiency English</strong></td>
<td><strong>N = 10</strong> %</td>
<td><strong>N = 13</strong> %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(for non-native speakers)</td>
<td><strong>N = 10</strong> %</td>
<td><strong>N = 13</strong> %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficiently well to be understood</td>
<td>1 17%</td>
<td>1 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasonably well</td>
<td>2 33%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well</td>
<td>2 33%</td>
<td>1 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluently</td>
<td>1 17%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M (SD)*</td>
<td>3.50 (1.05)</td>
<td>3.00 (1.41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proficiency Dutch</strong></td>
<td><strong>N = 10</strong> %</td>
<td><strong>N = 13</strong> %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>7 70%</td>
<td>10 77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficiently well to be understood</td>
<td>3 30%</td>
<td>2 15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasonably well</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M (SD)*</td>
<td>1.30 (.48)</td>
<td>1.31 (.63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length of stay in NL</strong></td>
<td><strong>N = 10</strong> %</td>
<td><strong>N = 13</strong> %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(before participation)</td>
<td><strong>N = 10</strong> %</td>
<td><strong>N = 13</strong> %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 ≤ 6 months</td>
<td>6 60%</td>
<td>8 62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 ≤ 12 months</td>
<td>3 30%</td>
<td>4 30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 12 months</td>
<td>1 10%</td>
<td>1 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M (SD)**</td>
<td>6.10 (3.32)</td>
<td>6.38 (3.50)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)
** in months
Table II Sample characteristics of partners split into with and without host (N = 23)\textsuperscript{31}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample characteristics of partners</th>
<th>With host</th>
<th>Without host</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>International experience</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No international experience</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to two years (1 – 24)</td>
<td>6 (60%)</td>
<td>6 (46%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two – four years (25 – 48)</td>
<td>1 (10%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than four years (&gt; 48)</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
<td>6 (46%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1 (10%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>M (SD)</strong> in months</td>
<td>33.78 (51.43)</td>
<td>59.00 (62.31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duration of assignment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 1 year</td>
<td>1 (10%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 2 years</td>
<td>1 (10%)</td>
<td>4 (31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 3 years</td>
<td>6 (60%)</td>
<td>3 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 4 years</td>
<td>1 (10%)</td>
<td>4 (31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not defined</td>
<td>1 (10%)</td>
<td>2 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cross-cultural training</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(pre-departure)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10 (100%)</td>
<td>11 (85%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{31} This Table is a continuation of Table II on the previous page.
Appendix 2 Questionnaires

The present study contained a total of 21 questionnaires for expatriates, partners and hosts, in English, French and Dutch. Table III contains an overview. The third questionnaire (nine months) for expatriates with host (in English) is shown as an example of these questionnaires because this questionnaire contained most of the instruments used in this study. The numbers of items that were reverse coded are underlined. A translated version of the questionnaire for hosts is also added to show which questions were asked with regard to the contact with the expatriate and partner.

The other questionnaires were similar, however, some questions were added or deleted according to the data wave and target group. The introduction of each questionnaire was also adjusted accordingly. The other questionnaires are available upon request.

Additional questions
Not all of the instruments used in this study are listed in the questionnaire on the following page. In the first questionnaire the following additional questions were added:

[International experience]
I. Excluding the present assignment, how many months have you lived abroad? ____ months

[Relocation assistance]
II. Have you used the services of a relocation agency when you first arrived here in the Netherlands, or has your employer (e.g. the relocation office) assisted you?
   O yes  O no

[Pre-departure training]
III. Have you received any training prior to departure?
   O yes: how many hours of pre-departure training have you received? _____ hours
   O no

Questions that were not applicable
In some questionnaires certain questions were removed because they were not applicable:
- The questionnaires for expatriates and partners without host did not contain the questions with regard to the contact with the host (items 173 – 177).
- The questionnaires for the partners did not contain the instruments regarding Work Adjustment (items 33 - 35) and Performance (items 51 - 63).

Table III Overview of the 21 questionnaires used in this study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Expatriates</th>
<th>Partners</th>
<th>Hosts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 months</td>
<td>• English</td>
<td>• French</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 months</td>
<td>• Host (English)</td>
<td>• Host (English)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Host (French)</td>
<td>• Host (French)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• No host (English)</td>
<td>• No host (English)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• No host (French)</td>
<td>• No host (French)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 months</td>
<td>• Host (English)</td>
<td>• Host (English)</td>
<td>• Dutch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Host (French)</td>
<td>• Host (French)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• No host (English)</td>
<td>• No host (English)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• No host (French)</td>
<td>• No host (French)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2a  Questionnaire expatriates and partners

For expatriates with a local host

Nine months have passed and it is the end of the project! Would you please fill in the third and last questionnaire of this project and send it back as soon as possible. This questionnaire will take approximately 25 minutes to complete. You can fill in your answers in the open spaces or tick the appropriate box. Please tick only one box per question, unless otherwise indicated. For the multiple-choice questions, please refer to the possible answers at the top. Please do not spend too much time on each question but write down the answer that comes to mind first. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and will only be used for this research.

Please send this questionnaire back in the enclosed envelope (no stamp needed) as soon as possible. Thank you very much!

Marian van Bakel MA, Radboud University Nijmegen

1. Please fill in your personal code? ______

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the five following statements:

(Please circle the answer that is most applicable to you)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>neutral</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. In most ways my life is close to my ideal

3. The conditions of my life are excellent

4. I am satisfied with my life

5. So far I have achieved the important things

6. If I could live my life over I would change almost nothing

7. In general, would you say your health is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>poor</th>
<th>fair</th>
<th>good</th>
<th>very good</th>
<th>excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. During the past 4 weeks, how much of the time has your physical or emotional health interfered with your social activities (like visiting friends, relatives etc.)?
   0 None of the time
   0 A little of the time
   0 Some of the time
   0 Most of the time
   0 All of the time

How TRUE or FALSE is each of the following statements for you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>definitely false</th>
<th>mostly false</th>
<th>don't know</th>
<th>mostly true</th>
<th>definitely true</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. I seem to get sick a little easier than other people

10. I am as healthy as anybody I know

11. I expect my health to get worse

12. My health is excellent
The following questions are about how you feel and how things have been with you **during the past 4 weeks**. For each question, please circle the one answer that comes closest to the way you have been feeling.

**How much of the time during the past 4 weeks:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>None of the time</th>
<th>A little of the time</th>
<th>Some of the time</th>
<th>Most of the time</th>
<th>All of the time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13. Did you feel full of pep?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Have you been a very nervous person?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Have you felt so down in the dumps that nothing could cheer you up?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Have you felt calm and peaceful?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Did you have a lot of energy?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Have you felt downhearted and blue?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Did you feel worn out?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Have you been a very happy person?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Did you feel tired?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please indicate how unaccustomed or accustomed you are to the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Unaccustomed</th>
<th>Customed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22. Living conditions in general</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Housing conditions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Food</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Shopping</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Cost of living</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Entertainment/recreation facilities and opportunities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Health care facilities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Socialising with host nationals</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Interacting with host nationals on a day-to-day basis</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Interacting with host nationals outside of work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Speaking with host nationals</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Specific job responsibilities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Performance standards and expectations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Supervisory responsibilities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the following questions the term “people” is used frequently. By “people” is meant all the people you associate with, such as your relatives, your friends, acquaintances, colleagues, etc.

Does it ever happen to you that people:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Seldom or never</th>
<th>Now and then</th>
<th>Regularly</th>
<th>Very often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>36. Are affectionate towards you?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. Give you good advice?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. Pay you a compliment?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Confide in you?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. Ask you for help?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. Drop in for a (pleasant) visit?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Does it ever happen to you that people:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>seldom or never</th>
<th>now and then</th>
<th>regularly</th>
<th>very often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>provide you with help in special circumstances, such as: illness, moving home or taking care of the children?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>comfort you?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44.</td>
<td>invite you to a party or to dinner?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45.</td>
<td>reassure you?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46.</td>
<td>make disapproving remarks towards you?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>blame you for things?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48.</td>
<td>treat you unjustly?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49.</td>
<td>make unreasonable demands of you?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.</td>
<td>ask you for advice?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please assess your own work performance on the following four items:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>poor</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>51.</td>
<td>overall performance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52.</td>
<td>ability to get along with others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53.</td>
<td>ability to complete assignments on time</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54.</td>
<td>quality of performance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

55. Would you like to terminate this expatriate assignment early?
   1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

56. If this assignment had no effect on your career, would you terminate this assignment now?
   1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

57. Do you hope that you will be asked to return home early?
   1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

58. Did you already have a performance evaluation in your current assignment?
   O yes
   O no*

* Please continue with question 64.

Please recall your most recent performance evaluation in your current assignment. Please indicate where that rating would place you relative to your peers on a percentage basis along the five dimensions indicated below. For example, 80 on achievement of work goals would indicate that your actual rating would place 80% of your peers below you and place 20% above you.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>59.</td>
<td>overall performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60.</td>
<td>ability to get along with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61.</td>
<td>completing tasks on time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62.</td>
<td>quality (as opposed to quantity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63.</td>
<td>achievement of work goals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

296
The following questions are about how satisfied you are with 8 different types of contact. If you never have a particular type of contact, please leave open the answer to the then following question about satisfaction.

64. Do you engage in social activities with Dutch people?  
   (e.g. going to the pictures, having meals)
   never                                      very often
   1  2  3  4  5

65. How satisfied are you with this contact?  1  2  3  4  5

66. Do you engage in recreational activities with Dutch people?  
   never                                      very often
   1  2  3  4  5

67. How satisfied are you with this contact?  1  2  3  4  5

68. Do you attend religious functions with Dutch people?  
   never                                      very often
   1  2  3  4  5

69. How satisfied are you with this contact?  1  2  3  4  5

70. Do you discuss significant issues with Dutch people?  
   (e.g. politics, social issues)
   never                                      very often
   1  2  3  4  5

71. How satisfied are you with this contact?  1  2  3  4  5

72. Do you work with Dutch people (e.g. on a daily basis or  
   during projects)?
   never                                      very often
   1  2  3  4  5

73. How satisfied are you with this contact?  1  2  3  4  5

74. Do you seek help from Dutch people with language  
   problems?
   never                                      very often
   1  2  3  4  5

75. How satisfied are you with this contact?  1  2  3  4  5

76. Do you seek help from Dutch people with work problems?  
   never                                      very often
   1  2  3  4  5

77. How satisfied are you with this contact?  1  2  3  4  5

78. Do you seek help from Dutch people with personal  
   problems?
   never                                      very often
   1  2  3  4  5

79. How satisfied are you with this contact?  1  2  3  4  5

80. This question is about friends and acquaintances. These questions are not only about friends  
   and acquaintances from the Netherlands, but also about friends and acquaintances from  
   your home country. Please answer the questions in the following two tables for the five  
   friends or acquaintances who are, in general, most important to you. Each row corresponds  
   to one single friend or acquaintance.
Note: Please indicate in the table below the person’s initials in the first column (for instance: if your friend’s/ acquaintance’s name is Frank Anderson, write down -> F.A.) and then their nationality. Please also indicate the closeness of each friendship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Friends</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Closeness of friendship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initials</td>
<td>Compat-</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>riot</td>
<td>other, i.e.:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. ___</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. ___</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. ___</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. ___</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. ___</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next, please note in the first column of the table below the same initials of the five friends and acquaintances as you have done in the table above. Then indicate the frequency of personal contact per month and contact by phone/email per month.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Friends</th>
<th>Frequency of personal contact per month</th>
<th>Frequency of contact per month by phone, email and/or letters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initials</td>
<td>never</td>
<td>1-2 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. ___</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. ___</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. ___</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. ___</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. ___</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

81. How often do you have contact (in person, by phone, email or in writing) with Dutch nationals:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>never</th>
<th>1-2 times</th>
<th>3-4 times</th>
<th>5-6 times</th>
<th>&gt;6 times</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To what extent do the following statements apply to you?

82. Tries to understand other people’s behaviour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extent</th>
<th>totally not applicable</th>
<th>hardly applicable</th>
<th>moderately applicable</th>
<th>largely applicable</th>
<th>completely applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

83. Is fascinated by other people’s opinion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extent</th>
<th>totally not applicable</th>
<th>hardly applicable</th>
<th>moderately applicable</th>
<th>largely applicable</th>
<th>completely applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

84. Takes initiative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extent</th>
<th>totally not applicable</th>
<th>hardly applicable</th>
<th>moderately applicable</th>
<th>largely applicable</th>
<th>completely applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

85. Is afraid to fail

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extent</th>
<th>totally not applicable</th>
<th>hardly applicable</th>
<th>moderately applicable</th>
<th>largely applicable</th>
<th>completely applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

86. Likes low-comfort holidays

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extent</th>
<th>totally not applicable</th>
<th>hardly applicable</th>
<th>moderately applicable</th>
<th>largely applicable</th>
<th>completely applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

87 -172 Items 87 to 172 are not shown because copyright issues prevent the complete reprint of the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000).

The final items of this questionnaire regard your contact with the host. Please note that your answers to these questions will not be revealed to your host.

173. How would you evaluate the contact with your host, the past months (since the last questionnaire)? Please indicate your evaluation on a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being lowest and 10 being highest. _______
174. How many times have you seen the host? (approximately) _____ times

175. What have you done together with the host? _______________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

176. Did you enjoy the contact with the host? Why? ____________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

177. Did the contact with the host help you? In what way? _____________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

178. Do you have any other remarks regarding this project? ____________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

This was the last questionnaire of this project. Please send it back in the enclosed envelope (no stamp needed), as soon as possible.

Thank you very much for your cooperation!
Appendix 2b Questionnaire host

Now that nine months have passed we have come to the end of the project. I hope you have found the contact with the expatriate and his or her partner interesting. I would like to ask you now to complete this questionnaire, which will take about 10 minutes of your time. Your answer will be treated as confidential and used only for this research.

Thank you very much!

Marian van Bakel MA
Radboud University Nijmegen

1. What is your personal code (to be found in my email)? _______

2. Date ________________

3. Are you? O man O woman

4. How often have you seen the expatriate (and his or her partner) in the last nine months?
   (about) ______ per month

5. How did you envisage the contact with expatriate at the start of the project?
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________

6. Has the contact been as expected?
   O yes, just as expected
   O yes, mostly as expected
   O to a certain extent
   O no, not really
   O no, not at all

7. What activities have you done with the expatriate (and his or her partner)?
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________

8. How was the contact?
   On a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high) I would rate my contact with the expatriate as ___,
   because __________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
9. Do you have the feeling that you have been able to give something to the expatriate (and his or her partner)? In what way?
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________

10. Has the expat refused invitations? Why?
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________

11. In what way could the contact with the expatriate (and his or her partner) have been better?
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________

12. Have you involved other people in this contact (children, friends, family)?
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________

13. Have you any remarks, tips or recommendations for this project?
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________

Thank you very much for your cooperation!
Appendix 3 Registration form

The registration form for expatriates is reproduced below. A similar form was made for partners, in case they were the ones who filled in the registration form. These forms were available in English and French. Another form was made in Dutch for hosts, containing the same questions except those that were irrelevant for hosts (e.g. arrival date). The partner version and the French and the Dutch version are available upon request.

Yes, I would like to get to know the Dutch!

I am glad that you would like to participate in this research! To be able to contact you as soon as possible, I would like to ask you a few questions. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and will only be used for this research.

Thank you very much!

Marian van Bakel MA
Radboud University Nijmegen

1. Name __________________________
2. Address __________________________
3. Postal code and place __________________________
4. Phone number __________________________
5. Email __________________________
6. Age __________________________
7. Gender
   O male    O female

8. When did you arrive in the Netherlands? __________________________
9. How long are you going to stay in the Netherlands? __________________________

10. Has your partner accompanied you on this assignment?
   O yes
   O no
   O I do not have a partner

11. Will he or she also participate in this research?
   O yes,
   - his/her name is __________________________
   - his/her email address is __________________________
   O no/not applicable

12. What is your nationality? __________________________

13. What nationality does your partner have? __________________________
   (if your partner is Dutch, unfortunately you cannot participate in this research)
14. Do you and/or your partner have children?
   O no
   O yes, their age is ________________

15. Have your children accompanied you to the Netherlands?
   O yes
   O no
   O only ________________
   O not applicable

16. Do you, the expatriate, have international experience in one or more countries?

17. Does your partner have international experience?

18. For which company do you work? ________________
19. In which city? ________________
20. What is your job title? ________________

21. Has your partner found a paid job?
   O no
   O yes, he/she works as ________________

22. This questionnaire will be administered through the internet. If, however, you or your partner would prefer receiving this questionnaire by mail, please indicate this by marking the appropriate box(es) below.
   O I would like to receive the questionnaire by mail at the address listed above.
   O My partner would like to receive the questionnaire by mail at the address listed above.
Appendix 4  Matching form

The form that was used to be able to match expatriates and partners to hosts is added below. The form was available in English and French for expatriates and partners and in Dutch for hosts. The Dutch version had some minor differences to tailor it to this group; for example, the hosts were asked to report their fluency in both English and French. The French and the Dutch version are available upon request.

Matching form

I would like to ask you to fill in the next couple of questions, so that I can bring you into contact with the right host. I will let you know after filling in the first questionnaire of this project whether you will be put in touch with a host immediately or after nine months. Your answers are strictly confidential and will only be used for the research.

Thank you very much!

Marian van Bakel MA
Radboud University Nijmegen

1. What is your personal code? _____________________
2. What is the date of today? ______________________
3. What is your partner’s personal code? ____________ O not applicable
4. What is the date of your birth? __________________
5. What is the date of birth of your partner? ____________ O not applicable
6. Are you:
   O Married
   O Single
   O Widowed
   O Separated
   O Living with a partner
   O Having a steady relationship, not living together
7. What was the highest level of schooling that you completed?
   O Some secondary school or less
   O Secondary school graduate
   O Some college or post secondary school classes
   O College graduate
   O Postgraduate or beyond
8. What was the highest level of schooling that your partner completed?
   O Some secondary school or less
   O Secondary school graduate
   O Some college or post secondary school classes
   O College graduate
   O Postgraduate or beyond
   O Not applicable
9. To what degree do you master Dutch?
   0 I speak it poorly
   0 I speak it sufficiently well to be understood
   0 I speak it reasonably well
   0 I speak it well
   0 I speak it fluently

10. To what degree does your partner master Dutch?
    0 he/she speaks it poorly
    0 he/she speaks it sufficiently well to be understood
    0 he/she speaks it reasonably well
    0 he/she speaks it well
    0 he/she speaks it fluently
    0 not applicable

11. Which means of transportation are available to you?
    0 Car  0 Bicycle  0 Public transportation

12. How far are you prepared to travel to meet the host? (I will try to bring you into contact with a host who lives near you)
    0 0-15 minutes
    0 15-30 minutes
    0 longer

13. What are your (and your partner’s) hobbies?
    0 Being active (walking, riding a bicycle, etc)
    0 Culture (theatre, cinema, museum, concert)
    0 Food
    0 Going to a pub/café
    0 Sports
    0 Dance
    0 Other _________________________________

14. What would you prefer to do with the host? _____________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________

15. Do you have pets?
    0 yes, I have ________________________________ 0 no

16. Do you or your partner smoke?
    0 yes  0 no

17. Are there other important things to take into account when matching you to a host, for example allergies? _______________________________________________________________________________

You can send this form back to me using the envelope provided (no stamp needed).

Thank you very much!
Appendix 5  Participant communication

The present appendix lists the various letters and emails that were sent to the participants – expatriates, partners and hosts – during their participation in the project, in chronological order. The letters and emails for expatriates were also available in French, but are given here only in English because of space limitations. The French versions are available upon request. The communication with the hosts was done in Dutch; an English translation is provided here.

The communication was adjusted according to whether the expatriate had a partner or not, and whether they had indicated on the registration form that they would like to fill in the questionnaire online or on paper. The examples that are provided here are for expatriate and partners who preferred to fill in the questionnaire online.

This appendix contains the following items:

Appendix 5a: Communication with expatriates and partners

1. Confirmation of participation
   a. Letter
   b. Enclosure with more information on the project
   c. Letter of informed consent
2. Personal code, matching form and first questionnaire
3. Assignment to experimental or control group
   a. Email to experimental group
   b. Email to control group
4. Diary participation
5. Introduction to host
6. Second questionnaire: five months
7. Third questionnaire: nine months
   a. Email to experimental group
   b. Email to control group

Appendix 5b: Communication with hosts

1. Confirmation of participation
   a. Letter
   b. Enclosure with more information on the project
   c. Letter of informed consent
2. Personal code and matching form
   a. Personal code and matching form
   b. Matching form and contact with expatriate
3. Contact with an expatriate
4. Questionnaire after nine months
Appendix 5a Communication with expatriates and partners

First, the communication with expatriates and partners is listed in chronological order.

1. Confirmation of participation (expatriates and partners)

Upon reception of the registration form (appendix 3), a letter thanking the participants for their interest in the project was sent to their home address. This letter (1a) contained an enclosure with more detailed information about the project (1b) as well as a letter of informed consent (1c), which needed to be sent back to confirm their participation in the project.

1a Letter

[name and address]

Re: project expatriates

Nijmegen, [date]

Dear [names expatriate and partner],

Thank you very much for your registration in the project about the experiences of expatriates in the Netherlands. Enclosed you will find more information on the content of the project and what we expect of you.

You will also find a letter of agreement. I would appreciate it very much if you would complete this and send it back to me as soon as possible, using the envelope provided (no stamp needed!). By signing this letter of agreement you indicate that you understand the content of this project and that you are willing to participate.

Once I receive this agreement letter I will send you an email with your personal codes. This code needs to be noted on every questionnaire that you fill in. In the same email I will invite you to fill in a matching form at the website [link], so as to be able to put you in touch with a host with the same interests etc. Finally, I will also ask both of you to fill in the first of three questionnaires of this project at the same website. After completion of this questionnaire, I will let you know when you will be put in touch with a host (directly, or after the nine months of the project).

Do you still have questions after reading this letter and the enclosure? Please email me at [email address]. An overview of the most important results of this project will be sent to you at the end of this project.

Thank you very much for your participation and I hope you will enjoy your stay in the Netherlands!

Yours sincerely,
Marian van Bakel, Radboud University Nijmegen
Would you like to get in touch with the Dutch?

Content of the project
Some expatriates experience difficulties when they are sent abroad on an international assignment. For those who come to the Netherlands, friendship with Dutch people may help the adjustment process, but many have found it difficult to make the initial contact with the Dutch. The aim of this project is to put expatriates and their partners from Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand with French or English as a first language in touch with a Dutch host, either during the first nine months of their stay in the Netherlands (when the research takes place), or afterwards. The idea is that you to get together regularly (at least once a month), to go for a drink, for example, to visit a museum etc... It is a unique opportunity to get to know the Dutch and their culture!

What we expect of you
Enclosed you find a letter of agreement by which you both can indicate that you understand the content of this project and that you are willing to participate. Please send this signed letter back to me as soon as possible (no stamp needed). Only after I receive this agreement can I put you in touch with a host. Once I have received this letter I will send you an email with your personal code and that of your partner. This code has to be noted on every questionnaire that you fill in. In the same email I will also ask you to fill in (together with your partner) the matching form at the website, so as to be able to put you in touch with a host with the same interests etc.

During the nine months of this project, you will be asked to fill in a questionnaire at three points: just before meeting the host, and after 5 and 9 months. Each of these questionnaires will take approximately 25 minutes. It is important for you and your partner to fill in the questionnaires individually. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and will only be used for this research. You will receive a notice with a password by email when it is time for you to fill out the next questionnaire at the website.

In addition, some of the partners will be asked to keep a digital diary once a week. To this end, I have created an email with a diary outline which helps the partner to write down their experiences. The partner will be asked to write about their experiences in the Netherlands. This diary will give valuable information about the adjustment process of a partner of an expatriate.

Contact with the host
I would like to stress that only half of the expatriates and partners will, in the first instance, be put in touch with a Dutch host. This is to be able to compare the two groups to see whether contact with a host is useful. After filling in the first of three questionnaires, I will let you know whether you will be put in touch immediately with a host. If this is not the case and you are still interested, you will have the opportunity after nine months to come into contact with a host. These nine months will probably go faster than you think.

The contact between you and the host will be established through an email with a short introduction of both of you. It is up to you and the host to decide what to do and when. It is expected that you meet at least once a month, and preferably twice in the first month to get to know each other as soon as possible. This is important for the project to be successful. You can find some ideas for activities on the website.

If you have any questions, please contact me at [email address]. An overview of the most important results will be sent to you at the end of this project. I hope you will enjoy your stay in the Netherlands as well as the contact with the host!

Marian van Bakel, Radboud University Nijmegen
1c Letter of informed consent

Agreement

Through the website [link] you have indicated that you would like to participate in this project about the experiences of expatriates with French or English as first language who come to the Netherlands. You have been able to read more information about this project in a separate letter.

Please indicate on this page if you are willing to participate in this project or not. If you would like to participate, you need to sign this. Please send this letter back as soon as possible using the enclosed envelope (no stamp needed).

☐ Yes, I will participate in the project about the experiences of expatriates with French and English as first language who come to the Netherlands and who are put in touch with a Dutch host.

- I have received enough information about this project. I have read the written information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I have had sufficient time to think about participating. I understand the scope and goal of this project.
- I have understood that participation in this project is voluntary and that I can withdraw from this project at any time, without giving a reason.
- I understand that results of this project will be published. I agree to this, on the condition that my privacy is protected.

I hereby consent to participate in this project.

Date: __________________

Name: _________________  Name partner: _________________

Signature: _________________  Signature: _________________

☐ No, I will not participate in this project about the experiences of expatriates with French or English as first language who are put in touch with a Dutch host.

Name: _________________

2. Personal code, matching form and first questionnaire (expatriates and partners)

When the agreement letter was sent back, participants were asked by email to fill in a form with questions (e.g. about hobbies) that could help to match the expatriate and partner to a suitable host (appendix 4). This same email contained a request to fill in the first questionnaire of the project.
Dear [name expatriate and partner],

Thank you very much for returning the agreement letter. Based on this letter I have given you a personal code. Please be so kind to note this code on every questionnaire that you fill in so that I can keep track of the questionnaires.

The personal code of [name expatriate] is: [personal code expatriate]
The personal code of [name partner] is: [personal code partner]

Matching form
I would also like to ask you to fill in the ‘matching’ form jointly, so as to be able to put you in touch with a host with the same interests etc. You can find this matching form at [link] and click on ‘Matching’.

First questionnaire
And last but not least I would like to ask you both to independently fill in the first of three questionnaires of this project. This will take about 25 minutes of your time. You can fill in the questionnaire at [link]:
- click on ‘Survey’
- [name expatriate]: click on ‘Questionnaires for expatriates’ -> choose ‘Questionnaire 1’
- [name partner]: click on ‘Questionnaires for partners’ -> choose ‘Questionnaire 1’
The password for both questionnaires is: Erasmus

After filling in this first questionnaire I will let you know whether you will be put in touch with a host immediately. If this is not the case and you are still interested, you will have the opportunity to come into contact with a host after nine months.

Yours sincerely,
Marian van Bakel, Radboud University Nijmegen

Desiderius Erasmus [1466-1536]
The Dutch humanist, Desiderius Erasmus, was born at Rotterdam, apparently on October 28, 1466, the illegitimate son of a physician’s daughter by a man who afterwards turned monk. He was called Gerrit Gerritszoon (Dutch for Gerard Gerardson) but himself adopted the tautological double name by which he is known. His most famous book is The Praise of Folly (1509). [link]

3. Assignment to experimental or control group (expatriates and partners)

After completing the first questionnaire, expatriates and partners were informed either that they would be put in touch with a host immediately (this became the experimental group), or after a delay of nine months (this became the control group).
3a Experimental group

Email subject: Project expatriates: host

Dear [name expatriate and partner],

I am happy be able to tell you that you will shortly be introduced to a host. [short description of the expatriate, e.g. nationality, age, family situation, place of residence].

I will soon send an email addressed to both you and the host to introduce you to each other. You can then agree to meet for the first time. But first I would like to ask you to send me a couple of lines in which you introduce yourself, to facilitate the introduction to the host – could you please send this to me?

Yours sincerely,
Marian van Bakel, Radboud University Nijmegen

3b Control group

Email subject: Project expatriates: host

Dear [name expatriate and partner],

The selection of participation of people either to be put in touch with a Dutch family or in the control group is done randomly, not by any personal choice or criteria. In this case, I am sorry to have to tell you that you will not be put in touch with a host immediately. I know it can be very disappointing to be in the control group, but this group is essential for the research; and if you are still interested, you will have the opportunity to come into contact with a host after nine months. These nine months will probably go faster than you think.

In five months you will receive another email asking you to fill in the second questionnaire and after nine months a request to fill in the third and last questionnaire of this project (which will both only take about 20 - 25 minutes). After you have filled in this third questionnaire, you will be asked whether you are still interested in getting in touch with a host.

In the meantime, however, it is important if this project is to succeed that you fill in all three questionnaires. By comparing those expatriates who have contact with a host with those who do not, we can examine whether such contact helps the transition to a new country. And that is what this project is about! Both groups are essential to the project.

Thank you very much for your participation. It will help not only the research, but also fellow expats and their families.

I hope you enjoy your stay in the Netherlands!

Marian van Bakel, Radboud University Nijmegen
4. Diary participation (expatriates and partners)

Directly after informing the expatriates and partners about whether they would be put in touch with a host or not, the partner was asked to participate in a diary study.

Email subject: Project expatriates: your experiences in the Netherlands

Dear [name partner],

As partner of an expatriate participating in this project, I would like to ask you if you would be willing to keep a short weekly diary of your experiences in the Netherlands. This entails that you would write me an email once a week during the nine months of this project. This email can be as long (or short) as you want. If you are on holiday during that period, that is no problem, just let me know so that I do not send reminders when you are away.

To facilitate this I have created a diary outline that will be emailed to you every week. This outline contains some questions that may help you write down your experiences. This will give valuable information about the adjustment process of a partner of an expatriate.

I would very much appreciate it if you would also participate in this part of the project and I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,
Marian van Bakel, Radboud University Nijmegen

5. Introduction to host (expatriates and partners)

The participants were put in touch with each other via email. This email contained a short introduction from both parties to facilitate the initial meeting.

Email subject: Project expatriates: introduction

Dear [name expatriate, partner and host]

I have great pleasure in introducing you to one another. Please find below some more information about both of you.

Now it is up to you to get in touch and make an appointment to meet each other. For the project to be successful, you should meet at least once a month, and preferably twice in the first month to get to know each other better as soon as possible. You can find some ideas for activities at [link].

I am very pleased to make this introduction and I hope you will enjoy your time together.

Kind regards,
Marian van Bakel, Radboud University Nijmegen

[introduction expatriate and partner] and [introduction host]
6. Second questionnaire: five months (expatriates and partners)

When it was time to fill in the second questionnaire an email was sent to the participants to ask them to fill in this questionnaire. The email to the control group was slightly adjusted to link to the questionnaires for expatriates without host.

Email subject: Project expatriates : second questionnaire

Dear [name expatriate and partner],

How are you? Five months have passed and I would like to ask you to individually fill in the second questionnaire of this project. This will take about 15 minutes of your time. You can fill in the questionnaire at [link] -> Survey

[Name expatriate]
- Go to ‘Questionnaires for expatriates’
- Choose ‘For expatriates with a host: Questionnaire 2’
  Password of the questionnaire is : Leeuwenhoek
  Your personal code is: [personal code]

[Name partner]
- Go to ‘Questionnaires for partners’
- Choose ‘For partners with a host: Questionnaire 2’
  Password of the questionnaire is : Leeuwenhoek
  Your personal code is: [personal code]

I would appreciate it very much if you would fill in this questionnaire within the next week – exactly five months after you started in this project.

Thank you very much for your participation!

Marian van Bakel, Radboud University Nijmegen

Antony van Leeuwenhoek was an unlikely scientist. A tradesman of Delft, Holland, he came from a family of tradesmen, had no fortune, received no higher education or university degrees, and knew no languages other than his native Dutch. This would have been enough to exclude him from the scientific community of his time completely. Yet with skill, diligence, an endless curiosity, and an open mind free of the scientific dogma of his day, Leeuwenhoek succeeded in making some of the most important discoveries in the history of biology. It was he who discovered bacteria, free-living and parasitic microscopic protists, sperm cells, blood cells, microscopic nematodes and rotifers, and much more. His researches, which were widely circulated, opened up an entire world of microscopic life to the awareness of scientists. [link]
7. Third questionnaire: nine months (expatriates and partners)

When the project ended after nine months, the participants were asked to fill in the final questionnaire. In addition, the participants in the control group were asked whether they were still interested in being put in touch with a local host. This contact would take place after they had filled out the third questionnaire and thereby completed their participation in the project. Their subsequent contact with a host was no longer part of the study.

7a Experimental group

Email subject: Project expatriates: final questionnaire

Dear [name expatriate and partner],

I hope this email finds you well. It is already nine months ago that I have put you in touch with your host. I would like to ask you to fill in the third questionnaire of this project. This questionnaire will take approximately 25 minutes to complete.

You can fill in the questionnaire at [link]:

-[Name expatriate]
  - Click on ‘Survey’
  - Click on ‘Questionnaires for expatriates’
  - Choose ‘For expats with a host: Questionnaire 3’
    The password for this questionnaire is: Rembrandt
    Your personal code is: [personal code]

-[Name partner]
  - Click on ‘Survey’
  - Click on ‘Questionnaires for partners’
  - Choose ‘For partners with a host: Questionnaire 3’
    The password for this questionnaire is: Rembrandt
    Your personal code is: [personal code]

I would appreciate it very much if you would fill in this questionnaire this week – exactly nine months after you started in this project.

Thank you very much for your participation!
Marian van Bakel, Radboud University Nijmegen

Rembrandt van Rijn [1606-1669]
In 2006 it has been 400 years ago that Rembrandt, Holland’s greatest 17th-century painter, was born. Rembrandt, son of a Leiden miller, was born on July 15, 1606. His parents expected him to enjoy a university education, however, Rembrandt was to choose a different career. He was apprenticed to Leiden master Jacob van Swanenburgh and had his first studio in this city. In Leiden he made his first historical paintings and self-portraits. [link]
Email subject: Project expatriates: final questionnaire

Dear [name expatriate and partner],

I hope this email finds you well. It is already nine months ago that you have started in this project and I would like to ask you to individually fill in the third and last questionnaire of this project. This questionnaire will take approximately 25 minutes to complete. I would appreciate it very much if you would fill in this questionnaire this week – exactly nine months after you started in this project.

You can fill in the questionnaire at [link].

[Name expatriate]
- Click on ‘Survey’
- Click on ‘Questionnaires for expatriates’
- Choose ‘For expats without a host: Questionnaire 3’
  The password for this questionnaire is: Rembrandt
  Your personal code is: [personal code]

[Name partner]
- Click on ‘Survey’
- Click on ‘Questionnaires for partners’
- Choose ‘For partners without a host: Questionnaire 3’
  The password for this questionnaire is: Rembrandt
  Your personal code is: [personal code]

Now that the project is almost done, I would like to ask you if you are still interested to be put in touch with a host? Please let me know as soon as possible, so that I can find a host for you.

Thank you very much for your participation!

Marian van Bakel, Radboud University Nijmegen
Appendix 5b Communication with hosts

We now turn to list the communication with the Dutch hosts, in chronological order.

1. Confirmation of participation (hosts)

The registration procedure for hosts was similar to that for expatriates. Hosts also received a letter of informed consent that they needed to sign to confirm their participation in the project. This letter (1a) contained an enclosure with more detailed information about the project (1b) as well as a letter of informed consent (1c). These letters were slightly adjusted when the host was single and when they preferred to fill in the questionnaires on paper.

1a Letter

[name and address]

Re: project expatriates

Nijmegen, [date]

Dear [name],

Thank you very much for agreeing to take part in this project that deals with the experiences in the Netherlands of expatriates whose first language is French or English. Enclosed you will find further information about the precise nature of the project and what we expect of you.

You will also find enclosed a letter of agreement. I would be very grateful if you could fill this in as soon as possible and return it to me in the enclosed envelope (postage stamp is not necessary). By returning this letter you and your partner confirm that you know what the project is about and that you take part in it of your own free will. When I get this letter I will send you an email with your personal code and that of your partner. You should note this code on all the questionnaires that you complete. In the same email I will ask you to fill in a matching form on Internet so that I can match you with an expatriate who shares the same interests etc.

If, after reading this letter and the enclosures you have any questions, please feel free to mail me [email address]. You will be given an overview of the results of the project when it ends.

Thank you once again for your cooperation!

Kind regards,

Marian van Bakel MA, Radboud University Nijmegen
Have you always wanted to get to know an expatriate?

What the project entails
Some expatriates run into problems when they are sent to a foreign country. Contact with people from the host country can help the expatriate and his or her partner to adjust, but sometimes it can be difficult to come into contact with people, in this case the Dutch. For this reason I am bringing French and English speaking expatriates into contact with Dutch people for nine months at the start of their stay in the Netherlands. The intention is that, as local host, you do things with the expatriate (and his or her partner) on a regular basis. You could decide to take them to see the Delta Works or the cheese market in Alkmaar, or you could just meet them in a pub or go to the cinema together.

As local host we expect you to make regular appointments, at least once a month. It is possible that once you have sent back the agreement letter I can put in touch with an expatriate (and his or her partner) immediately, but it could a few months. In any case I will get in touch with you as soon as I can put you in contact with an expatriate. However, I am afraid I cannot guarantee that I will be able to put you in touch with an expatriate.

What we expect of you
Firstly I would ask you to send the letter of agreement in the enclosed envelope. When I have received this letter you will get an email with your personal code and that of your partner, if he/she is also taking part in the project. You should fill in this code on all the questionnaires you complete. In the same mail I will also ask you (with your partner) to fill in the matching form so that I can match you to an expatriate who has the same sort of interests etc.

At the end of the project you will receive a questionnaire, which takes about 10 minutes to complete. It is important that you and your partner, if he/she is taking part in the project, fill in this questionnaire individually. Your answers will be treated as confidential and will be used only for this research.

Contact with the expatriate
The contact with the expatriate and partner will be established via email. It is then up to you and the expatriate (and his or her partner) to decide what you will do and to make an appointment. You are expected to make at least one appointment per month and preferably two in the first month so that you can get to know each other better. This regular contact is important for the success of the project.

If, after reading this information, you have any questions you can reach me at [email address]. I will send you an overview of the results at the end of the project.

Many thanks for your cooperation and I hope you have a good and enjoyable contact with the expatriate!

Marian van Bakel MA, Radboud University Nijmegen
1c Letter of informed consent

Agreement

Through the website [link] you have indicated that you would like to participate in this project about the experiences of expatriates with French or English as first language who come to the Netherlands. You have been able to read more information about this project in a separate letter.

Please indicate on this page if you are willing to participate in this project or not. If you would like to participate, you need to sign this. Please send this letter back as soon as possible using the enclosed envelope (no stamp needed).

O Yes, I will participate in the project about the experiences of expatriates with French and English as first language who come to the Netherlands and who are put in touch with a Dutch host.

- I have received enough information about this project. I have read the written information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I have had sufficient time to think about participating. I understand the scope and goal of this project.

- I have understood that participation in this project is voluntary and that I can withdraw from this project at any time, without giving a reason.

- I understand that results of this project will be published. I agree to this, on the condition that my privacy is protected.

I hereby consent to participate in this project.

Date: ________________

Name: ________________ Name partner: ________________

Signature: ________________ Signature: ________________

O No, I will not participate in this project about the experiences of expatriates with French or English as first language who are put in touch with a Dutch host.

Name: ________________
2. Personal code and matching form (hosts)

Upon reception of the letter of informed consent, the hosts were asked to fill in the matching form (Appendix 4) with questions to be able to match them with the expatriate (2a). They then received an email thanking them for this information and informing them that the researcher would be in touch again as soon as a suitable expatriate was found (2b).

2a Personal code and matching form

Email subject: Project expatriates: personal code and request to complete matching form

Dear [name hosts]

Thank you very much for the letter of agreement. On the basis of this I have given you both a personal code. You should note this code on all questionnaires you complete.

The personal code of [name host 1] is: [personal code]
The personal code of [name host 2] is: [personal code]

I would also like to ask you both to complete the matching form on my website. If I have this information I am better able to match you with an expatriate with the same interests etc. The matching form can be found at [link].

When you have completed the form together I will get in touch with you again.

Kind regards,
Marian van Bakel, Radboud University Nijmegen

2b Matching form and contact with expatriate

Email subject: Thanks for completing the matching form

Dear [name hosts]

Thank you very much for completing the matching form. As soon as I find a suitable expatriate for you I will get in touch with you. Hopefully this will be very soon, but it could take a few months. I am afraid I cannot guarantee that I will be able to put you in touch with an expatriate, as this depends on the expatriates who enrol for the project.

In any case I will get in touch with you as soon as I can bring you in contact with an expatriate.

Kind regards,
Marian van Bakel, Radboud University Nijmegen
3. Contact with an expatriate (hosts)

As soon as the expatriate and partner had confirmed and were asked to fill in the first questionnaire; the prospective host was informed of the match via email.

*Email subject: Project expatriates*

Dear [name hosts],

I have good news for you: I will soon be able to put you in touch with an expatriate. [short description of expatriate, e.g. nationality, age, family situation, place of residence].

One question: in order to make the introduction easier would you send me a couple of sentences (in English) introducing yourself? Many thanks.

Kind regards,
Marian van Bakel, Radboud University Nijmegen

4. Questionnaire after nine months (hosts)

After nine months, hosts were asked to fill in a questionnaire to conclude their participation in the study.

*Email subject: Project expatriates: request to complete final questionnaire*

Dear [name hosts],

It is nine months since I put you in contact with an expatriate. I hope you have had a good time and that you will remain in contact. To complete the project I would like to ask you both to complete a questionnaire. This will take about 10 minutes and can be found at [link].

The personal code of [name host 1] is: [personal code]
The personal code of [name host 2] is: [personal code]
The password of this questionnaire is: Rembrandt

I would be extremely grateful if you could complete the questionnaire this week – exactly nine months from the start of the project.

Thank you very much,

Marian van Bakel, Radboud University Nijmegen
### Appendix 6 Descriptives of expatriates and partners, with and without host

Table IV Mean scores on the Adjustment and Performance variables of expatriates with or without host (based on the data without multiple imputation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>0 months With host</th>
<th>5 months With host</th>
<th>0 months Without host</th>
<th>5 months Without host</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with Life</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Health</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Health</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociocultural Adjustment</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Adjustment</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4.77</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Adjustment</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assess own Performance</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most Recent Performance Evaluation</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>80.75</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to Terminate Assignment</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most Recent Performance Evaluation</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>80.75</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A: on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)
B: on a scale of 1 (low) to 4 (high)
C: on a scale of 1 (low) to 7 (high)
D: as a percentage (0 – 100%)
Table V Mean scores on the Adjustment variables of partners with or without host

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>0 months</th>
<th>5 months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With host</td>
<td>Without host</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with Life(^A)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Health(^A)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Health(^A)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociocultural Adjustment(^B)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Adjustment(^C)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction Adjustment(^C)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9 months

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>With host</th>
<th>Without host</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with Life(^A)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Health(^A)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Health(^A)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociocultural Adjustment(^B)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Adjustment(^C)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction Adjustment(^C)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C: on a scale of 1 (low) to 7 (high)
### Table VI Mean scores on the Social Support variables of expatriates with or without a host (based on the data without multiple imputation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>0 months</th>
<th>5 months</th>
<th>9 months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With host</td>
<td>Without host</td>
<td>With host</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n M SD</td>
<td>n M SD</td>
<td>n M SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Host National Access</strong></td>
<td>32 3.59 1.46</td>
<td>32 3.44 1.50</td>
<td>32 4.03 1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Host National Social Support</strong></td>
<td>- - -</td>
<td>- - -</td>
<td>33 9.93 3.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A: on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)  
B: range from 1 (low) to 25 (high)

### Table VII Mean scores on the Social Support variables of partners with or without a host

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>0 months</th>
<th>5 months</th>
<th>9 months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With host</td>
<td>Without host</td>
<td>With host</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n M SD</td>
<td>n M SD</td>
<td>n M SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Host National Access</strong></td>
<td>10 2.50 1.27</td>
<td>13 2.23 1.09</td>
<td>10 2.90 1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Host National Social Support</strong></td>
<td>- - -</td>
<td>- - -</td>
<td>10 10.00 7.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A: on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)  
B: range from 1 (low) to 25 (high)
Table VIII Mean scores on the Intercultural Communication Competence variables of expatriates with or without host on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high) (based on the data without multiple imputation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>0 months</th>
<th>9 months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With host</td>
<td>Without host</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openmindedness</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Initiative</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Stability</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Empathy</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table IX Mean scores on the Intercultural Communication Competence variables of partners with or without host on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>0 months</th>
<th>9 months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With host</td>
<td>Without host</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openmindedness</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Initiative</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Stability</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Empathy</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 7  Overview of expatriates and partners

Table X shows the expatriates (E) and partners (P) who participated in the research, whether they were assigned to the experimental group or to the control group, whether they kept a diary, and whether they or their host were interviewed. The expatriates and partners were coded according to the order in which they started in the research. If the partner also participated in the research, he or she was identified with the same number (e.g. P2 is the partner of E2). These codes are used to identify quotes throughout the dissertation.

Table X Overview of participants with code, assignment to either experimental or control group, and participation in interview and diary part of the study (E = expatriate; P = partner)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Host (expatriate)</th>
<th>Interview (partner)</th>
<th>Interview (host)(^{32})</th>
<th>Diary (expatriate)</th>
<th>Diary (partner)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E2 + P2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E3 + P3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E4 + P4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E5</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E6</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E7 + P7</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E8</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>E9</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E10</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E11 + P11</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>E12</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>E14</td>
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\(^{32}\) The interview has taken place with the host of the expatriate.
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\(^{33}\) This Table is a continuation of Table X on the previous page.

\(^{34}\) The interview has taken place with the host of the expatriate.

\(^{35}\) A number in grey means that the partner was removed from the study because he or she had never met their host.
Table X Overview of participants with code, assignment to either experimental or control group, and participation in interview and diary part of the study (E = expatriate; P = partner)\textsuperscript{36}

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\textsuperscript{36} This Table is a continuation of Table X on the previous page.

\textsuperscript{37} The interview has taken place with the host of the expatriate.
Appendix 8 Interviews

This appendix shows the interview schedule that was used for the interviews. Similar ones in Dutch and French were used for the interviews that were held with French expatriates and partners and with Dutch hosts. These interview schedules are available upon request.

Interview schedule English

Introduction
0 goal of interview
0 background expat

Contact with the host
0 first contact?
0 how did it develop?
0 what did you do?
0 email, phone?
0 who took initiative?
0 what did you expect?
0 was it different?
0 what did you like most?
0 what did you like least?
0 anything else that struck you?

Usefulness
0 do you think the contact has helped you in any way? why, or why not?
   - examples
   - practical help?
   - to ask questions on Dutch culture?
   - professional work relations?
   - to have a Dutch family to meet up with?
   - what was most important?
0 do you think this could help in general?
   - necessary conditions?
   - type and attitude of host?
   - when to join the project?
   - frequency of contact?
   - would you participate again?
   - would you recommend it?
Appendix 9 Diary

This appendix lists the emails with the diary outline that were sent out to the diary participants every week, including the reminders.

Initial email with diary outline

Subject
Your experiences in the Netherlands (week 1 of project)

Email
Dear [name participant],

Thank you very much for agreeing to tell us about your experiences in the Netherlands each week. To facilitate this for you I have created an outline which will give you a framework in which to write down your experiences. Please hit the reply-button, indicating your answer with personal comments, and send it back on Monday at the latest. If you have questions, please contact me at [email address].

I am looking forward to reading your stories!

Thank you very much,

Marian van Bakel MA
Radboud University Nijmegen

************************

Your experiences

I would like you to write down your impressions of the past week. Below are some questions that may help you, but don’t feel like you have to stick to these. Please note your experiences in the space below the questions.

- Has anything particularly caught your attention the last week in your contact with the Dutch?
- Have you met the host the past week?
  - If so, what have you done and what was your impression?
- How did you feel generally in the Netherlands the past week?
- How are your contacts with the Dutch progressing?
- Did you think the past week at any point: “I want to go home!”?

<<Space for answer>>
**Subsequent emails with outline**

**Subject**
Your experiences of this week (week ... code ...)

**Email**
Dear [name participant],

Thank you very much for sending us your experiences of last week. Below this email you find an empty diary outline that you can use to do the same this week. Please hit the reply-button, indicating your answer in the space below. Please send me your experiences next Monday at the latest.

I am looking forward to reading your stories!

Thank you very much,

Marian van Bakel MA
Radboud University Nijmegen

************************

*This email is then followed by the same questions as in the first outline.*

**Reminders**

**Subject**
Reminder diary outline (week ..., code ...)

**Email**
Dear [name participant],

I would like to remind you that I have not yet received the account of your experiences of last week. I would very much appreciate it if you would send them to me as soon as possible, in any case before Thursday morning, when the new diary outlines for the current week are sent out. An empty diary outline is included below this email.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Marian van Bakel MA
Radboud University Nijmegen

************************

*This email is then followed by the same questions as in the first outline.*
References


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*References*


Summary

Introduction
Due to the high direct and indirect costs of international assignments the literature on the subject gives a great deal of attention to causes of their success or failure. One of the most important causes of expatriate failure is cultural differences. There are many difficulties associated with a cross-cultural transition and one of the ways to deal with these difficulties is to get in touch with nationals of the host country (Brewster & Pickard, 1994; Church, 1982; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Parker & McEvoy, 1993). The present study investigates whether facilitating interaction with host nationals through putting expatriates and their partners in touch with the Dutch helps them deal with the difficulties of their sojourn in the Netherlands. This is especially relevant since Europe, and especially the Netherlands, was found to be the most difficult region to make friends, according to the recent Expat Explorer Survey (HSBC, 2010).

Adjustment and performance
Whether an expatriate is successful does not depend only on his or her job performance, but also on his or her adjustment to the new country. Research shows that this is a central factor for the success of international assignments (Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer, & Luk, 2005). However, research into the effectiveness of expatriates often focuses only on adjustment, because it is assumed that this has an impact on expatriate job performance (Mol, Born, & Van der Molen, 2005). For that reason, this study includes both adjustment and performance to get a picture that is as complete as possible of the level of success of the expatriate assignment. Chapter 2 discusses these two concepts in more detail.

The measurement of job performance during an international assignment is complicated “owing to the subjectivity and the diversity of environments, both external as well as internal” (Harvey & Moeller, 2009, p. 283). It also leads to practical issues for researchers. As a result, expatriate performance is usually measured through such criteria as early return. As this is an extreme form of failure, another criterion that is often used is psychological withdrawal (thoughts and plans to quit the assignment) (Shaffer & Harrison, 1998). This research uses several instruments (Desire to Terminate the Assignment, Assess Own Performance and Most Recent Actual Performance Evaluation) in an attempt to cover the concept of job performance more fully.

With regard to Adjustment the present study uses the two most common models: the ‘Model of the Acculturation process’ (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001), frequently used in cross-cultural psychology, and the ‘Framework of International Adjustment’ (Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991), which is common in International Human Resource Management. The first model distinguishes two aspects of Adjustment: Psychological and Sociocultural Adjustment, while the second model contends that Adjustment has three
aspects: General, Interaction and Work Adjustment. The effect of contact with a local host is examined for these five Adjustment variables.

**Benefits of contact with a local host**

Contact with host nationals has several benefits, which are detailed in chapter 3: for example, one is better adjusted to interaction with host nationals (Johnson, Kristof-Brown, Van Vianen, De Pater, & Klein, 2003) and to the new environment (Brewster & Pickard, 1994). The above mentioned Model of the Acculturation Process (Ward et al., 2001) shows that there are two ways in which contact with a local host can contribute to the success of the international assignment. Interaction with host nationals could help expatriates and partners to learn about the cultural rules and conventions of the host country. Host nationals could also provide social support when expatriates and partners face the challenge of rebuilding their social network upon arrival in the host country. Finally, contact with a local host might also benefit the organisation itself if the local host fulfils some of the Host Country National Liaison roles (Vance, Vaiman, & Andersen, 2009) and thereby facilitates effective knowledge management. It is advisable for organisations to encourage their expatriates to get in touch with host nationals. This, however, is not always easy. Contact with a local host is a way in which this barrier can be overcome.

**Research questions**

This longitudinal study examined whether contact with a local host had a positive impact on the success of the international assignment of Western expatriates and their partners with English or French as their first language in the Netherlands. The first research question is:

**RQ1** Does contact with a local host contribute to the success of an expatriate assignment?

The analyses with regard to this first research question pertained to four concepts: Adjustment, Performance, Social Support and Intercultural Communication Competence. In chapter 3 hypotheses and research questions are formulated – for each concept – and their theoretical bases examined.

Furthermore, the present study combined quantitative and qualitative methodologies to explore how to improve such an intervention in such a way that a local host can contribute optimally to expatriate success:

**RQ2** To what extent does quality of contact between expatriate, partner and local host have an effect on the success of the expatriate assignment?

**RQ3** Which aspects promote high quality contact between expatriate, partner and host?
Methodology

The methodology of this study is outlined in chapter 4. The main study was a randomised controlled experiment to examine the longitudinal effects of contact with a local host (RQ1): thirty-three expatriates, of whom ten with partner, were put in touch with a Dutch host with whom they had contact for a period of nine months (experimental group); another thirty-two expatriates, of whom thirteen with partner, did not have contact with a host (control group). Assignment to experimental conditions was randomised and at baseline level, after five and nine months expatriates and partners filled in a questionnaire. This questionnaire contained validated instruments that measured adjustment, performance, social support and intercultural communication competence. The local host was a family, a single person or a couple with whom the expatriate and partner undertook a great variety of activities, from dinner or drinks to more touristic activities such as visiting a whiskey brewery, a local town or even walking the mudflats in the north of the Netherlands.

Qualitative methodology was added to gain more insight into the phenomenon under study (RQ2 and RQ3): open-ended questions about the contact with the host were added to the questionnaires, and interviews were held with ten expatriates, four partners and five hosts. Eight partners and three expatriates of the experimental group kept a weekly diary throughout the project. The researcher kept in touch with the host on a regular basis to enquire how the contact was going; these emails were also taken into account in the qualitative analyses.

Does a local host matter?

With the first research question the study examined whether contact with a local host had an impact on Adjustment, Performance, Social Support and Intercultural Communication Competence (RQ1). A local host had an impact on all except Performance, suggesting that contact with a local host primarily affected the private domain.

First, a local host increased the comfort expatriates and partners felt with interacting with host nationals (Interaction Adjustment), this was especially marked for expatriates if they did not have a partner. No effect of a local host was found for the other Adjustment variables (Psychological Adjustment, Sociocultural Adjustment, General Adjustment and Work Adjustment).

Second, with regard to Social Support, a local host buffered a decrease on access to host nationals (Host National Access) for female expatriates, and expatriates with a host received more social support from host nationals (Host National Social Support) than expatriates without host. Also, it was possible for a local host to become a strong tie, a friend, for both expatriates and partners (Friendship), and the long term potential of contact with a local host was shown in the fact that about one third of expatriates in the experimental group kept in contact with their host for at least two years (Contact Maintenance).

Third, a local host affected all three aspects of Intercultural Communication Competence: knowledge (Knowledge), attitude (Openmindedness) and two of the (personality-based)
intercultural skills (*Social Initiative* and *Emotional Stability*). Expatriates and partners were able to learn about Dutch culture from their host (*Knowledge*). In addition, a local host buffered a decrease both with regard to *Openmindedness* and *Social Initiative*, although in the case of *Openmindedness* only for expatriates with partner. With regard to *Emotional Stability*, contrary to the expectations, partners *without* host increased on this variable, whereas those *with* host remained stable.

These findings suggest that contact with a local host is not a panacea for all the difficulties faced by expatriates and partners on international assignments, but that it might be particularly useful, for example, for expatriates who have to deal with host national colleagues and clients on a day-to-day basis.

Only limited effect of a local host was found for the partners of expatriates. This might be due to the fact that the intervention was designed with the expatriate specifically in mind, so that it might have been less effective for partners of expatriates. An important difference between expatriates and partners was that the partners in this research did not have a job, which means that they might benefit more from contact with a local host if it could (also) take place during the day. Another possible explanation for the lack of effect is that a possible effect might not have reached significance due to the small sample size (N = 23).

**Does the quality of the contact matter?**
Second, the study examined the role of the quality of the contact between expatriates and hosts (RQ2), which is the subject of chapter 6. Expatriates who were put in touch with a host were divided into two groups based on their experiences: 21 expatriates developed high quality contact with their host, whereas for 12 expatriates the contact was of low quality. This research question was answered only for expatriates, because the group of partners was too small.

The study showed that the quality of contact played a role in the impact of a local host on the expatriate assignment (*Interaction Adjustment, Host National Social Support, Friendship, Knowledge, Openmindedness* en *Social Initiative*). Although the data did not permit drawing firm conclusions as to the exact role of the quality of the contact due to the small sample size of the groups with high and with low quality contact, it seemed that in most of the cases in which a local host had an impact, contact quality had a linear relationship with the success of the expatriate assignment: the higher the quality of the contact, the more benefit the expatriate experienced. Moreover, expatriates with low quality contact did not experience a detrimental effect, suggesting that contact with a local host is a low-risk intervention.

**Catalysts and barriers**
Third, the qualitative study explored which elements were important for the formation of high quality contact (RQ3). Chapter 7 discusses seven catalysts (similarity, motivation,
enriching contact, benefits with regard to adjustment and social support, proximity and research context) and six barriers (anxiety, different expectations, busy schedules, suboptimal timing, communication breakdown and cultural differences) that had an impact on the development of the contact between expatriate, partner and host.

To gain more insight into which factors override others, the four cases with highest quality contact and the four with lowest quality contact were described in more detail. The analyses suggest that it is worthwhile to establish some similarity between participants in a matching procedure, although it is difficult to pinpoint exactly which aspects are essential in this respect. Age and family situation seem to be relevant starting points, as well as some similar interests so that participants have some common ground on which to build a relationship. Also, it is recommended to match expatriates and partners to a host who lives close by, as this makes it easier to meet and results in higher quality contact. In addition, it is advisable to make sure the expatriate and partner are willing to make an effort because it could help overcome potential barriers to the contact such as busy schedules; this willingness is not self-evident even if participation is voluntary. Involving expatriates and partners in the timing of the contact with the host could also be useful so that it is established when the expatriate and partner think they would benefit most from the contact. It could also be helpful to discuss expectations of the contact with the expatriate, the partner and host before they are put in touch with each other. Moreover, benefits experienced by expatriates and partners during the contact – for example social support – are an important stimulant because this could encourage them to invest more in the contact.

**Conclusion and discussion**

Chapter 8 discusses the results of the study presented in chapters 5-7 in the light of the theories dealt with in chapters 1-3, together with limitations and suggestions for future research.

The results of this study showed that a local host mainly had an impact on the affective aspects of the expatriate assignment – an expectation on the basis of the stress and coping model – although also some culture learning took place. The findings were partly in line with what was expected on the basis of the literature (for example that contact with host nationals predicts interaction adjustment (Johnson et al., 2003)), but also suggested that findings of the effect of comparable interventions are not always applicable to contact with a local host. For example where some studies of mentoring or peer pairing for international students found an effect on performance-related outcomes (e.g. Carraher et al., 2008; Westwood & Barker, 1990), no such effect was found for a local host.

Contact with a local host is a way in which organisations can support their expatriates and partners, especially with regard to interaction with host nationals, provision of social support, knowledge about the host country, and to counteract a tendency to become less openminded and less socially active. As the benefits occurred in the private domain,
organisations should not expect the intervention – as designed in the present study – to impact on expatriate job performance.

Practical implications
Chapter 9 highlights the practical implications of this study for organisations, expatriates and their partners. As expatriates with high quality contact seemed to benefit more from the contact than expatriates with low quality contact with regard to Interaction Adjustment, Host National Social Support, Friendship, Knowledge, Openmindedness and Social Initiative, organisations should aim to stimulate the quality of the contact between expatriates, partners and hosts. This might be done, for example, through careful matching that takes similarities between expatriates, partners and their hosts into account and by discussion of expectations, but also through preparing participants and monitoring the contact. Also, it is advisable to involve participants in the timing of the contact because of individual preferences. The dissertation ends with practical recommendations for expatriates and their partners, such as the importance of taking the initiative and perseverance when setting up a new social network in the Netherlands, to help them maximise the success of the expatriate assignment through getting in touch with the locals.
**Nederlandse samenvatting**

**Inleiding**
In de literatuur is veel aandacht voor het welslagen van de uitzendingen van expatriates omdat er aanzienlijke directe en indirecte kosten mee gemoeid zijn. Een van de belangrijkste oorzaken van mislukte uitzendingen is verschil in cultuur. Een verblijf in het buitenland brengt moeilijkheden met zich mee en een van de manieren om hiermee om te gaan, is contact met mensen uit het gastland (Brewster & Pickard, 1994; Church, 1982; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Parker & McEvoy, 1993). Dit onderzoek ging na of het in contact brengen van expatriates en hun partners met mensen uit het gastland (een lokale *host*) helpt bij het omgaan met de moeilijkheden van een buitenlands verblijf. Het onderzoek heeft zich gericht op westere expatriates die naar Nederland komen. Dit is extra relevant gezien een recentelijk onderzoek van HSBC (2010) dat liet zien dat expatriates het in West-Europa, en vooral in Nederland, het lastigste vonden om vrienden te maken.

**Aanpassing en performance**
Of een expatriate succesvol is, hangt niet alleen af van zijn of haar performance op werk, maar ook van zijn of haar aanpassing aan het nieuwe land. Onderzoek laat zien dat dit een centrale factor is voor het succes van expatriate uitzendingen (Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer, & Luk, 2005). Veel onderzoeken naar de effectiviteit van expatriates focussen echter alleen op aanpassing, omdat ervan uit wordt gegaan dat dit invloed heeft op performance op werk (Mol, Born, & Van der Molen, 2005). Dit onderzoek neemt daarom zowel aanpassing als performance mee om een zo volledig mogelijk beeld te krijgen van het succes van de uitzending. In hoofdstuk 2 wordt dieper ingegaan op deze twee concepten.

Het meten van performance op het werk tijdens een internationale uitzending is lastig vanwege de subjectiviteit en diversiteit van de interne en externe omgeving (Harvey & Moeller, 2009) en het stuit ook voor onderzoekers op een aantal praktische bezwaren. Daarom wordt expatriate performance in de expatriate literatuur doorgaans gemeten door criteria zoals *vroegtijdige terugkeer*. Aangezien dat een extreme vorm van het mislukken van een uitzending is, wordt ook vaak *psychologische terugtrekking* (gedachten en plannen om de uitzending vroegtijdig af te breken) als criterium gebruikt (Shaffer & Harrison, 1998). Dit onderzoek gebruikt meerdere instrumenten (*Desire to Terminate the Assignment*, *Assess Own Performance* en *Most Recent Actual Performance Evaluation*) in een poging om performance op het werk zo volledig mogelijk te meten.

Psychological Adjustment en Sociocultural Adjustment, terwijl het tweede model aanpassing onderverdeelt in drie aspecten: General, Interaction en Work Adjustment. Het effect van een lokale host is bekeken voor deze vijf aanpassingsvariabelen.

**Voordelen van contact met een lokale host**

Onderzoek laat verschillende voordelen zien van contact met mensen uit het gastland, die in hoofdstuk 3 in meer detail uit de doeken worden gedaan: men is bijvoorbeeld beter aangepast aan interactie met buren en collega’s (Johnson, Kristof-Brown, Van Vianen, De Pater, & Klein, 2003) en aan het leven in het nieuwe land in het algemeen (Brewster & Pickard, 1994). Het bovengenoemde ‘Model of the Acculturation Process’ (Ward et al., 2001) laat zien dat er twee manieren zijn waarop contact met een lokale host kan bijdragen aan het goed verlopen van de uitzending. De interactie kan expatriates en hun partners helpen om de cultuur van het gastland te leren kennen (culture learning model). Daarnaast kunnen mensen uit het gastland sociale steun geven aan expatriates en partners die hun sociale netwerk hebben achtergelaten en in het land van uitzending een nieuw netwerk moeten opbouwen (stress & coping model). Tot slot kan het contact met een lokale host ook voor de organisatie zelf voordelen met zich meebrengen als de lokale host een aantal Host Country National Liaison rollen (Vance, Vaiman, & Andersen, 2009) op zich neemt en daarmee effectief kennismanagement bevordert. Het is daarom aan te bevelen dat organisaties hun expatriates stimuleren in contact te komen met mensen uit het gastland. Dit is echter niet altijd even gemakkelijk. Contact met een lokale host is een manier waarop deze barrière geslecht kan worden.

**Onderzoeksvragen**

In dit proefschrift is onderzocht of contact met een lokale host bijdraagt aan het goed verlopen van de internationale uitzending van Westerse expatriates en hun partners met Frans of Engels als moedertaal. De eerste onderzoeksvraag luidt:

**OV1** Draagt contact met een lokale host bij aan het succes van de internationale uitzending?

In de analyses met betrekking tot deze eerste hoofdvraag zijn vier concepten onderzocht: aanpassing, performance, sociale steun en interculturele communicatieve competentie. Voor elk concept zijn hypotheses en onderzoeksvragen geformuleerd, die in hoofdstuk 3 theoretisch onderbouwd worden.

Daarnaast zijn twee hoofdvragen geformuleerd om inzicht te krijgen in de mogelijkheden om de bestudeerde interventie (contact met een lokale host) te verbeteren zodat die interventie optimaal kan bijdragen aan het goed verlopen van de uitzending.
In hoeverre is de kwaliteit van het contact van belang voor de impact van een lokale host op het succes van de internationale uitzending?

Welke aspecten beïnvloeden de kwaliteit van het contact tussen expatriates, partners en hosts?

Methodologie
In hoofdstuk 4 worden de methoden die gebruikt zijn in dit onderzoek uiteengezet. Het hoofdbestanddeel van dit onderzoek was een gerandomiseerd onderzoek met controlegroep om het longitudinale effect van een lokale host te onderzoeken (OV1). Drieëndertig expatriates, van wie tien met partner, zijn in contact gebracht met een Nederlandse host met wie zij gedurende negen maanden contact hadden (experimentele groep). Zij zijn vergeleken met een groep van tweeëndertig expatriates, van wie dertien met partner, die pas na negen maanden in contact werden gebracht met een lokale host, indien zij daar nog steeds interesse in hadden (controlegroep). Toewijzing aan de experimentele en controlegroep gebeurde op willekeurige basis. Aan het begin van het onderzoek (0 maanden), na vijf en na negen maanden hebben de expatriates en partners een vragenlijst ingevuld. Deze vragenlijst bevatte gevalideerde meetinstrumenten voor aanpassing, performance, sociale steun en interculturele communicatieve competentie. De host kon een familie zijn, maar ook één persoon of een stel, met wie de expatriate en partner allerlei activiteiten ondernamen. Dit varieerde van samen iets drinken of uit eten gaan tot meer toeristische activiteiten zoals een bezoek aan een whisky proeverij, een stad of wadlopen. Voor de tweede en derde onderzoeksvraag is kwalitatieve methodologie ingezet. Naast open vragen in de vragenlijsten naar hoe het contact met de host is verlopen, zijn interviews gehouden met tien expatriates, vier partners en vijf lokale hosts. Acht partners en drie expatriates uit de experimentele groep hebben een wekelijks ‘dagboek’ bijgehouden gedurende het project. Daarnaast zijn de e-mails van met name hosts, met wie de onderzoeker af en toe contact had om te vragen hoe het contact verliep, maar ook van expatriates en partners in het kwalitatieve onderzoek meegenomen.

Draagt contact met een host bij aan het succes van de internationale uitzending?
In hoofdstuk 5 wordt de eerste hoofdvraag beantwoord: draagt het contact met een lokale host bij aan aanpassing, performance, sociale steun en interculturele communicatieve competentie? Contact met een lokale host had invloed op drie van deze vier concepten: alleen een effect op performance ontbrak, wat suggereert dat contact met een lokale host vooral invloed had in de privésfeer.

Ten eerste droeg contact met een lokale host bij aan de aanpassing van expatriates en partners aan interactie met mensen uit het gastland (Interaction Adjustment), met name als de expatriates geen partner hadden. Er werd geen effect gevonden op de overige
aanpassingsvariabelen (Psychological Adjustment, Sociocultural Adjustment, General Adjustment and Work Adjustment).

Ten tweede bleek contact met een lokale host op het gebied van sociale steun een daling tegen te gaan in mate van toegang tot mensen uit het gastland (Host National Access). Dit gold echter alleen voor vrouwelijke expatriates. Een andere bevinding op het gebied van sociale steun was dat expatriates met host meer sociale steun van mensen uit het gastland ontvingen dan expatriates zonder host (Host National Social Support). Ook bleek dat het contact tussen de expatriate, partner en host zich kon ontwikkelen tot een vriendschap (Friendship). Het lange termijn potentieel van dit contact kwam tot uiting in het feit dat ongeveer een derde van de expatriates in de experimentele groep minimaal twee jaar contact hield met hun host (Contact Maintenance).

Ten derde had contact met een lokale host invloed op de drie aspecten van Interculturele Communicatieve Competentie: kennis (Knowledge), attitude (Openmindedness) en twee van de op persoonlijkheid gebaseerde interculturele vaardigheden (Social Initiative en Emotional Stability). Expatriates en hun partners leerden van hun host over de Nederlandse cultuur (Knowledge). Verder ging contact met een lokale host een daling tegen op zowel Openmindedness and Social Initiative, al gold dit in het geval van Openmindedness alleen voor expatriates met partner. Tot slot waren de bevindingen met betrekking tot Emotional Stability tegenstrijdig met de verwachtingen aangezien partners zonder host op deze variabele stegen, terwijl degenen met host stabiel bleven.

Deze resultaten suggereren dat contact met een host niet voor alle problemen die expatriates en partners tegenkomen op hun uitzending, een oplossing vormt, maar dat het vooral nuttig is voor bijvoorbeeld, expatriates die elke dag te maken hebben met collega’s en klanten uit het gastland.

Niet alleen expatriates waren de focus van dit onderzoek, ook hun partners zijn in het onderzoek betrokken (N = 23). Zij bleken echter nauwelijks te profiteren van het contact met een lokale host. Het is mogelijk dat dit gebrek aan effect veroorzaakt werd doordat de interventie specifiek voor expatriates opgezet is, waardoor het minder effectief zou kunnen zijn voor partners. Een belangrijk verschil tussen expatriates en partners was bijvoorbeeld dat de partners in dit onderzoek geen baan hadden waardoor zij mogelijk meer gevaar zouden zijn bij contact met een host dat (ook) overdag plaatsvond. Een andere mogelijke verklaring voor het grotendeels ontbreken van een effect voor partners is dat de groep partners in dit onderzoek erg klein was (N = 23), waardoor mogelijke effecten van een lokale host niet het gehanteerde significantieniveau van p = .05 bereikten.

**Invloed van de kwaliteit van het contact**

De tweede hoofdvraag van dit onderzoek richtte zich op de rol van de kwaliteit van het contact tussen expatriates en hosts (hoofdstuk 6). Op basis van hun ervaringen zijn de expatriates die in contact gebracht zijn met een host, ingedeeld in twee groepen: 21 expatriates ontwikkelden hoge kwaliteit contact met hun host, terwijl voor 12 expatriates...
Samenvatting

Het contact met de *host* van lage kwaliteit was. Deze onderzoeksvraag is alleen beantwoord voor de expatriates in dit onderzoek, aangezien de partners een te kleine groep vormden.

Het onderzoek liet zien dat de kwaliteit van het contact een rol speelde bij de invloed van contact met een lokale *host* op het succes van de internationale uitzending (*Interaction Adjustment, Host National Social Support, Friendship, Knowledge, Openmindedness en Social Initiative*). Vanwege de beperkte grootte van de groepen expatriates met hoge en lage kwaliteit contact was het niet mogelijk om definitieve conclusies te trekken met betrekking tot de precieze rol van de kwaliteit van het contact. Het terugkerend patroon in de data suggereerde echter dat als een *host* invloed had op een bepaalde variabele, de kwaliteit van het contact een lineaire relatie had met het succes van de uitzending: hoe hoger de kwaliteit van het contact, hoe meer voordeel de expatriate had. Daarnaast waren expatriates met lage kwaliteit contact niet slechter af dan expatriates zonder *host*. Contact met een *host* lijkt daarom een interventie zonder veel risico te zijn.

**Aspecten die kwaliteit van het contact beïnvloeden**

Aangezien de kwaliteit van het contact een rol speelt bij de invloed van een *host* op het succes van de internationale uitzending, is het belangrijk om meer inzicht te krijgen in de aspecten die de kwaliteit van het contact beïnvloeden. In hoofdstuk 7 worden de belangrijkste catalysatoren en barrières voor de ontwikkeling van het contact besproken. Er worden zeven aspecten onderscheiden die in meer of mindere mate een positieve invloed hebben gehad op de ontwikkeling van het contact, namelijk overeenkomsten tussen de deelnemers, motivatie, voordelen van het contact (of het contact verrijkend was, of dat het contact een bijdrage leverde op het gebied van aanpassing of sociale steun), geografische nabijheid en onderzoekscontext. Zes andere aspecten bleken in meer of mindere mate een barrière te zijn: angst of onzekerheid over het contact, verschillende verwachtingen, drukke agenda's, suboptimale timing van het contact, communicatieproblemen en cultuurverschillen.

Niet elk aspect is even belangrijk geweest voor de ontwikkeling van het contact. Een analyse van de vier koppels met hoogste kwaliteit contact en de vier koppels met laagste kwaliteit contact heeft licht geworpen op de aspecten die de meeste invloed hebben. Zo is het bijvoorbeeld belangrijk om er via een matchingprocedure voor te zorgen dat er overeenkomsten zijn tussen deelnemers. Matching m.b.t. leeftijd en familiesituatie (partner en/of kinderen) lijken goede uitgangspunten te zijn, net als gezamenlijke interesses zodat de deelnemers iets hebben om de relatie op te bouwen. Een ander belangrijk punt om in de matching mee te nemen, is geografische nabijheid aangezien dat het gemakkelijker maakt om elkaar te ontmoeten. Verder is het aan te bevelen om na te gaan of de deelnemers gemotiveerd zijn om energie in het contact te steken, omdat dit een belangrijke factor is die potentiële barrières zoals drukke agenda's (deels) kan wegnemen. Hoewel deelname vrijwillig was, was deze motivatie namelijk niet vanzelfsprekend. Daarnaast lijkt het betrekken van de expatriate en partner bij het bepalen van de timing van het contact met
de *host* zinvol te zijn, omdat op deze manier ingespeeld kan worden op de eigen inschatting van wanneer het contact het meeste zal bijdragen. Ook het bespreken van de verwachtingen van het contact – nog voordat het contact tot stand wordt gebracht en aan het begin van het contact – kan bijdragen aan het ontstaan van hoge kwaliteit contact. Tot slot is wat de expatriate en partner aan voordelen uit het contact denken te halen – bijvoorbeeld sociale steun – een belangrijke stimulans voor de ontwikkeling van het contact, omdat men dan eerder geneigd is om in het contact te investeren.

**Conclusie en discussie**

In hoofdstuk 8 worden de resultaten uit hoofdstuk 5-7 bij elkaar gebracht en bediscussieerd aan de hand van de theorieën die in hoofdstuk 1-3 behandeld zijn. Ook bevat dit hoofdstuk de beperkingen van het onderzoek en suggesties voor verder onderzoek.

Het onderzoek laat zien dat contact met een lokale *host* vooral effect had op de affectieve aspecten van de internationale uitzending (*stress & coping model*), alhoewel de deelnemers ook hebben geleerd over de Nederlandse cultuur (*culture learning model*). De bevindingen waren deels in lijn met wat verwacht werd op basis van de literatuur, zoals bijvoorbeeld dat contact met mensen uit het gastland leidt tot betere aanpassing aan deze interactie (Johnson et al., 2003). Niet alle verwachte effecten op basis van studies van vergelijkbare interventies waren echter terug te vinden in deze studie. Zo vond deze studie geen effect van contact met een lokale *host* op performance op werk, terwijl sommige studies van de effecten van mentoren in het bedrijfsleven en van internationale studenten juist wel een effect vonden op uitkomsten die te maken hadden met hun (academische) performance (bv. Carraher, Sullivan, & Crocitto, 2008; Westwood & Barker, 1990).

Contact met een lokale *host* is een manier waarop organisaties hun expatriates en partners kunnen ondersteunen, met name wat betreft de interactie met mensen uit het gastland, sociale steun, kennis van het gastland en om tegen te gaan dat men minder open en sociaal actief wordt. Aangezien de voordelen van contact met een lokale *host* alleen op privégebied te vinden waren, is het belangrijk dat organisaties niet verwachten dat dit contact – zoals in de huidige studie vormgegeven – bijdraagt aan de (werk) performance van de expatriate.

**Praktische implicaties**

In hoofdstuk 9 worden de praktische implicaties van deze studie voor organisaties, expatriates en hun partners belicht. Omdat expatriates met hoge kwaliteit contact meer voordeel leken te hebben van het contact dan expatriates met lage kwaliteit contact wat betreft *Interaction Adjustment, Host National Social Support, Friendship, Knowledge, Openmindedness* en *Social Initiative*, is het belangrijk dat organisaties trachten de kwaliteit van het contact tussen expatriates, partners en lokale *hosts* te verhogen. Dat kan bijvoorbeeld door zorgvuldige matching waarbij overeenkomsten tussen de deelnemers mee worden genomen en door het bespreken van de verwachtingen, maar ook door deelnemers voor te
bereiden en te begeleiden gedurende het contact. Ook is het aan te bevelen om deelnemers te betrekken bij de timing van het contact met de host omdat de voorkeuren hiervoor verschillen. Tot slot worden een aantal praktische aanbevelingen geformuleerd voor expatriates en partners zelf, zoals het belang van eigen initiatief en doorzettingsvermogen bij het opzetten van een nieuw sociaal netwerk in Nederland.
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Curriculum Vitae

From 1997-2002 Marian van Bakel studied international business communication (French) at Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands, of which she spent one academic year at Université François Rabelais in Tours, France. She completed her master’s degree with a thesis focusing on the adjustment of Dutch expatriates in France and the UK. This theme was pursued after her graduation, when she was attached to the University of Oxford as a visiting study fellow, conducting research into the adjustment of Dutch diplomats and their partners in London. This stay was financed through a VSB-scholarship. In 2003 she commenced working as communication advisor at Radboud University Nijmegen Medical Centre. She has been involved in the setting up of an International Office to better welcome international employees and the communication about the introduction of performance related financing in Dutch health care in 2012. This part-time job enabled her to pursue her PhD research in international business communication, for which she was attached to the Centre for PhD Research, Radboud University Nijmegen. The PhD research focused on the possible contribution of contact with a local host to the success of expatriate assignments and has been presented at several workshops and congresses and published in the Thunderbird International Business Review (2011). A grant of Catharina van Tussenbroek-fonds and Radboud University Nijmegen enabled a three month study visit in 2009 to Reading University (UK), University of Melbourne (Australia), and Victoria University Wellington (New Zealand). Since 2004 Marian van Bakel has been an active member of Young SIETAR (Young Society of Intercultural Education, Training and Research), co-organising two Intercultural Research Workshops (2005 and 2006) and serving in the board as Head of Education for three years (2006-2008). In this position, she co-edited and co-authored A Suitcase Full of Discoveries (2008), an intercultural storybook for children. Her main research interests are expatriation in profit and non-profit sectors, the impact of social support, intercultural communication in hospitals and the evolution of culture.
Colophon

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