Self-Initiated Expatriates and the Impostor Phenomenon

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to obtain the academic degree of
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in the Joint Master’s Program
Global Business Russland/Italien
Statutory Declaration

I hereby declare that the thesis submitted is my own unaided work, that I have not used other than the sources indicated, and that all direct and indirect sources are acknowledged as references.

This printed thesis is identical with the electronic version submitted.

Perg, January 2017

Alexandra Rosenberg
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Abstract

The impostor phenomenon is an intense feeling of intellectual and professional fraudulence, which is felt by high-achieving individuals, who may be present in the workplace. Thus, companies should be aware of the impostor phenomenon and its implications to the workforce. Currently, globalization is providing an increased employment opportunities abroad, which have been growing steadily in recent years. Many companies and their human resource departments are growing more aware of this global shift and have increased implementation strategies to accommodate international workers, such as, Self-Initiated Expatriates (SIEs), who voluntarily moved to another country for work. However, despite the prevalence of SIEs in the workplace, little is known about interrelated factors that may link the SIEs to the impostor phenomenon. The challenges that SIEs experience, when they initially undergo the expatriation process, may stem from international, individual or impostor phenomenon related factors, such as, education, accent, gender, identity, anxiety and/or fear. Therefore, the aim of the thesis is to explore how do SIEs perceive the challenges of expatriation and whether certain factors relate to the impostor phenomenon. Additionally, it is of interest to investigate how could firms support international workers to mitigate the challenges of expatriation and the impostor phenomenon. Hence, the findings of the research showed and implied that factors, such as, expatriation, international factors, individual factors and impostor phenomenon factors have linkages and interrelated themes. Suggesting that international upbringing, foreign education and language or accent may be a contributing factor to the impostor phenomenon. Since firms and human resource departments are interested in obtaining and maintaining a satisfactory work environment for international workers, this thesis provides a recommendation for mitigating the challenges of expatriation and the impostor phenomenon, by implementing increased feedback, supporting network groups and providing on-board training for international workers.

Keywords: Self-Initiated Expatriates, impostor phenomenon, impostor syndrome, expatriation process, culture, interlinking factors, mitigation
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<td>Assigned Expatriates</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIPS</td>
<td>Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale</td>
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<tr>
<td>DKE</td>
<td>Dunning Kruger Effect</td>
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<td>HRDs</td>
<td>Human Resource Departments</td>
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<td>IP</td>
<td>Impostor Phenomenon</td>
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Globalization provides increasing employment opportunities abroad, which have been growing steadily in recent years. Many companies are opening offices abroad, participating in joint ventures or trying to enter into emerging markets, where business is expected to thrive (Hurn, 2014). These organizational movements provide boundaryless careers for employees, which can offer individuals new career advancement, increased responsibilities, attractive pay and higher position, but may also be triggered by political pressures or family reasons (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996; Economist, 2010). In effect, globalization is broadening and giving rise to the diverse pool of individuals who could eventually leave their home country to work in a host country.

Many firms and their respective Human Resource Departments (HRDs) are growing more aware of globalization and have increased implementation strategies to accommodate the high number of international workers (Hurn, 2014). When people of different cultural backgrounds move and then work together, HRDs consider factors that may influence their work performance, evaluation and satisfaction, and in effect want to select individuals with desirable competencies (Hurn, 2014). Factors, such as, internationality and culture, are a particularly interesting area of research, which is studied on different types of international groups and analyzed for phenomena that affect them.

Therefore, an international and interesting group to study is the Self-Initiated Expatriates (SIEs). Literature by Biemann and Andresen (2010) and Selmer and Lauring (2014) describe SIEs as a distinctive group of individuals, which have voluntarily moved to another country, for various reasons, such as, deliberate job relocation, immigration, marriage, university, political asylum or other matters. Since SIEs exhibit certain traits, which are learned and developed during their expatriation process and transition into another culture, these individuals could be attractive contributors to globally diverse work teams (Biemann and Andresen, 2010). Expatriates, like SIEs, look for job opportunities abroad, because globalization is making it easier to obtain jobs in other countries with increased motivations for career advancement through boundaryless careers (Defillippi and Arthur, 1994; Arthur and Rousseau, 1996; Arthur et al., 2005). For example, as of 2013, it is not a real surprise that, when just looking at the United States alone, it shows a significant amount of SIEs in the workforce, which is quantified by around 150,000 H1-B visa applications granted to temporary workers (Economist, 2014). Subsequently, as of 2014, when looking at European OECD countries, an increase of 4% was noted.
Chapter 1 Introduction

for employed foreign-born migrants (OECD, 2015). Hence, concluding that there is a steady growth of foreign-born individuals who are seeking employment in other countries and that this trend is continuing in recent years among European, North American and some Asian countries (OECD, 2015). Proposing that the business world has undergone an international broadening, where interconnected phenomenons can be observed by international management (Richardson and McKenna, 2002, p. 67).

HRDs world-wide pay attention to various aspects concerning international staff. One of the most recently revitalized and interesting topics of study in the business community is the impostor phenomenon\(^1\) (IP) (Clance and Imes, 1978; Kets de Vries, 2005; Whitman and Shanine, 2012). The impostor phenomenon, coined by Clance and Imes in 1978, is an intense feeling of intellectual and professional fraudulence and phoniness, which is felt by high-achieving individuals (Kets de Vries, 2005; Vergauwe et al., 2015). These individuals (also called the “impostors”), despite having numerous achievements and recognized skills, have self-doubt in their abilities and they fear that at some point they will be found out or discovered as fraud (Clance and Imes, 1978). When an individual exhibits characteristics of the impostor syndrome, such as, perfectionism, workaholic behavior, punishing oneself for failed goals, avoiding evaluation or performance review, dodging disagreements and comparing to others (Kets de Vries, 2005), a demanding workload can lead to a burnout and cause development of negative attributes and attitudes (Truman et al., 2010; Crawford et al., 2016). Since high-achieving individuals are present in the workplace, companies should be aware of the impostor syndrome and its implications to the firm. Internal pressures to perform could resurface undesirable actions, which could have negative consequences for the individual and the company (Truman et al., 2010). Therefore, focusing on understanding the importance of the impostor phenomenon is essential in causing awareness and promoting the mitigation of the syndrome in the corporate culture and structure. Coping with the impostor syndrome can be difficult for individuals at work (Kets de Vries, 2005). Hence, a strong social support system can be the answer to work place deterrents (Whitman and Shanine, 2012). HRDs in firms can initiate trainings and/or a strong workplace social support system to mitigate the challenges of the impostor phenomenon, so that these individuals can overcome the setbacks and increase their performance and work satisfaction (Bechtoldt, 2015). Therefore, the impostor phenomenon is an interesting area of study, which can be applied to individuals and their actions at work, since negative attributes of the syndrome can be detrimental to employees and to the office environment.

Alas, the aim of this thesis is to investigate the connection between SIEs and the impostor syndrome. It is pondered that SIEs’ perceived challenges of the expatriation process, combined with cultural differences, could be factors, which may be linked to the impostor syndrome. Additionally, it is relevant to note that the syndrome may cause some work related areas to be effected by this syndrome, for the individual and to the workplace. Subsequently, firms may be

\(^1\)In literature, the “impostor phenomenon” is also referred to as the “imposter phenomenon” and “imposter or impostor syndrome” (IS). This thesis will utilize impostor phenomenon or the impostor syndrome as the nomenclature.
interested in or are currently searching for mitigating factors, which management can take in avoiding future negative implications of the impostor syndrome.

1.1 Literature Gap, Relevance and Research Questions

This thesis explores whether and which perceived factors pertain to the impostor phenomenon in SIEs. Based on prior literature, the basis of this research was derived and deemed worth analyzing. In the case of the impostor phenomenon in SIEs, this work seeks to ponder how the expatriation process relates to the syndrome and whether firms could support SIEs in mitigating it.

First, many SIEs are valued in the workplace, because they have had prior intercultural experience, which they can apply in their current work environment (Biemann and Andresen, 2010; Economist, 2010; Selmer and Lauring, 2014). Firms look for and want to retain employees with prior international exposure (Caligiuri and Tarique, 2012) and who possess cultural intelligence (Crowne, 2008; Economist, 2010). Hence, companies seeking future global managers may want individuals with extensive prior international experience, cultural intelligence and overall positive work dynamic. Therefore, SIEs provide an interesting, semi-prepared candidate pool for prospecting global teams, which would benefit from further research and analysis. Some companies value their experience and want to make sure that the positive aspects of SIEs shine, while the negative aspects are mitigated, so that there is a pleasant workplace environment (Truman et al., 2010). Therefore, it is noteworthy for HRDs and firms, in general, to study this group in more detail for better understanding and potential adjustments in corporate culture.

Second, the impostor phenomenon is not a well-researched topic for high-achieving business professionals, such as, “global managers”, as most research on the impostor syndrome was conducted on students, academics and very few professionals (Fried-Buchalter, 1997; Kets de Vries, 2005; Whitman and Shanine, 2012; Bechtoldt, 2015; Vergauwe et al., 2015; Crawford et al., 2016). Therefore, due to prior literature and an increase in current articles, further research for business professionals is necessary, as this area of research is gaining momentum.

Third, the concept of the impostor syndrome in connection with the influence of international experience has not been addressed, which means that prior research of the impostor syndrome has not been associated with SIEs, so far. Therefore, an exploration of the impostor syndrome relevance to the SIE group is of great interest. This research gap is significant, interesting and requires further studies. Because the process of expatriation has had minimal attention in connection with SIEs, as most research was conducted on Assigned Expatriates (AEs), which are sent abroad by firms, who want to expand in further markets (Mcevoy and Buller, 2013). SIEs undergo a different process, since they have to move on their own, voluntary accord, their process is unique, with multiple levels of various challenges (Richardson and McKenna, 2002).

Moreover, business application, which is work place implication of the impostor syndrome, and how to mitigate the phenomenon has had minimal attention, especially for SIEs. For example,
prior research of Whitman and Shanine (2012), Vergauwe et al. (2015), and Crawford et al. (2016) concentrated on social support systems and their importance in the workplace in mitigating the syndrome. Additionally, Kets de Vries (2005) has stressed the fact that employees who suffer from the impostor syndrome need support in ways, such as, leadership training, positive reinforcement, and a better work-life balance system. These studies stressed the significance of developing and nurturing mitigating factors for professionals with the impostor syndrome. This means that the practical relevance of workplace mitigation, due to the increased literature and research, is being recognized as an area of importance to managers and firms alike. Thus, this research is creating awareness that further research is necessary for application in the workplace and this is where contribution can be made with this thesis. Hence, mitigating strategies of the impostor syndrome seem to be a new and exciting area of interest, but there are no papers on mitigating strategies developed especially for SIEs. The reasons SIEs are an interesting area of study is because SIEs tend to play an increasing role in the number of workers firms hire and therefore, additional studies in this area may provide benefits to future organizations.

Therefore, this thesis addresses the following research questions, which have not been answered in the latest research:

1) How do Self-Initiated Expatriates perceive the challenges of expatriation and whether certain factors relate to the impostor phenomenon?

2) How could firms support international workers to mitigate the challenges of expatriation and the impostor phenomenon?

1.2 Structure and Objectives of the Thesis

The structure is as follows: Chapter 2 is the literary review; Chapter 3 is the research design; Chapter 4 is the results; and Chapter 5 concludes this thesis.

The first section of the literary review, pertaining to SIEs, introduces and define SIEs, while pointing out the differences to other expatriates (Biemann and Andresen, 2010) and their relation to protean careers (Hall, 1996). SIEs motivation and expatriation process are analyzed by exploring scenarios and reasons for moving abroad (Richardson and McKenna, 2002). Characteristics of SIEs, such as, flexibility (Biemann and Andresen, 2010), international communication (Cao et al., 2013), social sensitivity (Selmer and Lauring, 2014) are explored on their applicability in the business application. Using social cognition theory (Bandura, 2001), international exposure (Caligiuri and Tarique, 2012) and cultural intelligence (Crowne, 2008), understanding can be reached in the way SIEs may be successful team members in international teams in the workplace. However, due to a number of cultural challenges of acculturation and culture (Berry, 1997; Hofstede, 2015), some international factors may provide to be hinderances for SIEs. For the purpose of this thesis, international factors or “internationality” could refer to factors, such as, SIEs accent due to native language, different education level/system in another country, cultural differences, age/culture gaps, international parents/upbringing and different achievement levels.
The second section of the literary review introduces and define the impostor phenomenon and the impostor cycle (Clance and Imes, 1978), which may stem from initial family dynamics of the individual and other factors. To understand the phenomenon, high-achieving individuals (Watkins, 2012) are analyzed and compared in relation to Dunning Kruger Effect (Kruger and Dunning, 1999) and the impostor syndrome. Furthermore, characteristics of neurotic impostors (Kets de Vries, 2005) are investigated, where fear of failure and success (Fried-Buchalter, 1997), strong and weak opinions, and perfectionism (Kets de Vries, 2005) can be seen in the individuals with the impostor phenomenon. Which, may have consequences on the individual and the firm in the business application of the impostor syndrome (Kets de Vries, 2005).

The third section of the literary review focuses on the combination of SIEs and the impostor phenomenon. Interrelated factors, characteristics and traits (Arthur et al., 2005; Vergauwe et al., 2015) are explored to note some linking factors of the impostor syndrome in SIEs, which may be challenging in the workplace, especially during the expatriation process. It is this hindrance that the firms would want to avoid in their firm and in their ideal candidates, so that full potential can be utilized.

The fourth section of the literary review focuses on the objective of examining ways a firm can mitigate the perceived difficulties experienced by SIEs in the workplace. Business application of this assumption are defined through an analysis of mitigating factors of the impostor syndrome in the workplace (Kets de Vries, 2005; Whitman and Shanine, 2012; Vergauwe et al., 2015; Crawford et al., 2016). Hence, mitigating and supporting strategies, which human resources departments may implement during the expatriation process, are analyzed for SIEs and other international workers.

Chapter 3 discusses the research design and methods of the qualitative study of the impostor syndrome and SIEs. Chapter 4 analyzes the data and provide the findings of the semi-structured interviews gathered in the study. Thus, based on what SIEs, who experience different levels of the impostor syndrome during the expatriation process, express as their main concerns for the phenomenon, an exploration of how firms could mitigate the impostor phenomenon and its implications in the workplace are addressed. Furthermore, recommendations or suggestions for human resources are made. Chapter 5 concludes the thesis and pinpoints the limitations and further research opportunities.
Chapter 2

Literary Review

This chapter presents existing work, which separately focuses on the impostor phenomenon and the SIEs, with topics spanning across international management, human resources, intercultural relations, and business and managerial psychology. The literary review showcases the main topics of interest and their potential gaps, which are utilized in the results chapter of the thesis. Since the study of SIEs, with potential impostor syndrome characteristics, is a new area of research, detailed research on prior studies, which have addressed those areas in a separate fashion, are providing the basis for a solid foundation to build on, where this information is combined, in order to answer the research questions.

2.1 Self-Initiated Expatriation

This section introduces and defines SIEs and characterizes them in relation to AEs (Biemann and Andresen, 2010). It is noteworthy that the two groups are distinguished by their differences in motivations and expatriation processes (Richardson and McKenna, 2002). There are various advantages and challenges gained through the expatriation experiences and this expatriation process has an impact on work-life and business implications. Business applicability (or business application) of expatriation can be seen in individuals who have had international exposure (Caligiuri and Tarique, 2012) and who in effect, possess cultural intelligence (Crowne, 2008). However, at the same time, this process of adjustment abroad may provide to be a challenge. Culture and other international and individual factors come into play, when SIEs find themselves working abroad (Berry, 1997). These challenges vary from person to person and may stem from education or other characteristics of culture (Hofstede, 2015).

2.1.1 Introduction and Definition

SIEs are a unique group of individuals/professionals that voluntarily move to another country, for various reasons. (Biemann and Andresen, 2010; Al Ariss and Crowley-Henry, 2013; Selmer and Lauring, 2014). Some SIEs move to study, with hopes of better job opportunities in the host country. Others move for family or political reasons, but who also seek to be employed in the host country. Motivational factors, such as, location, career development and the host country,
in general, are some of the triggers for SIEs to decide to explore a new country, where relocation can provide desired outcomes (Volmer and Spurk, 2011). Therefore, self-initiated relocation can be thought of as a move, which mimics the concept of protean careers (Hall, 1996; Bonache et al., 2001; Volmer and Spurk, 2011; Cao et al., 2013). Hall (1996) was the first to describe protean careers as careers, which are selected and pursued based on inert values, that drive the individual to their career decision, where criteria for selection are subjective and where the individual is viewed to be in charge.

Self-Initiated vs. Assigned Expatriation

In contrast to SIEs, AEs are individuals who have been sent to another country by the firm they are currently working for (Biemann and Andresen, 2010, p. 432). This includes individuals who are expanding the business of their firm in emerging markets or when that individual is promoted or needed to work abroad (Bonache et al., 2001, p. 6). AEs receive significant support and training before they depart to work abroad. Usually, this includes language and culture training, interpersonal communication and services for smooth adjustment in a new country. Relocation expenses and other bureaucratic services are easier and supported by the firm. A repatriation, or moving back to the home country, follows most expatriation cases of AEs (Mcevoy and Buller, 2013, p. 216).

Biemann and Andresen (2010) defined differences for self-initiated and assigned expatriates, in management positions, with noted variances in relation to working internationally, career aspirations and career management. The findings of the research state that SIEs start their careers younger than AEs and have a higher organizational mobility and expect that their international experiences will further their future careers (Biemann and Andresen, 2010, p. 437). For example, SIE might move to another country during their education, in order to gain a degree applicable in their field with the accreditation accepted in that country.

Doherty et al. (2011) focused on defining motivational variances for moving abroad between SIEs and AEs, because prior research has had little focus on investigating the reasons and the issues associated with the actual decision to relocate abroad. The study revealed that there are some differences and some similarities between the two groups. The main reasons for SIEs relocations abroad where due to a particular location and host reputation (Doherty et al., 2011, p. 608). AEs placed importance on specific career motives, such as, job, skills and career impact (Doherty et al., 2011, 2013).

Doherty et al. (2011) makes a point and a distinction between SIEs and AEs, by stating that SIEs are protean careerists, while AEs are boundaryless careerists (Doherty et al., 2011, p. 608). Hence, SIEs are seen as taking charge of their move, while AEs usually go abroad purely due to their company needs and have little say in the place and duration of expatriation. The goals and outcomes of those expatriation processes are different, which may breed different attitudes in their career satisfaction. Since SIEs choose to go abroad on their own, research by Cao et al. (2013) concurs with the findings that protean careers attitudes have a positive impact on SIEs.
2.1 Self-Initiated Expatriation

Figure 2.1: Conceptual framework and proposed mediation model explaining the positive effect of a protean career attitude on SIE experiences. Adopted from Cao et al. (2013, p. 59).

experience and their work life, as noted in Figure 2.1. It shows that a positive protean career attitude yields correlated cultural adjustment, which leads to career satisfaction, life satisfaction and intentions to stay (Cao et al., 2013, p. 71).

Hence, it is important to distinguish SIEs and AEs in research, because SIEs are not studied in such detail as AEs have been in the past. However, research is increasing in this field and this is promising, as SIEs are becoming an increasing working force in current organizations (Biemann and Andresen, 2010; Selmer and Lauring, 2014).

Motivation and Expatriation Process

The expatriation process is different for everyone who decides to move abroad (Bonache et al., 2001). Individuals will experience different types of situations and their adjustment may be seen as, easy or difficult. Expatriation practices, techniques, motivations and reasons for moving and ways of adjusting provide to be dichotomous, where one may choose to expatriate on their own will, while others move due to more forcing powers (Doherty et al., 2011). Since, SIEs choose to go abroad, motivational reasoning and the process of moving is of interest, to current research.

Voluntary expatriation provides various reasons to go abroad and the actual process of expatriation can be different. Research by Richardson and McKenna (2002) focused on academics, who have self-selected to go abroad. The researchers recognized that university alliances are providing more opportunities for academics to go abroad and, therefore, these expatriates selected to voluntarily seek opportunities in different countries (Richardson and McKenna, 2002, p. 70). Hence, a need to study voluntary expatriate and the experience the expatriates underwent, was of interest. The study paid particular attention to motivation and processes of expatriation, while linking them to metaphors for ease of understanding.

Therefore, the qualitative study of Richardson and McKenna (2002) pin-pointed four motivational reasons to go, namely classifying the expatriate academic as either, the explorer, the
refugee, the mercenary, or the architect. The “explorer” expatriates are individuals who want to see the world and experience living in another country. The “refugee” expatriates are individuals who may not have opportunities in the home country and are looking to move abroad for a better life and more opportunities for themselves or their families. The “mercenary” expatriates are relocating for non-monetary reason, which are not as common, as money is a large driver for relocation. Although, there are some individuals, who choose to relocate to help or contribute to the country where they are relocating to. The “architect” expatriates are individuals who want to build their career and who want to develop and could be thought of as high-achieving (Richardson and McKenna, 2002, p. 70-72).

Furthermore, Richardson and McKenna (2002) defined the expatriation process as having four distinct experiences, such as, explorer, outsider, tightrope and student. The “explorer” expatriation experience is noted as exciting and ever-changing process. The “outsider” expatriation experience details expatriates not belonging or connection to the country and to the local people. The “tightrope” expatriation experience puts a lot of pressure and stress on the expatriate, because individuals have a fear for being let go from their jobs and in effect, having to go back to the home country. The “student” expatriation experience has a strong tendency for individuals to having feelings of lack of identity, or undergoing a significant amount of personal changes, which are argued to, either have direct relation to expatriation, or could relate to general principles of individual change (Richardson and McKenna, 2002, p. 72-76).

Thus, motivation for relocation varies from person to person, which follows by the move, that may also, vary in its processes and attitudes. Even a group, as limited as SIEs, experience their move abroad in different ways. For example, SIEs may move as young adults to continue their education, in order to gain more opportunities later on in their career, while others, seek out jobs that are known for faster and better progression. However, the benefits of moving and the motivation to move, may be met with challenges, such as, visa requirements, unavailable jobs or economic conditions. Therefore, this area of research may provide to be beneficial, if studies are expanded to include additional empirical research on SIEs motivation and expatriation processes.

2.1.2 Characteristics

Numerous studies have been performed on various groups of SIEs to address their interpersonal traits and behaviors. For example, many SIEs possess positive attributes, which have been documented by prior research. These SIEs are recognized for exuding flexibility (Biemann and Andresen, 2010) when picking up new projects or working with different groups of people. Some SIEs are also noted in being proficient in intercultural communication (Cao et al., 2013), because of their prior understanding of languages and recognizing that, although differences exist, they can be managed. SIEs are also more likely to show social sensitivity (Selmer and Lauring, 2014) by using soft skills in creating a pleasant atmosphere within the working groups. Hence, companies value the positive attributes of the SIEs, which are essential in current working environment.
2.1 Self-Initiated Expatriation

**Flexibility**

Flexibility is an essential behavior trait. Due to the nature of constant moving and adapting to new cultures and environments, SIEs modify their general behavior, interaction and job adjustments upon changing into a new cultural environment (Selmer and Lauring, 2014, p. 425). In order to be successful in the new culture, by design, these individuals become more flexible, because they are forced to adapt to new situation in society (Doherty et al., 2011; Cao et al., 2013). Additionally, choosing and shaping their environment becomes part of daily activities, when they try to adapt to new situations or places (Bandura, 2001).

**Intercultural Communication**

Intercultural communication is gained from living abroad. Cao et al. (2012) stated that SIEs gain a heightened cultural identity perception, which yields positive intercultural communication skills and multiculturalism, by constantly being exposed to host country nationals. SIEs, who are willing to adjust and learn ways to communicate, fast and effectively in the host country, are able to assimilate into society (Cao et al., 2012, p. 166-168). In optimal conditions, by observing behavioral patterns and environmental influences, these individuals become more aware of the way they need to communicate in their new/particular society (Bandura, 2001, p. 20-22).

**Social Sensitivity**

Social sensitivity is heightened, due to interactions with various culturally diverse individuals (Selmer and Lauring, 2014, p. 425). Selmer and Lauring (2014) described SIEs interpersonal sensitivity, which enhances perception skills and provides a balance between social and emotional sensitivity. The study showed that SIEs have higher social sensitivity than other groups, confirming added skill formation from living abroad and sharpening the skills to judge social situations. By being socially cognitive, this group undergoes self-enhancing phenomenon (Bandura, 2001, p. 10).

Therefore, SIE have some positive characteristics, which help them adapt to the host country, upon their move. Being in tune and sensitive to cultural differences, SIEs provide to be flexible, have a good basis for intercultural communication and exhibit social sensitivity, which may help them in their careers abroad. By exhibiting these characteristics, SIEs gain some access to jobs abroad and these traits provide them with a possibility to be successful in the adjustment process in the new country and in the business world.

2.1.3 Cultural Challenges

SIEs may experience challenges on their initial move abroad. One of those challenges is culture. It is important to understand culture and the role it plays in SIEs expatriation process, in order to get a glimpse of the challenges that may lay under the surface. Culture is defined as “shared and transferable perceptions, values and practices” (Hofstede, 2015, p. 546). However, culture can
be defined in various different ways, ranging from macro to meta cultures (Wilhelms et al., 2009, p. 100). People perceive, interpret and follow with an action their ways of communication, which is interlinked with culture. Since people do not always perceive things the same way, culture may be misinterpreted, which can cause issues for people from various countries, who may need to interact together for business or personal contact (Hofstede, 2015). Tan et al. (2005) proposed that to understand the cultural challenge, one must review emotional challenges of expatriates, during the expatriation process. Since individuals deal with emotions differently, the process of moving abroad may influence people in a different way, causing emotional exhaustion or decreased job satisfaction (Tan et al., 2005, p. 9). Therefore, cultural adjustment has a connection to emotional stability, which HRDs may consider to be important to review for recruiting and selecting processes.

Furthermore, research of Berry (1997) described cross-cultural psychology in acculturation, immigration and adaptation of culture and how culture may provide challenges to the individuals undergoing an adjustment or a change from original culture to the host culture. Berry (1997) studied and defined acculturation strategies of integration, assimilation, separation and marginalization (Berry, 1997, p. 9-10). Integration occurs when individuals hold and maintain their original culture, while interacting in the host environment. Assimilation, assumes that individuals let go of their original culture and take on the host culture. Separation, specifies that individuals refrain from accepting the new culture and continue to only maintain their original culture. Marginalization is geared more toward exclusion, discrimination and little interest in cultural diversity. Therefore, this research proposed that when individuals move abroad they may undergo behavioral shifts, cultural shedding, cultural conflicts and acculturation stress (Berry, 1997, p. 12-13). Depending on the age of relocation to the new country, the individual may experience hard times, if they were older, rather than younger, when they moved. Acculturation is easier when the person is younger, flexible and adaptable (Berry, 1997, p. 21).

Moreover, literature by Hofstede (2015) reviewed cultural difference and acculturation, in relation to organizations and the individual. The view point of Hofstede (2015) focused on the culture’s causes, which were argued to be due to deep culture and individual-level causality. Deep culture is something that is ingrained on a micro-level, which in some cases people are not even aware of (Hofstede, 2015, p. 557). Therefore, case studies were reviewed to gather understanding of the cross-cultural importance on status-power terms. The main points were outlined in connection to culture and group identity and how one is not necessarily defined as the other. Cultural differences are present across borders from one country to another, which may reflect in organizational structures.

Thus, acculturation is a challenge that SIE must face when moving abroad. When individuals try to acculturate, they have a few options on how they may proceed in the process of adjusting abroad. However, deep culture is hard to change and therefore, challenging to adjust. Hence, HRDs benefit significantly by staying aware of deep culture challenges and benefits, in order to stay connected to international staff.
2.1 Self-Initiated Expatriation

International Factors

The study of how culture or “internationality” affects individuals, such as, migrants or expatriates, has been around for a long time (Berry, 1997). Cultural differences or internationality may be a challenge when individuals first arrive in the host country, because differences will stand out, due to their novelty in current situations. Culture is in the nature of individuals who exhibit international factors, such as: childhood environment, education, class, status, gender, language, accent, identity and other implicit understandings (Hofstede, 2015), as seen in Figure 2.2. Additionally, Berry (1997) characterized certain variables that influence acculturation or adjustment process, such as, gender, education, reasons, cultural distance and other personal factors. For example, international factors have been defined as contributing variables in cultural differences and can, either be in the control, or out of control of the individual. Therefore, these factors range from deep to shallow culture, meaning that some are deeply ingrained and satisfy basic assumptions, while others can be seen just on the surface of the individual. It is noted that people are unaware of the deep culture, and therefore, deep culture is hard to recognize and change (Hofstede, 2015, p. 567).

Hofstede et al. (2010) classified organizational culture in six areas/dimensions of uncertainty avoidance, power distance, individualism/collectivism, femininity/masculinity, long-term vs. short-term orientation and indulgence/restraint, which is called the Hofstede Model. Hofstede (2011) further described the Hofstede Model of the six dimensions of culture and compared the value differences that are present at the individual level. All of these dimensions play a different role for individuals coming from different countries, which is important to study and analyze when researching culture and the differences that might occur between individuals. For example, international parents, education level, class, status, gender, language or accent, and identity, are considered international factors for the purpose of this thesis.

Hence, every distinct group creates their own culture by natural, unconscious acculturation (Hofstede, 2015, p. 549). Environmental attributions have a significant impact on culture and development of beliefs. Since people, with different cultural backgrounds, grew up with international parents and upbringing, their behavior, values and norms may vary from the host country, which can be challenging for the expatriate and the people around them. For example, the child rearing techniques used for boys and girls could be different, with various dimensions being highlighted, ranging from one culture to another (Hofstede, 2015).

Moreover, education plays a role in defining cultural assumptions in success levels (Hofstede, 2015, p. 550). In some cases, the education or achievement level reached by the expatriate’s parents may be considered low or high, in comparison to the host county standards. Likewise, the education level of the expatriate may be different to the level in the ideal ranking of the host country and the translation of the foreign degree might be over or under the expected educational level required for the organization. Therefore, education abroad might be an encouraged option by family (Pimpa, 2005, p. 211). Berry (1997) argued that the higher the education, the better the adjustment of the individual, because of lowered stress and a more smooth acculturation.
However, at times, education is not accredited in the host country, and individuals experience a status loss, either due to prejudices or an actual degree difference (Berry, 1997, p. 22). This challenge can be detrimental to the individual, as accreditation may be difficult to accomplish.

Suggesting that class and status may play a role in cultural differences, which is concurred by Hofstede (2015), when stating that the status of an individual is important in accumulating and maintaining power. The challenge of the power-status game is a socially constructed phenomenon, that can be seen in school, one’s parents and other institutions, which have been underlined for cultural studies (Hofstede, 2015, p. 552). Status and power drives individuals, groups and organizations, and builds, constructs and fuels cultural construction. Berry (1997) suggested that individuals have reasons for their push/pull motivations and expectations of the move abroad, and can either be a considered reactive or proactive. Therefore, suggesting that motivations for power and status might be different for all individuals (Berry, 1997, p. 22).

Gender is an individual factor, however, as far as gender is concerned in adjustments abroad, females tend to experience more problems than men, but this may depend on the country of origin and preconceived notions of prior or current culture (Berry, 1997, p. 22). Nevertheless, masculinity and femininity does not always go hand in hand. Females can act more masculine and males more feminine, and roles and values do not have to be aligned (Hofstede, 2015, p. 553). However, females that hold power, tend to act more masculine to compensate in the status-power game, to be able to hold the level of power desired. This status-orientation and power-orientation is common in business and can be seen between genders, as described by Hofstede (2010, p. 41).
and Hofstede (2015). Challenges attributed to gender are common and go beyond international studies, as some of the factors relate to personality (Vergauwe et al., 2015).

Additionally, the language and the accent is an enormous part of cultural identity and cultural distance (Berry, 1997, p. 23). How closely similar are the two countries and their language may determine how fast the individual will become accustomed to the culture. Knowing the language may be a challenge for some expatriates, as it might be very different from their original language and they may experience a strong accent. Accent is tied to deep culture and sometimes people are unaware of their language and accent, until faced with situations where encounters with other “native” speaker occur (Hofstede, 2015, p. 549). Study by Hosoda and Stone-Romero (2010) explained that accents may play a role in employment decisions, and, therefore, might be a challenge for hiring process of foreign workers (Hosoda and Stone-Romero, 2010, p. 114).

Furthermore, another individual factor, which links to the challenges of culture is social identity (Scurry, 2013). Identity issues and culture can seem inter-related, but at the same time should be separated from group identity, as described by Hofstede (2010, p. 39) and Hofstede (2015). Cultural differences in an organization can be seen as group identity conflicts, but it is worthy to note that, although culture is blamed for problems in interpersonal conflicts at work, in some cases, it is rather more applicable to social identity issues. When individuals feel like they do not belong, identity issues could come to the surface, since deep culture of all individuals can resurface at any point. However, personal factors may come into play when introversion or extroversion factors may define the person and their actions (Berry, 1997, p. 23). Every individual has different stress reaction styles and may bring in their personal identity and reactions to cultural settings. Personal and cultural characteristics may have a blurred line between their characteristics. Hofstede et al. (2010) outlined, the personal and cultural experience of an individual, as it may relate to a relocation and the expatriation process, which is depicted in Figure 2.3. It shows how an individuals’ evolved stream of life and their rituals are affected by their personality and their culture. Personality has a direct impact on the life story of the individual with influence on the personal biography, while culture influences the story of the society and their cultural history. Therefore, personality drives characteristic adaptations, while culture drives characteristic institutions, which both influence the stream of life and the rituals, due to various goals and learning cycles (Hofstede et al., 2010).

Subsequently, challenges with international factors and cultural differences are noted as related factors in business interactions and can be seen on various individual levels or even in group dynamics. HRDs prosper through understanding of various intertwined international factors that affect SIEs and their expatriation process. This awareness brings forth opportunities for firms to provide services to individuals who join the organization and go through the adjustment process, that can eventually bring lasting positive effects to the person and the company, considering other factors are not involved.
2.1.4 Business Application

In today’s work environment, global firms pursue individuals with an array of different attributes, which focus on competencies in international management. Not only is international aptitude important for projects abroad, but also, working and collaborating with transnational teams and individuals within the firm. Employees are encouraged to become future global managers by learning from current successful global leaders. Therefore, firms look for and want to retain employees with global leader attributes, who have prior international exposure (Caligiuri and Tarique, 2012) and who possess cultural intelligence (Crowne, 2008; Economist, 2010).

SIEs come to mind when considering individuals with prior exposure to cross-cultural environments (Selmer and Lauring, 2014). Therefore, companies seeking future expatriates may find these individuals as a good source of recruitment, because they may emerge to be successful in future cross-cultural projects abroad. The study by Crowne (2008) noted that in-depth experiences and exposures abroad increased cultural intelligence. Thus, suggesting that certain SIEs, who exhibit deep cultural experience, show higher cultural intelligence and efficient interaction skills, which subsequently benefits a diverse workplace. Not only is the international aptitude important for future projects abroad, but also, working and collaborating with transnational teams and individuals within the firm (Economist, 2010). This subsection describes the importance of SIEs and their role in the current business environment.
2.1 Self-Initiated Expatriation

Social Cognition Theory

Based on social cognition theory (Bandura, 2001), linkages can be drawn that SIEs are well-suited candidates for international adaptability, due to their experiences and learned cultural knowledge. Although life experiences are different for all SIEs, these circumstances contribute significantly to the sought-after attributes in the business environment, such as, international exposure and cultural intelligence.

Different societies function in many unique and sometimes not readily identifiable ways. The social cognition theory states that people are producers and products of the social system that they, either belong to, or participate in (Bandura, 2001, p. 14). Therefore, when meeting people from other countries or cultures, one might be unaccustomed to their ways of life, because they have not been exposed to their norms or cultures. One must live and absorb the countries’ social standards to learn some of the attributes (Bandura, 2001). One aspect of social cognition theory, states that sought after interactions can be accomplished with the help of human agency of: personal, proxy, and community (Bandura, 2001, p. 13). In personal agency, one can accomplish certain learning on their own accord, while proxy agency is related to seeking other individuals who have access to required resources or information. Additionally, the community agency creates synergy for the group to attain any of their set out goals. All the mentioned agencies can be utilized together for learning and obtaining information in a new social group or country (Bandura, 2001). Hence, societies are shaping the way people communicate, work together and interact, within their own groups and with the incoming outsiders.

Moreover, social cognition theory can be applied to the study of individuals, who have had the experience of trying to adapt and fit into societies outside their home. This area of research helps in understanding the way people act and how they might seeks ways to adjusting to new environments. Literature on social cognition theory may be applicable to practical empirical social studies and help gain a perspective in recognizing different human agency theories and their applicability to SIEs, who choose to work in another country.

International Exposure

International exposure is of value to businesses, which seeks candidates for international projects, due to globalization and displacement to overseas positions. These new global managers must demonstrate certain characteristics and satisfy concrete international-level needs and goals of the organization. Caligiuri and Tarique (2012) defined that tolerance of ambiguity, cultural flexibility, and reduced ethnocentrism are predictors of cross-cultural competencies, which are essential in effective global leaders (Caligiuri and Tarique, 2012, p. 613). Additionally, Caligiuri and Tarique (2012) focused on the importance of cross-cultural experience in work and non-work related activities. It is hypothesized that not only should global leaders experience work related exposure, but also non-work related activities. With this dichotomous outlook on interactions with different cultures, a positive outlook towards people from different countries will be developed (Caligiuri and Tarique, 2012, p. 614). Furthermore, culturally appropriate behavior
Chapter 2 Literary Review

will be naturally developed and utilized in future business deals. Subsequently, global leaders absorb numerous competencies and become effective in meeting the challenges in this complex cross-cultural world (Caligiuri and Tarique, 2012, p. 619).

SIEs exhibit the international exposure traits defined by Caligiuri and Tarique (2012) and therefore, could exhibit the desired global leader traits in the business world. SIEs could have had both, work and non-work related activities. Therefore, they have had the crucial exposure to get the glimpse of necessary skills or obtain a base for further knowledge. Therefore, SIEs are valued, because they have had experiences in other countries and settings, which they can use in their current positions or firms (Biemann and Andresen, 2010; Economist, 2010; Selmer and Lauring, 2014). SIEs have more opportunities toward international exposure and may be suitable addition to international teams.

Furthermore, international exposure is a key benefit that has been gained by SIEs, just by purely being from another country and moving abroad. Since, SIEs have moved abroad, once or even more than once, international exposure has occurred, and lessons have been learned from those experiences. This inert characteristic, by default help SIEs to have better interactions with people at work, regardless of their cultural background.

Cultural Intelligence

Moreover, cultural intelligence is stressed as an important element in the business world (Crowne, 2008, p. 391). The study by Crowne (2008), noted that in-depth experiences and exposures abroad increased cultural intelligence. As noted in Figure 2.4, Crowne (2008) pointed out that cultural exposure abroad, such as, employment, education, vacation and other experiences yield cultural intelligence on levels of meta-cognition, cognition, motivation and behavior (Crowne, 2008, p. 394). Thus, suggesting that a global leader, with deep cultural experience, shows higher cultural intelligence and efficient interaction skills, which subsequently benefits a diverse workplace (Crowne, 2008). Hence, companies seeking future global managers, who strive to become the above-mentioned global leaders, may want individuals with extensive prior international experience and cultural intelligence. These individuals provide an interesting, semi-prepared candidate pool for prospecting global teams. By doing so, the company may save money and time by hiring these individuals, because minimal cross-cultural training would be necessary, since the initial “training” has already taken place (Selmer and Lauring, 2014, p. 431).

Since global leaders show increased cultural intelligence, due to their prior experience working or studying abroad, they can be linked to SIEs by the common thread of international experiences. Of course, more skills are necessary to be a good global leader, but exposure to prior international experiences can be a good base for managerial roles. Crowne (2008) further noted that management should evaluate the status of education, internships, trainings, expatriation and global leadership in future candidates and to enhance these areas in their current employees. Cultural intelligence can be learned and with international exposure, sometimes even for a short period, can yield results in openness and increased cultural intelligence (Crowne, 2008, p. 393).
Figure 2.4: Possible antecedents of cultural intelligence. Adopted from Crowne (2008, p. 394).

Hence, when firms look for future global leaders, with international exposure, individuals with encompassing prior international experience and cultural intelligence are an attractive option for recruitment. Therefore, SIEs are thought to be an ideal candidate for this role, due to their exposures abroad. Firms may value their experience and take future measures in adjusting working style or trainings of those SIEs, in order to highlight their strengths and mitigate the weaknesses (Truman et al., 2010). Therefore, the study of SIEs is beneficial to HRDs and firms, because a general understanding of this group may provide positive returns to the firm in knowing the benefits and challenges of the group and pondering ways to mitigate it.

2.2 Impostor Phenomenon

This section introduces and defines the impostor phenomenon, describes the impostor cycle, enumerates the phenomenons origin of family dynamics (Clance and Imes, 1978) and characterizes high-achieving individuals (Watkins, 2012). In comparison to the Dunning Kruger Effect (Kruger and Dunning, 1999), impostor syndrome is something that is different and it is noteworthy not to confuse those two concepts. Additionally, numerous characteristics of “neurotic impostors” are analyzed through fear of failure and success (Fried-Buchalter, 1997), strong and weak opinions, and perfectionism (Kets de Vries, 2005). Challenges of the impostor syndrome in the workplace can be a hindrance to the firm and the individual, and therefore, consequences of the impostor phenomenon are explored in business application (Kets de Vries, 2005).
2.2.1 Introduction and Definition

The impostor phenomenon, first defined by Clance and Imes in 1978, occurs within high-achieving individuals, who experience intellectual fraudulence and believe that they will be found out (Clance and Imes, 1978; Kets de Vries, 2005; Vergauwe et al., 2015). Even though these individuals (also known as “impostors”) have accomplished a lot in their careers and have exhibited the necessary skills for success, they continuously question their abilities and they fear that someone important will discover their perceived inabilities (Clance and Imes, 1978). The study done by Clance and Imes (1978) pioneered the impostor phenomenon and described female students, who exhibited success, but who feared that it was not due to skills, but rather to their charisma, interpersonal relationships and luck. This study showcased the reasons for developing the impostor syndrome and how developments in early childhood and school can influence these adults. Furthermore, Clance and Imes (1978) defined the impostor cycle, family dynamics, and high-achieving tendencies, which may all play a part in the impostor syndrome development.

The Impostor Cycle

Clance and Imes (1978) and Clance (1985) defined and described the impostor cycle, which can be seen in Figure 2.5. Individuals may start the impostor cycle by receiving a new important project or a piece of work from their boss. Such a big project can cause anxiety, self-doubt and worry, which festers and yields to acts of over-preparation and/or procrastination, because the expectation is perceived to be high. However, despite these negative feelings, the individual gets the project done and has overall accomplishment and success. Naturally, this accomplishment provides a feeling of relief for the individual and in time, positive feedback is received from the boss for the success of the project. This positive attention is ignored or pushed away by the individual, because they think their accomplishment was due to effort or luck and not their knowledge. Hence, feeling like a fake, self-doubt, depression and anxiety can be the resulting outcome (Clance and Imes, 1978; Clance, 1985; Clance and O’Toole, 1988).

Moreover, the impostor cycle can have multiple branches, but most follow the general cycle described. Of course all individuals have a unique path of experiences, but the general understanding is that self-doubt, anxiety and over-achievement leads to feelings of impostorism. “Impostorism” or “imposterism” is defined as this intense feeling of believing one is a mistake, fraud or a fake (Clance and Imes, 1978; Bechtoldt, 2015).

Family Dynamics

The origins of the impostor phenomenon come about in early life and family dynamics (Clance and Imes, 1978, p. 3). In literature, it is noted that the impostor syndrome characteristics are developed during developmental years of the individual and attributed to family life. Individuals who experience the impostor phenomenon will most likely reflect on their family dynamics, such as, birth order, pressures to succeed in school, favoritism, or being labeled as the “smart” vs.
2.2 Impostor Phenomenon

The Imposter Cycle

![Diagram of the Imposter Cycle. Adopted from Clance and Imes (1978) and Clance (1985).](image)

the “social” child (Clance and Imes, 1978; Kets de Vries, 2005). Clance and Imes (1978) further explained that there are two specific origins of the emergence of the impostor syndrome in early childhood.

First, a child could be compared to his or her siblings or close relatives and get labeled based on social adaptability or looks, instead of intelligence (Clance and Imes, 1978, p. 3). This would make the child feel inadequate in comparison to the “more intelligent” sibling or relative. In effect, any hard work or success in their studies is attributed to social skills or interpersonal sensitivities, rather than their competencies. Another branch of this school of thought is that some parents are also expecting the child not to succeed, based on their own social status or class (Kets de Vries, 2005, p. 3). For example, if a blue collar workers child is excelling in education and later on in their career, the child may feel out of their comfort zone, due to their family status or prior expectations. The child will continue to think he or she is not good or smart enough, because their parents always thought of them as less sufficient in comparison to others. Therefore, breeding continuous self-doubt in future endeavors, even when success is achieved (Clance and Imes, 1978, p. 4).

Second, a scenario where parents make the child feel superior, special and talented in comparison to other peers, siblings or relatives, may also provide some challenges (Clance and Imes, 1978, p. 3). Growing up, the child is raised with praise for all actions, even if those actions are not deserving of any significant recognition. Therefore, once the child experience any failures or difficulties, they could doubt their abilities and feel as though they cannot fulfill the expectations that are required of them to still be considered perfect. The overachievement expectation placed
on the child by the parents, and at times accompanied by lack of warmth, puts an immense pressure on the child (Kets de Vries, 2005, p. 3). At some point the child or the growing adult will be unable to keep up with the expected success, and they may question their parents' judgment of them all along, which would cause future insecurities, due to the failure to continue to be special and talented (Clance and Imes, 1978, p. 5).

Thus, all of these factors can contribute to the triggers of the impostor syndrome in working adults (Kets de Vries, 2005). As these children grow up, their impostor syndrome heightens, because they either felt and continue to feel less and less adequate when compared to their peers, or they realize that they have to work very hard to try to maintain or keep up with expected level of achievement. Therefore, family dynamics play an important role in analyzing the impostor syndrome in business professionals.

**High-Achieving Individuals**

Individuals, who strive for success, look for opportunities, receive promotions and get recognition for certain abilities, can be defined as high-achieving individuals (Clance and O’Toole, 1988; Watkins, 2012). High-achieving individuals are people who may hold a high degree, have received recognition and awards, may have went up the corporate ladder at a fast rate or have contributed to the success of a firm or some special projects. These individuals can be seen in the business world, as well as in academia.

When high-achieving individuals have been studied in the past, an impostor phenomenon was noticed in these individuals (Clance and Imes, 1978; Fried-Buchalter, 1997). Majority of the research on the impostor syndrome was conducted on students, academics and very few professionals, therefore, the impostor phenomenon is not a well-researched topic for high-achieving professionals, who hold managerial positions in firms or who have achieved relative success in their companies (Fried-Buchalter, 1997; Kets de Vries, 2005; Whitman and Shanine, 2012; Vergauwe et al., 2015; Bechtoldt, 2015; Crawford et al., 2016).

Consequently, further research in this area, as it relates to work environments and for professionals, is necessary and beneficial. This thesis contributes to the study of high-achieving individuals, with distinct focus on business professionals and not graduate students or academics, and their relation to the impostor syndrome.

**Dunning Kruger Effect vs. Impostor Syndrome**

It is worth noting that the impostor syndrome is very different from the Dunning Kruger Effect (DKE), where the two have been compared in previous literature (Kruger and Dunning, 1999; Dunning, 2011; Schlösser et al., 2013). In comparison to the impostors, DKE research argues “that when people are incompetent in the strategies they adopt to achieve success and satisfaction, they suffer a dual burden: Not only do they reach erroneous conclusions and make unfortunate choices, but their incompetence robs them of the ability to realize it.” (Kruger and Dunning, 1999, p. 1121). Therefore, these people are under the impression that they are doing
fine, regardless of the outcomes (Kruger and Dunning, 1999; Dunning, 2011; Schlösser et al., 2013). In contrast to DKE, the impostor syndrome individuals feel like they are not doing fine, even when their actions are well thought out or successful. This shows that there is a significant gap in what individuals can think about, in relation to their actions and internal beliefs. Therefore, impostors are not actual frauds, as can be implied by the DKE, where the perception of the individual does not match the actions.

Hence, the perceived and actual abilities of the DKE individuals and the impostor syndrome individuals lay on opposites sides of the spectrum (Kruger and Dunning, 1999; Dunning, 2011). Therefore, stating that individuals with the impostor syndrome have actual abilities, while the DKE individuals just perceive to have the desired abilities.

2.2.2 Characteristics

There are numerous assumed characteristics of the impostor syndrome, that range from mild to extreme. Multiple studies indicate the prevalence of certain traits or behaviors that the impostors either experiences or exhibits (Clance and Imes, 1978; Kets de Vries, 2005). These characteristics can be experienced by every individual, but in the case of neurotic impostors, which have a high propensity to feel the impostor syndrome, they can be excessive and detrimental (Kets de Vries, 2005, p. 2). Figure 2.6 shows the various characteristics of the impostor syndrome, which can be displayed by an individual, who at one point or another has felt like an impostor (Clance and Imes, 1978; Kets de Vries, 2005).

The basic premise of the impostor syndrome is the feeling of fraud and phoniness, which leads these individuals to be paranoid of being found out (Clance and Imes, 1978, p. 2-4). Clance and Imes (1978) confirmed in their study that impostors think that they are successful, because they use charisma, social skills and charm, which may be the case and can actually provide some benefits, but, is not a sole reason for their success. The impostor characteristics can be grouped into a few main areas, such as, fear of success vs. fear of failure, strong vs. weak opinions and perfectionism.

**Fear of Success vs. Fear of Failure**

Fear of failure and fear of success has been studied by various researchers (Fried-Buchalter, 1997; Kets de Vries, 2005; Neureiter and Traut-Mattausch, 2016). Fear of success is a type of fear, which focuses on the positive exposure, where an individual is afraid of being in the limelight, or does not want to be recognized as being the best, because they think that their success may not be justified or that the expectation for future success is too high. Contrary to fear of success is the fear of failure, where individuals are overwhelmed by the thought of failing that it consumes their actions (Ross et al., 2001; Bechtoldt, 2015).

Fried-Buchalter (1997) showcased a study on men and women in marketing management positions and described what these individuals experienced. The study aimed at pointing out the extent the individuals exhibited fear of failure and fear of success. The results of the study...
showed that women experienced an increased fear of success, due to societal stereotypes, but fear of failure was restively similar between men and women (Fried-Buchalter, 1997, p. 855). Additionally, a study of students by Ross et al. (2001) reviewed achievement disposition and the five factors model of neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness. The study linked multiple important factors, particularly self-handicapping and fear of failure, to the impostor syndrome (Ross et al., 2001, p. 1354). This revelation has expanded the understanding of the phenomenon and provided an interesting framework for addressing these negative attributes.

Thus, it is important to understand where these fears of either, success or failure, fit into the fabric of the impostor phenomenon. Due to these fears of success and/or failure, the impostors may even appear modest or humble when receiving praise, because they try to underplay their success in fear of having to repeat these triumphs, because they feel that they are unable to fulfill the expectations of others. By downplaying prior achievement, impostors shield themselves from additional expectations by avoiding praise or recognition. It is as if they try to avoid success or additional achievement, so that they may not disappoint others (Kets de Vries, 2005). This increased fear of visibility, brings on an increased feeling of anxiety, which could cause individuals to avoid future recognition (Kets de Vries, 2005, p. 2-5).

**Strong vs. Weak Opinion**

Individuals with the impostor syndrome could have a dichotomous approach to their own feelings and opinions. Kets de Vries (2005) explained that, at times, the impostor will have a very strong
stance on issues, while at other times, they can lack an opinion all together (Kets de Vries, 2005, p. 5). Consequently, these individuals lean to one spectrum of the two, more than the other, with having a strong propensity to, either be very stubborn on views, or to be too lenient in opinions. It is also worth noting that impostors can bounce between the two states.

On the one hand, impostors might maintain a firm stance on their decision, because they don’t want to be questioned on its validity. Leading to situations where they do not ask for advice. It is noted that impostors have difficulty in asking for help, because this would provide “proof of fraud” that they are incapable to perform at the high level as they think people expect them to perform. Hence these actions could be viewed as impostors having a trust issue of others, leading to all major decision-making to be made by the impostor, regardless if it is right or wrong (Kets de Vries, 2005, p. 5).

On the other hand, the impostor may be afraid to trust his or her own judgment, so they do not provide their own opinion, fearing that it is wrong or could be unacceptable (Kets de Vries, 2005, p. 5). Hence, there is a group of impostors who do not voice their concerns, even if they might be relevant to the problem at hand. Additionally, by not stating their (different) opinion, the impostor dodges and avoids disagreements, so that they may also dodge uncomfortable moments when the “opponents” may question or challenge them (Kets de Vries, 2005). Therefore, by avoiding uncomfortable situations, the insecurity will not be shown and the impostor can feel safe and protected.

Subsequently, the variance in behavior can hide the impostor syndrome tendencies or cause different outcomes. The individual will either appear strong and unapproachable to weak and as someone that can be pushed over. This might be hard to detect as an impostor syndrome and may provide challenges for people to recognize it even in themselves.

**Perfectionism**

Kets de Vries (2005) noted that perfectionism is one of the main triggers for the feeling of impostor phenomenon in working professionals, because these individuals or impostors continuously think they are not good enough in comparison to others. They persuade themselves that they need to be better in comparison to co-workers or peers and perfectionism develops, because the impostors focus on too many details and try to excel in multiple areas that they seem necessary. A common belief develops, where the impostor starts working longer and harder. This however, in the long run, could eventually lead to excessive working hours and workaholic behavior (Kets de Vries, 2005, p. 3-7).

Hence, perfectionism, which may seem as a positive attribute, may in fact become a hindrance to these individuals, if taken to an extreme level, because over-working may lead to a burnout and a crash in productivity, which may cause other problems for the individual and people around them.
Chapter 2 Literary Review

Positive Side-effects

Clance and Imes (1978) stated that impostors use charisma, social skills and charm, as ways to hide or deal with the impostor syndrome. This can be seen as a positive aspect of the phenomenon, as it can be used to the benefit of the individual and the environment around them. Exhibiting positive and well managed social skills may provide an outlet for impostors to secure a position within a firm, where further room for advancement is available. Additionally, building relationships with powerful individuals, in an organization, could be viewed as an asset and may provide opportunities, which would not initially be there. Unfortunately, positive attributes fuel the impostorism even more, because the impostors think that they got to the place where they are due to these personality characteristics and not due to their actual skills (Clance and Imes, 1978, p. 5).

Consequently, although positive side-effects of the impostor syndrome exist, they do not out-weight the negative. Therefore, individuals find that the hindrances of the impostor syndrome can become a real challenge in their personal life and in their profession and business endeavors. Which brings to the forefront the significance and application of the impostor syndrome in its business implications.

2.2.3 Business Application

While many successful and high-achieving professional are employed in firms, these companies should be cognizant of the impostor phenomenon and its business application and implication. Firms may put intentional or unintentional pressures on individual to exhibit high-performance. But performing these expectations may evoke undesirable actions from the workforce, which can yield detrimental consequences for the individual and the firm (Truman et al., 2010). Hence, the need for a focus and an understanding of the significance of the impostor syndrome should be prioritized in building awareness of this phenomenon. By promoting understanding and openness to individual phenomenons, the firm can offer mitigation of the syndrome in the corporate culture and structure. However, recent research has had minimal attention on workplace application of the impostor syndrome and how to mitigate this phenomenon.

Consequences for the Individuals vs. the Firm

The impostor syndrome can have multiple consequences on the individual and the firm. Not only should the impostor phenomenon be highlighted as a problem for managers, on the personnel level, but also for the entire company as a whole. Kets de Vries (2005) explained that there are numerous areas of professional life of individuals, who have the impostor syndrome, which can be affected by this phenomenon, such as, destructive behavior, abuse and impact to interpersonal relationships. Also, firms could experience negative side-effects with the impostor syndrome, if this syndrome is not controlled or is not detected and corrected in time. Firms can suffer the consequences of poor individual behaviors of the impostors and experience pitfalls, such as, loss
2.2 Impostor Phenomenon

Figure 2.7: Hypothesized model of preconditions for and career-relevant consequences of impostor feelings. Adopted from Neureiter and Traut-Mattausch (2016, p. 3).

of revenue due to poor delegation, abrasive behavior of impostors to customer, and other actions that can influence the bottom line (Kets de Vries, 2005, p. 5).

Due to these facts, an increased wave of research is taken place on the business application of the impostor syndrome (Kets de Vries, 2005; Whitman and Shanine, 2012; Vergauwe et al., 2015; Crawford et al., 2016). The desire to provide more information and scientific back-up for the effects of the impostor syndrome on the individual and the firm is gaining momentum and can provide significant contribution to firms and their HRDs. Therefore, the focus of business application, as it relates to the fear of failure vs. success, strong vs. weak opinions and perfectionism, can highlight and provide relevant examples of the implications the impostor phenomenon has on individuals and firms.

Fear of Success vs. Fear of Failure

Fearing success may affect or even harm performance, because the individual may handicap themselves in future business projects of negotiating deals (Kets de Vries, 2005). Therefore, this problem negatively impacts the individuals, who will miss out on opportunities, bonuses or achieving higher goals, but could also harm the business firm, since the objectives or targets of the company will not be met, due to the mistakes or intentional failures of the impostor. Figure 2.7 shows the preconditions to the feeling of the impostor syndrome, such as, fear of failure, fear of success and low self-esteem, which have significant career-relevant consequences for the individual in career planning, career striving and motivation to lead (Neureiter and Traut-Mattausch, 2016, p. 3).

Fear of failure is detrimental to the individual, especially, if the company punishes failure and does not tolerate mistakes. When anxiety and insecurity is prevalent, fearing every step in decision-making process can lead to a negative impact on the organization (Kets de Vries, 2005). When mistakes are not tolerated in the organization, the firm may breed a micromanagement style in the impostor, who will want more control over their work and people around them (Kets de Vries, 2005). This can be seen as a waste of company resources, because the time and energy of the individuals are not allocated properly. Additionally, with extended working hours or inadequately placed importance on certain task, will also subsequently waste time and resources.
and yield negative reactions of the subordinate employees. Turnover may occur of either the impostor, or their direct reports.

Consequently, fear of failure and fear of success may lead to poor evaluations and performance reviews. For example, the promotion to the next position could be affected if the impostor avoids or performs poorly in the evaluation process. Crawford et al. (2016) described that impostors are more prone to avoiding evaluation or performance review, due to their insecurity of evaluation by others. They fear that the review will show their inabilities and that they will be finally discovered for the fraud they think they are (Crawford et al., 2016, p. 14-15). Even if the evaluation is positive and their success has been noted by superiors, the impostor may feel even more pressure that a repeated level of performance may not be achieved in the future. Causing either a promotion or a demotion, depending on the response of the impostor to the recognition (Kets de Vries, 2005, p. 5). Downplaying success could decrease the chances of bonus or monetary advancement for the individual. Additionally, the firm may also agree with the individual that the goal was not as high as anticipated and place even higher expectation on the impostor, causing a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Hence, recognizing that fear of failure and fear of success may be a real challenge for some individuals at work, can bring awareness to HRDs, who can review if it is necessary to take corrective actions and if the bottom line may be affected, due to these factors. By noting that these fears can lead people to act in a different way or have negative consequences for the firm, may trigger new ways to perform evaluation reviews.

**Strong vs. Weak Opinion**

When individuals, which are placed in leadership roles, exhibit the impostor syndrome, a poor leadership style could be exhibited and can have a negative impact on the firm, with lasting damaging effects to the organization (Kets de Vries, 2005, p. 5). Leaders, who may lead with strong or weak opinions, can produce different results. Therefore, understanding the challenges of each style of the way leaders or managers exhibit their opinions, can bring forth more information on how the impostor syndrome may impact the business world.

Impostors with a strong opinions may experience an inability to delegate, due to their doubts in others or themselves (Kets de Vries, 2005; Bechtoldt, 2015). A study by Bechtoldt (2015) focused on task delegation within a firm or working group. The research proposed that managers who exhibit the impostor syndrome were more likely to delegate work to other co-workers or subordinates who also exhibited traits of the impostor syndrome. Furthermore, Kets de Vries (2005) also confirmed that poor delegation tactics of managers can effect the firms success and individual performance. Hence, if the impostors maintain too strong of an opinion, this may prevent creativity, entrepreneurial spirit and innovation in the working team, because the members and the impostor may be unwilling to experiment, develop and learn. This could be a contributing factor to inadequate decision-making process and eventually, a poor execution of those decisions (Kets de Vries, 2005).
However, when impostor leaders exhibit a lack of opinion or when they question the validity of their opinion, pondering whether they are wrong or right, can lead to procrastination and lost opportunities. Time wasted on procrastination leads to poor time management and inadequate asset or resource allocations. When impostors over-analyze and worry over their decisions, they may seek out reassurance and support by confirmation. Which leads to a prime example of certain leaders or companies, in general, being “addicted” to using consulting companies to help make important decisions (Kets de Vries, 2005, p. 6). The reason that the consultants are needed, is because the impostor is not convinced of their own decision and they want to spread their risk of failure. They need the confirmation that the strategy they have come up with is solid and has been double checked for errors. This of course is expensive for the firm, as consulting companies cost a lot of money, time and effort (Kets de Vries, 2005).

Therefore, impostors with either strong or weak opinions have their own challenges that get in their way of utilizing their power and influence. This is a huge detriment to the firm, if it is a known fact, that can be mitigated. Hence, higher management and HRDs may be interested in monitoring leader and managers and noting their style in communication, to see if those styles can be associated with the impostor syndrome similarities.

**Perfectionism**

The impostors may appear abrasive, because their perfectionism causes impatience and irritability. The behavior of the impostor can turn nit-picky, if the impostor is expecting the team to provide the same level of detail or high standard, as they put on themselves. Impostors tend to intimidate others with their high expectations, because impostors put a high expectation of themselves and they expect the same from others. Therefore, high criticism of self and others, by the impostors, may be an issue in customer interactions or in other duties/achievements.

When impostors experience some sort of push-back or criticism, currently or in the past, they tend to blow little things out of proportion, and worry with anxiety. When those impostors continue to “cover-up” their perceived inabilities with hard work, certain goals, that were set too high, might fail and they may, in return, punishing themselves for those failed goals (Kets de Vries, 2005). With this distorted self-perception and self-criticism of the individual, organizations may face problems with self-destructive behavior, with examples ranging from womanizing, alcohol and other substance abuses in the workplace (Kets de Vries, 2005, p. 5). This behavior can damage working relationship with others and tarnish the reputation of the individual and the firm (Kets de Vries, 2005).

Over-achievement tendencies and unrealistic expectations can lead to long working hours for the team. Not only does this affect the impostor, but it also increases the pressure on the entire group. Workaholic behavior causes a decrease in motivation and a potential increase in inter-company transfers or employees seeking employment elsewhere (Kets de Vries, 2005). Subsequently, burnout (Kets de Vries, 2005; Truman et al., 2010; Crawford et al., 2016) can be caused by the impostors drive for achievement and could be a draining effect on the individuals,
because they are simply doing too much. Burnout may induce an individual to get depressed, lose interest in work or personal life, perform poorly, have a lack of energy or many more symptoms, which may play a negative role in the office (Kets de Vries, 2005; Crawford et al., 2016; Truman et al., 2010).

Therefore the neurosis of the impostors could ruin their career and the business as well (Kets de Vries, 2005). Experiencing burning out, by always trying to be perfect, the impostor can have eventual troubles in the firm, which can cause the company to suffer similar negative consequences and problems. Bringing cognizance to HRDs about impostor syndrome and ways to fight off burnout, which may be due to perfectionism, may provide a better work-life balance for the individual and a positive result for the firm.

### 2.3 Self-Initiated Expatriates and the Impostor Phenomenon

This section goes over the assumptions and interrelated factors between SIEs, their expatriation process and the impostor phenomenon, and provides insights into its business application. Furthermore, linking factors, characteristics, behaviors and traits are expanded on in search of mutual interrelation between the expatriation process with individual and international factors and the impostor phenomenon, in SIEs.

#### 2.3.1 Interlinking Factors

Since the area of research connecting the impostor syndrome and SIEs is new, the objective of this work is to explore and combine the concept of the impostor syndrome in association with the influence of international experience and note if interrelations exist. This section will propose a need for a model, where several assumed interrelated factors show how the impostor syndrome could influence SIE expatriation process or the other way around. Furthermore, the interlinking factors that are bridged together are: individual factors, international factors and the impostor syndrome factors.

**Expatriation Process**

SIEs perceive their expatriation process differently, as it is assumed that some SIEs have a positive expatriation process, while others have more challenges. The experience will depend heavily on situations, circumstances, support and SIE motivations (Richardson and McKenna, 2002). Moreover, other factors influences the experience of expatriation, such as, individual and international factors. A person’s personality and cultural background may interplay in the perception of the adjustment into the host country (Vergauwe et al., 2015). Thus, it is of interest to gain knowledge in the different experiences that SIEs have in their move abroad. By defining these experiences and looking at their levels of impostor syndrome, one can see if interlinkages can be made in the influences that the impostor phenomenon has on the experience of expatriation or if expatriation has an influence on the level of impostor syndrome tendencies.
Hence, one assumption is that the impostor syndrome may influence the expatriation process. By SIEs exhibiting impostor syndrome factors, such as, anxiety, insecurity, fear, doubt, excess pressure, increased expectations, lack of opinions, comparison to others and over preparation during their initial move abroad, may cause challenges in their adjustment process. These challenges may appear in their work-life balance. SIEs may feel disconnected or unsupported, which will taint their expatriation process memories. Thus, understanding the impostor syndrome and to what extent the SIEs exhibited these traits is essential in understanding the imprints that were left on their experience of expatriation and if additional challenges were created, due to impostor syndrome factors.

On the contrary, the second assumption is that the expatriation process may influence the impostor syndrome tendencies. By SIEs undergoing the challenges of expatriation, such as, logistical issues, lack of collaboration, limiting orientation process and new working style, may cause some interlinkages to emerge to the tendencies of the impostor phenomenon. These challenges may appear in their working style. SIEs may feel anxious or fearful of their future at the firm, if the expatriation process is not going as planned or if there are too many bumps in their acculturation process. Therefore, understanding the expatriation process and how this process was handled by SIEs is essential in gaining knowledge in the imprints that were left on their experience, which may or may not play a role in how they exhibit the characteristics of the impostor phenomenon.

Individual Factors

As mentioned, individuality plays a role in the expatriation process and the way a person behaves and what factors they are more susceptible to. Individual factors, such as, gender, identity, personality and hypersensitivity are noted as common, since these factors are personalized and particular to each individual. It is worth noting that two of the international factors listed in Subsection 2.1.3, especially under the definition of 'International Factors', can also be considered as individual factors, such as, gender and identity. These particular factors may or may not be influenced by culture or internationality, but may be an individual aspect that may relate to factors of the impostor syndrome. Additional factors, such as, personality and hypersensitivity may also play a role in individual behavior, which relates to the impostor phenomenon.

For example, personality of individuals may vary from person to person and cannot be quantified (Berry, 1997, p. 23). This factor contributes to the way a person acts and behaves with others at work (Guthrie et al., 1998, p. 371-376). Certain values and beliefs may be under the influence of personality and can cause the individual to have different objectives and outlooks in their inter-personal relationships. Therefore, the study of personality is rich and deep, which implies an undertone to this research that personality should always be considered when studying individual behavior. Hence, a tie-in can be made from personality to the impostor phenomenon through research conducted by Vergauwe et al. (2015), who proposed that impostor syndrome characteristics may be linked to personality, through the Big Five personality traits of...
neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness, with special emphasis on neuroticism, extraversion and conscientiousness (Vergauwe et al., 2015, p. 567).

Additionally, hypersensitivity is of concern when individuals are overly cognizant of their surroundings. Selmer and Lauring (2014) noted that SIEs have heightened awareness to sensitivities in social interactions. While, it is an asset mastering social sensitivity, a hindrance might occur with too much sensitivity. Goleman (2013) described hypersensitivity, as an internal alarm clock, which occurs within certain individuals, who are very aware of their environment and the behavior of others around them. Hypersensitivity arises in SIEs, because they may be extremely cognizant of their new surroundings, which causes them to pay attention to everything and double guess their meaning and application to the situation. This awareness can become a hindrance in their daily life. For example, if these hypersensitive individuals know what is going on around them and what they assume is happening to the people around them, it consumes them. Their perceptions of what they see, which should have been unnoticed in normal cases, can trigger an honest, but unwanted, response from themselves and can send unnecessary signals to the person they are speaking to (Goleman, 2013). Since SIEs possess social and emotional sensitivity, such skills are utilized in the workplace. However, these social sensitivities should be used as an asset and not be turn into a crippling behavior of hypersensitivity. Therefore, providing a link to a thought that hypersensitivity my play a role in the interrelation between internationality and the impostor syndrome.

International and Impostor Syndrome Factors

As previously seen in Figure 2.2 and Figure 2.6, SIEs may exhibit certain characteristics, whether they relate to internationality or the impostor syndrome. International factors, as listed in Sub-section 2.1.3, especially under the definition of 'International Factors', relate to the impostor phenomenon in three particular areas. The areas, such as, international upbringing, education and language or accent, are assumed to be the major themes, which are part of the expatriation process that SIEs experience during their transition into the new country. Therefore, the expatriation process is a topic of a particular interest. SIEs undergo this adjustment process, and the international factors that SIEs bring along with them, as their underlying culture, are hypothesized to have some interrelations to the impostor syndrome.

The impostor syndrome factors, as listed in Section 2.2, have some similarities to internationality, in areas of: family dynamics, high-achievement, fear, anxiety, pressure, expectations, weak opinions, fear of failure, and perfectionism (Clance and Imes, 1978; Kets de Vries, 2005). Hence, interlinkages can be made between all factors of individuality, internationality and impostorism.

Model for the Assumed Interlinking Factors

To formulate a model for this theory, all three groups of factors (individual, international and impostor syndrome) can be considered, either together, or with some lose linkages. This model will be developed and discussed in Chapter 4 of this work. There, the expatriation process
2.3 Self-Initiated Expatriates and the Impostor Phenomenon

and international factors may be interlinked, or one might outshine the other, when SIEs move to the host country. Therefore, the interrelated factors, as they interconnect to the impostor syndrome, might only relate to the expatriation process, while for others, it might only be the individual, international or cultural factors. It is assumed that in general, it is a mixture of both, the expatriation and the international factors, which may be coupled to feelings of impostor phenomenon.

Hence, the study of whether expatriation and/or international factors are linked to the factors of the impostor syndrome is unique and interesting to research, which can be applicable to the study of international business and provide benefits to the HRDs and firms, as a whole. Individuals may also find this information intriguing, as personal development may take place in discovering whether impostor syndrome is common among SIEs and if, international aspects are more prevalent in triggering or mimicking impostor phenomenon syndromes. Therefore, it is important to identify the SIEs characteristics of the impostor syndrome, and ponder if they were experienced during expatriation, describe the interrelated factors, note the effected areas in the workplace and pinpoint mitigating factors, which HRDs can take in avoiding future negative implications.

2.3.2 Business Application

Currently there are no papers on mitigating strategies developed exclusively and especially for SIEs, even though this area of research could be of great interest and excitement for the research community. The reasons SIEs are an important group to study is because SIEs are playing a bigger role in recent recruitment and hiring, which may provide additional information to HRDs, who face challenges during globalization adjustments of employees and expatriates (Mcevoy and Buller, 2013; Hurn, 2014).

Since SIEs exhibit certain behaviors and traits, which are learned and developed during their transition into another culture, these individuals could be attractive candidates to globally diverse work teams (Biemann and Andresen, 2010). These traits are developed because SIEs had to adjust to their new environments, on their own and, usually, with little help from their firms or governments. Due to this self-initiation, the SIEs can go through a lot of hardships where determination is needed in order to achieve their desired goals (Selmer and Lauring, 2014). The psychological state and emotional strength of the individual is important in positive adjustment and, therefore, parallels can be seen between SIEs and impostors. Since linkages could be made between international factor insecurities and impostor syndrome traits, it is of no surprise that those two groups may have some similarities.

Another reason SIEs are an interesting group to study, especially in regards to the impostor syndrome and human resource management, is because it is reported that there is a sub-group of SIEs who perceive themselves to be high-achieving individuals, due to their heightened desire to work abroad (Economist, 2010; Cao et al., 2012). By moving abroad, SIEs are under a subjective view that this change has a prospective for career success (Arthur et al., 2005). This
determination for potential future success and their actual ability to get hired abroad is testimony for their high-achievement. Their drive, willpower and pursuit of their dreams can be coupled with uncertainty, but they also have a source of desire for achievement.

Hence, this thesis especially focuses on how business may be affected by the SIEs who experience impostor syndrome and how can these feelings be prevented, controlled or even detected. Therefore, mitigation strategies for the impostor syndrome are pondered and after, specific strategies are analyzed for SIEs and other international employees. Since current research on the support of SIEs and their expatriation process is limited (Bonache et al., 2001), the thesis brings light to some ways that SIEs may feel supported during the acculturation process at work.

Support in the Expatriation Process of SIEs

Current literature has not been noted for implementation of help or trainings for SIE during their expatriation process. AEs receive help in some cases, when they move abroad and literature is predominantly focusing on these topics (Howe-Walsh and Schyns, 2010). However, SIEs do not usually receive any support or orientation once they start their jobs abroad. This could be the main issue in adjustment and potential impostor syndrome tendencies. Therefore, further investigation is necessary into what areas of support are advisable to implement in firm, in order to support the new arriving SIEs.

Hence, once this thesis has addressed the issues of how do SIEs perceive the challenges of expatriation and whether certain factors relate to the impostor phenomenon, the research can go further and recommend and suggest some ways firms can support SIEs to mitigate the impostor phenomenon. This provides a worthy contribution to the current study of SIEs, gives further insights into the impostor syndrome and allows a new perspective on human resources studies.

2.4 Mitigation of the Impostor Phenomenon

This section examines methods in which ways a firm can mitigate the perceived difficulties experienced by international workforce, such as, SIEs, in their daily life in the office. Additionally, business application of these assumption are defined by exploring mitigating factors of the impostor syndrome in the workplace (Kets de Vries, 2005; Whitman and Shanine, 2012; Vergauwe et al., 2015; Crawford et al., 2016). Since expatriation process is a unique process experienced by SIEs and other expatriates, mitigating strategies developed especially for those individuals, to handle the move and the impostor syndrome, are analyzed, in order to explore if this is a beneficial practice and if HRDs should implement new policies in their employment manuals.

Currently the impostor syndrome is known in the field of business and companies are aware that this phenomenon could be a problem to the individual and the firm (Kets de Vries, 2005; Whitman and Shanine, 2012; Vergauwe et al., 2015; Crawford et al., 2016). However, there are no known articles where the companies, themselves, address this issue and address their current mitigating strategies, if any. Company handbooks do not address the impostor syndrome, as
explicitly as some other aspects like expatriate management and compensation (Bonache et al., 2001).

Firms may be aware of the impostor phenomenon, but little is done to mitigate it in the workplace. When SIEs experience the characteristics of the impostor syndrome, firms should consider mitigating strategies that can be implemented at work to help SIEs and other expatriates to cope with them. However, there are some challenges in implementing and putting into place the strategies that may be beneficial to individuals with the impostor syndrome. There are a few ways that the impostor syndrome can be mitigated, but it is difficult to decide and pick one or few strategies that can be efficient industry wide. Different selection strategies or options might be relevant for different types of firms, based on size and budget, and various industries can also undergo variances in the selection of a strategy. Hence, it is important to understand how can the impostor syndrome be detected and what potential mitigation options are there to consider.

First, it is important to note that firms should find ways to see the problems that may be associated with the impostor syndrome, but it is very hard for a firm to recognize the impostor phenomenon, because impostors are hard to detect (Kets de Vries, 2005). However, firms can implement ways to look for and detect future problems. Bosses can and should look for symptoms and alert the impostor and/or superiors, who can reflect on these findings and see if this is relevant and applicable to the individual (Kets de Vries, 2005, p. 7). Meetings and evaluations during the performance reviews are usually a good time to look for signs and report them to the individual (Kets de Vries, 2005).

Second, firms may implement internal changes to help individuals to mitigate the impostor syndrome at work. There are numerous strategies for coping and supporting the impostor syndrome at work (Kets de Vries, 2005, p. 7). For example, training can be implemented to aid in impostor syndrome mitigation. The research of Vergauwe et al. (2015) proposed that individual coaching can provide relief to the impostor phenomenon. Leadership development and coaching programs for CEOs or rising management stars can mitigate future insecurities or prevent negative feelings (Kets de Vries, 2005). Mentoring can help in dealing with pressure and maintain equilibrium under stress (Kets de Vries, 2005, p. 7). Assigning mentors to new managers and future potentials in leadership, is a proactive way in mitigating the feeling of impostor syndrome and in cultivating other beneficial qualities. Figure 2.8 depicts what HRDs can do to help SIEs feel support in the expatriation process. By defining the position, providing mentoring and co-teaching and having access to non-work support, SIEs may find that work, interactions and general adjustments are accomplished with less stress and difficulties (Howe-Walsh and Schyns, 2010, p. 19).

When it comes to decision making and the unknowns that are associated with these tasks, firms can provide decision making assistance, which can range from increases personnel, opportunities to select different options, or even seeking outside help from consultants or strategic partnerships (Kets de Vries, 2005). This may provide the necessary assistance in making the right and confident decision. In the case of succession, succession planning and awareness, with
defined expectations, are solutions to uncertainty and doubt (Kets de Vries, 2005, p. 7).

Bosses and supervisors can teach by words and examples (Kets de Vries, 2005), because with more responsibility comes more criticism, and confirmation helps the impostors to deal with anxiety. In the case of good decision making or performance, increased positive reinforcement and motivation from superiors and co-workers, usually helps individuals with the impostor syndrome to solidify their perception of their actions and confirm their expectations. By strengthening the link between positive achievement and effort, impostors can thrive. When organizations do not punish “smart mistakes”, the impostors and the organization are offered learning and growth. Additionally, superiors could promote a better work-life balance to mitigate burnout and excess pressure (Kets de Vries, 2005, p. 7).

The research of Whitman and Shanine (2012), Vergauwe et al. (2015), and Crawford et al. (2016) focused on social support systems and their significance for the individual and in the workplace. It was confirmed that significant improvements were noted for companies’ and individuals’ satisfaction when social support system was implemented at work. Kets de Vries (2005) also suggested that a strong social support system, which human resources departments can implement at work, have been successful to mitigate impostor syndrome tendencies. It is argued that if individuals have an outlet where ideas and challenges can be shared, people will experience a belonging and may gain allies during their adjustment and acculturation process.

Third, a very important mitigating factor for the impostor syndrome is self-reflection and self-initiated change (Kets de Vries, 2005, p. 6). This self-evaluation and ways to behave in a new and constructive way is critical in battling the impostor syndrome (Vergauwe et al., 2015; Crawford et al., 2016). At times, it is extremely helpful for the impostor to recognize that they have some insecurities, and by knowing this fact, they may implement behaviors to change. Furthermore, Crawford et al. (2016) suggested that a new ways of conducting performance reviews may be an option in mitigating negative side-effects of the impostor syndrome. By doing so, an indi-
2.4 Mitigation of the Impostor Phenomenon

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<td>Work-life balance promotion</td>
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<td>Strengthen link between positive achievement and effort</td>
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Figure 2.9: Firm Related Mitigation Strategies for Impostor Syndrome. Developed by the author, referencing Kets de Vries (2005), Whitman and Shanine (2012), Vergauwe et al. (2015) and Crawford et al. (2016).

Individual may receive feedback from the superiors, which they can process in an enriching way, by internalizing them and reflecting on its significance and applicability to their professional career.

Moreover, Kets de Vries (2005) noted that employees who showcase the impostor syndrome tendencies need various support and training. It is shown, through this literature review, that a practical relevance of workplace mitigation is highlighted in current literature and research. Therefore, mitigation of the impostor syndrome is being recognized as an area of importance to business practices. Hence, contributions can be made with this thesis with the direct study of SIEs and mitigation strategies for this particular group, which relates to all international workers. Figure 2.9 shows the various mitigation strategies that can be implemented to battle impostor syndrome for working professionals. Examples, such as, training and opportunities to develop a strong workplace social support system, may be the answer for firms to mitigate the challenges of the impostor phenomenon, so that the professional who work at the firm can overcome the challenges that they face and can increase their overall performance and satisfaction at work (Whitman and Shanine, 2012; Vergauwe et al., 2015; Crawford et al., 2016).

Summary

This chapter presented the theoretical background on topics of the unique group of SIEs and the impostor phenomenon. Interrelated factors were implied to exist in the expatriation process of SIEs and the impostor phenomenon. Additionally, these topics were applied to the business application and how relevant the impostor syndrome is in the workplace, especially for SIEs or other international workers.

Therefore, the literary review helped in building up the basic assumptions about the research questions of the thesis. Prior studies paved a way to look into how SIEs perceive the challenges
Chapter 2 Literary Review

of expatriation and also, helped build a theory on whether certain factors relate to the impostor phenomenon. Moreover, prior research provided assumptions on how firms could support international workers to mitigate the challenges of expatriation and the impostor phenomenon. Hence, in order to answer the research questions, the review of prior studies have provided a solid basis to build on in future research endeavors and also, to go deeper, by testing the assumption in an empirical way.
Chapter 3

Research Design

This chapter describes in detail the methodology used in this thesis to answer the main and sub-research questions. The first part addresses the way the qualitative empirical study is conducted, by using the selected method and data collection. The second part focuses on the case study approach. The third part discusses the sampling selection. The fourth part goes into the semi-structured interview process. While, the last part describes how the data was analyzed and what tools were used in the analysis process. The chapter helps to define the parameters for the research, which other researchers may expand on or re-create.

3.1 Empirical Qualitative Analysis

The thesis conducts a qualitative empirical study with a case study approach. The purpose is to explore, understand and describe the SIE expatriation process and its relevance to the workplace, where interrelations to the impostor phenomenon are looked into. The topic is interesting to explore, because, first, the impostor phenomenon has not been studied in SIEs and second, the mitigation of the impostor phenomenon at work is still new in this research arena. The outcome of this empirical study should provide an answer on SIEs’ perception of their move abroad, the challenges they faced, and the factors that are unique to their experience. These answers will help in providing a bridge to the factors linked with the impostor syndrome. Which will in the end assist in providing a recommendation to firms on how to be able to mitigate the expatriation process and the potential feelings of the impostor syndrome.

3.1.1 Method

This thesis uses the qualitative method, by using qualitative research rigor (Gioia et al., 2012). “Qualitative research claims to describe life-worlds ‘from the inside out’, from the point of view of the people who participate. By so doing it seeks to contribute to a better understanding of social realities and to draw attention to processes, meaning patterns and structural features. Those remain closed to non-participants, but are also, as a rule, not consciously known by actors caught up in their unquestioned daily routine. Qualitative research, with its precise and ‘thick’ descriptions, does not simply depict reality, nor does it practice exoticism for its own sake. It
rather makes use of the unusual or the deviant and unexpected as a source of insight and a mirror whose reflection makes the unknown perceptible in the known, and the known perceptible in the unknown, thereby opening up further possibilities for (self-) recognition” (Flick et al., 2004, p. 3). The reason qualitative method is appropriate for this thesis is because it is deemed the best approach in answering the research questions, as described in Chapter 1, Section 1.1.

3.1.2 Data Collection

Primary and secondary data is used to gather the necessary data to answer the research questions. Primary data is the data that is collected via interviews or the current research, while secondary data is the data collected through prior studies, which was done by other researchers (Bryman and Bell, 2003). Therefore, this thesis will utilize an interview process to gather the primary data, while reflecting and referencing the secondary data gathers in the literary review, as seen in Chapter 2. Hence, this work will utilize semi-structured and narrative interviews in gaining insights into the topic (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). A combination of a short questionnaire and open interview questions are administered to gather information and derive a result. The reason for this selection is because using semi-structured interviews is found to be the most practical and functional way of gaining insight into the research questions.

3.2 Case Study

A case study approach is used in testing the research questions, as described by Bryman and Bell (2003) and Flick et al. (2004). The case study approach is chosen for the thesis, because “case study research consists of a detailed investigation, often with data collected over a period of time, of phenomena, within their context. The aim is to provide an analysis of the context and processes which illuminate the theoretical issues being studied. The phenomenon is not isolated from its context (as in, say, laboratory research) but is of interest precisely because the aim is to understand how behavior and/or processes are influenced by, and influence context. [...] The case study is particularly suited to research questions which require detailed understanding of social or organizational processes because of the rich data collected in context. In organizational research, the case study is likely to be one or more organizations, or groups and individuals operating within or around the organization (for example, particular departments, types of employee, customers or clients)” (Cassell and Symon, 2004, p. 323). The case study strategy is appropriate in answering the research questions of this thesis, because “case studies are useful where it is important to understand how the organizational and environmental context is having an impact on or influencing social processes. Case studies can be useful in illuminating behavior which may only be fully understandable in the context of the wider forces operating within or on the organization, whether these are contemporary or historical” (Cassell and Symon, 2004, p. 325).
3.3 Interview Partners

The interviewee selection consists of 7 high-achieving professionals in managerial or leadership roles. Snowballing and purposive methods are used in gathering the appropriate informants (Bryman and Bell, 2003). High-achieving individuals are defined as high-potential individual who are recognized for their ambitions and abilities by their firm or alma mater in a formal or informal manner (Derr et al., 1988; Clance and Imes, 1978). For example, top university graduates, business executes, managers and team leaders can be thought of as high-achieving individuals. Additionally, individuals who exhibit high drive and passion for advancement can also be considered high-achieving or high-potential individuals.

Table 3.1 describes each individual, who participated in the interview process. Ideal interviewees are comprised of high-achieving SIEs, who have successfully completed a general college education, which are on a bachelor or master level. A selection of people from different international backgrounds and industries are sought after, but specific jobs, genders and nationalities are not the main criterion. The age of participants can vary from early 20s to late 60s. Individuals are required to currently hold a position in a firm, who are either in a management role or have some specialized skills, which are perceived to be an asset in the firm. For example, some of the interviewees are top or middle managers, directors, senior executives or specialized staff. Individuals selected have to have prior international experience, which is defined as, living abroad and having worked in one or more cultural environments, either in another country or with multinational teams. The time frame of international projects can vary and does not have to be for an extended period of time. A move from one country to another is sufficient, as international experience. SIEs are defined as individuals who self-initiated a move abroad for work opportunities. Therefore, these individuals, by definition, satisfy the notion of international experience, due to their familiarity in both, the home and host country. For the purpose of this study, these criterions are deemed sufficient for providing a representative sample of high-achieving individuals.

A network of professionals, with experience in international roles, was contacted and asked to participate in the study. Additionally, professional networking sites, such as, LinkedIn and InterNations, are utilized in finding out more about the candidates for interviews. Interviewing requests are initiated by email, where individuals agree to a video-conference interview. All participants are asked ahead of time to block out 1.5 hours of their time for the actual interview and a chance to follow-up vie email, if needed. The actual interview process is about 60 to 90 minutes, which is long, but yields a more fluid conversation, where many follow-up questions are asked and plenty of time is given to the person to speak openly and without constraint. The convincing factor for the participation in the interview is based on goodwill and the incentive of finding out more about a personal phenomenon, which may be beneficial in their future work endeavors.
3.4 Process

This section describes the semi-structured interview process that is utilized in the thesis.

3.4.1 Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale

The interview process included an online test, which was developed by Professor Clance, and provided to all of the participants.² The “Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale” (CIPS) test, is a 20-question test, which measures initial level of the impostor syndrome (Clance and Imes, 1978). Clance describes the scoring of this test as: “If the total score is 40 or less, the respondent has few impostor characteristics; if the score is between 41 and 60, the respondent has moderate IP experiences; a score between 61 and 80 means the respondent frequently has impostor feelings; and a score higher than 80 means the respondent often has intense IP experiences. The higher the score, the more frequently and seriously the impostor phenomenon interferes in a person’s life”, as seen in the Clance CIPS test instructions in the Appendix B. This test is very important, as it provides the rating (between “few” to “frequent”) on the individuals’ impostor tendencies (Vergauwe et al., 2015), which is essential in the interview process. Individuals with a moderate to high (intense) test scores are the ideal candidates for the purpose of the thesis. However, cases of few (low) test score are to be expected and welcomed. Variances in results may derive

²Permission to use the CIPS test was received from Dr. Clance on May 27, 2016.
Table 3.2: Results of the CIPS test. Table developed by the author. Instructions and scoring are noted in Appendix B.

3.4.2 Interview Guide

Total interview time range is from 1 to 1.5 hours. The interview process has three distinct phases, including: Phase I, general interview questions; Phase II, online (CIPS) test; and Phase III, discussion after the test with further interview questions.

Initial Disclaimer

At the beginning of the interview, the interviewee is told that the interview and the subject of discussion is of sensitive matter, but that all information provided, by the interviewee, is anonymous. No individual names and actual firm names are released. The interviews were recorded and a verbal consent from the interviewee was obtained, prior to recording.

Interviewing Phases and Steps

The interview process is outlined in three phases and with multiple steps. A combination of open interview questions and a short questionnaire are administered at the interview. The first part (Phase I) is concerned with basic introduction, with steps including, discussion of initial background questions, expatriation process, challenges and etc. The second part (Phase II) is focused on the CIPS online test. The third part (Phase III) combines all the elements together, where both research questions are tied in, for an overall reflection, with steps including, going over the CIPS results, speaking openly about the impostor phenomenon, pondering international and personal factors and discussing impostor syndrome implications at work. The steps are defined in more detail below and the interview questions are summarized in the Appendix A.

Phase I. The first phase is concerned with basic introduction questions, with steps:

1. Expatriation process/career/initial background questions.
2. Challenges in expatriation process and career questions.
Chapter 3 Research Design

Phase II. The second phase is focused on the CIPS online test and follow-up sub-questions, with steps:

1. Interviewee takes online CIPS test.
2. Interviewer goes over the results and calculates the score.
3. Additional sub-questions in conjunction with the CIPS test.

Phase III. The third phase combines all the elements together, where both research questions are tied in, for an overall reflection, with steps:

1. Impostor phenomenon definition.
2. Interviewer reveals the CIPS test score.
3. International and individual factor questions.
4. Mitigating the impostor syndrome and its implications at work questions.
5. Concluding questions.

In more detail, Phase I begins the interview with some warm-up and basic data questions, which are asked as the initial part of the interview process, and that take about 30-40 minutes. This is where the initial questions are asked of the individuals to get to know them better and to get their description of their experiences of the expatriation process. Questions about their background, career path, motivations, challenges and successes lead to a better understanding about the individual’s work and expatriation process. Step 1 focuses on making the interviewee feel comfortable and open and to see how they react to further questioning and discussion. Furthermore, the interviewee is encouraged to discuss the expatriation process and their career. Step 2 goes even further in the challenges that the expatriation process and the career path has brought to the individual. Inadvertently, some information that SIEs may share, could lead to connections that SIEs could be exhibiting the impostor syndrome. It is here, that international experience attributes or challenges at work may show some interconnection to the impostor phenomenon. Hence, this phase of the interview starts to address the main research question of “How do SIEs perceive the challenges of expatriation and whether certain factors relate to the impostor phenomenon?”. These certain factors can mean experiences, characteristics, traits or attributes that SIEs possess. It is worth noting here that, at this point, the interviewee has not heard anything about the impostor syndrome or its definition, which will come later on in the interview process, in Phase III. This is intentional, since the next phase in the interview process is a short test, to gauge the SIEs impostor tendencies, and a bias is avoided by not disclosing the impostor phenomenon definition. The interviewee is told to take the test in Phase II of the interview, which gauges some of their characteristics and opinions on their interactions at work and life, in general.
Phase II focuses on the CIPS test. Therefore, in step 1 of Phase II, the online CIPS test takes place and takes about 15 minutes to answer. Interviewees are asked to hang-up the conference call and to take this short test online, which is sent to them at that instant via email. The reason the test is taken at the day of the interview and not before, is to gain a genuine response, where the interviewee has not had time to overanalyze the subject matter. After the interviewee completes the test, the step 2 of Phase II takes about 30 minutes. Once CIPS test is complete, the results are instantaneously calculated, using the scoring defined in Appendix A. After the result are calculated by the interviewer, he/she calls the interviewee back, after a short analysis of the test. However, the results are not revealed (at that moment) to the interviewee, due to bias reasons. The results are given to the interviewees in Phase III of the interview. Nevertheless, the results are used by the interviewer for the next step of questioning, where more detailed probing questions are asked to get more information and examples of experiences from the interviewee. In step 3 of Phase II, the interviewer asks more detailed questions, in regard to the CIPS test, specifically, probing questions are asked to get more information and examples of experiences from the interviewee, where the interviewee has either, scored high or low on the particular questions. Table 3.2 provides the CIPS test results for each of the participants. For example, questions, which were asked during the CIPS test, are expanded on here and follow-up questions are asked. The answers to the CIPS tests, which yields the answer of 4 “often” and 5 “very true”, are discussed in detail or, on the other hand, low ranking scores of 1 “not at all true” or 2 “rarely”. The reason this spectrum is asked, is to see if clear differences stand out. For instance, in this step, real examples can be elaborated on and stories of prior experiences are encouraged for discussion. Additionally, if needed, small passages of hypothetical examples are provided, which speak of another person and their experiences, where the interviewee is asked to comment on and to relate to their own life. This way, the interviewee is not pressured to open up too much of their own story, but comment through a third person narrative. This brings up an important limitation, in case an interviewee has a hard time admitting the impostor syndrome, not providing examples or just scoring low on the CIPS test. In this case, the interview makes a shift, where hypothetical discussion and general perceptions are discussed, which yields a different perspective to the research.

Phase III of the interview starts off with a definition of the impostor syndrome. In step 1, the definition and background of the impostor phenomenon is described here, so that the interviewee has more context for future discussion and questioning. Since the purpose of this thesis is to see how the impostor phenomenon is viewed by SIEs, what factors stand out and how can firms mitigate the syndrome at work, it is important that the interviewee understands the significance the impostor syndrome holds to the discussion. The interviewees will be encouraged to answer a few more questions after hearing the definition of the impostor syndrome and to apply it in answering further questions.

In step 2 of Phase III of the interview, the interviewee learns of the results of the test and it’s connection to the impostor phenomenon. Once the interviewee learns of the results, a discussion
is lead to go over impressions and consequences of the results. Moreover, in step 3 of Phase III of the interview, characteristics associated with the impostor syndrome are explored and a connection between those characteristics and the factors of internationality are examined to see if there are any bridges or similarities. This step is the open part of the interview, where linkages are made and examples of prior experiences are explored. Some assumed answers from the interviewees could mention characteristics that SIEs possess, such as, over-achieving, doing too much, lacking of opinion and trusting issues (Kets de Vries, 2005). These feelings can be triggered by the impostor syndrome as described by family dynamics of (Clance and Imes, 1978), or it can also have some root in assumed international factors (their internationality or culture), such as, their accent due to native language, different education level/system in another country, cultural differences, age/culture gaps, identity issues, hypersensitivity, international parents/upbringing and different achievement levels. By digging deeper, with leading and rhetoric questions (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009), the individuals are asked to tell more about the perceived reason for the syndrome, its’ affects and if this phenomenon has anything to do with internationality, such as, being previously abroad or currently relocation abroad. Based on the responses from the SIEs, this is where future findings and comparisons are made and some conclusions can be draw to either lean toward Clance and Imes (1978) factors or the international factors. This is where the data is unknown, and therefore, the questions are guided toward international attributes, as this is the more unique and interesting aspect of the study.

Next, in step 4 of Phase III, the posed interview questions may help in answering how does the impostor syndrome affect the SIEs at work and what tactics could the firm use to mitigate the impostor syndrome in the susceptible SIEs or other international workers. The sub-research question of “How could firms support international workers to mitigate the challenges of expatriation and the impostor phenomenon?” are answered by focusing on the perception of the SIEs on what firms can do to help them with these issues. At this point, if not enough information is received from the questions, a more detailed questions or small case studies will be asked/examined to see how and why the individual perceives to either, exhibit or not, the impostor syndrome at work and how can it effect his or her working environment (Crawford et al., 2016). Based on questions, assumed responses would focus on areas of professional life, which is affected by the impostor syndrome, such as, promotion, delegation, new task responsibility, leadership, burnout and wasting company resources (Kets de Vries, 2005). The questions asked lead to a focus on mitigating factors and ways of dealing with impostor syndrome in the workplace. Questions and dialogues with the SIEs could generate some suggested ways that firms can mitigate the impostor syndrome at work, such as, training (speech, behavior, confidence, etc.), new ways to conduct performance reviews, motivation, individual coaching, mentoring, leadership development, succession planning, decision making assistance and others (Kets de Vries, 2005). However, the focus here is on the perception of the SIEs, where the view of the firm is not considered or relevant for the purpose of this study. The goal is to get the opinion of SIEs and formulate a proposed solution and/or recommendation for the supposed issues in their working environments.
Lastly, in step 5 of Phase III, concludes and summarizes any last items that have not been covered during the interview. At this point some other open questions may come up, which have not been anticipated. This step is necessary, because at the end, individuals might have some ideas they want to share or questions may arise that need to be answered and expanded on. Here, may be an opportunity to gain honest and frank answers, as concluding remarks.

3.5 Data Analysis

After the interview process, different methods and tools of data analysis, f5 and MaxQDA, were used to derive the results. All interviews were recorded and the text was transcribed for further examination, using the f5 transcription system. The f5 tool was helpful in organizing the interviews and listening to the recordings for coding. Following the transcription process, the transcripts were coded using MaxQDA tool/software system. MaxQDA system was utilized for coding the relevant information from the interviews and consolidating the overall data analysis, as seen in Appendix C (MaxQDA, 2016). All interviews were reviewed and sorted based on selected categories. Meaning was derived from similar themes, which emerge from the transcribed interview texts. The analysis of the information gathered from the interviews were coded and categorized for further interpretation, findings and final conclusions (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Table 4.1 in Chapter 4 provides a summary of MaxQDA categories (from Appendix C), which are used for analysis and findings. Below are the selected categories, which are derived from the MaxQDA analysis and deemed interesting for the purpose of the study:

1. Expatriation Process Factors - motivation, student vs. professional adjustment, on-board training support and orientation, working style, logistics and settling-in, visa, and network, collaborations and friends

2. International Factors - cultural differences, international upbringing, modesty, educational level, language and accent

3. Individual Factors - gender, identity, hypersensitivity and personality

4. Impostor Phenomenon Factors - anxiety, insecurity, self-doubt, fear, luck, praise, pressure, expectations, work-life balance, fear of failure, fear of success, strong and weak opinions, perfectionism, comparison to others, over and under preparation

By categorizing, certain factors became clearer, due to coding and categorizing schemes. Patterns are noted through repetition and agreed upon categories, where conclusions can be made in linking impostor syndrome characteristics and SIEs. If the interview data is not straight forward, a form of deconstruction methods can be used to gather data from what was or was not said and meanings can be derived from putting hidden context together (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Due to a detailed content analysis of these findings, recommendations are presented at the end of the thesis.
Chapter 4

Results

This chapter presents the findings of the case analysis, which focuses on the SIE expatriation process and the impostor phenomenon. The results provide the basis for answering the research questions, by addressing the areas of the previous literary review. Subsection 4.1.1 addresses the findings of the experiences of the expatriation process. Subsection 4.1.2 focuses on the findings of international factors. Subsection 4.1.3 discusses the findings of individual factors. Subsection 4.1.4 presents the findings on the impostor phenomenon. Each section lists and defines distinct categories of importance in relation to that subject, where most significant topics are discussed in detail. Section 4.1.5 combines and discusses the outcomes and interpretations of the interlinking factors between expatriation, international, individual and impostor syndrome factors. Furthermore, Section 4.2 addresses and recommends ways firms could support international workers in mitigating the impostor phenomenon and the challenges associated with moving abroad.

4.1 Case Analysis

The thesis can now answer the main research question of “How do Self-Initiated Expatriates perceive the challenges of expatriation and whether certain factors relate to the impostor phenomenon?”. The case analysis disclosed that the challenges of the expatriation process varied for all individuals, with multiple areas of concern, while factors of international nature contributed to their challenges of adaptation. These international and individual factors were noted to interrelate to the feeling of impostor syndrome, but on varying levels. A prime example of mixed feelings and wanting to know why and how they come about were noted from the following interviewee: "From day one, you have to try mingle and meet society and culture. I mean, a lot of people don’t try to pick up the accent from me. I also had to. I tried to pick up an accent. So even just doing that. Or you doing it right. Or you are doing it not right. How to say a certain word. How to laugh at certain jokes. Whether you get them or not. Sometimes people will just laugh, and I remember doing it myself. In the beginning. Usually you don’t know how to look for content or you really don’t think it’s funny, really. Yeah, I think there is an added factor of like being an outsider and trying to fit into the, a circle, a something that you are not part of. That’s certainly has a role to play. I am curious to know if expats have this number splice, if they have"
Chapter 4 Results

a higher probability of having an impostor syndrome.” (D121 - 121 (0))

The findings showed that all interviewees, regardless of the CIPS score, mentioned and commented to the following topics: initial on-board support at work, lack of friends and collaborations, different working style, language and accent, hard work, anxiety and fear, comparison to others and perfectionism. The most prominent topics for low scoring interviewees are: initial on-board support at work and general confidence. The most striking topics for medium scoring interviewees are: evaluation and performance reviews, communication, networking, language and accent. The most prevalent topics for high and great scoring interviewees are: personal development, pressure and expectations, upbringing, cultural differences, feedback, luck and fear or self-doubt. Furthermore, the findings are summarized in Table 4.1 and outlined in the following subsections, with more detailed descriptions of these topics, which are accompanied by examples from the interviewees.

Table 4.1: Category and Statement Summary in relation to Interviewee responses, CIPS results and Expatriation Process. Table developed by the author using data from MaxQDA (see Appendix C).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Interviewee Statement Summary</th>
<th>Interviewee Responses</th>
<th>CIPS Result (Level of IP)</th>
<th>Reflection on the Expatriation Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expatriation Process Factors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>experience something new; increased opportunities; escaping tense political environment; better chances for jobs</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student vs. Professional</td>
<td>varying intensity of culture shock; ease or difficulty of acculturation</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>varied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-Board Training, Support and Orientation</td>
<td>minimal or lack of training and support at work</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>varied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Style</td>
<td>different expectations; fast paced environment; difference in hours worked; varying efficiency and work ethics</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>challenging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logistics and Settling</td>
<td>support during secondment; lack of support with banks, lease and credit history</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>challenging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visa</td>
<td>difficulties with sponsorship, job stability and recruitment; limiting factor in promotions and/or salary</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>challenging</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interviewee quotes are referenced by their Interviewee code name, ranging from A - G, followed by the MaxQDA paragraph coding reference.
# 4.1 Case Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collaboration, Network and Friends</th>
<th>lack of connection; disengagement with family and friends; disruption in professional networks</th>
<th>all</th>
<th>medium</th>
<th>challenging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>International Factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Differences</td>
<td>underestimated differences per country, region, political parties; variances in cultural environment and professional settings; comparison to home country; new cultural references and norms; different values</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>challenging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Upbringing</td>
<td>traditions; parents education; role of modesty/bragging; smiling</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>challenging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modesty</td>
<td>due to upbringing; afraid to ask for more</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>challenging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Level</td>
<td>different translation of degrees; loss or gain of credibility; seeking good reputation; value of top-tier education; better job opportunities; status upgrade</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>challenging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language and Accent</td>
<td>accent; misinterpretation and communication issues on a professional level; lack of understanding; seeking language training</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>challenging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual Factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>male domination in the work place; different mental process; leadership roles; feeling less deserving; cultural dilemma to roles of men vs. women in the work place</td>
<td>only women</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>challenging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>influence of personal factors; feelings of an outsider; identity issues; lack of confidence; similar group association; staying true to self</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>varied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypersensitivity</td>
<td>hyper-awareness; increased scrutinizing; fear of judgment; hindrance in the work place</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>varied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>influence on adaptation; desire for change; flexibility; personal mindset</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>varied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Impostor Phenomenon Factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety, Insecurity, Self-Doubt and Fear</td>
<td>nervous of unfamiliar environments; needed time to realize self-worth and gain confidence; relief was gained through switching jobs, gaining more experience and adjusting</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>challenging</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Luck</th>
<th>fortunate due to exchange program, recruiter connection, coincidence or college; elements of trust; knowing the right people; perseverance; hard work</th>
<th>varied</th>
<th>high</th>
<th>varied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Praise</td>
<td>underplaying praise and recognition; new element of self-promotion; impacts future promotions and salary; management awareness of praise avoidance</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>varied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure and Expectations</td>
<td>expectations of the firm, family and friends; halo-effect triggers more pressure; feeling of proving something; increased responsibility vs. expatriation process</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>challenging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-Life Balance</td>
<td>pressure; status symbol; burnout; loss of personal life; workaholic behavior</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>challenging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of Failure</td>
<td>questioning one-self; uncertainty of job; avoidance; prevention of future opportunities; limitations in the work place; self-criticism; comfort zone; consequences of hidden and suppressed feelings; developing ways to deal with fear</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>challenging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of Success</td>
<td>feeling of under preparation and inexperience; fear of increased responsibility and commitment</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>varied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Opinions</td>
<td>strong feelings or stance on issues; drawbacks and implications to the firm</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>varied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak Opinions</td>
<td>lack of opinion; fear of asking for things; fear of having tough discussions with superiors</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>challenging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfectionism and Comparison to Others</td>
<td>expectation of self, others and from others; difficulty comparing self to other’s abilities and capabilities</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>challenging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over or Under Preparation</td>
<td>wasted time and resources on extended preparation; second guessing and doing more</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>varied</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.1.1 Findings on the Experience of the Expatriation Process

As discussed in Section 2.1, and specifically in Subsections ’Motivation and Expatriation Process’ (2.1.1) and ’Expatriation Process’ (2.3.1), challenges arise during the expatriation process. The interviews showed that the topics of importance, during the expatriation process, revolved around categories: motivation, student vs. professional adjustment, on-board training support
and orientation, working style, logistics and settling-in, visa, and network, collaborations and friends. These categories are important and interlinked, because all SIEs experience some sort of motivational drive to move abroad, whether student or professional, where eventually they receive a job placement. When getting the job, SIEs face challenges with settling in with logistical issue and some are faced with visa restrictions or requirements. At the actual job, the topic of on-board training and support plays a role in the way they adjust to their work environment, with additional challenges of varying working styles and changes in collaborations of networks. All these aspects provide an environment for SIEs where situations have to be managed and adjusted to and SIEs need to come up with ways to deal with them. Therefore, the following topics are discussed in detail to show relations to CIPS scores, and how examples of those situations were addressed by the interviewees during the expatriation process.

Motivation

The participating individuals described their expatriation process experience as either, “explorer” or “refugee”, as described by Richardson and McKenna (2002). The motivational reasons (Volmer and Spurk, 2011) for relocation were derived from either, exciting new location, or greater opportunity abroad. The individuals classified as “explorer” stated they wanted to move to experience something new: “I always wanted to work abroad, somewhere, in my career, and I wanted to do it early, so I didn’t want to wait, until I am more experienced, [...], I wanted to do it as a young professional, because I thought, as a young professional, you have more opportunities and its easier how to find positions.” (A5 - 5 (0)) “I just wanted a change of scenery, [...], I wanted to move to another big city. I wasn’t ready to move back to Australia, so then I moved. [...], and hoped it worked! (laughing).” (E5 - 5 (0))

While on the contrary, the individuals classified as “refugee” stated that opportunity was the main driver for relocation to the host country: “I wanted to come and study here (USA), so I thought I was going to get a better education here and there will be more opportunities than there were back in Bulgaria, so the way I originally came here is I came here for college, I wanted to go get my education and I wanted to study business and finance.” (F5 - 5 (0)) “Because in my home country (Bulgaria), I was a student, and at some point of time I realized that the political environment is not on the good way, meaning there was lots of corruptions, [...], so, therefore, I broke up my study there and decided to come to Germany and study abroad, so after that, I would have been able to decide to live and work anywhere, within Europe or even in the States. I just had better chances to find a better job.” (G10 - 10 (0))

All interviewees found their move to be beneficial to their future, even if difficulties and challenges were encountered during the expatriation process. SIEs were driven by the thought of experiencing something new, having increased opportunities, or escaping tense political environments. Also, the prospect of better chances for jobs pushed SIEs’s motivation to succeed and progress in their careers, kept them motivated to continue with either their studies, or provided drive to obtain better positions at work. Opportunity is the main driver for majority of the
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interviewees and their expatriation was worth the effort during the relocation process.

Student vs. Professional

When SIEs move to the host country, as either a student, or as a working professional, their experiences have different themes (Bonache et al., 2001). Students found that culture shock is significant during this time, but their adjustment to culture, or acculturation, as described by Berry (1997), may have been easier in comparison to professionals who move later on in life, which had harder adjustment period: “When I first came, in high school, you go through culture shock, like everyone else and there, it was very quite well organized, because we had like an orientation, what to expect, for about a week, but clearly, that’s not enough and then you have an, American family that you live with. [...] The fact that I went to University here made the transition a lot, a lot easier.” (B38 - 38 (0)) “In school you are taught, to prepare yourself for the work here. [...] Interacting with Americans, because I went to school here, it was easier, right, I could relate to them in terms of news, TV, but also values, what’s important.” (B40 - 40 (0))

Professionals did not get the same special treatment, as students found to be the case in their expatriation process: “I don’t recall having anything special for them (professionals), I mean they had to find like a place on their own, they had to do everything on their own, there wasn’t really anything special for them. I think the only, college was the only place where they did things for us, like we had that orientation for international students, which was before the general orientation for the American kids.” (F39 - 39 (0))

However, the findings showed that the benefits of being a student and receiving a head-start on the cultural adjustment (Berry, 1997), does not necessarily predict a higher or lower CIPS score. The intensity of culture shock and the ease or difficulty of acculturation did not form a pattern, but rather showed varying expatriation experiences for the SIEs. But, the benefits of being a student was still voiced by the interviewees as being a positive attribute to dealing with their better adjustment during the expatriation process.

On-Board Training, Support and Orientation

Several SIEs responded that they did receive some sort of an orientation or diversity training, due to the fact that they were foreign, but, it was not necessarily during the expatriation process. The orientation was “not for me specifically, because I moved. I have done a diversity training here before. But it was I think, I was part of it, because I am, you know, from outside America, so I was chosen to take part.” (E45 - 45 (0))

However, the remaining SIEs noted a lack in support (Kets de Vries, 2005) during the expatriation process: “At work, this was a disaster. [...] So they don’t take any time to give you some preparation, it’s like you go there on the first day and this is your case, go, do the job, serve the client, there was basically, no time for, either technical preparation or cultural.” (G42 - 42 (0)) “Zero support, no support, no relocation, no reimbursement, nothing.” (A15 - 15 (0)) “No
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training, no cultural education, mostly learning by doing.” (A39 - 39 (0)) Since students were treated as local hires, no international orientation was provided: “Because I was a campus hire, I didn’t get it.” (B70 - 70 (0))

Therefore, this topic of minimal support or lack of training during on-boarding from the firm was noted as an important subject, for all of the interviewees. They felt that this area was lacking in their experience, once they joined a firm and that something was missing in the office administration that would have helped them in this delicate process. Since some of the interviewees, who scored low on the CIPS test, defined that they had on-boarding support, may suggest that this helped them in the process and decreased their level of impostorism. Showing that higher scoring individuals did not find a good way to deal with this drawback in their expatriation process and indicating a limiting factor of not having on-board training and support from the firm. SIEs suggested ways to deal with this challenge, which will be described in Section 4.2.

Working Style

Working styles vary from one company to another, as well as from one country to another. Therefore, this challenge provides difficulties for new hires, and especially to new employees who come from a different culture or background. The style of working is noted by all interviewed SIEs, as something that stood out to them, when they first moved abroad to the host country: “It’s a different style of working in American, everything is a little, I don’t know, slower or maybe I am just bias, that’s how I feel.” (D19 - 19 (0))

Other interviewees had a different idea of the US, with heightened expectations and fast paced environment: “I think working in New York, I don’t know, probably just New York, (laughing), I found the whole corporate culture shock for me, it just operates totally different to Melbourne and London. [...] I guess behavior in the office, was, is also, was also quite different to the way other people are working, like, I think people thought that at times I was quite casual, [...], it’s just more my behavior, it’s more relaxed and I guess New York is not so relaxed.” (E23 - 23 (0))

“In New York, it’s just the way people operate and the expectations are very high and people, I guess, they wanted everything today, not tomorrow.” (E27 - 27 (0)) “It’s this mentality, or this, I work so hard, so long, so, I feel like I have to keep working hard, that it’s part of the game, it’s part of the ask, and why complain.” (B104 - 104 (0))

Additionally, a cultural difference in hard work, long hours or definition in efficiency, came in as topics, where some comparisons were made to the European way of doing things: “Here (Australia) are some similarities, to Ireland so it wasn’t a complete shock in terms of culture, there (Ireland), was a little bit more laid back. [...], but definitely not as hard working as Germans or Dutch.” (C43 - 43 (0)) “The work style is not as efficient as in Germany/Austria, so this leads to longer work hours, usually, and in efficiencies I feel. So, and probably the other thing is, some people, especially in New York, they may feel good about it to work long hours and if they can tell other friends and colleagues ‘yeah, oh I work until midnight’, in Austria and Germany,
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no one cares if you starve or stay past 6, right, but here in the US, if you tell someone, in New York, ‘oh I had to work until midnight, pulled an all nighter’, everyone is like ‘wow!’, right, or ‘really important job!’.” (A49 - 49 (0))

Hence, it is clear that all interviewees are very much aware of the new working style that they were surrounded by and how it effects them and their current working environment. SIEs saw their new environment as either fast, or slow, but in both scenarios it showed that the new expectations that SIEs where put under were there and that SIEs needed to adjust to them as quickly as possible, in order to deal with this challenge. The varying efficiency and work ethics in the workplace made some SIEs question their new surroundings. However, SIEs made the adjustments needed to the working hours required to work, in order to fit-in or to belong in the office that they currently work in.

Logistics and Settling

The actual act of moving and going through the settling-in process was noted by SIEs, who had different experiences. Several SIEs receiving some support from the firm, while others received zero support from the company. The SIEs who received support in finding housing or receiving a housing allowance for the initial period were very happy in their expatriation process: “They paid for 6 weeks of accommodation to find an apartment.” (C27 - 27 (0))

SIEs, who in their careers received a chance to work abroad on international job rotations (also known as “secondment”, which mimics the experience of AEs), also received some support, which they found to be a great help in their adjustment abroad, because housing, visa and other matters were taken care of: “They organized everything for me. Like, they gave me corporate housing, they took care of the visa, of all the contract. I got a help with searching my apartments, after the month of corporate housing, and so on, I mean like on the organizational side they were pretty good, they moved my furniture over there (US) and back (Germany).” (G42 - 42 (0))

Nonetheless, other challenges, such as, credit history, bank accounts, signing and finding a rental leases and so on were a concern to some SIEs, because there was no support provided by the firm to mitigate some of these set-back: “Logistical issues, around the move, like opening a bank account, getting a lease, in a foreign country without a credit history, especially here in the US, where the credit history is very important, so I had a lot of logistical challenges to get settled in, especially in New York, in the first 6 to 8 month, to basically get my stuff together to make sure that I’m equivalent to American, […] so I had a lot of those challenges.” (A37 - 37 (0))

“It would have made it easier if the company would have really supported it from an relocation perspective, if they would have helped me to find, you know, an apartment or housing in my target city.” (A53 - 53 (0)) “Opening a credit card, however, is a different story all together, until this day I don’t have a credit card in the UK. I still use my American credit cards. […] Applying online is not that easy, as it’s in the US. So yeah, it’s, that is difficult.” (D17 - 17 (0))

An overall settling into the new culture and country was also challenging for some, as the different environment provided some unknowns, which required time to adjust to and get used
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to: “But when you move here (New York) and you are not working and everything just seems really like chaotic, like and quite different, so, I think the New York move was more of a culture shock per se, and just it took longer to feel more settled, than London. London I didn’t have much of a settling period.” (E15 - 15 (0)) “I guess, like the the biggest struggles were within the first two years, moving to the country and afterwards, it was of course much easier.” (G22 - 22 (0))

As a general finding, the logistics part of the move provided to be a big stress factor for SIEs, which put undue pressure on them. The support during secondment was viewed in a positive light, while the lack of support with banks, lease and credit history for unsupported SIEs was a nuisance. Therefore, SIEs suggested ways to deal with these challenge, which will be described in Section 4.2.

Visa

One of the biggest challenges for SIEs and their adjustment abroad was the issue of obtaining and maintaining their visa or permission to work abroad: “You don’t get a visa that easy, so it took me half a year of preparation to get the visa and to meet all of the requirements, especially the financial ones.” (G22 - 22 (0)) “It was difficult, it was tough to get a visa.” (B16 - 16 (0))

Visa issues plagued the minds of students, who wanted to continue working abroad, after finishing university, because a new status or “sponsorship” and a new visa needed to be obtained. Students, who wanted sponsorship, would seek out certain degrees or companies, who were known to sponsor a visa: “As a foreigner in Germany, you are allowed to stay in the country for one year after graduating and search for a job.” (G26 - 26 (0)) “Because I was on a student visa, in order for me to work, I had to find a job that would sponsor me for work visa and that’s not easy. That’s part of the reason why I went into accounting, is because and, I remember it was a conscious decision, I wanted to do financial and international business and, but the big thing with, so when I did my master I concentrated in accounting, because everybody, I guess more, there is more need and looking back that was the best thing I could do because, these are the companies that do sponsor, either that or IT.” (B42 - 42 (0))

Additionally, job security and worry over visa status is of concern to professionals, as well: “If you don’t do well in this class, you can always do another class. When you are working full time, [...] , in like finance, you never know when your job might be cut for example, so, and then if your job gets cut, then you are on a visa. Visas, you only get a certain number of days to find a new job and a visa.” (D73 - 73 (0))

Visas also effect the recruiting process and the speed of finding jobs abroad, because firms and recruiting firms seek out or eliminated certain candidates, based on their visa status: “In New York, yeah, a lot of recruiters, like, they don’t want to see your resume, because you are on a visa now. I mean so they see your resume, but they don’t want to see you, because you are on a visa.” (E19 - 19 (0))

It takes a certain kind of recruiter or recruiting experience to help SIEs find jobs that require a visa sponsorship. For example, in London it was easy to find part-time work with a visa, but
other places have different processes and time frames, which require certain visa knowledge: “In London it took me just a couple of weeks, I was only doing contract work there, so it’s a lot easier, [...], so I got a job, I think it was like three weeks or something when I first moved there, four weeks, and then I started working, but when I moved to New York, the job, the one I had, the visa I am on, it can be continually extended, so I am not doing contract work. I was struck lucky here actually. I also got a job within three weeks, but, I had a friend who had a friend (laughing) who’s friend is in recruitment here, [...], so he had a lot experience with visas himself and then, also he was doing a lot of recruitment with people that are on visas trying to explain to, you know, firms in the city that, you know, ‘all under the visas are not that difficult, some are, and some aren’t, but a lot of the visas are not that difficult, just sponsor people.’” (E17 - 17 (0))

Subsequently, visas not only provide challenges in finding work, but also, visas can be a limiting factor in other areas of professional life, such as, promotions, monetary gains of salary or bonus. The overall feeling of inadequacy or fear of asking for what is deserved or desired is triggered by the feeling of gratefulness: “I think because I was a foreigner and because I needed sponsorship for a visa, I was kind of more grateful to get a job that would sponsor me, I didn’t negotiate for the highest salary, probably didn’t get a sign on bonus, because my sign on bonus was the visa sponsorship, so some of it is just not asking for what I would have probably be able to get, maybe not, who knows, but I think some of that as well and it’s harder to find a job, because before I can be offered a job, there is a whole process of interviewing Americans, [...]. Limitations, in terms of promotions, so after you get it and after you get the visa, then I think promotions probably the same way, was with a small office and it’s kinda for two years, ‘lets see how you are doing’. I wanted to transfer, because I wanted to transfer, I didn’t get promoted, when I should have, so probably just and I didn’t ask for it, again I didn’t fight.” (B52 - 52 (0))

The described difficulties with visa sponsorship, job stability, recruitment and limitations in promotions or salary were noted by SIEs, with insecurities and fear being the undertone in their responses. This experience of the moving process, with these faced challenges, may have an inter-relation to the impostor syndrome. Therefore, SIEs’ relatable impostor syndrome characteristics, behaviors and experiences are described in Subsection 4.1.4.

Collaboration, Network and Friends

Due to distance, SIEs felt a disconnect to their previous professional relationships and prior collaborations, which caused less involvement and less contact: “It’s just very hard if you don’t have those regular face to face meeting to keep collaborations going, [...], remote collaboration, certain things seem to not just work.” (C35 - 35 (0)) “I think that was the big change, [...], to build up networks specifically, although of course in Canberra, and augment my networks I had, with you know, US or specially with the European and still try of course to have some collaborations with people in Europe, but it certainly got less and less.” (C37 - 37 (0))

Additionally, moving causes disruptions in SIEs network maintenance and their perception of
the future development in their career goals: “Moving to different countries and actually building up your network from scratch is taking a lot of time [...] this is always the saying, you know, you should work abroad and you get all this experience, but in fact, I think it’s takes a long time to build up the same networks you had wherever you worked before and that may have an impact on this speed of career progression, as pretty much, if you change job too often, but I think changing countries makes it probably even harder to build up this networks.” (C83 - 83 (0))

An important aspect in international relocation is leaving the comfort of old friends and family (Whitman and Shanine, 2012) and building up a network of new friends or connecting with new people: “Just moving, from Deli to New York, on my own, with out any support, I mean, just mental or emotional support from my family, [...] just moving and just making a life of your own, making new friends, [...], so I was just coming up with a new circle of friend, getting involved in new activities.” (D75 - 75 (0))

SIEs experienced challenges in making new friends: “I didn’t have a lot of friends here, so I was not able to talk to anyone about my challenges.” (A127 - 127 (0)) “It’s harder to break into existing circles.” (B48 - 48 (0)) “In the beginning it was a bit more tricky, because I was coming over by myself, I didn’t really have any friends in Australia, didn’t really know anyone in Australia, [...]. I chose a shared housing in the beginning, because it just makes it easier to get to know some people.” (C41 - 41 (0))

Some SIEs found differences among cultures in making new friends and approaching new people: “I found [...] the Australians in general, less approachable than I expected, you know, I thought it’s quite an open culture, in terms of you know getting to know people, especially from Ireland, where you know, you just go to any pub, (laughing), and like 10 people talk to you. There, it’s not like that, more little bit, I mean, I have been in the US for a couple of months, as an exchange student, and I found it from this point of view, quite similar to the US, so, people in your work place there wasn’t a lot of mixing between private life and work life, so you wouldn’t know too much about your colleagues.” (C52 - 52 (0))

The additional challenge of the changing environment and changes in the circle of people, struck SIEs as a limiting factor in maintaining their new found networks: “People move in and out of New York, so it’s harder to develop relationships, because you never know how long people will stay in New York. [...]. The social network changes a lot. I feel it changes every two years. There is a turn around in the social network, and this is also a little bit different to adjust, adapt to it, but at the same time, it requires to constantly build relationships, constantly build your network.” (A37 - 37 (0))

However, some SIEs moved to the host country and had previous contacts that they could engage with, which provided a good base for friends, settling-in and job opportunities. These previous contacts or family members helped the SIE deal with the challenges of moving and may provide answers to the ways SIEs can seek out and obtain a pre-arranged networks: “I had a little bit of familiarity with the country (UK), having lived there before, for a year, [...]. I had already had quite a strong foundation, [...], so, for me, the London move wasn’t as what I would
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say difficult. [...] They (family) have given me contacts, [...] the recruiters, and [...] this bank and do this and do that. So, there was more of a process, but I don’t think it was as difficult where as when I moved to New York.” (E15 - 15 (0))

On the contrary, even knowing people in the host country, still provides a level of discomfort: “I guess mostly again in New York, like friends, just getting a social circle, that was definitely a challenge for me, because as I said, I just knew friends of friends. [...] So I guess that would have been a personal challenge for me.” (E21 - 21 (0))

Hence, since all interviewees discussed the challenge of networking and collaborations, it is noted as an important aspect to consider when evaluating expatriation process and how to better help SIEs in their adjustment. The lack of connections, disengagement with family and friends, and the disruption in professional networks put a burden on SIEs when starting a new job abroad. Interviewees who ranked medium on the CIPS test highlighted the network and collaboration topic to be of great significance to their experience. Therefore, firms might consider the importance of incorporating networking into the on-boarding process as a way to help SIEs in the beginning of their work experience. SIEs suggested ways to deal with this challenge, which will be described in Section 4.2.

Summary of Expatriation Process Findings

The discussed expatriation process categories are summarized in Table 4.1. Where all interviewees expressed their reasons for the move and their motivations. Student vs. professional adjustment had varying responses with no linkages to predicted outcomes, because both groups had different experiences, with some negative and some positive. All interviewees spoke of on-board training support and orientation and how this aspect was lacking in their expatriation process and there could be a clear linkage seen to the low CIPS score. Thus, suggesting that the impostor syndrome and the on-board training aspect of the expatriation process are interlinked. Furthermore, working style of the new country stood out to all interviewees, who noted a big change to their host country, making the transition more challenging in their process abroad. The topic of logistics and settling-in and the visa sponsorship was mentioned by varying interviewees, who had different experience in those regards. The matter of network, collaborations and friends was noted as a strong discussion point for the interviewees, since all participants talked of challenges in this regard, where CIPS test results showed more medium scoring interviewees as being more influenced by this challenge. Thus, suggesting that the impostor syndrome and lack of network connections of the expatriation process are interlinked.

4.1.2 Findings on International Factors

As discussed in Subsection 2.1.3, and specifically as part of 'International Factors', challenges arise from international factors. The interviews showed that the topics of importance, as they relate to the factors of internationality, revolved around: cultural differences, international upbringing, modesty, educational level, language and accent. These categories are important and
interlinked, because all SIEs experience some sort of cultural differences when they move to a new country. Some of these cultural differences stem from international upbringing, because the SIEs learn certain cultural aspect of their youth and they bring it with them to their new work environment. Furthermore, modesty, is rooted from this international upbringing and may reflect in the individuals ways of behaving at work. Additionally, the international education level, the way they speak, their language, or accent may play a role in the way SIEs perceive themselves or the way others perceive them in the workplace. All these international aspects have to be managed by SIEs, where they need to come up with strategies to deal with these challenges. Therefore, the following topics are discussed in detail to show relations to CIPS scores, and how examples of those situations were addressed by the interviewees during the expatriation process.

Cultural Differences

The international factor of cultural difference may be a challenge, when the SIE first comes to the host country (Berry, 1997; Wilhelms et al., 2009; Hofstede et al., 2010; Hofstede, 2015). This does not mean that cultural differences go away with time or that there is a predefined amount of time where cultural differences are eliminated or controlled. These time and culture gaps could provide uncomfortable situations for SIE, which may lead to the feeling of not belonging. Therefore, cultural differences not only apply during the expatriation process, but also beyond.

Cultural differences may be underestimated by SIEs, because of some preconceived assumptions. Every move, from one country to another, may provide a different experience and outcome, therefore, each relocation is noted to be treated as a unique experience. At times, even if the SIE is supported with initial help during a move, the cultural differences are still too great: “I used to compare that (secondment in the US) with my experience of me coming to Germany, [...], I had like two very tough years, [...], because I thought I had to do everything on by my own, like no financials support, nothing and I thought going to the US is not going to be as hard as that, because I have all of the financial support. I don’t have any visa problem, so everything is set. I just need to go there and work. But, it was exactly as hard as it was in coming to Germany, because of this cultural differences and I need to admit, that I kind of underestimated it at the beginning. I thought it was going to be much easier, because Germany is a developed country, US is a developed country, so me going there was, well, can’t be that different, the language and maybe the shops, and that’s it. Everything is different! The whole mentality! [...]. Yeah, so, I changed a lot during this one year, not just on the work side.” (G44 - 44 (0))

Different cultural environments and differences among people are noted not only by country, but also per different regions of that country: “You need to basically adapt to that cultural circle, so I definitely had some challenges, with-in the different parts of the US, to adapt to peoples work styles, to peoples, personal styles, and I felt a little bit, I need to adjust for each of the regions.” (A45 - 45 (0)) Therefore, SIEs learned to deal with this aspect by adjusting their behavior for various regions. Once they learned that the difference existed, they adjusted their actions to fit it (Berry, 1997).
Conservative environments or people belonging to various political parties, provided some challenges for SIEs, which may cause insecurities, because the SIE might not feel good enough in comparison to the locals: “You make friends who are like yourself, that also came from somewhere else, not with, not so much with locals, differences sometimes in political views, yeah, people were more conservative.” (B48 - 48 (0)) Thus, SIEs formed groups of similar background in order to counterbalance this challenge. Meaning, they would seek out people like themselves in order to belong (Scurry, 2013).

At work, the different professional environments and the way people act in the office were novel to SIEs. Additionally, self-promotion was one aspect that was very new to SIEs. This behavior needed to be dealt with, however, it seems to be hard to change, and therefore, still provides a challenge in their current work: “Challenge that I had, was definitely the cultural environment, so especially in the professional setting. […]. The New York environment was so fast paced, so different than my old environment, which was Vienna. […]. Here in the US, you do a lot of self-promotion in your job, so it took me a while to recognize that you do a job, but at the same time, you do some self-promotion, so that people basically recognize you. In the Austrian/German/Swiss environment, you basically work hard and you know at some point someone will recognize it, right, you don't need to raise your hand, 'hey, I am a super star'. Here, in the US, you need to do a lot of self-promotion, which I didn’t feel comfortable and I still don't feel conformable, but that's the way how it works in the US.” (A37 - 37 (0)) Thus, a linkage to the impostor phenomenon can be made here, because the cultural difference is engrained in the person and causing ways in behavior that may lead to insecurities, fear and discomfort.

Some other examples of uncomfortable encounters are political correctness and directness: “Style, how you deal with people. So in Germany/Austria, in a work environment everything, is very direct and you don’t bullshit around with being overly friendly to get something out of people, so you are very direct, you go to a person say what you want, by when you want it, and that was it, right. Here, in the US, you feel like you always need to sell to this other person why you need it. […], be overly friendly. […]. find the right tone and you always need to be politically correct.” (A49 - 49 (0))

Topics of efficiency in the working style, dancing around the issue and honesty also fascinated SIEs: “Feedback, what you get from people. So in Austria/Germany, they tell you what the situation is, they are super honest, and tell you where they stand with the work, what the situation is, what the challenges are. Here, in the US, people try to hide any challenges they have, because they don't want to look bad. […]. In Germany/Austria, people don't care, they tell you the truth, right, even if it’s bad news, but here in the US you never get bad news from anyone, so it’s harder to figure out on where things stand.” (A49 - 49 (0)) “The British people are, try to dance around the issue and not point out what exactly they want sometimes, try to be diplomatic, but it’s just not a New York or American way of working, so it can be a little annoying too.” (D19 - 19 (0))

Comparisons between structure and inflexible of the home country to the host country provided various differences, which were viewed in a positive or negative light. A few interviewees specified
that the structured job assignments, responsibilities, rules and regulations of the US were very different to Bulgaria and/or Germany: “I feel like here (US), people tend to be more specialized, like there is more structure here. You, this is your job and you follow the rules and this is how you do it. In Bulgaria, I feel like things are a lot more disorganized, so you have to be a lot more creative and think outside of the box.” (F33 - 33 (0)) “The biggest challenges, well you know, they said that the Germans are very straightforward, they don’t do any, they don’t compromise with like administrative stuff and things like that. Going to the US, I realized that Germans are actually very flexible compared to the US guys, [...] so it was kind of fighting with this inflexibility. Over there (US), so I got pretty frustrated with all the rules that exist over there and I thought we had lots of rules over here (Germany).” (G46 - 46 (0))

Cultural references and the idea of small talk were some of the biggest challenges for SIEs to adjust to. Humor and pop-culture references were unusual to the SIEs and they had to learn new ways of thinking about these new ways of behaving. At times, these cultural references made the SIEs feel isolated or unwelcome, and they felt that they had to adjust, as soon as possible, in order to fit in: “When I first moved, there is not a lot of, concept of small talk in India, either you talk to someone properly or you kind of don’t. You just smile and move on. Where as people in the US, there is always trying to act friendly, [...], so, you know small cultural differences, like that. Having said that, we all grow up watching Hollywood movies and TV shows that are America, so you kind of know what to expect, or you at least understand like how cultural references and that kind of stuff, but there is lot of nuances you still have to pick up, in like, slang (laughing), that you pick up, you know the humor, a little bit, and it’s just there is no easy way to learn it, you just pick up things over time, as, the longer you spend somewhere the more you learn about it. Same thing as moving to London, just, a lot of references or you know, things that these guys say that means something to normal British people, don’t mean anything to me.” (D26 - 26 (0)) Therefore, SIEs dealt with this challenge by just sticking through with living their daily life and picking up the culture as they went. Paying close attention to it and recognizing it helped them adjust and pick up some of these new cultural references (Berry, 1997).

Past-times, like sports, provided to be challenging for SIE, because most do not know or follow the new teams they are now faced with: “A lot of people here (London) follow soccer or football, and I don’t, and so this same thing happened to me when I moved to the US, I only grew up watching and playing cricket and to move to the US, there is no such thing, so, slowly getting to new sports like American football, you learn that, pick that up, have a team and you start hanging out with people who follow similar team or have similar interest, and then we moved here (London) and there is no such thing as American football. Again, and, in fact, people laugh about it, because they don’t understand it, so right now, I don’t have any sports contacts, so people talk about their player moving from one club to another and I have no idea who they are (laughing).” (D26 - 26 (0)) “I work with a lot of men, [...], I don’t follow all the American sports like football and hockey and basketball, so whenever these guys like get together and talk about all the sports, I feel left out, cause I don’t follow that.” (F35 - 35 (0))
Personal cultural differences were noted by SIEs that had caused a stir within their own values. Changes occurred for some SIEs that went deep to their own cultural differences and caused a shift in views, by accepting a new and welcomed ideas, as suggested by Berry (1997). By changing, these SIEs felt that they made themselves better and have adopted a new and positive way of looking at their environment: “The first thing that I noticed that everyone was kind of (laughing) smiling at you, even though we didn’t know you, and I was like ’why are these people so friendly to me, they don’t care about me, they don’t know who I am’. And, […], is very fake, and insincere, but then, I thought to myself ’you know why, I mean is being polite and being nice, is not really such a bad thing’. At home, everybody is like, you know, grumpy, and they look down upon you and that really not that nice to see that, I mean they don’t know you here, obviously, but you know, fake politeness might not be all that bad.” (F33 - 33 (0))

Finding ways in dealing with cultural differences provided to be rewarding to some SIEs, because they found a way to adjust and to broaden their views, which caused comfort: “I found, […], the time spent in US, was I changed the way I approach people and I changed the way I communicate with my co-workers, which was great, because the team over there is very international, so you have people from India, Brazil, I don’t know, from all over the world, and you cannot approach a person coming from India the same way you would talk to somebody coming from Latin America. You need to change the attitudes to get connected with this person and here, in Germany, due to that we are not as much international, you don’t have to do it, you just have the German type who go forward and that’s it and this is the way it has to works. So, this was my attitude going there at the very beginning and after a month and a half, I realized this is not working, (laughing). I need to change something, so yeah, I think this was like the the biggest value I learned during my year there.” (G46 - 46 (0))

Subsequently, it can be said that cultural differences were noted as an extremely challenging and critical aspect for all interviewed SIEs to understand and absorb. SIEs struggled with underestimated differences per country, region and political parties. Variances in cultural environment and professional settings provided to be hard to adjust to in the very beginning of expatriation, because SIEs tried to compare the processes to their home country. The new cultural references and norms were noted to be different to their values, which SIEs tried to adapt to for ’survival’. Especially, it was discovered that SIEs, who score high on the CIPS test, found this topic of great significance. They pointed out multiple examples of where culture reflected on their insecurities. Thus, these finding suggest that culture and internationality, as a whole, may be an interlinking factor to the impostor syndrome, which helps to support the research question, as to be discussed in Subsection 4.1.5.

**International Upbringing**

SIEs grew up in another country, with international parents and foreign upbringing, which may have vast differences to the host country’s way of raising children. Therefore, the child rearing techniques used could be different, with various dimensions being highlighted as suggested by
Hofstede (2015). Additionally, the achievement level of the parents may be low, in comparison to the SIE, which may cause insecurity. Or vice versa, the achievement level was higher for the parents than the SIE. Hence, SIEs may experience various contrasting cultural differences in the way they were brought up, which may play a role in their adult daily life in the new host country.

SIEs explained that the international factor of their early family life, in another country and in the way they were raised and their cultural traditions left an impact on the way they behave in their current life. Their upbringing influenced them in the way they receive compliments: “Growing up, at least in my family, you are never given compliment about anything, so, and on the other hand, you are told, when you don’t do something right, so it’s just, you know, nurture, this kind of leads to your nature and makes you that way. So, yeah, I guess I am just used to it. So many people giving compliment like, sitting through my reviews is easier for me to go listen to stuff and if there were need to improve on, than the stuff that I did really well. But I don’t know where to look, whether to make eye contact, how much to smile or how much not to smile, it’s just hard to accept that.” (D61 - 61 (0))

SIEs expressed how they view bragging, modesty and future abilities: “I don’t know if it’s raising or it’s culture, but it’s this thing of, everything is earned, everything is hard work, don’t brag. I don’t know, it’s the whole, I think it’s a mix, to be honest with you, but, yeah, that’s why I don’t take compliments well or praises.” (B186 - 186 (0)) “That’s just, my family is like that, I feel like it’s a family trait, like my parents are both very hard working and they are very modest, so I feel like my brother is the same way, just I feel like that’s how we were raised by my family. (F67 - 67 (0))

One SIE even attributed the ability to impress people with the way her parents raised her to be: “It was also due to my family, my parents wanted me always to have good confidence, and I start working at the age of 16 for them (family business), [...], I needed to be confident when talked to clients and make them buy what I was selling, so I guess this was the time I developed this ability.” (G78 - 78 (0))

Traditions and education of parents may have played a role in shaping the SIEs views on modesty, bragging and smiling. Hence, it is noted that interviewees, who scored high on the CIPS test, voiced that upbringing was a big factor that may have linkages to their feeling of impostor syndrome. This confirms the research of family dynamics (Clance and Imes, 1978), as discussed in Subsection 2.2.1, and brings forth new view on how SIEs perceive their upbringing and how it effects their life, as they move abroad. International upbringing and its linkages to the impostor syndrome will be discussed in Subsection 4.1.5.

Modesty

When discussing SIEs upbringing, the international factor of modesty seemed to be connected to the way people were brought up and this resonated in their current modest outlook in their actions and ways of thinking: “I like for them to kind of recognize my accomplishment, but I’m generally modest person, so I don’t like to be flashy about, you know things that I have done.”
“Because you come from somewhere, and you are grateful to get what you get, you’re afraid to ask for more.” (B52 - 52 (0))

Due to this modesty, an effect on potential promotions can occur. SIEs may feel that opportunities were lost or that they are unable to express their opinions the way they intend to, because of their timid approach: “People maybe jump on opportunities faster than I do, even though I know they may not have the same (incomprehensible) abilities that I have in a specific task, so yeah, maybe there are some cases, but I don’t think it’s extreme. But yeah, I do know individuals who probably would say all the time, even though I know they probably are not particularly capable of doing a specific task, but they just recognize it’s an opportunity and you know, (laughing), and just doing it.” (C125 - 125 (0)) This example shows a comparison between DKE and impostors, as defined by Kruger and Dunning (1999).

However, negative attributes of modesty can get in the way of SIEs being able to show true capabilities and to speak up when needed in company presentations. “I have to present in front of people, more and more and more. One is in client meeting, where it’s been a learning process in terms that, first, you go to meetings and the other person speaks and you chime in a little bit. [...] If you don’t say anything, it means you don’t want to say anything. So I had, after going to a few meetings, and not saying anything, I realized, so what value am I contributing? And then, I had to have a discussion (with management) [...], and then I feel more comfortable.” (B90 - 90 (0)) The SIE overcame her fear with practice and by realizing that something needed to change, so that she was able to alter this modesty in order to succeed in work.

Hence, SIEs upbringing and their modest outlook may provide challenges, because they are afraid to ask for more, even when they deserve it. This may lead to weak opinions, as described by the impostor phenomenon in Subsection 4.1.4.

### Education Level

The international factor of education may be different to the level experienced in the host country (Hofstede, 2015). The translation of a degree might be over or under the expected educational level required. SIEs may seek out MBAs or further their education in other higher educational outlets, in order to solidify or to confirm their educational level: “When you say, ’trained in the US’, after you go through a little bit of explanation, it’s probably, ’oh ok’, but we do have people that came on secondment and stayed that don’t have US education, and I have noticed in order to give them that credibility, they go for an LLM, for example, in the US, just to say ’but we have an LLM here’. But even within the organization, in other groups, people ask, but ’What do they know? They are foreign trained. What do they know about the tax system here?’ for example. So, not clients, […], but even people within.” (B86 - 86 (0))

Comparisons in the reputation or the credibility of the university may or may not be as important in the home or host country. Therefore, depending on if the name of the school holds a high regard, the SIE could experience inadequacies, if they feel like they do not stack up to the desired educational reputation (Berry, 1997): “I went to a school (in US). […]. Now the
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discussion is more around, 'oh, you didn’t go to Harvard or Yale?' or so, now it’s a different battle, like but 'you didn’t go to top, like an Ivy League’, (laughing). But again, it’s only how much I make it a problem and I make it a problem, but I should not. People do, oh here in the US, people look at the school you went to and even if it’s a school here, 'where is it?' And you go to client, to events, networking events, and someone, like you must say 'I went to NYU', if you did go, because then you are doing yourself a disservice that you did not do, [...]. I see people (laughing) rise in their eyes, 'oh yeah! NYU! That’s it, you are good, you are good’. There, it’s huge, in the US, I think this is much more than in Europe. I think in Europe, 'oh you have a degree from the US’. That’s it. No questions asked. Here, it’s what school and if it’s not a top tier, then it’s like, 'hm, ok yeah, sure, let’s see what else you have done, let’s see what else you can do. Prove me, prove me otherwise'.” (B88 - 88 (0))

However, job opportunities and advancements were also a consideration for SIEs wanting to extend their education abroad. These individuals wanted to think ahead of their education, career opportunities or visa sponsorship: “Expend my personal network […], develop personal relationships and I wanted to connect with people at almost my professional level or seniority. […]. To have other job opportunities after I get another degree, especially from a good institution, I thought it would open additional doors.” (A31 - 31 (0)) “I think the one, especially, business and finance focused, the US has especially, the New York area is kind of the center of the business and finance world, so I thought my education here will be better and having an American education will give me better opportunities for finding a job afterwards.” (F7 - 7 (0)) “To advise on the field of taxes, […], is to do the German tax advisory exam, which is like a very difficult one and so on. So if you cannot manage to to get the title, you cannot grow further in your career, so you need to stop at the level below manager.” (G14 - 14 (0))

All interview participants received or are in the process of receiving additional education abroad. The different translation of degrees, either provided loss or gain of credibility. SIE tried to seek out universities with good reputation, so that their degree would mean something in the host country. It was clear that the host countries valued top-tier education, and with this education one can get better job opportunities and status upgrade in society (Hofstede, 2015). These topics were so important and resonated so strongly with the interviewees, that it was clear that this international factor of education was a trigger for some concerns and challenges that SIEs experienced during their international relocation and settling abroad. Therefore, education is seen as a challenge during the expatriation process and a gateway to some linkages to the impostor syndrome, as discussed in Subsection 4.1.4. Education and its linkages to the impostor syndrome will be discussed even further in Subsection 4.1.5.

Language and Accent

The accent may be an issue for SIEs in their work life and professional comfort level. The feeling of not being able to communicate, on a level they expect to perform and the way they see others speak, may trigger insecurities during expatriation process (Hofstede, 2015). This matter was
voiced by numerous SIEs as an important issue in their expatriation process.

Some SIEs moved abroad without knowing the language, so they were pushed to further their education to be eligible to work: “I moved to Germany without any language knowledge. So I spent the first year an a half visiting language courses and try to prepare myself for to speak the language in a level, which is enough for me to study here (Germany).” (G14 - 14 (0))

Furthermore, even when one is able to speak the host countries’ language, an additional factor of being able to speak on a professional level, causes SIEs to continue to experience insecurity (Hosoda and Stone-Romero, 2010). SIEs goals were to increase the level of fluency, so that confidence can be gained: “The language was also a very, a huge challenge. I mean my English is not fluent, and it was much worse back then, than it is now, so of course, you feel like completely helpless. First of all, you can’t understand all the stuff at work, secondly, even if you do understand it, you cannot put it in the right words, so it was very frustrating for a long time.” (G50 - 50 (0)) “Couple of challenges, especially in the beginning, so, number one, was obviously, language, although I felt I knew English, it was different to speak English in a professional environment, so definitely took me a while to basically, to be able to communicate efficiently, in English, especially, on a conference calls, especially in meetings, where you had to present, absorb information, negotiate. And, speaking English, language barrier, was pretty high for me, in the beginning, especially the first 6 months, because this was new to me, to speak English 100% of the time.” (A37 - 37 (0))

Moreover, not only is the SIE required to speak the host countries’ language, but also, the issue of having an accent came up quite a lot in conversations with SIEs. Worries and insecurities stemmed from SIEs feeling that their messages are not understood. Additionally, trying to pick up the home countries accent was a challenge for some SIEs: “I think I speak very, very good English and probably I write better than, but still, there is always this ‘oh you are, you have an accent’.” (B54 - 54 (0)) “In the beginning, I was really kind of worried speaking, [...], I had an accent, and I was always concerned that people wouldn’t understand what I was saying, that my message wouldn’t be clear getting across.” (F23 - 23 (0)) “I grew up speaking English and Hindi, [...]. But then, suddenly moving to New York to speaking English and getting used to the new accent, picking up the new accent, was also challenging, but a learning experience.” (D24 - 24 (0))

Furthermore, some SIEs even noted that the accents of others was a drawback in their international environment, because it was difficult to understand the message of other people. Accents got in the way of clear communication, but SIEs learned with time to get used to them: “In my team, [...], there is not a native English speaker, so it’s challenging to work, because you hear different languages around you all the time. It can get annoying at some point in time when you trying to concentrate, and then, sometimes, communicating it’s not easy. [...], you have to get used to the accents, it was a little bit getting used to the British accent in general and then working style is a little different.” (D19 - 19 (0)) “It’s getting better, but it’s definitely was challenging for me, in the beginning, a lot of times. I just (laughing) would not understand, what the
MD (Managing Director) wanted when he spoke with an accent that I just could not understand. [...] but over time, I have gotten used to their accents.” (D22 - 22 (0))

Therefore, some SIEs end up seeking professional language training: “No, I didn’t do any any profession training, but I am planning to do it. Because now it’s really annoying to me that my accent is still very strong, so I definitely seek this summer some professional language coaching. But, I haven’t done it yet, so for me it was always like learning by doing. [...] I think from a language perspective, my grammar is pretty high, but definitely my vocal skills, my speaking skills, definitely have a lot of areas for improvement. How I feel is, my pronunciation, I could improve, getting rid of my accent, I could improve, and definitely the way how to say things, I could improve.” (A41 - 41 (0))

Of course, some SIEs move to a country where their mother tongue is the same in the home country and the host country. However, even in those cases, SIEs still noted some inconveniences, in relation to accent or word choice: “In New York, I think everyone seems like Australian accent is still very novel for them. [...] the words I use, at the start, I guess I probably changed to the language I used. But, a lot of the time they don’t understand, not the accent, ‘what does that word mean?’: Because, I am using like British English.” (E33 - 33 (0)) “People say ‘what did she mean!’ I am like ‘Ah’. I try to think of another word for that word (laughing).” (E39 - 39 (0)) Thus, SIEs find ways to deal with these inconveniences by adjusting their speaking style.

On the contrary, some SIEs noted no significant differences to the challenges related to the language or the accent: “I think in the business setting, it wasn’t really an issue, Australia is pretty international [...] so there wasn’t really an issue from a work point of view, I guess. And I mean, in Australia, seems to be quite forgiving if you have a strong accent. [...] its not like in Europe, [...] you might find problems.” (C41 - 41 (0))

One SIE even tried to fix the accent, but found that it was not worth the effort and that it was not putting her at a disadvantage: “Worried that [...] they wouldn’t hear me speak, they wouldn’t even pay attention to what I am saying, because of the accent. So I was working, we basically had somebody at (name omitted) who help us with the presentations. So he happened to actually have worked in the past as somebody who would help people, form abroad, remove kind of their accents. So when I was telling him that I had that concern, so he said ‘oh you want me to try to help you and see if you can get rid of some of your accent?’ [...] So I sat down with him for an hour once and it was a nightmare. He was like trying to like make me pronounce different words, [...] You know what, this is not going to work (laughing). [...] I mean people really don’t care and I honestly don’t care. It’s too much of an effort and he told me the same thing. I don’t think it matters, [...] once in a while, I will run across somebody who might, when I speak, he will kind of sound surprised that when he hears me speak, but for the most part it’s never been an issue.” (F25 - 25 (0)) “Yeah, I don’t feel, yeah (incomprehensible) disadvantage in any way because of that.” (F29 - 29 (0))

Therefore, this international factor of language and accent is another highlighted topic among SIEs. All interviewees commented on how language has affected their life abroad. The misinter-
pretation and communication issues on a professional level brings forth a lack of understanding between people, which pose challenges to SIEs. Seeking out language training is an option to deal with this factor and to gain more confidence in speaking with others. Additionally, interviewees who scored medium on the CIPS test, found the topic of language and accents to be of interest and great significance, during the interview process. Hence, language and accent may have linkages to the impostor syndrome, as discussed in Subsections 4.1.4 and 4.1.5.

Summary of International Factors

The discussed international factor categories are summarized in Table 4.1. Where all interviewees expressed challenges with cultural differences and there could be a clear linkage seen to the high CIPS score. Thus, suggesting that the impostor syndrome and cultural differences experienced during the expatriation process are interlinked. Additionally, international upbringing showed high scores on the CIPS test, which indicates that the way people are raised have an influence on impostor syndrome characteristics (Clance and Imes, 1978). Modesty had varying responses with no linkages to predicted outcomes. All interviewees spoke of education levels and how this aspect was a challenge during their expatriation process and which is currently also contributing to some anxieties. However, there are no clear linkages noted to the CIPS scores. The topic of language and accent was noted as a strong discussion point for the interviewees, since all participants voiced issues in this regard, because the CIPS test results showed more medium scoring interviewees as being more influenced by this challenge. Thus, suggesting that the impostor syndrome and lack of language skills during the expatriation process are interlinked.

4.1.3 Findings on Individual Factors

As discussed in Subsection 2.3.1, individual factors may also come into considerations when SIEs adjust to their new work environment during expatriation. The interviews showed that the topics of importance, as they relate to their individual personification, revolved around: gender, identity, hypersensitivity and their personality. These categories are important and interlinked, because all SIEs, as individuals have their own identity and personality. However, differences can be noted in the experience of men and women, due to gender variances in culture and society norms. While, hypersensitivity factors are an individual behavior, which can have varying reactions in different people. All these individual aspects have to be managed by SIEs, by finding ways to deal with these individual challenges. Therefore, the following topics are discussed in detail to show relations to CIPS scores, and how examples of those situations were addressed by the interviewees during the expatriation process.

Gender

Gender may be considered as an international or an individual factor. By definition, gender is not purely influenced by internationality, but gender still plays a significant role in gender
differences among cultures and different nations (Berry, 1997). Therefore, the topic of gender relates to the individual, which may stem from international exposure, because these differences that are experienced abroad in the home and host country may trigger certain responses, due to preconceived notions and cultural imprinting. Hence, as described by the interviewees, gender is intertwined between individuality and internationality, which has blurred lines, especially for the women.

Male domination in business may provide issues for women, because of prior cultural notions. If a woman is used to more males being in managerial positions, in relation to women, these women might feel like they do not belong to be in management and that they are not good enough in comparison to the their male counterparts. Their cultural background might prevent them from realizing their dreams and suffer from lack of confidence, even if they are placed in high management roles (Hofstede, 2015).

This gender anxiety may cause the woman to miss out on a promotions or leadership roles: “I think it sometimes comes the factor of like, women in the workplace. Sometimes, you know, working in pretty male dominated (environment). When you get more senior in this field, there is not as many women. So sometimes, I guess, you question, like, if that’s even a factor or is it just something that you’ve got in your unconscious mind of everything you read in the media and all this stuff.” (E86 - 86 (0)) “I see the difference, I mean at work, there is some people that focus a lot on female vs. male. There are differences in how we interact, maybe in our mental processes, but not necessarily in the quality of the work that we do. I think there are differences in terms that, because men ask for what they think they deserve. They get it and they move faster. Whereas women, they ask for things only when, after few years, they felt they deserved it. They seem, don’t get it, so then, so there is this lag in time, because things are asked at the same timeline, not because somebody is trying to keep women back, at least in my view, but what makes it more difficult is that, if a woman wants to have children, physically, she has to take as step back, physically. And that has an impact.” (B32 - 32 (0))

Sometimes, support from the firm is available, which is helpful for female SIEs. This support offers trainings for women and their leadership progressions, which helps them deal with insecurities of gender. However, differences and difficulties are still noted in the way women and men are perceived: “In terms of advancement and then trying to make women get to the next level and so on, it’s (firm) supportive, but there are difficulties and there are differences.” (B30 - 30 (0)) “I went to a training, which is great, the company, the firm, really has looked into women and why are they not in that leadership role compared to men. [...] One of the main topics for discussion for everyone, from the panelist, was like ‘how do you balance with it children’, [...]. When I compare with what men do for example, they can be ‘on’ at all times. They can hop on a plane tomorrow and go to Singapore, France, wherever is needed. With her (boss), it’s a bit more difficult, [...]. I don’t know, if I can do what she does for example. That I would be able to have this, put those ‘boundaries’.” (B26 - 26 (0))

Internationality or cultural differences also play a role in men vs. women differences noted by
SIEs: “In New York at least, it seems that things are better, although if you start drilling, you see the same. But in Moldova, they are different there. A woman does everything (laughing). She takes care of the kids, the household. The husband is provider, or at least that’s the expectation. So women are at least they enable (for pregnancy) to take one year off, impact to career, at least that’s what I see, impact to career, ‘who cares’, right, ‘we’re going to make it happen, children come first’. Although, when I speak to my friends back home (Moldova), it does seem that things are changing and now mothers are forced, that they have to go after a few months, similar to the US, in order not to step back in their careers. So, I don’t see it, where I come from and in my family, I think probably it’s more traditional, but with friends that I have in Kishinev (Moldova), I see sometimes that, if someone is successful, in order to sustain it and keep it and not lose momentum, they can’t take time off. So it’s I think, we have this dilemma, that men don’t, just don’t have to even think about.” (B34 - 34 (0))

Subsequently, some women feel an increased fear of success, as described in impostor syndrome literature (Fried-Buchalter, 1997, p. 855). SIEs suggested that there are drawbacks of focusing too much on gender differences, because women SIEs who focus on those differences, might experience more feelings of impostor syndrome: “A lot of people have the same feeling about being an impostor. I don’t think guys as much as women, and that’s again a general conversation. But like there have been so many studies, and that I read this book, ‘Lean In’ book (by Sheryl Sandberg). And I remember, she references a study there like ‘Hobbes study’. [...] And it’s funny, because she said that it’s like your mind is unconsciously, like, you don’t expect the woman in that scenario and that’s why you unconsciously question it. Where you expect the man, just from historic [...] and the levels and you know men and women working over the years. So I guess, I think that’s still prevalent in men. Just the way they have been brought up. And this thing with women, you are unconsciously doing it. [...] She also said the same thing, just thought provoking, about how ‘you see yourself without realizing a lot of the time you are, actually the things you are doing is hurting yourself, even though you don’t realize’.” (E134 - 134 (0))

Thus, it was noted that all women interviewees commented on gender, during the interview process. The male domination in the work place changes the women’s mental process as it relates to the leadership roles. Women expressed that they feel less deserving. Additionally, a cultural dilemma of defined roles of men vs. women is noted as an interesting factor, which is unique to the selected international interviewees. Hence, exemplifying that gender still plays a big role in the role of a woman and her career (Berry, 1997, p. 22).

Identity

Negative aspects, stemming from some personal factors might arise for SIEs, such as identity issues. The identity issues, which may be due to the fact that SIE moved abroad and have undergone the expatriation process, could be linked to an increased level of feeling like an outsider (Doherty et al., 2013). When individuals do not know where they belong and feel left out, feeling of fraud and phoniness are increased (Scurry, 2013).
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When individuals feel like they do not belong, identity issues could appear. For example, during immigration, some SIEs exhibit a sense of disengagement from society and feel like an outsider (Selmer and Lauring, 2014). Therefore, true identity may be hidden or not shown in initial stages of adaptation. This can be expressed as some SIEs take risks or others suppress their capabilities: “I was kind of gambling though. Because this was like the first option. I get to gather some experience. Not to be just a graduate from the university. So my first aim was to survive the first year.” (G16 - 16 (0)) “I would think just probably, over like, just not sold myself, as such, to the degree that, you know, my capabilities, that I are on my honest capabilities and strengths, overselling myself and that, but you know, just not being confident in what I can actually do.” (E138 - 138 (0))

The disadvantage of identity issues may be resolved with engaging in a group of like-minded individuals: “Most of my friends, actually, were not even American, they were all international people, but they weren’t Bulgarian necessarily, but they were all kind of in the same situation that I was.” (F23 - 23 (0)) “I associate myself more with people that come from other countries, as opposed to the Americans, even though I have been here for so long.” (F35 - 35 (0))

To the contrary, findings state that SIEs question identity, but do not have a lack of belonging or confused cultural identity. SIEs may even know their strengths and appreciate their abilities and use them in their adjustment: “It wasn’t really difficult, in terms of culture, to fit in.” (C48 - 48 (0)) “I mean I think this is like my mentality. I can impress people easily and I just do have this ability and I have received, as a feedback, very often, that I have this confidence, competence, attitude and that I can make somebody to believe me very quickly (laughing).” (G74 - 74 (0)) “I think this was something when I was younger, back then in Bulgaria.” (G76 - 76 (0))

Therefore, arguing that SIEs are actually internalizing and transforming these different cultures into their new identity. This shows that although identity could seem like a confused aspect of SIEs, in reality, it is a balance between positive and negative: “You have to be kind of true to yourself and kind of figure out what’s important to you and what do you want accomplished and what makes you happy. And for different people the answer is different.” (F140 - 140 (0))

The influence of personal factors plays a role on the expatriation process. Some SIEs felt as an outsider, with varying identity issues and lack of confidence, but they found ways to deal with them by group association with like-minded individuals (Bandura, 2001). By finding other international people, SIEs found ways to connect and belong to a group, which made their process more pleasant. SIEs also emphasized the fact that they should not lose themselves and that they should stay true to themselves, without losing their culture.

**Hypersensitivity**

During the expatriation process, SIEs may experience hypersensitivity (Goleman, 2013). This personal factor is linked with a heightened sense, in dealing with people’s reactions, tone of voice, facial expressions and other triggers: “I tend to have a good memory around those, I remember the exact sequence of event or date and whatever in general, about things. That, in general, about
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a lot of things. To the point where I can tell the colors and stuff and like people wore during that meeting or where they were looking, where was the window in that room and that kind of stuff and I think that plays into a few situations, that I remember that I have not done well.” (D57 - 57 (0)) “Aha, let me, scrutinize it a bit more or let me, not so much now, but I think there was very well hidden, but there was a little bit more about that, until people get to know you. Which, hey, it makes sense, I am probably the same way towards others.” (B54 - 54 (0))

Some SIEs described a feeling of this hyper-awareness and having internal dialogues in wondering what others are thinking and considering. At the same time, SIEs regard this feeling to be universal among individuals: “I think every time you do interviews you have to practice stories for that position. [...] When I was 22 and looking for my first job, it was always the feeling, ‘wow, I, my responsibilities on this project weren’t really what I am making them out to be. Will they know the way I talk about it?’ [...] but I have talked to a lot of my friends about that and I think it’s true for almost everyone I know.” (D111 - 111 (0)) “I compare myself even now-a-days. [...] So we (co-workers) have common meetings together, we like, we participate in conferences. So I have the chance to kind of interact and talk to them and see how they think and what kind of questions they ask and I mean, I don’t really find them all that much more smarter or knowledge than I am.” (F89 - 89 (0))

Being aware is important in a global business environment and this social sensitivity can be used as a tool, without over analysis. Hofstede (2015) linked that perception is different for all individuals and people either, do not show their views, or are not even aware of them, which may cause troubles in interactions.

Therefore, hindrances may be developed in SIEs, due to cultural differences and cause them to shut down, in cases of hypersensitivity: “All I say is ‘hi’, that’s it, or ‘how are you’, and the immediate next step is ‘Oh you have an accent, where are you from?’. It, I’ve been here 16 years! Why you’re still asking? So I find, this is recent. I find that sometimes, I just shut off and I don’t respond to that person at all, (laughing), and then I feel bad. I’m like, ‘oh what’s wrong with me?’. They, the person is just trying to make small talk and why else can they talk about, except, ‘oh, accent!’ So, I don’t know, it’s just an opener, but some, that, I don’t know, that bother me. So, I am still viewed as a foreigner, after so long. And comments, sometimes in passing, is ‘oh, all your group is foreigners, do you guy have any Americans?’. It’s kinda, it means nothing, but once, sometimes you start wondering, ‘Do you think, do you feel you are getting less of a service? Do you feel you would prefer to have Americans?’.” (B78 - 78 (0))

Another hindrance is fear, as described by the impostor syndrome, and linked by this response to culture: “It’s a cultural thing, it’s probably, since I was a kid, I did not like it (presenting). [...] I think, I don’t know, fear that someone will ask something and I will not know the answer. Fear that I am saying this and I don’t think it’s really important. [...] I want to brand myself, that I know. Instead, I have to present on this other thing, that I don’t want to emphasize so much. I so that’s part of it, but I think the other things is just fear of how will others look at me, how are they judging me.” (B94 - 94 (0))
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Hence, hyper-awareness, increased scrutiny, and fear of judgment may be a hindrance in the work place for the SIEs (Goleman, 2013). Being able to control these urges and sensations is essential and SIEs found ways to maintain their composure, even if they had to suppress their feelings or hide their emotions. However, this poses a risk, because unexpressed emotions are bottled up and SIEs expressed that these feelings are a nuisance that they fight with internally. There seems to be a linkage between hypersensitivity with the impostor syndrome and expatriation process, because during the move SIEs are more aware of their surroundings and pay closer attention to people and their actions. Thus, causing some insecurities and fear to build up and influence their daily life.

Personality

Adaptation and personality (Vergauwe et al., 2015) are intertwined in the opinions of SIEs, and by definition, this personal factor is unique and hard to describe for each individual. However, it is noted that in order to adapt, a person has to want to change their persona. It should be ingrained in the mindset of those individuals to be flexible and adjustable to different environments: “It depends a lot on peoples personality. It’s this, I have a lot friends who couldn’t get kind of adjusted and then went back. [...] you need to have a very open mind, and kind of be flexible, because if you just, if you don’t, if you kind of have a rigid mindset, then it’s gonna be really hard to adjust.” (F136 - 136 (0)) “They just felt like they couldn’t fit in. They just didn’t like the American culture, the American people. They thought that it’s not the way to live, constantly working and being under stress, and they all rather be back. Which is a totally perfect choice for who they are.” (F138 - 138 (0)) The concept of separation and marginalization rings true for this example of individuals not being able to acculturate, either due to their personality or cultural factors, as defined by Berry (1997) and Hofstede et al. (2010). Satisfaction was decreased, due to emotional state of mind of the individuals who decided to leave, because they could not fit into the society (Tan et al., 2005).

SIEs expressed that personality plays a huge role in adjustment, which may or may not have anything to do with culture, or the fact that they came from somewhere else: “I used to be exactly the same (nervous), also during my studies in Bulgaria. I mean every time I was about to take an exam, I thought there is a maybe, like, half chance to get it. And I was always scoring the highest possible so, yeah, it was not changing the country.” (G148 - 148 (0)) “Business school was about presenting in front of a lot of people. And then, here, in this job also, [...]. I think I am a better speaker in a closed circle, in a group of people, than like in front of like a huge audience. But I just, I think it’s more to do with personality, than with like being in another country.” (D32 - 32 (0))

Thus, personality has an influence on adaptation, desire for change, flexibility, and overall personal mindset. Especially, it was noted that SIEs, who scored high on the CIPS test, found this topic of great significance. They pointed out multiple examples of where their personality and persona attributes were reflected on and compared to the impostor syndrome characteristics.
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(Vergauwe et al., 2015). Additionally, experiences of the expatriation process were described to have contributed to their shifts in personality or stories stood out the most during this time.

Summary of Individual Factors

The discussed individual factor categories are summarized in Table 4.1. Gender responses were only mentioned by women, suggesting that this topic is prevalent for only women in relation to men. Identity and hypersensitivity had varying responses with no linkages to specific predicted outcomes. Additionally, although varying responses were gathered for personality factors, high scoring CIPS scores were noted in this category. Suggesting that individual factors are a predecessor to international factors, and may be an interlinking factor to the impostor syndrome, which helps to support the research question, as to be discussed in Subsection 4.1.5.

4.1.4 Findings on the Impostor Phenomenon

As discussed in Section 2.2, and specifically in Subsection 2.2.2, impostor syndrome factors and characteristics can be classified in various ways. The interviews defined that the topics of importance, as they relate to the factors of impostor syndrome, revolved around: anxiety, insecurity, self-doubt, fear, luck, praise, pressure, expectations, work-life balance, fear of failure, fear of success, strong and weak opinions, perfectionism, comparison to others, over and under preparation. These categories are important and interlinked, because they are the most prevalent behaviors or traits of the impostor syndrome, as defined by (Clance and Imes, 1978). Therefore, the following topics are discussed in detail to show relations to CIPS scores, and how examples of those situations were addressed by the interviewees during the expatriation process.

Anxiety, Insecurity, Self-Doubt and Fear

During the expatriation process, SIEs experienced a factor of the impostor syndrome through anxiety, when they found themselves reflecting on their capabilities, because nervousness and worry permeated their thoughts (Clance and Imes, 1978): "I was like 'oh god, they made a huge mistake giving me the chance in the first place, I am not capable to do it. In any case, but I will try'. So I am kind of still trying to (laughing).” (G16 - 16 (0))

Some SIEs expressed their anxiety and compared it to the individuals with DKE (Kruger and Dunning, 1999): "You always go with worry, that I don't know how I am going to do. [...] I wasn't certain of the result, I mean I was prepared. I did the best that I could. But then I still went with this nervousness that I'm not sure how it would end up. I never go into things, that thinking 'oh my god, I got this, I nailed it, it's all good' (laughing)." (B116 - 116 (0)) "I am not a person of a huge ego or self-esteem. [...] I know other friends that go in and any situation, 'oh I am the greatest and I can do whatever I want to do', right." (A119 - 119 (0))

Insecurity arose in SIEs when some found themselves in unfamiliar environment, or were pushed to be better: "It's very interesting, because now when I did the MBA, right, I definitely
felt I am not belonging in this club, right, (laughing), kind of. So it was definitely, I probably was, had a high (impostor) feeling about that. I don’t belong to that environment, right. So I definitely felt that at some point, after 6 weeks, 8 weeks, someone comes in, ‘well we did admission mistake’, something like that right. So this, I mean, I felt very strong about that, (laughing), in the beginning.” (A109 - 109 (0)) “I am always like fearful a little bit. […] I think that the reason why I feel like that is actually from my sport thing, career. What I had when I was younger, when I played soccer. So I felt I was never good enough, because I was playing good teams and I always played with older people, so, and I always had coaches who always pushed me to the next level, right. […] So I think this contributes actually a lot, because I always competed against better players, better people in sports, right, and people wanted to push me, but I took this pushing as ‘I am not good enough’ probably right. And therefore, going into any situation, always fearful at first.” (A119 - 119 (0))

Self-doubt was found to be a common symptom, where doubts come up in various aspects of SIEs lives, which may effect their confidence (Kets de Vries, 2005). Additionally, the impostor cycle (Clance and Imes, 1978; Clance, 1985) can be see in SIE experiences: “We all have our doubts, I mean obviously (laughing).” (F104 - 104 (0)) “I do think that it’s taken longer for me to realize how good I am and the only way I do that is when I am in different positions, like when I switched my job to this other job. That’s when I was like, ‘I am actually good’. There I felt like even more of an impostor! Because of the environment. But something, with no matter what, I feel pops up in different areas, so if I am comfortable with my technical skills, it shows up in my social skills, not social skills, […]. But like then it shows up in client meetings, and then in shows up in presentations. […] So it never goes away.” (B204 - 204 (0)) “In Germany, I thought that during the first course of 6 months, I haven’t learned anything at all, and I am not making any progress and, […], that I am not going to pass, sure, right. But I did pass, and I scored really high, so it was kind surprise, […]. And I never thought I would get so far.” (G62 - 62 (0))

Fear of appearing weak or not knowledgable may cause SIEs to fear for their jobs: “Because we are expected and there is this mentality of ‘Fake it until you make it. You don’t feel comfortable, do it.’ Because there is truth in it, right. But there are things that I don’t know and there are situations that sometimes I’m not comfortable handling or and I’m afraid that in the eyes of the team, that looks up to me, I will, ‘well she doesn’t know everything, she didn’t know how to handle it’.” (B138 - 138 (0)) “The first 2 years in Germany, and having the feeling that I would never make it, […], to learn the language, […], to get a job, […], to finish my studies.” (G142 - 142 (0)) “It took lots of my time, I mean this doubt thing, and like all the fear going to bed at night and having just nightmares you are going to wake up and tomorrow you are going to be fired (laughing).” (G146 - 146 (0))

However, it appeared that contrary to some of these negative attributes, the SIEs found a way to deal with the feeling of impostor syndrome, by either taking their time to adjust, gaining more knowledge or becoming more confident with experience: “I have become more confident in my own abilities, if I don’t know the answer, I know I can figure it out or find someone who
can help me find the answer, where as probably that (CIPS test) answer would have been more appropriate for me a few years ago.” (E100 - 100 (0)) “I was nervous that people will figure out that I did not know as much, even though they knew I didn’t know, but maybe more realize that I didn’t know, even more that they thought. But I guess I grown confident with that. Being ok with that I don’t know as much, or you know I have also gained knowledge over time.” (E108 - 108 (0)) “Well I am feeling this (impostor syndrome) now-a-days less, than I used to feel that. But at the very beginning, as I said, starting work and everything, I thought everybody else is smarter and everybody would do a better job and so on. But now, I mean, I have a couple of years of experience. I do still think so, comparing myself to other managers or senior managers. I think that if they would have my project, they would have done a better.” (G100 - 100 (0))

Subsequently, it was noted that all interviewees felt a level of anxiety, self-doubt and fear, either during their expatriation process or even in their current working environment. Interviewees who scored high on the CIPS test found this topic extremely sensitive and had many examples of self-doubt, insecurities, doubts and fears. Also, being nervous of unfamiliar environment was described by most interviewees. They learned to deal with this aspect by taking their time to realize their own self-worth and gain confidence with experience. Sometimes, relief from fears were gained through switching jobs, because SIEs felt that they have gaining more experience and can adjust better to the next position.

**Luck**

Impostor syndrome literature focuses on luck and how individuals feel that their gains were received through some luck (Clance and Imes, 1978). SIEs feel lucky in some regards during their move abroad, either by knowing the right people or being at the right place and the right time: “I was lucky to be selected for the exchange program, that I went, that opened doors, right, and then I was lucky to live with the host family that I had, because they were amazing and they are still in touch and they helped me with college and finding the right one and then, also through them right, they put me in touch with a recruiter.” (B152 - 152 (0)) “It’s more of coincidence, I think, like you know, as I told, I used to work with no permission, [...], this was also luck, [...]. Then, like the time I was about to graduate, I had no idea, what should be the title of my master thesis, [...], so this was the coincidence, so this was not a planned success, and then, by that time I was about to search for job, [...], I checked the Internet and there was this one position for mergers and acquisition, with banks, I applied for that, this was my first application, first interview and they just took me! And this was the surprise. I was the last person for a year that got a contract.” (G98 - 98 (0)) “I got lucky on that!” (G26 - 26 (0))

Additionally, when SIEs are supported in their expatriation process the adjustment is much easier and is viewed in a positive light. This approach of support is a way to deal with the negative experiences of moving abroad. One SIE described her process as easy (Bonache et al., 2001), because of the luck she was fortunate enough to get in the beginning of her move: “Personally, it was very easy, because I went to an American high school when I was in Bulgaria, so I was
kind of used to the American culture. [...]. When I came here (US), everything was provided for me. So I had a full scholarship, they came, they picked me up from the airport, my school was like half an hour from the airport, there was a special program for international students, they allowed me to work on campus. So I had some extra money for you know spending money, they basically made the adjustment very easy, and I was like so young and eager to kind of come in and experience the different culture that, you, I, you, it was very easy for me to kind of integrate and make friend and kind and adjust. I think if I were to come now, the process will probably be much, more difficult, but at that time, it was really easy. And, because I didn’t come on my own, exactly, I mean everything for me it was like an organized program, everything was provided, from the, kind of, it made the process easier. I didn’t have to look for an apartment, I lived in the dorms, I didn’t need a car, I didn’t need to learn how to drive right away, I could make easily friends, because there were other people in the same situation, as I was, I didn’t need to worry about food, because I ate on campus, I didn’t worry about finding a job, because they kind of provided me with, you know, a job for like, you know, pocket money, so it was, I had, I feel lucky in that respect that it, the whole process, was pretty easy.” (F21 - 21 (0))

A big element in the luck topic, was highlighted by trust and that SIEs relied on trust or were entrusted, which made them feel very fortunate and lucky: “I think the reason why I even got the interview, is because the recruiter that looked at my resume they saw that I had worked at (name omitted) before, so there was some sort of a trust there, because I had already been there. So she knew she could talk to other people who can, kind of, testify to my abilities and my work, but in that sense, I feel kind of lucky that she, […], forwarder my resume to the right people. So I feel like, that she kind of, […], helped me get the interview.” (F87 - 87 (0)) “I applied for the job, luckily they took, me. I don’t know why! […] I didn’t have the right profile. I haven’t studied any taxes at the university and I was applying for a job with it as a tax advisor basically, so they had enough trust in me that I am going to manage it.” (G14 - 14 (0))

However, SIEs attribute their luck to hard work, perseverance and seizing opportunities, even if others helped out in the process. They felt that it was not necessarily luck, but that it was deserved and earned: “I know a lot of very smart people who have not done, as well, and some of it has been luck. Like they were at the wrong place, and the wrong time, and I feel like sometimes, I’ve been at the right place, at the right time. So luck obviously matters, but, then I mean, I worked very hard for everything that I have achieved.” (F85 - 85 (0)) “People define success differently, which is taken in this, yes, there was an element of meeting the right people, having people speak up for me when they had to, but it’s a lot of hard work. It’s, I feel like I’ve worked a lot through it, and it’s not an error. It’s, I mean, I am away from my family, I have sleepless nights, I have had, it’s hard work. With, but not just myself, no, it’s always, I’ve always been lucky enough to have people that I could work well with, people that help me, that put in a good word, that made the right contact, supported me, suggested, promoted, but it’s, I feel like, it was earned.” (B150 - 150 (0))

These elements of luck and hard work, were suggested by SIEs to be not confused, but rather
attributed to the high-achievement element of the impostor syndrome, as defined by (Clance and O’Toole, 1988; Watkins, 2012): “What resonates most is not that it’s luck, but you mentioned perseverance, working hard.” (B202 - 202 (0)) “I feel like I had to work toward and plan everything and nothing ever happening to fall into my lap. Right from applying to grad school after undergrad, or applying to business school or getting a job. Every time I had to work hard, interview really hard, do tons of mock interviews, practice, get rejected from a few places, before I learned my lesson and that kind of stuff. And then I think, and then you (incomprehensible) taking tests, you know, obviously, you have to put in your time, so I don’t think there is, I don’t consider myself lucky. Like I have never had won a lottery ticket.” (D77 - 77 (0))

Consequently, SIEs felt fortunate due to exchange program, recruiter connection, coincidence or college they attended. Elements of trust and knowing the right people contributed to feeling lucky in obtaining jobs or other beneficial placements. However, SIEs emphasized that luck was not the only contributor, as these high-achievers also praised their perseverance and hard work for their successes. The outcome of the CIPS results was clear, that individuals who scored high on the CIPS test, found themselves feeling more lucky, in comparison to the other interviewees. This topic resonated heavily with higher level of impostorism, because these individuals really felt that luck was a big contributor to their achievements (Clance and Imes, 1978).

Praise

SIEs expressed that they tend to underplay praise, as described by the impostor syndrome. Numerous SIE responses focused on negative feedback that they have received: “I succeeded, I think, ’ok, this was my job anyway, so I mean there is nothing to rave about it, nothing I should be proud of’, right. But in situations, when I failed, I definitely have those situations remembered for long period of time, because, number one, I’m disappointed that I failed, number two, I look back and try to figure out why I failed or why it didn’t go as well, and number three, I probably remember the feedback, the negative feedback, than the positive feedback.” (A67 - 67 (0)) “This self-promotion thing, right, so, I am not a guy who needs a lot of appraisal or great job, […], but if I don’t do the job well, I definitely take the feedback personal and really angry at myself that I didn’t do it better.” (A69 - 69 (0))

By explaining and finding excuses for their achievements or job well done, SIEs hope to prevent disappointment or increased future expectations of management (Kets de Vries, 2005): “I realize that at first step I always dodge it off, more like ’yeah, but, I did this, because it was easy or I did this, because it was this and this, or yeah, but look I had 5 people helping me and they did that’. There is always an explanation and now I am more like sometimes I say thank you, because I think I am more comfortable that I do know something. But still, no. I like to receive it (praise), it feels good, […]. I want to know when I do good, because what I do good, I will continue to do good, and when I don’t do well, I also want to hear it, in a nice way. Instead, if I am not given any feedback, I just allow it to, but sometimes if it’s praise that I think it’s too much for what I did, and that happened very recently, then I am like, ’oh, now I am worried, and now I feel like
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no matter what I have to jump, jump to make sure that the client is not disappointed’, because of
this ‘oh she is great’ (laughing).”  (B122 - 122 (0)) “Sometimes you just second guess yourself,
and you know when someone said that, did I really do a good job or are you just saying that?”
(E84 - 84 (0))

When receiving praise, an unknown reaction is warranted, because one SIE said he did not
know how to react to praise: “I feel a little bit awkward in that situation, just from a psychological
perspective. […] the issue number one I have is that if I received this feedback, I will not know
how to react to that so, what’s the right response for that?” (A73 - 73 (0))

However, praise is wanted by SIEs and they need time to adjust to it: “Too much praise is
good! Because probably that’s, and the more you hear it, it’s like ‘hey, maybe I am better than I
think I am’, but I, it takes time to get there.” (B126 - 126 (0)) “I always need some recognition
from people to know that I am doing it well.” (A119 - 119 (0))

When management notices and addresses factors of the impostor syndrome, such as, the avoid-
ance of praise. Management can reinforces the positive attributes, which is found to be well
received by the SIEs, because they were encouraged by this praise: “Yeah, they (management)
definitely notice. They mentioned it (avoidance of praise) a few times. They, for example, they
said I should be a little bit more, proud about stuff, what I am doing and what I have accomplished
and not always try to think how I could improve myself, or how I can improve what I’m doing. So
that, said I should sometimes take a step back and look back and see what I have accomplished.
Yeah, I definitely get some feedback around that, because, again, I’m more driven by negative
feedback, because then, I try to prove myself that I can do it better and positive feedback, I take
it, but for me it’s like no big deal.” (A75 - 75 (0)) “I find it hard to accept it (praise) at times,
but I think they (management) realize that my reaction and say like ‘no, it’s well deserved’ or
what have you, like kind of back it up to make sure that I am not questioning it.” (E96 - 96 (0))

Hence, SIEs are noted to underplay praise and recognition which may be due to new element of
self-promotion. However, avoiding recognized success may effects future promotions and salary.
Therefore, it is important that management is aware of praise avoidance and this is how some SIEs
have been able to deal with this challenge (Kets de Vries, 2005). Since management recognized
avoidance, corrective actions were taken, which gave SIEs more confidence in their expatriation
process and boosted their comfort levels at work.

Pressure and Expectations

SIEs experience pressure in their roles at work, due to the demands of the firm, which can trigger
impostor syndrome attitudes. This drives them to achieve more and gain success: “Projects, are
time sensitive […] we never own the timing […] high pressure environment.” (A19 - 19 (0))

“Something more to achieve, something more to get.” (B16 - 16 (0)) “I need to find the time
to do it, so the time pressure at work is, meaning, but if it’s important there is no excuse, now
there is the new quote in the firm that ’Never tell anyone I am so busy, nobody wants to hear
that, tell them what’s interesting you do and it’s all prioritizing. So everyone is busy, that’s not
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some, that’s not acceptable to tell people you meet in the hallway’. So find time. (laughing) but it’s New York there are resources, there are, it’s a matter of prioritizing.” (B96 - 96 (0)) “We were up until 3 or 4 o’clock in the morning and got back at 8 o’clock in the morning. And at that point you basically just do it, so there is no strategy, you just push through it.” (A21 - 21 (0))

Comparison to the home country is common among SIEs, as it related to hours worked, because it was much less.

Expectations of the firm are the main triggers of the pressure felt by SIEs to provide high performance (Kets de Vries, 2005). These expectations caused worry about the perceived halo-effect experienced by the SIE: “Expectations are always the same, from the client, from the management, from my boss, right, but you never know whether you will be able to meet those expectations. This is the issue. So, you go into a situation, into a new deal, and you never know whether you will be able to meet them or not, I mean you know what the expectations are, because it’s your job description basically, your job function.” (A85 - 85 (0)) “I’ve done one or two things that I think were small, for the client and apparently, now I don’t know if it’s true, but apparently said ‘oh my god, she is great’, [...] I get this extra credit, because of the good word that the partner put in, or because of that, it’s a halo effect, right. So now, what I do it’s, so I discount it. I say, he likes me more, because of the good word that was put in.” (B136 - 136 (0))

The pressure and the expectations cause SIEs to question their work and achievements: “Out of place, in terms of, it’s hard to say why. There are times where I’m wondering ‘why am I here, what am I doing here, why am I working so hard, what am I trying to achieve, who am I trying to prove something to’. ” (B76 - 76 (0)) Hence, it was noted that it’s the way the person deals with the pressure, internally, that is important in pressure management: “It’s just business. There is pressure. I mean the pressure is the same for everybody. And this is like your own feeling how hard you get, to under the pressure or not. How you let it get to you.” (G154 - 154 (0))

SIEs described that the increased pressure and expectations steamed from increased responsibilities and not the expatriation process per se, because with time, the bar was raised higher for their performance. Additionally, reason and motivation for performance vary from individual to individual, but SIEs rely on staying within the boundaries of expectations: “I mean, I don’t think it has to do with the expatriation, it’s just, I think in general. If I am not really into something, I do what is expected, but I won’t go, like, I get lazy and I won’t go above and beyond to do the best job that I can. [...] And then, that has lead to promotions, faster than expected in the past. But like now, this point in my job, I am kind of disillusioned, so that I am not doing that anymore and also, like looking to switch jobs for the same reasons.” (D45 - 45 (0)) “I feel them (pressure) more now, because [...] there is more pressure on me than, [...] like when I started my job, initially, I had less responsibilities and people and trusted less in me and now I have a lot more responsibilities, so I feel like the bar is just set higher.” (F114 - 114 (0))

The expectations of the firm, family and friends put additional pressure on the expatriates. At times, when expectations were high, SIEs were plagued by the halo-effect, which in effect triggers more pressure, becoming a vicious (impostor) cycle of feelings of proving something
beyond expectations (Clance and Imes, 1978; Clance, 1985). SIEs also stated that the pressure was actually triggered by increased responsibility and not exclusively by the expatriation process. However, it was also noted that interviewees who scored high on the CIPS test felt that pressure and expectations were the main triggers and causes for their feeling of impostor syndrome. Whether the pressure came from work or family, the expectations weight down on the individuals and anxieties were formed over the perceived demands.

**Work-Life Balance**

SIEs are concerned about the work-life balance that stems from their high-achieving goals of moving up, like becoming a partner, or feeling pressure from current work environments: “My biggest concern would be, I work already a lot, and I’m saying that because, would I work more? As a partner, and looking at some other partners that currently are, I don’t think so, but maybe yes. Knowing me and my work style, I would probably will end up working more, so I am worried about that.” (B26 - 26 (0)) “Increase in workload and an increase in bad work-life balance.” (A25 - 25 (0)) “So my hours there were really, really bad. There were, like I worked from like 7 o’clock in the morning until like 10, 11 at night, I had to work weekends.” (F9 - 9 (0))

It was noted that working long hours may be seen as a status symbol, which does not necessarily define productivity: “Status symbol, exactly! In Germany/Austria it’s like ‘oh damn you really have hard style, work-life balance, and why do you do that and what’s the point?’ (laughing) so it’s different. So you never know if someone tells you at work, ‘oh and you need another hour another 2 hours?’ That are, it’s two productive, efficient hours? Or whether in those two hours they also do other stuff, right, so, this is still a challenge to understand.” (A51 - 51 (0))

Which leads to increased levels of frustration and questioning the worthiness of the hard work: “In terms of work-like balance, I am feeling it more and more, and like, whether it’s worth putting in these hours and like what do you get out of it, except for some kind of, you know, monetary compensation. Just that kind of stuff, whether it’s physically, whether it’s worth health wise, whether it’s good for you, or, definitely not good for you, but whether it’s worth it to do this kind of routine. That’s what I think is challenging.” (D85 - 85 (0)) “It’s just the hours. I just think putting in 80 to 100 hours, week after week, it’s just not good.” (D87 - 87 (0))

Eventually, the overworking leads to an overwhelming feeling of loss of control of personal life, over-challenged mind and an overall burn out effect (Kets de Vries, 2005): “Yeah, I did (feel burn out), yeah, that’s why I left. I mean my relationship, the guy I was dating at the time, like, my relationship was suffering, because of that, so I felt that, I mean, I knew that this was not sustainable and I needed a change.” (F60 - 61 (0))

Due to pressure and seeing long working hours as a status symbols, may lead to SIEs’ burnout and loss of personal life. Hence, not maintaining a good work-life balance may trigger impostor syndrome traits of workaholic behavior (Kets de Vries, 2005). The interviewed SIEs described that the work-life balance was poor during their transition into the new culture during the expatriation process and in some cases, has continued or grew in their current position at work.
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Fear of Failure

As discussed in Subsections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3, the fear of failure was shown in SIEs in the way they questioned themselves and their actions (Fried-Buchalter, 1997; Ross et al., 2001; Kets de Vries, 2005; Crawford et al., 2016; Neureiter and Traut-Mattausch, 2016). Some interviewees felt that some things are out of their hands. They were fearful of tests, of being judged or compared to others: “When I moved here (NY), I thought I would fail and not get a job basically, so, but even though I knew that I have done everything in preparation to do, to get one and give myself the, you know, the most likelihood to get one, but I guess I question myself, well, ‘what if luck is not on my side?’ You need a bit of luck, you need a bit of this and that. So, I guess that was one of the biggest challenges for me.” (E98 - 98 (0)) “I do investment right, so I have to, my job is constantly to kind predict the future. So, I feel like I’ve done well in the past, but I really have no certainty that I am going to do well in the future. [...] Like I feel, because of the nature of the job, I feel less kind of certain in my success going forward just cause, [...] whatever your assessment of the future is might be totally wrong and you might be, you might lose money, because of that. So, just the nature of the job is less certain.” (F106 - 106 (0))

Failing a goal may lead an individual to avoid future tasks that are similar in nature and prevent future opportunities that may stem from those tasks. This limiting factor is of great concern to one SIE, who, when asked how she handling failure said, “Oh, that’s it, it’s the end of it! I mean it depends on how big the goal is and how important is it to me and why I failed. Like for example, like I think that presentation, [...], I prepared for it very well and I think I’m sure I did well, it just, I wasn’t as comfortable as presenting and then my mouth went dry, [...]. So I think to others they probably ‘yeah she did ok, she is not the best presenter, whatever, screw it, moving on’. To me, it’s, I’m now avoiding presenting to that audience again and I am like thinking and thinking and why and on, because, I presented to those people before and I did great, so I don’t know like, it bugs me, it nags me. I need to work to make sure that it does not limit me from other opportunity, because ‘oh I am afraid that I am going to fail’.” (B158 - 158 (0))

Moreover, not only do SIEs have high expectation of themselves, but also, they feel the expectation of family or friends. SIEs are afraid to fail or sometimes even change their jobs, due to the loss of security and status (Hofstede, 2011) that they have established. This may prevent them from advancing (Neureiter and Traut-Mattausch, 2016), because they are stuck in the same job, due to their fear: “Like my friends and family, I mean they think this is a big deal, me being a manager at (name omitted), and that I am kind of super smart and so on. But I don’t see it this way. [...]. There are lots of other people who do, I guess much better job. So I, yes, I am afraid that they do have huge expectations. And also, maybe this is kind of a reason why I haven’t changed my job, because it’s, you know, I know the company now, I know where the risks and where the advantages. If I would change, I would not have any basis and I am kind of afraid that I am not going to make it.” (G90 - 90 (0))

Subsequently, this leads to severe consequences (Kets de Vries, 2005; Whitman and Shanine, 2012; Vergauwe et al., 2015; Crawford et al., 2016). Due to this fear of failure SIEs avoid certain
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tasks, as described by Neureiter and Traut-Mattausch (2016, p. 3), which puts pressure on them to act as if they are confident or are not fearful: “I have to promote the group, to the outside community, so that we know the market, they know us, so I have to go to these presentations, [...]. So the first time I did it, I was very concerned, it was very short, so I did a really good job. Second time I did an ok job and third time I choked. And since then, my boss pushes me, ‘you have to do it again’. I avoid now, so that’s something to get over it. It’s big. I have to present at conferences sometimes and presentations and so it’s going forward, I have to do it more and more and more and more and more and more, and I need to work through it and get comfortable doing it. Or act and make sure others know that I am comfortable doing it, regardless of how I feel on the inside.” (B92 - 92 (0))

Hiding their emotions and fears puts even more pressure on them to feel like a failure, which forces self-criticism (Kets de Vries, 2005) and feeling of impostorism: “Sometimes I doubt the fact that there are so many questions to ask in what we do and you only know this much and there is always more and more and that’s when I always falter. When people, like I work with clients, right, so client are pushy. They want to know the answer now, today, and that’s not always possible. There is always work that is involved. I need to ask other people. [...]. And I have been on calls where the client (incomprehensible) well ‘why don’t you know it, why don’t you get me on a call with someone who knows it?’ And how do you answer? [...]. But still, I take it as my failure for not knowing in that moment of time. [...] I know that it’s only human not to know everything, but I still take it as I failed.” (B128 - 128 (0)) “Where it didn’t go as well, and those are with me and I’m criticizing myself over it and maybe it’s not as bad as I think it is, but I make it bad.” (B134 - 134 (0))

However, some SIEs found ways to deal with their fears and have implemented techniques to put at bay their worries. These techniques were suggested to be implemented during the expatriation process to help SIEs to deal with negative connotations of fear of failure. One way of coping is starting new project with no preconceived notions: “I feel in every engagement, every deal, it’s so different, that you almost start from scratch. So if you have done one deal, well, it does not mean that the other deal goes as well, because there are so many challenges in our work, that so many things can go wrong. So I always start a new engagement with blank sheet of paper and I forget what I have accomplished before, what I have been appraised of before, because it could be a total disaster the next one. Because there so many stakeholders, so many challenges in our work, that you never know whether it goes well or not. So for example, on my current deal, [...], everything went wrong, that I really felt like I’m the worst, you know, deal advisor in history, right. But then, on other deals, it goes so well, that I think, ‘oh, how did this happen, right?’ So sometimes in my work I don’t have it under control and I never take feedback or accomplishment from a prior deal to the next one, because, I know, it could be so different, so it’s always better to start from scratch.” (A83 - 83 (0))

Second way of dealing with fear is analyzing failures: “I have willingness to understand why that I failed. And I want to know why and then try to figure out if it was personal, like if I, it
was all my fault that I failed, or was it a combination of me and other people that were involved, or whatever, like, what was the reason that we failed and why. [...] After all of that emotion moves away, then I want to know why and understand.” (E102 - 102 (0))

Third way of coping is to put in more efforts to avoid failures in the first place: “I try to kind of understand what I did wrong and learn from my mistake, but generally, I think, I feel like I am pretty conservative. I try to, I do my best effort trying not to fail, if that makes any sense, (laughing). So, like even like for tests, I’ll rather study hard than, you know, do, than study half way and have to take it again. I just try to, that’s maybe why I put like, I used to put so much effort into things, just cause I kind of try to avoid failing and having to do it again and dealing with kind of the the consequences of that.” (F75 - 75 (0))

Additionally, SIEs found ways to learn from previous mistakes or failures: “I can learn more in an environment where you failed, right. So you failed, you have more lessons learned, and probably therefore, I remember those situations a little bit more, than the others in where I succeeded.” (A67 - 67 (0))

Subsequently, fear of failure is viewed as an important topic for the SIEs, especially for interviewees who scored high on the CIPS test. SIEs noted that they questioned one-self and tried to avoid uncertainty of their job, which was not necessarily directly linked to the timing of expatriation process. Fearing failure prevents future opportunities and may contribute to limitations in the work place, due to self-criticism, which prevent innovation and sometimes risky, but beneficial decision-making (Kets de Vries, 2005). High scoring SIEs are fearful of exiting their comfort zone, with consequences of hidden and suppressed feelings. However, as noted, SIEs also developed ways of dealing with their fear with time and experience and found that elimination of preconceived notions, analyzing their fears, avoiding foreseen failures and learning from prior failures provided some relief, for either current situations or times of expatriation.

**Fear of Success**

As discussed in Subsections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3, the pressure of the expectations and demand for higher achievement may lead to impostorism (Fried-Buchalter, 1997; Ross et al., 2001; Kets de Vries, 2005; Crawford et al., 2016; Neureiter and Traut-Mattausch, 2016). This rings true for the fear of success: “I feel like every time and every time you, I do well, I feel like the bar is being raised.” (F65 - 65 (0)) However, the fear might be due to feeling underprepared or inexperienced, rather than success itself. “I don’t think I am afraid of being successful, as such, just more, so that sometimes I feel like underprepared, like I have said, then I realize, I am not.” (E78 - 78 (0))

One SIE felt a level of fear for her future success, when a partner promotion is seen on the horizon, which is causing doubts and discounting tendencies, due to fear of future commitments and responsibilities: “I like the compliments, like the way I receive very high, like a lot of positive feedback, lately, and I associate it to, well, ’that’s what they have to do’, because they trying to promote me to the next level, instead of just taking it as it is. I discount it. Yeah, maybe part
of it is true, but part of it is, because of this and part of it, they have to promote me, so they can’t say anything bad.” (B204 - 204 (0)) “I’m very proud to be there. It’s hard work. The next level is to become partner in the company, in the firm, so that would be quite an achievement, but at the director level, there is, very client facing, client interaction. I mean, I have a team that helps to support everything, but I review this essentially. [...] There is a lot of responsibilities that involve the size of the team, the financials, providing advice” (B22 - 22 (0)) “I do have the opportunity now, but it comes with, not that this is not with a lot of commitment, but it’s (laughing) mental process. I mean, if you have to go through a lot of preparation. You have to make sure that 35 other partners would support you. [...] When I become partner, I will have like my own business case and I have to bring certain number of revenues, millions of revenues, and if you don’t at a certain point, then you don’t earn your salary. So it’s different, so it’s your own entrepreneur to some extent. [...] It comes with a lot of commitments.” (B24 - 24 (0))

Therefore, the perceived feeling of under preparation and inexperience leads to fear of increased responsibility and commitment, which may block future success. However, no direct linkage to the expatriation process was noted in the examples of fear of success.

Strong Opinions

As discussed in Subsections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3, several SIEs expressed strong opinions when they spoke of things they believed in and efforts they put into something that is worthy: “I feel very strongly about a certain position.” (A97 - 97 (0)) “I think it comes down to if I really care about something, I will make sure that it’s done the way I think it’s best to be done. So it takes extra hours or extra time or whatever, it will get done that way. But, if I don’t, then, [...] I will just give suggestions or make some final changes here and there. But not to much, so it depends, what the topic is. I can be really into it and want everything done the way I want it done, or I could care less, just follow like I guess something done in the past or let the analyst put his brain to work.” (D51 - 51 (0)) “She would say ‘oh he can be very, like, bossy at times, and just have to, or really fight for what he believes in.’” (D53 - 53 (0)) “They would probably say that I kind of make it evident of what I like and what I don’t like. And then that would just reflect on how much effort I put into it.” (D55 - 55 (0))

However, some SIEs expressed that they needed to have an even stronger opinion, if they want to run their jobs in the proper way. Therefore, these individuals recognized that a strong opinion is important in their role and balance must be reached between saying yes and no: “You always try to be nice, right. If after the call, the client is pissed off and he complains to the next person then, ’oh my god, she cannot handle client issues’. So, but at the same time, if you always say, ‘yes we agree with the discount’, we spent too much time. It’s a balance. It depends on what it is.” (B146 - 146 (0))

Moreover, at times, strong opinions were a drawback in SIE experience, as it caused some feedback issues, tensions and layoffs: “I got laid off, during that time and I know I could have avoided it, by just like, getting along better with my bosses. I would like, in midyear review, I
had made it abundantly clear that I was not happy with the work I was doing or like this is not what I expected when I was brought into the team. [...] I should have pretended better, to get along with them and I just started a whole chain of events that lead to, you know, when the time for layoffs came, I was the obvious candidate. So, and after that, I, after the midyear review, I just started putting into less and less into my work, so that also had, kind had a role to play. So, the next phase, I made sure I right from the get go, I was getting along with people and I was getting involved in stuff, that I really wanted to do and I really liked, because otherwise, I find it hard to motivate myself.” (D59 - 59 (0)) “I definitely feel weak on probably, excepting feedback from other people and in general. Try to understand what other people think about myself, I guess. So it definitely came out, you know, I really don’t care what other people think, whether I have accomplished something or I’m, I, you know, I’m smart or whatever. For me, it’s like, ‘ok, probably should think about more about what other people think about myself’ (laughing). Not be so self-centric and not just care and just go my own way, right. So, I probably should open more up to that and probably also accept that feedback, right.” (A99 - 99 (0))

Additionally, strong opinions have an implication to the firm, because some SIEs might use their opinions to go against company policies and this is where the impostor syndrome may affect the work environment in a negative way (Kets de Vries, 2005; Bechtoldt, 2015): “I don’t mind sitting through mine (review). The hard part I find is writing other peoples reviews. [...] It’s just, that’s hard. I don’t have a lot of good to say about people and I don’t have a lot of bad to say about people. It just, I think, two lines each, 2-4 lines each can just summarize the performance, good and bad, just writing them seems very cumbersome or kind of like a waste of time, to me.” (D67 - 67 (0))

One SIE provided an example of a strong opinion issue during the expatriation process, which had negative effect in the work environment: “I see that when we do have the Americans, that we have in the group, they think they, they perceive themselves better, than people that come from another country on secondment. If they speak English better than someone else, then I have had a discussion with someone even about that, so I see differences in how, and that’s why, new hires, new campus hires, for example, that are associates and there is a manager from another country, with an accent, then the new hire thinks they are better than the manager. [...] So I see it at that level, and the other way around, but that tells you about the challenges people face that come here as a senior manager or someone who doesn’t, with a lot of experience and a lot to offer, and then there is an associate that doesn’t want to work with them or acts out, because they think they are better. So, but I see it, yeah the way that some people, depending on the country, they may say certain things that are hurtful to others and then you have to manage that, depending on what country they come from, there more direct and outspoken and to them to say ‘oh you are such a woman’ they think it’s ok, but it’s not. Or, so I see it both ways, and they probably struggle as well, and there is some cultures saying ‘look, here is using these words are seen very strong, don’t say them.”(B98 - 98 (0))

The described strong feelings or stance on issues provide drawbacks and implications to the
firm. Therefore, not only does this pose as an issue to the current work environment, but also, potential challenges for incoming SIEs during the expatriation process.

**Weak Opinions**

As discussed in Subsections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3, certain SIEs expressed that, at times, they did not speak up or express their opinions, because they were a foreigner and some international factors got in the way of expressing themselves. Either their accent, visa fears or culture prevented them from stating what they really wanted. Having tough discussions with senior leaders in the organization or clients caused SIEs to weaken their opinions or fall silent on certain topics. Additionally, promotions or bonuses were passed up, because of this impostor syndrome factor (Kets de Vries, 2005; Bechtoldt, 2015): “I think initially it was more, kind of, getting over kind of that fear to speak up your mind, then not worry about what people are gonna think that, because I have an accent and I might not speak the same way as everyone else, that was kind of the biggest thing.” (F23 - 23 (0)) “I felt the company had to do many extra step in order to sponsor me for a visa, that I didn’t ask for sign on bonus or other things, and because I was foreigner.” (B54 - 54 (0))

Negative implications of not knowing how to react in the moment, which impacts the individual and the firm, are described by one SIE as: “Client meetings (incomprehensible) aspects of that has to do with reacting in the moment, something that, I don’t know, because there is, that, you can take something and react to it so well that ‘oh my god, it’s great’ or say something that’s general, that still answers the question and like finding a formula to help with that. My tendency has been to date, is, I don’t know, ‘oh, oh ok, great, that’s everything’, forget everything else is bad. So learning how to deal with that, and if someone in my team sees me failing in it, then I feel like I lose credibility. Everyone, and that’s one aspect, and the other one is having the tough discussions. A lot of times, on client push back on fees, on budgets, on timing ‘why isn’t this coming back’ and, when, I am, some, often, I am struggling with is, telling them, ‘thanks for your feedback, you are right in this, but you are wrong in this’. And that’s why we are, getting my point across, we are still in this, the client is always right and you have to listen to it. But having this tough discussions I’m still struggling. Others are better at it, maybe technically they are not as good, but they are better with these business aspects of it, so that’s when to give in, when not to give in and how not to give in, so that everyone is happy and you move on.” (B144 - 144 (0))

Thus, the lack of opinion leads to fear of asking for things, of having tough discussions with superiors and clients, which poses challenges to the individual and the firm. Weak opinions are also expressed to stem from the fact that SIEs view themselves as foreigners and they do not ask for things they want, because they came from another country. Not only does this effect their current state, but also was described as a limiting factor during the expatriation process.
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Perfectionism and Comparison to Others

As discussed in Subsections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3, few SIEs expressed perfectionism, in themselves and others, but also noticed others expecting perfection from themselves, which puts pressure on them to try to know everything, even when they do not or can not: “I think I expect perfection from myself and everyone else.” (B132 - 132 (0)) “This feeling that I have, that I need to know everything and I don’t know everything.” (B140 - 140 (0)) “You are just going to think about ‘oh my god, I suck, oh, wow’.” (B234 - 234 (0)) “I feel like I do 99 amazing things and then there is one thing that I needed more time or maybe you know, it’s (incomprehensible) and that’s what I’m reminded of from others (clients). [...] Now I see it that’s not just me, others are judging me the same way. People tend to remember the bad things.” (B134 - 134 (0))

This perfectionism stems from comparison of SIEs’ abilities and skills to others, because SIEs want to eliminate the unknown perception of where they stand in comparison to others by trying to gain more knowledge of the expectations (Kets de Vries, 2005): “Working in public accounting, [...], it’s very hierarchical, and it’s in levels, and it’s very easy to compare yourself to other people in your level, because it’s very open knowledge of what everyone is doing and what they are working on. If they are doing well, so I guess that’s how I easily compare myself to other people.” (E104 - 104 (0))

SIEs provided some explanations on how it would help to deal with issues of comparisons, such as, better communication and transparency of management’s expectations (Crawford et al., 2016): “Communication style, could be better from management, a little bit sometimes, because, especially, the people who (incomprehensible) where you stand against your peers. I mean, you see what everyone is doing, but you never know how management perceives those different.” (A77 - 77 (0)) “When I switch jobs, in the beginning. [...], I felt like I don’t belong here, [...], because I don’t know what I should expect from the job, from the work and whether I can actually deliver on those expectations. So once, similar like in school, so once I execute one or two engagements and I get more comfortable with, ‘ok, this is the expectation, this is what I can achieve, this is what I can do’ and I actually feel comfortable about it, then this feeling goes away. But especially the first 6 months, in a new job, I guess or any new firm, I feel like I don’t know where I stand. It’s hard to compare myself to other colleagues, other people. So especially in the beginning I feel like I don’t belong there, but then as I deliver my first engagements, this feelings go away, you know. But especially in the beginning, [...], when I joined I was like, you know, they fire me in the next 6 weeks!” (A117 - 117 (0))

Hence, it was noted that, especially during the initial stages of the expatriation process, SIEs felt that they did not know what was expected of them and they, therefore, relied on comparing themselves to others and at times over compensating with perfectionism to get the job done. All interviewees stressed the importance of this topic and noted that it was a challenge during their initial phase in the new country. This lead to increased expectation of self, others, and added another complexity, of believing that others had a high expectations of them. If management was not transparent, SIEs had difficulty comparing themselves to other’s abilities and capabilities,
causing confusion in their own views of their performance, which mimicked impostor syndrome tendencies.

**Over or Under Preparation**

Over-preparation takes place with some SIEs, because they think they need to do it in order to be successful (Kets de Vries, 2005). At times, it is because they do not realize how much effort is enough, so by putting in more is better than less, so that they do not underestimate: “The reason I am successful is advance preparation, [...], a lot of time.” (B120 - 120 (0)) “I prepared before and the more I prepared the better I did, usually.” (B118 - 118 (0)) “I think because I have prepared enough, (laughing).” (E74 - 74 (0)) “Cause I just, I put a lot more effort than many other people do. I don’t think I am smarter than other people, but I’m, in like many cases, I work a lot harder than them.” (F55 - 55 (0)) “I took the CFA, so the level, so it’s 3 levels. [...]. I studied for it a lot, I, generally, for me it’s really hard to figure out how much is enough. So I generally tend to over do things. So I studied for it pretty hard. [...] I usually tend to like underestimate how I’ve done, especially, with tests, and result actually comes up to be better than what I thought I did. I think it’s just kind of my, I lack, I just have difficulty like figuring out what’s, some people are really good at it, like figuring out how much is enough and I don’t have a sense for it, so I do a lot and then I kind of underestimate what I’ve done.” (F53 - 53 (0))

However, being prepared is usually a good strategy, but it may be a drawback, because it might take a lot of energy and unnecessary time, which takes precious time away from other, more important and primary work: “I had to once organize a women’s network event, that are in tax, [...]. I know it’s so simple for others, it’s, but for me, I feel like I devoted more time to making sure that it was great, than do my job at that point, so I had to do the extra work. But it involved coming up with like creative ideas, like what would be do to network. [...]. I took it on, presenting it, finding the time, finding the venue, getting all the people to sign up, following up, making sure, like. It was very successful I think, I’m proud of it, that I’ve done it, but I was not comfortable, at all, doing it and I don’t want to do it. But then, it was great, everyone was (incomprehensible) ‘it went so smoothly, you had such great ideas, we didn’t have to do anything, you made it easy’, but it took a part of me to do it.” (B156 - 156 (0))

In contrast, some SIEs felt underprepared in their activities and felt pressure that they could have done more and that their efforts are not enough, causing insecurity in second guessing oneself in their impostorism: “I always feel underprepared. So it started when I was in school. So I always thought I could study more for exams or tests, [...]. I was always felt I was 70% prepared or, you know, I could have done more, but then at the end, it always worked out [...] GMAT, which totally, was hard and constantly failed and I always felt I am not prepared and in that case is was the actual truth (laughing), and then all the other cases, I actually felt I was not prepared, but then it eventually worked out.” (A63 - 63 (0)) “I guess sometimes I feel like underprepared, like my preparation is not enough. But I think that’s just like a general insecurity, where you feel like you haven’t done enough, you haven’t studied enough, but you have. When
you get the result and I think I am like conscious enough to study, like I don’t usually go you
know ‘fly by the seat of my pants’ kind of style. But then, I always second guessing myself a bit.”
(E72 - 72 (0))

Therefore, the consequence for the firm is great, if SIEs waste time and resources on extended
preparation and second guessing themselves. However, no specific or direct link was made to the
expatriation process and over or under-preparation, during the interview process.

Summary of the Impostor Phenomenon

The discussed impostor phenomenon categories are summarized in Table 4.1. Where all inter-
viewees expressed anxiety, insecurity, self-doubt and fear during their expatriation process and
there could be a clear linkage seen to the high CIPS score. Luck was also noted to link to the
high scoring CIPS results in SIEs. Thus suggesting that there are interlinkages between some
anxieties/insecurities and view of luck during the expatriation process. The topic of praise, work-
life balance, fear of success, strong opinions, weak opinions and over or under preparation had
varying responses with no direct or clear linkages to predicted outcomes. On the other hand,
pressure and expectations of others and fear of failure were noted as a big concern for high CIPS
test respondents. Suggesting that increased pressure and risks in failure provided to have more
links between the impostor syndrome and the experience of the expatriation process. Addition-
ally, perfectionism and comparison to others was a matter that resonated with all interviewees,
with direct linkages to the expatriation process, because during the beginning phases of the move
and the adjustment process SIEs had to rely strongly to their perception of their surroundings
and actions of others, which caused them to act in a certain way, such as, perfectionist behavior.

4.1.5 Outcome and Discussion

As discussed in Section 2.3, and especially in Subsection 2.3.1, there are interlinking factors that
SIEs, who exhibit individual and international factors, and the impostor syndrome have in com-
mon, especially during the expatriation process. From the findings, this relationship and theory
is depicted and developed further, in a model in Figure 4.1. One can see the hypothesized rela-
tionship between individual and international factors, as they relate to the impostor syndrome.
This model helps in developing a basis for the outcome and discussion of the current research
between SIEs, expatriation process and the impostor syndrome. Furthermore, this section will
focus on the interpretation of the results, where meaning and connections to prior literature are
derived and connected (Bryman and Bell, 2003; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009).

Interrelation between Expatriation Process and the Impostor Syndrome

Since SIEs perceive their expatriation process differently, one assumption is that the impostor
syndrome may influence the expatriation process and the second assumption is that the reverse
occurs, that the expatriation process may influence the impostor syndrome tendencies. Based
on the findings, this work focused around the assumption that the challenges of the expatriation process brought to light some linkages to the impostor syndrome tendencies.

The responses from the interviews provided back-up, which support the reasoning that expatriation process and impostor syndrome characteristics may be interlinked. First, low scoring interviewees spoke of on-board training support and orientation (Kets de Vries, 2005) and how this aspect was lacking in their or co-workers’ expatriation process. Suggesting that they recognized this lack and counter-balanced it by dealing with these challenges and were, in the end, able to persevere, resulting in a low score on the impostor syndrome scale. Second, for medium scoring interviewees, the issue of network, collaborations and friends (Crawford et al., 2016) was noted as a strong discussion point during their expatriation. Third, high scoring interviewees expressed anxiety, insecurity, self-doubt and fear (Clance and Imes, 1978) during their expatriation process. Fourth, high scoring interviewees noted that luck (Clance and Imes, 1978) was also seen as something that they believe they had on their side, when immigrating to the host country. Fifth, high scoring interviewees believed that pressure and expectations (Kets de Vries, 2005) of others and fear of failure were present during their expatriation process, because during the initial phases of the move and the adjustment process, SIEs had to rely strongly on their perception of their managers and the firm culture. This caused them to act in a certain way, which may suggest certain impostor syndrome tendencies.

The results can also be interpreted in reverse, as the impostor syndrome could have an influence on the experiences of expatriation, but as the CIPS test results were not know for each individual prior to expatriation, those conclusions are unknown in this research. What one can assume, from the gather results, is that high scoring impostor syndrome individuals would have an extremely difficult time adjusting during the expatriation process, due to increased levels of anxiety, comparisons to other, heightened expectations and avoidance of praise. Opportunities and future advancements could be missed, because of these factors and show that the process of expatriation is seen as unsuccessful or longer than anticipated.

**Hypothesized Model**

Due to the findings, a model is developed to describe the interlinking bridges between individual, international and impostor syndrome factors, during the expatriation process. It is important to note that the expatriation process is the underlying environment or basis of the model, which is expanded from this assumption. In summary, further assumptions of the model, as seen in Figure 4.1, are that the individual factors are the beginning of the process, as these factors are the underlying contributors of individuals’ psychological make-up. For example, factors, such as, gender, personality, hypersensitivity and identity influence the individual, regardless of local or international experience, as described by Berry (1997), Hofstede (2011) and Goleman (2013). Therefore these factors are the beginning of the chain in individual’s response to their surroundings.

Linking individual cultural and psychological state provides an interesting area of study, which
has some common factors to internationality. Therefore, next, international factors come into play, where similarities, or better yet, factors which are apparent during the expatriation process, can be interrelated with the impostor syndrome. Each of the three parts of international factors, can provide an assumed sample of some examples that interrelate to the impostor syndrome. For example, the factor of international upbringing is joined with family dynamics, that was described in the impostor syndrome research of Clance and Imes (1978), because both appear to have common themes of family relationships and can be seen in the findings of the current research in the responses received from the interviewees, who described the contributions of family imprinting on their expatriation process. Moreover, concurring with the research of Berry (1997) and Hofstede (2011) on importance of family on the individual.

Furthermore, the factor of international education may be linked to anxiety, insecurity, fear, pressure, expectations and comparison to others. This assumption is based on the premise that SIEs may feel insecure of their education abroad and may have consequences that contribute to increased fears of fraud and feeling of impostorism (Clance and Imes, 1978). Moreover, the factor of language and accent may trigger weak opinions, fear of failure and perfectionism in SIEs, because they might feel like an impostor, if they find themselves struggling with developing a clear way of communication (Berry, 1997; Hofstede, 2011).

**Model Application and Interpretation**

During the expatriation process, the interviews defined that the topics of importance, as they relate to the interrelated factors of impostor syndrome and SIEs, revolved around the fact that there are bridges that combine and trigger some individual factors (Subsection 4.1.3) that flow
into international factors (Subsection 4.1.2), which in effect may link to the impostor syndrome factors (Subsection 4.1.4). The thesis now continues to answer the research question. Therefore, the findings show that certain international factors may contribute to the impostor phenomenon in SIEs.

The first interlinking connection that helps in answering the research question, shows the bridge between individual factors of gender, identity, personality and hypersensitivity to international factors. International factors may lead to a lack of confidence and the feeling of always trying to prove oneself, in addition to the element of struggle on the gender front (Berry, 1997; Tan et al., 2005; Hofstede et al., 2010).

A good summary of these interplaying feelings and emotions is described by one SIE, where she draws on her gender challenges, personality, immigration, internal pressure and self-worth, and brilliantly illustrates the complexity of these interrelated factors all coming together into one: “These women leadership and what I notice, the difference of how women think and how men think. And I know I have this for sure. So I think I mentioned that. The men is 50% there, if you ask for it, and I see it, I’ve seen it first hand in people that work for me. And a woman, I think is so great and she is still, not sure. It’s this thing, we have to have, and I’m the same way. In order to get into something new and to feel comfortable and confident, that I will do it, I have to have ‘all my eggs in a row’. I have to have this and this and this, so I have to feel like I’m ready. Where as others, just go in and ‘I’ll figure it out the rest’ and go. And in some areas of my life, I am like that, where like when I travel, I will just go and ‘I will figure it out’. But it’s a mental thing and sometimes the more pressure on me to succeed, the more I need to have everything in order. The more important I feel the goal is, the more, the longer it takes, then the more I think I hold myself back. So I don’t know if it’s a personal thing. One thing is probably this, women vs. men. But I don’t know if the other, is what is it, self confidence or self-worth. Or I, that may also have to do with it, the fact that I came from somewhere else and I have to prove myself, not stop. But the entire time, maybe that’s still sticks, and I feel like I have to prove, prove, prove, when people ask me a questions. It’s maybe just to make conversation, but I take it as ‘oh, it’s a challenge’ to prove, prove myself again. ‘Hi, where you are from?, oh you are not from here. Where are you from? oh’, again, so I feel like I have to, I feel like people put me down. Where as, maybe they don’t. But me, myself, ‘oh, well, I am an immigrant’.” (B212 - 212 (0))

This finding concurs with the research of Guthrie et al. (1998), which define that various personality traits have an impact in the workplace and that depending on certain actions of the person, individuals that exude certain positive traits (confidence, intelligence, etc.), will be taken more seriously at work, or vice versa. Therefore, SIEs’ personality, that is closely interlinked with their international background and history, may play a role in the way that other people perceive them at work. Having a heightened awareness of their surroundings plays a role in their daily life, because SIEs have moved from one place to another, where this personal factor continues to stand out in their day-to-day activities. Hence, during the expatriation process, SIEs adjusted
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their personalities in order to fit in (Berry, 1997).

The second interlinking connection that helps in answering the research question, shows the bridge between the international factors of upbringing to the family dynamics of the impostor phenomenon (Clance and Imes, 1978). SIEs may find that their international upbringing relates heavily to the defined impostor syndrome factor of family dynamic, with an extra twist of cultural aspects, because SIEs reflect on what they have learned from their childhood culture and are applying it during their expatriation process.

The following quote depicts this internal battle in a perfect way: “It is in my culture, [...], "actions speak louder than words, modesty is a virtue" so, I have been brought up with, "don't brag, don't speak, only kind when spoken to, don't speak over others older or elderly people, older people they always know better", like and I'm expected to, so this is something to and I'm a bit better, but I think it will never go away. I'm still not comfortable bragging and I am supposed to brag, [...]. This thing of self-promotion is missing, which is so present here (US), [...]. Then the other thing I have, back home, like, respect for the elderly, when to speak up, when to question things, [...]. The other thing is the smiling. So in our culture you're, right it's, you don't smile, you smile when you have a reason, you smile when you know the person, there are pleasantries, but they stop at a certain point, so because of that, people probably think that I'm always upset, there is this perception, [...], so my boss is trying to tell me 'don't be so reserved, don't be so distant', well, I make small talk, [...], these are the things that are still left for me to work on, to fake. [...], like making small talk and self-promoting myself that's, those are the biggest things. [...]. I think what also maybe helping me, holding me back is the fact that I still owe something to somebody, and I still have to prove and because I had to work very hard every step of the way, I am still in that mind set, that and I'm, I don't know, I don't want to be a workaholic, but I think that's the things, I feel like I have to keep working, working and it will never stop.” (B100 - 100 (0))

This finding correlates with the research of Clance and Imes (1978) and may provide an addition to this topic, as internationality or cultural aspects, can be added to this research. This contribution to the research provides an extra element to the currently rich research on the subject, but it is noted to be important to the current state of globalized workplace environment (Defillippi and Arthur, 1994; Arthur and Rousseau, 1996; Arthur et al., 2005). It is indicated that family dynamics and upbringing is one of the main perceived triggers to the feeling of impostor syndrome, where SIEs especially, commented on modesty/culture as being a factor in the way they were raised, which continues to reflect in their current careers and not only during the expatriation process.

The third interlinking connection that helps in answering the research question, shows the bridge between international factors of education (Hofstede, 2015) and heightened expectations to the impostor phenomenon. Once a SIE does go to a local university, which is considered top-tier, insecurities might arise, because high expectations are the underlying challenge and insecurity (Pimpa, 2005).
As one SIE has pointed out in his experience, which summarizes the intertwined complexity of pressures to succeed and the anxieties that accompany them: “Because I always felt that an institution like Wharton or you know, Harvard, Stanford, Columbia, right, I mean, those institutions were always, I thought, so far away and not reachable for me, right, and I would never able to study at those type of institutions, right, and yeah, and then, even when I got accepted, right, I felt like ’wow, I mean, great, but why did they accept me?’, right? (laughing). Kind of, then you know, once I met all the class mates, which were also great, I felt ’oh, they must have done admissions mistake, so I should probably double check if I was admitted’, right. So this was how I felt, so for me it was like, this aura of this institution, right, where everyone is talking about it, and then, you go there and and then you don’t feel like you don’t belong there and ’why me?’ and ’why did they accept me?’ or something like that, so I felt very strongly about that the first 6 months. I feared constantly, every time I went to (name omitted) or calling the admissions office.” (A111 - 111 (0))

This finding mirrors the research of Hofstede (2015) in relation to education and culture, as this aspect contributed significantly to the results exhibited by the SIEs in feeling like an impostor. The topic of not fitting in, or wanting a superior education, because of a better image/status or increased opportunities with the local education, showed the expectations that the SIEs are under, to be better (Hofstede, 2015, p. 552). This perceived interrelation of education and increased expectations have provided a recognized feeling of the impostor phenomenon.

The fourth interlinking connection that helps in answering the research question, shows the bridge between international factors of language and accent (Hosoda and Stone-Romero, 2010) to the fear of failure and weak opinions of the impostor phenomenon. Language and accent was noted as the number one challenge for all SIEs and was seen as the most significant aspect in their experience. Since language is a very transparent trait, which can be seen and heard from a person, this is probably why it has had such an impact on the SIEs.

An example of this interplay on internationality and impostorism, through language, was noted as, “Even though my German is at very high professional level, at the very beginning, people were just staring at you, because you have an accent and I felt always I am not good enough, as the other Germans. So, there is always this insecurity that, because you are not born in the country, that’s, yeah, you need to do more than anyone else.” (G18 - 18 (0)) “Once I started working, like I noticed the impostor syndrome more when I was in college, and I was in student government. And I’ve had a fear of speaking up for some reason, I don’t know, it’s cultural. I think there this is when the impostor syndrome started first coming out, like ’why am I here?’. I felt like I am not contributing, as much as I should have. And at work, […], you are expected to speak up, so it (impostor syndrome), because more evident in the last 2 to 3 year. I put, I was able to put kind of my finger on it, before it held me back, because I probably didn’t think I was as good as I was, and I didn’t ask for what I want, so I take it back, it held me back in terms of probably 2 promotions, and more money.” (B210 - 210 (0))

This finding agrees with the research of Berry (1997) and Hosoda and Stone-Romero (2010)
that specify that language is an important aspect of a persona’s identity and the way they will feel at work. Therefore, speaking with an accent of having to learn another language is a major hurdle of SIEs’ adjustment abroad as they expatriate, which was shown to be an interlinking factor in the perceived feeling of the impostor syndrome.

Summary and Contributions
Section 4.1 provides the findings and the interpretation of those findings, which answer the first research question of how do Self-Initiated Expatriates perceive the challenges of expatriation and whether certain factors relate to the impostor phenomenon. Thus, what can be learned from the results and the findings of this case study is that the CIPS score shows that the score variances make a difference with regard to the expatriation experience that SIEs experience. What is interesting about the findings is the indication that the lower scoring individuals had a better adjustment process and the higher scoring individuals encountered more issues in their acculturation. However, the success level of those individuals is not tarnished or predictable, due to the score. The interpretation of these results is special because, they show that the impostor syndrome may unfold during the expatriation process, through a lack of support from the firm in on-board training and minimal networking collaborations (Kets de Vries, 2005). By not having these outlets, SIEs can experience impostorism, with increased insecurities, pressures and fears. This study provided an exploratory glimpse of what SIEs undergo when they immigrate to another country and how their experiences influence them at work and potentially, increase or decrease the likelihood of them developing impostor syndrome factors.

4.2 Recommendations
Based on the findings of the SIEs’ expatriation process, international factors, individual factors and impostor syndrome factors, this work has deduced that, in addition, firms may be able to help international individuals in adjustment to their new work environment. Through mitigation at the initial employment phase of the employee, HRDs may offer strategies in supporting challenges of international relocation and the factors that may be associated with the impostor phenomenon.

4.2.1 Mitigation of the Expatriation Process and the Impostor Phenomenon
Since international workforce is not limited to SIEs, this recommendation can apply to SIEs and all other individuals who may move to a host county to work. From the outcome of the research, not only can SIEs benefit from the findings, but also, the firm and all international workforce. As discussed in Section 2.4, the thesis may now answer the sub-research question of “How could firms support international workers to mitigate the challenges of expatriation and the impostor phenomenon?” Therefore, the firms can help in: supporting international environment, providing orientation, forming support groups, issuing books and manuals, encouraging personal development, opening up lines of communication and feedback, providing clear expectations,
transparency, stability, training, mentoring and coaching (Kets de Vries, 2005; Whitman and Shanine, 2012; Vergauwe et al., 2015; Crawford et al., 2016).

**International Environment**

SIEs, who joined a firm with a very international and diverse environments, experienced the adaptation process to be easier. A suggestion to other SIEs and international workers, during expatriation, is to embrace other cultures and seek out other international individuals: “International organization and the group itself is very international. More than 50 people are from another country, so that in itself makes it easier. And it’s New York, which I think is more accepted that people are from somewhere else.” (B62 - 62 (0))

Moreover, SIEs suggested to make friends with people with similar situations, but to also have contact with locals, by mingling and networking. This notion interplays with the social cognition theory of Bandura (2001). The biggest issue or lack of integration occurs when locals do not participate and leave out the SIEs who join the new firm: “Make friends with as many as you can, and I think others, within the organization, have to be open and inviting. I also don’t see that. People just get so busy, nobody cares about you. People are forgotten honestly. So some type of companies reaching out and only the ones that reached out, are the ones that have been through it. So I think that’s, I see people that like cry behind their desks and are miserable and ‘what, why am I here, what am I doing?’ And all it took it just, ‘hey, join us for this’. I don’t know. But, it’s locals as well, not just foreigners, reaching out.” (B236 - 236 (0)) “Probably, as for someone who has strong (impostor) syndrome, to say. I do remember when you first go in the universities, sorry. For example, you do have these classes, on cultural issues and mingling and how to mingle with people and at least for the international students. So I think that helps a bit, but it’s just about spending more time in the place. I don’t think you can take the (incomprehensible) shock out of it, out of the experience. I think it’s just part of the experience.” (D125 - 125 (0))

Hence, the firm can provide outlets for international workers to get to know local and international individuals within the firm. This way SIEs and other internationals can feel like they are part of the known international community, but also have a connection to the local community, where mutual benefits can be gained (Bandura, 2001).

**Orientation**

Orientation was noted as being important in welcoming SIEs and helping them adjust, once they join the firm. A recommendation to HRDs is to provide an orientation meeting to welcome new international employees: “I had a contact point, person in HR, that took me places. So, because someone, I think, I went outside the US and I got that. I imagine that someone coming in here on secondment, would also get some type of, at least there is always an orientation when you join a company. It’s more to like, welcome to our company. So I wonder if there is something similar to that for expatriates coming to the US, then they meet others and they have kinda like a support group.” (B68 - 68 (0))
When the firm provides awareness and gives tips and advice to SIEs, when they arrive, this would help in change management and their mental process. This lets SIEs know that their feelings are normal, which is a good strategy that might be of help to susceptive SIEs’ negative adjustments (Kets de Vries, 2005): “What I think the company could do is some type of, not just training, but presentation. Just building awareness around it is very helpful. So now, you know, 'hey, I am not alone, its part of the process. Some people have it’. It helps in knowing, 'ok, this is, this reality or this is kicking in’. I think if there would be more awareness around it, that would already be a step forward, and then probably the same for self-initiated expatriates. Part of it is this, part of it would be just, 'you are going through culture shock’. Or like, I, we have people that come on seconmndment and sometimes I. Like in one instance, I think I had to, we formed a friendship very quickly and I see, 'you are going through this'. Like first, everyone goes through this negative, 'I hate it, it sucks, why are you doing it this way?'. There is this denial, but I don't think they get any coaching (incomprehensible) at all, just changing cultures, changing environment and, usually, people, by the time they have to go back, if it’s a one year rotation, only after they go through the motions, they suffer, however long, when they start liking it and are adjusted, it’s time to go back. So there is, I think, if there is anything that can be done to help them with that adjustment, 'hey it’s normal not to like it, it’s a mental process, it’s part of human experience’, then that’s the, that would be a huge help.” (B220 - 220 (0)) “Some people that come to the US are highly educated, and it’s just helping them with this mental process, ‘you will go through a tough time, it’s not you, it’s human nature’. Adjusting to change, if you are older, it’s tougher, so this is, so I think that would be a tremendous help.” (B222 - 222 (0))

An orientation was suggested to provide a safe and open environment to discuss impostor syndrome or/and the expatriation process. This process can be organized to be inside or outside of the organization, or both: “I think it would be both, but the firm, because if they want someone to be successful and what the firms care most? Making money. Making a person adjust as soon as possible. So if somebody comes in there, going to have first, a tough time getting adjusting to a new job and if there are from somewhere else adjusting to a new role. So I think it should be someone from within the firm. But it should be in a way, 'look, there is this tool that we are offering, it’s not mandatory, some people go through it’. Like, you know, it’s all about how you present it. Not to start, ‘oh you are already lacking, but just in case you maybe be struggling with it, these are the resources that you can go to’. And I think a firm probably offers, [...] But people have to ask for themselves and if they don’t know about it? There has to be, they have to know. That’s culture, yeah, so it has a link within the firm for sure, you, (incomprehensible), and however that’s provided, outside or inside.” (B230 - 230 (0)) “General working sessions, that you know, to talk about openly and give people points of contact, and points of view, and ideas in places they can, you know, go to if they need help. And also, you know, ideas of how to, you know, move on, you know, change the situation they are in.” (E148 - 148 (0))

However, it was also stated that some things are out of control of the organization and the individual must orient themselves: “A lot of it you just learn as you go and it’s hard for someone
to tell me, you know, preempt, when you got experience I guess. But probably, like, I guess if someone, like, given me more of an awareness and, like, an overview of how the expectation of, like, the cultural environment, that would have been helpful. But at the same time, I also feel that sometimes those things are trying to preempt something that maybe someone has, were not even there, experience.” (E59 - 59 (0))

Thus, the help of the firm, in collaboration with the desires of the international workers to want to adjust to the new environment, is suggested to create an orientation process for secondment or full-time foreign workers. An official HR process, which is defined for this task, would show the SIEs the importance that this orientation holds and would make them feel more willing to adjust to the firm.

Support Group

SIEs expressed that a social support group of individuals who have gone through the expatriation process would have been a great help to their adjustment process, personally and professionally (Vergauwe et al., 2015, p. 578): “Just connect with more people that have already gone through that process, maybe there should be more kind of support groups with where people that have already gone through that process can give advice and help the people who are just new to all of that.” (F130 - 130 (0)) “It would helped if I would have had an network of people in my, you know, target country, with whom I could have connected, once I got off the boat. [...] If the company would have helped me to connect with maybe professional organizations.” (A53 - 53 (0)) “Could also, like, do an informal, like, meet and greet type of thing for any people, who, any expats that, you know, like, that have moved within 3-6 month period or something like that, because I feel like the, that things, that people have come across as challenges are probably common. So it’s always nice to find a commonality with other people, right? So I guess, if they did something like that, it would make people feel more connected to the firm, but also, within the new community that they are being a part of.” (E160 - 160 (0)) “One of the reasons why I thought of the MBA, was to try to mitigate this a little bit, [...] try to build up the networks here, in Australia.” (C85 - 85 (0))

When asked if moving abroad contribute to the impostor syndrome, one SIE stated that it does, because a network of family and friends is missing to help the individual recover from any difficulties that they encounter abroad (Whitman and Shanine, 2012): “I think sometimes it does factor like a little bit. Like if you have the feeling (impostor syndrome) and then you live away and you may not have like, the, your close friends and family to bounce that, those thought off, or, and squish that idea. That people have know you for many years. That sometimes, also, like, allows that feeling to continue on and on, because you don’t have those people to get you to put your feet on the ground again and be like ‘it’s ok, it’s not, it’s just that the way thinking and feeling, but it’s not really how you are’.” (E140 - 140 (0))

Therefore, social support group is described to be one of the most effective mitigation strategies. In order to avoid or suppress the perceived triggers of the impostor syndrome, a support group
can be implemented, by the HRDs, for the new employees, where they can find support they need (Whitman and Shanine, 2012; Vergauwe et al., 2015; Crawford et al., 2016). These groups may be the answer to avoid future drawbacks of the impostor phenomenon factors.

**Manual or Books**

A mixed review of the use of books and handbooks was noted by SIEs. On the one hand, a book or manual is useful in providing interesting and relevant guides to the different culture and the new country: “A handbook, right, simple as a handbook, right. So also, the things you need to watch out for, if you go to the US, if you go to Japan, if you go to Africa, right, if you go to Luxembourg, right. Just a cultural guide. What a company could have provided, of things how you get adjusted to that country. So I am not sure, that a lot of firms actually have that. I have never heard it from anyone, from friends, who have moved with the companies that they get a kind of handbook or (incomprehensible) list, right, of things which are different in this other country that in your home country.” (A127 - 127 (0)) “I did a rotation in another country and when I left, there were books - 'look, it’s how is it in another country'. “ (B66 - 66 (0)) “When I went to this rotation to another country, I think one of the things, although it was short, but there were a couple of books like 'the culture in South America, how is it different from the US, what to expect, what not to expect there'.” (B68 - 68 (0))

Books or better yet, personal journals, seemed to be useful in expressing and thinking of cultural differences, by writing in a journal and reflecting personally on issues at hand. One SIE appreciated this outlet in expressing her culture shock and recognizing the differences around her: “There was this book that they wanted us to read and fill out, in your, in terms of your, 'how are you adjusting to a new country'. And culture shock was there.” (B38 - 38 (0))

However, on the other hand, books and manuals were expressed to be a waste of time or limited in capacity (Bonache et al., 2001). They were too general, basic and not enough to really capture the scope of the differences: “Just giving me some books, to be honest with you, that I laughed, honestly, there was like, 'yeah ok, thanks, no thanks'. And it was geared towards Americans going overseas.” (B220 - 220 (0)) “It wasn’t helpful at all, because it was for people that have never left the US, that don’t even have a passport.” (B222 - 222 (0))

Hence, companies may provide an option for some books SIE should or could read, but it is not a requirement. Just by providing some information, would help internationals to feel like there are outlets for them to explore, where they can make the conscious choice in making it or not.

**Personal Development**

Some SIEs, especially the ones that scored high on the CIPS test, recommended personal development as a way to mitigate the impostor syndrome. Some SIEs said that they felt the impostor syndrome more when they first moved abroad, in comparison to their current state, due to personal development: “I would say that they probably feel it (impostor syndrome) more.
4.2 Recommendations

Just comparing myself to when I moved here (London) vs. to when I first moved, I think, if I had to pretend to like or understand or know about things a lot more, than I do now.” (D123 - 123 (0))

Therefore, personal growth and change, was a solution for some SIEs in gaining more confidence and battling insecurities (Vergauwe et al., 2015; Crawford et al., 2016): “You have to go down and then you go up.” (B38 - 38 (0)) “Oh yeah, for sure! I mean, you have to ‘walk the talk’, you know. In general, people in Asia, don’t like to talk about themselves, but it’s not so true in the West. For example, especially, when you go out in the West, sorry, for job interviews, you have to sell yourself and it’s not really practiced in Asia. So that definitely, I think you have, and then, also, picking up just new culture, new accent, everything. I think, you definitely have to do that.” (D127 - 127 (0)) “I guess the more and more you develop yourself personally and professionally you realize that a lot of people have the same feeling.” (E132 - 132 (0)) “Yeah and give points for development and such, I think sometimes also people just don’t know how to change it. And if they don’t have the confidence to ask then they never going to get to that point.” (E146 - 146 (0)) “I guess, keep gaining knowledge and personal development on myself and things like that.” (E156 - 156 (0)) “Have more self confidence (laughing), believe in themselves.” (F128 - 128 (0))

Personal network was encouraged by one SIE, who found it very valuable to gain friends and contacts outside the offerings of the firm. This aligns with the notion of the human agency of: personal, proxy, and community (Bandura, 2001, p. 13). Relying on the firm is not the only way to make contacts and some important aspects or connections must be done by the individual: “They (firm) put me in touch with some other people that were in New York, like the person helpful, but at a certain point you meet people at work, you make your own friends, you make your own network. So, I, yeah, it was helpful. I mean, it cannot be where the person gives you everything, you have to do so many things yourself, as well.” (B74 - 74 (0))

When it came to evaluations and gaining knowledge from the performance reviews, the review offered by the firm is noted as too general. The SIEs, who score medium on the CIPS test found performance evaluations to be very important in their development and the impostor syndrome linkages. Some SIEs recommended to evaluate and reflect on oneself for better understanding and to absorb the enriching feedback of the evaluations provided to them: “I think this cannot be set up by a company. I think it is the personnel efforts, to do it the right way, for his own. I mean, the system they have, it’s kind of, very abstract. And, at the end of the day, either your boss is happy with you or he is not, and it doesn’t matter what kind of questions he has to evaluate, by giving you a note for your work. The only thing that matter is his own feeling about you. You doing it good or not. And, I mean, they are putting in a lot of effort into that, but, from my point of view, it is up to me to get it understandable for myself.” (G114 - 114 (0))

However, one SIE expressed that, although, she wants feedback, the firm does not provide the level of support and outlet needed to express herself and to have a way for personal growth. There is a need for personal development, but the firm does not offer the right level of support for it. This drawback may be mitigated by a test, that can better gage an individuals desire for personal
development. Moreover, feedback is not an overall solution, as too much can be a disadvantage, as well. Therefore, a balance must be found in providing the accurate level of feedback and personal reflection on own actions and growth: “Maybe some type of coaching around. Because coaching is focused on performance and how you do, which should be, but, maybe, try to identify what is there and what is not there. Like, I think, I’m this, where someone says, ‘you are not’, I think, ‘you are this’. Like trying to identify the gap between ‘what, I think, what I need to work on’ vs. ‘what others see that I need to work on’. Or ‘what I think I’m not doing well’, but ‘others think of doing well’. So, it’s tough, I don’t know that there is something specifically they have to do. Like, my company, goes through phases and phases of more feedback, more time. They come up with new systems. It all has flaws. Nothing is perfect. Depends on each individual. People internalize it differently. Yeah, I don’t know, maybe having people take some type of test and work through it. […] For me, it would be to help me better identify where I am doing good, because of ‘what I’m really doing good’ vs. ‘where I just fake it’.” (B216 - 216 (0))

“Try to request for feedback, but that’s also bad, it’s double sort of, you have to. Because I do have someone who asks for feedback all the time and now it’s like, ‘ok, listen this is sometimes too much. Putting someone under a microscope is not helpful for me and is not helpful for you’. I mean like looking back, and that’s nothing that I can do, is probably just not over, not thinking about it so much, really think of ‘what am I making up’ vs. ‘what is there’, and finding someone who can work through that with me. And people are busy and people don’t have time to like have these types of discussions.” (B218 - 218 (0))

Subsequently, personal growth category was noted as one of the more significant recommendations, because suggestions spanned from various effected areas expatriates experience in the work place. From evaluations, to feedback, to networks, to self-support and motivation, personal growth is seen as something every international worker has to go through and that the firm may be able to help in this regard, by providing support groups and networking opportunities to their employees.

**Communication and Feedback**

SIEs who scored medium and high on the CIPS test found communication of great importance in mitigating the impostor syndrome and other international factors. When new arrivals, such as SIEs, join the firm, communication may be different, due to cultural differences. Therefore, firms should be aware of this and find ways to mitigate any issues that might arise (Kets de Vries, 2005): “I guess the main one would be, culturally, I think the way people, and I mean, it’s also, like, factors like their experience level and inter personality and I think generally, that the thing I find is just between cultures, usually is communication style. And then communication style just fades any other issue that’s probably, may be, there on the raise, because of the way some people communicate compared to others. Some cultures, they don’t verbally communicate a lot.” (E43 - 43 (0)) “Sometimes issues arrive, because of lack of communication and miscommunication among people. So I think, I mean, it’s, with different cultures that tends to happen more often,
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than if you have similar personalities or similar people. So, I work with people that are kind of, difficult to work with, and they have, like, I work very, I have to work very close to other people and they both have very difficult opposing personalities. So, sometimes, I feel like it’s kind of really hard to work with all of them and fit in. So I feel like, more communication, in my case, would be more helpful. Just the, because of the nature of the people I work with, and I think generally, I feel like, yeah, lack of communication is what kind of exacerbates the situation.”

(F124 - 124 (0))

Feedback is pivotal, because SIEs want and expect it. It can also be a motivational factor or a detrimental factor, if the feedback is of negative nature: “Like from my consultant time it was rarely that I get good feedback for the work I was doing and I had the feeling I have no idea why they still keep me there. And after the first year, I started to work on projects, which I really liked, and I put lots of effort into that, and I still felt during this time, that it’s not enough. It should be a little more and that anybody else would do more than I was doing, or maybe more efficient. But like after the first 6 month, I got great feedback from my bosses, which was kind of surprising.” (G66 - 66 (0)) “I want to receive feedback about my work. I want to have heard from my boss ‘this was shitty work (name omitted), you need to do this and this’, or ‘well done’. I need that. And I always give that to the other people, because this, from my point of view, this is the only way you can learn.” (G108 - 108 (0))

The way SIEs cope with negative feedback is described by one SIE, as: “I also have seen my mistake myself, and I got criticized for that? Then, I am good. I am good with that. I don’t feel like abused or whatever. But, if I feel like not fairly treated, then yeah, I cannot agree to that.”

(G112 - 112 (0))

Additionally, SIEs want more routine feedback with not only their boss, but also subordinates. This helps in providing a baseline for SIEs on where they stand: “One measure could be more real-time feedback, right. So sometimes, if you go and do a job in your organization, you get your first feedback probably at the end of the review, right, once a year. So if you get more, lets say monthly feedback, right, from your boss, right, where you really have a sit down with your boss for 15-30 minutes, and he tells you ‘where you stand, what you have done well, what you haven’t done well’. This would help, I guess. You know, more routine feedback, [...] Probably 4 or 5 reviews through out the year, not just 2. This would help me, also, to assess where I stand. So could been thing, the other thing could be, 360 reviews, right. So my firm does it on my level every 2 to 3 years. So if they would do a 360 review, which means other, you know, people who actually report to you, right, provide feedback. If you get that feedback, probably on an annual basis, it would probably also help, because you also know ‘where you stand, how people perceive you’. So this helps. So it definitely helped me when I got my 360 review in October. And I read the feedback. I read the assessment. I definitely felt better after that, right. But before, I didn’t know for 2 to 3 years on where I stand, right. So I think this helps, a 360 reviews, more routine feedback, and yeah, I mean, those are the two things, I guess, that would help me.” (A121 - 121 (0))
Some SIEs have a fear of admitting their weaknesses during feedback sessions, which firms should take into consideration, when an open conversation is expected: “With my boss, yeah, and I am expected to have an open conversation, but one things I noticed with her, is that, I’ve noticed, when I admit a weakness to her, it’s not because she said, ‘well, and I have noticed this and it would be good to’, but when I admit something, internal, that people don’t see on the outside, and this was a lesson learned: How I feel on the inside, may not necessarily be reflected on the outside. And then, she was like ‘oh yeah’. So now, I have to be a bit careful on what do I, because people don’t notice things and you mention something and then they notice it. But, and this particular event, like even she came after and she said, ‘so here, like you tried to over prepare’. Like she gave feedback and she gives me feedback, only when things don’t go well, at all. So for this one, for this particular one she knows (incomprehensible) and she gave me some tips, like, ‘you know, don’t think you are gonna have all the answers. Look, you know the material really well, I think’. But the feedback she told me, is that I try to over prepare and have it scripted and instead it should be bullets and think around it and this will teach me to think on my feet and I think about this, ‘she does know’. And I do have an open conversation, sometimes maybe more open than she would like it to be (laughing).” (B162 - 162 (0))

Furthermore, the feedback that is received from the boss, should be casual, gentle and constructive, without being an actual, institutionalized evaluation: “With my boss it’s different, like, she wants me to grow. She is the one supporting me for the next level. So now we have to be even more honest. [...] There is a culture of asking for feedback and getting it back. So from my boss, what I would like, and I tried to ask her, but I have just (incomprehensible). After a call or after an interaction, I want some assessment ‘this went well’ or ‘this went well, but maybe this’. Sometimes, and I think now she is doing it a bit more, but before, it’s after a meeting, I don’t know how it went, and I feel like sometimes, I’m, if I allow myself to judge, I will either over or under judge. Or where as, I want her input, ‘this went well’. This, I want a debrief more. But not, not a part of evaluation, but kinda going forward, because then it’s, and then I get (incomprehensible). So I think, it’s over-feedback and it’s all negative and I already know I could have done it better. So, it’s a balance, if people will tell me do this more, do this more, do this more, then I think I would get annoyed and frustrated. So it has to, at the right time, and kind ‘hey, you are doing it well, keep on doing it, add on to this, add this to that.’” (B164 - 164 (0)) “I would like to know more, what I am doing better, what I am doing good.” (B166 - 166 (0)) “I would like to know, so that I know, ‘ok, so at least I know I’m not going to worry about that part, I’m going to keep on doing it, I am going to add on to it.’” (B168 - 168 (0))

The firm can provide mitigation by having open lines of communication with the boss or outside consultants (Kets de Vries, 2005). However, a concern for SIEs is privacy and honesty. SIEs might feel threatened by the association of the boss or the coach with the firm, because open communication is not always possible with these type of people: “I also have a coach, like as part of this next development. I have like a coach that I can meet with twice a month for 30 minutes. But again, the coach works for the company, so the coach is there, (incomprehensible)
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to help me, but also, I’ve noticed it’s confidential, but, if I say something that makes, puts doubt in their mind. [...] It puts doubt in their mind, that it’s not ok. So, the tools are there. People are open, it’s just how we. It’s not a culture where everyone admits their mistakes or failures or, because people don’t know the failures. They think you are doing great, until you admit them, and then, like ‘a ha!’ Well, it’s a balance, I mean, the feedback has to be constructive and I have to give feedback to give others, and sometimes I struggle and it goes both ways. But people don’t grow unless they know exactly what to do.” (B170 - 170 (0)) “I wish. Because I have noticed the fact that it’s (coaching) from (name omitted), or (name omitted) pays for it. I’m not, I was 100% honest, and I’m honest, but I now have discussions with her only on work related matter, rather than 'hey, I have a self-confidence issue here, because of this'. It’s not like that, I present it differently, and she is helping it. But I think, if it was an outside coach, the topics of the discussions would go deeper, it would be different.” (B172 - 172 (0))

Firms already perform evaluations and feedback sessions, but SIEs suggested that the feedback is more routine, confidential, coming from various people (superiors and subordinates) and that the communication style of it is more clear. Therefore, firms should reevaluate the way they provide feedback to international workers and try to make adjustments in order to facilitate more culturally acceptable ways of communicating and provide more information to the employees for their peace of mind in how much is expected of them.

Clear Expectations and Transparency

SIEs want a clear expectation that they can follow, in order to judge if they are doing well or not: “Having goals, like, basically, having a list of what the expectations are, because I often feel like people misjudge what they have done just, cause they don’t know what is expected of them. So there is a clear, if there is more clarity, in terms of what’s kind of, to be expected of them, in terms of achieving, then they will know where they stand better. They will know wether they are doing better or worse, than what’s, kind of, expected of them and they feel like, often times, there is really no clear expectations. So you don’t know are you 'doing well' or are, you know, 'not doing well’.” (F126 - 126 (0))

Additionally, one SIE provided a good example of transparency in the promotion process (Defillippi and Arthur, 1994). In his case, it took a long time to get feedback on the status of the promotion and to get formal recognition, which was desired for planning the timeline for next level of advancement. Firms can mitigate this by providing transparency and clear benchmarking: “We have this promotion process right. If you do your job well, at that point, when you get promoted, you know, you did it well, right. And this probably helps. So I guess, in my case, earlier in my career, I got immediate feedback, because the promotion cycles were much shorter, right. So you got promoted every 2 to 3 years, right. At my current level, the last promotion I received, was in 2012, right. And the next one is the partner level, right. So it’s obviously, a little bit of a longer process right, to get that positive feedback and get it on paper, right. A lot of people telling me ‘oh you did a great job’, yeah, 'sure thank you, but why didn’t you
promote me to partner by now?’ right. So it’s like, the thing I need, also, a formal recognition, which in my case is probably driven by promotions and compensation. With verbal feedback alone, end up, for me, ‘ok, well, thank you, but doesn’t help me much’. So, what could management do? Well, management probably could do a better job in laying out the timeline for the next promotion, which they actually did, but I was looking for that, right. For that pronunciation. They could have done that earlier, right, (incomprehensible) tell me (incomprehensible) projection and be a little bit more open about, you know, what it takes to get to the next level.” (A77 - 77 (0))

Thus, transparency and clear expectations in daily activity, promotions and career paths provide a good basis for international workers to know where they stand. This recommendation is particularly linked with the impostor syndrome, because impostorism is very sensitive to the lack of defined expectations (Kets de Vries, 2005). Therefore, firms should pay a closer look at the way they communicate their expectations to the employees.

**Stability**

During the expatriation process, some SIEs feel instability, due to anxiety over the visa and green card process. They might experience fear, as defined by Richardson and McKenna (2002) in “tightrope” individuals, who are scared to lose their jobs: “During the financial crisis, back in 2008, I was kind of really nervous, what might happen, because a lot of people were being laid off. There were some of the companies, refuse, basically to hire anybody who is on a work visa. So, at that time, I was really nervous of what’s going to happen, if I get laid off. So that made me kind of work extra hard and make, just trying to do everything I can to make sure that I, kind of, have my job and don’t lose my job, because I knew that, if I were to lose my job, it would be really hard to find another one. So in, kind of, these times of instability, my, the pressure on me was significantly higher, just cause I knew that my alternatives weren’t that great and I would probably have to move back. So it was a big sign of relief, when I got my green card, because it’s easy, now I don’t have to worry about what happens if I lose my job.” (F35 - 35 (0))

Therefore, security, is sought out by SIEs, so that insecurity can be avoided when the career path can be jeopardized: “In the beginning, I did, especially, when I was on my visas. I kind of, this was my highest priority, like I needed some stability in my life, so I felt like I need to do whatever I can to just make sure that I kind of advance in my career and I get my green card and I do well. And I’m at this point in my life where I feel like I need to have more balanced life, so if I am not the best, then so be it. But, I spend for like initially, I yeah, I used to work a lot harder.” (F57 - 57 (0))

Certificates and other institutionalized confirmations give SIEs the desired stability and security: “It has changed, I mean it became less after me getting the the German certified tax advisor exam, because this gives you confidence. Like when you talk to clients, there is a proof, like, a real proof of your knowledge. And, although, you speak with an accent, they have to respect you and listen to what you are saying. And, also when you are about to solve a task, then you think ‘ok, I managed to do that, so I am gonna manage to do this as well’. So it gives you more
4.2 Recommendations

Additionally, time and increased comfort level that comes with benchmarking and knowing your surroundings also provided a level of security for SIEs: “In the second year, I felt more safe, and I also knew where I stand with my classmates, with my learning team. So I got more benchmarks, and more data, to figure out on where I stand, basically. And that made it, me more comfortable that I then believed, 'ok, I really belong here'. Because in certain areas I really excelled. Ok in other areas, I was not as good. But on average, it seemed that, right, on par with all the other guys here, so. But, I didn't feel that way in the first 6 months. Especially, not after my accounting exam was so bad, and I didn't have time to study a lot, and all this stuff, because of work challenges. So yeah, the second year was like 'ok, I am still here, I am still not kicked out’.” (A115 - 115 (0)) “Bit more predictable.” (A25 - 25 (0))

Thus, firms can provide stability to international workers through certificates and visa security. Since SIEs have insecurities in fearing for the loss of their status or visa, a firm who spells out the process and ways to maintain or keep their visa, would provide an outlet for relief. If safety or stability of the employee is not considered by the firm, they might lose this employee, due to change of job or other impostor syndrome consequences (Kets de Vries, 2005).

Training, Coaching and Mentoring

Training programs (Vergauwe et al., 2015) on diversity and culture were noted as helpful sessions for new arriving SIEs. However, it seemed that these training were not offered, either right away or to SIEs who were students in the host country: “It would also would have been helpful if my company probably would have had a cultural training program.” (A53 - 53 (0)) “We had this diversity training, that was mandatory, but it was mandatory for everyone. I think for me, the cultural training, that was, at the most relevant time was when I came here the first time, and I felt like, after I didn’t need that training, but companies do offer that. [...] I think probably because I was a direct hire not a someone on rotation, that was not offered, but there were discussions in diversity or I am sure if there would have been something they would have struggled with, there is this hierarchy of you have mentors and coaches and I am sure if you phrase it to them, they would have found some resources to help, if there would have been an issue.” (B66 - 66 (0))

Furthermore, coaching and mentoring, was also mentioned as a great service for the transition period (Kets de Vries, 2005; Howe-Walsh and Schyns, 2010): “One thing could be to assign a transition coach, right. To really assign a mentor or a person to you in the first 6 months. To not just help you at work, but also outside of work. To get adjusted to the new environment. I think, this would help a lot to really have a formal mentor relationship with someone. Then secondly, coaching could help, be helpful. So to have professional coaches, where probably meet with the coach every 2 to 3 week and basically discuss certain situation, which you experience at work, or in the new country. To basically talk about those things, right, because sometimes, especially, in the beginning. [...] So this would definitely help. And basically, talking to a personal coach, who is from that environment, right. That country. So this would have definitely helped me, I guess,
if I would have had the coaching sessions for the first 6 months. Just to run certain things by him. Than the mentor relationship, transition coach.” (A127 - 127 (0)) “At least I had someone I can reach out to right, so there was there was an intent, there was an effort to help.” (B72 - 72 (0))

Firms would provide a greater service to SIEs, if training programs are offered on a more regular basis (Kets de Vries, 2005). International workers voiced that guidance and support would help in the expatriation process, hence coaching and mentioning would be an ideal pairing to their adjustment process. This support from a superior member of a firm can boost confidence and tone down any insecurities SIEs might experience.

Summary and Contributions

Section 4.2 provides the findings and the interpretation of those finding, which answer the sub-research question of how could firms support international workers to mitigate the challenges of expatriation and the impostor phenomenon. Thus, what can be learned from the recommendations from the interviewed SIEs is that during the expatriation process new arriving SIEs require support from the firm. What is interesting about the findings is that simple tactics, as orientation and creating a group or a network of individuals, who are in the same situations, provides a form of relief. The received recommendations are special because, they go in deeper in defining that the needed network for SIEs must include local and foreign individuals, so that a well-rounded acculturation can take place (Berry, 1997). Additionally, more routine feedback was suggested as a way SIEs can gain transparency into the firms expectations and in return, they can gain stability in their position. Firms may also implement coaching for international workers in their initial year of joining the firm. This would foster their personal development, which was noted as a highlight in the recommendation responses of the SIEs. Concluding that there are numerous ways that firms may provide support for international workers, such as, SIEs.

4.2.2 Implication to the Firm and HRDs

As discussed in Subsection 2.2.3, HRDs and international workers would benefit significantly, if firms consider the mitigation of the impostor syndrome and factors that stem from internationality. If on-board training and support systems are put into place, international workers may be able to address any weak areas that are affected by their international and individual factors, which may cause increased levels of the impostor syndrome. This mitigations may prevent the development of or progression of the phenomenon and negative implications that follow (Kets de Vries, 2005; Whitman and Shanine, 2012; Vergauwe et al., 2015; Crawford et al., 2016).

Firms would be able to prevent personnel loss, due to decreased burn out, stress and anxiety. Productivity would increase, because individuals would not have to worry as much, because they would have more transparency and defined expectations. Motivation and work-life balance would increase, because workers would have a support group, where they can share ideas and situations and receive the necessary help they need.
Chapter 5

Conclusion, Limitations and Future Research

This chapter presents a summary of the literary review, the research design, the results and the recommendations of the thesis, while addressing the limitations and providing suggestions for future research on the provided basis.

5.1 Conclusion

The impostor syndrome has been studied for multiple types of individuals, but not as many studies have focus on professionals, and especially, not specifically tailored for SIEs. Research on SIEs’ experiences and adaptation to the new country is limited, but may be of interest to the growing amount of international workers in firms world-wide. Therefore, the original contribution of this work revolved around a particular group of SIEs, who have undergone the expatriation process and who have shared their insights into their perceived challenges of the process and how the change of moving abroad have lead, mimicked or intensified their feeling of the impostor syndrome. By learning more about their experience, a recommendation is made to HRDs on how these challenges and impostor syndromes can be mitigated in the workplace.

The way this research was conducted was through a qualitative study of SIEs and how they perceived the challenges of expatriation and if certain factors were linked to the impostor phenomenon. Based on prior literature, the basis of this research was derived and deemed worth analyzing. The research began with a review of literature for the four areas of interest: 1) the SIEs’ expatriation process, 2) the impostor phenomenon, 3) the interrelations between SIEs and the impostor syndrome, and 4) the ways firms could support SIEs to mitigate the impostor phenomenon. A case study design was utilized to answer the research questions. Furthermore, the discussion chapter provided the analysis and the findings of the semi-structured interviews gathered in the study. In the case of the impostor phenomenon in SIEs, this work pondered how the expatriation process relates to the syndrome and whether firms could support SIEs in mitigating it. This exploration helped in finding concrete recommendations of how companies could help international workers with avoiding or helping with the impostor phenomenon.

The findings of the research is new and have provided interrelated factors that may have interlinkages between the expatriation process of the SIEs and the impostor phenomenon. Therefore, this thesis has addressed how SIEs perceive the challenges of their expatriation process and
whether certain factors relate to the impostor phenomenon. Hence, the findings laid out the factors, which were deemed significant within the SIE group during expatriation, as: 1) international factors, 2) individual factors and 3) impostor phenomenon factors, which have 4) interrelated factors and may contribute to the study of international workers. The outcome of the research has hinted and proposed that 1) international upbringing, 2) foreign education and 3) language or accent may have interlinkages to the impostor phenomenon.

Therefore, the results were reviewed by, first, classifying the findings of the experiences that took place during the expatriation process, with the main focus on motivations (Richardson and McKenna, 2002), on-board support, visa help and lack of networking, which has created numerous challenges during initial stages of relocation. Second, the concentration was on findings of the international factors that SIEs exhibited and felt that these factors stood out the most, such as, cultural differences, upbringing, modesty, education and language (Berry, 1997; Wilhelms et al., 2009; Hořádek et al., 2010; Hōstede, 2015). Additionally, individual cultural values and the effects of culture on the individual is built on assumptions that cultural and generic transmission, acculturation, and ecology have a psychological influence on the individual (Tams and Arthur, 2007). Which leads to a third finding of classifying the individual factors, such as, identity issues and hypersensitivity, which can be hypothesized as a predecessor to the impostor phenomenon, because of some underlying similarities in the feeling of not belonging and being overly aware of situations or interactions around other individuals (Goleman, 1984). The fourth finding was focused on the impostor syndrome characteristics, such as, anxiety, fear of praise/failure/success, perfectionism and strong or week opinions. The impostor syndrome characteristics showed that SIEs, at some point or another, felt that they were: being afraid of trusting their own judgment, blowing things out of proportion, not asking for advice and doubting decisions, which had debilitating effects on their mental state of mind (Kets de Vries, 2005).

These findings lead to the discussion and interpretation of the results. From the learned information a model was developed of the main categories that had an effect on the SIEs during the expatriation process, which showed interrelations between various international and individual factors and the impostor phenomenon. Showing a correlation that an interrelation exists between experiences of the expatriation process and impostor syndrome CIPS results. Lastly, the result of the interviews provided suggestions and recommendations for mitigating strategies of the phenomenon, which firms can implement to help international workers by, mentoring, training, providing transparency in expectations and support groups (Kets de Vries, 2005; Whitman and Shanine, 2012; Vergauwe et al., 2015; Crawford et al., 2016).

The significance of the thesis is to contribute to the basis of future research for SIEs and the impostor syndrome. Since, HRDs and companies, in general, have an interest in recruiting, hiring, maintaining and promoting international workers, further knowledge on the impostor phenomenon and its relation to SIEs may be beneficial. By encouraging further research in this field, this exploratory work may open some doors in discovering the relevance and power of this syndrome and its implications to the business application. Finding and implementing some ways
to create an awareness around this phenomenon and mitigating it is challenging, but noteworthy. Hence, this thesis has provided recommendations and suggestions on how firms could support international workers in mitigating the challenges of expatriation and the impostor phenomenon, because this topic is relevant, interesting, and requires further studies.

5.2 Limitations and Future Research

Current research on the impostor syndrome was noted to have a few gaps, worth further research, and which was partially addressed in this thesis. However, the aim of the research was to explore and begin the research of SIEs and their perceptions on the expatriation process and the impostor syndrome. This research has gained insights into some of the causes of the impostor tendencies and has suggested some ways that firms can help these SIE individuals in dealing with this problem. Nevertheless, this thesis has some limitations, which can be noted in a few different areas.

First, the literature review in this work was limited in scope and not all applicable information was reviewed and incorporated, due to a limitation in time and resources. A more in-depth research should take place on SIEs and their adjustment into their lives abroad. An expansion on theoretical research on cultural aspects of SIEs and their differences to AEs would provide a rich and more detailed background on the significance of the various groups.

Second, this research specifically focused on SIEs, who exhibited some level of the impostor syndrome and the study investigated if “internationality” may be perceived to be one of the triggers of the impostor phenomenon symptoms. However, the group of SIEs is vast and has unclear boundaries. Some SIEs can be students, spouses, migrants, or some other classification. Therefore, a more detailed study with separated groups may yield different results on their perceptions and views on the expatriation process and their challenges. Hence, the impostor syndrome might be viewed differently by each of the groups. Additionally, the country of origin of the home country and also, the country of the host country, may yield different results and should be taken into consideration in future research.

Third, the sample size for the interviewees consisted of 7 individuals. A larger group of participants is advised to study in the future. Additionally, demographics of the participants in the sample size were not considered. Future research would benefit from expanding this topic to include analysis of men and women SIEs, since there is scarce research on their differences. Most studies take gender and age out of the empirical data, for testing purposes, but it would be fascinating to observe the gender variances for both of the groups. An analysis on how does gender play a role in significant differences in SIEs would be of value. Defining what traits, if any, provide challenges, would be beneficial to HRDs in tailoring mitigating strategies for different groups of people.

Fourth, age or generational differences have not been considered and would be interesting to study in relation to the individuals’ perceptions, as it relates to different age groups. The
participants involved in this study were all in their 30’s, but gaps in age and generations could yield different results, which would open more doors for additional research opportunities. Testing how younger vs. older generations view the expatriation process and adjustments abroad, could yield various results for mentoring and training programs that HRDs may implement.

Fifth, quantitative testing for impostor syndrome has not been explored on a broad level for professionals, while considering, gender, age or SIEs. Testing could show if SIEs find themselves feeling more or less as an impostor, in comparison to the non-international counterpart or a control group. Making a large-scale quantitative test of who feels more of an impostor syndrome, whether SIEs, other migrants, women or men, or non-international individuals, would be riveting. Future quantitative studies would add great benefit to this qualitative exploratory work, by expanding its scope and depth.

In conclusion, the area of research for this topic is not oversaturated and has intriguing elements for international management studies. Further research would benefit SIEs and the firms they work for. The studies of psychology would also benefit from exploring a group of professionals with international experience and the affects of the impostor syndrome on these groups.
Bibliography


Appendix A

Interview Guide and Questionnaire

Expatriation process/career/background questions:

1. What country (location) do you currently work in?

2. Why did you initiate and decide to go abroad to this country? Why was this an attractive idea? What were your motives?

3. Could you please provide a brief timeline of how you reached the current point in your career? What is your role? Please tell me a little about your current job.

Challenges in expatriation process and career questions:

1. How was it moving abroad and the expatriation process? How did you feel? Why?

2. What were your biggest personal challenges in the expatriation process and in your current role? Do these challenges stem from the fact that you are a foreigner in another country?

3. What are the biggest changes that have happened in your career since the transition into the new country? Were there difficulties?

4. Were there any cultural differences that stood out the most to you?

5. Could you recall a moment in your expatriation process where you felt out of place? Why?

6. Have you ever had to present in front of people in your professional life? Do you like it? Are there any challenges? Why?

7. Do you work with culturally diverse individuals? How is it? Are there challenges?

8. Have you had interpersonal communication or intercultural training, once you moved abroad?

9. What would have made your expatriation process easier for you?

10. Depending on the answers to previous questions, the following suggested questions can be asked, if necessary:
Appendix A Interview Guide and Questionnaire

a) Does your accent or way of speaking make you uncomfortable in certain situations?
b) Does your education level make you uncomfortable in certain situations?
c) Do you think you belong/fit-in more in the current country or back in the home country?
d) Do your international parents or your upbringing make you uncomfortable in certain situations?
e) For women: Do you feel that the male domination in business make you uncomfortable in certain citations? Any cultural differences?
f) Are there any other international factors that you would like to mention that you think has had an influence in your job?

Impostor phenomenon questions:

1. What did you think of the CIPS test?
2. Was it difficult to answer honestly/frankly to the questions?
3. Have you ever heard of the impostor syndrome before? If not, definition of impostor syndrome is explained.
4. Did you think you had the phenomenon? How do you feel about it?
5. Does it make you uncomfortable talking about it or admitting to it?
6. Now that you know the phenomenon we are interested in, when do you have the biggest moments when you feel the most exposed?
7. Can you provide examples of when this has happened to you the most?
8. In general, how has the impostor syndrome held you back?
9. How does the impostor syndrome relate to your expatriation process and did it have an influence?

Concluding/summarizing remarks/feedback:

1. In your opinion, which personal factors contribute to your feeling of the impostor syndrome the most?
2. Which mitigating factors your work can put in place that would help you the most?
3. If you had to give advice, which forms of strategies a firm could implement that could help SIEs with anxieties or insecurities at work?
4. Would new ways to conduct evaluation/performance reviews be helpful? How?
5. Which self-initiated changes could provide more confidence at work?

6. Is there anything else that you recommend for SIEs and their firms to do to help with the expatriation process and in the future, with continuous improvements?

7. Is there anything else that you would like to add to this discussion or is there anything that you feel I didn’t ask that could be of significance?
Appendix B

CIPS

The CIPS test questions and the scoring are shown on the following four pages, as described in Subsection 3.4.1.
Clance IP Scale

For each question, please circle the number that best indicates how true the statement is of you. It is best to give the first response that enters your mind rather than dwelling on each statement and thinking about it over and over.

1. I have often succeeded on a test or task even though I was afraid that I would not do well before I undertook the task.

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<tr>
<th>1 (not at all true)</th>
<th>2 (rarely)</th>
<th>3 (sometimes)</th>
<th>4 (often)</th>
<th>5 (very true)</th>
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2. I can give the impression that I’m more competent than I really am.

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<th>3 (sometimes)</th>
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3. I avoid evaluations if possible and have a dread of others evaluating me.

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4. When people praise me for something I’ve accomplished, I’m afraid I won’t be able to live up to their expectations of me in the future.

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5. I sometimes think I obtained my present position or gained my present success because I happened to be in the right place at the right time or knew the right people.

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6. I’m afraid people important to me may find out that I’m not as capable as they think I am.

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7. I tend to remember the incidents in which I have not done my best more than those times I have done my best.

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<th>1 (not at all true)</th>
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8. I rarely do a project or task as well as I’d like to do it.

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9. Sometimes I feel or believe that my success in my life or in my job has been the result of some kind of error.

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<th>2 (rarely)</th>
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10. It’s hard for me to accept compliments or praise about my intelligence or accomplishments.

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11. At times, I feel my success has been due to some kind of luck.

1 (not at all true) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very true)

12. I’m disappointed at times in my present accomplishments and think I should have accomplished much more.

1 (not at all true) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very true)

13. Sometimes I’m afraid others will discover how much knowledge or ability I really lack.

1 (not at all true) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very true)

14. I’m often afraid that I may fail at a new assignment or undertaking even though I generally do well at what I attempt.

1 (not at all true) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very true)

15. When I’ve succeeded at something and received recognition for my accomplishments, I have doubts that I can keep repeating that success.

1 (not at all true) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very true)

16. If I receive a great deal of praise and recognition for something I’ve accomplished, I tend to discount the importance of what I’ve done.

1 (not at all true) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very true)

17. I often compare my ability to those around me and think they may be more intelligent than I am.

1 (not at all true) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very true)

18. I often worry about not succeeding with a project or examination, even though others around me have considerable confidence that I will do well.

1 (not at all true) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very true)

19. If I’m going to receive a promotion or gain recognition of some kind, I hesitate to tell others until it is an accomplished fact.

1 (not at all true) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very true)

20. I feel bad and discouraged if I’m not “the best” or at least “very special” in situations that involve achievement.

1 (not at all true) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very true)

Scoring the Impostor Test

The Impostor Test was developed to help individuals determine whether or not they have IP characteristics and, if so, to what extent they are suffering.

After taking the Impostor Test, add together the numbers of the responses to each statement. If the total score is 40 or less, the respondent has few Impostor characteristics; if the score is between 41 and 60, the respondent has moderate IP experiences; a score between 61 and 80 means the respondent frequently has Impostor feelings; and a score higher than 80 means the respondent often has intense IP experiences. The higher the score, the more frequently and seriously the Impostor Phenomenon interferes in a person’s life.

Please find attached the requested Clance IP Scale and scoring instructions. This correspondence constitutes permission to use the scale. I request that on each CIPS you use/distribute, that you have the copyright and permission information printed on each page:


This clause is already on the attached CIPS copy.

If you do not want to put the name of the test or book on the scale if it may affect your research, contact me and I can send you a version of the scale without that specific information yet retaining the clause, “Under copyright. Do not reproduce without the permission of Dr. Pauline Rose Clance.”

For research purposes, I also request that you send a citation and abstract/results summary of your work to me when you are completed with your research to add to the IP reference list.

For IP presentation purposes, I request that you send me a brief summary (i.e., couple of sentences) of participant (and your own) feedback about the presentation in regard to how the Impostor Phenomenon was received.

Thank you again for your interest in the Impostor Phenomenon. Please e-mail me that you agree with these conditions. You may refer participants to my website (www.paulineroseclance.com) for any interest in viewing IP articles and for my contact information.

Best,

Pauline Rose Clance, Ph.D., ABPP
Appendix C

MaxQDA Coding

Example of MaxQDA coding is shown on the following page.
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<th>Code System</th>
<th>A - Interviewee</th>
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