

THE ROLE OF VALUES IN THE INTERCULTURAL ADAPTATION OF CANADIAN
EXPATRIATES IN VIETNAM: AN INTEGRATIVE APPROACH

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Abstract

This study takes an integrative approach to intercultural adaptation by looking at the role of values (i.e. social norms) in the acculturation of Canadian expatriates living in Vietnam. By viewing intercultural adaptation as a process by which expats and host-members “establish (or re-establish) and maintain relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationships” (Kim, 2001, p. 3) with their environment, this study focuses on moments of apparent ambiguity, misunderstanding or malaise experienced by expats in their host-community. This emphasis will enable us to better understand how expatriates make sense of their values and social norms during these instances. This research not only sheds light on the ways in which expats make sense of their values, but also how their narratives and stories participate in creating, constituting, and cultivating certain *figures* during their intercultural adaptation process. The data gathered reveals that the ways in which expats make sense of their values during moments of malaise with their host-community varies quite meaningfully depending on various situational, institutional and personal factors at play during each interaction, as well as what matters most to expats during those moments. Thus, these findings assist in showcasing that misunderstandings experienced in the host-community are complex, as expats consider many factors in order to make sense of, respond to, and adapt to each individual situation.

Key Words: Acculturation, Intercultural Adaptation, Ethnography, Expatriation, Vietnam

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1. Introduction

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I forgot how different Hanoi was from home. When I visited Vietnam back in 2017, I had already been travelling around other parts of Southeast Asia for over a month. Though Hanoi is incredibly unique, travelling through other Southeast Asian cities allowed me to get a feel for many of their similarities in values and social norms. But coming here again and landing directly from Canada has enabled me to feel the cultural differences much more intensely. When I first got off of the plane and hopped into a taxi towards my hostel in the very early morning, at approximately 4:30 a.m., I remember looking out of the car window into the dark night at my surroundings in both awe and shock. People were out and about - huddled together eating food on the side of the streets, riding around on their motorbikes, - and the outdoor markets were bustling. I couldn't help but wonder why so many people were out before the crack of dawn. I felt happy to be watching this life before me, hoping that this time I could integrate and learn a bit more than I did when I was simply backpacking through. With my heart pounding due to a mix of excitement and nerves, I began to reflect about what I would learn and make of my time here, not only as a researcher but as an expatriate in Hanoi.

Nowadays, communication as well as transportation technologies are advancing at a fast pace, creating a globalized world that is becoming “more interdependent than ever” (Global Policy Forum, 2019). According to intercultural communication scholar Jane Suderman (2011), “representatives and employees of multinational corporations are crisscrossing the globe in ever growing numbers” (p. 16). Although many employees are crossing international barriers to attend conferences and business meetings worldwide, many are leaving their home countries for longer periods of time to work abroad. These types of employees can also be referred to as expatriates. Specifically, expatriates are defined as “legally working individuals who reside temporarily in a country of which they are not a citizen in order to accomplish a career-related goal, being relocated abroad by either an organization or by self-initiation, or directly employed by the host culture” (McNulty and Brewster, 2017, p. 30).

As global mobility is on the rise, so is the number of individuals finding work in foreign countries (Finaccord, 2018, p. 11). According to a study entitled “Global Expatriates: Size,

Segmentation and Forecast for the World Market”, presented by Finaccord - an international market research organization, the number of expatriates worldwide amounted to 66.2 million in 2017 (Finaccord, 2018, p. 16) with an estimated annual rate of growth of 7.2% between 2017 and 2021 (Finaccord, 2018, p. 16). With this rate of growth in mind, the study suggests that by 2021, approximately 87.5 million individuals (primarily stemming from twenty-five countries) will be considered expatriates (Finaccord, 2018, p. 16).

According to this study, Canada ranked third on the list of countries that generated the most expatriates in 2017, directly behind India and China (Finaccord, 2018, p. 16). To be more precise, an estimated 2.8 million Canadians are currently scattered around the planet for work (The Canadian Expat, 2019). Therefore, as many Canadians are temporarily living and working abroad, it appears pertinent to gain a better understanding of how some of these Canadians are experiencing their expatriation process, especially as it relates to the ways in which they *adapt* to their host-communities. Since adaptation “is a fundamental life goal for all humans” (Kim, 2001, p. 5), when relocating abroad, individuals experience difficulties as they must “change some of their old ways so as to carry out their daily activities and achieve improved quality of life in the new environment” (Kim, 2001, p. 21). Therefore, as we are undergoing this growth in expatriation, we are also experiencing the increasing need to study the ways in which individuals change, adapt and cope with their new intercultural environments.

For the sake of this research, intercultural adaptation is defined as a “dynamic process by which individuals, upon relocating to new, unfamiliar, or changed cultural environments, establish (or re-establish) and maintain relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationships with those environments” (Kim, 2001, p.3). As Kim (2001) outlines, studying human adaptation to foreign environments isn’t about “whether individuals adapt, but *how* and *why* they adapt” (p.

7). Therefore, the notion of intercultural adaptation as it relates to expatriates is increasingly a pertinent area of research for scholars, organizations, as well as people around the world (Barker, 2015, p. 56). Furthermore, when studying intercultural adaptation, Kim (2001) outlines the importance of considering expatriates' host-environments, since variances in cultural milieus "evoke different responses in strangers by serving as the cultural, social, and political forces in accordance to which they must strive to increase their chances for meeting personal and social goals" (p. 147).

Therefore, although Canadian expats are currently living all over the globe, to better understand their adaptation processes to different cultural milieus and the intricacies of their experiences, it is important to focus on contextual aspects of their expatriation, such as on their specific host-environments. With this in mind, this particular research will focus on the intercultural adaptation process of Canadian expats living in Vietnam, a specific case study that can be seen as a "sample" of other possible expatriation experiences around the globe.

According to the InterNations 2019 Expat Insider Report, Vietnam is ranked second on the list of most common expatriate destinations and is positioned first in terms of the best countries for work abroad (InterNations, 2019). Surprisingly, little to no studies in the field of intercultural communication have been conducted on expatriates in Vietnam. Thus, this host-country proves to be an important destination in need of further research. Additionally, since Vietnam is Canada's largest trading partner out of all of the ASEAN region (Government of Canada, 2019) and is part of a Comprehensive-Partnership with Canada, which implies the cooperation of both countries on areas such as politics, trade, development, as well as cultural and academic exchanges (Government of Canada, 2019), the number of Canadian organizations and Canadian expats currently located in Vietnam is quite significant, though the precise amount is difficult to obtain.

Therefore, with many Canadians temporarily establishing themselves in this host-country for work, it seems like a suitable opportunity to better appreciate the complexity of their expatriation experiences.

Specifically, by focusing on Canadian expats' adaptation to Vietnam, this study will aim at understanding how their values and social norms come into play during their interactions with the host-community. More precisely, it will seek to highlight how the expats make sense of some situations involving moments of apparent misunderstandings, malaises, and ambiguities between them and their host-culture. These moments are particularly interesting since they tend to shed light on what matters most to people, what they care about, and what they don't fully understand. Thus, focusing on these moments will allow for a better understanding of how expats make sense of their experiences during intercultural communication. This study also recognizes the importance of taking an integrative approach to intercultural adaptation by focusing on how the host-community members make sense of situations involving moments of misunderstandings with Canadian expatriates. By doing so, we argue that we can gain a more holistic view of how expatriation is experienced by including the input of members of the community.

Although gaining an in-depth account of host-community's points of view about expatriates would allow us to have a more complete overview of the intergroup and interrelation outcomes of these ambiguous moments (Bourhis et al., 1997), actually doing so has proven to be quite difficult. As Maxwell and colleagues (2015) explain, several challenges can present themselves when conducting interviews cross-culturally as the interviewer and interviewees must negotiate "differential cultural norms, languages, and spatial environments (Hult, 2014; Mill and Ogilvie, 2003; Young, 2011)" (as cited in Maxwell et al., 2015, p. 96). For instance, a researcher's positionality (i.e. where he/she comes from as well as their status) can create challenges on

gathering in-depth interview data, as the intersectional identities of the researcher can impinge “on not only *what* is communicated, but *how* it is communicated and *how* it is interpreted as well (Corbin Dwyer and Buckle, 2009; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011)” (as cited in Maxwell et al., 2015, p. 96). Berger (2013) further illustrates this point by explaining that the position of the researcher can affect their “access to the ‘field’ because respondents may be more willing to share their experiences with a researcher whom they perceive as sympathetic to their situation” (p. 220). Therefore, as a Canadian researcher, gaining access to Vietnamese host-community members can be challenging, as members may be more resistant to divulge in-depth accounts of their experiences with Canadian expats due to the researcher’s position in accordance to their own.

Since mobilizing a fully interactive model of expatriate (i.e. to be explained) and host-community relationships proves to be quite challenging, this research places primary focus on the Canadian expatriates’ account of their experiences with the host-community. To do so, this research makes use of qualitative interviews and ethnographic observation in order to empirically show how some Canadian expatriates in Vietnam make sense of their situation, and more specifically how their values and social norms play an active role when faced with ambiguities, malaises and misunderstandings with their Vietnamese host-community. By doing so, this case study contributes to the field of intercultural communication by shedding light on a more contextualized view of intercultural adaptation and allowing to unpack the role that values and social norms play in the sensemaking process of expatriates, as well as in the relationships between expatriates and host communities during ambiguous situations. With this in mind, the following chapter will provide an overview of the current expatriation literature in order to better situate this case study within the field of intercultural communication.

2. Literature Review

Though the notion of expatriation has existed for thousands of years (Selmer, 2017, p. 61), studying business or organizational expatriates is a relatively new field of study (Selmer, 2017). Throughout academia, the study of expatriates first began to appear in the literature during the 1960s (Selmer, 2017), and mostly revolved around the topics of expatriates' intercultural experiences (see Roger Goodman et al., 1960; Hall & Whyte, 1960a). Since then, and presumably due to the effects of globalization (Global Policy Forum, 2019) as well as the rise in multinational corporations (McNulty and Brewster, 2017), studying individuals who crisscross the globe in these ever-growing numbers (Suderman 2008) has gained popularity (McNulty and Brewster, 2017).

For instance, the study of expatriation as a phenomenon has increased quite drastically in the last few decades (Selmer 2017), and is a field of research that has spanned many disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, management, organization studies and communication. With each discipline placing focus on different aspects of expatriation, many theories and themes surrounding the overall expatriate experiences and practices have come forth. In intercultural communication literature specifically, two of the most common areas of research have been expats' intercultural communication competency, as well as their adaptation to their host-communities (McNulty and Brewster, 2017). Accordingly, and in what follows, an outline of the intersection between intercultural communication and expatriate research will be provided, followed by an overview of intercultural communication competency and adaptation research. A summary of some of these themes' most common premises and studies, especially as they relate to expatriate research, will be provided.

2.1. Intercultural Communication

Intercultural communication primarily stems from an anthropological field of research that looks at the “communication processes in different cultures” (Gudykunst and Mody, 2002, ix). One of the pioneers and leading scholars of this field of research was American anthropologist of the mid 1900’s, Edward T. Hall. Early in his career, Hall published three books, each theorizing and exploring the ideas of culture and communication, and the intricacies surrounding the way they work together (1959; 1966; 1976). In his first book *The Silent Language*, Hall explored and defined the notion of culture, which led him to develop the premise that culture deeply affects someone’s life, especially when it comes to the way in which we communicate, behave, and perceive things around us (Hall, 1959). This book is seen as the pioneer of intercultural studies, and has served as a basis for the field’s underlying belief that when people communicate, there are “multiple cultural influences on their interaction” (Kai, 2005, p. 31), and that these influences stem from their “traditions, customs, norms, beliefs, values, and thought patterns” (Liu et al. 2011, p. 55).

This premise has led some intercultural researchers to study, compare and theorise the differences in communication patterns from individuals of different national cultures, in order to better understand the role of cultural influences on intercultural interactions. Perhaps one of the most referenced studies in intercultural communication research is Geert Hofstede’s (1992) Theory of Cultural Dimension. In his research, Hofstede interviewed 116,000 employees from thirty-eight different occupations stemming from seventy-two different countries twice between the years 1968 and 1972. Through the interview process, he was able to come up with “organizational patterns” (Sadri et al., 2011, p. 46), and established six factors that assist in understanding the communication differences between cultures (i.e. power distance index, individualism vs.

collectivism, uncertainty-avoidance index, masculinity vs. femininity, long-term orientation vs. short-term orientation, and indulgence vs. restraint). Although Hofstede's work has received a lot of criticism for being too general, western-oriented, politically oriented, and in need of further updating (Hurn et al., 2013), his comprehensive analysis still remains a basic tool for "assessing national cultures and management styles" (Hurn et al., 2013, p. 42).

Since Hofstede's study was first conducted, the need to empirically investigate and better unpack the practical implications of intercultural communication has continued to increase. For instance, as the phenomenon of expatriation continues to gain popularity, intercultural communication research attempts to further appreciate expatriate experiences by shedding light on culture's role in forming, perceiving, and maintaining intercultural relationships (Liu et al., 2011). In order to better grasp intercultural relationships, many current-day communication scholars have focused their research on understanding the cultural differences and communication challenges experienced by expatriates and host-community colleagues during intercultural communication encounters. This notion of "intercultural communication challenges" is one of the leading themes in intercultural communication research, and is discussed thoroughly in many studies such as the one proposed by Chudnovskaya and O'Hara (2016), entitled "Experiences of Danish Business Expatriates in Russia: Power Distance in Organizational Communication". In this study, the authors interviewed eight Danish business expatriates who worked in Russia, in order to better understand the differences in communication patterns between Danes and Russians, especially as they related to Hofstede's Power Distance index. Within their research, the authors concluded that expat assignments can be "very challenging due to cultural and communication differences, and that many expatriates are not able to accomplish their mission successfully in the host country (Kim, 2008; Templer, 2010)" (as cited in Chudnovskaya and O'Hara, 2016, p. 262). This supports

Liu and Sadri's (2011) position that, since culture is believed to be "learnt" (Liu et al., 2011, p. 56), as well as "diverse" (Sadri et al., 2011, p. 46), communicating across cultures is challenging due to (cultural) differences, and that these cultural differences "have the potential to lead to misunderstanding, miscommunication, dispute, and even conflict" (Sadri et al., 2011, p. 9).

This notion of misunderstanding and potential conflict has been another relevant theme in intercultural communication literature. As exemplified in Chudnovskaya and O'Hara's study (2016), this has often led some scholars to utilize deductive reasoning stemming from generalized cultural trends, such as the ones proposed by Hofstede (1992), to see how and why misunderstandings or conflict occur during intercultural communication. However, since intercultural communication studies have often been criticized for "essentializing generalizations" (Ferri, 2018, p. 4) and assuming differences (Ferri, 2018), more recently, many intercultural scholars have attempted to stem away from these reified views by placing emphasis on the premise that culture is not stagnant (Ming, 2006, p. 33). For instance, as Ming (2006) suggests, when the "political, societal, and economic environments change, people's cultural values also change" (p. 33).

Although culture was once defined by one's nationality (Moon, 2010), it now also considers "gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, social class, and other identifications that affect and are affected by interaction" (Moon, 2010, p. 38). As Spencer-Oatey and Kotthoff (2007) express, "it is now widely accepted that cultures cannot simply be reduced to nationality, nor even to a homogeneous speech community (...) we can see that many people live in ephemeral social formations, that they simultaneously belong to several cultures and that they can change their memberships" (p. 1). Moon (2010) suggests, that even though nationality still remains a significant unit of analysis in intercultural communication, much of the research no longer relies on the

“notion of sharedness” (Moon, 2010, p. 38). Instead, much of the current literature takes in consideration the individuals and the context in which the communication takes place, while outlining the active and constitutive nature of culture. Accordingly, organisational communication scholars such as Cooren and colleagues view culture as a process of cultivation (Cooren et al., 2013, p.113), that is, viewing culture as what is cultivated by organizational members or expatriates on a daily basis. This theory of cultivation is sound, as it provides us with the opportunity to give a voice to each individual actor. With this in mind, we can see the importance of moving away from a rather general and fixed point of view when studying the intercultural communication experiences of expatriates. Instead, it seems fruitful to focus on the context and the situation of each interaction, as well as the individuals taking part in them by highlighting the active role that communication plays.

2.2. Intercultural Communication Competency

As we have noticed in the literature, understanding the different modes of communication and challenges experienced by individuals who participate in intercultural communication, such as expatriates and host-community members, has been a prominent focus of research. With the challenges that surround intercultural communication, some scholars have noted the importance of overcoming potential relational barriers and developing skills to help expatriates and host-community members communicate more appropriately amongst one another. For instance, authors Liu, Volčič and Gallois (2011) explain that, “today it is more likely than ever that we live with culturally different others in our own cities and countries. Hence, developing good intercultural and intergroup relations becomes an important part of our lives” (p. 240). More so, intercultural communication is often believed to be “inherently stressful” (Kim, 2015, p. 4), and that expatriates’ ability to communicate across cultures effectively may play a role in successfully

completing their mission in their host-organization (Chudnovskaya and O'Hara, 2016). Thus, when it comes to expatriate research, communication scholars have focused much of their studies on intercultural communication competency (ICC) and understanding how it comes into play during expatriates' stay in their host-country.

Prominent intercultural scholar Ting-Toomey (1999) defines ICC as "a process whereby individuals from two (or more) different cultural communities negotiate shared meaning in an interactive situation" (p. 16). Though Ting-Toomey has provided a commonly accepted definition of ICC, different definitions can be found throughout the communication literature. Some scholars have thus argued that providing a single all-encompassing definition is challenging since the notion of *competence* is often subjective to the "individuals involved" (Arasaratnam and Doerfel, 2005, p. 138). Although many varying definitions of ICC have been provided throughout the past sixty years, it seems as though much of the current research tends to agree that, with the "rapid changes in the global economy, technology, transportation, and immigration policies, the world is becoming a small, intersecting community" (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 3). With this, there is an increasing need to develop competence in communicating interculturally and cross-culturally.

An early scholar who gained popularity in the field of ICC during the late 1900s, shortly after Edward T. Hall's first book, and whose work is often referenced by other authors, is Gudykunst (2004). When theorizing about ICC, Gudykunst used the expression "effective communication" (Gudykunst, 2004, p. 21), in order to describe the process of "minimizing misunderstandings" (Gudykunst, 2004, p. 21). For Gudykunst (2004), communication is effective "to the extent that the person interpreting the messages attaches meaning to the message that is relatively similar to what was intended by the person transmitting it" (p. 21). With this in mind, many other intercultural researchers have focused their research on the application of said-to-be

effective communication in an intercultural setting. For instance, Arasaratnam and Doerfel (2005) conducted a study involving thirty-seven participants from fifteen different countries, who were deemed to have frequent interaction with people from different national backgrounds, and interviewed them on the characteristics of an “effective” intercultural speaker. Through questioning each participant, data revealed that the participants perceived effective intercultural speakers as being sensitive, kind, having past experiences with different cultures, and having a desire to “learn about cultural matters” (Arasaratnam and Doerfel, 2005, p. 157). According to these authors, the above characteristics all relate to the notion of *empathy*, which supports Losoya and Eisenburg’s (2001) study outlining empathy as “a construct (and competency) that contributes to, or can be seen as an aspect of interpersonal sensitivity and social competence” (p.51). Here, interpersonal sensitivity is defined as “the ability to sense, perceive accurately, and respond appropriately to one’s personal, interpersonal, and social environment” (Bernieri, 2001, p. 3). According to Chen and Starosta (1996), positive emotional responses to intercultural encounters “will in turn lead to acknowledgment of and respect for cultural differences. This process is the development of intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 1986; Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992; Chen & Tan, 1995; Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, & Wiseman, 1991).” (p. 362)

Another finding brought forth through Arasaratnam and Doerfel’s (2005) study was the characteristic of being *observant*. Within this relational dimension, participants related intercultural communication competence and efficacy to individuals who are “open to others, (...), show interest in differences and are aware of these, and have a level of exposure (exposed) to these differences that make them able to pick up on these” (p. 157). Other characteristics that came up in this study included that of showing interest, as well as making an effort to understand and help the individuals involved in the intercultural communication context (p. 158). As we can see,

Arasaratnam and Doerfel's study provided insights about ICC, by laying out many characteristics related to interculturally competent speakers, all while considering factors that may influence potential cultural biases (p. 160). Thus, this study assists in providing a better understanding of the intricacies of intercultural competence.

Though these authors offered in-depth insights on many characteristics surrounding ICC, other prominent studies published afterwards have revealed a variety of other ICC dimensions, such as the notion of synchrony (Kim, 2015). For instance, within the field of intercultural communication, synchrony is often believed to lead to cohesive relationships amongst individuals (Kim, 2015). Kim (2015) defines synchrony as "the state of a positive communicative relationship formed by the coming together of the interactants nonverbal behavior" (p. 27). Through her research, Kim observed that "differences in cultural synchronic systems render at least some level of stress-producing dis-synchrony in intercultural interactions; and the challenge of dyssynchrony, in turn, presents an opportunity for individual communicators to initiate and facilitate synchrony in their intercultural interactions" (Kim, 2015, p. 27). Many scholars have conducted empirical research on the links between synchrony and positive communication encounters (see Feldstein and Welkowitz 1978; Dallimore, Sparks and Butcher, 2007; Rueff-Lopes, Navarro, Caetano and Silva, 2014; Van Swol, 2013). For instance, Miller (1991) conducted an analysis, which looked at the non-verbal communication of naturally-occurring conversations between Japanese and American coworkers. Within his observations, Miller was able to note that while some Americans did not achieve synchrony with their Japanese coworkers, one American "skillfully adapted his listening to the Japanese mode of more active and frequent vocalizations and nodding" (Kim, 2015, p. 31).

As we can see, intercultural communication competence (ICC) is a vast area of communication research, with many studies dedicated to its conceptualization, its application, and its overall assessment. Though there are many facets to ICC, some current scholars such as Kim, Lieberman and Gamst (2015) seem to agree that in today's global landscape, ICC isn't only important for the cultivation of said-to-be successful intercultural communication encounters, but is also linked to expatriates' overall adaptation to their host-country. For instance, Lieberman and Gamst (2015) explain that for some expatriates, intercultural communication competence "influences effectiveness (i.e. goal accomplishment) and appropriateness (i.e. exhibiting appropriate behaviour), with the goal of producing the desirable cross-cultural communication outcomes of adaptation (...) and adjustment (...)" (p.18). Thus, we can see how, for these scholars, expats' ability to communicate "effectively" in an intercultural setting will not only influence the immediate communication context, but will also affect their overall sensemaking, adaptation, and adjustment to the host community. Although ICC is said to have a pertinent impact on the way in which expats adapt in an intercultural setting, some scholars have also noted a variety of other factors that have an influence on the adaptation process. For this reason, the next section will provide an overview of the notion of intercultural adaptation in order to gain a better understanding of the way in which adaptation comes into play during the experience of expatriation.

2.3. Intercultural Adaptation

It has been suggested by Lieberman and Gamst (2015), that conducting intercultural research allows us to gain a deeper perspective on the many facets that play a role in expatriates' experiences abroad, such as their overall intercultural adaptation (Lieberman and Gamst, 2015). All in all, understanding expats' intercultural adaptation is an important field of research in intercultural studies and according to Selmer (2017), it is the most widely researched area found

across expatriation literature. Intercultural adaptation is thus a vast area of study within expatriate research, and mostly includes literature on “general adjustment to a host-location, interacting with host-country nationals, and adapting to the expatriate job” (Selmer, 2017, p. 65).

Additionally, this broad umbrella term of intercultural adaptation encompasses many different sub-categories, each revolving around the notion of an individual's adaptation to a host-community. For instance, a common term found in intercultural adaptation research is *adjustment*, which relates to “psychological responses to cross-cultural challenges” (Kim, 2001, p. 3). Another prominent term found within the literature is *acculturation*. Specifically, many intercultural adaptation scholars tend to agree that acculturation is a process that can be defined as “the acquisition of some, but not all, aspects of the host cultural elements” (Kim, 2005, p. 380). As Barker (2015) explains, regardless of the length of their stay, expats’ “ability to function in their host culture rests to some degree on adjustment and cultural change, a process referred to as acculturation” (p. 56).

Current research on acculturation mainly focuses on two overarching topics. These topics include understanding expats’ maintenance of their home-culture, as well as their participation in the host-culture (Barker, 2015). According to Berry (1997), the interplay of these dimensions results in four different acculturation strategies: integration, separation, marginalization, and assimilation. Within his model, Berry attempts to outline two basic issues that seem to challenge expats by playing an active role in their acculturation process. First off, expats must decide whether or not retaining their home-culture is of value, and secondly, they must choose to which degree inter-group relations with host-community members is important (Berry, 1997). Through many empirical studies on North American immigrants, Berry was able to show that the most widely favoured acculturation orientation is *integration*. This means that expatriates reflect the desire to

maintain some of their home-culture identity, while adopting some of the host-community features (Bourhis et al., 1997).

As Berry's model merely accounts for expats' acculturation orientation, Bourhis et al., (1997) came up with a more interactive model, also known as the Interactive Model of Acculturation, which presents a "non- determinist, more dynamic account of immigrant and host community acculturation in multicultural settings" (p. 379). This model not only accounts for the acculturation orientation of the expatriates, but also of the host-community in relation with expats. This allows for a more interactive, relational and in-depth account of the intergroup and interrelation dynamics between the host-community and the expats (Bourhis et al., 1997).

With these models in mind, it seems pertinent to gather deeper insight on the way that intercultural adaptation is viewed within intercultural communication literature. For instance, Kim (2005) has suggested that intercultural adaptation should be viewed through the lens of the Integrative Communication Theory (ICT). This theory proposes that for an acculturation process to occur there must be intercultural communication (Kim, 2005). However, "communication across cultures is inherently stressful as it challenges our taken-for-granted assumptions" (Kim, 2015, p. 4). For instance, someone's cultural habits or bias become apparent when that person is in contact with people whose "cultural scripts are at variance with our own" (Kim, 2015, p. 4). In this case, our cultural scripts not only include our identity and behavioural norms, but also our fundamental values (Barker, 2015).

Broadly speaking, Kim's theoretical framework is based on an open-system theory that suggests that adaptation "manifests the natural human instinct to struggle for an internal equilibrium in the face of adversarial environmental conditions" (Kim, 2005, p. 378). Acculturation is thus viewed as a dynamic process, in which a variety of external and individual

factors influence the adaptive behaviour of the expat. Therefore, intercultural adaptation is understood as being an interplay between the individual and its environment (Kim, 2005). Furthermore, this theoretical framework underscores the belief that adaptation is a communication-based phenomenon that occurs “in and through communication activities” (Kim, 2005, p. 379). This means that for an acculturation process to happen, there must be communication and relations between the expat and their host-environment. This framework outlines that the only time adaptation doesn’t take place, is when an individual is in complete insularity from the host community. Thus, grounded in this theory is the view that any action, event or situation is mostly based on a communicative component (Kim, 2005).

As we can see, Kim’s open-systems theory based on communication serves as a conceptually sound starting point to analyze expatriates’ intercultural adaptation to their host-community. For instance, it allows us to analyze expats’ communication with their host-environment in order to better understand how they make sense of their malaises, misunderstandings or ambiguities. Though Kim has spent much of her time conducting conceptual research, such as the one mentioned above, part of her research on intercultural adaptation also revolves around empirical studies, which directly analyze the ways in which individuals adapt to their surroundings (e.g., Kim et al., 1998; Kim, 2015). For instance, in her article “I Can Walk Both Ways: Identity Integration of American Indians in Oklahoma”, Kim and colleagues (1998) conducted 182 interviews with First Nations in Oklahoma, in order to better understand their identity experiences in their state. The findings were able to show that the participants mostly shared “the integration identity orientation, mixed with varying degrees of separation orientation, as in Berry’s (1970,1980,1990; Berry et al., 1988) model” (Kim et al., 1998, p. 267). With this in mind and as we will see in the following section, though intercultural adaptation is a vast area of research, with

many scholars, such as Kim, who have gathered data on the ways in which adaptation manifests itself in individuals' life, there are still many aspects of this process to be explored.

2.4. Lacunas in Acculturation Research

According to Matsudaira (2006), in intercultural adaptation research, much of the emphasis has been placed on the domain of behaviour and attitudes, such as adaptation to food, clothes and language. Mastudaira explains that this emphasis, paired with the omission of other domains such as culturally-based values, has created a "biased assessment of acculturation processes" (p. 473). Aside from behaviours and attitudes, such as use of language, food and clothes, the acculturation process also takes into consideration subjective changes and adaptation that occur through communication and language. These changes which include values, ways of doing, cultural beliefs, and ethnic identity (Matsudaira, 2006) have to be communicated and talked into being in order to be salient and matter in the process. Through reviewing the literature, the study of values and social norms in acculturation seems to be most dominantly lacking, but as suggested by Matsudaira, it/they represent an important aspect of the acculturation process.

According to Bicchieri (2006), social norms are defined as the practices that hold a given community together, and are the embodiment of a society's core values (p. ix). Here, the notion of core values can be defined as culturally approved "motivational constructs" (Bardi and Shwartz, 2003, p. 1208) that "convey what is important to us in our lives" (Bardi and Shwartz, 2003, p. 1207). This definition of values also supports Samovar and Porter's definition, which explains that values are "enduring attitudes about the preferability of one belief over another (...) the social guideposts that show us the cultural norms of our society and specify in large measure the ways in which we should behave" (Samovar and Porter, 1991, p. 108). Samovar and Porter outline that "in

the study of human interaction, it is important to look at cultural values, but in the study of intercultural communication it is crucial” (p. 108).

Although the notion of value has not been studied extensively within acculturation research, many intercultural communication scholars have outlined the important role that values play within intercultural encounters (for example, Cai & Fink, 2002; Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003; Park & Guan, 2009; Zhang, 2005). For instance, Schwartz (1994, 1999) outlined that understanding individuals’ “value priorities” (Schwartz, 1999, p. 25), could assist in better understanding their behaviours and ways of doing (Schwartz, 1999). Furthermore, according to Croucher (2017), when considering an individual’s culture, values are one of the most difficult components to change since they are “the most central to individuals” (p. 80). Thus, it is interesting to better understand how individuals make sense of and adapt (or not) their values in new cultural environments, when they are faced with host-community members whose “value priorities” (Schwartz, 199, p. 250) may differ from their own.

Although studying values is argued to be difficult, since values are “largely formed and held at an unconscious level (Hofstede, 1980)” (as cited in Fitzgerald, 2003, p. 22), the impact of values on intercultural adaptation is perceived to be significant (Fitzgerald, 2003, p. 22). Thus, focusing on how values and social norms have an active role in the acculturation process from a communicative perspective represents an important area of research that is currently in need of deeper and more meaningful understanding. Accordingly, this study will allow us to better understand how these values and social norms come into play during expats’ acculturation to a host-community.

2.5. Research Questions

As we have seen, much of the current research on expatriate adaptation to host-communities has tended to focus on behaviours with a psychological inclination. According to Matsudaira (2006) and Barker (2015), studying the value system has received the least attention in intercultural adaptation research (Barker, 2015). One exception is a study by Rotheram-Borus (1993) that evaluates the value system of Mexican Americans. Nonetheless and even if these studies have addressed matters of social values, norms and ways of doing of some expatriates, they have mostly opted for a psychological perspective (i.e. mental models) thus limiting the possibility of studying the actual phenomenon occurring on a daily basis. For this reason, we propose to shed light on Canadian expats and their value system during their acculturation process by focusing on moments, situations and interactions (i.e. communication processes) where apparent misunderstandings or seeming malaises happen and the ways they make sense of them.

As previously outlined, in order to focus on the contextual aspects of the expatriation process, this study specifically focuses on Canadians expatriating in Vietnam, by shedding light on moments of misunderstanding, malaise or ambiguity between the expats and the host-community members. As mentioned in the introduction, in 2019, Vietnam was listed as the second most common expatriate destination in the world (InterNations, 2019). This means that Vietnam surpasses most other countries (aside from Taiwan) in terms of the number of expats that are working and residing within their national borders. With the popularity of this host-destination, Vietnam is seemingly constantly bustling with individuals from different cultural milieus who are adapting to their new surroundings. Furthermore, with Canada's important involvement with Vietnam through their partnership agreement (Government of Canada, 2019), many Canadians are temporarily establishing themselves in this host-country for work. Therefore, the actual context

represents a suitable opportunity to better appreciate the complexity of Canadians' expatriation experiences by better understanding how they adapt to their Vietnamese host-community. With this in mind, this study will follow the lead of the following questions:

RQ. 1: How do Canadian expatriates living in Vietnam make sense of and cultivate their values in moments of perceived ambiguity, misunderstanding, or malaise between them and their host-community?

RQ. 1.1: What figures (values and social norms) emerge from Canadian expatriates living in Vietnam during moments of perceived ambiguity, misunderstanding, or malaise with their host-community?

3. Intercultural Adaptation in and Through Cultivation

By following the lead of these two aforementioned questions, this grounded-in-action research will view intercultural adaptation as a communicative process of cultivation, all while keeping the contextual nature of intercultural adaptation in mind as it has been suggested by Kim's (2002) Integrative Communication Theory. Here, the notion of cultivation refers to things "such as practices, ways of talking, artefacts, values, norms or ideologies (also see Cooren 2010a) that become specific, relevant and significant to organizational members" (Cooren et al., 2013, p.113). Additionally, by mobilizing a performative view of culture, that is, how social actors enact this very culture by their own actions and languages, our empirical study will shed light on the many ways in which expatriates *cultivate* certain things, also referred to as "figures", during their interactions and practices (Cooren et al., 2013, p. 113) with the host-community. More specifically, we will show how the cultivation of these figures plays a prominent role in their overall adaptation process. Influenced by the work of Weick (1969; 1979), we understand the concept of "organization" as a verb (i.e. organizing), which helps support the notion that organizational culture is "communicatively constituted" (Putnam et al., 2009, p. 1) and thus enacted by social actors themselves. With this in mind, the following section will unpack what it means for culture and cultivation to be "communicatively constituted" (Putnam et al., 2009, p. 1), and how this concept assists in better understanding the role of values during expatriates' adaptation abroad.

3.1. A Constitutive View of Intercultural Adaptation and the Ventriloquial Perspective

The concept that organizational culture is constituted in and through communication is not new, although it has been scarcely mobilized in communication research. According to Cooren and al., (2013), this view of culture was first introduced in Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo's (1983) article entitled, "Organizational Communication as Cultural Performance". Here, the

premise that culture is communicatively constituted consists in “noticing that a variety of forms of agency are always at play in *any* interaction” (Cooren, 2012, p. 62). In other words, this view of culture and communication encompasses the idea that in each interaction and relations, there are a variety of things that communicate and express themselves (Cooren, 2013), a concept also referred to as *ventriloquism* (Cooren, 2008, 2010; Cooren & Bencherki, 2010).

Indeed, this notion of ventriloquism suggests that “people in interaction manage to act and speak *for* or *in the name* of specific beings to which they feel (consciously or unconsciously) attached, whether these beings be principles, values, beliefs, attitudes, ideas, ideologies, interests, organizations, etc.” (Cooren, 2012, p. 62). When organizational or social actors communicate and position themselves as speaking for a specific idea, a practice and/or a value, their idea, practice and/or value is what is animating them, which in turn, recursively leads them to say or do something. For example, and as we will see in the analysis, when facing a situation of malaise that challenges an expatriate’s value about ethical workplace practices, if this expatriate speaks up about the perceived malaise, not only is the expat speaking, but so is the value (or *figure*) he/she cares about and is attached to. Therefore, we can see how one organizational and social actor (i.e. *the ventriloquist*) makes speak another actor (*the figure/value*) (Cooren et al., 2013), which in return allows for both a shared authorship and a more robust authority, thus giving weight to the utterance as well as to the situation.

All in all, though many studies have brought forth the notion of organizations as being constituted in and through communication (i.e. the CCO approach), (e.g., Boivin, Brummans and Barker, 2017; Cooren et al., 2018; Caïdor and Cooren, 2018), not many studies have mobilized this performative view of organization toward culture, especially not in terms of studying the ways in which specific “values, norms, principles, or ideologies are sustained in everyday interactions”

(Cooren et al., 2013, p. 114). As we will see with the analysis, by mobilizing a performative view of culture, we were able to show what mattered and counted for organizational actors and what values and social norms were conveyed in interactions between expatriates and host-community members. This is the process that is referred to as *cultivation*. In the following section, we will provide a deeper understanding of cultivation, and how this notion applies itself in an intercultural setting, especially as expatriates are making sense of ambiguous situations or moments of malaises.

3.2. Culture as Cultivation

One study in particular that mobilized the concept of cultivation and the performativity lens is Cooren, Brummans, Benoit-Barné, and Matte (2013). Their research not only showcases how culture is constituted through interactions and communication, but also highlights *what* is cultivated and precisely *how* organizational actors are cultivating these figures. Accordingly, and for our study, we will empirically show how expatriates are communicating with host-community members and what values, social norms and ways of doing (i.e. *figures*) are cultivated. With this in mind and by grounding our research on a constitutive view of culture (i.e. cultivation), we will highlight the many ways expatriates make sense of their surroundings by cultivating and/or “clinging on” to certain values, social norms and ways of doing during their interactions with their host-community. It is also pertinent to recognize the things that seem to count and matter to expats, such as their values and social norms “which are implicitly (and often unconsciously) cultivated through speech and actions” (Cooren et al., 2013, p. 115).

Therefore, by analyzing what values, social norms and ways of doing are being cultivated in their interactions, especially ones surrounding malaises and ambiguities, we will emphasize how expatriates’ make sense of their intercultural adaptation, as well as how it is lived, experienced and

enacted through their narratives and stories (Cooren et al., 2013). This theory of cultivation is innovative in many ways as it allows organizational actors to fully express themselves and what matters to them, by recounting their own individual experiences with intercultural adaptation. By gaining an understanding of how expats make sense of their experience, we are also highlighting how sensemaking comes into play in expats' interactions with the host-community. Here, sensemaking is viewed as a "significant process of organizing" (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2005, p. 409). This process explains the ways in which people "engage in ongoing circumstances from which they extract cues and make plausible sense retrospectively while enacting more or less order into those circumstances" (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2005, p. 409).

All in all, we argue that by mobilizing a performative view of culture and cultivation to an intercultural context, we will gain a better understanding of how expatriates make sense of values and social norms during their interaction with the host-community, as well as what they cultivate to make sense of their experiences.

4. Methodology

Reflection

On my first night in Vietnam, I met with a group of six Canadian expatriates for dinner. We got to know each other over some traditional Vietnamese food and they spoke to me about their experiences living and working in Vietnam. I was already gaining so much insight from them. After our informal dinner on that first night, I developed longer-lasting relationships with most of these expats, by meeting up for coffee, dinner or leisurely walks around the Old Quarter on some of their time off. Many of them even chose to take part in the qualitative interviews. Conducting the interviews with them was different than conducting interviews with other expatriates. Because we already knew each other, they seemingly felt more comfortable with me, which resulted in them divulging more in-depth information about their adaptation struggles.

As previously mentioned, this empirical research has adopted a communicative approach to acculturation. Though the focus has primarily been on Canadian expats' acculturation to Vietnam, I also observed and interviewed a select number of host-community members who worked alongside Canadians in order to deepen my understanding of expats' adaptation to their host-organization. By focusing on the observation of the interactions and the development of relationships between host-community members and expats, this study takes an overall qualitative approach. Additionally, as mentioned in the journal entry at the beginning, my own status of expatriate is experienced through my very ethnographic research project, allowing me to both study and live the process of expatriation along with the Canadian expatriates living in Vietnam that I met for this research.

4.1. Overview of Study Design

To understand the many ways in which Canadian expatriates make sense of their values and social norms during moments of ambiguity, malaise, or misunderstanding, I collected data through ethnographic fieldwork (Atkinson, 2015) with observation and non-participant semi-structured interviews (Spradley, 1979, 1980). As we will see, this ethnographic method allowed us to grasp the Canadian expats' experiences and sense-making process as they organized and reorganized

themselves in their host-environment, thus highlighting the complexity of the phenomena. Furthermore, as outlined by Bonneville and colleagues (2007), since qualitative research is convenient in exploring complex phenomena, this study incorporates the contextual characteristics of the research subject (Bonneville et al., 2007). By mobilizing an inductive logic, we offer a comprehensive understanding of the role and the cultivation of values and social norms in adaptation.

4.1.1. Ethnographic Thoughts and Observation

Ethnography originally stems from the broader field of cultural anthropology (Croucher and Cronn-Mills, 2014, p. 134), with Malinowsky being one of the method's most significant early contributors (Kaberry, 1957, p. 71). According to Young (1979), Malinowsky is the founder of "prolonged and intensive field work" (p. 1) and is most widely recognized for his two-year ethnographic research in the Trobriand Islands, where he shed light on the locals' "language, culture and society" (Young, 1979, p. 1). Since Malinowsky's work, many significant scholars such as Putnam and Van Maanen, have mobilized ethnographic approaches within their own research, which has encouraged them to think of culture through the lense of a little c rather than viewing culture as a big C (Putnam et al., 1993, p. 22). Nowadays, ethnography is a methodological approach utilized across many different fields, and continues to allow researchers to both "penetrate and be penetrated by the culture studied" (Putnam et al., 1993, p. 22). Current day ethnographers, Kramer and Adams (2017) explain that "the primary purpose of ethnography is to gain a holistic understanding of a social or cultural group" (p. 457). Specifically, in intercultural communication research, ethnography is used to understand groups' "speaking patterns and practices, nonverbal behaviours, and messages about relationships within and outside of the group,

as well as how these patterns, practices, behaviours, and messages are created and reinforced through social interaction” (Kramer and Adams, 2017, p. 457).

Lauring and Selmer (2010) explain that, aside from a few ethnographic studies (e.g., Jennifer Jones-Corley, 2002), there has been a “distant data collection that has characterized most studies of business expatriates” (p. 62). For this reason, these authors outline the importance of ethnographic research as a means to better appreciate the contextual influences that are impacting expats, as well as the expats’ “experiences of different dimensions of expatriation such as professional networking and cultural adjustment” (Richardson, 2014, p. 237). By keeping this in mind, I attempted to get closer to the expatriates and the host-community, by travelling to Vietnam and directly observing Canadians during their expatriation. Specifically, this was accomplished through observations as well as the participation in the lives of Canadian expats in Vietnam for a period of seven weeks between January 17th, 2019 and March 7th, 2019. During this period, I was able to not only observe expatriates’ interactions with the host-members but also cultivate a personal relationship with these expats outside of their host-organizations, allowing myself to gain a deeper appreciation for their overall adaptation process. Through my observations and by focusing on possible moments of misunderstanding or situations that seem ambiguous to the expatriates, I collected the data using field notes and photographs.

It is nevertheless important to note that due to restrictions put in place by host-organizations, the ethnographic thoughts and observations were primarily constructed on the basis of my observations of expatriates’ and host-community members’ everyday lives, outside of their workplace. Though the primary objective of the research was to conduct observations within a variety of organizations, this did not affect the study’s leading questions, as I continued to observe how Canadian expatriates made sense of ambiguities, malaises and misunderstandings with host-

community members outside of their organizations. Gathering information during times of leisure proved to be helpful in gaining a well-rounded awareness and comprehension of the different facets of the adaptation process and how they work together and influence one another. Furthermore, in order to gather data on expatriates' adaptation in their host-organization, specifically on the ways in which they made sense of their values and social norms in moments of perceived malaise, ambiguities or misunderstandings within their workplace, I made use of ethnographic interviews.

4.1.2. Ethnographic Interviews

Defined as “conversations with a purpose” (Byrne 2008, p. 208), qualitative interviewing is a research method that is used to gather information from individuals about the “issue under research” (Byrne 2008, p. 216). Ethnographic interviews are uniquely characterized by the ongoing nature of the relationship between the interviewer and the participants (Munz, 2017, p. 454). Though some of the interview data was gathered spontaneously, while I was “engaging in a larger field of study through participant observation” (Munz, 2017, p. 455), most of the interviews were scheduled ahead of time, in order to accommodate the participants' schedules. It was important to ensure that the interviews took place in a comfortable location where the interviewees felt at ease. For this reason, most of the interviews were conducted outside of the participants' organizations, such as in coffee shops or in the participants' homes. The interviews proceeded with the help of a topic guide (appendix 1).

In order to understand how participants “discursively construct their experiences” (Kartch, 2017, p. 1073), I structured the questions in a way that elicited the participants to recount narratives and stories surrounding the ways in which they made sense of their values, social norms and ways of doing during apparent ambiguous situations or moments of misunderstanding. This was done through the use of general questions that asked the participants to “generate a story” that spoke to

the “larger issue of interest” (Kartch, 2017, p. 1073). To document the data from the interviews, the dialogue between the interviewee and myself was recorded via an iPhone or transcribed on a laptop, depending on the individual participant’s preference. All in all, by being on the field observing the expatriates as they interact with their host-community, ethnographic interviews were used to help gather deeper insights on how the expats and host-community members made sense of their values, social norms and ways of doing when moments of apparent malaise or misunderstanding occurred.

4.2. Sampling and Participants

The primary participants for this study were Canadian expatriates who had recently moved from Canada to live in Vietnam. The participants were required to work for an organization in which they were in face-to-face contact with host-community members on a daily basis. For the sake of this study, the term “recently” is used to signify a timeline between zero months to eight months. The reason this study placed emphasis on expats who were recent to Vietnam, was to be able to study them while they were experiencing new and potentially unfamiliar situations that differs from their internalized cultural scripts. This allowed for a better understanding of the “early stages” of the acculturation process. Within the study, three Canadian participants were not as recent to Vietnam, as they had been living in the host-country for over a year. Due to the challenges that I faced in gathering a sample of participants that fit within the proposed guidelines, these interviews were used to shed light on the early days of these participants’ expatriation and how their adaptation has developed over time, - providing insightful data on the evolution of one’s adaptation process.

All in all, this research gathered twenty-three participants (see Appendix 2. for a detailed breakdown of the participants referenced in this study). Of these participants, eighteen were

Canadian expatriates and five were host-community members who worked alongside Canadian expats or North Americans in general. Ideally, more host-community members would have participated in order to provide further insight on the interactive acculturation process, as proposed by Bourhis (1997). However, due to the prominent language barrier, Vietnamese who were both fluent in English and/or French and worked alongside Canadian expatriates proved to be challenging to find.

After obtaining my certificate of ethics approval in January 2019, I began the recruiting process of potential participants for the research. Specifically, in order to recruit the participants, I sent out an email detailing the research aim to Canadian organizations in Vietnam and international organizations that were deemed likely to employ expatriates. Canadians and Vietnamese who were interested were asked to email the researcher to indicate their willingness to participate. Of the participating expatriates, most worked within different host-organizations, however, a few expats did work together within the same organization. By choosing to gather a sample of participants through various organizations situated in Vietnam, our study takes on a non-probability sample design where purposive sampling was used. This means that, due to the strict criteria listed for the participants, and the difficulties that arose in gathering such a sample, the sample was selected on the basis of my knowledge on the population, as well as “its elements, and the nature of the research aims” (Baxter and Babbie, 2004, p.135). Purposive sampling was useful as it allowed me to “study a small subset of a larger population in which many members of the subset are easily identified but the enumeration of them all would be nearly impossible” (Baxter and Babbie, 2004, p. 135).

4.3. Approaches to Data Analysis: Studying Discourse through Narrative

In order to analyze the interview data, I chose to study discourse (i.e. broad discursive lens) through the approach of a specific narrative analysis. For the sake of this research, discourses are described as being “embodied and enacted in a variety of texts although they exist beyond the individuals that compose them” (Phillips and Hardy, 2019, p. 3). Throughout this study, the “texts”, which can also be referred to as “discursive units” (Phillips and Hardy, 2019, p.3), included the spoken words of the participants, as they recounted their experiences during their interviews, as well as the observed actions of the expatriates and host-community members as they went about their personal and professional lives. Since this study views culture, adaptation, and organizations as being communicatively constituted, as well as, unfixed, fluid, and having contradictory dynamics (Phillips and Hardy, 2019, p.3), studying overall discourse served as a powerful tool that allowed myself to study what held together these contradictions and made them “real for us” (Phillips and Hardy, 2019, p.3).

As it’s been mentioned, though discourse has been studied and analysed through many different “approaches” (Cooren, 2015, p. 16), within this research, it is explored through the approach of a narrative analysis (i.e. the study of narratives and stories). According to Catherine Riessman (2002), “narrative analysis takes as its object of investigation the story itself (...) The purpose is to see how respondents in interviews impose order on the flow of experience to make sense of events and actions in their lives” (p. 2). Narrative scholars such as Riessman and Bruner, view personal narratives as a way for individuals to structure their “perceptual experiences and organize their memory” (Riessman, 2002, p. 3) as well as a way to build “the very events of a life” (Bruner, 1987, p. 15).

With this in mind, through narrative analysis, I focused and reflected on “how people collectively or individually create, report, or make sense of the evolving aspects of a situation” (Cooren, 2015, p. 39). Accordingly, I analyzed how expatriates created, reported and made sense of their values, social norms and ways of doing during moments of malaise or misunderstanding that were experienced throughout their expatriation. It is prominent to note that the narratives (stories) being recounted by the participants through their interviews do not “transparently” tell us “what an independent reality might look like” (Cooren, 2015, p. 39). Instead, narratives and stories “are constructing or constituting” (Cooren, 2015, p. 39) the reality of expatriates. As Cooren (2015) explains, narratives consist in “selecting, naming, or even inventing aspects of a given situation or sequence, aspects that are meant to serve the purpose of the storytelling or the storyteller’s interests (impressing, denouncing, praising, arguing for a specific position)” (p. 39). Thus, the interviewees aren’t simply telling stories, they are also “accomplishing various things in doing so” (Cooren, 2015, p. 39).

For this study, I argue that conducting a narrative analysis adds value and supports the conceptual framework (i.e. ventriloquism). For instance, the stories and narratives that emerged from the participants’ interviews were useful in making emerge the figures (i.e. values, social norms and ways of doing) that are typically brought forth through the ventriloquial perspective. Specifically, since narrative analysis is seemingly more attuned to interviews, by analyzing the expats’ stories, I was able to gain an in-depth and well-rounded understanding of their overall experience, which assisted in revealing the cultivation and adaptation patterns of the expats. Therefore, by analyzing discourse through narrative analysis, this research provides not only a better comprehension of how expatriates make sense of their values and social norms in apparent

ambiguous situations, but also how their stories participate in creating, constituting, and cultivating certain figures during their expatriate experience.

All in all, approximately thirty hours of interview data was collected. Due to the lengthy amount of time of data recorded, I chose to proceed to an in-depth analysis of only a small subset of this data. In order to choose which specific discursive units would be most relevant to analyze, I began by listening to each interview in detail. Subsequently, I met with my supervisor and spent multiple meetings discussing and making sense of these interviews, by focusing on the malaises and misunderstandings that expats seemed to recount in these narratives, as well as the similarities and differences surrounding how they seemingly made sense of these malaises and what they cultivated throughout their interactions with the host-community. By doing so, themes and patterns began to emerge from the data. By gaining more clarity on the recurring ideas brought forth through the data, I chose to re-listen to the interviews that stood out, and transcribed the most relevant narratives uncovered in these interviews.

Specifically, the narratives that were transcribed were the most relevant to the study's working thesis, meaning they most clearly described and illustrated how expats seemingly made sense of their values, social norms and ways of doing in moments of malaise or misunderstandings, and the many figures that emerged in doing so. Additionally, ethnographic observations and thoughts gathered during my time abroad were used to support and analyze the expats' discourse throughout the interviews.

4.4. Strengths and Limitations of Proposed Research Methods

The research methods proposed for this study proved to be very useful in uncovering the working thesis. For instance, in the past, these methods have been valuable in providing in-depth "insight into how members of a group create and maintain culture through communication and

social interaction” (Kramer and Adams, 2017, p. 461). By travelling abroad to Vietnam to observe Canadian expatriates in their host-community, I was able to experience my own acculturation process, which provided me with a deeper understanding of the expatriates’ narratives and the overall adaptation process. For this reason, and to better understand how I experienced my own intercultural adaptation, brief auto-ethnographic excerpts have been provided throughout this study. These excerpts emphasize my “lived experiences (...) to access culture as communicative accomplishment” (p. 74). By being reflexive on my own experiences in Vietnam, these auto-ethnographic accounts add insight on the intricacies of acculturation.

Furthermore, by being in the field, I was able to develop relationships with Canadian expatriates and host-community members, which not only helped me better understand their acculturation process, but also allowed me to build trust with the study’s participants (Kramer and Adams, 2017, p. 458). Due to our on-going relationship, the expatriates were seemingly more open to divulge personal information and insights. It is important to note that the participants in which I developed the most personal relationships with, are the ones that were the most open to discuss the deeper struggles and triumphs they were going through during their adaptation, thus providing me with more profound insight on their adaptation process. For this reason, these participants are the ones whose narratives came up most frequently throughout the analysis. Additionally, throughout the ethnography, I was “interactively engaged with the field” (Fabian and Rooij, 2008, p. 623). By constantly interacting with my research participants (i.e. host-community and participants), as well as embracing “the inextricability of the research subject and research object” (Bolen, 2017, p. 74) by offering myself “as both through personal experiences” (p. 74), I was able to be more empathetic towards the expatriates and the adaptation process than if I had been conducting research from a distance. Therefore, the data produced from this ethnography is

believed to be deeper and more well-rounded than it would have been, had I chosen to simply conduct interviews from my home-country.

Though these methods are recognized for producing data that provides a well-rounded understanding of a specific cultural group and phenomena (Kramer and Adams, 2017, p. 457), like any other research method, they are paired with their own sets of limitations. For instance, through participant observation, my implication in the data collection may lead to a certain form of subjectivity (Bonneville et al., 2007, p. 186), since I developed on-going relationships with the participants. Although I attempted to remain neutral in the process, as previously mentioned, there were times when I could relate and empathise with the expats, since I was undergoing similar circumstances through my own adaptation process. Furthermore, there is the risk that participants modified their behaviour (voluntarily or involuntarily) due to my presence (Bonneville et al., 2007, p. 186). Though it is difficult and almost impossible to tell whether or not the expats modified their behaviours, it seems as though this may have been the case for the Vietnamese host-community members. For instance, during interviews, it is possible that participants produce answers that conform with the interviewer's expectations (Bonneville et al., 2007, p. 178) - a limitation that seemingly occurred during my interviews with host-community members. For instance, and as previously mentioned, gaining access to host-community members was challenging, not only because of linguistic barriers, but also because of my positionality in accordance to their own (Berger, 2013). With this in mind, it seems as though these participants often adapted their answers to what they believed I might have wanted to hear about their experiences with Canadian expats in their workplace, which was mostly a positive recounting. Regardless of these potential limitations, the proposed research methods proved to be valuable in gathering insightful data on the adaptation of Canadian expatriates in Vietnam. As we will see in the following section, through

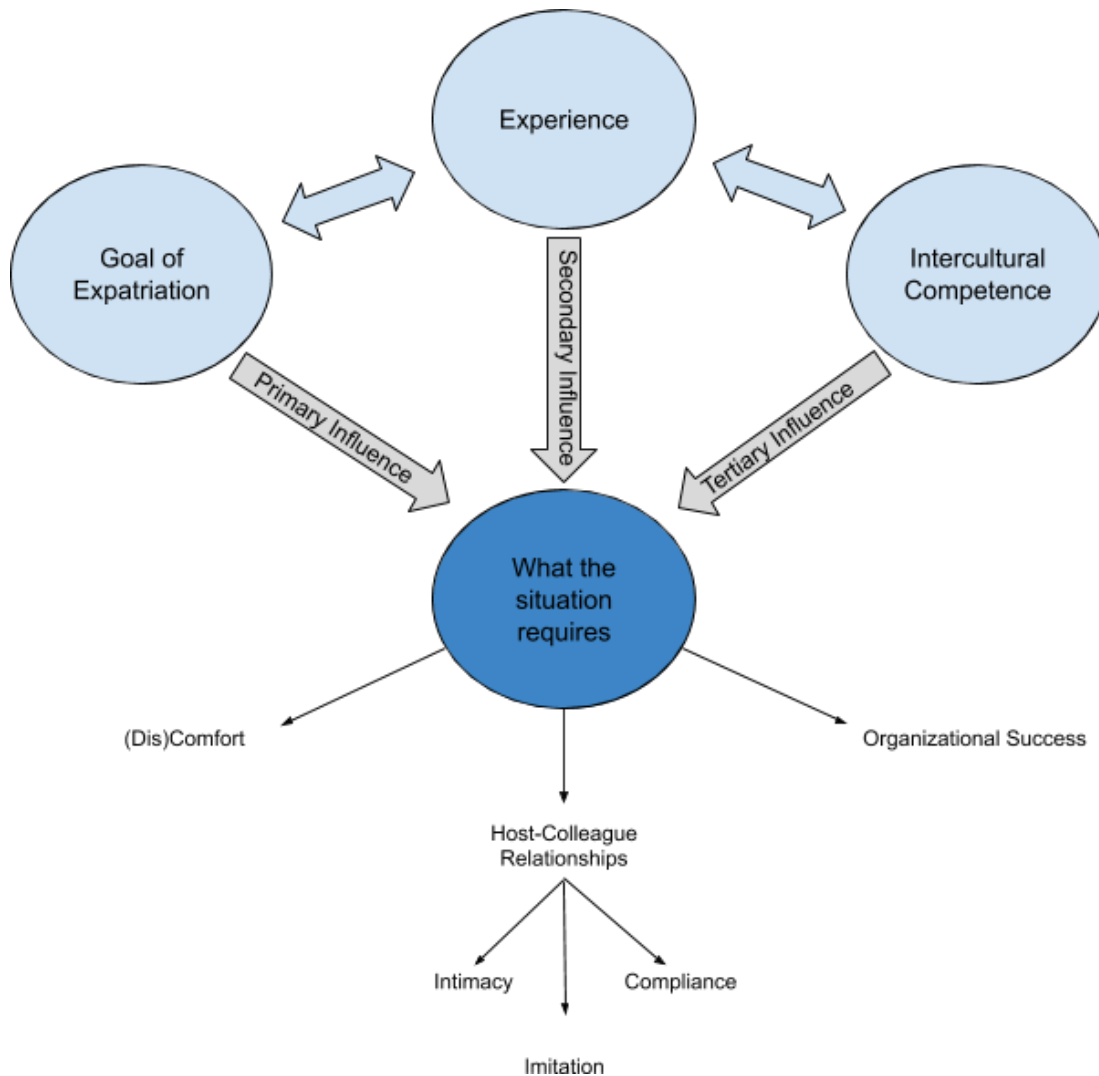
the use of observation and semi-structured interviews, many recurring themes surrounding the cultivation patterns of expats have come forth.

5. Analysis

Journal Entry: January 27th, 2019

I am exhausted almost all of the time. I think it is because of all of the new stimuli I am experiencing, such as the intense smog and the narrow winding streets, so densely populated with motorbikes and outdoor shops, making the simple act of walking feel like an extreme sport. Moreover, each block seems to be engulfed by a variety of new and unfamiliar smells, and I can never seem to get away from the persistent honking of people on their motorbikes. I feel simultaneously overwhelmed and in awe of the bustling Old Quarter. Because of my unfamiliar surroundings, I am experiencing constant uncertainty about what I should be doing next, which means that I can never fully allow myself to relax.

As previously mentioned, this study is trying to uncover how some Canadian expatriates in Vietnam *make sense* of their values, social norms and ways of doing in moments of malaise or misunderstanding when living and working abroad, and which *figures* they cultivate in doing so. Although this study primarily seeks to reveal expats' adaptation to their host-organization, it seems as though, when relocating to a new and unfamiliar environment, the way in which expats organize themselves outside of their host-organization (i.e. in their personal life) plays a crucial role in their overall adaptation. Since adaptation research attempts to understand the ways in which expats "struggle for an equilibrium" (Kim, 2005, p. 378), as they must constantly make sense of new or unfamiliar situations and ways of doing, we also attempt to understand the way expats do so outside of their host-organization, in order to gain a well-rounded understanding of the adaptation process. As we will see, through ethnographic observation and qualitative interviews, data revealed three main cultivation patterns of expatriates, which include cultivating (dis)comfort, cultivating relationships through imitation, compliance and intimacy, as well as cultivating organizational success. Within each of these categories, many sub-categories come into play, each supporting in exemplifying the ways in which expatriates make sense of their values and social norms during ambiguous situations with the host-community.



Model 1.1. *The Cultivation of Values in Adaptation*

In order to present the data, the analysis will loosely follow the structure of this model. The model of Cultivation of Values in Adaptation was created in order to visually represent three constitutive aspects uncovered through this research, that have been shown to influence the ways in which expatriates made sense of their values and adapted to ambiguous situations as they related to the cultivation of host-community relations. As demonstrated in the model, and as will be discussed throughout the analysis, the primary aspect that seems to influence the ways in which expats cultivate values is their overall goal of or reason for expatriation (i.e. the degree to which

the goal is professional versus personal). However, since the research shows that there are many aspects at play when expats make sense of their values and social norms and adapt to ambiguities and/or misunderstandings, the study suggests that we might also consider the level of experience of the expatriate, as well as the expat's level of intercultural communication competence, as described by Arastharam and Doersfel (2005). Here, the term *experienced* is used to describe expats who have past workplace experience, and oftentimes past expatriate experiences. In some cases, young (twenty-something's) expatriates were completing their bachelor's degree while taking part in internship programs in Vietnam. Thus, their prior workplace experience was limited as many had only worked in part-time positions. In other cases, a few participants had left their full-time positions in Canada to expatriate for the first time, while others had expatriated many times before.

As we can see, though each aspect has a different degree of influence on how expatriates will adapt to the situation, they each work together and influence one another to varying degrees. Furthermore, this model assists in demonstrating that the degree to which individual expatriates will cultivate their relations with the host-community ranges, depending on what they think the situation requires. This means that the figures of (dis)comfort, host-colleage relationships, and organizational success that we will analyse, each lie on a spectrum, as expats will cultivate these figures to different degrees depending on what the situation is telling them to do, based on their expatriation goals, experiences and intercultural communication competence.

By following the lead of this model, the next section will outline narratives surrounding some of the expats' experiences outside of the workplace. As we will see, how expats adapt, organize and make sense of their values and experiences in moments of malaise or

misunderstanding is often related to the emerging tensions between cultivating “comfort” and managing “discomfort”.

5.1. Adapting: Managing the Figures of (Dis)comfort

Journal Entry: January 27th, 2019

Like most Canadians I have met here, I am drifting towards moving away from the Old Quarter to live in the expat district. I am telling myself that by living there for the last month of my research, I am going to be surrounded by more of the people who fit within my research sample. This is undoubtedly an asset for my study. But I know that I am also drifting to Tay Ho out of my desire to increase my comfort level. The house that I chose to rent is in a quiet neighbourhood, filled with a mix of expats and seemingly more “well-off” locals. I think the reason I feel a sense of comfort when I imagine myself living there is because the surroundings are much more familiar and the stimuli is much less intense than it is in other parts of Hanoi, such as in the Old Quarter. For instance, coffee shops and French bakeries can be found directly beside street food vendors, motorbike traffic is seemingly cut in half, and a few of the roads have sidewalks, making walking around much easier. Being alone in Hanoi is already uncomfortable enough as it is, so seeking a little bit of comfort during my time abroad makes a lot more sense to me now. In this city where almost everything feels so different, I feel comforted by surrounding myself with people who share more similarities and cultural codes with me.

As Kim (2005) explains, when expats enter their new environment (i.e. host-community), they are “faced with situations that deviate from their familiar and internalized original scripts” (p. 382). Throughout the interviews, each expat discussed deviating situations that occurred in their personal life and often associated them with feelings of uncertainty, ambiguity and uneasiness. Through the data, we can see that the ways in which expatriates handle these malaises or ambiguities often depends on how much value and importance they place on increasing their comfort or decreasing their discomfort in that particular situation. For the sake of this research, “comfort” can be defined as a feeling of relief, ease, and/or familiarity (Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary, 2019) and is often associated with ways of living back home. While in some instances, expatriates expressed their desire to embrace uncomfortable situations, - such as intentionally

pushing themselves out of their *comfort zone* – other times they were more adamant about finding means to mitigate uncomfortable situations by managing their (dis)comfort. As we will see, the degree to which expats tend to avoid and/or attempt to mitigate uncomfortable situations lies on a spectrum. Each expat has shown to fluctuate along this spectrum, depending on what they value most in a particular situation or how they cling on to what matters to them. When discussing the management of comfort and discomfort in their everyday lives abroad, the matters of concern that came up most frequently were affordability, pollution, western amenities, and contact and/or relationships with other expatriates. In what follows, we will see how, for each of these matters, the level to which expats will organize and make sense of the figures of comfort and discomfort varies depending on what they value most and what counts most to them in those moments.

5.1.1. Pollution: Managing Discomfort

Reflection

During my first week in Vietnam, I began wearing a surgical mask outdoors when I was travelling around the city by motorbike. At first, I didn't know much about the density of the air pollution in Hanoi, so I imitated what I saw of the host-community members. It wasn't until I began meeting more Canadian expats and that I started feeling the constant symptoms of a head cold, that I chose to better inform myself on the poor air quality in Hanoi. A fellow Canadian provided me with a few surgical masks that he got from Canada. These masks were not like the masks worn by the locals. They were not only form fitted to my face but also had an air filtration system on the front. I began wearing these as opposed to the basic surgical masks that I wore in the past, and oftentimes, when the pollution levels were really high, I would use them when I was simply walking or sitting outdoors. I was staying in Hanoi for two-months, and thus would only be exposed to the high air pollution levels for a relatively short period of time, and this reassured me.

Throughout the interviews, one of the most prominent malaises discussed by expatriates was that of the overall air pollution in Vietnam. In Hanoi, during the time that the research was being conducted, the air quality index (AQI) often ranked between 150 US AQI and 200 US AQI, meaning that there was an “increased likelihood of adverse effects and aggravation to the heart

and lungs among the general public” (2018 World Air Quality Report, 2018, p.6) according to the United States Embassy. Additionally, during a few days in January 2018, the city reached an AQI of over 200 US AQI, meaning that the air was “very unhealthy” and the “general public would be noticeably affected” (2018 World Air Quality Report, 2018, p.6). According to the IQAir AirVisual 2018 World Quality Report, Hanoi ranked 12th on the list of most polluted capital cities in the world, and Vietnam ranked 17th for the most polluted country in the world (2018 World Air Quality Report, 2018, p.7). As Canada ranks 61st on the list of most polluted countries, we can see how the expats may not have been accustomed to such elevated levels of pollution. In what follows, three expatriate narratives surrounding the perceived issue of pollution will be outlined in order to illustrate the varying degrees to which they pushed to ease discomfort amid their more polluted host-city.

During the interview process, while discussing life in Vietnam, Caleb expressed that he has struggled with the city’s pollution. For this expat, the way that he has dealt with his discomfort towards the pollution has been mainly through buying good filtration masks. Caleb expressed:

I can afford a really good mask (...) the mask that I wear (...) has a filter. I spend 35,000VDN per mask and they only last two weeks. So that is not necessarily accessible to everybody. I go buy a box of 10 for 350,000VDN. And for me, that is less than one hour's wage, but for a lot of other people, that is a lot of money.

As Caleb states that the filtered masks are not “accessible to everybody”, he outlines that he is more privileged than the general population. Therefore, we can see that the figure of luxury/privilege comes into play as Caleb makes sense of the situation by comparing his advantageous professional posture with many of the host-community members. According to Caleb, his way to adapt to the pollution has been through a means that many in the general host-community cannot afford. Though he is aware of his privilege, he continues to buy these filtered

masks, as he seemingly places more value on his own individual health than he does on emulating the general population's way of doing.

The data shows that eight other expats have also discussed the fact that they wear better filtration masks to help diminish the effects of the pollution when they are outdoors. According to my observations, this is not a typical Vietnamese practice since host-community members were mostly witnessed wearing basic surgical masks. Seemingly due to their monetary means, the expatriates are able to afford a more effective mask - which mitigates their discomfort - and therefore they are able to take precautions that they believe are better than host-community members when it comes to their health. Through their narratives surrounding filtered masks, we can see that expatriates value their individual health enough to purchase a good that is not utilized by the host-community, thus, privileging better air quality above following host-community practices.

Although buying good filtration masks has been a means for many of the expats to ease discomfort in regard to the air pollution in Hanoi, two expats have taken even more drastic measures to mitigate the polluted air. For instance, Janine explained, "with the pollution, I panicked. I went on the Internet to understand everything. I don't want to have permanent health effects. (...) I was prepared to pay two-thousand euros for good air purifiers. I have the money, so I wanted good ones". Much like Caleb, Janine speaks in the name of her privileged position by stating that because she has "money" she can afford good air purifiers. As we can see, for this expat, the air quality in Hanoi caused her discomfort and distress since she felt unnerved about the potential side effects that the pollution would have on her health. In order to manage her concerns and lessen her discomfort towards the poor air quality, she resorted to educating herself on the issue and to spending money to install air purifiers. Since no air purifiers were being sold in

Vietnam and she had to get hers shipped from China, we can assume that having an air purifier in Vietnam is not the social norm for host-community members. Thus, Janine cultivates the figures of luxury and privilege since in this situation, part of her adaptation to the host-community has been to spend money on relatively expensive amenities that she deems “necessary” to feel more at ease living in a very polluted city.

During another interview, Emily referred to the pollution by explaining, “It makes me depressed. If I am at work and I want to go for a walk outside during lunch, it is difficult because the pollution is very thick (...) The pollution at my workplace is double that of where I live. So that is why I live where I live, ten kilometers away from my workplace, because the air is cleaner, there are trees and there isn't as much congestion”. Through Emily’s story, we can see how emotionally affected she said she is by the pollution. By stating that the pollution makes her “depressed”, this expat speaks in the name of the burden of the poor environmental conditions of her host-community. Emily’s desire to go for leisurely walks outside during work is poorly affected by the dense pollution she feels when she goes outdoors. Therefore, by living on the outskirts of the city where the air is seemingly cleaner, she has found a way to live away from the pollution, thus ease her discomfort. Though her commute to work is lengthy, in the face of this malaise, she seemingly values cleaner air more so than the convenience of proximity.

Data shows that the high level of pollution in Vietnam has been a source of discomfort for most of the expatriates and represented an actual matter of concern. When it comes to the issue of pollution, most of the expats have not adopted the host-culture’s ways of doing, which could be framed as mostly “living with”. Other than wearing surgical masks outdoors, the majority of the host-community members seem to live amidst the air-pollution without attempting to mitigate its effects, presumably for lack of financial resources. Though expats differ on how much value and

importance they place on the matter of pollution, many of them have discussed (to varying degrees) their own strategies to try to mitigate their discomforts and help diminish the potential negative health effects brought forth by the poor air quality. For instance, other practical strategies that have been mentioned by the expats have been to keep windows shut when spending time indoors, as well as not spending as much time exercising outdoors as they might at home. In this situation of malaise, each expatriate seems to make sense of their situation by attempting to find at least one way to soften the potential negative effects of the pollution. In general, it appears that expats tend to place a higher level of value on cleaner air - and their individual health - rather than emulating the host-culture's practices of "living with" the pollution.

5.1.2. Expatriate Amenities: Cultivating the Figure of Material Comfort

As we have seen in the previous section, many expats addressed spending money on air purifying supplies that are not necessarily attainable to most of the Vietnamese population, in order to manage their discomfort toward air pollution. This notion of being able to afford relatively luxurious amenities has been broached by three expats as one of the reasons for which they feel at ease living in Vietnam. Though the expats' narratives surrounding mitigating air pollution were mostly related to easing their discomforts, when it comes to discussing the affordability of everyday life in Vietnam, expat narratives tended to lean more towards the notion of cultivating an increased level of comfort. For instance, Caleb explained:

I am living in a place where having a little bit of extra cash helps me live the life that I want to live. So, if I don't feel like I am getting everything that I need in my diet, I go to a place that caters to expats and I get a salad for 130,000 VND. I can make everything work for me in a very specific way. It might be different if you weren't making money (...) I have a very comfortable quality of life over here, which is the whole point of moving here.

Through the expatriate's story, the notion of luxury or being privileged is evident, as he discusses being able to afford the life that he wants. By referring to moments of malaise by stating that he

can “make everything work” for himself, Caleb exemplifies this privileged posture that many expats seem to look for when living abroad, apparently beyond integrating in the society in which they are. To provide perspective on Caleb’s discourse, according to *Trading Economics*, the average monthly income for Vietnamese in 2018 was 5,622,000 VND, which is equivalent to approximately \$320 CAD (*Trading Economics, Vietnam Average Monthly Wages, 2018*). Therefore, we can see how the 130,000 VND that the expatriate spends on a salad, which is equal to almost \$7,40 CAD, may not be affordable for the average Vietnamese. This may be the reason why Caleb refers to the restaurant as a place that “caters to expats”. Seemingly because Caleb has enough money, he is able to mold his desired way of life in a manner that suits him. Through Caleb’s narrative, we can see that cultivating what is said to be a high quality of life is apparently the primary reason for choosing to move to Vietnam. Although Caleb often discussed the effort he has made to familiarize himself with Vietnamese lifestyles, for instance, through living in Vietnamese dense neighbourhoods with Vietnamese roommates, we can nevertheless see that the material comfort he cultivates through being able to afford what he “wants” in moments of malaise, seems to be the main reason for choosing to expatriate to this host-country.

The notion of placing value in affordability has been broached by another expat named Leah as well, when she expressed, “Vietnam is a country that is very comfortable in so many ways, especially if you have money, you can do anything. You can go to another city for very cheap (...) you can have all sorts of food (...). In terms of comfort, like Western comfort, it has everything”. As we can see, Leah describes comfort as having access to Western amenities, thus placing value on familiarity and what she experienced back home. Furthermore, through her narrative, she is clear about the notion that these comforts (i.e. cheap travel, food and Western amenities) are attainable if you have enough money. Similar to Caleb’s narrative, she seems to value her ability

to purchase material comfort in her experience as an expatriate. Thus, in both of these cases, the value that the expats place on material comfort and quality of life supersedes other aspects that may influence one's decision in expatriating to a specific country, such as culture or work. Such as the case with the air pollution, when it comes to malaises surrounding quality of life, the expats are willing to step away from the "Vietnamese way-of-doing", in order to cultivate an increased level of comfort that allows them to profit from their host-community.

Through the two aforementioned narratives, we can see how being able to live like "expats", that is, being able to afford more than the general Vietnamese population, allows the expatriates to cultivate the life they say they want. In general, the data shows that expats tend to take advantage of the affordability of Vietnam, since each expat has seemingly stepped away to some degree from the Vietnamese practices, to seek relatively luxurious amenities. As we have seen, being able to afford more luxurious amenities seems to be a prominent value and an important part of expats' adaptation to their host-community, as it is a common means for the expats to cultivate a certain level of comfort within their unfamiliar environment.

5.1.3. Expatriate Lifestyle: Managing the Figure of Symbolic Comfort

As outlined throughout, the notion of being able to ease discomfort and purchase comfort have been central figures for expatriates when discussing their ways of living and working in Vietnam. Another common figure surrounding increasing comfort, especially symbolic comfort (i.e. ways of doing) has been expatriates' contact and relations with other expats. For instance, many have explained that in general, spending time with other expats is in many ways comforting. In one case, Lucy explained that she believes finding a balance between spending time with both locals and expats is "healthy" and "fruitful" for herself and her relationships. She described that she doesn't want to spend everyday with other expats, since she would be "desperate" and

“unhappy” if she didn’t spend time with locals. But when she does spend time with expats, it is “easy” and she is “very happy”, since they understand each other. Here we can see how important and valuable spending time with expats and locals is for Lucy, since by doing so, she is able to be happy all while avoiding feelings of desperation. By explaining that her time with other expats is easy, she seems to refer to the apparent mutual understanding they have between each other, likely due to them speaking the same language and sharing similar experiences and/or cultural references. Although she seems to cultivate a certain level of comfort due to the familiarity found in other expats, she clarifies that surrounding herself with too much of this familiarity would cause her discomfort, since she places a high level of importance in cultivating relationships with locals and learning about cultural matters.

Although Lucy has expressed finding her own balance and level of comfort between spending time with expats and locals, Sophia has expressed the lack of balance that she has cultivated in this regard. During the interview, she expressed, “I definitely could have chosen a harder route, or I could have chosen to go somewhere and be isolated and then acclimate. But I immediately was like, I need to take what I have and what I know and take advantage of that even if it is following the path that is more comfortable”. Sophia further explains that she decided to find a place to live in an expat neighbourhood and shares a house with five other westerners, since this was more comfortable for her. Through Sophia’s discourse we can see that instead of favouring the unknown – and the “harder route” of being more mixed with locals as she said -, she seems to have placed a high level of value in what she is already familiar with and has pushed to emulate this familiarity in her host-culture. When Sophia states that she takes “advantage” of what is already known to her, she exemplifies the desire to cultivate familiarity in an unfamiliar environment. While Sophia seeks what is already familiar to her, Lucy attempts to cultivate more

of a balance between familiarity and unfamiliarity – thus placing more importance on becoming familiarized with new ways of doing and more accustomed with the local culture. The other interviewed expats' narratives also fluctuate along this spectrum. Therefore, it seems that, during these ambiguous moments or situations that would favour a more thorough integration, each expatriate has attempted to cultivate his or her desired lifestyle by trying to make sense of the apparent tension between what is more familiar (i.e. home lifestyle) and what is less accustomed (i.e. host-community lifestyle).

5.1.4. Comfort and Discomfort: Emerging Tensions

As we can see, when discussing the notion of comfort and discomfort, most of the time, expats' narratives tend to revolve around their basic needs, such as physiological needs (i.e. food, home) and safety needs (i.e. mitigating air pollution), and also encompass belonging needs (i.e. relationships). In some circumstances, expatriates are likely to try to cultivate comfort, and in others, try to appease their discomfort. As we can see throughout the narratives, comfort and discomfort are constantly working together, as expats are always making sense of and voicing both simultaneously depending on the situation. When expats attempt to increase their well-being, they seem to do so either by trying to emulate or reproduce what is already familiar to them, which seems to be the case when they choose to move in an expat dense neighbourhood with more westernized amenities, or by living in a way that surpasses their living standard at home (i.e. by purchasing relatively luxurious goods). When expats attempt to ease discomfort, they often do so by trying to mitigate the effects and the severity of what is causing them discomfort.

Additionally, expats who both value and actively pursue pushing themselves out of their comfort-zone (i.e. embracing host-community lifestyles and/or cultural elements), are encouraged to familiarize themselves and learn local practices as a way to ease their discomfort. All in all,

throughout their expatriation process, comfort is likely never fully achieved, and discomfort is never fully avoided, as expatriates are constantly facing new situations and are trying to make sense of and adapt to their new environment. As we have seen in the stories outlined above, in moments of malaise or ambiguity, expats each pushed to cultivate comfort and ease discomfort in different moments and to different degrees depending on what they valued most, what they cultivated and what seemed to matter to them.

5.2. Adapting: Cultivating Host-Colleague Relationships

Journal Entry: January 25th 2019

A few days ago, I encountered another misunderstanding surrounding the price of food. This occurred during lunch, when I decided to visit a food vendor listed on a “Local Foods” pamphlet I received from a friend, to try a local papaya salad dish (Nộm). The pamphlet outlined that Nộm would cost 15,000 VND, but after I ate it, the restaurant owner charged me 40,000 VND. I tried to explain to her that I was told that the cost would be much lower, but we couldn’t understand each other properly due to the prominent language barrier. With the help of a customer that could speak a bit of English, we were able to decipher that 40,000 VND was in fact the price for everyone, and that the owner was not giving me a different price because I was a tourist. I remember feeling a bit saddened by the entire misunderstanding. The restaurant owner didn’t seem happy that I was questioning the price, and inquiring about it became much more of an ordeal than I had intended it to. It is difficult to know when to question the prices here, since I have witnessed many merchants “overcharge” tourists for items. I remember seeing tourists buy a pineapple from a street merchant for 100,000 VND (approximately \$5.67), while I bought a pineapple from that same merchant for 10,000 VND (approximately \$0.50). Since a Vietnamese acquaintance had warned me about the difference between “tourist prices” and “Vietnamese prices”, I often question the initial prices offered by street merchants. Regardless, I find myself feeling torn between speaking up about the prices of items, to show vendors that I am aware that they might be charging me a tourist price, or keeping quiet and paying the price that they offer in order to avoid potentially creating an unpleasant encounter. I find that when I do choose to inquire about the price, it becomes very challenging due to language and cultural barriers. Seemingly because of these barriers, misunderstandings become more heightened than they do when they occur back home.

As we can see with this reflexive thought of my own experience of living in Vietnam, managing (dis)comfort in one's personal life is a common way for some expats to make sense of their new environment. When it comes to adapting and making sense of their values during ambiguous or unknown situations in their host-organization, expats' narratives tend to focus not only on their management of (dis)comfort but also on the ways in which they tried to adapt to their workplace or personal relationships. For instance, one of the most common matters brought forth through the data was that of cultivating relationships (i.e., being mindful and reflexive about relations) - specifically with host-community members. Throughout the interview process, many expats recounted the ways in which they made sense of their values and social norms by being self-reflexive about their relationships with host-colleagues. In the following section, we will be able to see how cultivating relationships as well as making sense of them has been a way for expats to adapt to their new environment. However, the data has shown that the degree to which one will put the emphasis on the cultivation of relationships will fluctuate depending on a variety of situational issues, such as organizational and personal ones. Throughout the interviews, many social practices and ways of interacting and behaving have been discussed. However, the most common approaches to cultivating relationships during ambiguous situations brought forth by expatriates have been the figures of imitation, compliance, and intimacy.

5.2.1. The Figure of Imitation

Reflection: November 14th, 2019

The traffic laws that I know and obey at home are not pertinent here. The traffic lights are seemingly just for show, and signalling before changing lanes or turning is not common practice. On top of this, the sheer density of the traffic is not something that I am used to. For the most part, especially during my first week, when I was still new to the ways of the road, I felt very overwhelmed. I struggled in getting to my destination, since I didn't have time to properly think about veering off of the main road before the dense six lane traffic swept me forward, leaving me without the ability to slow my bike down

or turn. Overtime, I learned how to manage the traffic in the best way that I could, which was mostly to imitate the local way of doing, and by doing so, I began to feel less anxious. Now, by the end of my time in Hanoi, driving feels almost like second nature, so much so, that I tease my family back home that I may have trouble adapting back to the more rigid Canadian driving laws.

A way of managing ambiguity or discomfort through cultivating relationships that has come up in a total of ten interviews with expats, has been that of imitating host-community behaviours and communication practices as a means to “fit-in” in specific situations. These interviews show that even when the host-practices were different and at times challenged expats’ own set of social norms and values - due to what they represented culturally and socially - the expats still imitated host-members in order to cultivate and nurture their relationship. Thus, the data showed that in many cases involving malaise or misunderstanding, expatriates placed more value in “fitting-in” by imitating host-colleagues’ ways of doing rather than sticking to their own set of social norms. In what follows, two narratives illustrating how expatriates have imitated host-community members in order to cultivate their relationship by being mindful about it will be outlined.

To begin, in one case, Leah gathered what she felt were social cues and adjusted her conduct accordingly by adapting to a situation in a way she believed host-members would. For instance, Leah recounted a moment when she was being “yelled at” by her boss in front of other employees. She explained that although she knew that she could have clarified herself to her boss - since she strongly felt it was inappropriate to be yelled at -, according to her, speaking up would not have been in her best interest. She believed that if she had done so, others would have perceived her as “that crazy young girl talking back to the boss” or “a really disrespectful person”, thus possibly hampering her relations with colleagues or at least their perception of her.

With this story, we can see how this expat seems to have considered the intricacies of youth, gender, and authority, and how she believed they came into play in her host-workplace. For instance, during a previous moment in her interview, Leah mentioned that, as a young woman, she felt as though she was “at the bottom of the food chain”. Therefore, through her narrative, it appears as though she felt that by being a young woman she could not talk back to her boss without being seen as disrespectful or crazy by her host-community colleagues. She elaborates on this by stating, “I do understand that it is the way that relationships work here. Your boss knows better than you. It is frustrating because I have always had fairly open bosses”. Regardless of the frustration she felt in this instance, Leah outlined that the reason she chose not to speak up was because she collected social cues from the host-community employees and had a sense that they would not have spoken up, had they been in this situation. In other words, it seems as though, in this instance, Leah cultivated interpersonal sensitivity (Bernieri, 2001). For instance, in her narrative, she explains, “I just knew that I couldn’t (speak up). I don’t know how to explain it. I think it is through studying anthropology. You understand quickly how to pick up the social cues of working in different settings”. She explains that due to her past educational experience, she is seemingly able to easily pick up on the host-community’s social cues. As we can see, in this instance, her own emotions towards the situation and her set of workplace norms were not as important for her as imitating host-community conduct, thus placing value during this moment of misunderstanding in “fitting-in” rather than in speaking-up. Therefore, she cultivated restraint in the name of “good” relationships, in order to fit in and likely be more accepted by host-community members.

The practice of gathering and being observant of social cues from host-community members, that is, trying to figure out what ought to be the appropriate social norm in a given situation, has been broached by other participants as well. Similarly, many have discussed the ways

in which they have directly mirrored the host-community's conduct. For instance, Liam outlined that although he was used to presenting new ideas and speaking up freely at work, it is better for him to remain quiet during meetings in his host-organization. He explained, "I am really used to bosses that have been very open to new initiatives, but I feel like they are less open to hearing this here. If I am the boss, I am the boss, you know?". He further explained that through observing social cues, he learned that his role in group meetings was to sit and listen to what his boss had to say. Liam elaborated by explaining that in meetings "the manager or the director is the one who decides the subject and he is the one who will talk about it". By this, he points to what seems to be a more hierarchical view on management and authority, a view he was not used to prior to his expatriation.

In his story, Liam outlined that his host-coworkers once received him "coldly" when he had brought up a new initiative during a meeting. He explained, "I am always trying to juggle between - no, take your time to take your place because you are still new here, - as I have for every other job I have done (...) So I tried to do the same thing here. But one time I saw that even if I tried to do it (i.e. bring up a new initiative), it was more complicated." For this reason, Liam explained that he no longer broaches new ideas during meetings. Similar to Leah's narrative, he observed social norms surrounding formal authority in his workplace and has cultivated his relationships by imitating the host-community's norms. In other words, by gathering social cues of colleagues' reactions, Liam seems to have changed his practice by mirroring how his colleagues act. Therefore, the way in which this expat seems to have made sense of his values in this moment of ambiguity was by placing more importance on being well-received by his colleagues by not creating a possible malaise, than on broaching his new initiatives in meetings.

Through these two stories we can see how imitating colleagues' practices, such as by observing social cues and/or directly mirroring the host-community's actions, is an approach used by some expats to make sense of ambiguous situations or possible malaises. These narratives enable us to show that adjusting one's own actions, being reflexive and imitating colleagues, is often believed to lead to a more attuned outcome in relationships. In these two cases, as well as for the eight other expats who have expressed practicing a strategy of imitation, the perceived outcomes are related to blending in with host-community colleagues and cultivating "good" relationships. By using imitation as a way to be attuned to both situations and relationships, expats have outlined that they felt to be better received by others, allowing them to fit-in more with their host colleagues and their organization. Therefore, when the host-community's social norms and values regarding workplace practices differ from the expats', they often make sense of their social norms and values as deeming them to be mostly inappropriate for those given circumstances. Instead, expats mostly favoured host-colleagues' ways of doing, as a means to cultivate these relationships.

5.2.2. Imitation on a Spectrum

Although these two narratives illustrate ways in which expats have imitated host-community practices, data shows that in some moments, expats do not always use a "copy-paste" strategy to cultivate their relationship and make sense of apparent malaise or misunderstanding. In fact, as we will see, the degree to which an expat will imitate or try to emulate host-members during situations, especially ones where misunderstandings present themselves, will vary quite meaningfully. In other words, the practice of imitation is not always the "go-to" for expats when cultivating and being mindful about their relationship with host colleagues. Thus, the degree to which an expatriate chooses to imitate or not, lays on a spectrum. While some expats will decide

to fully replicate colleagues' ways of doing and being during moments of ambiguity, others, especially the more "experienced" expats, will choose to act according to their own social norms and values even if it might create a discrepancy.

As we will see, many times, expats' ways of doing will fluctuate along the spectrum of imitation, depending on what they perceive the situation requires (i.e. what seems to be the most appropriate thing to do), and on the degree to which they are willing to let go of their internalized social norms and values in that given context. To be precise, eight expatriates have recounted stories involving moments in which they chose not to fully imitate host-community colleagues during ambiguous moments. In what follows, two separate narratives will be outlined in order to demonstrate the fluctuations on this spectrum of imitation.

To begin, during her interview, Janine, one of the more experienced expatriates, outlined that although she gathered social cues on how her work colleagues conduct themselves during lunch hours, she chose not to reproduce their practices. Janine explained that during the lunch hour, her colleagues napped on the floor of the meeting room. Instead of participating in this apparent social norm, she chooses to spend this time at home. Janine expressed:

They sleep at the office. They take forty-five minutes to eat, and then they sleep for forty-five minutes in the big conference room. They all go there with mattresses, blankets and pillows and shut the lights off and sleep. I thought of joining, but with the pollution and since I live five minutes from there, I won't sleep in the pollution.

Here, this expat decides to act in a way that apparently goes against the workplace norm or way of doing. By stating, "I won't sleep in the pollution", Janine demonstrates her resistance towards the host-community practice of sleeping in the conference room. As she explains, at one point, she thought of imitating this practice, however, it seems as though she has concluded that not following this norm was what would benefit her the most. Therefore, since she wants to avoid sleeping in the "pollution", walking home during lunch seems to be a better alternative for her. As has often

been the case for Janine, it appears as though mitigating the effects of the pollution is prioritized above adopting her host-colleagues' practices.

On another note, although Emily (one of the least experienced expats) has often expressed the importance of mirroring host-colleagues and adopting their practices even if they put her own values in question, she hasn't always fully done so. For instance, in one circumstance where she didn't want to adopt the host-community practice, Emily admitted to lying to her host-colleagues about her ways of doing in order to better fit-in. Specifically, during an observation period, Emily was overheard speaking with her boss, telling her that the researcher and herself took the public bus to get to their meeting location. This wasn't true, as we had both taken our own motorcycle taxis. Once Emily and I were alone, Emily explained that she often makes it seem like she takes the bus to commute to work and elsewhere around the city, so that her coworkers don't perceive her as having a lot of money (the fee for the motorcycle taxis can often amount up to ten times more than that of the public bus), something that she feels might negatively affect their relationship. For Emily, it seems that taking public-transport placed her on a more even ground as her colleagues, since it is a normal practice for many locals who don't own their own method of transportation. Regardless, it seems that this expat doesn't actually commute via public-transport, thus has not adapted her conduct to this more local practice. But, since she wanted to be perceived as she though she has adapted, she apparently lied about it to her host-colleagues. It is as though appearing like she has emulated her host-colleagues' conduct was more important than actually doing so.

Through these two narratives, we can see that depending on the situation and the perceived relationships, whether one decides to adapt their way of doing to mimic host-community practices or decides to keep with their own social norms, will differ depending on what matters most to them

in that moment. Data has shown that the process of imitating (or pretending to imitate) seems to result, to some level, in conformity. The degree to which an expat will want to conform will depend on what they value most in that specific instance and how much importance they place on the perceived social repercussions and how it may affect the cultivation of their relationship with the host-colleagues.

5.2.3. The Figure of Compliance

Reflection: November 14th, 2019

I was standing on a small side street with only a few people and nothing but restaurants in sight. I was stuck and unsure of what I should do next, when a young Vietnamese came over to me, seemingly to see if I needed help. We couldn't understand each other due to linguistic differences, so I pointed to my motorbike tire to show him that it was busted. He gestured for me to follow him, and unsure about what else I should do, I nodded my head in agreement. Together we started rolling my bike forward. He led me to the front of a house. It didn't seem like a shop, but I could see tools and tire tubes available in the open-air family room. After discussing with the Vietnamese family inside, the young Vietnamese and what I could only guess was the father of the family started working on my tire. The family welcomed me into their living room and provided me with a chair to sit on as I waited for them to fix my tire. We couldn't communicate verbally, but with Google Translate and many gestures, we were able to share a bit of information about ourselves and our lives. When they successfully completed the task, the young Vietnamese rolled my bike back to where it was when he first found me, shook my hand and waved goodbye. After this whirlwind incident, I was back on the highway and on my way home. I was so thankful for him and the help he provided me. Even though we had a challenging time verbally communicating, I left the encounter with such an overwhelming sense of community and gratitude for his desire to help me, a complete stranger.

Another way that expats have recounted making sense of moments of malaise has been through practicing what we coined by the term “compliance”. In this case, compliance refers to accepting and following a certain demand or expectation by host-colleagues, without explicitly complaining, denying and/or contradicting them, even when the request seemingly challenges one's norms and values. Throughout the interviews, seven expats have outlined the ways in which

they have agreed to executing certain tasks even when they didn't want to or felt uncomfortable doing so. It seems as though, most of the expats who have discussed complying even when they felt uncomfortable in doing so, have been amongst the least *experienced* participants. Similar to the reasons why an expatriate may want to conform, through their narratives, it seems as though some expats complied either to fit in, to not cause a scene, or to not hamper their relationships with host-members. In what follows, three narratives will be outlined in order to showcase how compliance has been a figure cultivated by some expats in order to make sense of misunderstandings and ambiguity during their adaptation to their host-organization.

To begin, during her interview, Emma, one of the least "experienced" expatriates, recounted a misunderstanding that occurred during the first two months of her expatriation, where she agreed to eat meat even though she considers herself a vegetarian. In her workplace, an in-house chef cooks lunch every day, and the staff eat together around a table. She explained that during one of these lunches, her co-worker offered her meat and she replied, "no thank you". According to Emma, her co-worker responded by saying "she (the chef) cooked this, and she would be really happy if you tried". Emma explained that she agreed by saying "ok just one piece". However, during the interview she stated, "I was pissed off (...) but then it happened another time and I just didn't know what to do in that situation".

Although she didn't explicitly outline why she agreed to eat meat repeatedly even though she didn't want to, it seems as though she was doing so in order to be respectful towards the chef, since the chef was going to be "really happy" if she ate it. Furthermore, although Emma was frustrated with the situation, she felt uncertain about how she should respond. Thus, in each circumstance, it seems that Emma made sense of her value on vegetarianism as deeming it to be less important than eating the meat in order to comply with the situation. Through her storytelling,

we can see that she declined to eat the meat at first by voicing her preference. Seemingly due to the insistence of her co-worker, she felt pressured to compromise, and thus negotiated by eating only one piece of meat. It seems as though this decision was made in order to make the chef and her co-worker happy, therefore, not causing a scene nor possibly disrupting their relationship. In this case, she cultivated lenience since her value (vegetarianism) was put aside momentarily, as a means to comply with what seemed to be social pressure to fully fit-in.

Additionally, four other expats mentioned the way they seemed to comply with their host-colleagues' requests or expectations, specifically in reference to where they sat during meetings. In each of these expats' stories, they discussed the way in which they were told to sit at the head of the table or in the front row of a meeting hall, while host-community colleagues sat behind them. For these expats, sitting in the front seemed to signify that they were more "important", which they noted, made them feel uncomfortable. Regardless of them saying that they felt uncomfortable about the typical seating arrangements, the expats seemed to continuously comply with the requests without any protestation, thus cultivating the apparent slyness of organizations to put expatriates in the front row to show them off. For example, coworkers Sophia and Emily both explained that when they sit in front at meetings, they often get photographed. Sophia explained, "they emphasize the fact that we are interns (...) and Canadian". Additionally, Emily outlined, "the fact that we are international, I think it gives the organization prestige". By stating that her national identity gives her host-workplace "prestige", Emily reinforces the privileged posture that is brought forth by many of the expatriates. Additionally, although both Sophia and Emily outlined their uneasiness regarding the situation, it seems as though they have kept complying with this practice without any attempt of proposing an alternative. Therefore, the fact that they cultivated restraint in speaking up about their "said-to-be" clash in values regarding this

situation allows their organization to continue to reproduce the cliché practice of “showing-off” their expatriate employees.

Caleb also discussed this type of compliance, as he explained the malaise he felt surrounding often being videotaped by host-colleagues when giving workplace presentations. He explained, “I was really uncomfortable with that, but I didn't really know if I had the right to say no. So, I kind of let them do it and just kind of got used to it”. According to Caleb, the videotaping was used to advertise the organization on social media. He outlined, “I just didn't test it because I liked the place and I wanted that job”. Here we can see that Caleb also complied with a practice that made him feel uncomfortable because “he wanted that job”, thus compromising on something he said he was not at ease with. As Caleb stated that he didn't know if he “had the right to say no”, he speaks in the name of the uncertainty he felt towards the outcome of the situation if he were to be non-compliant. Like we have seen in other narratives, the uncertainty surrounding what would happen if he voiced his concerns led him to fully comply with the host-community's practice in spite of reticence. Such as is the case with other expats, Caleb has cultivated lenience in his values or ways of doing, and seemingly by complying, he felt more certain that he would be able to keep the job. Thus, according to Caleb, by avoiding possible conflict and by meeting the expectation, he would be able to cultivate better relationships with his host-community colleagues and avoid potential repercussions (i.e. losing his job).

It appears as though in each of the above narratives, expats felt more at ease complying with host-community requests rather than speaking up. In many instances, expats momentarily pushed their values and worldviews aside in order to be attuned to the local practice. The unknown of what would happen if they declined to comply with the practices was likely one of the driving forces behind their acquiescence. Additionally, as we can see, perhaps in these situations, the

values that were being challenged did not matter enough for the expats to push back and potentially disrupt the harmony of the situation. As the following section will outline, sometimes when values that really seem to matter are challenged, expats have decided to speak up and not be fully amenable.

5.2.4. Compliance on a Spectrum

As mentioned above, depending on what the situation seems to require, some expats will not always be accepting of workplace requests or expectations. As is the case for “imitation”, the degree to which one will comply during moments of malaise or discontent lies on a spectrum, as it seems typical of the acculturation process in our case. In the ambiguous moments mentioned above, expats seemed to be quite obedient, however, in other situations, expats were more adamant about moulding their practice in a way that better aligns with their own set of social norms and values. Often times, expats expressed making sense of an uncomfortable workplace practice by autonomously coming up with a way to complete the request all while appeasing their internal conflict. On the other hand, in situations where they couldn’t find a resolution to the malaise on their own, four expats discussed the ways in which they have fostered said-to-be honest discussions with their colleagues about their own set of social norms and values to allow host colleagues to try to understand why they were not fully accepting of what was being asked. Throughout the interviews, six participants have outlined situations in which they were non-compliant or refused to let go of what seemed to matter to them. It seems as though, for these six expatriates, non-compliance was common practice, as in each of their interviews, they expressed multiple instances in which they didn’t fully acquiesce. In what follows, three participant narratives will be outlined in order to showcase how they have made sense of their social norms and values in moments of misunderstanding through cultivating an attitude of non-compliance.

Perhaps one of the most prominent examples of non-compliance through “honest” discussion was a narrative provided by Janine, in which she outlined a moment when her boss asked her to review one of his many businesses on a website. According to Janine, in response to her boss’s request, she explained, “I don’t think it is a good idea for your company because I think that the customer wants an independent review and if they know that it is people from your company that are reviewing, I am not sure that is what they are looking for”. Here we can see that Janine placed value in being honest and transparent with customers to the point that she felt like she needed to confront her boss about their “clash in values” regarding rating his business. By stating “I don’t think it is a good idea for your company”, Janine shows her boss that she values and wants to do what is best for her boss’s business. However, instead of simply denying her boss of his request, she elaborated on why she didn’t feel comfortable in doing so, thus providing him with a reasoning for the rebuttal. The practice of providing her boss with a justification for why she did not agree with him has come up frequently in Janine’s other narratives as well.

Though this is an example of an attitude of non-compliance through open discussion, in situations where expats could come up with a resolution to their malaise autonomously, they often chose not to discuss openly with their host-coworkers, seemingly in order to not cause a scene. For instance, in two separate situations, expats were asked to copy-paste information from other websites, in order to claim it as their own. Both Janine and Emily observed that presumably due to the lax copy-write laws in Vietnam, copying information from the Internet is common practice for their host-colleagues. Janine explained, “I didn’t feel ethical about taking information from someone else, to make this company money. Also, if I am taking the info from a non-credible source, and I give it to our company and it is not good (...) I want to have it right”. By explaining that she “didn’t feel ethical” about the proposed practice, Janine speaks in the name of her value

for honesty and transparency. Therefore, instead of simply copy-pasting the information, Janine and Emily handed the requested documents to their bosses with a reference list to all of their used sources, a practice they were accustomed to following back home. Therefore, we can see how the malaise they felt due to their values being challenged, was dealt with implicitly since both expats were able to find an alternative that would make both them and their boss content, without having to go against their own set of ethical values.

In another circumstance, Janine felt conflicted on how she should handle a particular situation involving gender-norms. In general, when faced with situations involving gender norms (a commonly perceived malaise by expats), many expats have expressed feeling too uneasy to speak up, as is also the case in Janine's circumstance. According to Janine, during her communal lunches with her host-colleagues, her boss left all of his waste on the table (apple core, sunflower seeds, etc.), and exited the room, apparently expecting the women to clean up his garbage. Intensifying her malaise, Janine's Canadian male colleague, Mike, also imitated his boss's actions by leaving all of his waste on the table. In reference to this situation, Janine stated, "it was the worst for me (...) for me it is not respectful (...) It is not because you are a man that you can't pick up your things". By stating "it is not because you are a man", Janine points to her belief that this situation is linked to gender norms. She explains the conflict she felt in this situation by elaborating, "for me it was natural to help them. But on the other side, because I am a woman, am I giving them the impression that really women have to do this, because Mike is leaving and I am staying? (...) There was this conflict there. So, I was like, - ok what should I do?"

She explained that she didn't feel comfortable speaking up but wanted to find a solution to the conflict of values that she was experiencing without compromising her relationships. She clarified, "I think that change should come from the women here". By saying this, Janine is stating

that since she is not Vietnamese, she should not be the one to speak up about her concern surrounding gender norms. For this reason, she chose to broach her issue during a meeting with other Canadians in Vietnam, which also included her colleague Mike. In this meeting, Janine recounts that she felt comfortable speaking openly about the malaise she felt towards the perceived gender-norms in her office. When recounting the meeting, she elaborated, “Mike said that before I came (...) he tried to help, but the girls told him, - you don't have to. But they never said that to me”. After hearing Mike recount his situation, Janine was able to conclude that, “it is really a man and woman thing”. Therefore, she asked Mike to begin to help her clean at lunch. She noted that since he has been doing so, their host-coworkers haven't said anything about it, thus she now feels more at ease with the situation. By cultivating a more equal gendered approach and by putting in place a sort of gradual stratagem with her colleague Mike, Janine was somehow able to change how things were done in a subtle manner, at least temporarily.

As we can see, this clash of values and the apparent alternative way of going about this conflicting situation was quite complex. In this case, Janine felt that she couldn't speak up about her issue with host-colleagues, because she didn't feel like it was her place, as a foreigner, to say something and try to make a change. Seemingly this was the case because it was a practice that was executed by the entire office, and a social norm that she felt was rooted in the society more broadly. Although she didn't feel comfortable speaking up in her workplace, she did feel at ease to do so when other Canadians surrounded her. By asking Mike to help clean-up, it seems as though she wanted to show her Vietnamese colleagues that in Canada, cleaning up is not exclusive to women, but is a practice executed by everyone. Therefore, Janine has found a middle ground approach in which she was still able to comply to her boss's implicit request, thus showing her colleagues that she wanted to help, but according to her, she was also showing them that helping

is not exclusively a woman's role. In this case, Janine made sense of her values by cultivating gender-equality in her host-organization without explicitly discussing her divergent values with host-colleagues.

Accordingly, when a value, a social norm or a way of doing is important enough to some expats, they will often try to come up with middle ground strategies to engage with the host-community members. In many instances, specifically ones related to differing gender-norms, the data has shown that expats don't feel comfortable directly vocalizing their internal conflicts and malaises. Therefore, in moments when they don't feel at ease complying with what seems to be expected of them, but also don't feel comfortable vocalizing their issue, a few expatriates have explained that they would attempt to find a resolution autonomously, in which they independently adapt the request to suit their own values. Throughout the data, it seems as though when expats neither vocalized their concerns nor found a suitable middle ground, thus complying to practices that surpassed their level of comfort and opposed or disrupted their values, it resulted in feelings of frustration. In general, compliance and feelings of frustration were mostly voiced by some of the least experienced expatriates. Therefore, we can see that cultivating relationships and making sense of values and social norms through openness, mediation, and compromise, may be a fruitful practice for expatriates, in order to avoid possible adverse feelings towards their workplace and hampering their relationships with host-colleagues and the organization where they work.

5.2.5. The Figure of Intimacy

Journal Entry: January 24th, 2019

The tour wasn't supposed to last that long, but we couldn't stop talking. I asked her many questions about her upbringing and her life in Vietnam, and in return she asked me about my life back in Canada. At the start, the questions were quite surface level, - what did she do for work and leisure, - but by the end, we fell into an in-depth conversation about her family values and her childhood, while comparing and contrasting them to my own.

Throughout the interviews, many expats have discussed the value they have placed in participating in more personal (i.e. intimate) conversations and gatherings with their host-community colleagues as a way to cultivate and nurture relationships. Similar to the ways in which one may adapt to a new workplace in a familiar environment, in their host-workplace, expats discussed often making sense of their situation by engaging in non-work-related discussions with colleagues, as well as joining outside of work gatherings, in order to develop more friendly relationships. However, following the trend discussed in the previous categories, the degree to which expats will try to gain more intimacy in order to cultivate relationships varies greatly from person to person. In some cases, expats outlined that though they speak to their Vietnamese colleagues, their conversations almost solely revolve around work. Additionally, many expats have outlined that they spend most of their time engaging with other Canadian or international colleagues on a personal level as opposed to with host-community colleagues. As we will see, these expats tend to be the same ones who seek familiarity and mostly surround themselves with other westerners in their personal lives (refer to section 4.2.1).

5.2.6. Intimacy on a Spectrum

There is a noticeable trend of who is most likely to adapt to their environment by cultivating intimacy with host-community colleagues and who is less likely to do so. For instance, when observing the collective ensemble of data, the expats who discussed the fact that they have not been cultivating more personal bonds with their host-colleagues have either been young expatriates (twenty-somethings) working in their first expat role (i.e. less-experienced), expats who are working in an organization in which a large portion of employees are international and/or Canadian, or expats whose primary *intention* for expatriation have been for sole professional opportunities. This trend is not unanimous to all young first-time expats, as two of them have

discussed the notion of participating in more personal discussions and outside of work activities. However, when it comes to expats who are primarily expatriating for the *professional* opportunity provided, as well as the five expats working in organizations employing many other foreigners (Camille, Maxine, Alice, Natalie, and Leah), they have each expressed the lack of personal bonds fostered with their Vietnamese colleagues.

When it comes to expats who are expatriating mostly for professional purposes or expats working in organizations alongside many other Canadians and international colleagues, the notion of cultivating more personal relationships with Vietnamese colleagues has not been broached. Instead, it seems as though each of these expats tend to follow the seemingly pre-established and organization-wide norm of forming personal bonds with other foreigners instead of with their Vietnamese coworkers. According to the five expats working in this type of organizational environment, their Vietnamese coworkers mostly speak to one another. These five expats have each explained that during lunchtime, it is very common for the Vietnamese to eat together, while the foreigners do so separately. Both Camille and Alice have discussed that this separation during lunchtime often makes them sad, especially when the Vietnamese go out for lunch together without them, but neither of them has expressed broaching this concern with their Vietnamese counterparts. Camille even outlined, “I don’t think I will ever be close to my Vietnamese colleagues”. When talking about workplace environment, Natalie, who works in the same organization as Camille outlined, “there is a big separation between Canadians and Vietnamese”. By stating that there is a “separation” between the Canadians and the host-community coworkers, Natalie emphasizes that she spends most of her time with other Canadians.

It seems as though, in an organization that is constantly employing expats, the employed expatriates tend to stick together rather than cultivate more personal bonds with host-community

colleagues. For instance, Alice expressed, “here the Canadians become your friends”. Through the expats’ stories, it seems that this separation between host-members and expats has been a sustained norm for their organizations. Therefore, newcomers may be making sense of their environment by following this seemingly pre-established workplace norm without challenging the practice. Furthermore, host-colleagues may be less open to fostering relationships with expats, since they are also cultivating this apparent organizational norm. Oppositely, for expats who expatriate for new cultural opportunities, as well as expatriates who are employed in an organization with no other expats or only one other expat, data shows that they are more likely to seek more personal or intimate bonds with their host-colleagues than those seeking professional growth and those employed in expat-dense environments. Therefore, we can see that the purpose of expatriation, as well as workplace environments and social norms seem to play an important role in whether or not an expat will cultivate informal discussions and participate in outside of work events with host-community members, in order to cultivate more intimate relations.

5.2.7. Aspects Influencing the Cultivation of Relationships

As we have seen in the sections above, in order to make sense of their values, social norms and ways of doing during moments of malaise or discontent, expats often imitate, comply, and become more intimate with host-community members in order to better cultivate relationships. Through expats’ narratives, the data has shown that the degree to which one will cultivate either of these three figures, will depend on a variety of situational, organizational and relational aspects. For instance, similar to what Bernieri (2001) described as interpersonal sensitivity, expats will often respond to a specific circumstance depending on what they believe the situation requires and what the situation is telling them to do to a certain extent. Often times, in order to cultivate relationships, expats have momentarily pushed a specific value aside, since they believed it was

best for that specific situation. These moments were often influenced by the uncertainty that expatriates felt towards how host-members would respond if they didn't comply to the host-community's social norms. Nevertheless, data has shown that when certain values, social norms or ways of doing were being challenged, expats have stood by them instead of imitating and/or complying to their host-colleagues' practices. Specifically, when the values, social norms and ways of doing in question were too important for expats to fully let go of, they found ways to compromise with or challenge host-colleagues' requests.

As empirically illustrated, the concept of "what the situation requires" may be one of the most compelling grounded ways to locally adapt for some expatriates. When expats make sense and are being reflexive of the situation in which they are by trying to figure out what seems to be required (i.e., expectations, social norms, ways of doing) they are influenced by a variety of aspects. As previously mentioned, throughout the participants' narratives, data has shown that how far expats will push to shape and influence relationships, and how mindful they will be about them, is often dependent on more personal features, such as the expats' main purpose for expatriation and their past experiences, as well as institutional issues, such as the organizational culture. Additionally, one of the most prominent aspects found to be playing an active role in the sense-making process has been expats' past experiences. Through the expats' narratives, we can see that the ones who have past workplace experience, and oftentimes past expatriate experiences, seem more willing to stand by the values that matter most to them. Furthermore, these "experienced" expatriates (especially the ones whose main purpose for expatriation is mainly for cultural opportunity), who are working in non-expat dense environments, seem to be more willing to cultivate more personal and intimate relationships with host-colleagues through openness and participation, and have often been the ones to explain that they would go out of their way to get to

know their host-colleagues more personally. Oppositely, expatriates who are part of internship programs, thus who do not have as much professional experience, and are first time expats, are more likely than experienced expats to make sense of situations by imitating and complying to host-community colleagues even when a value that is seemingly important to them is being challenged (regardless of the main purpose of their expatriation).

Though past experiences may help to better explain why the veteran expats are more likely to speak up when values and practices that matter most are being challenged, another justification for why these expatriates may be undergoing seemingly more attuned relationships with their host-colleagues and host-organization, may be due to the apparent importance of hierarchy and age in the organizations. Most of the study's participants noted that there is an apparent strict hierarchy in their workplace, which means that the decision-making is often solely made by the organizations' higher-ranking authority figures. Furthermore, many participants have discussed the way in which host-community members valued "old age". Alex even outlined, "my age here kind of becomes an advantage because people have a bigger respect for older people". Since all of the less-experienced expatriates are younger and have jobs that are lower-ranking than the more experienced expatriates, they may feel like they can't speak up as much due to their youth and their lack of authority. Therefore, this may also partly explain why they resort to imitation and compliance even when values, social norms or ways of doing that matter are being challenged.

5.3. Adapting: Cultivating Organizational Success

As we have seen through the narratives brought forth in the interviews, it seems that older and more experienced expatriates who hold a position of authority in their workplace are more likely than younger and less-experienced expats to enact and make sense of their values and practices by speaking up in moments of malaise or misunderstanding. Additionally, the data shows

that these veteran expats have commonly addressed speaking up to their colleagues about new or alternative ways of doing in their host-organization, as a means to increase what could be called “organizational success”. It is pertinent to note that the organizational success that these expats are attempting to cultivate fits within their own definition of success, and what they think is best for the organization. Precisely, five expatriates have brought forth cultivating said-to-be organizational success. Through their narratives, each of these expats has in some way described the implementation of new practices as being challenging and difficult to balance. According to some of these expats, the challenge comes from their desire to make sustainable changes without overstepping or attempting to alter their host-colleagues’ ways of doing to the point that they become “resistant” or insulted. For example, during Alex’s interview, he expressed, “when we leave, they (host-colleagues) should be able to do it on their own”. With this in mind, narratives surrounding the ways in which expats have attempted to cultivate their own definition of organizational success will be outlined. As we will see, though each of the five expats has mentioned the challenge and the required balance associated with cultivating this projected success, the ways in which they have approached implementing new organizational practices differs.

During Alex’s interview, while discussing his organizational position, he expressed that he felt strongly about his intention to implement new organizational practices in his host-organization, since he occupied a “consultant role”. As Alex elaborated on the practices he wanted to implement in his host-organization, he expressed that in his workplace, “anything about planning long term is non-existent”. He elaborated on the malaise he felt towards this practice by stating:

In Canada, we measure and plan for the long-run all the time. But not here. It is all short-term planning. Planning is made difficult. Things will happen when they happen. When you come as a Canadian, it is tough because you want to plan everything. You want to know what is going to happen. But you can’t (...)

Businesses are at a competitive disadvantage if they don't plan" (...) they need to plan (...) Canadian businesses thrive because of these best practices.

As we can see through his discourse, Alex struggles with his host-organizations way of doing, since they apparently do not plan for the long-term, something that is seemingly of value to him. He believes that long-term planning is a successful practice that is implemented in Canadian businesses and is something that should be cultivated in his host-organization. As we can see, he groups all Canadians together, making it seem that planning long-term is a cultural practice held by Canadian organizations in general, not only by him. By stating that Canadian businesses "thrive because of these best practices", he seems to be explaining that to also "thrive", his host-organization should implement this "Canadian" way of doing. Therefore, Alex makes sense of his value by prioritizing it above his host-colleagues' practices and attempting to implement the practice of "planning long-term" within his host-organization, in order to cultivate success according to his worldview.

In this case, the expat seems to be holding on to his own definition of success, instead of adopting his host-organization's way of doing. Therefore, instead of remaining passive in his host-organization, he explains that he gladly expressed this value to his colleagues by consistently speaking up and sending them emails reminding them to plan ahead and complete tasks on time. Alex explained that he purposely speaks up and sends reminders in the hopes that his consistent and proactive behaviour becomes comical for his colleagues, and they can "laugh" at him and say things such as, "yes, I know Alex is going to ask for a date and time again". For instance, he explained, "people can laugh at me for it and I don't care. At the end of the day the organization becomes more competitive if they are able to implement these best practices". According to Alex, he uses humour and consistency as a means to communicate this workplace value to his colleagues and boss. Although

implementing this practice seems important for Alex, he noted that when he senses that his coworkers are overworked he won't "push too much", since he doesn't feel it would be "appropriate".

Though no other participant has expressed being as boisterous as Alex when it comes to implementing new workplace practices, two other participants have outlined their own ways of doing to cultivate their view of organizational success. For instance, Alice and Janine have expressed taking their time to observe their host-colleagues' ways of doing prior to attempting to suggest new practices. In her narrative, Alice expressed, "I make sure not to come in and immediately start telling them what to change. But (...) our role is also to change something. It is a balance. It takes time to make changes here." Similar to Alice, Janine also expressed taking her time to suggest new practices. Janine explained that before being assertive about implementing new practices in her workplace, she needed to feel confident in her workplace relationships. For instance, when discussing how and when she chooses to suggest new practices, she stated, "I take my time, I observe, and I go slowly". Janine elaborated:

I look at how people are doing, take notes, think, and then start step-by step (...) For example, I met yesterday with the CEO and I really think we need to speak more because he is not really in the office often. So, I asked him to meet once a week. And he said yes. (...) Step by step I make little changes. I want to understand the way they think, ask questions, and have solutions that make sense. I want them to understand the purpose of what I am doing (...) To change habits, it takes time. The first step is making people think it is a good thing. I don't want to be like – we do that this way – I want to be in a team that collaborates and finds the best idea to work.

As we can see, this differs from Alex's practice of being boisterous and comedic when he brings up his own "Canadian" workplace values in his organization. Instead, Janine expressed taking her time in developing relationships before she feels comfortable opening up about her own values and opinions on ways of doing in the workplace. By stating, "I want them to understand the purpose of what I am doing", Janine cultivates the importance of

awareness, and seems to take a more team-oriented approach. Through her discourse, we can see that in moments of malaise or discrepancy surrounding workplace practices, she makes sense of her values by finding propositions that she believes will work best for her specific coworkers, and similar to Alice, expresses being patient with her coworkers about forming the new suggested habits.

Through these expats' narratives, we can see that there seems to be a constant tension between implementing new ways of doing and keeping things the same, since many expats are adamant about cultivating a balance between both. In moments when expats wanted to implement new practices within their host-organization, they expressed debating on which practices were the most important and how they would sustainably implement them while remaining mindful of their host-colleagues' ways of doing. It seems that in some cases, ethnocentrism was present, as the expats often believed that their way of doing was best and defined success by referring to their own cultural scripts. This may help explain why sometimes expats and host-members experienced misunderstandings and/or clashes in values. All in all, cultivating said-to-be success seems to play an important role in these expats' adaptation to their workplace. As we can see, they often made sense of their values by favouring their own way of doing, or what they perceived was best for the organization, and attempting to implement new workplace practices in order to cultivate their own definition of organizational success.

6. Discussion

As we have seen with the analyses, values, social norms and ways of doing play an important role in the overall adaptation process of expatriates since expats must constantly make sense of their interactions and relations during moments of apparent ambiguity, misunderstanding or malaise with the host-community. Specifically, the ways in which expats make sense and are being reflexive of their values, social norms and ways of doing was revealed throughout the qualitative interviews. For instance, as they recounted narratives on the ways in which they encountered malaises or misunderstanding, the expats were animated by values and social norms to which they were attached, such as the ones surrounding gender norms and formal authority, and their narratives spoke for and in the name of these. This empirical case study provided the opportunity for a comprehensive understanding of how apparent underlying cultural assumptions affected expats' intercultural adaptation process, such as what they chose to "cling-on" to and cultivate when they were faced with these situations of ambiguities.

Furthermore, the interview data showed that the ways in which expatriates make sense and adapt varied quite meaningfully depending on various situational, institutional and personal aspects at play during each interaction and relation. The interviews also assisted in revealing some cultivation patterns of expatriates. For instance, as previously mentioned, the three main figures that were seemingly cultivated by expats during moments of malaise were *(dis)comfort*, *host-community relationships*, and *organizational success*. In order to cultivate these three main figures, expatriates explained that they conveyed various *sub-figures* in the process, depending on what they felt the situation required. The main sub-figures that emerged were that of discomfort, material comfort, symbolic comfort, imitation, compliance, intimacy and resistance. Though these configurations of figures were discussed independently throughout the analysis, in reality, they

were each intertwined and seemingly influenced one another to some degree depending on the stories told. This empirically assists in showcasing the ways in which ambiguities, malaises and misunderstandings experienced in the host-community are complex, as expats take into account many aspects in order to make sense of and adapt to each situation. With this in mind, the following section will provide an overview of the implication of these aforementioned findings, by first outlining how they contribute to the overall literature on expatriate acculturation, followed by the ways in which they assist in better understanding the role of values, social norms and ways of doing in the intercultural adaptation process.

6.1. Acculturation: Integration is more than Imitation

Throughout this study, the data collected during the interviews and ethnographic observations empirically support the intercultural adaptation conditions laid out by Kim (2001). For instance, through discussing the ways in which some expatriates have made sense of their values and social norms during moments of malaise, misunderstanding and/or ambiguity in their new cultural environment, they outlined how they have attempted to “establish (or re-establish) and maintain relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationships with those environments” (Kim, 2001, p. 3). To do so, expats discussed the ways in which they have made sense of their values by adapting to situations in a way that they believed would allow them to appropriately cultivate their relationship with the host-environment. This means that in many cases expats adopted host-community ways of doing, such as not speaking up to their bosses and eating meat during communal lunches. This notion of acquiring “some but not all of the host-culture’s element” (Kim, 2005, p. 38), fits within this study’s proposed definition of *acculturation*. When it comes to acculturation, and more specifically, acculturation strategies, Berry (1997) suggested that the most favoured orientation has typically been that of *integration*. Berry (1997) outlines that by following

the *integration* orientation, expats reflect their desire to maintain their home-culture identity while adopting some of the host-country features. By applying these integration conditions to this particular study, it seems as though only a small portion of the expats have fully “integrated” in their Vietnamese host-community.

For instance, as we saw, the expats who decided to expatriate for professional opportunities (more so than cultural ones), who worked in expat dense environments, and/or who were amongst the least experienced expats, were less likely to cultivate intimacy with host-community members and often expressed spending most of their personal time with other Canadians or Westerners in general. Furthermore, many of these Canadians, especially the young and less experienced ones, often complied and imitated the host-community’s ways of doing, even if these practices they didn’t align with their own values. As we saw, this often led to overall feelings of frustration for these expats. Thus, even though these expats were more likely to adopt the host-community practices (through imitation and/or compliance), they often expressed adverse feelings towards these practices, and frequently discussed separating themselves from the host-community when they felt the situation allowed them to do so (i.e. in their private life, outside of their host-organization). Therefore, in this case, though integration is seemingly perceived to be the adopted acculturation orientation when observing their conducts inside of their host-organization, their expressed frustrations towards their imitation and compliance supports the notion that they have not actually internally adopted host-community ways of doing, but have only pretended to do so.

On the other hand, the expats who have expressed that they have expatriated primarily to “learn about cultural matters” (Arasaratnam and Doerfel, 2005, p. 157), as well as older and more experienced expats who work in non-expat dense environments, have most often been the ones to cultivate more intimacy with host-colleagues, all while speaking up and cultivating more resistance

when host-community practices didn't align with their own values. Even though these expatriates are more likely than others to be non-compliant and step away from host-community ways of doing, after conducting interviews and hearing their narratives surrounding their expatriate experience, they are seemingly the ones who have integrated the most to the host-culture. For instance, these expats have been amongst the most likely to express their willingness to be open and learn about the differences in values and social norms with their host-community, as well as their willingness to not always be fully compliant when their values didn't align. Therefore, it seems as though, when they have chosen to comply or imitate the host-community ways of doing, it was more likely because they *wanted* to do so, and not because they felt like they had to. Thus, in this case, these particular expats seemed to truly reflect their desire to maintain some of their internalized cultural scripts, while internally adopting some of the host-country features (Berry, 1997).

Through these findings, we can also see the ways in which intercultural communication competence plays a role in the overall acculturation process of expatriates. For instance, the expats who align most with Arasaratnam and Doerfel's (2005) definition of an effective intercultural communicator, such as being "open to others (...) showing interest in differences and are aware of these (...) having past experiences with different cultures (...) and have a desire to learn about cultural matters" (p. 157), have been the ones to reflect less frustration towards their expatriation experience. Specifically, expatriates who have cultivated more intimate relationships with host-community members seem to also be the ones who have been more open with host-members about their differences in values and social norms, and are often the ones who have past experiences in working in different cultural communities. Oppositely, expatriates who do not seem to embody this definition of an "effective intercultural communicator", have been less likely to cultivate more

intimate relationships with their host-colleagues and more likely to express adverse feelings towards their overall expatriation experience.

This continues to encourage us to view acculturation as a process that goes far beyond actions, discourses and behaviours. Through the data, we can see that acculturation, and integration specifically, represent much more than externally complying and imitating the host-community's ways of doing. When discussing acculturation, we also ought to be looking at how the expatriates feel, talk about and are being reflexive about the local ways of doing, and how these ways of doing come into play for expats when they are outside of their host-organization. As Kim (2001) explains, "both the quantity and the quality of strangers' communication activities in a new environment are crucial to the success of their adaptation" (p. 2). Thus, even if expatriates continue to replicate the host-cultural practices, but do not actually embody them, then the "quality" of their communication activities is seemingly lacking. Since the experienced expats are the ones who are seemingly more content with their overall expatriate experience, even though they may lack in the "quantity" to which they replicate host-cultural elements, the "quality" of their adaptation is heightened, as they are more likely to fully embody the host-cultural elements they choose.

All in all, the empirical data showed that genuine integration seemingly moves beyond imitation and compliance, as expatriates must internalize some of the host-community's ways of doing, in order to actually integrate and create a more harmonious relationship with themselves and the host-community. However, as we will see in the next section, integration, and more generally, acculturation, are intricate processes, since to adapt and internalize host-cultural elements, expatriates must make sense of their host-environment by not only considering their ways of doing and communication activities, but by also making sense of their internalized values.

6.2. Making Sense of Values: What the Situation Requires

Aaron Wildavsky (1962) once wrote that in a variety of contexts, “the rival needs for routine and for flexibility exist in a permanent tension” (p.718). Wildavsky’s findings support this research as the data showed that in their host-workplace, some expatriates experience a permanent tension between the flexibility and the routine of their values. As expatriates made sense of situations by oftentimes stepping away from their own set of values and social norms in order to comply or imitate the host-community’s way of doing, we saw that the overall goal of “fitting-in”, has often been the most influencing social aspect for them. As previously outlined, expatriates likely chose to imitate or comply with host-community practices even when these practices didn’t align with their own values or social norms, due to the uncertainty surrounding what would happen if they didn’t. The uncertainty or possible malaise surrounding the situation was seemingly heightened for the less experienced expats, which resulted in them making sense of situations by cultivating compliance and imitation more so than the more experienced expats. As Klein and colleagues (2006) explain, making sense of situations “is a motivated, continuous effort to understand connections (which can be among people, places and events) in order to anticipate their trajectories and act effectively” (p. 71). This supports the notion that when expatriates complied and imitated host-community ways of doing even when they felt uncomfortable and/or did not agree with them, they made sense of their situation by anticipating that compliance and imitation would provide them with the more appropriate outcome, especially as the outcome relates to cultivating relationships with host-community members.

Opposingly, in some instances, when expats’ values seemingly mattered more to them than complying or imitating host-community ways of doing, - and if they felt the situation allowed them to do so, - some expats found ways to adapt the situation to suit their specific preferences (either

through speaking up or moulding the practice to align with their values). But as we have seen, in many cases, even strong opposing values are seemingly not enough for expats to step away from host-community ways of doing, since expats have also discussed the importance of considering what is *required* for each specific situation. For instance, data has shown that when expats sensed that opposing the host-community's way of doing had the potential to negatively affect their relationship with host-colleagues and/or the ways host-colleagues perceive them, they were more likely to make sense of their values by cultivating their relationships with host-members through imitation and compliance. However, if the expats sensed that the situation would not poorly affect their relationships with host-colleagues, or if their values were perceived to be more important than the cultivation of these relationships, they were more likely to prioritize their (dis)comfort.

All in all, the data seems to show that the notion of cultivating relationships is dominantly affecting the ways in which expats make sense of their values in moments of ambiguity, misunderstanding or malaise. For instance, the level of importance expats placed on cultivating more intimate relationships with host-members, as well as cultivating a "positive" perception of themselves in the eyes of the host-members, seemed to deeply affect how they adapted to situations. With this in mind, it is also pertinent to take a look at the ways in which host-community members made sense of and adapted to these ambiguous situations in return. Although gathering in-depth data from host-community members proved to be challenging, a small excerpt will be showcased in the following section in order to shed light on the values that this kind of data could bring to the intercultural adaptation literature.

6.3. Applying an Interactive Approach

Though the questions guiding this study placed emphasis on the perspective of Canadian expatriates as they were adapting to Vietnam, it is also pertinent to attempt to understand

adaptation from a more interactive context. As Bourhis (1997) suggests, it is important to understand host-community worldviews, as well as their adaptation to expatriates, in order to gain a more well-rounded account of the adaptation process. With this notion in mind, interviews were conducted with five different host-community members. As previously discussed, gathering a sample of host-community members proved to be challenging for multiple reasons. For instance, Vietnamese who worked alongside Canadian expatriates, who could communicate conversationally in English or French, and who were open to divulging information about their experiences with Canadian expats to a Canadian researcher, were difficult to find. Nonetheless, the small subset of data gathered suggests that more research needs to be done on host-community sensemaking toward expatriates, as it allows for a more holistic understanding of the ways in which adaptation and acculturation is lived. To provide perspective, the following excerpt will showcase how a Vietnamese CEO recounts his experience with Canadian expats who work within his organization. During his interview, the host-community member explained,

(...) it is a different mindset between the local people and the Canadian ones, so it takes time for them to understand each other (...) From my point of view, Vietnamese try to have something immediate. But Canadians do things a lot more structured, you know, the planning - going from the big picture to the small one. In the meantime, the Vietnamese are moving from a small mosaic to the big picture. So, it is just a different way, a different approach (...) It takes time to understand (...) I think we can learn both (...) the good thing with Vietnamese people is they are very flexible. Yours - it is more formal, more "should it be like that?". Meanwhile, we are very flexible. So, we can change more and adjust (...) but when something needs to be done quick and fast you need to be very flexible.

Through his discourse, this host-member emphasizes the idea that adaptation is not exclusively experienced by expatriates. For instance, he explains that it takes time for both expats and host-members to "understand each other". Therefore, he points to the idea that within an organization, everyone must adapt to each others' ways of doing, and that to do so, it "takes time". By saying so, he seems to acknowledge that the process of adaptation is not something that happens

quickly. Additionally, after outlining differences in practices between Canadians and Vietnamese (i.e. Canadian's seemingly being more structured and formal with procedures and tasks while Vietnamese seem to complete tasks as soon as they are required, without as much planning), this host-community member outlines that by understanding one another's practices, he believes expats and host-members could "learn" from "both" ways of doing. Thus, he is cultivating the idea of shared knowledge and openness, rather than favouring one culture's way of doing above the others. This openness that he seemingly references to, compares with the ways in which a few of the expat participants have expressed to address misunderstandings and ambiguities in their workplace. As previously outlined, these expats are also the ones who were less likely to discuss feelings of frustration towards their host-organization. Thus, we can see that the notion of openness and learning about one another, seems to be a more attuned way of adapting for both expats and this host-community member.

Furthermore, through his discourse, this host-community member seems to point out that he feels as though Vietnamese employees can more easily adjust their practices to suit the Canadians' ways of doing while some Canadians seem to take more time and are seemingly more reflexive on how things should be done. By stating that Vietnamese are more "flexible" and that they can more easily "change" and "adjust", he seems to outline that some expats cultivate more rigidity and resistance when it comes to adjusting to their host-colleagues' ways of doing. For this Vietnamese CEO, being flexible and open to adjusting to different ways of doing is a necessary quality in an organization, and is a quality that is mostly embodied by the host-community members rather than the newcomers.

As we can see, through his discourse surrounding his experiences in working with Canadian expatriates from a somewhat privileged position, this CEO was able to provide insight

on the ways in which adaptation is experienced and perceived from a host-community point of view. By doing so, he was able to provide a more grounded understanding of how he believes Vietnamese adjust and adapt to Canadian practices, and the importance of time, openness, and understanding when it comes to working with expatriates. By conducting more interviews with host-community members who work with expatriates, and gathering data on the ways in which they experience adaptation, especially when it comes to perceived moments of misunderstanding, malaise, or ambiguities between them and expats, we would certainly gain a more comprehensive understanding of the ways in which adaptation and cultivation are experienced by all of the members involved in the process. Therefore, this would be an interesting direction for future studies, as it would allow us to deepen our knowledge on the intricacies of intercultural adaptation.

7. Conclusion

This empirical research shed light on the ways in which some Canadian expatriates made sense of and cultivated their values, social norms and ways of doing in moments of perceived ambiguity, misunderstanding, or malaise, between them and their host community. By conducting ethnographic observations, as well as qualitative interviews with some Canadian expatriates and a few host-community members living in Vietnam, this study uncovered some of the cultivation patterns of expatriates with the figures that emerged most commonly through their narratives. By being on the field observing and interviewing those Canadian expats and host-community members as they were experiencing their intercultural adaptation in real time, and developing relationships with the participants outside of the research framework, I was able to gain a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the role of values and social norms in intercultural adaptation and acculturation. Additionally, by travelling abroad to conduct this research, as opposed to interviewing expatriates from my home-country, I was able to undergo my own adaptation process, which allowed me to be more empathetic towards the expatriates' experiences, and gave me a better understanding of the intricacies and complexities of intercultural adaptation as a whole.

Since studying the role of values, social norms and ways of doing in the acculturation of expatriates has not received much attention in adaptation research (Barker, 2015), this research empirically contributed with meaningful findings to the field of intercultural communication. Regardless, even though this research shed light on the role of values and social norms in intercultural adaptation, it faces a few limitations. For instance, due to restrictions put in place by host-organizations, and perhaps due to my positionality in the host-environment, I was unable to gather much ethnographic data from inside of the host-organizations. Therefore, the ethnographic

thoughts and observations were primarily constructed on the basis of my observations of expatriates' and host-community members' everyday lives, outside of their workplace. To gain more in-depth understanding on how intercultural adaptation is experienced in real-time within host-organizations, future research should focus on conducting ethnographies within host-workplaces. This would allow researchers to observe how expats and host-community members interact, make sense of, and adapt to misunderstandings when they arise, which would provide a more in-depth and accurate account of how differing values come into play in acculturation. Finally, as it was difficult to gather insight from the host-members' point of view, future research should place increased focus on host-community members' adaptation process, in order to gain a more integrative and holistic understanding of the ways in which intercultural adaptation is experienced within an organizational context.

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Appendix 1 - Semi-Structured Topic Guide

1. The Interviewee's past expatriate experiences.
2. Circumstances surrounding the interviewees first days of arrival in the host-country.
3. Emotions experienced during their arrival in the host-country.
4. Differences between organizations the interviewee worked for in Canada and the organization they work for in their host-community (i.e. practices, rituals, communication patterns, ways of doing).
5. Misunderstandings that occurred between the interviewee and a member of the host-country.
 - a. How the interviewee dealt with this misunderstanding.
 - b. How the interviewee felt about this misunderstanding.
6. Moments where the social-norms of the interviewee's host-community differed from their own.
7. Moments where the interviewee faced an ethical dilemma in their host-country.
 - . How they dealt with the ethical dilemma.
 - a. The values that were being challenged during this ethical dilemma.
8. Differences in values and beliefs between the interviewee and host-community members.
9. The ways in which the interviewee has adapted to the host-community.
 - . Adjustment to social norms.
 - a. Adjustment to values and beliefs
10. Values and social norms that the interviewee has not adopted from the host-community.

Appendix 2 - Participant Reference Table

<i>Name</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Past Experience</i>	<i>Expatriates in the Workplace</i>	<i>Initial Purpose of Expatriation</i>
Caleb	Male	First time expat Worked full-time in Canada	Little to no expatriates	Personal experience
Janine	Female	Second time expat Worked full-time in Canada	Little to no expatriates	Personal experience
Emily	Female	First time expat Student in internship position	Little to no expatriates	N/A
Leah	Female	First time expat Worked full-time in Canada	Expatriate dense	Career opportunity
Lucy	Female	Long time expat Worked full-time in Canada	Little to no expatriates	Personal experience
Sophia	Female	First time expat Student in internship position	Little to no expatriates	N/A
Liam	Male	First time expat Worked full-time in Canada	Little to no expatriates	Personal experience
Emma	Female	First time expat Student in internship position	Little to no expatriates	N/A
Camille	Female	Long time expat Worked full-time in Canada	Expatriate dense	Career opportunity
Maxine	Female	Long time expat Worked full-time in Canada	Expatriate dense	Career opportunity
Alice	Female	Long time expat	Expatriate dense	Career opportunity

		Worked full-time in Canada		
Natalie	Female	Long time expat Worked full-time in Canada	Expatriate dense	Career opportunity
Alex	Male	Long time expat Worked full-time in Canada	Little to no expatriates	Personal experience