Title:
Exploring evidence-based executive coaching as an intervention to facilitate expatriate acculturation: Fifteen case studies.

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The completion of this dissertation was made possible by the guidance and support of many people. I would like to give special recognition to the role of my primary supervisor Bruce Stening for his calm, concerned and professional guidance through the peaks and troughs. Thanks also to Tony Grant, whose passion for coaching and coaching research was a constant source of inspiration, and to Paul Atkins whose intellectual curiosity kept me moving into new areas of exploration. On a personal level, my profound thanks to my parents Jocelyn and Nigel Abbott for their support in many ways. Special thanks to Eduardo Batres for his support during many difficult times. And to my uncle, Michael Butler and his late wife Sheila, who unknowingly inspired me to belatedly pursue an academic direction and who more recently gave me invaluable assistance. My thanks also to the participants who allowed me access to their lives and trusted me both as a coach and as a researcher.
ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores executive coaching as an intervention to facilitate the acculturation of expatriate managers, with the degree of success in the acculturation process assessed primarily by work performance and personal satisfaction. The research methodology is a form of pragmatic action research in which the researcher worked with participants in the role of an executive coach. There are fifteen case studies of individual coaching engagements of between three and eighteen months in El Salvador, Central America. The studies of ten expatriate managers are included in the main body of the dissertation. Five related studies of people with different perspectives on the expatriate experience (four spouses and a local manager working for a multinational company) are appended. The form of executive coaching was ‘evidence-based’ (Grant, 2005), an emerging cross-disciplinary approach to coaching in which the coach applies a variety of proven theories and techniques.

The dissertation proposes a philosophy of executive coaching which underpins the methodology of the research. The pragmatism of William James, John Dewey and others is put forward as a useful epistemological base. The recent philosophical position of critical realism, mainly inspired by the work of Roy Bhaskar, speaks to the ontology. Critical realism embraces multiple realities at the local level while acknowledging the influence of universal social laws and tendencies. Each case study is presented in narrative form with extensive direct quotations as a self-contained story. Together, the studies provide rare in-the-moment descriptions of the processes of executive coaching and expatriate manager acculturation. A cross-case analysis provides evidence that coaching - in this context – seemed to be related to (1) improved performance, and (2) increased personal satisfaction. These are two recognized measures of success for both coaching and acculturation. The author (who was also the coach) concludes that coaching appears to have contributed to these two measures for these expatriates because it:

• was tailored to the individual needs of diverse individuals in diverse cultural contexts;
• applied sound models from coaching (Grant & Greene, 2001; Rosinski, 2003) and acculturation (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001; Earley & Ang, 2003) to operate interactively across the affective, cognitive and behavioral domains, giving particular attention to the often-ignored affective domain;

• encouraged expatriate managers to operate from a basis of trust in professional cross-cultural relationships;

• clarified and worked from the personal values of the individual expatriate managers;

• facilitated reflective thinking, allowing the expatriate managers to step back from their complex and pressured situations to better-understand themselves and their contexts and to plan effective actions;

• provided a medium to transfer and apply knowledge (theory, research and experience) from other contexts into the local situations of the individual expatriate managers; and

• from a cultural perspective, promoted leveraging individual and group differences.

The dissertation proposes that these finding could potentially be extended to other contexts if considered by skilled researchers and practitioners using the technique of analytic generalization (Yin, 2003), and considered in the light of other research. The research also demonstrates the efficacy of executive coaching as a research tool with the capacity to get inside decision-making processes in complex environments. The strength of the specific method in this study – intense engagement with the participants from the inside by one researcher-coach – is a limitation. The author recommends that larger scale studies using comparison groups, multiple coaches and assessors, more locations and quantitative measures of impact would be invaluable in exploring and clarifying themes identified here.

Looking ahead at the future application of executive coaching in international business the author sees considerable potential, and in particular:

• the use of executive coaching in combination with mentoring and training (e.g. mentor-as-coach initiatives) in ways that are appropriate to each context; and

• expanding the current individual focus of coaching (inspired by the traditions of Western thinking) into a greater consideration of family, organizational, community and societal systems and cultures.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................ 10

2. THEORETICAL RATIONALE FOR EXECUTIVE COACHING AS AN INTERVENTION WITH EXPATRIATE MANAGERS .......................... 22
   2.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................. 22
   2.2 The Challenge: Increasing Expatriate Manager Performance and Satisfaction ........... 23
   2.3 Traditional Responses ................................................................................................. 29
      2.3.1 Selection ............................................................................................................... 29
      2.3.2 Training .............................................................................................................. 30
      2.3.3 Mentoring ......................................................................................................... 31
   2.4 An Additional Response: Evidence-Based Executive Coaching ............................... 32
   2.5 Multiple Coaching Perspectives ................................................................................... 35
      2.5.1 Cognitive Behavioural ...................................................................................... 35
      2.5.2 Psychodynamic ............................................................................................... 37
      2.5.3 Developmental ............................................................................................... 38
      2.5.4 Action Learning ............................................................................................... 40
      2.5.5 Systems .......................................................................................................... 41
      2.5.6 Cultural ............................................................................................................ 42
   2.6 Coaching Compared with Training and Mentoring ..................................................... 49
      2.6.1 Training and Coaching ..................................................................................... 49
      2.6.2 Mentoring and Coaching ................................................................................. 50
      2.6.3 Summary and Table ......................................................................................... 52
   2.7 The Executive Coaching-Acculturation Fit: Working across the Affective, Behavioural and Cognitive Domains ......................................................... 54
      2.7.1 The Affective Domain .......................................................................................... 54
      2.7.2 The Cognitive and Behavioural Domains ............................................................... 55
      2.7.3 Individual and Integrative ................................................................................... 56
   2.8 Coaching for Expatriates in Practice .......................................................................... 57
Executive Coaching and Acculturation

2.8.1 The Central Role of the Coach ........................................................................ 57
2.8.2 The Role of the Organization .......................................................................... 59
2.8.3 Limitations of Executive Coaching ................................................................. 60
2.9 Summary ............................................................................................................. 63

3: PROPOSING A PHILOSOPHY OF COACHING: PRAGMATISM AND CRITICAL REALISM ................................................................. 65
3.1 Introduction ......................................................................................................... 65
3.2 Pragmatism ......................................................................................................... 66
3.3 Critical Realism ................................................................................................... 69
3.4 Why Cross-Cultural and Cross-Disciplinary Approaches? ................................. 71
  3.4.1 Questioning to Generate Reflective Thinking ............................................... 72
  3.4.2 A Focus on Synthesizing Cultural Orientations ............................................. 73
  3.4.3 Democratic Foundations ............................................................................... 74
3.5 A Pragmatic Conclusion: It is Useful to Have a Philosophy of Coaching .......... 76

4: METHODOLOGY (1): THEORY AND DESIGN ................................................. 80
4.1. Introduction: The Research Framework ............................................................ 80
4.2 Primary Method: Action Research ..................................................................... 84
4.3 Grounded Theory ............................................................................................... 86
4.4. Hermeneutics .................................................................................................... 88
4.5 Reframing Executive Coaching as Action Research .......................................... 88
4.6 A Case Study Approach ..................................................................................... 92
4.7 The Specific Research Model: A Multiple Case Study of Executive Coaching with Expatriates ......................................................................................... 95
4.8 Design Flexibility ............................................................................................... 96
4.9 Coaching Tools .................................................................................................. 97
  4.9.1 Models of Change......................................................................................... 98
  4.9.2 Multicultural Personality Questionnaire ..................................................... 98
  4.9.3 360 Degree Feedback: Leadership Effectiveness Questionnaire ............... 99
4.10 The Role of the Researcher-Coach .................................................................. 100
4.10.1 Bricoleur and Friendly Outsider ................................................................. 100
4.10.2 Ethics and Confidentiality Issues: Navigating Dual Roles of Coach and Researcher ................................................................. 102
4.11 Participants ................................................................................................................ 103
4.12 Structure and Duration of Coaching Programs ....................................................... 107
4.13 Recording and Transcription Process ......................................................................... 108
4.14 Location: El Salvador ................................................................................................. 108
4.15 Measuring the Success of Acculturation ................................................................... 109
4.16 Generalizability .......................................................................................................... 112
4.17 Cross-Cultural Application of the Model ................................................................. 112
4.18 A Coach in the Host Country ..................................................................................... 113
4.19 Fieldwork .................................................................................................................. 114
  4.19.1 Phase 1 ............................................................................................................... 115
  4.19.2 Phase 2 .............................................................................................................. 116
4.20 Methodological Rigor ............................................................................................... 116
4.21 Connecting Executive Coaching, International Business and Academia ................. 117

5: METHODOLOGY (2): CODING AND ANALYSIS .............................................. 118
5.1 Data Analysis .............................................................................................................. 118
5.2 Case Study Construction ............................................................................................. 123
5.3 Cross-Case Analysis ................................................................................................... 127
  5.3.1 Ongoing Observation and Reflection: Memos and Notes ................................. 127
  5.3.2 NVivo Analysis of Transcripts and Other Textual Data .................................. 128
  5.3.3 Post-Coaching Questionnaire and Interview ................................................. 128
5.4 Measuring the Professionalism of the Coaching Experience ..................................... 135

6: CASE STUDIES ........................................................................................................... 136
6.1 Linda Gateau ............................................................................................................... 136
6.2 David Redmond ........................................................................................................... 152
6.3 Neil Barber .................................................................................................................. 166
6.4 Paul Plummer .............................................................................................................. 181
6.5 Wesley Trudeau .......................................................................................................... 198
6.6 Jack Trimboli ............................................................................................................... 213
6.7 Raul Hernandez ........................................................................................................... 230
6.8 Randy Peters ............................................................................................................... 247
6.9 Danielle Powell ........................................................................................................... 263
6.10 Drew McLaren .......................................................................................................... 273
7. CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS ......................................................................................... 289
7.1 Introduction ................................................................................................................. 289
7.2 Impact of Executive Coaching: Work Performance and Personal Satisfaction .......... 290
7.3 Common Participant Issues ......................................................................................... 293
    7.3.1 Work Relationships ............................................................................................. 294
    7.3.2 Day-to-Day Life ................................................................................................ 294
    7.3.3. Looking Ahead ................................................................................................. 295
7.4 Acculturation-specific Themes ................................................................................... 295
    7.4.1 Cross-Cultural Management ............................................................................... 295
    7.4.2 Cultural Dimensions ........................................................................................ 296
    7.4.3 Transition Planning ............................................................................................ 298
    7.4.4 Multinational Corporations and Ethics ............................................................... 299
    7.4.5 Spouse and Family Member Acculturation ......................................................... 299
    7.4.6 Mentoring ......................................................................................................... 300
    7.4.7 Timing .............................................................................................................. 301
7.5 Cognitive-Behavioural Factors ................................................................................... 301
    7.5.1 Reflection ........................................................................................................... 301
    7.5.2 Challenging Participants .................................................................................... 302
    7.5.3 Applying Evidence: Linking Theory with Practice ............................................ 303
    7.5.4 Pragmatism: Utility and the Consideration of Consequences ......................... 304
    7.5.5 Goal-setting ..................................................................................................... 304
    7.5.6 Self Efficacy and Self Confidence .................................................................... 305
7.6 Affective Factors ......................................................................................................... 306
    7.6.1 Intelligence ....................................................................................................... 306
    7.6.2 Trust ................................................................................................................. 307
7.6.3 Values ........................................................................................................... 311
7.7 The Practice of ‘Coaching Research’ as a Form of Action Research ....................... 313

8: CONCLUSIONS .......................................................................................................... 315
8.1 Overview ...................................................................................................................... 315
8.2 Evidence of Impact in One Context ............................................................................ 316
8.3 The ABC Model of Executive Coaching and Acculturation ...................................... 317
8.4 Individually-Based ...................................................................................................... 319
8.5 Need for a Team Approach ......................................................................................... 320
8.6 Executive Coaching from a Cultural Perspective ....................................................... 321
8.7 A Philosophy of Evidence-Based Coaching ............................................................... 321
8.8 Research Relevance and Rigor .................................................................................. 323
8.9 Limitations ................................................................................................................... 324
8.10 Application and Utility of the Findings ..................................................................... 326
8.11 Building on the House of Change ............................................................................. 328

APPENDICES .................................................................................................................. 333
Appendix A1: Case Study - Alicia Peters ......................................................................... 333
Appendix A2: Case Study - Julietta Carboni .................................................................... 344
Appendix A3: Case Study - Patricia Rivers ...................................................................... 355
Appendix A4: Case Study - Rafael Luz ............................................................................ 369
Appendix A5: Case Study - Gillian George ...................................................................... 384
Appendix B: Participant Demographics ........................................................................... 392
Appendix C: Leadership Effectiveness 360 Degree Feedback Instrument ......................... 393
Appendix D: NVivo Node Structure and Character Count .................................................. 397

REFERENCES ................................................................................................................ 401
This dissertation examines the intersection of two major trends in international business. Firstly, executive coaching has emerged as an increasingly common intervention to assist managers to become more productive and increase their levels of personal satisfaction. The form of executive coaching examined in this dissertation is ‘evidence-based’ (Grant, 2005), an emerging cross-disciplinary approach that connects sound theory, predominantly from psychology and management, to the work of managers-in-context. Secondly, there has been an ongoing move towards economic globalization with a concomitant rise in cross-national management assignments of various kinds, creating a high number of ‘expatriate managers’ whose lives are invariably stories of constant change and transition. Through an innovative action-research case study methodology, the dissertation explores how executive coaching can facilitate acculturation processes for expatriate managers. Acculturation refers here to the ongoing changes and outcomes that occur as an individual experiences the process of interacting in and adapting to a different cultural environment (Berry, 1997, p.12). Acculturation is a multidimensional and developmental process which continues throughout the expatriate sojourn, (i.e., at no point does one become ‘acculturated’). Executive coaching aims to improve work performance and enhance personal satisfaction (Kilburg, 2000). These two criteria are common – and complex - measures of success for expatriate assignments (Mendenhall et al., 2002). Satisfaction and work performance are affected by how effectively one adapts to the different cultural environment (work and social) – the process of acculturation. Failure to successfully acculturate is indicated by factors such as early termination, poor work performance, and low levels of personal satisfaction with various aspects of one’s life. The links between coaching, acculturation, satisfaction and performance provide the main research question and are explored throughout the dissertation.

There are fifteen case studies of individual coaching engagements conducted by the author in El Salvador, Central America. The studies of ten expatriate managers are included in the
main body of the dissertation. Five related studies of people with different perspectives on
the expatriate experience are appended. Four of these studies are of spouses, each of whom
was pursuing her own career. The other was of a local manager working with expatriate
managers in a multinational company. Results from the studies indicate that evidence-based
executive coaching in one location seemed effective as an adjunct intervention to assist
people to deal with the complexities of the expatriate manager experience, giving support to
a theoretical fit first discussed by Abbott, Stening, Grant and Atkins (2006, in press). This
study provides some initial evidence that coaching can offer something in addition to the
two main approaches used to assist expatriate managers – training courses and mentoring.
The coaching-acculturation relationship has not been studied before in depth, though there
are coaches around the world who are working with expatriate managers.

Chapter 2 provides a rationale of why, theoretically, evidence-based executive coaching
may be an appropriate intervention with expatriate managers. The relevant research
literature encompasses evidence-based executive coaching and expatriate manager
acculturation. Dr Anthony Grant, Director of the Coaching Psychology Unit at the
University of Sydney, has been at the forefront of the development of ‘evidence-based
coaching’, which seeks to provide a sound theoretical and research basis to coaching
interventions in the field, in the face of challenges to coaching on the basis that it is just
another management fad conducted by people with varying degrees of professional
competence and credentialing. Grant and Cavanagh (2004) recently reviewed the relatively
sparse but growing body of coaching literature, of which executive coaching is a subset. An
often-cited definition of executive coaching used in this dissertation was by Kilburg (2000)
who defined it as, ‘a helping relationship formed between a client who has managerial
responsibility in an organization and a consultant who uses a wide variety of behavioural
techniques and methods to assist the client to achieve a mutually identified set of goals to
improve his or her professional performance and personal satisfaction’ (p. 67). Drawing on
the literature, different coaching perspectives that informed the coaching intervention used
in the research are described. Because of the cross-cultural context, particular attention is
given to the theory and practice of executive coaching from a cultural perspective.
Acculturation has been the subject of considerable research attention. The literature on expatriate acculturation has been reviewed by Mendenhall, Kuhlmann, Stahl and Osland (2002) and Thomas (1998). The ongoing challenge of supporting expatriate managers is examined in the light of diverse and conflicting research findings. During the time that the fieldwork was conducted, the concept of ‘cultural intelligence’ (CQ) was developed (Earley & Ang, 2003; Thomas & Inkson, 2004). CQ provided a cross-cultural extension of emotional intelligence (EQ), a concept that has proven extremely useful in the practice of executive coaching (Peltier, 2001). A major theoretical link between evidence-based executive coaching and acculturation is that both processes involve interaction between the affective (A), behavioural (B), and cognitive (C) psychological domains of individuals. Links between models from the coaching literature (Grant and Greene, 2001) and the acculturation literature (Ward et al., 2001; Earley & Ang, 2003) are discussed.

In Chapter 3, a philosophy of executive coaching from a cultural perspective is proposed. It is suggested that this philosophical position could be appropriate for evidence-based coaching more broadly. A combination of pragmatism and critical realism is described. The epistemology of the position is derived from the pragmatic tradition established in the early twentieth century by William James (1890a, 1890b, 1907a, 1907b, 1907c, 1997) and John Dewey (1888, 1910, 1916, 1917, 1925), and revived more recently in new forms such as neo-pragmatism and prophetic pragmatism by Richard Rorty (1983, 1989), Cornel West (1989, 1999) and others. Dewey (1917) observed a disconnection between science and philosophy in his time. This is still an issue today. A pragmatic epistemology has the effect of grounding the coaching in pursuing approaches that work in the context of the individual manager (in this study, expatriates) and in ongoing reflection on the consideration of consequences of intended actions. The proposed ontological foundations are from critical realism (Archer, Bhaskar, Collier, Lawson, & Norrie, 1998; Bhaskar, 1975; Bhaskar, 1997, 1998, 2002). Critical realism conceptualizes multiple realities at the local level. It also encourages curiosity about and a critical consideration of universal social structures, laws, and tendencies.
Bhaskar’s work gives a philosophical framework for dealing with the social realities in which the research and the coaching are conducted. The dissertation is structured around this framework. Bhaskar identified three interrelated levels of reality; the Empirical, the Actual, and the Real (capitalized in the text to differentiate them from common usage). At the first level are our individual Empirical worlds which we experience and observe directly. At the second level are Actual realities which include ideas, knowledge and experiences which sit outside our known Empirical worlds. They comprise the collective and related Empirical worlds of others (for example, the world of executive coaching). We do not observe them directly but they are theoretically accessible. By accessing the Actual world we can expand our Empirical worlds. Bhaskar’s third level is the Real world which contains stable underlying laws and tendencies of society that directly and indirectly influence all aspects of our lives. We can speculate about them and may even be able to influence some of them. Others we may never be aware of. This philosophical position both emerged from and shaped the conduct of the research, consistent with the cyclical nature of the action research methodology (which also drew on grounded theory).

The theory and design of the research methodology are described in Chapter 4. The detail of the implementation of the methodology is described in Chapter 5 (Coding and Analysis). The action research methodology is inspired by the ideas of Kurt Lewin (Lewin, 1946, 1947a, 1947b, 1936; Likert, 1947) Chris Argyris (Argyris, 1993; Argyris, Putnam, & Smith, 1985; Argyris & Schön, 1996) and others (e.g. Reason & Bradbury, 2001) who view science as a means of providing solutions to real world problems. The specific method chosen to study how evidence-based executive coaching might assist acculturation was coaching itself. Evidence-based executive coaching is conceptualized as a form of action research. Both involve a broadly-skilled coach/researcher working in-context with a client/participant to explore and solve real world problems. (The term ‘participant’ is used to refer to the fifteen coaching research clients in this study, and ‘client’ as a general term for people who receive executive coaching as a commercial service.)

Executive Coaching and action research are both cyclical processes of setting goals, planning, acting, reviewing, revising goals, and so on (Abbott & Grant, 2005). While the
structure of this dissertation is linear in its presentation, the process and thinking behind it were not. The cyclical process of action research is also reflected in the shape of the coaching interventions. Executive coaching, action research and acculturation are multidimensional processes that include the complex interplay of multiple variables. This complexity is captured in the stories of the individuals and in the multi-level analysis. Executive coaching is particularly suited to those experiencing change and transition. Acculturation is typified by rapid change and transition, particularly in the first year of an overseas assignment. The nature of expatriate assignments is such that the expatriate reality is one of constant change. The case studies provide descriptions of how coaching works with people undergoing the process of acculturation with its associated challenges. By conceptualizing evidence-based executive coaching as a form action research the dissertation proposes and demonstrates a new method of investigating themes of leadership and management. In this example, the ‘coaching research’ methodology allowed the coach-researcher to observe first-hand (and participate in) the decision-making processes by expatriate managers at senior levels of multinational companies.

As coach-researcher I was an engaged and active participant and I have used the first person to reflect the centrality of the coach-researcher role. My role as coach dictated that I did more than research. My aim was to make a concrete and measurable contribution to the work performance and personal satisfaction of the participants. I was also an expatriate who went through a process of acculturation, and a coach who was intimately connected to the lives of the fifteen participants with whom I worked (some for over a year and a half). As a researcher with certain skills I also aimed to step back from the action and used techniques of analysis to gain a more objective view of what was going on. The methodology therefore openly places the researcher in a very close relationship with the participants over an extended period of time. This is both a strength and a limitation of the design. It allows unique in-depth exploration of the participants’ situations while at the same time it leaves the work open to criticism of researcher-bias. Both the participants and the researcher-coach had a stake in a successful coaching outcome for the participant. The participants dedicated time and commitment to the process. The coach-researcher placed faith in the effectiveness of coaching as a means of facilitating successful expatriate processes. A belief
in the effectiveness of coaching is – paradoxically – a requirement for its success.

Transparency about this issue is maintained through the text so that readers can make informed interpretations. Other interpretations can be placed on the events that I have described and analysed. The case studies include many direct quotations so that others can draw independent conclusions, though the selection of quotations is itself open to bias.

The case studies stand in their own right and make a contribution by giving a rare description of what happens within the executive coaching process, meeting a gap in the literature identified by Kilburg (2004a), ‘what actually happens in coaching engagements remains quite mysterious’ (p.204). Similarly, there are very limited studies that provide in-depth descriptions of the expatriate experience from the point-of-view of the expatriate.

The tone of the dissertation to some extent reflects the tone of the executive coaching. I tried to capture John Dewey’s (1910) concept of the ideal mental condition, ‘To be playful and serious at the same time is possible, and it defines the ideal mental condition. Absence of dogmatism and prejudice, presence of intellectual curiosity and flexibility, are manifest in the free play of the mind upon a topic. It is incompatible with carelessness or flippancy’ (p. 219).

I entered this field of research with a strong grounding in industrial/organizational psychology and evidence-based executive coaching (through study and research) and in cross-cultural communications and management (through experience working as an executive in the Special Broadcasting Service, Australia, a multicultural and multilingual broadcaster). My knowledge of these fields suggested that my investigation of the intersection of evidence-based executive coaching and cross-cultural management would require qualitative and innovative methods that would need to be flexible yet robust. The approach is qualitative, which is generally the case with action research, yet draws on quantitative research findings from the coaching and acculturation research literature.

This research aims to meet criteria proposed by Anderson, Herriot and Hodgkinson (2001) in what they term ‘pragmatic science’ for the conduct of research industrial/organizational
psychology. Pragmatic science is high in relevance, high in methodological rigor, and places the practitioners and scientists in partnership to solve real world problems. It has been proposed as a research approach to narrow a growing divide that has been observed between universities and society, particularly in areas related to business and organizational behaviour (Abrahamson & Eisenman, 2001; Anderson et al., 2001; Greenwood & Levin, 2000; Levin, 2004). It draws on existing research knowledge and traditions while at the same time accepting that useful knowledge is essentially constructed by local players. The proposal in this dissertation is that evidence-based executive coaching, conducted as action research, closely fits the definition of pragmatic science.

The research is cross-disciplinary because neither executive coaching nor acculturation sits comfortably within one discipline. It is cross-cultural management in so far as it examines how managers from one culture operate in another. It is industrial/organizational psychology in that the systems of interest are organizations. It is industrial/organizational psychology in that the systems of interest are organizations. It is cognitive psychology to the extent that the model of executive coaching examined is grounded heavily in cognitive and behavioural theories and techniques. The diversity of theories and approaches reflects the philosophical grounding proposed in Chapter 3. Both pragmatism and critical realism embrace the concept of diverse realities. James (1907a) wrote of a ‘multi-verse’ (p.134). At the Empirical and Actual levels, critical realism similarly describes multiple realities.

In conducting the coaching and the research I endeavoured to follow Stake’s (2000) reflective observational approach to qualitative case studies, ‘The brain work is ostensibly observational, but, more basically, it is reflective’ (p.445). In this research project, I relied on my skills as an action researcher operating in the scientific-practitioner tradition. This is consistent with evidence-based executive coaching where the coach is the key vehicle for the techniques and ideas worked with during the sessions. The choice of tools by the researcher/coach depended upon the participant, the context and the goals. That is, I did not use the same coaching techniques and instruments with all participants, because to do so would have run contrary to the essence of client-based coaching. Also, techniques and tools were modified and developed according to context and my experience in the field. From the standpoint of traditional experimental designs with common interventions, this feature is
methodologically challenging. However, it is consistent with action research methodological principles that place a high value on the needs of the participant.

For data analysis, I used the qualitative research software NVivo, mainly as a way of navigating around the very large data set. The research rigor was reinforced by my immersion in the process and personal conduct of ten research elements:

1. direct observation as coach in all of the coaching sessions (over 200 hours);
2. audio-taping and/or extensive noting of all sessions;
3. transcription of the audio tapes;
4. design and administration of a Post-Coaching Questionnaire (see Table 5, pp. 123-126);
5. post-coaching interviews with clients;
6. analysis of Post-Coaching Questionnaire ratings;
7. coding of the transcripts, notes, and Questionnaire responses;
8. coding analysis through individual and cross-case treatment;
9. correspondence with participants about their individual case studies; and
10. final write-up and analysis.

In Chapter 6, I present the case studies as stories with my observations. This is the Empirical level, with each case standing independently as a separate study. Ten case studies of coaching assignments with expatriate managers are presented in the main body of the dissertation. Five case studies of those closely associated with expatriate managers are appended in their entirety (Appendices A1-A5). Yin (2003) described a case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context, particularly when the boundaries between phenomena and context are not clear, as was the case in this research study. I made every effort to maintain the internal integrity of each case. Stake (2000) commented, ‘We may simultaneously carry on more than one case study, but each case study is a concentrated inquiry into a single case’ (p. 436). The case studies reveal the diverse realities and perspectives at the Empirical level across which coaches operate (and in doing so connect and expand).
In addition to the individual case studies at the Empirical level, I looked across the studies for common themes which are discussed in Chapter 7 (Cross-Case Analysis). The analysis concentrated on the following questions:

- How was executive coaching impacting in the expatriate situation?
- What seemed to be common across the cases (and were there exceptions)?
- What was unexpected?
- What do the cases add to knowledge about executive coaching and acculturation?

The analysis was extended in the conclusions in Chapter 8. The analysis in these chapters represents a shift to the Actual and Real levels in Bhaskar’s structure. James (1907a) described the link between the Empirical and the Actual levels, well before Bhaskar articulated the three level structure, ‘Our multi-verse still makes a universe; for every part, tho it may not be in actual or immediate connection, with every other part, however remote, through the fact that each part hangs together with its very next neighbours in inextricable interfusion’ (p. 134). My aim was to reflect across different sources of Empirical evidence to make informed observations and analysis about executive coaching and its intersection with the process of expatriate acculturation.

In the Conclusions (Chapter 8), I contemplate the influence of deeper social laws and tendencies on coaching and acculturation. A major observation is that both of these processes are best-conceptualized through an interaction across the participants’ affective, behavioural and cognitive domains. Two fundamental forces emerged from the fieldwork that provided some explanation as to why coaching might be effective with expatriate managers, and why it might be effective more generally. These were the role of trust as an essential ingredient in professional relationships, and the role of personal values in anchoring change processes. Chapter 8 also proposes an extension of an existing model of change derived from cognitive behavioural psychology (the House of Change, Grant & Greene, 2001) to offer a way forward that is beneficial for evidence-based executive coaching and its intersection with global business.
This dissertation makes five main contributions. Firstly, it provides limited evidence from one context that the evidence-based executive coaching seems to be of value as an adjunct intervention to assist those who work in cross-cultural business environments. Specifically, executive coaching programs could offer benefits for expatriate managers in the form of improved work performance and enhanced personal satisfaction. Secondly, the study gives fifteen descriptive case studies of what actually happens in executive coaching, providing a rare view of coaching (and acculturation) from the ‘inside’. Thirdly, it proposes a solid methodological and philosophical grounding (in pragmatism combined with critical realism) for executive coaching from a cultural perspective, and potentially for the emerging profession of evidence-based executive coaching. Fourthly, it provides an example of how evidence-based executive coaching can be used as a form of action research with the capacity of getting inside decision making processes in organizational settings; illustrated with the specific context of expatriate managers. Fifthly, it provides an analysis of how executive coaching worked in this specific context, why it seemed to contribute to the participants experiencing a successful acculturation process, and consideration of how it might be applied as an intervention in the future in other contexts. Regarding ‘how and why’, the conclusions are that in this context executive coaching seemed to facilitate expatriate acculturation because it:

- was tailored to the individual needs of diverse individuals in diverse cultural contexts;
- applied sound models from coaching (Grant & Greene, 2001) and acculturation (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001; Earley & Ang, 2003) to operate interactively across the affective, cognitive and behavioral domains, giving particular attention to the often-ignored affective domain;
- encouraged expatriate managers to operate from a basis of trust in professional cross-cultural relationships;
- clarified and worked from the personal values of the individual expatriate managers;
- facilitated reflective thinking, allowing the expatriate managers to step back from their complex and pressured situations to better-understand themselves and their contexts and to plan effective actions;
• provided a medium to transfer and apply knowledge (theory, research, and experience) from other contexts into the local situations of the individual expatriate managers; and
• from a cultural perspective, promoted the leveraging of individual and group differences.

I suggest that through ‘analytic’ (or ‘naturalistic’) generalization (Stake, 2000; Yin, 2003) these findings have the potential to be extended to other contexts, when supplemented by other relevant research. Analytic generalization places the responsibility for extending the results to other contexts onto the shoulders of those who are accessing the research. My aim as the researcher was to provide sufficient detail in the methodology and sufficient richness in the case study descriptions to make it possible for researchers, coaches, expatriates, human resource professionals and others to consider the findings in relation to their specific circumstances, and in relation to other available research. One study in one context is limited evidence. Larger scale studies using comparison groups, multiple coaches and assessors, more locations and quantitative measures of impact would be invaluable in exploring and clarifying themes identified here.

In the Conclusions I make two very general recommendations about the future application of executive coaching in international business, both of which would rely on others to make judgments based on individual, company and cultural considerations, and additional contextually-relevant evidence such as other research studies:

(1) coaching be delivered in combination with mentoring and training (e.g. mentor-as-coach initiatives); and
(2) the current individual focus of coaching (inspired by the traditions of Western thinking) be expanded into a greater consideration of family, organizational, community, and societal systems and cultures.

The dissertation serves to strengthen the theoretical foundation and empirical research base of executive coaching, particularly in a cross-cultural context. In a review of the state of executive coaching, Feldman and Lankau, (2005) commented that without such a
strengthening, ‘coaching runs the risk of falling into a passing trend that has no advocates because it has no evidence’ (p. 845). The dissertation adds to the evidence-base of coaching and of expatriate acculturation.
CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL RATIONALE FOR EXECUTIVE COACHING AS AN INTERVENTION WITH EXPATRIATE MANAGERS

2.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the limitations of current interventions to assist expatriate managers and provides a theoretical basis as to why evidence-based executive coaching may be effective in improving work performance and enhancing personal satisfaction. Adapted from its use in the medical context, the term ‘evidence-based coaching’ refers to the intelligent and conscientious use of best current knowledge in making decisions about how to deliver coaching to coaching clients, and in designing interventions for coaching clients (Grant, 2005). The different perspectives from which evidence-based executive coaching can be conducted are described below. I note my role and development as a researcher-coach and provide details of the specific intervention used in the research fieldwork. I emphasize executive coaching from a cultural perspective because of the cross-cultural context of the research project.

Specifically in this research dissertation, I explore the potential of evidence-based executive coaching to facilitate successful expatriate manager acculturation, measured by improved work performance and enhanced personal satisfaction. Expatriate managers are key players in the global economy, acting as the, ‘human link in international trade’ (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001, p.168). There is an ongoing problem of high failure rate of expatriate managers, reflected in early termination of the sojourn, lack of performance or high levels of personal dissatisfaction. Failure comes at high cost to companies, host nationals, and to the individuals themselves. Based on an examination of the relationships between the theoretical underpinning of both executive coaching and expatriate cross-cultural contact, I propose that executive coaching may offer value beyond that offered by mentoring and training, methods that have commonly employed to assist expatriate managers. Executive coaching is examined as an as-well-as rather than instead-of intervention.
Evidence-based executive coaching may be effective with expatriate managers because – in theory - it shares essential features with a successful expatriate experience. Both processes operate interactively across the individual’s affective, behavioural and cognitive domains. As such, they both have an impact on the whole person. The dissertation examines how executive coaching - at least in the context of the research project – may contribute to:

- improved work performance; and
- enhanced personal satisfaction (often associated with personal growth).

These are two criteria which are common measures of success for expatriate assignments (Mendenhall et al., 2002) and for executive coaching interventions (Kilburg, 2000).

2.2 The Challenge: Increasing Expatriate Manager Performance and Satisfaction

The termination rate of expatriate assignments is generally seen as high, though figures vary. Black, Mendenhall and Oddou (1991) claimed that sixteen percent and forty percent of American expatriate managers return early, at a cost of $100k each. Early termination is a common but imperfect measure of sojourn failure. Termination is a reflection of either (1) a failure of work performance, or (2) a lack of personal satisfaction on behalf of the expatriate or family member(s), or (3) both, since research indicates they are related (Thomas, 1998). Termination as a measure does not take into account the potentially higher cost, in terms of key relationships and financial outcomes, of a manager who stays while performing poorly and being highly dissatisfied with his or her lot in expatriate life.

Training, development and selection have been the main tools to combat high expatriate failure rates. As a recent comprehensive review of the literature on expatriate development and assignments (Mendenhall et al., 2002) affirmed, there exists a considerable body of research on the processes, as well as the pitfalls, of expatriate selection, training and development. Yet, despite that attention, the challenge of finding effective methods of improving expatriate performance and satisfaction remains (Earley & Peterson, 2004).
Failure by the expatriate manager (and/or his or her family) to successfully acculturate is agreed to be the main reason for failure. Mendenhall et al. (2002) concluded that, ‘Acculturation may not automatically lead to effectiveness, but it is assumed by most scholars working in the field that it appears to be a prerequisite in some way for effectiveness to occur’ (p.167). One limitation with this conclusion is that there is an assumption that one does or does not acculturate. In this dissertation, I conceptualize acculturation as a process which can be experienced in many different ways. The degree of success is measured against two main criteria – improved work performance and enhanced personal satisfaction. Both are highly complex.

As observed by Thomas (1998), there is considerable overlap and lack of distinction between some of the common outcome variables, such as acculturation, adjustment, effectiveness and satisfaction. Berry (1997) referred to the concept of acculturation at the group level as the cultural changes resulting from cross-cultural group encounters. I use acculturation in this dissertation to refer to what Berry (1997) terms ‘individual level psychological acculturation’ (p.12), i.e. the ongoing changes and outcomes that occur as the individual experiences the process of interacting in and adapting to a different cultural environment. The terms acculturation and adaptation are interchangeable in much of the literature. My interpretation of the various accounts is that acculturation often refers to a holistic engagement with the expatriate experience, while adjustment can be a more short-term and reversible process. The dissertation focuses on the broader definition of acculturation.

Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou (1991) provided a theoretical framework that encompasses three facets of adjustment; (1) adjustment to work, (2) adjustment to interacting with host nationals, and (3) adjustment to general environment. Hechanova, Beehr, and Christiansen (2003) reviewed the adjustment/acculturation literature and found that four factors were common predictors of all three facets of adjustment; (1) self efficacy, (2) family and spouse adjustment, (3) work adjustment, and (4) interaction with host nationals. The executive coaching programs conducted in this study aimed to work across all three facets and with the four factors identified as predicting successful adjustment - as well as others.
Acculturation does not only refer to the adaptation to a new national culture. All groups have cultures. Culture operates at all levels of an individual’s life. Families, communities, societies, organizations, and nations all have cultures. For the expatriate manager, the cultural factors regarding adjustment to work may involve a mix of each of these levels of culture, adding to the complexity of the acculturation challenge. The cultural influences from different group cultures help shape our individual identity. This is one reason why expatriate assignments can often be transformational for individuals (Osland, 1995). There are many definitions of culture. From the literature and my experience in this research, I view culture as contextual. Tayeb (2001) observed that, ‘Culture is a woolly concept, almost impossible to observe and 'measure' in all its visible and hidden corners. Like the air that we breathe, we cannot see it or weigh it, we cannot put our arms around it and feel its strength and power, but we know it is there’ (p.92). Culture is subject to change as different cultures come into contact with each other; an issue that is particularly relevant to the expatriate situation. I have therefore avoided selecting one definition for use in the dissertation. Each perspective on culture has something to offer in seeking to understand its nature and influence. I give weight to recent conceptualizations of culture that move away from culture as a fixed and static variable to see it as a process that is in constant motion (Erez & Gati, 2004).

Rosinski (2003), when elaborating on a cultural perspective on coaching, defined culture as, ‘the set of unique characteristics that distinguishes its members from another group’ (p.20). Writing about culture in a corporate context, Schein (1999) defined culture as, ‘the sum total of all the shared, taken-for-granted assumptions that a group has learned throughout its history. It is the residue of success’ (p.29). Fukuyama (1996), in the context of exploring the relationship between trust and economic development, saw culture as inherited social habit and as essentially ‘arational’ in its substance and how it is transmitted (p. 33). Hofstede (1997), who identified five (originally four) dimensions along which culture could be measured, conceptualized culture as the collective programming or software of the mind. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998), looking at how international business could use culture as a positive influence, offered the perspective that
culture was, ‘the way in which a group of people solves problems and reconciles dilemmas’ (p. 6). Erez and Gati (2004) provided a multidimensional model of culture in which each cultural level served as the context of the cultural levels below it (p. 588).

The muddiness of culture as a concept has clear implications for expatriate acculturation. There is no easy approach that can be captured in a training course or manual. Cultural interaction is implicitly and inevitably involved with complexity, uncertainty, change and paradox. Assisting expatriate managers in achieving a smoother acculturation which is related to improved work performance and enhanced personal satisfaction therefore no easy matter. The acculturation process is complex and multidimensional (Thomas, 1998). Also, it is an ongoing process that has no identifiable end point where one could consider to be ‘acculturated’. New experiences and more time in the sojourn simply bring new developments and challenges. Ward et al. (2001) observed that the sojourn experience has affective, behavioural and cognitive components (the ABC model), and that there is interaction among these components. It is a complex experience which has been extensively researched. Many paradoxes and contradictions have emerged, as Osland (1995), Thomas (1998) and others have noted:

- A direct positive relationship exists between expatriate adjustment and effectiveness – but the same characteristics that make an expatriate effective can also make it more difficult to adjust;
- Married executives adjust better - but the main reason for expatriate failure is the failure of the spouse to adjust;
- Cultural differences between home and host cultures result in adjustment difficulties - but cultural novelty may facilitate certain types of adjustment;
- Support from the expatriate’s homeland can assist adjustment - but too much contact with home can hinder adjustment;
- Host-country language skills are positively related to adjustment - but over-proficiency can lead to suspicion; and
- Prior expatriate experience assists adjustment – but not always. It has to be positive and of a similar kind.
These paradoxes add to the difficulty of making sound selections and designing interventions to address issues facing expatriate managers. They also cast some doubt on the utility of research findings that show some connections between variables. While such trends and findings are interesting and provide some guidance to companies, sojourners, and researchers, they do not give in-context answers to expatriates who are facing immediate questions about what to do when serious issues arise – as they invariably do.

Various models of acculturation have been put forward to assist sojourners and employers to better understand and prepare for the experience, most notably the ‘U curve’ (Lysgaard, 1955) which hypothesized that the sojourner will initially experience excitement and positive emotions, then dip as the reality of cultural distance and the changed environment set in. This will be followed by a gradual increase in cross-cultural adjustment. This model is presented in some pre-departure training programs, including to some participants in this study. It seems to resonate with many expatriates though it has received mixed support from empirical studies (Thomas, 1998).

Osland (1995) drew on the work of Joseph Campbell (1968) to develop the metaphor of the hero’s journey from mythology to conceptualize the journey of the expatriate. Osland emphasized the importance of expatriates’ experiences as stories with different chapters that follow a common pattern. She matched the experiences of the research participants with eight stages of the hero’s journey:

1. Separation from the world;
2. Call to adventure;
3. Initiation;
4. Road of trials;
5. Ultimate boon;
6. Awakening of self - higher consciousness;
7. Magical friends; and
8. Return.
Osland’s model, based on post-hoc interviews with expatriates, is compelling in that it emphasizes the storytelling aspect of the expatriate sojourn, with less emphasis on the precise interplay of variables which seem to vary so much from individual-to-individual. The hero’s journey metaphor is also relevant to the practice of coaching. In proposing the use of narrative in coaching, Drake drew on work by Van Gennep (1960, cited in Drake, 2004) on rites of passage as cultural practices designed to help people navigate the uncertain waters of life transitions. Three phases are identified of separation, transition, and incorporation.

However conceptualized, the expatriate experience is complex and multidimensional. McCall & Hollenbeck (2002) studied 101 global executives. They described the complexity of developing executives who work globally, and the multidimensional nature of the environment in which they operate:

We can say with some certainty that there are many different kinds of global corporations, varying along all sorts of dimensions, from the degree of their international presence, to how they are designed, to how multinational their work forces are. Since different situations require different executive talents and skills, there must be many kinds of global executives. But if there are many kinds, can an organization come up with a single strategy to develop all of them (p. 2)?

They concluded that the diversity of cultures, religions, and regulations in the global business environment dictate that organizations encourage executives to be flexible and to design approaches that work in their context. They judged that an exploratory and experiential method has the best chance of working in the climate of chaos, paradox, and complexity experienced by expatriates. My conclusion from examining the various models that have been put forward to explain the expatriate experience is that no interpretation is going to fit each case. Each expatriate experience and context is different. Logically, organizations that wish to assist expatriates in performing and developing through their sojourn will need to take this factor into account. There is no one-size-fits-all.
2.3 Traditional Responses: Selection, Training and Mentoring

Organizations have generally attempted to increase the likelihood of a successful sojourn by trying to select the right people and providing them with appropriate training opportunities before and during the sojourn. Formal and informal mentoring arrangements have also been viewed as ways of assisting expatriate managers to cope with the challenges of a sojourn.

2.3.1 Selection

With the best of intentions, organizations frequently place expatriate managers into high pressure postings without a rigorous examination of their personal qualities and preparedness for the expatriate experience. There is an abundance of information about the qualities and characteristics that are likely to make for a successful sojourner, but many organizations do not utilize the knowledge (Harris & Brewster, 1999). Various instruments are available for screening and assessment for suitability, such as the Intercultural Adjustment Potential Scale (ICAPS) (Matsumoto et al., 2003) and the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ) (Van Oudenhoven and Van der Zee, 2002), which was with some participants in this study (see Chapter 4.9.2 for more detail). Both measures are based on solid research on what makes for a successful cross-cultural experience. Regardless of the availability of such instruments and the vast knowledge base, selections are often made largely on the basis of professional expertise (Black et al., 1991). Even worse, when timing is tight and there is pressure to get someone on the ground, selections are frequently made on the basis of availability and rapid recommendations from senior managers close to the decision-making process, with little consideration of the cultural context of the assignment nor of the real suitability of the candidate (Harris and Brewster, 1999).
2.3.2 Training

Once a selection is made – good, bad, or indifferent - the practical challenges of providing effective training and development are immense. A growing body of research has shown that training, particularly cross-cultural skills training, can be effective in facilitating adjustment to a foreign culture and in improving work performance abroad (Mendenhall et al., 2002). However, there are serious practical difficulties in getting results from training. It is costly and difficult to (1) locate or develop sophisticated and comprehensive cross-cultural training programs, (2) ensure that the programs are appropriate to the backgrounds and circumstances of attendees, and (3) deliver the programs to the right people at the right time. Training methods have frequently concentrated on the cognitive and behavioural aspects of the expatriate experience, but have given less attention to the crucial affective aspects of acculturation. Cross-cultural training has been regarded as something that is usually conducted at the beginning of an assignment, whereas acculturation is something that is not confined to the early months of interaction but, rather, is an ongoing process of adjustment. Too often, operational priorities put training on the back burner or individuals judge pre-packaged training programs to be irrelevant to their particular circumstances. The net result of these factors is that the rigor of training varies. Most training programs are not sufficiently comprehensive in content and implementation, and simply do not hit the mark (Ward et al., 2001). They are generally limited to the cognitive and behavioural elements of the sojourner experience, although role plays, simulations and experiential approaches are also used which to some extent target the affective domain. Not surprisingly, results of studies of the impact of training have been mixed, and complicated by the fact that outcome variables differ (Mendenhall et al., 2002).

Earley and Peterson (2004) recently proposed that training programs should aim to increase the ‘cultural intelligence’ of managers. Cultural intelligence describes the ability to effectively work across the affective, behavioural and cognitive dimensions to adapt to and flourish in a new environment (Earley & Ang, 2003; Thomas & Inkson, 2004). Such training would focus on broad meta-cognitive skills, motivation and behavioural skills.
However, their suggested approaches for increasing managers’ cultural intelligence carry some of the limitations of the current training approaches noted above.

Another significant point regarding the use of training as a development tool for expatriate managers is that the various management training programs which they may have undertaken prior to the sojourn carry cultural biases and assumptions. The models and approaches which sojourners bring with them, reinforced by top-up programs during visits back home, may not work in the new environment without some adjustments. For example, there is research evidence to suggest for example that North American management practices and theories do not automatically transfer across cultural boundaries. This is important because much of the international management literature, including on executive coaching, originates in North America. Hansen (2003) found that the underlying cultural stories about the practice of North American-based human resources and training were very different in Germany and the Ivory Coast, and suggested that adjustment should be made for cultural influences. Osland, Franco and Osland (1999) studied the application of North American management practices in Latin America and similarly concluded that these practices can work in Latin America - as long as cultural considerations are taken into account. It is likely therefore that firstly, the new expatriate manager will arrive trained-up with theories and practices that will need modification. Secondly, the expatriate manager will be seeking to train and develop local staff with methods that may not be appropriate without adjustment. Finally, it is likely that the expatriate will receive further homeland or international training during the sojourn that may not be appropriate to the local context. The message seems to be that expatriate managers do not have to discard their training, education, nor their favourite management models. However, they do need to find ways of adjusting their approaches to the cultural contexts they find.

2.3.3 Mentoring

Many expatriate managers have mentors, either through their own initiative or formal mentoring programs. Mentors pass on their personal and professional skills, life experience and knowledge to their protégées (Clutterbuck, 2003). There are clear strengths in being
Chapter 2: Theoretical Rationale for Coaching Expatriates

guided by someone who has their own personal experience to share, and senior company executives have an important role to play as mentors in acculturation (Harvey, Buckley, Novicevic, & Weise, 1999). However, what worked well for the mentor might not always be appropriate for the protégée. A mentor may have been a successful sojourner but have gained the experiences in a cultural context completely different from the contexts of the protégée. The mentor’s personal qualities and leadership style might be quite different from those of the protégée and what was effective for the mentor might fall flat. In most cases, the mentor is not on-the-ground with the sojourner and can provide support only at a distance. Also, formal mentoring programs may lead to inappropriate matches between mentor and protégée. In short, the mentor support role has a high degree of hit-and-miss.

In summary, it is clear that organizations need to put resources into improving the acculturation of their expatriates or they may suffer the costly consequences of failure. However, there are often legitimate doubts about how to put such resources to best use.

2.4 An Additional Response: Evidence-Based Executive coaching

This dissertation proposes that evidence-based executive coaching warrants serious consideration by both theoreticians and practitioners as in-the-moment support for expatriate managers as they face the many and diverse challenges of successful acculturation. The reasons why executive coaching has found a foothold as an intervention to assist executives in the general business environment are even more applicable in the pressure-cooker environment of the expatriate manager. Following an extensive review of the executive development literature, Sztucinski (2001) concluded that the executive coaching field had grown in response to the perceived limitations of other interventions designed to develop executives – and of training in particular. Traditional training methods were not having sufficient impact in the complex and changing contexts of executives, particularly as globalization increased (p13). Executive coaching is already being used in cross-cultural contexts. For example, Rosinski’s (2003) developed a global executive coaching process which places the emphasis on leveraging cultural differences at the national, corporate, and individual levels. However, I am not aware of executive coaching
having been proposed as a systematic intervention for the acculturation of expatriate managers.

Evidence-based coaching, by definition, relies on the rigorous application of evidence. Evidence comes in the form of up-to-date cross-disciplinary knowledge from relevant, valid research, theory and practice, found in the established literature in related fields in addition to coach-specific literature. The rigor of practice and the diversity of evidence delineate evidence-based coaching from other forms of commercially-provided coaching services that may, for example, be based solely on the personal experiences of one person or company, or from a single theoretical framework. The four key knowledge bases for evidence-based coaching are:

1. the behavioural sciences;
2. business and economic sciences;
3. adult learning; and
4. philosophy (Grant, 2005).

Evidence-based coaching fits within the broader field of professional coaching. Professional coaching is a cross-disciplinary approach to the enhancement of well-being, professional development and performance enhancement, and the facilitation of individual and organizational change (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004). The field is well-established in many countries, and is developing an international profile. For example, the International Coach Federation (ICF), an international association for professional coaching (of which I am a member) reported in 2005 that it had 132 chapters in 34 countries. The core constructs of professional coaching include a helping, collaborative and egalitarian - rather than authoritarian - relationship between coach and client, and a focus on the development of the client through an individualized, client-centred process (Grant, 2003a). Over the past five years, organizational use of professional coaches has grown considerably (Wales, 2003). Although the coach-specific peer-reviewed literature base attesting to its effectiveness is limited (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001), there are clear signs that coaching may be an
effective means of facilitating individual and organizational development (Grant, 2003b; Wasylyshyn, 2003).

Most participants in this research were executives or senior professionals. The coaching was therefore shaped to suit their needs as executives. In the coaching industry the term ‘executive coaching’ has developed to refer to a distinct practice in line with Kilburg’s (2000) definition of executive coaching (provided earlier in Chapter 1, p.11). Executive coaching encompasses a wide range of services and specialties including; coaching for enhanced strategic planning, presentation skills, anger and stress management, general performance, team building and leadership development.

The executive coach’s role is to help identify the individual’s specific needs and objectives and facilitate and guide the executive in a collaborative partnership. Coaches tend to work with their clients on an on-going basis, with coaching partnerships spanning between three months and several years, with coaching sessions on a fortnightly or monthly basis. Clients complete specific-action learning tasks between coaching sessions. In short, the coaching process is a systematic goal-directed process, which aims to facilitate sustained change, by fostering the on-going self-directed learning and personal growth of the executive (Grant, 2003a).

Evidence-based executive coaching draws on appropriate and well-researched business and management theories, selected according to the context and nature of the executive’s business. Client-generated goal-setting, which has a rigorously researched theoretical framework (Latham, 2003; Locke & Latham, 2002) lies at the core of any sound process of coaching. The executive coaching used in these fifteen interventions extensively drew on material from cross-cultural management and theory as well as executive coaching-specific works. The one difference between commercial executive coaching services and the intervention in the research is that commercial coaching is expensive while the research participants received the coaching for free.
2.5 Multiple Coaching Perspectives

There are various perspectives in coaching interventions with executives. Most coaching interventions, including those in the fieldwork in this research project, draw on multiple perspectives. As executive coaching is relatively new, there is no professional body which oversights the various schools of coaching in the manner, for example, of the practice of psychology. Evidence-based coaching describes the rigor of the coaching and a willingness to select from across disciplines to select appropriate methods for engaging with clients. Coaches choose perspectives and approaches that fit their client’s contexts and reflect their coaching training. For example, my coaching was primarily conducted in cross-cultural contexts and my initial coaching training was cognitive in emphasis. These features were reflected in my coaching work.

Established coaching perspectives include (but not only); cognitive behavioural, psychodynamic, developmental, action learning, systems and cultural. New perspectives and models emerge as the industry matures. Following is a description of each and an explanation of how they informed my coaching practice. There are strong linkages between perspectives. For example, Kilburg’s (2000) major work on coaching is variously described as being from a cognitive, systems or psychodynamic perspective. In the descriptions that follow, the cultural perspective is given the most attention because culture naturally tended to gain prominence as an issue in the coaching interventions I conducted with the expatriate participants. However, the coaching integrated various perspectives, with the emphasis dependant upon the issues and situation of the participants at the time.

2.5.1 Cognitive Behavioural

The cognitive behavioural approach draws heavily on the work of cognitive psychologists such as Aaron Beck (Beck & Emery, 1985) and Albert Ellis (1995). The approach was described by Ducharme (2004) who listed three assumptions that were common to a variety of cognitive-behavioural coaching methodologies:
1. Cognitive appraisals of events can affect behavioural responses;
2. Cognitions may be accessed, monitored and altered; and
3. Changes to an individual's cognition can result in desired behaviour change (pp 214-215).

Similarly, Sherin and Caiger (2004) described the use in coaching of Ellis’s rational–emotive behaviour therapy (REBT).

I received training through the School of Coaching Psychology at the University of Sydney under the direction of Dr Anthony Grant, the Director of the School, and author of various texts and articles on evidence-based coaching (Grant, 2001, 2003a, 2003b, 2005; Grant & Cavanagh, 2004; Grant & Greene, 2001; Grant & Zacon, 2004; Greene & Grant, 2003). Dr Grant’s approach and the initial training I received covered different perspectives. However, its primary perspective came from the cognitive behavioural model, with an emphasis on solution-focused coaching and goal-setting theory. Grant and Greene (2001) developed a popular change model - the House of Change - that conceptualizes the coaching process as guided by the interaction of the client’s behaviour, situation, emotions and thinking. This model draws heavily on social cognitive theory in which human agency operates within an independent causal structure involving triadic reciprocal causation. The triad is of behaviour, internal personal events (affective, cognitive and biological) and the external environment (Bandura, 1997, pp. 5-6). I used both of the coaching models across the coaching case studies, particularly the House of Change (see Figure 2.1 below).
2.5.2 Psychodynamic

The psychodynamic perspective in executive coaching has received considerable attention (e.g. Kets de Vries, 2003; Kilburg, 2000, 2004b; Peltier, 2001; Rotenberg, 2000). As in psychodynamic theory and practice generally, there is considerable variation between approaches. However, all draw in different ways on the ideas of Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Melanie Klein and others and give weight to the role of the subconscious in driving human behaviour. The connection between the practice of psychotherapy and the current models of executive coaching is strong, particularly the idea of a strong and confidential relationship between coach and client. Compared with traditional psychotherapy, coaching models working from a psychodynamic perspective are less likely to work with the client’s past and are more likely to focus on how the unconscious is impacting in the present.

Psychoanalytic approaches have been used to inform management consultancy practice and theory (e.g. Block, 2000; Kets de Vries, 2003) as well as by executive coaches as noted earlier. Kets de Vries’ (2003) work on the psychology of leadership is psychodynamic in emphasis. He drew on his own practice, from psychoanalytic psychology, history and
business to demonstrate that, ‘unconscious, out-of-awareness processes play an important role in organizational functioning’ (p.4). He more recently moved his attention to leadership coaching and its application to groups (Kets de Vries, 2005), personifying a trend in both business and psychotherapy for practitioners to adopt a coaching approach in their work.

Kets de Vries et al. (2004) discussed the need for leaders to work with the cultural context by instilling values that act as a glue between the regional and/or national cultures represented in the organization (p.480). Coaching aims to assist in surfacing such influences so that clients can understand them better and more effectively deal with related issues. In the expatriate context, the merging of leadership, culture, and psychodynamics is fertile ground for coaching conversations.

I had received some tuition in psychodynamics in my coaching course at the University of Sydney and in my psychology degree. However, I felt that I needed further information about the psychodynamics of organizations and how coaching could make use of this perspective. During a literature search on psychodynamics I found an article by Leopold Vansina (2000) which looked at the relevance of psychodynamic interventions in consulting and action research. I followed up with the author and in January 2005 attended a week long course at the Professional Development Institute in Belgium which heightened my awareness of the psychodynamic elements of coaching. Vansina’s work drew on the ideas of Wilfred Bion (1961) on the importance of the unconscious in a group setting.

2.5.3 Developmental

An increasing number of coaches work from a developmental perspective. The work of Robert Kegan (1982, 1994) on subject-object theory usually provides the theoretical basis for such approaches. Subject-object theory views the process of development as the movement of aspects of ourselves from being ‘subject’ to being ‘object’. What is ‘subject’ to us is that which we look through, which is unquestioned, which is seen as part of who we are. Throughout our lives we are ‘subject’ to such things as worldviews, assumptions, traits,
identities and beliefs within which we are so embedded that we fail to recognise that they exist. To make something ‘object’ is to bring it to awareness such that we can reflect upon, discuss, and potentially manipulate or control it. The constructive-developmental theory of Kegan proposes that we are not just passengers in the developmental journey. We can take actions, supported by others, that will change the pace and shape of our development.

Berger and Fitzgerald (2002) and Laske (1999, 2000, 2004) have been prominent in applying developmental theories to executive coaching. Berger and Fitzgerald (2002) discussed the role of a coach in supporting growth, and noted that without sound support people tend to slip back into more comfortable roles and ways of thinking (p. 44). The developmental perspective in executive coaching proposes coaching as a way of facilitating client growth through stages of development towards more advanced stages of thinking that can accommodate the increasing complexity of the modern business environment. As people get to the higher stages they become better able to step back from their situations and gain new insights. The developmental perspective is an additional layer or dimension to the cognitive-behavioural and psychodynamic perspectives described above.

The need to deal with complexity is a major issue in the cross-cultural environments of the expatriate manager. One of Kegan’s most influential ideas is that most people are out of their depth in handling the mental demands of modern life, ‘The expectations upon us… demand something more than mere behaviour, the acquisition of specific skills, or the mastery of particular knowledge. They make demands on our minds, on how we know, on the complexity of our consciousness’ (Kegan, 1994, p. 5). The demands on expatriates are notoriously heavy and complex. For expatriates to be able to see themselves in their situations with objectivity is a powerful strategy for understanding and managing individual and environmental complexity. I increasingly incorporated elements from the developmental approach in my coaching interventions.

2.5.4 Action Learning
An action learning perspective in executive coaching emphasizes learning that is cyclic and iterative in nature moving between action and learning and back to action. Action learning was an essential element to the action research methodology used in this dissertation. Action and experiential learning receive attention in many coaching approaches. Chapman, Best and Casteren (2003) for example, highlighted the role of experiential learning in encouraging risk taking. Vaartjes (2005) proposed an action learning coaching approach in organizational contexts as a way of enhancing business results, linking this approach to a developmental perspective. Action learning requires reflection, which links this perspective with the cognitive-behavioural perspective on coaching.

The work of Chris Argyris and others (e.g. Argyris, 1993; Argyris et al., 1985; Argyris & Schön, 1996;) on action science and learning provides much of the theoretical underpinning of the action learning perspective. This work in turn derived from the work of Kurt Lewin (1946, 1947a, 1947b; Likert, 1947) on the theory and practice of action research. More recently it has been extended and enriched by action research practitioners and theorists such as Reason and Bradbury (2001) who have incorporated alternative perspectives inspired by post-modernism and social constructivism. Distinctions are sometimes made between action learning, action science, and action research. Ellis and Kiely (2000) drew the approaches together as ‘action inquiry’. They noted that a distinctive feature of the action inquiry process is that, ‘it may change shape and direction over time as managers focus and refocus their understanding about what is really happening and what is really important to them’ (p.83).

As will be further explained in Chapter 4, my use of the action learning perspective is encapsulated in my conceptualization of evidence-based coaching as a form of action research. This link has been made before, by Witherspoon and White (1996) and O'Neill (2000). My work as a coach is influenced by the action learning/inquiry perspective, particularly in the emphasis I give to the cyclical nature of action and reflection, and the need for a reassessment of goals and process as the coaching program rolls out. McGonagill (2002) provided a model of the reflective practitioner which drew on the ideas of Argyris and Schön, in challenging clients on the difference between the approaches and assumptions they think they are using (the
espoused theory) and what they are actually doing (the theory in use). My coaching method had much in common with this model which combined cognitive, psychodynamic and action learning perspectives.

2.5.5 Systems

The systems perspective in coaching seeks to place the client in the context of interrelated systems and draws on various strands of systems theory, particularly soft systems thinking (e.g. Checkland, 1985) and family systems theory (Bowen, 1978). Soft systems thinking argues that the social world is not suited to conceptual models from mechanical systems but can be explored by using soft system models that keep in touch with the human content of problem situations. A soft systems approach does not to produce final answers but accepts that inquiry is never-ending. The application in executive coaching is to introduce to clients the idea that social systems (e.g. organizations) are not perfect, nor necessarily predictable. Bowen family systems theory views the family as an emotional unit and uses systems thinking to describe the complex interactions in the unit. In the executive coaching context, it is sometimes used to explore possible connections between the client’s family system and the way they interact in an organizational or social context.

Kilburg (2000) based his systems focus in coaching on the conceptual foundation of general systems theory as applied to organizations. O'Neill (2000) described her executive coaching as a systems approach. She combined a systems perspective with the action research model, ‘because each leverages the other for greater results’ (p.91). I used both texts extensively. Recently, Cavanagh (2005) extended the systems perspective further in proposing that ‘complex adaptive systems’ provided a useful conceptual framework for coaching. O’Connor and McDermott (1997, from Cavanagh, 2005) defined a complex adaptive system as a group of elements that functions as a whole and maintains its existence through the interdependent and adaptive action of its parts. The coaching relationship, the coach, and the client each make up interrelated systems, with multiple influences. An added layer of complexity is provided when this conceptual framework is
situated in a cross-cultural environment. The non-linearity and radical unpredictability of complex adaptive systems will be exacerbated, thus increasing the coaching challenge, but at the same time heightening the need for an intervention such as coaching that is suited to complexity and change. Mendenhall (1999) proposed viewing the expatriate experience from a systems perspective. He proposed applying the lens of ‘non-linear dynamical systems’ to the research of expatriate experiences, with the concept and application having much in common with Cavanagh’s adaptation of complex adaptive systems to executive coaching research and practice.

2.5.6 Cultural

The perspective to which I gave most emphasis in the fieldwork was coaching from a cultural perspective. This perspective has received limited attention in the coaching literature. For example, a recent publication on leadership coaching based on practice of fifty leading executive coaches gave only passing attention to the role of culture (Morgan, Harkins, & Goldsmith, 2005). There are few established frameworks for executive coaching from a cultural perspective. The best-developed is by Philippe Rosinski (2003) in Coaching Across Cultures: New Tools for Leveraging National, Corporate and Professional Differences. There are also some approaches and detailed case studies in Chapman et al. (2003). Otazo (2002) and Adler (2002) have also written chapters on coaching across cultures which provide useful insights for coaches.

Executive coaching from a cultural perspective requires willingness by the coach to explore and make use of the influence of culture as it operates within client contexts. Taking a cultural perspective aims to bring to the surface relevant issues and assumptions related to culture and harness them towards unleashing client potential and facilitating positive change. Many writers observe different layers of culture, with onion rings being a common metaphor (e.g. Hofstede, 1997; Schein, 1999; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998). The outer layers contain the artefacts and practices of culture through symbols, heroes and rituals, while deep at the centre reside the values and basic underlying assumptions of the culture, which are often unconscious. Coaching from a cultural perspective requires that
coaches look beneath the surface. Coaching can move back and forth from the external symbols and routine practices of culture to work with the internal values and associated desires of clients that are keys to unleashing potential.

The approach, as explained by Rosinski (2003), emphases the benefits of leveraging differences that may be culturally based, rather than treating them as obstacles, threats, or irrelevancies. The challenge of working and coaching across cultures is to manage difference, paradox, and complexity. A cultural perspective in executive coaching can bring to the surface powerful issues and assumptions related to culture and mobilize them to unleash client potential and facilitate sustainable and positive change. The approach is to value and explore differences rather seek the ‘right’ answer. The aim is to adopt an ‘and’ approach, in preference to ‘either/or’, and seek creative synthesis.

The evidence for the work, in addition to the research base for executive coaching generally, is from research and practice from cross-cultural psychology, intercultural communication, cultural values and dimensions, international business, sociology and anthropology. Rosinski (2003) developed a ‘Global Coaching Process’ which invites coaches and clients to connect their personal voyages with those of their families, friends, work colleagues, organizations, communities and society in general. Rosinski’s book also contains a practical coaching tool called the Cultural Orientations Framework (COF) which provides a way of measuring cultural orientations at the individual level. The instrument is similar to a tool developed and tested by Maznevski, Distefano, Gomez, Noorderhaven and Wu (2002). My coaching approach, while not utilizing the specific framework of the Global Coaching Process nor the COF, picked up on this expanded model of executive coaching which works out from the individual client to incorporate the various cultural systems within which they operate.

Coaching from a cultural perspective is connected to the tradition of pragmatism because it brings coaching into connection with what James termed our ‘multi-verse’. Increasingly, through globalization and improved communications the various systems that make up our multi-verse are coming into contact with each other. It is not realistic for people to operate
in semi-closed systems in companies, in communities or in countries. Systems are constantly interacting and different empirical worlds are increasingly being exposed to each other. The implications are (1) diversity is centre stage, and (2) there is a need for approaches that seek synthesis of differences.

Fundamental to the acculturation process is a consideration of cross-cultural issues. For example, it is critical that the expatriate understands the dimensions on which the host culture is different from the home culture and, especially, how people may think differently between the two places. For international business, culture has been given a form of reality through the quantitative research of cultural values. The best-known contemporary writers on this subject are people such as Hofstede (2001) and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998), though a massive amount of important mapping work has been done by others (e.g. Inglehart and Baker, 2000; Schwartz, 1999; Smith, Peterson, and Schwartz, 2002). Though is ongoing debate about the relative validity of the various maps there is little doubt that they continue to have considerable impact on management practice, including orientation and training of expatriates (Bing, 2004). In particular, the individualism/collectivism dimension receives considerable attention in the cross-cultural business and psychology literature. Though extremely useful, if not used carefully this approach can encourage a static view of cultures and at its worst promote stereotyping (Osland, Bird, Delano, & Jacob, 2000; Tayeb, 2001; Weisinger & Salipante, 2000). Osland, Bird, Delano, and Jacob (2000) warn of the dangers of ‘sophisticated stereotyping’ where the complex measurement of culture dimensions is used to pigeon-hole people on the basis of culture. Instead, they promote knowledge of cultural dimensions as a starting point or base from which managers can explore inevitable cultural paradoxes and develop intelligently complex explanations of the behaviours they observe (and display) in the new cultures.

Coaching from a cultural perspective requires careful use of knowledge of cultural dimensions and orientations. Coaches with a good understanding of the cultural maps that have emerged from the empirical work can assist judiciously by generating discussion of the client’s cultural contexts (home and host) in ways that improve the perceptions of issues, relationships and events.
Nisbett (2003), from a cognitive psychology perspective, provided an analysis of how different ways of thinking in ancient Greek and Chinese societies have translated into fundamental differences in the way that modern Westerners and Easterners view the world. He drew on experimental studies, cultural values research, historical records and anecdotal evidence to elaborate on the nature of those differences. When working with expatriates from Western cultures in countries where non-Western cultural customs and practices prevail, coaches who are aware of these differences can assist their clients to better understand their environment and the nature of their interactions with host-country nationals. Nisbett’s approach was new in experimentally testing hypotheses. Differences between Eastern and Western thinking have been identified by many writers. Jung expanded on these differences in 1939, suggesting that Western psychology had isolated the human mind from its, ‘primordial oneness with the universe’ (Jung, 1971, p. 481). Jung’s concept of the archetypes and the collective unconscious has much in common with the concept of culture. Campbell (1968), in his historical treatment of the hero in mythology, observed that Jung’s archetypes are rooted in annals of history and have inspired basic images of ritual, mythology, and vision. In executive coaching, both the psychodynamic and cultural perspectives are available as entry points to the discussion about instinctive or habitual behaviours, thoughts, and feelings.

The cultural perspective is not informed only by research specifically on culture. Research evidence from the study of intuition in the workplace is highly relevant to the expatriate manager. Klein’s (1999, 2003) recognition-primed decision model highlights the importance of tacit pattern recognition derived from extensive experience in a particular domain. Our intuitions are the result of experience distilled into unconscious patterns that manifest in the form of gut-feelings that, if attended to, can be used to guide behaviour. Klein (2003) claimed that intuition is particularly important when dealing with uncertainty. He identified five sources of uncertainty, all present in the environment of a new expatriate manager; (1) missing information, (2) unreliable information, (3) conflicting information, (4) noisy information, and (5) confusing information. A coach working from this evidence can raise awareness with expatriate managers of the risk that following their intuitions may
result in culturally inappropriate behaviour and ineffective work practices. Expatriates typically have considerable technical, management and company expertise, as well as extensive experience in their home culture (and probably in other cultures). However, they are likely to be limited in their ability to recognize patterns in the new culture and therefore be unable to develop appropriate action plans to respond to those patterns. Further, there is a risk of falling back on existing patterns appropriate for the home culture but inappropriate for the new culture. As with the development of expertise in any domain, expatriates require more appropriate and explicit rules and heuristics to aid with the development of cultural expertise until they have developed their own automatic recognition and response patterns. Coaching conversations seem well suited to helping the expatriate manager to assess the extent to which he or she is making use of appropriate cultural assumptions and situational cues. The coaching emphasis on situational awareness may help expatriates notice situational cues that are different from their home environment and allow them to reframe their schemas to take account of the new conditions. The coaching process can then produce specific goals and actions that translate cognitive reframing into productive changes in behaviour.

Other evidence clearly relevant to a coach working from a cultural perspective with expatriate managers is theory and research on expatriate success. Most research indicates that expatriate success (measured by work performance and personal satisfaction) is related to successful acculturation. A powerful theoretical model of acculturation proposed by Berry (1997) suggested that the best way of achieving smooth acculturation is through an integrationist approach, in contrast to assimilation, separation, or marginalization. Integration occurs when there is an interest on behalf of the expatriate in both maintaining his or her original culture while being in daily interactions with other groups. Thus, some degree of cultural integrity is maintained, while at the same time the expatriate seeks to participate as an integral part of the larger social network. This approach contrasts with assimilation where the individual does not wish to maintain his or her own cultural identity and seeks identification with and assimilation into the host culture. With expatriates, this is sometimes referred to as ‘going native’ and is treated with considerable suspicion by the home office! Separation is when the individual places a value on holding on to his or her
original culture and seeks to avoid interaction with the host culture. This stance is quite common with expatriate managers who may form enclaves (particularly in hardship posts) and was to some extent evident in El Salvador in this study. The strategy of marginalization is when there is little possibility or interest in cultural maintenance (often for reasons of enforced cultural loss) and little interest in having relations with others (often for reasons of exclusion or discrimination). This is a rare approach for expatriate managers.

The above evidence would suggest that executive coaching (and other) interventions for promoting successful acculturation should give every encouragement to expatriates to take an integrationist approach – that is, to retain their own culture but at the same time become familiar and connected to the host country society. Theory on identity and perception suggests that the way we perceive the world is a product of the cultural groups within which we interact (Singer, 1998). Therefore, an integrationist stance is likely to result in an altered identity in an expatriate executive and mean that the expatriate experience would indeed be transformative in shaping how the executive sees the world. Developmental theories such as the constructive-developmental position of Kegan (1982, 1994) would also suggest that progression through stages of human development can be accelerated through challenging interactions such as those experienced in expatriate sojourns. A coach working from an evidence base informed by such knowledge would be well-placed to facilitate the search for meaning and development with the expatriate manager, thereby assisting them in gaining full professional and personal benefit from the experience. The expatriate experience itself is an opportunity for growth. Coaching interventions aim to accelerate this growth.

As these examples illustrate, there is considerable potential for a coach working from a cultural perspective based on a solid foundation of evidence to assist expatriate managers in completing a satisfying and productive sojourn experience. The challenge for the coach is to pragmatically explore with the client how to identify what theories are relevant and how they are best applied in the context of the client. It is not always the coach who will introduce a theory or idea. Clients will of, course, have their own access to professional and cultural knowledge through education, experience, training, mentoring, and social and
professional networks. The coaching sessions become a forum for exploring and testing ideas from diverse sources.

My understanding of the cultural perspective was enhanced through my experiences for over ten years as an executive and researcher with the Special Broadcasting Service (Australia), an Australian government national multicultural broadcaster. This practical experience was extended through study for this dissertation at the Australian National University on the application of cultural dimensions to the practice of cross-cultural management. My aim was to have available as many diverse but rigorously researched ideas as possible. In El Salvador, I sought further information about coaching from a cultural perspective using local sources. In July 2004 I attended a week long seminar in Portland, Oregon at the International Institute of Communications on Coaching Global Executives with George Renwick, an expert cross-cultural coach. I also developed an association with Philippe Rosinski, including co-authoring a chapter on coaching from a cultural perspective for a major coaching text (Stober & Grant, 2006, in press).

For the assignment of coaching expatriates in El Salvador I used various kinds of evidence specific to Latin America. One particularly useful text was Condon’s (1997) Good Neighbors: Communicating with the Mexicans. Another was Stephenson’s (2003) Understanding Spanish-Speaking South Americans. Two local research colleagues who assisted with me with background information on El Salvador had written one of the few travel guides to the country (Weiss & Weiss, 2001). My local business knowledge was enhanced through an association with the School of Economics and Business (ESEN) in San Salvador. I developed my Spanish language skills and attended a language and culture class at a major university (UCA). I went on cultural awareness-raising visits, including attending a self-esteem class for incarcerated gang members. My sources of evidence were therefore diverse.

The cultural perspective in executive coaching leads to an expanded impact of the intervention beyond the individual. The model of a coaching working individually with an individual client has emerged largely from the traditions of Western psychology, and in
particular the therapist-client relationship. The cognitive-behavioural and psychodynamic perspectives have considerable influence and the model of individual interventions is still favoured in executive coaching. There is room for expanding beyond the individual interventions through greater consideration of cultures, systems thinking, and group dynamics.

2.6 Executive Coaching Compared with Training and Mentoring

Earlier, I described the major interventions used to assist expatriate managers - training and mentoring programs, with the latter sometimes being informal and sometimes formal. In this section I examine how each of these differs from coaching and how coaching may complement training and mentoring, adopting an ‘and’ rather than ‘either/or’ approach.

2.6.1 Training and Coaching

The training process tends to follow a predetermined agenda, is often a one-off event, and is frequently focused on the acquisition of knowledge or a specific behavioural skill (Burrow & Berardinelli, 2003). Executive coaching is a far more individualized process in which the client has a much greater say in the agenda and direction of the process. Coaching tends to be far more holistic and flexible than training. For example, if the expatriate manager is experiencing interpersonal communication problems at a senior level related to cultural issues (which happened in this study) the client can choose to bring the issue into the coaching program as a connected part of his or her experience. The coach and client might work out an approach in the coaching. Alternatively, appropriate training or even counselling might be sourced. It is unlikely that the expatriate would receive the right training at the right time without some sort of additional process to assist. Often, the requirements of the expatriate manager are more than cognitive or behavioural. The issues, such as the one above, may have an affective element. Training programs cannot deal with the affective domain of expatriate acculturation with the same immediacy and individual attention as can coaching.
Training does not always result in enhanced performance, with low transfer from the training environment to the workplace all too commonplace (Hesketh, 1997). There is often limited or no follow-up, regardless of the good intentions of the participants and trainers at the time of the training session. Coaching may be useful in providing a vehicle for follow-up and learning reinforcement. Research has found that training supported by follow-up one-to-one coaching sessions can significantly increase the transfer of training (Flint, 2003; Olivero, Bane, & Kopelman, 1997). It appears that coaching may be a key factor in contextualizing new knowledge and embedding new skills. Coaching runs as a simultaneous and connected process with acculturation and can be an invaluable in assisting clients to identify the training they need (rather than being passive recipients of training that others think they need). Coaches may even deliver training as part of the coaching process. This can be appropriate and effective if (1) a particular skill has been agreed as a training need through the coaching conversations; and (2) the coach is qualified to deliver the training.

2.6.2 Mentoring and Coaching

Mentors have expertise and experience in the business of the expatriate manager. Professional coaches usually have different skills and experiences and will not necessarily provide direct advice based on their own work experiences. The professional coach’s expertise lies in facilitating the executive’s learning and development using a range of validated techniques. The coach’s experience is often relevant, particularly where there is strong overlap with the challenges facing the executive client. The coach can, in part, be a mentor, providing that the focus remains on the finding what works for the client in the context of the client. A coach who has extensive experience as expatriate could be a mentor for the acculturation process itself. In any event, the coach will work with the expatriate to establish strategies that are likely to lead to successful acculturation, such as building local contacts and learning the language. If the client has a mentor a coach can be useful in contextualizing and exploring the application of any advice received.
Harvey et al. (1999) proposed that mentors have a major role to play in facilitating acculturation, including of dual-career couples. They made the bold claim that, ‘a large portion of the failure rate in expatriate postings is directly related to a lack of effective mentoring programs’ (pp. 811-812). They define mentors as managers within the company who are more experienced and have greater knowledge than the expatriate manager. The process they described seems in fact to be a form of executive coaching and the role proposed is similar to the role of an executive coach described in this dissertation. They suggested that mentors, among other things, could:

- take a personal interest in the protégé’s career by supporting and guiding them in the development of technical, interpersonal and political skills;
- facilitate a restructuring of home-country-specific interpretative schemas to achieve greater congruency with the new environment;
- build an expatriate's self-efficacy by providing vicarious experiences;
- facilitate relational sense making by working with emotional, cognitive and behavioral elements; and
- work through all stages of the assignment (pp. 610-618).

Such an ambitious mentoring program assumes a reasonable level of coaching proficiency on the part of the mentor – something that is by no means assured. Senior managers with expatriate experience are not necessarily equipped to deal with the issues of the new expatriate whose circumstances may be very different to their own. Another limitation is that such a model places the mentor-coach inside the company whereas one of the strengths of the executive coaching model is the level of independence of the coach. Mentors with the major role envisaged by Harvey et al. (1999) would presumably need to be placed in the host country. A home country mentor with a major role may hinder acculturation.

Florkowski and Fogel (1999) found that expatriates were more successful in acculturating when there was no one back home to protect their standing in home operations.

2.6.3 Summary and Table
The needs of each expatriate manager are going to be different. In some cases, mentoring might be enough. In other cases, just training might be the most appropriate support. Other cases might respond better with just coaching. More likely, there is room for a combination which suits the specific needs of the individual. A trend noted in the case studies (and raised in more detail in Chapter 7) is that there is a potential for mentors to be trained in coaching skills, thereby enabling them to perform dual roles – giving expatriates the best of both worlds.

A coach can assist expatriates in contextualizing advice from mentors and skills and knowledge from training. Table 2.1 below provides a summary of the strengths and limitations of each approach.
Table 2.1: Relative Strengths of Executive coaching, Training and Mentoring for Facilitating Expatriate Manager Success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method Characteristic</th>
<th>Coaching</th>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Mentoring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Works in the affective (A) Domain</td>
<td>Yes. Deals with the emotional here-and-now of the client. Works from the values and aspirations of the client.</td>
<td>Not usually - mainly limited to role plays, simulations. Limited evidence of effective cross over into reality.</td>
<td>Yes. If relationship is strong, expatriate can discuss feelings and get strategies for coping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works in the behavioural (B) domain</td>
<td>Yes. Clients set goals for behaviour change. Coach observes, monitors progress and suggests new strategies.</td>
<td>Sometimes. Some training programs are specifically designed for skill acquisition and behaviour change.</td>
<td>Sometimes. Depends on the relationship. Mentoree likely to make behaviour changes in response to advice from mentor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works in the cognitive (C) domain</td>
<td>Yes. Reflective thinking and cognitive reframing are strengths of coaching to promote situational awareness and client learning.</td>
<td>Yes. Often a focus of training courses in giving attendees a cognitive appreciation of facing the challenges of expatriate assignment.</td>
<td>Sometimes. Depends on mentor. Mentors may give advice for action based on experience rather than encourage mentoree reflection and learning in-context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works interactively across A, B and C</td>
<td>Yes. Works directly with feelings, thoughts, and behaviours of the client in-context.</td>
<td>Rarely. Hard to achieve within the boundaries of training courses. Role plays, simulations can achieve it.</td>
<td>Depends on mentor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps build relationships</td>
<td>Yes. Coaching goals include relationship building. Coach-client relationship can be a model.</td>
<td>Not usually.</td>
<td>Sometimes – depends on mentor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitive to expatriate context</td>
<td>Yes -coach works in-context.</td>
<td>Not necessarily - often delivered pre-departure.</td>
<td>Sometimes – depends on location of mentor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works over time through assignment</td>
<td>Yes – regular sessions through sojourn if company invests.</td>
<td>Not usually – though can be spaced before, during, and after assignment.</td>
<td>Yes – though sometimes by distance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assists with initial adjustment difficulties</td>
<td>Not usually – can assist expatriate in anticipating issues. Reflective thinking time in the early phase likely to be limited.</td>
<td>Not usually – pre-departure training can assist in anticipating issues. Early-assignment training programs for individual not usually possible.</td>
<td>Yes – can be very helpful in giving expatriate a trusting, experienced ear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailored to the individual</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>Not usually – group needs considered.</td>
<td>Sometimes – depending on mentor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally appropriate to expatriate situation</td>
<td>Usually. Ideally coach will be experienced in relevant cultures, and integrate a cultural perspective.</td>
<td>Sometimes. Courses on cross-cultural management have some impact in cognitive level.</td>
<td>Sometimes – depends on mentor. Problem if mentor is home-based or lacks local cultural experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitates an integrationist approach</td>
<td>Most likely as coaching promotes an ‘and’ rather than ‘either/or’ approach.</td>
<td>Possibly, but not if training is anchored in home culture.</td>
<td>Possible if mentor has achieved success through integration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directed to needs of company</td>
<td>Usually – if company is sponsor. Usually directed to sustainable change rather than short-term business goals.</td>
<td>Yes – usually. Often courses are geared to specific needs of company at the time.</td>
<td>Yes – assuming mentor is or was in company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considers needs of family</td>
<td>Yes – if coaching approach is broad.</td>
<td>Not usually – though can include spouse and family.</td>
<td>Yes – though it depends on closeness of the relationship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applies knowledge from research and other sources</td>
<td>Strength. Coaches can integrate experiences of other clients.</td>
<td>Yes, but limited in range and selection.</td>
<td>Possibly – but hit and miss depending on the individual mentor.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.7 The Executive Coaching-Acculturation Fit: Working across the Affective, Behavioural and Cognitive Domains

The most powerful connection between the evidence-based executive coaching process and the expatriate acculturation process is the way that both include the interaction of affective, behavioural and cognitive dimensions. The House of Change coaching model (Grant & Greene, 2001) introduced earlier views change as an interaction of situational, behavioural, affective and cognitive influences. This model of evidence-based coaching links neatly with Ward et al.’s (2001)’s ABC (affective, behavioural, cognitive) model of acculturation, and with Earley and Ang’s (2003) concept of cultural intelligence. The affective domain is the foundation of coaching, where values and motivation fuel cognitive processes, which in turn can generate behavioural change. The coaching connection of affective elements to cognitive and behavioural elements is a perfect fit for acculturation where expatriate managers are not necessarily receiving emotional and social support that is appropriate to the pressures they are experiencing.

2.7.1 The Affective Domain

The affective component of the ABC model can be captured in executive coaching through one aspect of the goal-setting process. Latham (2003) identified the power of ‘super-ordinate’ goals that capture the heart because they focus primarily on affect by appealing to emotion. Super-ordinate goals relate to individual values that strongly motivate behaviour (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992, 1999; Schwartz & Bardi, 2001). From these high-level goals can flow lower-level action-focused goals and objectives. Expatriate managers are often required to assess their core beliefs and values as they interact with individuals and organizations in a new culture that may be driven by unfamiliar and conflicting value sets. Coaching can provide a forum for expatriate managers to explore their personal values and motivations, and as a way of anchoring and driving change and development through their sojourns.
Executive coaching can connect with the underlying affective motivations of executives as part of the goal-setting process. This occurs through the articulation and clarification of values, translated into high-level goals and then into actions. It is an inspirational process that takes clients back to fundamental questions of meaning and purpose; something people rarely do unless prompted (Grant & Greene, 2001). Cognitive processes (mainly reflective thinking) are the primary means through which coaching reaches the affective domain. Without such affective anchoring, it is easy for the goal-setting process to generate unimportant activities, particularly in the stressed and cluttered environment of most executives.

The expatriate experience is invariably described as personally transformational, though this is often a realization that occurs after the sojourn rather than during (Mendenhall, 1999; Osland, 1995). Coaching gives individuals the opportunity to consider their identities and values in-the-moment as they move through the process of acculturation, and to have meaningful conversations around what might happen once they conclude the assignment. In theory, this should allow expatriates to have more understanding and input into their transformation process.

2.7.2 The Cognitive and Behavioural Domains

Coaching challenges and encourages clients to reflect on alternative perspectives and try new approaches. These are the cognitive and behavioural components of Ward’s et al.’s (2001) ABC model. Reflective thinking followed by planning and action is an essential feature of coaching models. Evidence-based executive coaching encourages clients to step outside of their pressured work environments to examine their thinking styles and the effectiveness of those styles within their specific contexts. Metacognition - thinking about thinking - gives the cognitive perspective a central role in coaching (Grant, 2003a) and is particularly crucial in the expatriate environment where the expatriates are surrounded by people whose cognitive patterns are likely to be different to their own.
The executive coaching process is a form of action research which utilizes experiential learning. Action research has its roots in the pragmatist philosophy. The relationship between pragmatism and coaching is developed further in Chapter 3. The pragmatist position involves selecting approaches that work in-context, rather than relying on grand principles or theories. Reflective thinking is central to the pragmatist approach (Dewey, 1910). Clients reflect on the consequences of their actions. They take actions, review progress and plan new actions based on what works in relation to their goals. These are cognitive and behavioural activities. Research into the expatriate experience is that the generation of action is likely to overcome some of the difficulties of adjustment (Ward et al., 2001). Reflection on action through coaching conversations as coach and manager test different options can enhance learning that is specific to the new context.

In coaching there is a considerable emphasis on collaborative goal-setting and action. The coach frequently works in a fast-paced, highly-challenging manner, encouraging and supporting the client to extend existing skills and competencies and highlighting blind-spots. The coach encourages feedback from managers, colleagues and subordinates and encourages a commitment from the manager to follow through with action relevant to the feedback. Feedback and follow through have been found to be essential features of effective leadership (Goldsmith & Morgan, 2004). The approach is akin to Lewinian models of action research where the client, in partnership with the researcher (in this case the coach), develops goals and actions, monitors feedback, then develops new actions and revises goals where appropriate (Lewin, 1946, 1947). In the expatriate environment this experimental and reflective cycle in the behavioural and cognitive domains is essential because often there is no established approach to follow and new managers have to make-do with what they have.

2.7.3 Individual and Integrative

The reality of successful expatriate and executive coaching experiences is that both integrate the affective, behavioural, and cognitive domains. There is no artificial separation. Acculturation is affected by and affects each of the components in the ABC model
described by Ward et al. (2001) and in the construct of cultural intelligence (Earley & Ang, 2003). Similarly coaching models such as the House of Change (Grant & Greene, 2001) work interactively across all domains.

The life of the expatriate can move quickly, with assignments often of short to medium-term duration, typically less than three years. Much is expected in that time, simply in terms of task completion. The work assignment is usually tough, and the cognitive pressure is enhanced by the cultural unfamiliarity. Distance from family and friends means that normal life events (such as a death in the family) put even more emotional pressure on the individual than would be the case in their home environment. Coaching is also intense as clients set themselves stretching goals over a period of months. Learning can take place across affective, behavioural and cognitive domains to achieve sustainable positive effects on management style, performance and satisfaction.

Expatriate experience and executive coaching are both highly individual experiences. Expatriate experiences are never typical, though they may follow similar patterns. Issues are specific to the context and work across professional, social, and family boundaries, as well as across the affective, behavioural and cognitive domains. Most executive coaches do not have a highly rigid program, though the process is structured. They work with issues presented by the client, which vary enormously. Expatriate acculturation and executive coaching are both highly integrative processes that are unique from person-to-person. They are well suited – at least in theory – to work together.

2.8 Executive coaching for Expatriates in Practice

2.8.1 The Central Role of the Coach

The effectiveness of any executive coaching intervention depends on the personal qualities and professional skills of the coach (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001). This is even more crucial in the expatriate situation where cultural influences and the dynamics of cross-cultural communication provide such a powerful challenge. Both coach and client are
making professional decisions in a highly complex environment. Chapman et al. (2003, p. 272) provided a description of the necessary attributes for a ‘capable coach’, including: self-management, communication skills, coaching craft (for example, goal-setting, action planning, capacity to support and exploring options), interpersonal skills, breadth of experience and technical skills. These attributes are certainly appropriate for the coach who is working with expatriates. However, they could be supplemented with these additional traits:

- a sound appreciation of the cultures of the client and the host country;
- self-awareness in terms of the coach’s own cultural background;
- some personal experience in cultural adaptation and acculturation; and
- thorough familiarity with theory and research in cross-cultural psychology and management.

Given that the acculturation and effectiveness of expatriates are determined not only by where they go but also where they come from (Stening & Hammer, 1992), some understanding of the cultural background of the expatriate manager is important in sorting through the potential influence of culture. The coach, too, may carry cultural baggage which needs to be examined and understood. There are three possibilities in respect of the nationality of the coach, (1) same cultural background as the client, (2) host-country national, or (3) third-country national. Each carries advantages and disadvantages as far as the coaching is concerned. Like age and gender, cultural background might be a factor best-considered when deciding the ideal coaching fit for a particular individual. Personal experience in adapting to foreign environments might be considered a prerequisite for someone coaching others in a cross-cultural situation.

Familiarity with the theory and research of cross-cultural psychology is an additional and essential base for the professional coach working in this area. Rosinski’s (2003) *Coaching Across Cultures* and Adler’s (2002) *International Dimensions of Organizational Behaviour* are two examples of relevant source material that would be an appropriate starting point for coaches working in this area.
Organizations and individuals require rigorous criteria addressing the issues above to select coaches. In the current unregulated market, where anyone can call themselves a coach, there is considerable variety in the qualifications and quality of individuals offering themselves as executive coaches. Recommendations can be useful but tend to be somewhat idiosyncratic. Organizations should screen carefully. Good coaches should be able to articulate their underpinning theoretical framework and use a flexible but structured evidence-based approach. These days many organizations require at least master’s level education and coach-specific training. Organizations should also be aware that many coaching certifications are no guarantee of competence. Coaches themselves should be forthcoming about any deficiencies in their skill set or perceived lack of fit with the client, and should be prepared to decline an assignment if the coach-executive fit is not appropriate. From a cultural perspective, an executive coach who is highly effective in the homeland culture might not be the best person to work in an expatriate environment. In this regard, the danger of selecting someone for an expatriate assignment solely on the basis of technical skills is paralleled in respect of the choice of the coach. The context of the assignment must be considered.

2.8.2 The Role of the Organization

Executive coaches typically sit outside the executive’s organization. This independence provides the executive with a level of freedom when discussing sensitive issues where the organization may be the subject of criticism. This independence also assists in creating an environment of high confidentiality and trust. In some cases, executives hire coaches directly. More typically, the organization - as sponsor - engages a coach or a series of coaches to work with executives. This is the likely model in the expatriate environment because of the cost and logistics of identifying an appropriate coach. The coach would normally not report in detail to senior management about the work being done in sessions. At the start of the assignment, the coach, the executive and the executive’s manager would typically agree on some goals of the coaching related to organizational objectives. The content of the sessions would be related to the goals. However, the coaching process has a
life of its own and will move between specific organizational issues and personal and professional issues facing the manager. If too much direction is given by the organizational sponsor, the capacity for the executive to engage in reflective thinking and to connect their personal values and identity to the process is likely to be limited. In other words, too much direction can remove the core affective component from the process. The organization must trust the coach and the executive to achieve the broad coaching goals of improved work performance and enhanced personal satisfaction. Resulting benefits will flow to the company.

2.8.3 Limitations of Executive Coaching

Evidence-based executive coaching is not proposed as a cure-all which will ensure expatriate success. Several limitations were apparent prior to my undertaking the research project. Some individuals do not respond to coaching for a variety of reasons. Laske (1999) proposed that the developmental stage of the manager (and also the coach) was a key determinant in whether or not coaching is appropriate. Experienced expatriate managers who are highly confident and competent may not feel the need for an independent coach. They may already have mentors or colleagues who already play a similar role. At the other extreme, managers who are not interested in acculturation as a process of change are unlikely to embrace coaching. I anticipated that some people would not want to be coached and this proved to be the case. There were five people who discussed the project with me in some depth and subsequently decided not to proceed. They were not always forthcoming about the reasons for the decision. Some reasons included:

- lack of clarity around what benefits coaching might bring them;
- lack of comfort with undertaking a change process at that time in their lives;
- satisfaction with their current level of support from mentors or professional colleagues;
- and
- uncertainty about the length or nature of their sojourns.
A risk of executive coaching in the expatriate situation is that the client may become dependent on the coach, paradoxically inhibiting the manager’s acculturation. The risk is greater if coach and client come from a similar cultural background. This is where the coach’s knowledge of the acculturation process is crucial, as well as his or her ability to assess affective issues in addition to the cognitive and behavioural nitty-gritty of the coaching process. If dependency looks to be developing, an evidence-based coaching approach may draw on Berry’s (1997) well-researched theory concerning the benefits of adopting an integrationist approach to acculturation. The coach would introduce in the coaching sessions the issue of possible dependence and explore the possibilities of the expatriate seeking interactions with people from the host nation. Dependency is not just an issue with the expatriate manager. As coach, I kept this issue in mind at pressured times during my own acculturation process.

High-quality executive coaching can be expensive. The decision for organizations must be based on a balance of the cost of services against the cost of expatriate failure. Costs can be offset by improved performance by expatriate managers who might already be operating efficiently. Training is also expensive, particularly if it involves a trip back to the homeland or flying-in a qualified trainer. The value of executive coaching might also be assessed in how it helps clients select from and make best use of other training (and mentoring) programs that the organization may be sponsoring.

One of the issues in coaching generally is that it has emerged in the market as a commercial activity and has been associated with often sophisticated marketing campaigns that focus on its strengths. The marketing and the research has tended to focus on the success stories of executive coaching with less attention to situations were it does not work. With the growth of the industry there has been an increase in the knowledge-base and experience of the buyers of executive coaching services. They are demanding that providers demonstrate results beyond anecdotal reports of success (Laske, 2004). The executive coaching providers have responded by measuring results. In particular, considerable work has been done on measuring ROI (return on investment). Claims have been made that executive coaching interventions produce an ROI in excess of 600%, meaning that companies that
invest one dollar in coaching can expect to receive six dollars back through the direct and indirect impact of improved performance of the executive (Anderson & Anderson, 2005; Fisher, 2001). These studies, however, have generally been funded by or conducted by those with an interest in the results – i.e. the service providers. Morgan et al. (2005) looked specifically at the question of whether or not executive coaching was worth the money and also examined the rigor of previous research on the issue. They concluded that executive coaching can be worth the money if customers choose wisely (p.250). With a sample of six executives, Laske (2004) found that evidence-based coaching can give ROI through promoting developmental shifts. Laske is a researcher and executive coaching service provider.

Careful choice by coaching services consumers is made more difficult in the expatriate manager field where the number of coaches who have the skills and experience to work across cultures is limited. Executive coaching is a relatively new profession. It is well established in North America, Europe, Australia and most developed countries. However, many expatriate assignments are in developing countries and there is no guarantee that appropriated qualified coaches will be readily available in the host country. Through the course of the fieldwork in El Salvador I met only one other coach. He was an experienced organizational consultant and skilled executive, though was not formally accredited as a coach. As executive coaching becomes more established world-wide, coach shortage is likely to be less of a problem. In the meantime, larger companies can bring in a coach from another country, providing the individual(s) meet the criteria suggested earlier and they are prepared to meet the costs. This is already happening. One large Salvadorian company flew-in a US-based coach every two weeks for a year to coach four senior executives.

In approaching this research project, I was mindful that few studies have focused on the limitations of coaching as a profession and none has looked specifically at the problems that might occur when coaches work with expatriate managers. I have therefore endeavoured to play close attention to the limitations, building in questions and analysis in the design that may bring up negative perspectives on a field that is dominated by good-news messages. Nevertheless, this research carries the same in-built bias as most other
coaching research in that I as the researcher am also a service provider. Transparency about this bias is a means of alerting readers to the issue and allowed informed judgment.

2.9 Summary

Each manager arriving to take up an overseas assignment comes with their own professional and personal resources. These managers are generally skilled and productive operators and they are expected to hit the ground running. Whenever an executive takes on a new position, some of the individual’s skills and approaches may need to be enhanced and new resources added. For the expatriate manager there is the additional reality that things that worked well at home may not be quite right for the new context. As Osland (1995) pointed out, it can be a testing time in which expatriates often question their basic assumptions about themselves, their culture, their interpersonal relationships and their management style. Change occurs simultaneously in virtually every aspect of life. In order for the experience to be positive, expatriates need reflect on their experiences and at times to engage in fundamental changes in thinking styles, behaviours and emotional responses. Executive coaching can assist in enhancing meaning through reflective dialogue while at the same time encourage new responses and behaviours that are appropriate in the new context. The result should be enhanced cultural intelligence and a more successful sojourn.

Expatriate acculturation is an active, dynamic and holistic process that interactively impacts on an individual’s affective, behavioural and cognitive domains and is often transformative. Successful acculturation seems to lead to successful sojourns. An active and integrationist approach, where individuals seek to retain their own cultural identity but at the same time become part of the new community, apparently offers the most effective approach to acculturation. Executive coaching is highly action-focused in assisting clients to reach meaningful goals. In theory, then, skilled executive coaches who have knowledge and experience in cross-cultural psychology and management should be able to make a strong contribution towards improving the work performance and enhancing personal satisfaction and of expatriate managers. Coaching from a cultural perspective encourages synthesis
between alternative cultural orientations, with an emphasis on ‘and’ rather than ‘either/or’ approaches to potentially contradictory or opposing perspectives.

An exploration of the themes discussed in this chapter is the basis for the conduct of this coaching action research project. The case studies and cross-case analysis provide information relevant to the following questions about coaching and acculturation:

- How was executive coaching impacting in the expatriate situation?
- What seemed to be common across the cases (and were there exceptions)?
- What was unexpected?
- What do the cases add to knowledge about executive coaching and acculturation?
CHAPTER 3

PROPOSING A PHILOSOPHY OF COACHING - PRAGMATISM AND CRITICAL REALISM

3.1 Introduction

One of the contributions of this dissertation is to propose a theoretical and philosophical underpinning for coaching from a cultural perspective and for evidence-based executive coaching more generally. As indicated in the introduction, my observations in the case studies and analysis of the literature about coaching from a cultural perspective confirmed my tentative thinking that executive coaching reflects an epistemology drawing on pragmatism melded with the ontological position of critical realism. In the cyclical process of action research, this conclusion came into sharper focus during the research process. It then worked to shape the writing and the thinking behind the final dissertation. I have therefore positioned the discussion early in the dissertation so that the thinking behind the work is clear to the reader.

In this chapter I look at the consequences and outcomes of conceptualizing the emerging profession of evidence-based executive coaching as pragmatic science (Anderson et al., 2001). I examine the roots of this position in pragmatist philosophy of the early twentieth century. This is essentially a discussion of the epistemology of coaching. I developed this approach as I considered the focus of the dissertation and before the fieldwork began. My tentative ontological starting point was the position of transcendental realism described by Miles and Huberman, 1994:

We think that social phenomena exist not only in the mind but also in the objective world - and that some lawful and reasonably stable relationships are to be found among them. The lawfulness comes from the regularities and sequences that link together phenomena. From these patterns we can derive constructs that underlie individual and social life. The fact that most of these constructs are invisible to the
human eye does not make them invalid. After all, we are surrounded by lawful physical mechanism of which we're, at most, remotely aware (p.4).

I suggest that the relatively recent concept of critical realism, of which Roy Bhaskar has been the main proponent (Archer et al., 1998; Bhaskar, 1975; Bhaskar, 1997, 1998, 2002), provides an additional perspective on coaching which may help in determining the future direction of executive coaching. Transcendental realism makes up one element of the more comprehensive philosophy of critical realism (Archer et al., 1998).

3.2 Pragmatism

Simply put, pragmatism involves making judgments about beliefs and actions based on their consequences. Pragmatism involves using what works. In popular usage, it carries connotations of superficiality and short-term thinking. Anne Huff, in her 1999 Presidential Address to the Academy of Management criticized trends towards pragmatic management approaches, describing them as, ‘throw it on the wall and see if it sticks’ (Huff, 2000, p.292). However, the original pragmatist position is decidedly more complex and is highly applicable to the world of international business when presented as pragmatic science.

Pragmatism gained a strong foothold in late nineteenth century America through thinkers such as William James, Charles Sanders Pierce and John Dewey. After a decline, it has experienced something of a revival (Menand, 1997). Pragmatism is more of a way of doing things than a philosophy. Bernstein (1988, pp. 385-389) outlined common elements of a pragmatist approach:

- anti-foundationalist (it does not depend on any grand truths);
- embraces fallibilism (any positions or ideas are open to question);
- acknowledges that individuals all operate as part of systems;
- accepts the role of chance in life (we cannot master unforeseen contingencies no matter how much knowledge we have); and
Chapter 3: Proposing a Philosophy of Coaching

- takes a position of engaged pluralism (accepts that a variety of truths can exist within different contexts).

Pluralism is the element of pragmatism that provides some guidance to the development of cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural coaching approaches. As noted earlier, James (1907a) spoke of a loosely connected multi-verse. Such a position describes the world of modern business in which executive coaches operate. Pluralism does not, however, mean abandonment to post-modern relativism. Pragmatism (as does evidence-based coaching) requires a capacity to make judgments about what to build on and what to discard. Contemporary neo-pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty (1983) observed that the view that every position is as rational or as moral as every other could be held only by a god (p. 336). Pragmatism proposes that a community of inquirers or interpreters, established from democratic foundations and appropriately structured to the community context, provides a means for moral and ethical judgments (Bernstein, 1988, p.398).

Pragmatism in the tradition of James, Dewey and others is systematic and scientific. Howard (1993) proposed that William James be anointed as the founder of the scientist-practitioner model, a model adopted by evidence-based coaching (Grant, 2003). James encouraged practitioners to examine apparent truths or realities and to look for superior outcomes within the domain in question. Pragmatism in its original form proposed that actions be taken for ‘assignable reasons’ which were based on the values, morals and ethics at play within the context where the activity was taking place (Howard, 1993, p.121).

Pluralism in James’ human multi-verse is largely carried and expressed through culture. Each professional discipline has its own culture – its unique set of characteristics and its way of solving problems. This immediately sets a potential for a leveraging of differences through cross-disciplinary (and thus cross-cultural) approaches to executive coaching. The idea of leveraging differences in coaching (Rosinski, 2003) seeks a synthesis of different orientations to develop superior approaches to situations and events. Difference is viewed as opportunity rather than threat.
Pragmatism emerges in definitions of coaching and in the description of the practice of coaching (Jackson, 2005). Solution-focused approaches (e.g. Greene & Grant, 2003) are essentially pragmatic with the focus going on what works in the context of the client. The two books that describe executive coaching from a cultural perspective both give special weight to pragmatism. Rosinski (2003) described his approach as ‘pragmatic humanism’ (p.3). Chapman et al. (2003) described their approach as predominantly pragmatic, ‘We are, in common with our clients, primarily concerned with action, getting things done’ (p. 18). Diversity within a coaching context requires a capacity by coaches to work pragmatically with different approaches to find strategies that work.

John Dewey (1917) called for a closer connection of science, philosophy and real life. The call is still valid. The science of evidence-based executive coaching does need to ask some fundamental questions, including tackling what are essentially philosophical issues. Vaartjes (2005) noted that the ontological and epistemological assumptions in the coaching literature were often difficult to decipher because of a lack of disclosure or exploration by authors. Coaches ask clients to creatively reflect on fundamental questions about purpose, meaning, value and vision beyond the content of their day-to-day lives at work. As members of an emerging profession there is a need for coaches to do the same.

Pragmatism is more concerned about methodology and process of knowledge creation than the underlying nature of knowledge or whether or not there is some deeper social reality. Dewey thought that the debate about realism – a question of ontology - was largely irrelevant (Dewey, 1917). Nevertheless, pragmatism generally acknowledges that exploring across plural worlds contributes towards a more complete picture of the social world while acknowledging that absolute truth is probably not attainable. James (1907a) believed that reality was distributed, ‘Reality may exist distributively just as it sensibly seems to, after all. On that possibility I do insist’ (p.135).

The roots of the practice of evidence-based coaching are in pragmatism. Pragmatism embraces pluralism and diversity. It provides an ideal epistemological framework for evidence-based coaching from a cultural perspective. Critical realism provides additional
insights on the nature of reality that are useful for the developing practice of executive coaching in international business.

3.3 Critical Realism

Roy Bhaskar maintained that our social worlds are largely constructed yet there exist some fundamental structures and laws of society of which we are largely unaware. He saw society being both a condition of human agency and a continually reproduced outcome of human agency (Bhaskar, 1998, p.35). Bhaskar described our social reality as being constructed through three interrelated hierarchical levels of the Empirical, Actual and Real.

At the first level is the Empirical world which we experience and observe directly. For example, for me in this project it incorporated my day-to-day practice of executive coaching and action research with the participants. Beyond what we observe and experience is the Actual world in the form of connected Empirical worlds of others. We are aware of different worlds – for example, other cultures - but obviously we cannot directly observe or experience all of them. As scientists, we can potentially gain access to information to at least part of these Actual worlds from others’ observations and experiences, thereby bringing them into our expanded Empirical worlds. Collected scientific knowledge of multiple worlds is available to us. We can compare and contrast and look for synthesis. In the coaching context, client potential belongs in the Actual world. The role of the coach is to assist clients to unleash potential. The client’s Empirical reality might be that they are working effectively in a role but without great passion or impact. The Actual reality is that there is potential for the client to find meaning and passion in their work and to have greater impact. The coach can assist clients to see potential and to actualize it, thus changing and expanding their Empirical worlds.

Beyond the Empirical and Actual levels there are underlying rules, tendencies and mechanisms of social life that are relatively fixed. These laws are causal – they drive human action. They are mainly invisible, are embedded in the natural structure and are different from the Empirical and Actual patterns of events (Bhaskar, 1998). As pragmatic
scientists we can apply our knowledge from the Empirical and Actual worlds and speculate and design theories that give us knowledge and insight about this relatively intangible Real world. The causal laws are not, in Bhaskar’s view, completely fixed. They are tendencies that, ‘may be possessed unexercised, exercised, unrealized, and realized, unperceived by men; they may also be transformed’ (Bhaskar, 1975, p.18). The more we know about the Real mechanisms and rules that operate beneath the surface, the more likely it is that these will become subject to change. Executive coaches and action researchers operating in the pragmatic science mode are primarily working in the Empirical and Actual worlds. They are able to speculate about the Real world which helps them to make more sense of executive coaching in the broader social world. If investigations reveal laws and mechanisms that are operating in the Real world that affect the profession of coaching, individuals can seek to influence them if they are not satisfied with what they find. This is the critical element of critical realism and is consistent with the democratic underpinnings of pragmatism. If coaching researchers and practitioners choose not to speculate beyond the Empirical and Actual they will be limited to the current paradigms and restricted in their capacity to release human potential.

At the level of the Real is where we enter the area of ethical and moral judgment which can take executive coaching into a broader societal role. In Rosinski’s (2003) coaching approach of ‘pragmatic humanism’, humanism gives coaching a global dimension and a commitment to ethical work. Pragmatist philosophy is similarly grounded. Given the impact of multinational companies on the global economy, coaches working with expatriate managers are virtually obliged to consider the ethical implications of their coaching interventions.

Critical realism incorporates the idea of the engaged observer. As with action research, critical realism includes the assumption that we change what we observe. Coaches and action researchers cannot, therefore, be detached observers. All coaches are aware of the power of just being with clients and reflecting their worlds to them. Even without action, our very presence has impact. Critical realism shares with pragmatism and action research the belief that the method of study of a social phenomenon depends upon its nature.
Bhaskar (1998) argued that, ‘it is the nature of the object that determines the form of its possible science’ (p.3). Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor and Tindall (1994) argued similarly (p.9). From this perspective it is the role therefore of engaged researchers and practitioners who are familiar with context to determine how best to conduct research. Similarly, coaching processes progress in a form determined by local context by the coach in partnership with the client.

3.4 Why Cross-Cultural and Cross-Disciplinary Approaches?

If executive coaches operate within the client’s Empirical world through limiting investigations and activities to the immediate context, coaching effectiveness is limited. The capacity to increase impact comes from looking beyond the immediate situation to other contexts so that the coach can leverage differences that exist due to the pluralist nature of society. In terms of critical realism, what the coach is doing is accessing more of the Actual world and in doing so revealing more of the Real world. This process can be threatening in two ways. Firstly, it is a source of potential conflict because other Empirical worlds are different from our own. We (coach and client) have to learn to deal with the tension of the dialectic and navigate and leverage differences. Secondly, when we do this we find out more about the underlying tendencies and forces that drive society at a deeper societal level. We might find deep conflicts at this level and we may not like what we find. However, it is through this process of seeking diversity at a local level then seeking synthesis that we can reveal deeper issues and achieve sustainable and positive development at individual, organizational and societal levels.

Dealing with cultural diversity in coaching is a relatively new field. Literature on coaching across cultures and across disciplines is limited. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the field is growing. Rosinski’s (2003) Global Coaching Process engages with all levels of reality by stretching the coaching process from the individual to family to organizational to community and to global systems. This process extends coaching across the Empirical, Actual and Real worlds. To effectively identify and leverage cultural differences for deep
and sustainable development, I would argue that process requires three elements which are consistent with the philosophical position described above:

1. Questioning to generate reflective thinking;
2. A focus on synthesizing different cultural orientations; and
3. Democratic foundations.

3.4.1 Questioning to Generate Reflective Thinking

Cultural pluralism includes different patterns of thinking and therefore of solving problems. A first step in working with multiple cultural perspectives is to generate reflective thinking and encourage openness to different ways of thinking. Executive coaching commonly involves encouraging clients to think about how they think and to step back from their daily worlds and look at what they do from a new perspective. Menand (1997) commented that pragmatism was about, ‘how we think, not what we think’ (p. xxvi). Dewey (1910) described reflective thought as the consideration of the grounds or reasons of a belief and its logical consequences (p. 5). He saw beliefs as part of our mental furniture that are often unconscious and often lacking in rational foundation. Dewey (1917) could be writing a foreword for a 2006 executive coaching text when he wrote, ‘in a complicated and perverse world, action which is not informed with vision, imagination, and reflection, is more likely to increase confusion and conflict rather than straighten things out’ (pp. 229-230). These ideas are similar to contemporary theories that are commonly applied in executive coaching, such as Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (Ellis, 1995) where the aim is to challenge irrational beliefs.

James (1907c) saw pragmatism as a force for un-stiffening theories and dogmas. Action research projects are initiated because of participants’ lack of satisfaction with the status quo. They move forward in cycles of reflective thought and action (Argyris & Schön, 1996). Theory is tested in action research and executive coaching through constant critical questioning. With executive coaching, the client generally has an unease or doubt about some aspects of their work life. Typically, these areas of doubt are clarified in the early
coaching sessions. Management theorist Warren Bennis has suggested that the effectiveness of executive coaching comes from, ‘getting people to hold up a mirror to themselves to provide reflective back-talk’ (Pettula, 2000, p.353). Beliefs and assumptions are examined through dialogue. This happens through critical questioning which focuses on the consequences of action. Greene and Grant (2003) bluntly state that, ‘coaching is about asking questions’ (p.95).

Cultural intelligence, with primacy given to meta-cognition (thinking about thinking), has recently been persuasively proposed as a variable of considerable relevance in the successful conduct of cross-cultural business (Earley & Ang, 2003; Earley & Peterson, 2004; Peterson, 2004; Thomas & Inkson, 2004). Thomas and Inkson (2004) proposed the concept of ‘mindfulness’ in cross-cultural settings. Mindfulness includes reflective thinking to achieve awareness of the assumptions, ideas and emotions of self and others (p. 52). Questioning is the process that generates reflective thinking. There is a clear linkage, therefore, between the cultural perspective in executive coaching and pragmatism’s foundation stone of reflective thinking to learn from the past and gauge the consequences of possible future actions.

3.4.2 A Focus on Synthesizing Cultural Orientations

Questioning and reflection can reveal cultural assumptions and patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving. Once different approaches are revealed, a process of synthesis can derive new approaches that work better in the specific context. Pragmatism, action research and coaching require a dialectic process of seeking the best of two or more positions to create a better position. The aim is not a compromise where each position gives something up, but a creative solution superior to each of the existing positions. A synthesis through interaction occurs in action research (Argyris, 1993; Argyris et al., 1985; Argyris & Schön, 1996; Flood, 1998). From a critical realism perspective, this is a process of improving and expanding Empirical worlds through creative interaction with pluralist Actual worlds. Executive coaching can provide an environment that promotes this kind of dialectic thinking where the points-of-view of others are revealed, explored and developed. Kilburg
(2000) proposed that apparently opposite approaches and positions could be used in coaching as frameworks for appreciating nuance and complexity, rather than as extreme and fixed positions from which to argue. The aim is a form of pragmatic synthesis of different realities.

In a cross-cultural context, actors are creating cultures constantly by constructing realities that give the best outcomes in particular contexts. Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (2000) saw cultural dimensions as starting points for cultures and not as dualist extremes. They portrayed the ideal as to, ‘perceive and think in both directions. This is another way of arguing that we must learn to think in circles, or cybernetically’ (p.3). For example, in the individualism-collectivism dichotomy, they observed that individuals have families, families must nurture individuals. One value leads to the other in a cyclic manner. (In Latin cultures, the oldest son is treated as a privileged individual within a strong collective family unit.) Rosinski (2003) applied the idea of leveraging differences to executive coaching through a cultural perspective.

Coaching dialogue about cultural synthesis in the Empirical level is informed by and adds to ideas, knowledge and experiences from the Actual level. In the expatriate environment, there is inevitably a high degree of diversity in the points-of-view and cultural dimensions and perspectives that enter the coaching conversations. This diversity establishes the potential for creative dialogue that can shed light on tendencies and laws that may be operating at the Real level.

3.4.3 Democratic Foundations

The environment must be conducive to the reflective thinking processes that reveal cultural difference and aims for creative synthesis for new knowledge and solutions to problems. A democratic foundation with a commitment to inclusiveness and participation must exist at least at the Empirical level. The reality is that sustainable change is not likely to occur in organizations or societies that impose rigid codes of behaviour and expression of thought.
Dewey’s prime interest was the health of democracy. Dewey (1888) advocated taking democracy and ethics into the realm of work rather trying to impose societal ethics from outside. Generating ethical behaviour within business is even more crucial now when multinational companies wield such power on a global scale. The form of democratic structure must suit the context. What is important is that principles of inclusiveness and participation are embedded in the environment. This is integral to action research models. Dewey (1910) saw society as driven by individual decision making but regulated by public accountability through the transparency and openness of decision making. If executives are aiming to make the ‘best’ decisions, in the pragmatic tradition, there is a question of how to judge between different solutions, ideas, and approaches. The grounds for judgments of rationality and morality can be found in the democratic traditions of both pragmatism and action research. Transparency of process and the engagement of individuals are two key principles.

In healthy democracies, university researchers partner with organizational participants to create knowledge (Blum, 1955; Levin, 2004). Evidence-based executive coaching has an underpinning belief in the empowerment of individuals and the inclusion of people in decision making. There is little or no evidence to support the model of an autocratic, isolated manager making decisions with minimal consultation (and poor communication) in a hierarchical, non-empowering organizational setting. However, such a model is not uncommon in the business world. For example, expert managers placed overseas through mergers or acquisitions may find themselves culturally and structurally isolated in positions where there is little encouragement for empowering or participatory management practices.

A pragmatic approach acknowledges that the answer to a specific challenge or problem for an executive operating in an organizational system is likely to be contextual and complex. No off-the-shelf product or rulebook is going to provide infallible approaches or solutions. All that can be done is to bring a variety of perspectives and approaches and to create the most effective approach in the context. Cognitive, behavioural, psychodynamic, cultural, developmental and other approaches to coaching are all valid and coaches need to be capable of working with multiple approaches – depending upon circumstance. The
Empirical world of the client can be expanded by the executive coach utilizing diverse approaches and encouraging the client to access diverse sources of knowledge. Coaches can tap into interrelated Actual worlds through forming partnerships with professionals, academics, and practitioners from different disciplines and organizations. This practice by the coach generates new ideas, perspectives and processes within the coaching sessions and encourages a similar exploration by the client.

3.5 A Pragmatic Conclusion: It is Useful to Have a Philosophy of Coaching

Working at the intersection between pragmatism and critical realism can expand the realities of expatriates and coaches. Having a philosophy that gives a framework for the practice of executive coaching can assist coaches to ground their practice when the course and impact of a coaching assignment seem unclear. Pragmatism describes a methodology for experimenting with new ideas and approaches with the aim of finding something that works for the client in-context. Figure 3.1 below shows how coaching fits within the critical realism framework. The ontology of critical realism can give coaches awareness that the pragmatic process of exploration and experimentation is contributing to an expansion of the Empirical worlds of their clients. This awareness can give them confidence that even if the options chosen by clients don’t work, there are associated benefits of increased awareness, knowledge and understanding that come from the process of engaging with the Actual worlds that lie outside narrow Empirical world boundaries. Also, there is the possibility for greater satisfaction if one’s life as a coach or client becomes connected with higher level engagement with the quest for knowledge about the Real world.
Figure 3.1: Critical Realism Framework for Evidence-Based Executive Coaching

**Empirical World**

- *The day-to-day practice of coaching in local contexts*
- *Observation and experience revealing assumptions and patterns*
- *Action research cyclical processes*
- *Methods suit context*
- *Creation of local solutions and approaches*
- *A cultural multi-verse of different realities and perspectives*

**Actual World**

- *Global coaching profession as pragmatic science*
- *Connections between multiple worlds and perspectives*
- *Creative cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural synthesis*
- *Leveraging differences*
- *Feedback to Empirical world*
- *Feed-forward to enhancing knowledge of Real world.*

**Real World**

- *Fundamental laws and tendencies*
  - *the place of coaching, expatriate experiences in society*
  - *influence of culture, systems, instincts, values*
  - *ethical and moral issues of business practice*
  - *discovery, critical evaluation, and creation of knowledge*

*Feedback to strengthen processes in Empirical and Real Worlds.*

In this framework, evidence-based executive coaching initially operates at the Empirical level of the individual manager in-context. In this study, there are fifteen individual expatriate managers each with their own realities, even though they are connected. Executive coaching assists managers in dealing with the complexity of their challenges and at the same time, following principles of pragmatic science, provide (and draw on) knowledge and experience across the diverse field of international management to connect Empirical realities with accessible broader Actual realities. Beyond that, executive coaching can stimulate a critical consideration of key tendencies and rules that operate
beneath the surface of interconnected global systems at the Real level. The levels of the Actual, Empirical, and Real are not rigid or disconnected. The boundaries are fluid. Coaches, clients and researchers move between them to gain new insights and create knowledge through a dynamic process of observation, experience and reflection.

Examining the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of executive coaching at this point in the growth of the industry is important. By applying the principles of pragmatic science to executive coaching, using a framework of critical realism, a clearer picture will emerge of what is going on now, how different approaches can be connected and more generally what significance executive coaching may have in society. Pragmatism provides an epistemological position from which to move the profession forward. Critical realism provides the ontological framework. The day-to-day work of coaching in local contexts (the Empirical) is fuelled by and fuelling the broader worlds of business, research and coaching (the Actual) and also connected to more fundamental moral and societal principles and tendencies (the Real).

Both pragmatism and critical realism are anti-positivist in their inclination. That is, both accept that at the Empirical level of reality there are multiple realities. As the idea of a scientific practice of evidence-based coaching takes hold, there is a risk that a demand for ‘evidence’ will be translated into the exclusive search for statistically-proven coaching methods with universal application. This would be problematic. The evidence from this study and from the coaching literature is that context will determine the correctness of any coaching intervention. Qualitative and quantitative evidence with assist experts in selecting specific methods. The cross-cultural context of expatriate acculturation makes this issue doubly significant because no two expatriate situations are likely to be the same. Critical realism proposes that there are relatively fixed laws and tendencies but many of these remain hidden from us at the Real level. In the Empirical and Actual levels of reality there must remain a good deal of plurality. In pragmatic terms, some approaches might work better than others but different views and ways of doing things are valid. That is, unless they run contrary to deeper and more significant ethical and moral principles at the Real level. Popular science writer Danah Zohar (1997) expressed this issue as follows when
discussing the benefits of dialogue over debate, ‘Unless a person is insane, he or she has some valid reason for holding a point of view or harboring a feeling. There is something valid about any point of view or any feeling any of us may entertain. There are no wrong points of view, no invalid ways to feel. I am here to learn your reasons and your feelings and to understand their origins. And to understand my own response to them’ (pp. 138-39).

Pragmatism and critical realism describe plural social worlds where active human agents can create better futures by critically drawing on diverse solutions and approaches. These characteristics fit well with the developing profession of executive coaching from an evidence-base. If the future development of executive coaching is anchored in such a philosophy that embraces cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural approaches within a democratic tradition, then it is likely to continue to mature into a rigorous and relevant profession. Evidence-based executive coaching of this kind can potentially make a small contribution to the health of the global society through facilitating an ongoing creative synthesis of cultural and ideological dichotomies.

In this research study, the contexts of the contribution are the Empirical worlds of fifteen expatriate managers. Expatriate managers are part of an interconnected Actual world of international business which has enormous influence on the future growth of global society. International business is influenced by and influences the deeper societal laws and tendencies of the Real world.
4.1 Introduction: The Research Framework

In this chapter, I propose that executive coaching is a form of action research. Therefore, the action research methodology of the dissertation is also the methodology of evidence-based executive coaching. Through the example of coaching expatriate managers, I show the potential of the action research/executive coaching model to provide a rich and appropriate means for collecting empirical evidence about management and business more generally. I investigate expatriate acculturation in El Salvador and how executive coaching can facilitate expatriate acculturation, i.e. the interaction of executive coaching and expatriate acculturation. I have used a multiple case study action research design. There were fifteen case studies of individuals, each coached by the same person who was also the researcher. Figure 4.1 (p. 77) sets out the research framework.

Leaders, managers and professionals have been travelling overseas virtually throughout history. Trade, religion, education, development assistance, military conquest and the quest for adventure have all been motivating factors for people to spend extensive time out of their own cultures. Research on their experiences is available in many forms. A large body of rigorous research has built up in the latter half of the twentieth century on many aspects of expatriate acculturation. The research has to some extent been motivated by a desire by multinational corporations to avoid the high costs of expatriate sojourn failure. The form of the research has mainly been quantitative, with the aim of isolating variables. Much is known but there is little agreement about ways of addressing issues that limit the effectiveness and longevity of expatriate assignments.
Figure 4.1
Research Framework

Overall Method

Specific Method

Two Foci of Study

Multiple Case Study
‘Repeated Experiment’

Potential for Generalization to

1. EXPATRIATE ACCULTURATION:
in El Salvador

2. EVIDENCE-BASED EXECUTIVE COACHING:
from a Cultural Perspective

15 CASE STUDIES

EVIDENCE-BASED EXECUTIVE COACHING

ACTION RESEARCH

INTERACTION

EXPATRIATE ACCULTURATION
and EVIDENCE-BASED EXECUTIVE COACHING
There is a lack of empirical research on executive coaching and coaching generally (Grant, 2001), though this situation is gradually changing. Factors contributing to the paucity of research to date include the relative newness and the cross-disciplinary nature of the field, and a lack of clarity about exactly what constitutes coaching (Brotman, Liberi, & Wasylyshyn, 1998). Another potential limiting factor in the development of knowledge about coaching has been the difficulty of applying quantitative research models to coaching. *The Economist* (15 November, 2003) commented on executive coaching stating that, ‘rigorous analysis of so touchy-feely an activity is probably impossible’ (p. 61). This same perception within academic circles may have slowed the development of a strong research tradition. This dissertation proposes that one qualitative method - action research - is well suited for researching coaching, and also for adding depth to existing knowledge about expatriate acculturation.

Traditionally within academic approaches to the behavioural sciences, quantitative, randomized controlled studies have been seen as a research gold standard. While it is clearly important to have a robust research methodology, executive coaching has several important characteristics that may inhibit the use of quantitative research designs utilizing random assignment to intervention or control groups and the gathering of quantitative data. In executive coaching, outcome variables are not always clear. Samples of executives are not easy to create and random assignment to intervention or control is difficult (and often impossible) to arrange. As in many field-based organizational research initiatives, there are large numbers of observable and non-observable variables that influence outcomes. Thus establishing clear causal relationships between coaching and outcome is somewhat problematic (Kilburg, 2000).

Quantitative controlled-variable research approaches tend to remove the effect of context. While this is important in some research applications, with executive coaching this can be somewhat problematic as context is a key feature of the intervention. Also, coaching from a cultural perspective aims to focus on difference as opportunity. It is common practice in multivariate statistical analyses (such as multiple regression and factor analyses) to delete or recode multivariate outliers because they can have a dramatic effect on regression
analyses (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001, p.117). These kinds of analyses are common when dealing with complex research issues. There is almost a philosophical choice of avoiding or moving away from individual differences as opposed to moving towards them. I am not arguing against such analysis. Instead, I propose that the research-mix include other forms of analysis that allow for a focus on difference and uniqueness. This is an ‘and’ rather than ‘either/or’ position, consistent with the philosophy outlined in Chapter 3.

The many contradictions and paradoxes noted in the expatriate cultural adjustment literature in reviews by Thomas (1998) and more recently by Mendenhall et al. (2002) suggest that quantitative methods, regardless of the duration or scope of them, may continue to struggle to find clarity. In this case, a considerable amount of quantitative work has already been done which has revealed the multidimensionality of the experience of acculturation. Qualitative research can add to this work by exploring some of the more complex concepts and interactions, and also by providing rich and accessible stories of sojourners that can be used by researchers and sojourners alike. For example, in this study the methodology provided for an exploration and description of the complex role of values and trust in the coaching and acculturation processes.

Existing theories are useful for interpreting case studies. If themes emerge that cannot be explained against what is already known it would provide some direction for future larger scale quantitative and qualitative work to develop new theories and approaches. It seems very unlikely that a new meta-theory of expatriate manager adjustment will emerge that will explain the expatriate experience any better than existing theories (e.g. by Berry, 1997; Black, Gregersen, Mendenhall, & Stroh, 1999; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Ward et al., 2001). Such a development is even less likely if we accept that the Empirical and Actual realities of the expatriate experiences are multiple and different. The methodology in this dissertation accommodates individual differences and allows for an in-context exploration of the phenomenon of executive coaching and expatriate acculturation.

One of the few qualitative studies of the expatriate experience is by Joyce Osland (1995) *The Adventure of Working Abroad: Hero Tales from the Global Frontier*. The book is
based on Osland’s (1990) doctoral thesis and examined the stories of thirty-five American businesspeople with overseas assignments of longer than eighteen months. She proposed the metaphor of the hero from ancient mythology for the expatriate sojourner. Methodologically, the difference between Osland’s account and the majority of quantitative studies is that she aimed to capture the subjective experience of the businesspeople. Osland’s social interaction with many expatriates and her own experience as an expatriate highlighted this gap in the literature. Her work makes a rare and significant contribution in providing a better understanding of the complex, transformational nature of the expatriate experience – a stated aim of the work.

One limitation of Osland’s (1995) study in capturing the essence of the hero’s journey is that it is done through retrospective self-report by interview and questionnaire. The gap between the data collection and the assignment was in some cases as long as eight years. From another perspective, this is a strength by providing distance and reflection time. The advantage of the executive coaching/action research approach is that data are collected as the participant is experiencing the assignment. It can also capture – and may be part of – the decision making process on central issues. The design in this project captures the stories as they unfold (with the coach as a character) as well as incorporating reflections from participants on what has happened.

4.2 Primary Method: Action Research

The research model I used for the multiple case studies can broadly be defined as action research, though it draws on other qualitative approaches. Action research encompasses a variety of naturalistic and collaborative research activities and had its origins in the social research of Kurt Lewin (Gold, 1999; Lewin, 1946, 1947a, 1947b). Dick (1997) described action research as having two criteria; (1) pursuing action and research, and (2) a cyclic process, alternating action with critical reflection. Action research does not have rigid procedures. Instead, action research approaches have shared features. Action research studies:
• are concerned with real-life problems determined by participants, in-context;
• proceed through action spirals of identifying problems, planning, acting and evaluating;
• are change-oriented, with change occurring at the level of norms and values expressed in action and different ways of thinking;
• challenge the status quo from a participant perspective;
• are rigorous, with high standards for developing theory, collecting and recording data;
• are emergent, with projects taking shape slowly as they respond to the situation in which they are located and the information they collect;
• require active, involved researchers who co-generate knowledge with participants;
• view the diversity of participant experiences/capacities as an opportunity for creative process enrichment;
• are pragmatic, with the credibility and validity of knowledge measured on capacity to solve problems (workability) and to increase participants' control over their own situations; and
• contribute simultaneously to knowledge in social science (list summarized from Argyris et al., 1985; Greenwood & Levin, 1998; Lewin, 1946; Putman, 1981; Reason & Bradbury, 2001).

Greenwood and Levin (1998) described action research as inevitably providing a challenge to the status quo in disrupting existing power relationships for the purpose of democratizing society (p.88). The aim of this research was not so ambitious. However, the systematic conduct of executive coaching as action research in international business may over time have a democratizing impact, particularly if power-brokers in the global business environment are encouraged to deeply reflect as to their motivations, values and the consequences of their actions. In this project, I positioned the action research approach through coaching as a means of questioning existing assumptions and frameworks which shaped the behaviour and impact of the expatriate managers in their environments.

There have been criticisms of the methodology of action research as being unscientific. Aguinis (1993) examined the perceived discrepancies between action research and scientific method and concluded that supposed differences could in fact be viewed as
similarities. Aguinis emphasized the scientific nature of action research as the application of scientific method to problem-solving and fact-finding in organizations, with the main difference being that the researcher becomes actively involved in the process. He noted that action research can be concerned with both quantitative and qualitative data. Greenwood and Levin (1998) saw action research as quintessentially scientific. They argued that good scientific practice requires constant cycles of thought and action. They saw science as, ‘a highly iterative and dynamic activity involving repeated action - reflection - action cycles’ (p. 65).

The flexibility of action research methodology allows for multiple and evolving approaches. In this dissertation, I drew on several different perspectives – particularly grounded theory and hermeneutics.

4.3 Grounded Theory

In proposing a future for qualitative research Lincoln and Denzin (2000) recommended a pragmatic melding of the various qualitative approaches rather than becoming overly committed to specific methodologies (p.1050). The dissertation action research methodology is heavily influenced by other qualitative approaches, including grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Locke (2001) observed that grounded theory is embedded in most modern qualitative approaches, though she noted that there is no complete agreement about just what constitutes grounded theory (p.2). The identifying feature of grounded theory is that theory is created up from the data rather than used as a starting point for testing related hypotheses. Grounded theory requires immersion in the data. Most practitioners share with action researchers the perspective of the researcher-as-participant. The final result is a combination of science, subjectivity and interpretivism (Locke, 2001, p.130).

I used the central grounded theory technique of ‘constant comparison’ in moving from the data to the theory and then back to the data through the course of the project. This happened right to the end of the project, at which point participants were still providing me with fresh
perspectives on the executive coaching experience which I was able to integrate into the report. From a critical realist perspective, I was using constant comparison to move from the client’s context (the Empirical) to generate ideas about the Actual and then the Real worlds. I also used the method of theoretical sampling to choose participants who had characteristics that would help me to shed light on particular aspects of emerging and existing theory, in contrast to random sampling methods (Partington, 2000).

A lot is known about expatriate acculturation. A grounded theory approach allowed me to use as data the major theories that have emerged over time – some of which were contradictory. I sought to avoid using the existing theories as underlying assumptions of my research. Instead, I aimed to remain open to discovering new angles on acculturation. Less is known about executive coaching. Grounded theory provided an approach for analysing what was going on from the raw data of the coaching conversations. The executive coaching industry is in a pioneer stage and grounded theory allowed for theory building.

The research intersection of the fields of coaching and expatriate acculturation was completely new ground. The grounded theory approach to the case studies resulted in a descriptive research report that contains deep analysis and theory but is also open to analysis by other people. Multiple interpretations are possible for the development of new theory about how coaching can work in the expatriate environment.

My decision to use aspects of grounded theory is consistent with Bhaskar’s (1998) view that the nature of the social phenomenon under investigation that should in part determine the method of research. The application of executive coaching and acculturation was well-suited for study through grounded theory since there was no way of accurately predicting what would happen. In this study I began each coaching assignment without a set theoretical framework for the client’s challenges. I worked with the client to find meaning in evidence from the context of the client, drawing in theories that were appropriate.
4.4 Hermeneutics

The research model is to some extent informed by the tradition of hermeneutics in qualitative research. Hermeneutics is largely concerned with the theory of meaning and understanding. The non-linearity of the executive coaching and acculturation processes can be captured by this approach, which has been proposed for expatriate research by Mendenhall (1999). Mendenhall suggests applying the hermeneutic principles of text interpretation (from an unpublished manuscript by Goble, 1997) to the expatriate experience as follows:

- The meaning of expatriation should be determined as much as possible from expatriates themselves;
- External theoretical models should not be imposed upon expatriates as templates to their experiences;
- The meaning of the expatriate’s experiences is partially dependent upon the expatriate’s worldview; and
- New insights can be created by expatriates from post-hoc musings on their experiences (p. 76).

Each of these principles was incorporated in this research design. Critical realism has close connections to the principles of hermeneutics, sharing the belief, for example, that meanings are embedded in social contexts (Bhaskar, 1998, p.28).

4.5 Reframing Executive Coaching as Action Research: Towards a Tradition of ‘Coaching Research’

I propose that executive coaches working from an evidence-base in the pragmatic tradition are not only consumers of research, but are action researchers - whether they currently carry such a formal tag or not (Abbott & Grant, 2005). An examination of the ten features of action research (noted on page 79) in relation to executive coaching reveals a strong
synergy between the two. Also, they are consistent with the methodology of pragmatism described in the Chapter 3 (pp 61-62). The pragmatic approach builds on existing knowledge with new ideas that are created through synthesis with other ideas from different systems and knowledge bases. A pragmatic coaching approach connects clients with fresh ideas that may facilitate creative synthesis. The new ideas can then be spread by coaching (and also by research reporting) into other systems with new clients. Pragmatic science and action research do not proscribe detailed research strategies at the micro level. The choice of the precise strategy depends very much on the purpose of the research being undertaken and decisions made by researchers with participants, as does critical realism. Action research, though generally favouring qualitative approaches, can also create and draw on quantitative data.

In action research, learning occurs through the interaction of existing knowledge and action; i.e. through theory and practice (Argyris & Schön, 1996). Similarly, a principle of executive coaching is to seek to build on client strengths and achievements and make small changes for maximum impact. William James (1907c) suggested that the great use of theory is to summarize old facts and to lead to new ones (p. 22). The idea is to discard what doesn’t work, and to continue with what does work. New truths and theories are themselves scrutinized and recreated.

Executive coaching is client-focused. Goal-setting and action planning are crucial elements. Action is taken after a search for relevant evidence in the form of observable data. Clients reflect on the impact of the actions and work back to reassess the issue or problem to determine new actions. Action research and coaching both establish new in-context understandings of reality, including changes to established patterns of thinking and action. The skills of the action researcher and coach overlap considerably and include questioning, listening, adaptability and flexibility, expertise and control of bias. To be successful, both require engagement, commitment, feeling, and passion.

Viewed from a systems perspective, executive coaching is an entry point to the individual’s complex world of interacting systems. In the expatriate environment, cultural influences
give additional complexity to systems perspectives. Within the coaching sessions, discussions inevitably centre on the way the client is operating in the family, social and organizational settings. Action taken by clients, if done over a period of time and consistently implemented with commitment will influence their relationships, their work interactions and their social worlds. It is also relatively common for coaching interventions to operate with groups rather than individuals. Action research and executive coaching are therefore on the same continuum in approaching people in their contexts. Both appreciate that individuals have multiple realities which intersect and interconnect.

Action research contributes simultaneously to knowledge in the local context and to social science generally (Argyris et al., 1985; Ellis & Kiely, 2000; Gold, 1999). Executive coaching has undoubtedly contributed to knowledge in local contexts, particularly for the individual executives. However, it is less clear what flow of knowledge there has been from executive coaching activities into social sciences. This link back to the broader social knowledge base is vital if coaching is to develop as a respected methodology for creating change.

There are differences in emphasis. A feature of action research is that it generally involves group projects. The coaching process, though similar in nature to the generally-accepted view of action research, differs in that its initial focus of change is usually the individual. Trompenaars’ (1998) perspective on the way apparently different approaches can be complementary is instructive here. The starting point of executive coaching might be the individual but the individual is viewed as being part of a system. Executive coaching as action research provides an ideal entry point to organizational systems – through the manager.

Another difference is that executive coaching has not been seen as a research tool while action research is well established (though not always embraced) as a research method. This dissertation illustrates that executive coaching can be an effective means of gaining knowledge about the world of executive management because it can gain an internal and involved perspective. Executive coaching viewed as action research is an ideal catalyst for
change in organizational systems and an effective instrument for collecting data about the way those systems operate.

The action research methodology of the dissertation engages with values. People’s values systems are embedded within their different Empirical realities. When they interact in new contexts with other cultural realities and with people with different values systems, there is likely to be a tension. This plays out in the behaviour, thinking and emotions of the individuals. For expatriate managers, interactions with contrasting values systems are likely to be commonplace. Executive coaching provides a powerful tool for people to become more aware of the way their values are influencing them in different cultural contexts. This awareness can assist them to shape decisions in ways that can facilitate productive interactions and thus improve work performance and enhance personal satisfaction. Lewin (1947b) recognized the role that values play in the action research process when he noted, ‘The problem of our own values, objectives, and of objectivity are nowhere more interwoven and more important than in action-research’ (p.153).

Both executive coaching and action research require all participants to think critically and reflectively throughout the process. Dewey (1910) captured the essence of the process through his concept of reflective thinking which he described as, ‘Active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and further conclusions to which it tends’ (p. 6). This process contains two sub-processes:

- a state of perplexity, hesitation, doubt; and
- an investigation directed towards bringing to light further facts which serve to corroborate or to nullify the suggested belief.

This kind of reflective thinking process is crucial to the success of executive coaching interventions, particularly in the expatriate environment where there are many situations that involve perplexity, hesitation and doubt.
Action research methodology relies upon flexibility, as does successful coaching, as does successful acculturation. The validity of this research model relies upon this synergy. To take this point further; there is no one form of action research. There is no one successful model of coaching. There is no one successful model of acculturation. However, within each successful approach there are common ingredients.

### 4.6 A Case Study Approach

Action research is generally case study work in that the researcher is engaged to assist teams or individuals in a change process in one context. Case study research has its critics. Verschuren (2003) observed that in the eyes of many quantitative social science researchers, the results of a case study are of poor quality (p.121). In particular, single case study research is often considered to be of limited value in that knowledge gained may only be applicable to the context of the case study. In looking at how case study research has served coaching, Kilburg (2000) suggested that the method provides, ‘weak endorsements of our efforts and suggestions at best’ (p.18). There are signs, however, that case study research is becoming more acceptable where there are multiple variables in complex environments – such as in coaching and acculturation. Four years later (Kilburg, 2004a) wrote, ‘As a consumer of and contributor to this growing literature on executive coaching, I have been concerned about the absence of other forms of data about coaching and particularly about the lack of detailed case studies that describe what practitioners actually do with their clients’ (p. 204).

There are examples in the executive coaching literature of case studies which are essentially action research. Chapman et al. (2003) described in detail a coaching assignment in Spain with a Latin American executive. The outcome of the assignment was ‘unfulfilling’ for the coach, yet extremely insightful as research. The case study examined the role of cultural differences and relationship histories in the development of a multicultural leadership team. The work is accessible and through analytic generalization could be instructive for executives, coaches and researchers in many business and cultural situations.
Kralj (2001) described a coaching action research experiment in which strategy-driven group-level interventions were used exclusively to drive both individual and team change. The conclusions focused on the local level impact of coaching. The publishing of this researched drew some reaction. Lowman (2001) noted the tension between (1) the pressure in the coaching and consulting arena towards positive results, and (2) the academic search for universal truths (p.119). In the design of this research, I approached this tension in the same way as I worked with clients as they navigated conflicting agendas and objectives – by looking for synergy. Bhaskar’s ontological structure was useful in conceptualizing how the processes of meeting goals of the expatriate participants and the goals of the academic research could be linked, but also distinct and clear. The work with the participants’ goals and objectives happened at the Empirical level with the coaching intervention injecting ideas from other realities of the Actual world. The academic search for universal truths occurred through the connection of the outcomes at the Empirical level with analysis of impact in broader Actual worlds of coaching and acculturation, then to the higher level of speculation about what it all meant in relation to the tendencies and laws of the Real world.

A recent and innovative contribution to the growing body of executive coaching specific literature is a narrative case study by a leading American coach Sue Bethanis (2004). *Leadership Chronicles of a Corporate Sage: Five Keys to Becoming a More Effective Leader* is unique in describing step-by-step the processes and conversations that take place between one coach and one client over a period of six months, thereby getting inside the coaching experience. Bethanis commented (2005, private email correspondence), ‘I included what I thought was most relevant for the reader to know. and I purposely did NOT include grandiose transformational moments because what usually happens is incremental change, with epiphanies along the way.’ Methodologically, as a rigorous case study the book has a limitation because it is a composite of about five clients and the dialogue is made up, though ‘very similar to actual dialogue’ (Bethanis, 2005, private correspondence). Nevertheless, this is a rarity in providing unique evidence of what really goes on between coach and client. The dissertation aim goes further by providing actual dialogue from real
cases. Bethanis is a good case study of a coach who works on the boundaries between academic and practitioner in the scientist-practitioner model.

The multiple case study approach has been described by Yin (2003) and Stake (2000). Multiple case study designs have greater research power than single case studies because different perspectives can be considered on the research issue of interest. The use of multiple cases does not entail the creation of a representative sample in the way that quantitative research methods dictate. Instead, the multiple cases are viewed as the repetition of the method. Each case is chosen for a specific purpose within the overall scope of the research. Replication logic is followed rather than sampling logic (Yin, 2003, p.47). The focus of the researcher remains on the individual cases rather than on the statistical significance of results from a full sample, as would be the case in a quantitative study. Nevertheless, generalization is possible from single and multiple case study designs. It is done through analytic or naturalistic generalization (Stake, 2000; Yin, 2003). In such an approach there is a responsibility placed on the readers to determine whether or not results from the case study or studies can be applied to their specific context. The researcher’s task is to make the reports sufficiently rich and insightful to allow readers to make these judgments. The researcher can also make observations about how the case studies fit with existing theory, or indeed how they point towards the generation of new theories.

Lowman (2005) recently criticized self-report case studies in coaching because they are, ‘inevitably biased by the human tendency to positive self-presentation and ego protection/enhancement’ (p.91). In selecting a self-report case study I have endeavoured to be mindful of this tendency. However, any research that reaches publication – whether it be qualitative or quantitative – is likely to subject to the same biases. In most qualitative approaches, the author is more present in the text as a ‘human’ and thus perhaps more accountable. Subsequently, he is or she is arguably more likely to be aware of the human tendency noted above, and (where there is awareness) also be more likely to reveal the tendency. Rigor in research is more a product of researcher skill and integrity than of the selection of methodology. By including significant amounts of actual dialogue from
transcripts, I have endeavoured to provide a level of transparency and leave scope for readers to draw their own conclusions.

4.7 The Specific Research Model: A Multiple Case Study of Executive Coaching with Expatriates

This is a multiple case study project conducted in El Salvador, Central America. As coach/researcher, I conducted coaching sessions with thirteen expatriates and two Salvadorians (one a spouse of an expatriate, the other a manager who worked with expatriates) over an extended period. There are two main research issues. The first is how executive coaching could assist expatriate managers to acculturate to their new country. The second is the nature of how executive coaching works.

I audio-recorded sessions and analysed the resulting data with the use of a qualitative software tool, NVivo. The fifteen participants were not viewed as a sample, but rather, the coaching intervention was replicated fifteen times with a variety of people who shared one characteristic – they were expatriates or associated with expatriates. Each case is a self-contained action research project between the coach/researcher and the participant. The coaching aims were (1) improved work performance, and (2) enhanced personal satisfaction. The coach/researcher was at the same time tracking research themes and exploring ideas from the associated theory using the qualitative research computer software. Also, the coach/researcher used experiences from the different cases to inject new ideas and approaches across the coaching conversations.

In-depth statistical analysis was not undertaken because the number of participants was small and diverse and therefore not suitable for the application of quantitative sampling methodology. The research incorporated quantitative elements through the limited use of psychometric instruments (after discussion with or at the request of the client) and a rating scale in a Post-Coaching Questionnaire (Table 5.1, pp 123-126) covering a range of questions about the coaching experience. I also used accumulated knowledge from
quantitative research in selecting appropriate coaching techniques and in informing clients about aspects of cross-cultural interaction.

The data set from this project is unique. The case studies were compiled from transcripts or detailed notes of over 170 coaching sessions, plus associated memos and interviews. The recorded dialogues were not interviews in the sense of traditional research but a record of the actual decision-making and reflective processes of change-in-action. In relying on conversations as data, I drew on theory from action science. Argyris (1993) described conversations as hard data in so far as they represent what individuals and groups actually say and do (p. 254). The resultant case studies and cross-case analyses contain rich information about expatriate acculturation, executive coaching, and their interaction. The full data set is also an incredibly rich source of information about other issues which I have made references to but not explored in depth, such as expert decision making (Klein, 1999, 2003) and cross-cultural leadership and management.

**4.8 Design Flexibility**

The design was flexible. The coaching process evolved as the participants selected issues and related actions to achieve change. Any manager who begins a new job has adjustment problems. Similarly, every manager has personal relationship issues, health concerns, financial challenges, staffing issues and so on. In viewing the experience of an individual expatriate, it is important to consider that not all of their problems will be directly or even indirectly related to expatriate experience. This was the experience in this research project, as will become apparent in the case studies that follow. The expatriate experience loomed large in the participants’ lives. The executive coaching model provided a forum for the individuals to work through their unique issues and to make their own decisions about the nature of the problems and issues they faced. Coaching provided an opportunity for the participants to create solutions that suited their circumstances. A feature of executive coaching is that it encourages individuals to sharpen their own foci and not to rely on the eyes of others in identifying issues or in designing solutions.
Theory was used pragmatically and conceptualized as a form of data. Coaching theory from various perspectives informed the participants’ unique processes of change. Also, the extensive body of theory developed around acculturation was used to assist individuals and also to interpret the data during and after the coaching sessions. Different pathways emerged and the design was sufficiently flexible to accommodate pragmatic decisions within the conduct of each case study and in the overall design. Robson (2002) provided the following characteristics of a ‘good’ flexible qualitative design which the study attempted to incorporate:

- rigorous data collection, data analysis and report writing;
- evolving design;
- a focus on participants’ views;
- procedures from different research traditions;
- a focus on a particular problem;
- causal relationships between variables flowing from rather than driving the design; and
- clear engaging writing that helps the reader to experience ‘being there’.

4.9 Coaching Tools

The different individual contexts faced by the expatriates in the study required that I use different approaches with each participant. This is a methodological issue in the research design and provides a contrast between more traditional experimental designs and action research. I anticipated that while the coaching processes might have a common structure (e.g. one-to-one relationship, sessions of 1-2 hours, regular meetings), the way in which each coaching program developed would depend on the issues and contexts of participants. Nevertheless, I anticipated common themes of change, cross-cultural leadership and the need for feedback about performance. I therefore ensured that I was prepared with some appropriate tools which are described below.
4.9.1 Models of Change

My coaching training and subsequent research into change models gave me the capacity to choose a model appropriate to the individual. The model of change that I believed to be most likely to be central to the coaching process with expatriates was the House of Change (Grant & Greene, 2001). This model conceptualizes client goals on the roof of the house emerging through the interplay of situation, behaviour, emotion and thinking within the four walls. It is a well-grounded in cognitive behavioural psychology theory and research, and in coaching practice. I also had access to various other models which I could draw on in different circumstances, including the trans-theoretical model (Prochaska, DiClemente, & Norcross, 1992; Prochaska et al., 1994). In this cyclical model, developed in the context of changing the behavior related to alcohol and drug addiction, clients can see where they are placed in stages of change moving from pre-contemplation, to contemplation, to planning, and to action. A model of change particularly relevant to the expatriate context is the Transition Curve put forward by Chapman et al. (2003) which set out different stages through which people typically pass when a major change occurs in their lives. The curve is similar in shape to the U curve model (Lysgaard, 1955) which has been useful in understanding the acculturation process.

4.9.2 The Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ)

Measurement and assessment are important executive coaching tools (Chapman et al., 2003). The selection of the appropriate measurement instrument depends on the context. A psychometric instrument that is specifically designed for use in cross-cultural contexts can provide excellent entry and reference points for coaching discussions of many issues related to culture. Two such instruments are the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ) (Van Oudenhoven & Van der Zee, 2002) and the Intercultural Adjustment Potential Scale (ICAPS). I selected the MPQ for use in this project because I judged that the evidence I could gain from the MPQ was richer and better able to be contextualized than from the ICAPS. With the ICAPS, scores were entered online and scoring done in a central point. Participant and coach would only have received a final set of scores on the scales.
The design did not involve the use of the MPQ with all of the participants. Through discussions, my aim was to identify if the MPQ was going to be a useful addition to the coaching intervention. Participants with an interest in psychometrics would tend to be more attracted to such an instrument. Also, I anticipated that the MPQ would be useful for those for whom cross-cultural relationships were proving very troublesome. The MPQ data has the potential to provide fertile material for coaching dialogue. It is based on the Big Five personality model and was constructed to describe behaviour when one is confronted with operating in a new culture. There are five subscales of cultural empathy, flexibility, open-mindedness, social initiative and emotional stability. The MPQ consists of a list of statements. Respondents rate on a scale of 1 to 5 how much a statement applies to them. Statements include: ‘likes low comfort holidays’, ‘is easy going among groups’, ‘starts a new life easily’, and ‘seeks a challenge’. A particularly rich source of leverage occurred where an individual differed markedly between the scales.

4.9.3  360 Degree Feedback: Leadership Effectiveness Questionnaire

I was aware in preparing for the expatriate coaching assignments that feedback about performance is an important element of coaching. I was also aware that most multinational companies have some form of 360 degree feedback process, or at least a performance management process that includes input from supervisors. I researched this issue and was not able to find any existing instrument that I could offer participants in the absence of an organizational process. I used a journal article by Luthans and Farner (2002) to draft a Leadership Effectiveness Questionnaire specifically designed for managers in a cross-cultural environment that would be suitable to offer to participants in addition to whatever feedback processes were available to them.

Over the two years of the fieldwork, I developed the instrument further by drawing on various coaching texts, course, theories and experiences with clients. A copy of fully developed edition of the instrument, including an example of feedback (for Drew McLaren, Case Study 6.10), is at Appendix C. This is not designed as a psychometric tool, nor is it a
statistically valid instrument. It is a flexible questionnaire designed on a case-by-case basis to capture aspects of leadership and cross-cultural management that are relevant to the expatriate manager. The aim was to use it to generate different perspective and provide rich material for coaching dialogue.

4.10 The Role of the Researcher Coach

The tone of the conduct of action research is important in setting the stage for meaningful dialogue that can facilitate positive action and change. Greenwood and Levin (1998) echoed the words of John Dewey when they described the stance of the action researcher (and thus the coach):

Finally, a kind of playfulness and irony is an indispensable tool for the professional action researcher. Someone who is unremittingly serious and dour and carries the burden of the world on his or her shoulders energizes no one. Humour and playfulness have an important role in social change processes. This is because AR projects attempt to suspend business as usual and try to produce unlikely but positive outcomes (p.107).

Bion’s (1961) work also informed me as to the position of the researcher-coach in the sessions. Working from a group psychodynamic perspective, Bion believed that the group analyst/facilitator – or this case the researcher-coach - should come without memory, understanding or desire. In essence, this means that the researcher-coach endeavours to be with the client in-the-moment and deal with the context and issues as they are presented. This position does not preclude the researcher-coach from disengaging from the present to sometimes reflect on other situations, experiences, theories or motivations that can add value to the dialogue occurring in the coaching sessions.

4.10.1 Bricoleur and Friendly Outsider

The bricoleur role envisioned by Denzin and Lincoln (1994) also gave me insights into my challenges as a researcher-coach. They described the bricoleur as being adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks, ranging from interviewing to observing, to interpreting
personal and historical documents, and to intensive self-reflections and introspection. They saw the researcher-as-bricoleur-theorist moving between and within competing and overlapping perspectives and paradigms. In reporting the research, the bricoleur becomes a storyteller who understands that research is interactive process shaped in part by his or her personal history. The result is the bricolage, ‘complex, dense, reflexive, collage-like creation that represents the researcher's images, understandings and interpretations of the world or phenomenon under analysis’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, pp. 2-3).

Greenwood and Levin (1998) introduced to action research the role of the ‘friendly outsider’ who can reflect back to the participants things about them, including criticism of their own perspectives or habits, in a way that is experienced as supportive rather than negatively critical or domineering. They can speak the locally unspeakable, and thus assist participants to face realities they have been avoiding (p.105). Greenwood and Levin made a link to coaching. They described the friendly outsider as a coach, not a director or a boss, and commented that, ‘The last thing most local groups who are stuck in difficult situations need is someone else telling them what to do. The coach counts on local people to be the talented players and helps them to improve their skills and strategies’ (p.106). They stated that the friendly outsider must also be a risk-taker (pp. 106-107). My aim was to provide a researcher-coach presence that reflected the roles of the bricoleur and the friendly outsider.

Executive coaching validates the introduction of the coach’s experiences and perspectives. It is quite appropriate within the coaching model for the coach to present as having knowledge or skills not held by the client or to recount successful experiences from similar or potentially related situations. This mirrors the action research approach where it is appropriate and indeed expected that the skills and knowledge of the researcher will be directed towards creating a solution with their research co-participants, rather than the researcher dispassionately observing from a distance.
4.10.2 Ethics and Confidentiality Issues: Navigating Dual Roles of Coach and Researcher

Ethics and confidentiality were crucial to the conduct of the research. I received ethics clearance from the ANU Ethics Committee prior to conducting the fieldwork. Somewhat surprisingly, managers were quite comfortable with having their innermost thoughts audio-taped and analysed, provided they had a say in how the material was reported and disseminated. Perhaps the explanation is simply that people are fascinated by stories, particularly their own. (Two participants requested copies of the transcripts, which I provided). However, once people reflected on how open and honest they had been in the coaching sessions, there was some anxiety about how the research was to be used (for example, if it was to be published). I ensured that participants had access to drafts of their individual case studies so that they could freely edit out any material that they wished to remain confidential, and also remove or change names and details they might identify them. This approach was consistent with Crawshaw’s (2006) recommendation that clients have full control of determining exactly what sensitive information will be included in the research (p 26). Similarly, Banister et al. (1994) argued that, ‘it is important to structure consultation and feedback over the interpretation of transcripts with participants’ (p. 67).

In the end, participants were only concerned with protection of confidentiality and had no major issues with the analysis provided in the case studies.

One issue in the action research model related to ethics is that the researcher is also initiating or facilitating action. With the coaching intervention, I wanted to investigate a phenomenon of interest – i.e. acculturation – while running an intervention that required the client to be in control of the direction of conversations. Once I as the researcher began to channel the conversation towards issues primarily of interest to me, the coaching ceased to be client-centred and its integrity and effectiveness were compromised. Although there was an overlap between the aims of the executive coaching intervention and the research, the aims were slightly different. In the context of therapist-as-researcher, Hart and Crawford-Wright (1999) explained this situation of competing aims as follows, ‘expectations of the therapist role centre around confidentiality and pursuing the client's best interests, while those relating to the researcher focus around issues of scientific acceptability and integrity’
(p. 208). The design of the study meant that I could give preference to the coach-client relationship over the researcher-participant relationship because I had full access to tapes of sessions for post-hoc analysis.

My approach within sessions was to seek the permission of the client to occasionally engage in a different conversation where I was clearly identified as a researcher. Participants were always cooperative. The process was explained in Session 1 along these lines:

In addition to the coaching intervention, I am broadly interested in researching the way in which expatriate managers cope with their assignments. Sometimes, I would like you to fill out some forms and answer some questions about your experiences which do not form part of the coaching process, though you might like to follow up some of the issues. When I do this, I will explain specifically what I am doing. Answering these questions is optional.

Crawshaw (2006) recently drew some of the ethical issues together, basing her analysis on the complexity of dual roles mainly in the field of clinical psychology. She concluded that coach-researchers have a responsibility to ensure that the social and psychological well-being of research participants is not adversely affected by their research, and should be aware of their nation's laws and ethical standards in related professions that could affect their conduct of research on human subjects (p30). Banister et al. (1994) described action research as a scientific researcher’s nightmare. They noted that action research means, ‘intervention in a world where everything can be happening at once and … where there is no ethical way of controlling (or measuring) the 'intervening variables' because those 'intervening variables' are actually people, with their emotional responses, their conceptualizations, their needs, their defence mechanisms etc.’ (p. 113). In this project, I found that the level of trust between me as coach and the participants was such that the nightmare did not eventuate!

4.11 The Participants

The group of interest was those expatriate managers who (1) intended to remain a sufficiently long period of time in the overseas country to require them to engage with a
new culture, and (2) were intending to return to their homeland. I set a minimum placement
time of one year and a maximum of five years.

Executive coaching interventions typically run for three to six months, with one-hour
meetings once per week. There is no strict formula. Some coaching programs and sessions
are longer, some shorter, and with different intervals. I discussed with participants their
time constraints and negotiated a program of around ten sessions spread over approximately
six months, with in-built flexibility to vary the program depending upon circumstances. I
transcribed most of the sessions and made extensive notes on the others. I transcribed the
tapes as the coaching progressed. Fifteen was the maximum number of participants I could
handle in the timeframe which was sufficient to give me a variety of perspectives.

There are deficiencies in the expatriate acculturation literature. Anyone interested in
expatriate acculturation (employing companies, prospective expatriates, trainers, skilled
workers and so on) is going to be informed by a body of literature primarily built on the
impressions and responses of married white men between the forty and fifty years of age.
Florkowski and Fogel (1999) commented that their sample of 250 US and European
expatriate managers was typical of most studies in that most participants were male,
moved, middle level or senior managers and between the ages of forty and fifty. Osland
(1995) reported problems in locating women expatriates for her qualitative study. She
included two women in a sample of thirty-five. Izraeli & Adler (1994) wrote of the ongoing
struggle of women internationally to reach senior executive positions. American companies
still hesitate to send women abroad on assignments (Adler, 2002, p. 284) The perspective
of women is therefore relatively silent in the literature, though there have been studies of
the effects of gender, most of which have been generally inconclusive.

I had several options in selecting participants:

1. Random selection from those who became available;
2. Choose those who fitted the ‘normal’ profile;
3. Match some other profile which is not currently represented in the literature (e.g. women); and/or
4. Seek a variety of people.

I decided on a combination of all four approaches. I used theoretical sampling to include different voices, including younger people and women. This allowed a form of triangulation in gaining different perspectives of a common experience in a common location.

In the main body of the dissertation there are case studies for the ten expatriate managers (including two women) from multinational companies, government agencies and embassies, and non-government aid and development organizations. Appendices A1 to A5 contain the five other case studies, including three female spouses of expatriate managers, one local manager who worked with expatriates, and the pilot study participant who was a young, single, female teacher.

The use of the pilot study was to assist me in becoming comfortable with the coaching program in the location. I chose the teacher as a ‘soft’ participant who was not embedded in a complex organizational structure. There was a question of credibility for me working with senior managers so early in my own sojourn. The relative youth and inexperience of the teacher, coupled with my own teaching background, gave me some confidence in working within a new cultural environment with a new method. (In retrospect, this choice was extremely effective and appropriate.)

Age, gender, nationality and experience differ. (A summary of the demographics of all participants is at Appendix B.) The Cross-Case Analysis (Chapter 7) and the Conclusion (Chapter 8) take into account all fifteen case studies.

My initial idea was to locate people who were beginning their assignments at approximately the same time. This was not possible since I found that newly arrived expatriates were not in a position to take on coaching due to the confusion and chaos of the
early period of sojourns. This was a finding in itself since there are implications for the practicality of newly arrived expatriate managers being assigned coaches at a time when they are not in a reflective state of mind and when they are fully occupied with the nuts and bolts of finding schools, housing, transport and alike. A practical issue is that expatriates do not generally arrive as a group. There were six participants who could be classified as ‘newly-arrived’. The others had been in the country for varying periods of up to four years. The average time that participants had been in the country prior to the coaching beginning was ten months.

The idea of including participants who were in different stages of the acculturation process was to get a broader view of acculturation than just the newly arrived perspective. As noted earlier, acculturation is an ongoing process that does not end until the expatriate leaves the sojourn, though change also occurs after the sojourn has finished and people reflect on their experiences.

In an initial discussion, I gauged the length of time participants were intending to stay in the country. An interesting issue with relevance to the expatriate research literature was that only one participant was sure of when she was going to leave El Salvador, suggesting a high level of uncertainty overlaying most of the sojourns. Most participants estimated that they would be in the country for between three and four years.

Most expatriates in El Salvador at the time of the study were Americans. This is reflected in the demographics of the participants. There were six Americans, two Canadian-Americans, one American-Filipina, one Canadian, one Kenyan, one South African, an Australian (Salvadorian-born) and two Salvadorians. One of the Salvadorian participants was married to an American participant. The other was a manager working for a European-based multinational. He was included to give the perspective of someone working with expatriate managers.

The average age of participants was 42.4 years, with the oldest being fifty and the youngest twenty-eight years old. There were nine male and six female participants. Two participants
were single at the start of the coaching. This reduced by one when the Australian participant married his Salvadorian girlfriend. Three participants were selected because they were married to expatriate managers. However, each was working in their own right and was therefore receiving coaching designed to facilitate work performance as well as other goals and objectives through the sojourn.

I located individuals through a variety of techniques ranging from cold-calling (e.g. to the American Chamber of Commerce, Academia Europea, The Union Church and the British School). Once I had established a network of contacts I found that people were referred to me – a form of snowballing. I made an initial assessment if they fitted the general criteria and my needs at a particular stage of the research.

I was mindful of Argyris’s (1993) recommendation that, ‘the researcher leave a client, or never accept an invitation in the first place, if staying or accepting will necessitate a serious compromise on the requirements of sound research’ (p.282). At no point did I feel compelled to withdraw from a coaching engagement. However, I did decline several offers of participation on the grounds that the general perspectives being offered were already well-represented by other participants (and in one case because of a medical condition disclosed by the potential participant).

In the relatively small community of expatriates in El Salvador, I found that the participants were normally familiar with each other, or at least the various organizations. I was therefore careful not to divulge who I was coaching. Confidentiality helped to build trust and was rated highly by participants.

4.12 Structure and Duration of Executive Coaching Programs

Sessions were conducted monthly on average, with the number of sessions varying between five and twenty-one. The average number of sessions was ten. The sessions were spread over a period of between four and eighteen months. A strength of the approach was that it to some extent took into account the longer term impact of the acculturation process.
Mendenhall et al. (2002) recommended that more longitudinal studies be undertaken. They cited various impediments common to all longitudinal studies such as money, time and access. In the early phases of the study it became apparent that there was scope to track some participants over a full two years, with the use of through follow-up questionnaires or telephone interviews if they had left the country. This occurred, with follow-up work continuing with clients in San Salvador, Washington, New York and Estonia. The venue for each session was decided by the participant. Usually sessions were conducted in the participants’ offices. Other venues included my office, cafes and meeting rooms (and occasionally the golf course).

4.13 Recording and Transcription Process

Except for Session 1 with each participant, I audio recorded all sessions (with the permission of the participants). During confidential or personal discussions, I sometimes stopped the taping at the request of the participant. I used a standard interview tape recorder (Sony Cassette-Corder TCM.400DV). Where the venue was unsuitable for recording, I took detailed notes. I transcribed all tapes into Microsoft Word and then transferred the files across into NVivo Quantitative Data Analysis software (see next chapter). Transcription was done with minimum notation, other than to signify long pauses (or other changes to the flow of the conversation) and to add some preliminary coding notes. Discussions which were casual in nature and did not appear to be related to the participants’ coaching issues were not transcribed. The transcribed dialogue inserted in the Case Studies was sometimes slightly edited to assist flow for the reader while retaining the essential meaning.

4.14 Location: El Salvador

The choice of location was based on three criteria:

1. High cultural distance between host and home country;
2. Capacity for the researcher-coach to operate effectively; and
3. Researcher-coach familiarity with location.
On the Hofstede cultural dimensions, El Salvador lies diametrically opposite the USA and Australia in virtually every analysis (i.e. there is high cultural distance). A consistent finding in the research is that the greater the cultural differences, the less positive is the adaptation and the greater the potential for culture shock (Berry, 1997). El Salvador was a developing country which raised the level of difficulty for the adjustment of expatriate managers. There was also a high crime rate, it is an earthquake zone and the capital city is located at the foot of a technically-active volcano. By conducting the research in El Salvador, rather than say with American managers operating in Australia (low cultural distance and similar economic, social and geographical environments), there was theoretically more potential to pick up any effects that the coaching interventions might have had on the expatriate managers.

I had been to El Salvador in 1999 and had a family connection there which allowed me to operate reasonably effectively. Before commencing the project, I had an intermediate level of Spanish which made the task of networking considerably easier.

4.15 Measuring the Success of Acculturation

Executive coaching interventions have two broad aims, (1) to improve work performance and, (2) to enhance personal satisfaction. These two measures are also reasonable measures of the sojourner experience and common in the literature. Participants were informed that these were the coaching aims.

Work performance is potentially open to more objective measurement, though there are definite methodological challenges in gaining data. This could be assessed through a 360 degree feedback process. In practice, this is not always possible, nor desirable. Participants who were struggling with performance would be unlikely to agree to such an assessment process because it would inevitably draw attention to their performance at a time when they were likely to feel vulnerable.
A central relationship is with the expatriate’s supervisor. Mendenhall et al. (2002) noted the difficulties of getting supervisor reports. They suggested that, ‘A true picture of the effectiveness may emerge only when one polls all those involved – the organization, the expatriate, his or her peer, host country and third country co-workers or subordinates, local government representatives, and the client/supplier network, in addition to sources of objective data’ (p. 168). Such a picture would be extremely complex and invariably present multiple truths. For example, a highly successful downsizing assignment might be viewed as a success in head office; yet as a demoralizing, unmitigated failure in the local office. The individual sojourner’s view would depend upon many situational variables and the selection of objective data would be a subjective exercise. With these issues in mind, I measured the effect of coaching on work performance from:

- participant comments during coaching sessions;
- my own observations of what was happening to the client with their career and work;
- direct questions in the Post-Coaching Questionnaire (pp.123-126).

Personal satisfaction is essentially a subjective evaluation by the participants. The way in which they gauge that satisfaction (personal growth, broadened horizons, financial or professional gain, cultural skills, and so on) is for the individuals to determine. To overlay criteria did not seem to be helpful, though there were general measures available such as the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985; Pavot & Diener, 1993). The impact of coaching on personal satisfaction was assessed through the participants’ comments in coaching sessions and through a direct question (on a rating scale) in the Post-Coaching Questionnaire (Table 5.1, pp. 123-126).

A common measure of acculturation success is related to the continuation of the assignment. Early departure can result from problems with work performance and/or low levels of personal satisfaction, though both of these factors are highly complex. Florkowski and Fogel (1999) used the following question with a seven-point Likert scale for level of agreement, ‘I would return to my parent company right away if that could be arranged
without any organizational stigma’ (p.791). Such an approach has a number of inbuilt assumptions which could skew the responses. For example, it assumes that the sojourner would return to the parent company. A more general subjective assessment by the sojourner at various points as to how likely they are to leave the assignment may provide a more accurate impression of ‘intention to leave’, which is really the issue of interest. However, one issue with such an approach is that in cases where the expatriate is experiencing intense stress, consideration of this question might influence their decision to go or stay. In discussing options with participants about difficulties they were encountering, I was careful not to proceed in a way which could be leading the expatriate manager towards early departure. Nevertheless, such discussions took place. The design of the research virtually ensured that issues of performance and satisfaction would emerge naturally as part of the executive coaching process. It would be strange if they did not!

The large body of expatriate acculturation literature includes various factors which influence the satisfaction and productivity of the sojourner. Studies such as Arthur and Bennett’s (1995) factor analysis and Ward et al.’s (2001) work on ‘culture shock’ have identified many variables that are likely to come up. The coaching approach is to facilitate the client’s discussion of the issues of most concern to them, which may or not be on the lists. (For example, one experienced expatriate said - in all seriousness - that his work was the same anywhere, he was largely anti-social, and his main criterion for a successful sojourn was a good broadband internet connection). A coach operating with expatriate managers needs to be aware of common issues, but this knowledge cannot drive individual coaching programs. As was apparent in the case studies, the sojourners themselves identified the issues relevant to the context within which they found themselves. My main priority as coach was to facilitate the flow of the coaching conversations so that individual circumstances could be accommodated.

The analyses of the individual case studies included discussion of how relevant these factors were for particular participants. As expected, individuals had issues peculiar to their circumstances. The process by which they tackled these issues is outlined in the case
studies. Major themes are dealt with in the Cross-Case Analysis and Conclusions in Chapters 7 and 8 respectively.

4.16 Generalizability

Caution has to be taken when generalizing from case studies. In this research project there were relatively few participants and they were in one location, and there was only one coach. The presentation of the research data (i.e. case study reports with substantial amounts of dialogue and observations) allows researchers, sojourners and others to make their own observations and conclusions about the applicability of the results to their research objectives or situations. Robson (2002) noted the potential for external generalizability from theoretical insights gained from flexible research designs. Yin (2003) used the term ‘analytic generalization’ to describe the process by which results from case studies can be extrapolated to support or disconfirm existing theory. Stake (2000) referred to this as ‘naturalistic generalization’. Greenwood and Levin (1998) went further by placing the responsibility for decisions about generalizability with the reader. They suggested that transferring knowledge from one context to another relies on understanding the contextual factors, judging the new context where the knowledge is to be applied, and making a critical assessment of whether the two contexts have sufficient processes in common to make it worthwhile to link them. In this study, the depth of description and analysis in the final report allows such judgments to be made. Another issue relevant to generalization is the power of the exception. Where the case studies produced findings that ran strongly against the direction of related theory (either in coaching or in acculturation), I made reference in the analysis.

4.17 Cross-Cultural Application of the Model

Action research has been applied in many cultures and it is common for researchers from Western countries to work with local area participants in developing countries. In this research project the cultural distance between the coach/researcher and the participants was relatively small with most participants, yet it was still significant. Over time, I noticed the subtle but strong differences between myself as an Australian and the fifteen participants
who were from other cultures. In approaching the coaching, I needed to remain mindful of potential communication issues between myself and the participants. The case studies contain examples of where our cultural differences did surface and where an informed discussion about the differences was of value to the participant within and outside the coaching sessions.

More overtly, the expatriate managers were faced with management issues with local Salvadorian staff which did in many cases have cultural implications. The discussions of cultural values, norms, customs and traditions that emerged during sessions assisted the participants in choosing techniques and solutions that were appropriate to their contexts in the host country. This was a design strength in conducting coaching research from an evidence-base of cross-cultural theory.

This research model addressed in a limited way the problem of ethnocentric bias which is a feature of much expatriate research. Mendenhall et al. (2002) recommended that, ‘in order to avoid this common ethnocentric bias in expatriation research, it will be necessary to include the host country perspective in research designs’ (p. 169). It was possible to capture some different perspectives, including the two Salvadorian participants (as mentioned above). My research design had included the possibility of coaching – in English - a host country manager who was in regular contact with expatriate members. Rafael Luz (see Appendix A4) provided this perspective.

4.18 A Coach in the Host Country

It is not uncommon for expatriate managers to have mentors in the home country who take an interest in their adjustment to the assignment. (Several of the participants in this study had mentors, though contact with them was limited.) As noted earlier, some of the efforts of these mentors may fit the description of executive coaching. However, other studies have found that having a home-country mentor was negatively related to factors that are usually positively related to successful acculturation, i.e. work adjustment and host commitment (Florkowski & Fogel, 1999). More broadly, a close connection with the home country could be a reflection of lower levels of adaptation to the host country. The strength of the
coach-on-location in this study was that any potentially negative trends in client acculturation could be identified and worked with in the coaching sessions.

Another benefit of the coach-on-location approach was that people from the host country could be drawn into the action circles that were created by the expatriate with the coach through the coaching process. In this situation, my experiences and networks created through the research project provided a potential resource for expatriates in making productive contact with host nationals.

A similar issue relates to the sojourner’s family. The success of the assignment often revolves around how well the spouse copes with the new country (Hechanova, Beehr, & Christiansen, 2003; Ali, Van der Zees, & Sanders, 2003; Andreason, 2003). The executive coaching program could include family members if the sojourner raised this as an issue and the action circles growing from the sessions could reach across the family. There was a direct or indirect flow-on into the family system in all of the case studies.

Executive coaching is generally done face-to-face. This is the main medium that was used in this coaching research project. However, some coaches operate exclusively by telephone and internet and such an approach would have some prima facie benefits in dealing with expatriates; the main one being cost. I did some follow-up coaching work by phone and email with participants who had left El Salvador. This proved effective but in each case I had already established a strong relationship. With expatriates there are cultural issues regarding the choice of medium. In a low-context culture (Hall, 1989) like the USA, face-to-face coaching is perhaps not essential for most people. However, my experience in this study was that people from high-context cultures (such as El Salvador) were reluctant to have serious coaching discussions over the phone or to regularly communicate by email.

4.19 Fieldwork

There were two phases of fieldwork. Phase 1 was exploratory (including a pilot study) and also an establishment phase for coaching the main participant group. Phase 2 included
completion of the coaching programs, transcription, coding, analysis and write-up. Both phases were conducted in El Salvador. I had anticipated a possible need to reconsider location after the exploratory phase. In the end, the availability of participants and nature of the executive coaching assignments meant that this was not necessary. As anticipated in the design of the project, the conduct of coaching in Phase 2 was governed by the outcomes from Phase 1.

4.19.1 Phase 1

Phase 1 was in the second half of 2003 and early 2004 and included the following components which were successfully completed:

1. Coach-Researcher acculturation including:
   - accommodation and office set up;
   - language training; and
   - familiarization with San Salvador.
2. Network establishment.
3. Connection with business school (ESEN) for advice on local business culture/issues.
4. Gaining an overview of the expatriate population in El Salvador:
   - numbers;
   - location;
   - businesses; and
   - demographic profile.
5. Approaches to organizations with strong involvement with expatriates:
   - American Chamber of Commerce;
   - government departments, schools and embassies;
   - multinational companies; and
   - non-government aid and development organizations.
6. Coaching
   - conduct of a pilot with one participant;
   - refining of procedures;
• build-up of main group of participants; and
• preparation for main coaching work.

7. Analysis
• familiarization with NVivo software program;
• transcription of first coaching sessions; and
• commencement of analysis of sessions.

4.19.2 Phase 2

At the completion of the coaching program I returned to Australia to discuss the results of Phase 1 with my supervisors. I then returned to El Salvador and completed Phase 2 of the fieldwork. This included:

1. Follow-up with the contacts from first phase,
2. Location of a more participants, utilizing information gained from Phase 1 to improve the approach; and
3. Completion of coaching, transcriptions and analysis.

The coaching proceeded through 2004 and early into 2005. I returned to Australia to report on progress and to discuss the nature of the analysis with my supervisors. I returned to El Salvador to complete the analysis of the sessions in consultation with the participants.

4.20 Methodological Rigor

The research rigor was reinforced by my immersion in the process and personal conduct of the ten elements of research analysis listed in the Introduction to the dissertation (p. 16). Each element was not a separate entity. Each impacted upon the other. For example, as I was transcribing the tapes through the course of the project, I was gaining new perspectives on the practice and theory of coaching expatriates. I was able to take the learning points from these reflections on experiences with one client into my engagement with other clients. Similarly, the final Cross-Case Analysis and Conclusions (Chapters 7 and 8) gave
me new insights into the individual case studies. I then rewrote and restructured sections of the case studies in the light of these insights. The rigor is provided by depth of immersion of the researcher, rather than more conventional techniques of interviews, psychometric instruments, and questionnaires (though these were used in various forms). The major instruments of the research and the coaching were the analytical capacity, powers of observation, and other skills of the researcher-coach.

4.21 Connecting Executive Coaching, International Business and Academia

The research model used in this study demonstrates that executive coaching can be a powerful research tool for investigating the world of the leadership and management in international business. In this example, the executives being studied were expatriate managers. Evidence-based executive coaching research can assist in various ways in connecting academic theory to the world of international business. Executive coaches can (and should) access relevant academic knowledge to strengthen the rigor and relevance of their coaching activities (Abrahamson & Eisenman, 2001; Anderson et al., 2001; Greenwood & Levin, 1998; Levin, 2004). This should be a reciprocal activity. The result would be improved executive coaching practice and a better connection between the academic and business worlds. The connection can become even stronger if coaches who engage in research follow action research principles to forge imaginative partnerships with academics from different disciplines, institutions and cultures. The resulting cross flow of knowledge would result in increased knowledge about the decision-making processes of executives and of coaching methodologies – plus better coaching.
CHAPTER 5

METHODOLOGY (2): CODING AND ANALYSIS

In this Chapter, I describe the process of coding and analysis. The linear coding and analysis description does not fully reflect the cyclic design and process. There was considerable shifting back and forth within the coding and analysis process resulting in regular adjustments in the techniques and emphases. These shifts also resulted in reviews and revisions of the theoretical and design decisions made early in the research process, as well as regular explorations into new areas of the relevant literature.

5.1 Data Analysis

The transcribed coaching sessions created a very large text database which comprised the bulk of the raw data of the project. There were also email exchanges between myself and the participants, memos about issues, as well as participant responses to open questions in the Post-Coaching Questionnaire and interview. Robson (2002) advised that Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) using dedicated software packages can be useful in managing large amounts of material. This is the approach used here. The software selected was NVivo. NVivo is viewed as one of the most sophisticated packages available for data management, coding, and retrieving text (Crowley, Harré, & Tagg, 2002). Investigation of the origins and design of the software (L. Richards, 2002; T. Richards, 2002) confirmed that it would meet my research needs.

There is still some controversy surrounding the use of QDA. Some researchers believe that it stifles the creative human element of qualitative research. There is also the danger of becoming overly engaged in the coding process, thereby losing touch with the main aims of the research. I took note of Marshall’s (2002) conclusion that, ‘if researchers are thorough and clear-sighted about their intentions and how they try to realize those intentions, a suitable CAQDAS, intelligently used can enhance the project’ (p.59). My purpose in using computer analysis was to check themes from the literature and to follow ideas I had
developed through the coaching. Also, computer coding enabled me to quickly locate and browse transcripts of specific conversations with clients as I constructed the individual case studies and looked across cases. I was careful not to become too enmeshed in detailed discourse analysis, nor to construct coding in ways that would have promoted micro-treatment of the data. With coding, Marshall (2002) also warns that there is sometimes a problem in knowing when to stop; pointing out that social analysis is theoretically interminable. I decided to use a pragmatic approach of stopping when I believed that the data set was coded to the level that would allow me to identify and explore the major research issues.

I developed an initial coding structure in January 2004 which reflected the major themes flowing from my initial thesis proposal (submitted in mid-2003) combined with my observations after an initial four months of coaching sessions. I did a major revision of the structure on four occasions prior to the completion of the fieldwork, as well as minor adjustments almost on a weekly basis during the coding process. A major coding issue in this research was the sheer size of the database of text from coaching sessions, comprising well over 1000 pages plus memos and emails. The initial structure strongly reflected ideas from the literature review conducted during 2003 and from the theory developing in my early thinking about the project. I was therefore mindful that major revisions to the structure were inevitable and desirable as the grounded theory process of analysis began to take shape during the coding of the material. The ongoing coding and analysis directed me to new lines of theory and research (right up to the point of completion) which I recorded in an Endnote database. The database included notes from over 550 sources by the time the final coding structure and analysis were completed.

I wanted to ensure that ideas coming from the data would drive the coding. While transcribing the tapes I inserted comments and potential codes in square brackets in the text for future reference and to aid my thinking in developing the coding structure. This process kept the coding in my mind as I listened to the tapes and transcribed.
Another way into the data was the open question and comment sections of the participant Post-Coaching Questionnaire. I collated the answers to the questions into a single document and coded them into a list of 77 free nodes. I then examined the contents at the nodes. I then combined the free nodes with the October 2004 coding structure. The October 2004 version was a relatively mature but open structure which reflected early theoretical themes combined with emerging themes from the transcription, coding and analysis processes. I then created a comprehensive coding structure which reflected:

- retrospective views of the participants (Post-Coaching Questionnaire numerical data and free node coding of the open questions);
- research themes from the original proposal and literature review (reflected in the initial January 2004 coding structure);
- emergent themes developed during the coaching process and followed with new literature searches (from subsequent revised coding structures, Endnote searches); and
- ideas and themes inserted in the text during the transcription process.

This initial loose coding structure became the starting point for the coding process. I deliberately left the node count high, even though it would have been a simple process to reduce it to a neat and concise structure. The danger of doing that would have been a loss of potential for later pattern analysis of the nodes. I did not want the coding patterns to become too rigid early in the process of analysis. I was acutely aware that an overly tight structure may result in the theory driving the data. The structure contained a total of 106 nodes contained in twenty-seven parent nodes (the top level in the tree structure). The parent nodes were:

1. Affective;
2. Behavioural;
3. Cognitive;
4. Situational;
5. Intelligence;
6. Values;
7. Trust;
8. Stress;
9. Relationships;
10. Communication Skills;
11. Client Issues;
12. Management Theory;
13. Decision Making;
14. Change;
15. Coaching Strengths;
16. Coaching Techniques;
17. Coaching Errors;
18. Coaching Definition;
19. Coach Attributes;
20. Coaching Conditions;
21. Theory-Practice Link;
22. Cultural Theory;
23. Acculturation;
24. Expatriate Success Measures;
25. Complexity;
26. Consequences; and
27. Cross-Cultural Management.

There was considerable overlap of categories which included double and sometimes triple (or more) coding of some sections of text. As the coding continued, I added to and revised the structure. New ideas that did not fit the existing nodes were added into a free node section and combined with the structure (or not) during major revisions. A feature of NVivo is that it allows the nodes to be amalgamated and moved around the structure without losing the initial coding. Also, it is simple to recode sections if a key theme emerges during the coding. I was able to recode some sections of the cases that I had analysed early in the process to accommodate new ideas and themes that emerged in later cases. However, I was aware that it was not possible to completely recode all of the data
each time a new node was added and the node structure altered. The approach was therefore pragmatic in choosing key sections and conversations to recode. As mentioned above, the aim was to identify key themes and to avoid getting caught in a massive coding loop across 1000 pages of data. The final node structure and character count against each node is at Appendix D.

The order in which I analysed and developed the case studies was potentially significant because in the grounded theory approach, the development of theory happens throughout the research process. I was mindful that the ideas embedded in the project at an early stage of the text coding were by design could potentially receive more structural attention than ideas entered the project toward the end when timing was tight and themes more developed. Therefore, I needed to take into account that cases analysed early could have more weight in determining the coding structure than those done later. There was a tension in deciding the participant-order for coding. In terms of value to the research, I did not want to deliberately assign different ratings to participants. All were individuals with valid and significant experiences.

One strategy I determined was to ensure that at all times I kept the QDA coding structures and text analyses as tools of my analysis, rather than the analysis itself. That is, the final construction of case studies was done through my own intuition and analysis – based on multiple sources and experiences – rather than just on the NVivo coding process. This was consistent with theories on decision making developed by Klein (1999, 2003) who noted that experts rely on gut-feeling in making decisions at key points. This theory is one which resonates with clients in the coaching environment. Its use in this research context is a good example of how the techniques of action research mirror those of coaching.

I first coded the transcripts from the pilot participant, taking into account that she was not an expatriate manager and using the exercise as way of familiarizing myself with the process and node structure rather than setting in place high level concepts and themes. This resulted in the addition of twenty-nine free nodes, mainly child nodes from the existing structure. I then streamlined the structure in preparation for coding other transcripts of the
other participants. The broader themes of pragmatism and critical realism began to emerge during the coding. For example, I subsumed ‘Consequences’ as a child node under a parent node of ‘Pragmatism’. While I expected the cultural perspective to be prominent, it was apparent that other approaches and perspectives were also coming through in the coding.

I coded the other participants in alphabetical order (on real names) starting with the ten case studies included in the main body of the dissertation. I revised the coding tree structure as I went. I added free nodes for additional themes and ideas that emerged from transcripts. It was clear after the combination of the codes from the initial coding structure, the Post-Coaching Questionnaire and the pilot coaching sessions that there was a potential for the coding structure to become incredibly complex. However, I decided to allow the complexity to develop within the project themes of tracking the ABC (affective, behavioural, cognitive) model of both executive coaching and acculturation. Given my familiarity with the theory and the case studies, I was not concerned about losing track of the data through over-complexity in coding. The grounded theory and hermeneutic principles of allowing the themes to emerge from the data iteratively rather than driving the coding remained paramount. At the conclusion of each case study analysis, I reviewed the coding structure and moved free nodes into the tree structure.

5.2 Case Study Construction

Chapter 6 contains ten self-contained case studies for the expatriate managers. Appendix A contains five other perspectives on the expatriate experience. Storytelling is a core element of qualitative research because it gives context to the knowledge that is created and allows readers to engage in analytic generalizations of their own. Qualitative research requires that the researcher present authentic stories that represent the points-of-view of the participants (Lincoln & Denzin, 2000). Each story is rich and multilayered. My research challenge was to balance the need to reflect and record the client’s context and story through the coaching process, while at the same time be sufficiently concise to allow space for comparison across cases and the development of project themes.
In Bhaskar’s structure of reality, the individual case studies represented the Empirical world, with my involvement as coach providing participants with links to other knowledge that initially lay in the Actual world. Through joint and individual exploration and by participant experimentation with new behaviours, potentially accessible information and possibilities became realized and incorporated in the participants’ Empirical worlds.

The case studies were not the raw data of the research. They represent my selection of material from the huge data base of text. The selection of quotes was done with the aim of representing – as best I could – the stories of the 15 participants mapped against a background of diverse theories of coaching and acculturation. The narrative nature of the case studies meant that a major aim was to provide the reader with context and flow and reference points back to key theoretical frameworks and research findings.

Each of the case studies represents a stand-alone study in executive coaching and acculturation and is a self-contained research unit which includes; selected and structured data in the form of dialogue, some description, and limited analysis that is contained mainly within the Empirical level of reality, with connections to the Actual level through the interactive injection of additional evidence from diverse sources.

I constructed the studies taking into account my impressions and reflections from the conduct of the coaching and my knowledge of the clients and the context. My approach was to write an individual description of what happened, illustrated and illuminated by extensive dialogue that gave voice to the participant. Each case was constructed through reflection on the individual situation while coding, through analysis of the nodes for the ‘case set’, and separate consideration of the responses to the ratings and open questions in the Post-Coaching Questionnaire. As I proceeded through the construction of the cases, I decided to increase the amount of actual dialogue to give the reader a sense of what had actually occurred rather than just my interpretation of it. This technique allows readers to make use of analytic generalization to apply knowledge from the case studies to different contexts. I checked cross the cases using the ‘explore document set’ function on NVivo.
My main technique was to explore the nodes in the individual case sets to check major themes and look at the detail of the coaching conversations.

I emailed the draft case study to each participant for their comment and input. The responses were revealing and formed part of each case study analysis.

With each case, I began by making notes under major headings from my existing knowledge of the case. I then added to the information from the coding process, including relevant quotes from the transcripts. By the middle of coding process I had begun to pen notes on various cross-case themes which were later to be reconstructed into the cross-case analysis in Chapter 7. These seemed to be mainly operating at Bhaskar’s Actual level of reality by crossing different Empirical worlds. After the post-coaching interviews were completed, I decided to include a special section in the case study for the role of values, noting the potential for this theme to be relevant to higher level analysis of Real world laws and tendencies.

The role of values was a good example of a theme that developed through the project in different ways. My early interest in values (fuelled by previous research on the relationship between values and organizational commitment) was tempered by faculty observations in my dissertation proposal seminar in June 2003 in Canberra that the role of values seemed ‘added-on’ rather than integral to the proposal. I agreed that the role of values was an element that may or may not emerge from the data. I pushed them back into the design as an element of the executive coaching intervention in line with normal coaching practice. They re-emerged as a central theme after the exit interviews with Paul Plummer (Case Study 6.4) and Randy Peters (6.8) who both observed the power of values in their situations. I revisited the other case studies through the values coding to note their power, and also drawing connections between cultural dimensions and values.

To test the approach, I began by drafting the pilot Case Study (Gillian George, Appendix A5). I wrote up the case study under headings that reflected the scope and aims of the research. As I proceeded to write the rest of the case studies, I revised these headings,
working back to the earlier studies to add or revise headings to achieve some degree of consistency (but not uniformity). Not all headings were relevant to all cases and I used pragmatic methodology to exclude redundant headings rather than force material into them. Common headings for each case were:

1. Profile;
2. Reason for Inclusion in the Study;
3. Issues and Goals;
4. Coaching Challenges;
5. Coaching Techniques and Perspectives;
6. Coaching from a Cultural Perspective;
7. Insights on Coaching Expatriates for Acculturation;
8. Coaching as Action Research;
9. Coaching and Pragmatism;
10. The Role of Values;
11. Limitations of Coaching; and
12. Impact.

Following the pilot case study I constructed the case studies for two expatriate manager participants who had received the highest number of sessions. These were Wesley Trudeau (Case Study 6.5) and Jack Trimboli (Case Study 6.6). Both offered a variety of experiences. I then proceeded through the other cases in alphabetical order. The individual analyses preceded major thematic cross-case analysis, though I made notes and built up memos on major themes as I proceeded. I cycled back through previous case studies to track major emerging themes, using a combination of NVivo search tools, node coding, and memory.

I used the NVivo ‘character count’ tool to check (rather than identify) major issues and perspectives within each case. This function counted the number of key stroke characters under individual nodes. It was a raw tool, but one that served as a useful back up to see if my impressions of what had occurred were reflected in the quantity of the dialogue. I
browsed the high-count nodes to ensure that I had identified and explored the major themes of our discussions.

NVivo coding was useful in checking that my impressions of the discussions reflected the actual discussions. The main driver was my consolidated view based on intuition, consistent with Klein’s theory of decision-making noted earlier (Klein, 1999, 2003). I trusted that by end of two years of immersion in the research that my judgments about coding would capture significant elements of what had happened. The gut feeling was then checked by reference to the other evidence, including referring the final drafts to the participants for their comments.

5.3 Cross-Case Analysis

The multiple case study method allowed for cross-case comparison, thus strengthening the power of the research. The cross-case analysis in Chapter 7 concentrates on the connection between the Empirical and Actual worlds in Bhaskar’s framework of reality. It also directed my analysis to speculation on higher level Real tendencies and laws that might be influencing the executive coaching and expatriate manager interaction. I used three interrelated techniques to analyse across the cases.

5.3.1 Ongoing Observation and Reflection: Memos and Notes

The main method of analysis was through my ongoing observations and reflections on the executive coaching process, assisted by a series of memos compiled during the coaching and research. I also kept notes during all coaching sessions and related meetings in a series of notebooks. These contained many diagrams which I constructed with the clients during the sessions and to which we often referred back in later sessions.

An important stage in the cross-case analysis was during the construction of the fifteen individual case studies. Since the write up was done at the completion of all coaching work, I was able to reflect on the cross-case themes with all of the information at hand, with the
exception of the cross-case NVivo analysis. However, consistent with the cyclical nature of qualitative analysis, each informed the other. That is, my thinking during the construction of the case studies informed my interrogation of the data with NVivo in the cross-case analysis. Also, the cross-case analysis gave me new insights about the individual case studies.

5.3.2 NVivo Analysis of Transcripts and Other Textual Data

The use of NVivo allowed me to draw on the full data set for cross-case comparison and analysis. This is a good illustration of the advantages of computer assisted analysis over manual analysis. By hand, I would have mainly limited my comparisons to the material in the individual descriptions. Instead, I was able to investigate themes at a higher level than the empirical local context.

5.3.3 Post-Coaching Questionnaire and Interview

The third cross-case analysis method was through analysis of the numerical and open responses to the Post-Coaching Questionnaire distributed to participants at the end of the coaching program (see Table 5.1 at the end of this chapter for the Questionnaire and numerical results) supplemented by an ‘exit’ interview. It covered eight aspects of the coaching experience:

A. Introductory Sessions;
B. The Coaching Relationship;
C. Questioning and Communication;
D. Goal-Setting;
E. Situational Awareness;
F. Cultural and Adjustment Issues;
G. Professionalism; and
H. Overall.
It also included questions soliciting demographic information and a series of open questions as follows:

1. Looking specifically at your achievements through the time of the coaching, what – if anything - do you think would be different if you had not been coached?
2. Similarly, what specific, concrete things did you get from coaching (in the form of insights, skills, knowledge, etc.)?
3. Looking back, can you think of any times when you felt that the coach was not effective or was even a negative influence? Be as specific as you can.
4. If you had to describe executive coaching to another person in less than 20 words, how would you describe it?
5. What do you think, if anything, makes executive coaching effective?
6. Do you think executive coaching has any particular strengths when used with expatriate managers? If so, what are those strengths?
7. Do you think executive coaching has any particular weaknesses when used with expatriate managers? If so, what are those weaknesses?
8. In general, do you have any other reflections on the coaching experience?

To my knowledge, there is no one recognized questionnaire of this type in the coaching industry, and certainly none that related to coaching expatriate managers. I constructed the instrument over time, incorporating issues directly of interest in the research, plus items adapted from coaching texts (particularly Greene & Grant, 2003; O’Neill, 2000).

All numerical responses are included in Table 5.1. A mean is included for each question and each category, by case and overall. These rank order means are only to aid interpretation and are not intended to represent statistical accuracy. The instrument was designed to provide a broad picture of the participants’ views of the coaching rather than as a psychometric instrument or means of conducting statistical significance tests for hypotheses. I have avoided presenting other statistical data such as standard deviation to avoid misrepresenting the data. The approach is consistent with the qualitative nature of the research.
In interpreting the data, readers need to keep in mind that I had a close professional relationship with each person (several of whom subsequently became my friends). I assumed they were therefore inclined to be generous in their responses. However, in all cases we enjoyed open and honest communication and I asked them to be frank and critical.

From Table 5.1 (pp 123-126) it is possible to scan the responses of participants on all items, made on the 1-to-5 scale as follows:

5 = Completely agree with the statement
4 = Generally agree
3 = Neither agree no disagree
2 = Generally disagree
1 = Strongly disagree.

The full statements are provided in the table to assist ease of interpretation.
Table 5.1

Post-Coaching Questionnaire and Ratings by Case

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case (N=15)</th>
<th>Initials</th>
<th>Mean (X)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LG</td>
<td>DR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Introductory Session</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Provided a good explanation of the coaching process</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Listened actively to my circumstances and issues</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Understood my core concerns</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Established an environment in which I felt comfortable to discuss my ideas</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean A</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. The Coaching Relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Developed a strong, trusting relationship</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Did not judge me</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Did not pressure or compel me</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Placed my interests as top priority through the program</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Acknowledged and praised my successes and achievements</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Provided a forum where I was comfortable to review less successful actions and develop new approaches</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Provided a forum where I could be open and honest</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean B</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## C. Questioning & Communication

1. Assisted me in gaining new insights and perspectives  
   Mean: 5.0 4.9 3.8 4.4 4.5 5.0 4.3 3.9 4.5 3.9 4.0 4.9 4.5 4.9

2. Challenged me  
   Mean: 5.0 4.9 3.8 4.4 4.5 5.0 4.3 3.9 4.5 3.9 4.0 4.9 4.5 4.9

3. Regularly demonstrated that he could see my point-of-view  
   Mean: 5.0 4.9 3.8 4.4 4.5 5.0 4.3 3.9 4.5 3.9 4.0 4.9 4.5 4.9

4. Regularly demonstrated that he understood my feelings  
   Mean: 5.0 4.9 3.8 4.4 4.5 5.0 4.3 3.9 4.5 3.9 4.0 4.9 4.5 4.9

5. Gave me time to express myself  
   Mean: 5.0 4.9 3.8 4.4 4.5 5.0 4.3 3.9 4.5 3.9 4.0 4.9 4.5 4.9

6. Provided suggestions without pressuring me into action  
   Mean: 5.0 4.9 3.8 4.4 4.5 5.0 4.3 3.9 4.5 3.9 4.0 4.9 4.5 4.9

7. Asked questions that helped me to explore options  
   Mean: 5.0 4.9 3.8 4.4 4.5 5.0 4.3 3.9 4.5 3.9 4.0 4.9 4.5 4.9

8. Questions focused on creating solutions for issues/concerns  
   Mean: 5.0 4.9 3.8 4.4 4.5 5.0 4.3 3.9 4.5 3.9 4.0 4.9 4.5 4.9

### Mean C  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case (N=15)</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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<th>10</th>
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<th>A5</th>
<th>X</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>DR</td>
<td>NB</td>
<td>PP</td>
<td>WT</td>
<td>JT</td>
<td>RH</td>
<td>RP</td>
<td>DP</td>
<td>DM</td>
<td>AP</td>
<td>JC</td>
<td>PR</td>
<td>RL</td>
<td>GG</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## D. Goal-setting

1. Helped me clarify core values, beliefs & priorities  
   Mean: 5.0 4.9 3.8 4.4 4.5 5.0 4.3 3.9 4.5 3.9 4.0 4.9 4.5 4.9

2. Helped me identify stretching, specific, measurable, attractive, realistic and time-framed (SMART) goals  
   Mean: 5.0 4.9 3.8 4.4 4.5 5.0 4.3 3.9 4.5 3.9 4.0 4.9 4.5 4.9

3. Helped develop simple, effective actions aligned with goals  
   Mean: 5.0 4.9 3.8 4.4 4.5 5.0 4.3 3.9 4.5 3.9 4.0 4.9 4.5 4.9

4. Provided useful feedback on progress towards goals  
   Mean: 5.0 4.9 3.8 4.4 4.5 5.0 4.3 3.9 4.5 3.9 4.0 4.9 4.5 4.9

5. Provided me with opportunities to revisit and review goals  
   Mean: 5.0 4.9 3.8 4.4 4.5 5.0 4.3 3.9 4.5 3.9 4.0 4.9 4.5 4.9

6. Encouraged me to take responsibility for achieving my goals  
   Mean: 5.0 4.9 3.8 4.4 4.5 5.0 4.3 3.9 4.5 3.9 4.0 4.9 4.5 4.9

7. Was effective in helping me to achieve my goals  
   Mean: 5.0 4.9 3.8 4.4 4.5 5.0 4.3 3.9 4.5 3.9 4.0 4.9 4.5 4.9

### Mean D  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case (N=15)</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
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### E. Situational Awareness

1. Helped me to better understand my situation and context
2. Focused me on patterns I could choose to change or monitor
3. Facilitated new insights about me and my situation
4. Encouraged me to reflect on my actions and decisions

Mean E: 3.6 4.8 4.8 4.3 4.5 4.5 3.6 3.4 4.2 3.8 4.2 4.2 1.4 4.0

### F: Cultural and Adjustment Issues

1. Introduced issues of cultural difference and perspectives at times that were relevant
2. Assisted me with cultural adjustment
3. Facilitated new approaches for cross-cultural situations
4. Facilitated improvements in cross-cultural communication
5. Helped get new insights on situations with cultural dimensions

Mean F: 4.8 3.5 4.4 4.4 4.6 3.6 3.4 4.2 3.8 4.2 4.2 1.4 4.0

### G. Professional

Was well organized

1. Began sessions with review of progress since previous session
2. Ended with wrap up of session and clarification of actions
3. Provided a professional service
4. Provided useful theories and ideas on change and transition
5. Was open and responsive to feedback about the coaching
6. Respected my confidentiality

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5.4 Measuring the Professionalism of the Coaching Experience

For this research dissertation to achieve its aims, I needed to be sure that participants felt they were receiving a professional coaching service and not simply participating in a research project. This issue was particularly important because participants were not paying for the service, meaning that they may have undervalued the coaching. The main way of assessing this was through Section G of the Post-Coaching Questionnaire (Professionalism). Analysis of the numerical data shows a mean of 4.6 across participants for Section G, with all participants rating higher than ‘Generally agree’. The average response to the direct question G3 of whether they were receiving a professional service was 4.7. My conclusion was that respondents felt they were receiving a professional service. My enthusiasm is slightly tempered by the fact that only one participant (P10) had been coached before, though he commented that the coaching was superior to that provided by his other coaches.
CHAPTER 6.1
CASE STUDY: LINDA GATEAU

Profile

Linda was a 48 year old Canadian-American. She was an audit manager with a US government organization. Linda arrived in El Salvador in September 2003. Her husband was working from home as a software developer and was distributing the product in the USA. Linda had a background in non-profit and Government aid, including two years in Afghanistan. We had nine sessions over eleven months. Linda arrived in El Salvador three months before beginning the coaching sessions. She anticipated being here for five years.

Reason for Inclusion in the Study

Linda offered the perspective of a female expatriate manager whose husband was endeavouring to build a career in their home country while living abroad. She also offered the cross-cultural perspective of a French-speaking Canadian working in an American organization in El Salvador.

Issues and Goals

Linda described herself as a passionate perfectionist:

*I am the only one with a vision. I will never do anything that is not well organized.*

*Everything I do I pay attention to details.*

She found the standards at her organization to be mediocre. This was a source of irritation. Linda was concerned about the lack of initiative, drive and competence of some of her local staff. Linda said from the coaching she wanted more time for thinking and a more pleasant ambience in the office.
Linda was having a difficult time with her immediate supervisor, though the situation seemed to be improving:

LG: I work with people I have no respect for. My boss has knowledge I don’t have in terms of mentoring, but respecting his management style or capabilities - no, there is nothing. I do get a bit more respect now. He could be worse. He helped a staff member a lot. He is human. He has a heart. But managing, no - he will never be a manager.

Linda wanted to look at different ways of approaching situations so that she could maximize her impact. She had considerable self awareness about her strengths and weaknesses:

LG: I am a very straightforward person. I do the diplomacy and stuff but my husband is the opposite. I go straight at it and I don’t see the things that are happening beside it. And I do have to but I don’t. If a tree is there with people in front I just go around them.

GA: In terms of coaching, I can see some stuff to look at - ways to get to the tree. How can you avoid causing damage on the way so that you can have maximum impact when you get there?

LG: That’s it.

GA: And not have the tree tell you to go away. Do you want to change, or do you want to go at the tree?

LG: No, I want to change. That’s what you have to help me to do. I just look at the tree and I just think, ‘This needs to be done’ and I don’t look at anything beside it.

The overall aim of the coaching was to assist Linda in increasing her capacity to make a difference, including by improving her connection with her local Salvadorian staff members. Later, the coaching moved into helping Linda clarify her own intentions about becoming a manager and thereby increasing her impact.

**Coaching Challenges**

Linda talked very quickly and a lot, and jumped from issue-to-issue. It was difficult for me to encourage considered reflections that might help her to gain insights and take actions
towards her goals. To enable reflection to occur in our dialogue, on many occasions I stopped Linda and asked her to reflect on her ways of communicating. The following quote from Linda illustrates the pace of her thought processes and her passion for justice:

LG: I can’t stand to see violence on TV. To me, justice is everything. It is the key to what I think, a major ... I really ... I have to think in French all the time... my line of direction is about justice. When I went to Afghanistan I was sick for a year. I had been in Ottawa making $50k a year with my own house and car. I came to Afghanistan and saw poverty like you have never heard of. I was dying. I didn’t speak the language and I felt like I couldn’t make a contribution. I was crazy. I had a very difficult time. When I look at people who say this is poverty, I say, ‘You haven’t seen anything.’ The issue of justice, how can I complain? I don’t have one reason to complain when I see people struggling. We are so fortunate and blessed to be born in Canada and to have a husband who is a loving man. What is the grand justice in the world? I don’t think there is any. I am more Buddhist than anything else. I have to believe in karma. It is hard, very difficult. Afghanistan changed my life. I was 30 years old. That was really down the tube for a long time. I lost a lot of weight. I find it difficult to waste food. How can I be with so many people having so little? I always eat everything on the plate and have small portions. This is maybe the difference between me and them?

Linda’s communication style was direct. For example, I suggested we might do a 360 degree feedback process:

LG: I am familiar with 360 degrees and I think it is a piece of shit, but if it is anonymous... It is all about asking your own friends to make comments - absolutely useless.

Nevertheless, Linda was open to suggestions and was prepared to try new things. We reflected often on the contrast between her direct, rapid communication style and her task focus with the more indirect, laid back and relational nature of the Salvadorian culture.

**Coaching Techniques and Perspectives**

I used multiple approaches to encourage Linda to be more reflective in line with her goals.
My initial approach was to work from a cultural perspective to encourage Linda to slow down and to look at the way she was working in the office and her relationships with those around her. I thought that if Linda was seeking time to think, I could provide a little of that for her in the coaching sessions. For example:

GA: Say those eight people, if I sat them down and asked, ‘What do you think of Linda? What is she doing, what sort of impact?’

LG: They would say I work too hard [pause]. I’m in a place they can’t… I should ask Andrea. When they complain they can never talk to me. I work too hard. I work. I don’t have time for coffee.

GA: Mingling is not work?

LG: Mingling is not me. I never take a break. When I go to see a person it is to find something or to get help. I don’t go to chat.

Later, I introduced the idea of Linda ‘slowing down to do more’. Before I did that I felt obliged to reflect to Linda my experience in talking with her. Linda’s North American directness enabled me to use my own preferred communication style which is also direct. At the same time I gave her a genuine message about the value I placed on my coaching relationship with her. This interchange happened in Session 6 after we had established a strong rapport. We had not seen each other for two months:

GA: Listening to you is frankly tiring. I enjoy it so much and I have missed you. And you always win client of the month… it is not just the cake. It is energizing but it is tiring and it is hard to keep up because you are going so quickly. Things that can bring it back to normal speed.

LG: I know I should.

GA: Breathing, relaxing, stretching - something that really pulls you out of the pace.

This led to a more reflective discussion.

GA: When does your conversation slow down?

LG: Never. I do slow down with training because it is in Spanish and I don’t want to make a mistake. I want to pronounce well.
GA: When have you been calm and felt like slowing down and then pulled back a little bit for reflection?
LG: My mother-in-law said that if you speak fast people will think it is unimportant. People will listen more if you slow down. I can recognize this and it is important to work on. Absolutely. French people tend to speak fast.
GA: If I didn’t say anything at all, would you keep talking?
LG: I should think so.
GA: So I would not have to say anything at all?
LG: I am not sure I understand.
GA: In this conversation, if I didn’t say anything would you keep talking?
LG: You are the best person to say. You may have done it.
GA: No I haven’t done it.
LG: I don’t think so. Even though I speak fast I want to be in a dialogue.
GA: I have to speak with you to speak to you. It is maybe a cultural thing?
LG: I would not blame that on the French. I speak fast yes. I would have to reflect on this. This is why you are valuable. You make me reflect on things that otherwise I would not reflect on. It is true. It is not something new. My mother-in-law said this years ago.

A related interchange followed:
GA: If you walk through a forest you don’t see much until you stop.
LG: What a wonderful reflection on my life. I don’t stop enough.
GA: If you slowed down and reflected at little at less pace things might change and shift.
LG: As you said, if you stop in the woods you might see more birds and insects. It is very true.

We set actions around monitoring the pace of her speech and enlisting others to comment on when she might be going to rapidly. When we met five weeks later, Linda had followed through with her yoga classes twice-per-week. She was also more conscious of the pace of her voice and was having success in moderating it. We talked about the idea of gears and moving from fast to slow pace depending on the situation – a way of leveraging difference. Two months later I asked about her progress:
GA: The yoga is ok?
LG: I do it twice a week. I leave the office by 4pm every day though I go in early.
GA: You seem more comfortable and peaceful and relaxed. There is not the urgency.
LG: I do feel much more comfortable in my work environment. I have a note to slow down and take a break. I am much more aware of getting up and taking a break and walking around the outside of the Embassy. Not being so intense. If you have someone to take a break with it is easier. The consciousness that I need to do it for my own good.
GA: You don’t want to be slow. It is good to speed up sometimes. Some of my clients move too slowly. I give them an opposite message. They don’t change in themselves, but they learn the capacity to speed up.
LG: I think it is better for me to try to speak more slowly. People have noticed it, at least three or four people have commented. They say I am more relaxed. I feel also my Spanish is even better. I was speaking so fast and making more mistakes.

Linda was keen on politics and reading political biographies. I encouraged her to consider people she admired who have a more reflective, non-confrontational style.

GA: The new PM of Spain, Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, has a reputation for non-confrontation, compromise... almost wishy-washy. But he became PM and has decided to take troops out of Iraq. And regardless of how you see the decision it is an amazingly controversial thing to do. His style is completely the opposite to the norm - non-confrontational. I find it almost contradictory.
LG: If I want to I can do but it is not my nature.

GA: They said, ‘What would you do if you met the head of ETA?’ He said, ‘I wouldn’t look him in the eye.’ So you would like to have some different ways of operating up your sleeve?
LG: I do want the coaching.

I observed that in the office Linda tended to do a lot of work herself and was not necessarily comfortable delegating. We talked about management style and I asked her to think of someone who to her was an ideal manager, thereby encouraging her to reflect on her own management style:

LG: My first boss in Canada has become a friend. She was a wonderful supervisor
GA: Imagine she is here. What are the values and qualities she has that were inspiring?
LG: She would never give you a deadline for the work that she needed. She would be very supportive.
GA: She gave you responsibility?
LG: She would give you the work and ask, ‘When can you give it to me?’
GA: She involved you in decisions about the work?
LG: She wouldn’t give you instructions on how to do the work.
GA: She wouldn’t tell you how to do it but she would say what she wanted done?
LG: Yes. Some people say, ‘I want this tomorrow.’ She would ask.
GA: You believe people should have ownership of what they do.
LG: You put it in nice words but that’s right.

The other approach I took was to support Linda in recognizing her special talents and encouraging her to see that her passion, experience, dedication, and skill gave her opportunities. The aim was to help Linda gain insights through reflection. Linda made rapid progress in her work and her relationship with her supervisor:
LG: I just had a mid-year review with my boss and it is going very well. He is going to recommend me for promotion. Not everyone is where I am with age and experience and what I have done before.
GA: Or who you are.
LG: I felt that in the office.

I explored with Linda her feelings about her tendency towards workaholism, again with the idea of giving her clarity:
LG: I want to feel like I can take a lunch break. It is not that I don’t want to, I don’t even think about it. Sometimes I don’t even take a pee. That is the way that I am. I took the CPA exam in one go - seven exams. People were asking me how I could do it. I don’t know. I can work for hours and not think about anything else..
GA: And you are happy with that?
LG: I wish I could stop. I am not the only one with a lot of work.
GA: You said, ‘I wish I could stop.’
LG: It is true.
GA: What would happen if you stopped?
LG: It is not like life and death. I am not a doctor.
GA: Do you want to stop working so hard?
LG: I want to have better discipline. I do too much work. I remember in primary school and I remember the principal had been in Africa for two years. He had tons of work but he managed to go home for an hour at lunchtime and have time for his wife and family. I remember him telling us how important it was to separate these things. At some time in my life I have to do that or I will kill myself. I will. I can do it but it is not good for me. This is not what life is about.
GA: So you are not happy with what is happening?
LG: I am happy but I am not happy. I think I should not do this.
GA: Why shouldn’t you do that?
LG: I don’t think it is good to work for seven hours in a row and not see the sun during the day. It is not healthy. I don’t think so.
GA: But while the work is there you are going to do it though?
LG: I have to. I do totally and honestly believe that other people have as much work as me but they have time to have lunch and get out of it to pause.
GA: How do you relax?
LG: Here, and I exercise. I go to the Radisson and I play tennis. I read. I cook. That is relaxing.

Linda encouraged me to direct her. I resisted, while at the same time I was happy to make suggestions provided she took ownership of decisions. The resumption of her yoga classes was a good example:
LG: You can tell me to do it.
GA: I am not going to tell you. If I tell you to do it, it is a waste of time. Why should I tell you to do it?
LG: You are supposed to do it. I need someone to.
GA: What if you told yourself to do it. I can ask you if you did.
LG: I know - if you make me accountable for it.
GA: You are accountable for it.
LG: I have to be accountable to someone.
GA: I can help you remind yourself but I am not buying into that.

By the end of the coaching sessions, Linda was contemplating a move to higher levels of management. This was realistic given that she was promoted very quickly.

GA: At a senior level the management of the people is a lot of the work. You do the strategic thinking and political work and get the people below you to do it. You don’t rush off to Haiti. You look at people like yourself and work out how to manage them. If you were managing you, how would you do it?
LG: [long pause] I don’t know.
GA: I know what I would do. What would you do?
LG: [pause] I would just let it go.

**Coaching from a Cultural Perspective**

There were various levels of culture operating in Linda’s situation. The discussion above about time was an example of leveraging difference between Linda’s preference for working very quickly and the benefits of adopting a slower pace to connect with her local staff and to aid reflection.

Linda’s passion and drive conflicted with the rather more staid culture of the workplace. This was a source of annoyance to Linda. I acknowledged the difficulties:

GA: It must be frustrating to see people around you who are not connected.
LG: That’s it, everywhere. I am not saying I am right and they are wrong. They are 29 years old.
GA: What were you like at 29?
LG: I wanted to see the world. I am a passionate person.

Linda appreciated my input on national culture issues between the USA and El Salvador. She had not noticed that beneath surface similarities, there were differences:
GA: The first time we met we talked about the uncertainty issue in El Salvador. There is another one about the question of hierarchy. It is much flatter in the US and more informal. Here it is more important the idea of hierarchy. Titles are very important. On business cards of one-person organizations they will use the title of president.

LG: I think that it is important about hierarchy and I had forgotten. It was certainly important in Afghanistan and I didn’t think because this is so much like the States, I didn’t really feel the importance of it so much here as I did there.

GA: Salvadorians are more likely to mesh things together. It is like taking telephone calls in meetings - it drives me mad.

LG: Me too.

GA: I have been to the doctor for an examination. She was on the phone three times during the examination, including to her mechanic. I thought, ok, that happens. I waited until she finished each call and we kept going.

LG: That is a good example Geoff. That is what I have to work on myself.

Linda was interested in improving her connection with her local staff and we talked through some ideas. My aim was to encourage Linda to think of approaches herself rather than follow ideas from me. Linda forced me to be in more of a consultancy role – to have the answer:

GA: What could you do differently?

LG: Tell me, so I don’t have to work so hard. I’ll be honest - tell me some things and I’ll agree or disagree.

GA: No, you tell me a few things.

LG: No no no - I’ll agree or disagree. I know I need to do different things.

GA: You have mentioned a few already today.

LG: I have to think of them - some simple chatting.

GA: What do you normally do on Mondays?

LG: I just go to the office and work.

GA: When do you first talk to them - when they come to your office?

LG: Some of them I don’t talk to all day. Today I only said, ‘Buenas noches’ to Lilian.
GA: Now you are aware of the importance of relationships in the workplace here, what impact do you think that would have on them?
LG: A bad impact. Terrible, now that I realize. For me, I can spend a week without seeing my boss. If she needs to talk to me she will come and talk to me. I can go days without talking to her and I don’t see it as a problem. My office is at the back.
GA: Out of sight out of mind.
LG: Exactly, it’s terrible. I have to chat more with them.
GA: How would you do it? You could do it subtly or you could make it obvious and make it quite deliberate and explicit?
LG: Which approach is better?
GA: There is no right or wrong.
LG: I know, but which approach will work best here?
GA: What sort of effect do you want to have?
LG: I am serious about doing it. It will be part of my day if I think it is important. I didn’t decide to continue with you not to follow your advice or really to make an effort to change. I believe this will have a major impact. I am so happy. Maybe it’s coming from me but I think it is coming from you.
GA: If it’s coming from me I wouldn’t do it.
LG: But I do believe what you are telling me. I do believe that this will make a major impact in the office so I am going to do it. It is not that I like it.
GA: Do it in a way that most suits your personality and makes the impact you want, which is to send a message to them that you are interested and want to acknowledge their way of operating a bit more.
LG: I think it will come Geoff. You have to meet people half way or you will never meet them. You can see this is so funny. Why it never dawned on me that that was it. John Adams was exactly like me - he wants to accomplish. Jefferson would go and have a beer, and a walk and tennis then finally at the end bring up the subject and have much better results. But I never saw it in that way before, and yet it was in front of me and I never saw.

I mentioned a concern to Linda that doing more chatting would add even more hours to her work days:
GA: The one thing that worries me about that is that you mentioned you were adding it to your day - the vacuum cleaner. You have sucked another thing in. Maybe we could talk about that next time?
LG: Letting go of some things. That would be good.

In the next session I asked Linda how she went with her conversational approach:
GA: You were going to keep on having conversations with your local staff. How is that going? Is it painful?
LG: It’s going well. I really make an effort, consciously. It never leaves me not to go right to the point but say, ‘How was your weekend?’ I don’t go and mingle but when I see people I ask them. Before, unless I had business I would just leave.
GA: It’s been several weeks.
LG: A month.
GA: Have you noticed anything different in terms of their reaction?
LG: I think people are more positive. They like it. They are more responsive.
GA: In what way? Can you think of an example of someone doing something different?
LG: Yes, especially with Beatriz. She is more responsive to any work that I give to her.

Linda used the time to reflect on her experiences as an expatriate. In many ways she took advantage of the opportunity to pursue her coaching goal of having more time to think:
LG: I am very blessed with good friends and a wonderful husband. When we moved to El Salvador, we had very difficult times for five months and I didn’t think it would work - after fifteen years. I remember saying, ‘I just want the feelings for each other to come again. The love and the feeling it seems like it has gone.’ Moving is a very stressful thing. It was through our friendship and finding out the problems. If I blamed him for the unhappiness we would not be together. We both had issues to deal with and to address in our own way. Slowly we finally connected again. You have to really look inside you to help you channel things through the proper cycle.
Coaching Expatriates for Acculturation

Linda was often uncertain about my role which was perhaps a reflection of the relative youth of executive coaching, particularly for expatriate managers who might have been out of touch with growth of coaching in their home countries. The advantage with Linda was that her directness enabled her to express her concerns and confusions about my role. Other clients might not do this and therefore not get full benefit from the coaching:

*LG: I wanted to remind myself what you are good at.*

*GA: I can help you get to where you want to go and to maybe see your situation better. To help you stand back, maybe to get to a distance to see what you are doing.*

Coaching and Pragmatism

I encouraged Linda to consider the consequences of her perfectionism and tendency to do things herself, picking up on an earlier conversation:

*GA: You have become a task vacuum cleaner. There are some in your workplace that work hard, some don’t do much, and many in the middle. Those in the middle, they are happy to let go of work. They will let you do it. You are doing the work of 3 people but you have 4 other people who could be energized with you. Can I ask what effect your work style has on them?*

*LG: I think it has a different effect on each of them. I think some get energized and want to do a better job. Others are afraid that their incompetence will show and they really try to do the minimal amount they could to get away with it. They try to justify themselves and don’t take responsibility for the work.*

*GA: How can you encourage them to take more, or do you want to? Is it ok as it is?*

*LG: No it is not ok. I don’t want to leave and know that what I have done will just go out.*

*GA: Using the rowing boat analogy, you are the skipper but you are also doing all the rowing.*
The Role of Values

Linda had a passion to make a contribution. The focus of the coaching was to assist her in having impact in her role and therefore be consistent with her value of contribution. The process of reflection seemed to stimulate Linda to contemplate a more senior management role, with values operating as a motivational influence for her to move out of her comfort zone as a project officer into management:

LG: I want to contribute. I don’t want to sit on my chair and do nothing.
GA: The reality is the higher you get the more power and influence you have. On the ground you can make things better and improve systems. But the more you go up, the more capacity you have to use organizational and personal power at a bigger scale. So if you want to make an impact….
LG: I have made an impact.
GA: You can make a different kind of impact at a lower level but not much beyond what you are already doing.
LG: I like your question, ‘Where you are going?’ It is funny, I am very driven. I would like to have a promotion, more money and recognition.
GA: It is more power…
LG: More power and influence. I don’t look at it that way.
GA: More capacity to do good?
LG: ‘More capacity to do good’ is a nice way to put it.
GA: Where would you have the most impact?
LG: I don’t really have a goal right now. I would have to reflect on this because I don’t know.
GA: Your career is moving up. There is room perhaps to step back a little and look at it again. If you could channel all of those different experiences which are uniquely yours and focus them to make an impact. There may be scope to manage what happens rather than just to go with it. It is not necessarily something to do now but maybe something to keep in mind for later.
LG: You always take me in different directions, always. I have not looked at it in this way. It is the first time I have looked at it the way you do. It just takes me by surprise. I have to reflect. I always changed jobs - four or five years. I never stayed very long.

Impact

Linda was extremely positive about the coaching experience with ratings of 5 out of 5 for almost every item. Linda saw coaching as a useful self-improvement tool, particularly for improving relationships, communication skills and work effectiveness. She also saw it as a useful way to develop her management style. In the Post-Coaching Questionnaire she said that without the coaching, ‘I would have been miserable. I can’t imagine.’

Linda believed she had realized through coaching the importance of slowing down and putting herself in the shoes of others. Towards the end I asked her about the impact of the work she had done to slow down:

LG: I used to have the extra stress. Now it is kind of nice. I take more time to read and relax which I had not scheduled before. This week I have been in bed from 8.30pm until 6am. Then I go to work. If I do more at 8.30 I will be up until 10.30 doing tax returns. I need a good nights sleep. I know what is good to do and not good to do.

GA: It doesn’t make you less efficient?

LG: A bit. I am not accomplishing as much. I am late. I will do some work at the weekend but I won’t stay late until 11pm.

GA: Have there been any benefits?

LG: I am much happier with myself. It is not a big price to pay. It is not a big price to pay.

GA: Are there any benefits at work from being happy?

LG: I love my work. I would never have a problem to work. My husband said even if you do not do as much, you do more than anyone else.

GA: The personal benefit is you are happier and less stressed. Are there any benefits at work? You are not doing as many things. Is the qualitative nature of the work any different?
LG: I think so Geoff because people feel more free to come into my office and talk. Carlos will come into my office. You made me realize this. People feel more comfortable coming and just chatting with me. I would make an effort before when they came but they knew I was so occupied. Now they can come and sit.

Linda felt that the coaching had helped her relationship with her supervisor:
LG: The one thing I learned is to make him look good. And thanks to you I was able to do it.
GA: Why thanks to me?
LG: You helped to make it happen, by trying to be more responsive as to how people perceive me. I got off to a wrong footage from the start.
CHAPTER 6.2

CASE STUDY: DAVID REDMOND

Profile

David Redmond was a 55 year old senior development officer in a government development organization in San Salvador. David and his family had been in El Salvador since 2001. He arrived in El Salvador under difficult conditions post-earthquake - with a sick son. He found he was working for an alcoholic boss and one of his senior staff was murdered shortly after his arrival. He was a Mexican-born American and was married with two children. He and his wife adopted their daughter in El Salvador, with the process being completed during the period of the coaching. He had extensive experience overseas with his organization, including in Eastern Europe and Malaysia. We had nine sessions together over thirteen months after which David and his family returned to the USA. David continued his career in the organization while at the same time looking for other opportunities in education and consultancy. His wife took up a position in government at a senior level. David was referred to me by his wife whom I had interviewed about her work in the area of spouse employment for US government officers in El Salvador.

Reason for Inclusion in the Study

David fitted the profile of an expatriate manager - male, married, and in his 50s. Issues that potentially provided additional perspectives for the research included:

- David’s extensive international experience;
- the intensity of some of his workplace issues which had developed over several years;
- the ongoing adoption process; and
- the fact that David’s wife was pursuing her own career in government and consultancy.
Issues and Goals

David was at the crossroads in his career. With a young family he needed to continue working for many years but was concerned that his pathway in his current organization was blocked by negative perceptions of him from his managers in El Salvador. He wanted to explore the possibility of other career options. His preference was to continue as a senior manager and to improve his management skills. The issue of ‘What next?’ was major.

Anger management was a major issue for David. The trigger for much of his underlying stress was a difficult relationship with his supervisor. From David’s perspective, Don was something of a bully, with few leadership or management skills and a tendency to undervalue the contributions of his staff. David referred to a management clique of the ‘front office’ that was driven by his supervisor and the second-in-command.

The other issue that David wanted to focus on was his relationship with his local staff. David was receiving anonymous feedback through his supervisors that he was not appropriately managing his staff and was being intimidating:

*DP:* Don accused me of falsifying my timesheet and last year he commented that I had problems with the local staff because I was alienating them and they were coming to complain about me. I was stunned because things were working well in the office after the retreat. I went back to him and said, ‘What’s the problem?’ From his point-of-view, I had done an absolutely horrible thing. He was chastising me for going to talk to people because I had put them on the spot. I had intimidated them by going in and asking them.

Coaching Challenges

David found it difficult to disconnect from the day-to-day stories of the office to reflect on the bigger picture. My main challenge was to encourage him to step back and consider his actions and future with as much objectivity as possible.
Coaching Techniques and Perspectives

Many of our discussions were in the area of career coaching as David explored various options. I worked to keep this process positive as David experienced a series of setbacks over the year we worked together. He was rejected for a job in Panama. He did not receive an offer from a consultancy firm that had approached him and with whom he had had lengthy interviews. He also received feedback from head office that he was not considered suitable for promotion which angered him considerably:

GA: So how are things?

DP: Pretty wild. I didn’t get any senior management jobs. The politics is becoming clearer. I had a call from head office from someone I used to work for. She said in the file there was a note that I had been told not to bid on senior management jobs. I said, ‘What? That is not true. Or maybe it is but I wasn’t told.’

My role was often to listen to David vent his frustrations in the face of setbacks and encourage him to look at future possibilities. I encouraged him to explore and reflect on the reasons why he might not have been successful with positions. He continued to look actively for positions and eventually found a suitable position in head office in the USA.

The issue of anger management was ongoing. I used ideas from cognitive behavioural therapy to assist David to better manage his anger. I worked on the idea of empathy – of encouraging David to look at the point-of-view of others, and reframing his interpretation of situations and events so that they would not trigger anger. Together we looked at the ideas of Daniel Goleman (1995) on emotional intelligence. David indicated that it was difficult for him to pull back in situations where his emotions were rising:

GA: Your reaction under stress seems to be a destructive thing. I had a boss who was a lovely lady but she sometimes got angry. That had a major effect and it took a long time to work through it. When the snap is about to come, you don’t have to be angry. You can be. You can go with it and snap. Or, as I feel myself getting angry I can move away.

DR: I tried that once. I said that I was not able to have the conversation because I was too angry. And I said it. That pushed the button.
GA: There was maybe another way of doing that?
DR: They wanted stay and have the argument.
GA: How could you have done it without getting angry? How could you have managed it without escalating it?
DR: I don’t know. The person is not here.
GA: Imagine they are and you are getting angry. How would that play out without getting angry?
DR: I could turn it about by saying, ‘Your solution and what we have here seem incompatible. What else could we try?’
GA: Yes.
DR: It’s easy to say now under no pressure.

In the above conversation, David at one point was becoming a little irritated which I sensed was starting to block our communication. My approach was to work with David to monitor situations where he had become angry and to examine alternative approaches. We continued:

GA: But if you kind of know how many times a week would you get angry?
DR: There was a couple of months when things were very tense. I don’t know how often it was anger or just perception. When you have someone who is so persistent when we should be doing this and Don has said no. I have not worked out how to handle that. Maybe that line ‘I can’t help you’ is better than ‘Don said no’ with the tone of voice.
GA: Do you know much about counselling techniques? Rogerian counselling suggests you start reflecting. Instead of getting angry, reflect that it must be frustrating for them. Get behind them.
DR: Get behind them. There is an example with Stella. Stella has been asking for more money for her project. I said, ‘What are we going to give up?’ If they are asked to look for things it is better than me getting angry.

Some of the strategies we discussed were; reflective listening, moving away from the anger towards a solution and the use of humour. I reflected to David that it seemed that when he
expressed frustration it was coming across to others as anger. We had a light-hearted
discussion in our final session about his progress with anger management.

**DR:** Methodologically, I am David Redmond and I have been free of anger incidents for 63
days.

**GA:** I did it once but I got over it!

**DR:** There is a joke. Three sharks go to an AA meeting where they try not to think of fish as
food. But this is a serious issue. I was thinking of one time when something went wrong and
I took it out on Daphne.

Professionally, David felt trapped and I encouraged him to reflect on ways of breaking
patterns:

**GA:** One of the things in coaching is that sometimes you can look at something that hasn’t
happened before and say it doesn’t mean it can never happen. Test and challenge and focus
some energy on it.

We looked at options for improving his situation:

**GA:** Have an external person come into the office – with the retreat and the 360. That
would be another way. What else could you do?

**DR:** Get a new job.

In the middle of the coaching program, David made a trip to the USA and began to explore
options outside his organization:

**DR:** The thing is, what does David want to do when he grows up? When I was in head
office I made the rounds for three days to re-establish contacts in my organization. I also
saw three external consulting companies. They all said there was plenty of work. It is a
question of, ‘What are the choices?’ It was a step if you like of leaving the womb after
twenty something years. It is a step.

**GA:** It’s rare when you start taking those steps that something doesn’t open up. Something
happens even if it is not what you expect.

David then related some ideas from an article I lent him (Perttula, 2000):
DR: The other thing in the Bennis article is that you are not in companies for ever.

I took every opportunity to refer to David’s strengths and experiences and how the potential existed for him to change his situation. We did a 360 degree feedback process in his organization (explained in more detail later). People in his office rated David high on self-efficacy. I took this up:

GA: The final thing is the self efficacy - it is very well researched. Henry Ford said, ‘If you think you can, or you think you can’t, you’re right.’ If I think I can become an executive coach or adopt a child in San Salvador and I have the determination to follow through, I can. That is an enormous strength for you. If you believe you can be a leader and you can work hard and be positive and focused on solutions, you can.

Coaching from a Cultural Perspective

David’s interactions with his local staff raised many issues for which a cultural perspective was appropriate. Navigating the cultural differences between the USA and El Salvador was a common issue discussed in the sessions. For example, we contrasted the directness and task-focus nature of Americans (and Australians) in contrast to Salvadorian ways of operating:

GA: Australians are very similar. We are very direct in the way we approach things.
DR: I know!
GA: For us, it is a signal of trust in a relationship - laying it on the table.
DR: Rather than labouring for 20 or 30 minutes. Why waste the time?

I shared with David the perception of another client that El Salvador looked Western, which was somewhat deceiving for expatriates. David agreed:

DR: You are right. Superficial appearances here are that it is very Western. I had just come from Eastern Europe and South-East Asia where you knew you were in a different world. The culture was so different that you had to sit and learn it. You also learned the phrase that, ‘The shortest distance between two points is not a straight line.’ You have to work your way around to the point. And I thought that I am finding here more like Asia.
These discussions gave David a better understanding of why he was having staff management issues. David was only broadly familiar with the theory from Hofstede (1997, 2001) and others. I gave him a copy of some graphs showing where El Salvador and the USA sat with various dimensions (Hofstede, 1997). David found these ideas useful for framing his view of his situation with his staff and his supervisor:

*DR:* Some of it I think is to continue to reinforce talking about management practices and style and to remind me day-to-day, ‘David, stop, there are other ways of doing this, other techniques.’ I tend to fall back into old habits and be more hierarchical. Don is more at the hierarchical end and opposed to the general America style. [David referred to the Hofstede graph of Individualism-Collectivism and Power Distance dimensions] His perception of the collective good is what he wants. He is over here, but claims to be here [points to axis on Power-Distance].

*GA:* So he is over here at one extreme, his American staff are here, and the Salvadorians are here.

*DR:* As a result, where I have the most problem is with him. When you are pressed for time and he wants something done, he just gives lots and lots of things to do without any real sense of the impact. I try to give him feedback but he and his deputy don’t want to hear. I have a tendency to fall into the, ‘They want this and are leaning on me and I am going to go and get it - just to get them off my back.’ Which means I am not behaving like this [points to low Power Distance] and it is more like this [high Power Distance] and it is counterproductive.

These kinds of conversations seemed to be of value to David in getting a new perspective on situations. David had a master’s degree and almost finished his doctorate and was comfortable talking about theory and how it might apply in his situation.

We talked a lot about the intentions of David’s actions as a manager as opposed to the perceived intentions, and how the gap might be exacerbated by different cultural orientations. I suggested he could raise with his staff this issue of USA-Salvadorian cross-cultural management:
GA: This could provide a safe way for them to express how they feel and give you a chance to say what you are doing - that directness is part of your style and not necessarily intimidation. Maybe there is some work in groups about cultural differences. There are heaps of good books around about culture and ways of doing thing. There is an enormous contrast between what happens here and the American style.

DR: It’s good to be reminded of that - to take a deep breath and then let’s work on it.

GA: Perhaps here people are misperceiving what in the US would be a reasonably soft management style that is not intimidating - they are interpreting it as intimidating?

I explored with David the reality or otherwise of his intimidation of local staff:

GA: The intimidation, where is that coming from?

DR: I am very strong-willed and opinionated.

GA: I wouldn’t describe you as someone who in any context would be particularly intimidating, except by intellect and presence I guess.

DR: As my wife says, I don’t suffer fools gladly. I asked a year ago when this first came up. I was getting different feedback and I thought the reality was in-between.

I drafted a 360 degree feedback instrument for David using ideas for an expatriate management effectiveness questionnaire in an article by Luthans and Farner (2002). I developed the original for Neil Barber. For David, I revised the questions to take into account new ideas picked up over a number of months coaching other expatriate participants. We worked on the draft and also received input from one of his American staff members. I spoke to his team (with David present) about the process and the instrument. It was distributed and we talked at length about the feedback, which confirmed to some extent that David’s style was not well-received by his local staff.

I spoke to George Renwick about the case (without names or organizations). George was an experienced US coach of global executives and also a writer and academic. His view was that in high context cultures such as El Salvador, a pen-and-paper 360 degree feedback instrument was probably not the best approach. He suggested it may have been more effective for me as coach to have talked individually with the team members and then
spoken to David. He said that in high context cultures, people don’t hold fixed views of others in ways that can be unloaded onto a page on request. Comments needed a context through dialogue. David considered this new perspective in reflecting on his own interactions with staff.

The 360 feedback process gave me an opportunity to see David interact with his staff. I noted that David was quite directive in the meeting and sometimes did not pick up on cues from people about their reactions to things that were occurring. For example, he missed the clear resistance to his idea that a staff retreat be held while his deputy was still on holidays. We discussed this in relation to high and low context cultures. There did seem to be a distance between David and the staff, and I noted that the form of address was always ‘Mister’. One member commented how brave it was of David to open himself up to comment in this way. I gave this feedback to David who found it useful.

We spent a good deal of time working through the results of the 360 degree feedback process and looking at some strategies for improving areas where staff had signalled concern. While I attempted to lead with positives from the exercise, David insisted that the negatives were the areas he needed to concentrate on if he was going to get on top of the situation:

*DR: They want management on their terms which I need to do more of. They say I am more approachable in the morning. I need to go round and talk to people in the morning and say, ‘How are you going?’*

One issue emerged was that people saw only one side of David in the workplace:

*GA: The cultural fit - the ratings here were an average of a 3 out of 5. They are not high-middle. Anything here you can see? These are lower than the things you tell me.

*DR: They are not seeing me in the non-work environment. I react to it more from the non-work environment.*

We looked at ideas for introducing some social elements to the workplace, though David did feel that his own social interests were not very compatible with those of his local staff.
The feedback suggested that David was not cultivating a learning environment. We looked at strategies for addressing this and I observed that there was potentially a cultural dimension to why the staff had not been more proactive in the past:

*DR:* Their feedback was that it is not a learning environment. They could learn about each other’s projects.

*GA:* They identify you as the boss and maybe they won’t do anything without that direction?

*DR:* Maybe I could get a couple of people to work on an idea?

**Insights on Coaching Expatriates for Acculturation**

In David’s situation, having me as an independent sounding board to discuss his frustrations with his supervisor and staff was useful, given that he had a limited number of people with whom he could discuss this issue (his wife being one). In their home countries, managers have colleagues, friends and family with whom to consult. This was a good example of the benefit of having someone available outside the client’s organization.

David’s situation highlighted the impact that family life can have on an expatriate manager. During the time we worked together, David and his wife went through a complicated and difficult adoption process. Their daughter developed stuttering problems. Their son was very sick and also experienced problems in school. Although they had many friends and church support, these events had a big impact on David and took a lot of his energy as he tried to manage work crises and career planning.

Although we did not discuss it, David was also experiencing blocks in his career at a time when his wife was receiving accolades. I am not sure what impact, if any, this was having on his self-confidence. Shortly before they left El Salvador, Dianne succeeded in gaining a permanent position in head office at a senior level. Had the coaching continued, this issue might have been appropriately discussed.
Through the complexities of the various issues in David’s life, it seemed helpful to him to have someone who could see things from his point-of-view and support him, while at the same time encouraging him to challenge himself and move ahead.

**Executive Coaching as Action Research**

The 360 degree process and team retreat idea brought me into direct contact with David’s team as a natural part of the executive coaching process. It also gave me insights into the research issue of expatriate manager acculturation as I observed the interactions between David and his staff. This was an excellent illustration of research and practice working together.

I felt that David and I worked together in developing his strategies for meeting his objectives. My role was as a participant, yet at the same time David was conscious of the fact that I was doing a research project. Our work together was a good illustration of the researcher-practitioner working in the Empirical reality of the client to improve a situation, bringing in ideas from the Actual reality of cultural and management theory and practice.

**Coaching and Pragmatism**

On reflection, I think I was encouraging David to be pragmatic in approaching his context by not overlaying grand principles of good management to the way he viewed the actions of his supervisors. He realized that getting the job done to the satisfaction of his managers was the aim of the game, and preferable to getting upset by what he saw as their inadequate and insensitive management styles.

**The Role of Values**

In Session 2, I talked with David at some length about his values. David valued variety in his job:

GA: What attracts you about variety?
DR: I see relationships between different things. The thing I used to do in the Baltics which was really exciting was to start looking at local government and business development - doing both - and looking at economics and democracy linkages too. You don’t have to force linkages but why can’t they talk to each other? If you are in a broad management position you can influence all of them.

Financial security was also important:

DR: I have two young kids who have to go to college. I’m 53. I have a wife who says I have to work until they are out of college, which is another 19 years! I am going to have to like what I am doing. I have grown accustomed to travelling a lot. I like that part. I am not yet ready to go back to the US and settle on a little property and look at the trees and neither is Dianne. We need enough money to live in retirement - real retirement.

David repeatedly came back to values related to management style. There were tensions related to this. The types of values exhibited by David’s manager (Don) in his leadership style were the antithesis of David’s own preferred style. Inclusion, equality, and fairness seemed to be the values underlying David’s approach, though we did not explore this as far as we could have. Don’s management style caused David considerable anxiety. However, some of David’s staff were critical of David for exhibiting similar traits in his own management style – perceiving him to be non-inclusive and intimidating. I worked with David on lining up his preferred (espoused) management style with his actual management style. I encouraged him to work with his staff to give them a more accurate perception of what he was trying to achieve. Values underpinned this exercise. In retrospect, I could have been more explicit with David about his value set and the various paradoxes and contradictions at work in his context.

Limitations of Coaching

In the final interview, David made the observation that successful coaching depends upon the willingness of the participant to seek information and feedback and make changes, combined with a coach whose style fits the needs of the executive. The issue of coach-
client fit is important when considering the limited availability of coaches in some countries where expatriates are operating. David also thought that the coach needed a sound understanding of local culture.

**Impact, Assessment**

David rated the coaching process very highly in every regard, giving 5 out of 5 for each item in the Overall section of the Post-Coaching Questionnaire. David felt he could trust me to listen to him and provide crucial observations, give positive feedback and help identify options for him to consider or improve weaknesses. In the Post-Coaching Questionnaire, David said that coaching had broadened his perspectives for the future: 
*I would not have had the belief that I could seek employment outside of government and acted on it.*

David commented that coaching had been:
*Personally and professionally rewarding. It required more insight and attention than I have devoted to management and career development in the past and that has been extremely helpful.*

The main impact from my perspective was that David began to see his own actions a little more objectively. I didn’t think there had been dramatic changes in the way he handled particular situations, but David commented that he had made changes:
*I have a better understanding of how to think about how my behaviour and management style affects others, both positively and negatively. This allowed me to reduce my frustration and not direct my anger, which was derived from my negative relationship with my bosses, to members of my office team.*

David’s awareness of his challenges seemed to contribute to his overall level of personal satisfaction. He seemed less puzzled by the reactions of people to him in the workplace and more positive about what was going to happen next. I think he took to next post some
strategies on how to avoid some of the negative situations he had faced in El Salvador. I asked him specifically what he had learnt:

\textit{GA: Is there anything really concrete you learnt here that next time you will do differently in your next role in the USA?}

\textit{DR: I have been doing one thing differently. I don’t know who triggered it - a number of people. I am too judgmental and I need to listen more. My boss said I do surface points of view but I am not listening enough so that people feel they are being heard.}

David commented on how the coaching questioning process had been successful in bringing him back to the important issues:

\textit{DR: You start a set of questions that reverberate. We keep coming back to these things.}

\textit{GA: In terms of new strategies I guess there is not a lot you can do here in El Salvador.}

\textit{DR: I have done this technique of sort of - I am David Redmond of Anger Anonymous – to turn it around to get to 128 days without anger incidents.}

We finished the coaching sessions with a discussion about focusing on the positives.

\textit{DR: I am seeing a lot more positive things in the past several months to keep reminding myself of a positive reaction.}

\textit{GA: Consciously reminding yourself to pick people up so they get used to it. It is a kind of automatic thing. People get drawn towards you.}

Retrospectively, I believe David made changes in the cognitive domain during the time of the coaching. He realised a lot of things that he had not realised before. He could see himself more objectively. However, these cognitive shifts had not yet transferred into behavioural changes nor necessarily into the way he felt about stressful work situations. I did not see any obvious indication that his work performance dramatically improved during the course of the coaching, though David rated the coaching 5 out of 5 for contributing to improved performance. This may have been an example of a participant being overly generous in the ratings in appreciation of my work.
CHAPTER 6.3

CASE STUDY: NEIL BARBER

Profile

Neil Barber was a financial manager with a European-based multinational corporation. He was South African and recently married. El Salvador was his first long overseas posting, though he had spent some time in Russia which he found difficult due to the aggressive attitude of the local people to foreigners. I was referred to Neil by the company’s human resources manager. I had also spoken to Neil’s immediate supervisor (Craig) who talked in general terms about the possibility of my coaching one of his staff. We worked together for a relatively brief period of time (five sessions). Neil remained in a similar role in the company for another 18 months, after which he was promoted.

Reason for Inclusion in the Study

Neil fitted the profile of an expatriate manager, being married, in his 40s and white. The fact that this was his first assignment meant that he provided a different perspective from the other participants. Neil’s situation gave me an opportunity to see how coaching might help someone who was facing a work crisis.

Issues and Goals

I coached Neil through a period where he was experiencing a lot of anger for the way he perceived the company had treated him. Neil had just been passed over for promotion to financial director, a position for which he believed he was being groomed in his time in El Salvador. He found the way in which the decision was made and how he was treated to be extremely galling. Not only was he not promoted, he was not even interviewed for the job and was simply informed that someone from overseas was going to take over the position when Neil’s supervisor left the country. He had been told generally that his personality did
not fit with being a line manager and that he was not ‘robust’ enough. Neil felt that there
was an impression that his introversion was not a benefit because the company selection
processes favoured extroverted managers. Also, he was not viewed as a ‘political player’.
The major issues were therefore to identify:

- What perceptions did people have of him in the company?;
- Where had they come from?; and
- What could he do to change or add to them to his advantage?

We discussed his motivations:

GA: So there are two motivations, firstly to free you up to talk to Ian [the regional manager]
or others about other possibilities. You can talk about the apparent perceptions of your
work and that you want to go outside Craig [his immediate supervisor] and Roger [the
Human Resources Manager].

NB: And I also want to know what that is based on.

GA: So that is probably number one. What is the perception and how was it arrived upon?
Who holds it? Where did it come from – evidence? What else?

NB: And is it alterable?

GA: Is it alterable, or do they think it is alterable?

NB: And a subset, if it is not these guys then who is it? And if their view is more favourable
then how would I get that taken into account?

Neil was in crisis and was considering his options, including leaving the company. He
viewed himself as the victim of poor management skills by his supervisors, inadequate
support from human resources and a generally unfair process of selection in the company.
Neil saw the company culture as encouraging people to ‘brown nose’ if they wanted to get
ahead. People like himself, who quietly went about their business, were not given the same
opportunities as those who engaged in grubby office politics. He believed that he had been
deceived on many levels.
Coaching Approach, Techniques and Perspectives

In our early sessions, I concentrated on listening to Neil tell the story of the circumstances of his failure to be promoted, put in the context of his broader aims of making an impact in his professional life. Neil believed that his anger was justified and realized he had to work through it before he could set up some strategies to get control of his situation.

The coaching sessions were a way of allowing Neil to express his anger and move through a difficult time without acting-out his anger with senior managers:

GA: And sensing your own feelings in the meeting and putting it aside to follow up later.
NB: And the ability that this relationship is giving me. There are some things that I am feeling a bit cheated or hard done by or angry about. Rather than dwelling on that, you said to me, ‘It doesn’t matter how we got to this point. What is the best way that we move forward from this point?’ That would be added-value for me. But the next time I see you I might say that Craig said, ‘This and this’, and I can vent it in that way.

Once through the initial anger, Neil was keen to develop strategies to improve his situation within the company, or alternatively to look elsewhere. We spent a good deal of time planning his approach to a meeting with Roger (the human resources manager) and Craig (Neil’s supervisor). This included an exchange of emails with draft meeting notes on the strategy. Neil drafted a document which I agreed fitted with the strategic approach we had discussed in a previous meeting.

Retrospectively, I viewed Neil’s situation from a developmental perspective (Berger & Fitzgerald, 2002; Kegan, 1994). It seemed that Neil’s self image may have been closely connected to the company. His ability to see himself independently of the company, with a separate set of values and beliefs, meant that when the company did not do the right thing by him, he was very hurt. The approaches I was using in the coaching encouraged Neil to develop a more independent self and to view himself and his career as disengaged from the company identity. This proved difficult. It was as though Neil viewed the company as having a personality and identity that he wanted to be aligned with his. His view of the
coaching intervention was that it was not helpful because I could not offer insights and connections to the ‘company’.

I talked about the Transition Curve put forward by Chapman et al. (2003) which set out different stages through which people typically pass when a work crisis such as Neil’s occurs. Neil found this model useful in conceptualizing his situation and was particularly interested in the upswing in the latter stages of the curve.

From the early sessions, I encouraged Neil to take a more active role in his career, as opposed to assuming that he would be recognized and promoted:

*NB*: One of the other routes of staying with the company is that if we get right what we believe we will get right over the next year or 18 months in Central America it will be an interesting place to work. There are lots of acquisition talks. Some are coming to the boil. My understanding is that I will be strongly involved, but I don’t know what the new guy would say if Craig left. He was involved in mergers and acquisitions.

*GA*: You are putting that relatively passively. What might work is to position yourself to get that opportunity regardless of your boss. Positioning yourself to be part of the team now might make you a more obvious choice. That is the sort of thing that might bring you closer. Become the obvious choice rather than one of many. That is probably not the case now.

I worked a lot with Neil in encouraging him to build strategies to work the organizational politics, using his existing knowledge of the players:

*GA*: How would you go about communicating that to Derek [in head office, Europe] and Ian [the regional manager] and Craig? Where would you start to test the model?

*NB*: It would have to start with my own trust. I trust Ian.

*GA*: So step one would be to take this model in a form that is digestible and take it to Ian. Then what would happen?

*GA*: If you developed the model and took it to Ian would you lose anything?

*NB*: In the best of honest worlds there would be no problem.

*GA*: Are there negative issues there?
NB: No, though Ian would be concerned about hierarchy. I should talk to Derek.

GA: You still have to have a conversation with Craig about the next phase. Perhaps we are getting ahead of ourselves? Maybe you need to sort that with Craig first to clear the air and worry about the model after?

NB: The first interaction is with Craig and Roger.

GA: Is that what you want? Is the two of them together ideal?

NB: I think the two together is right. If I have Craig alone he will say, ‘The company believes,’ etc. Roger is more direct. I also want the right to take the conversation further. I don’t believe they necessarily have the power to enable what we are talking about here.

GA: And Craig is not one to confront?

NB: He will hide behind the company.

GA: How could you get Craig to be more open than he normally would be?

NB: To express that the meeting is something I need.

GA: So you need to talk about what it means to you to able to make an impact and contribute. You are confused and the best thing for you is open feedback - negative and positive - so you can make decisions about your career. Be inviting rather than aggressive. How can you invite them to engage and avoid them being defensive? What can you say to bring it down?

On the issue of dishonesty, I questioned Neil on whether or not the message about his performance had in fact been delivered to him – albeit rather indirectly – but he had not registered:

NB: My bigger issue is my perception of the dishonesty. Craig’s contract came up in December. It has been clear to me I aspired to the position. He had lots of times to put a warning line there for me. I am sure in 7 months I could have picked up the warning signals.

GA: You may not have wanted those signs and Craig is very indirect.

NB: There is that. I think though that I am reasonably perceptive. The other side is to ignore the dishonesty.
Coaching from a Cultural Perspective

The level of culture most at work here was organizational culture. The company culture encouraged an extroverted go-getting style of manager which Neil not only did not fit, but also did not want to fit. I worked with Neil to encourage him to explore ways that someone with a different style could thrive in a ‘hostile’ culture. I drew attention to how Ian, the regional director, managed to be successful without resorting to what Neil viewed as dirty tactics. Neil had great respect for Ian and a good understanding of his own challenge to get ahead in the company:

*NB:* Some of it may well fall into the trap of the more senior company people tend to be the balls-to-the-wall - more aggressive type leader. Ian is atypical but he has grown up through a subsidiary wing rather than the main production centre. There is a different culture. Rightly or wrongly he got his opportunity to move into Eastern Europe - not necessarily as the obvious next choice. They had a problem of availability. The passage talk was that it was doing ok and he couldn’t bugger it up. He took it on a growth path and left it in a better state and elevated his capabilities and belief. I wouldn’t say I relate to many of the company managers in that way if you look at the way we related on the plane.

*GA:* He has a definite presence.

*NB:* Absolutely. He is clearly the leader - the boss. If you think of the head of the company - he thumps the table and throws files at people. That may be an extreme but that is seen as typical for more senior company leaders - and that is not me.

And in a subsequent session:

*GA:* I keep thinking of Ian - who through circumstance and probably through his own ability to read situations and be politically smart is now in a senior position.

*NB:* I will juxtapose that and say that the guys who are senior to Ian in Africa and Asia and Europe - the heads of those businesses. Ian is better than any of them, but he won’t get those positions.

Using a model from Transactional Analysis described by Rosinski (2003), my impression was that Neil was caught the role of Victim, with various Perpetrators including the human
resources director and particularly his immediate supervisor. The problem for Neil was that there were very few Rescuers, since he did not have a mentor and his immediate support group was limited. He did realize the need to rescue himself and began to take actions in that direction.

**Insights on Coaching Expatriates for Acculturation**

This case highlighted the isolation of expatriate managers when something goes wrong. Neil did not have anyone to turn to except other disaffected managers who due to their own issues may not have given him positive strategies.

For Neil, without the work crisis it is unlikely he would have undertaken the coaching program. Timing of the coaching sessions seemed to be significant with the expatriates in this study. Having a coach available to managers when needed may be an advisable strategy for companies, rather than attempting to institute set coaching programs at set times.

**Executive Coaching as Action Research**

The situation seemed ideal for the use of a 360 degree feedback process and I suggested it to Neil, using a model from the literature (Luthans & Farner, 2002), tailored to the individual. This was consistent with an action research model of involving people who were related to the issue, person or situation. Neil was quite receptive at first, though he was concerned about how it might be perceived by senior managers. To get around this, we decided that we would lead with the research project aspect of the exercise:

*GA: One of the things in coaching is to get the manager some structured feedback from around them. There has been work done recently on leadership and management for cross-cultural managers - a 360 degree feedback system. You would decide a list of people and they would be sent a form which we agree and they send it back to me anonymously. I would collate the figures and comments. You would have a series of performance ratings.*
That is a way of getting feedback from around you. If there some things you want to know, we can feed these into the system.

NB: I don’t think that is necessarily a bad idea. I am trying to think who we would get honest feedback from. I would be uncomfortable sending it to Brian [a former manager in head office in Europe] because I am not sure how he would perceive it.

GA: What if we said it was part of a university research project?
NB: We put it under the auspices of a research project?
GA: That is all true.

Neil agreed that my putting together draft instrument would be a valid and worthwhile step. I drafted a version that was designed to pick up aspects that Neil was particularly concerned about. We exchanged emails to refine the draft. This was consistent with the action research approach of working in-context, rather than bringing in off-the-shelf approaches from the theory. In the end, the coaching sessions stopped without the instrument being used.

Coaching and Pragmatism

The area of organizational politics was sensitive for Neil. In developing options and approaches, I used a pragmatic approach in encouraging Neil to look at the consequences of taking certain actions. This was particularly important when I considered making suggestions since I did not have internal knowledge of the impact of actions. In the lead up to his major meeting with Craig and Roger, I questioned him about consequences:

GA: What is the worst thing that can happen at that meeting?
NB: That I find out their perceptions are correct in that I can’t go any further in the company. I find out that their perceptions are valid.
GA: That you agree with them. So you think there is a chance they are right?
NB: As of today, no.
GA: Is it possible for them to hold a valid set of perceptions but they are wrong?
NB: They don’t hold the full set, then if there was no additional evidence that could change them?
GA: If that was the case, how would you finish the meeting? What would you say?
NB: I am not really sure.

GA: Would you say, ‘Well thanks guys, you are right. I don’t expect to go any further?’
What else could you say?

NB: ‘What are the things I need to do to go a different direction?’

GA: You would accept that the pathway is blocked?

NB: Then look at what are the other pathways.

GA: What is the best outcome?

NB: To find that what they have said or my understanding of it is not right. After probing it, I would have some concrete... an understanding that I could get to a more senior level and some ideas on what to do. I don’t expect a promotion.

GA: The worst is the block. The best is a loosening?

Neil was pragmatic in the use of the executive coaching service I was offering. He had a specific situation that he needed to work through. When he had worked through it, he stopped the process – the coaching ceased to be useful for him in his current situation. For me, this was professionally a little disappointing as I felt that Neil had a lot of opportunity to position himself for future opportunities within and outside the company. Pragmatically, however, my view here was not relevant because Neil was making decisions about what was useful for him.

The Role of Values

Two major values were at work in the coaching process. The first was Neil’s fundamental value of honesty. The way in which he was treated by the company cut across that value and the underlying anger that this caused, while it was controlled, was not overcome. The other value was perhaps more a need – the need to make an impact. Neil’s lack of opportunity in the company left him underutilized and unable to make the impact that he felt was possible.

I could have made more of these value issues in the coaching, and possibly would have come back to them in later sessions had we continued. Of particular relevance was the
underlying tension that Neil was experiencing by being in an environment where he perceived that one of his major values – honesty – was not given much priority. Neil’s fundamental belief in honesty was perhaps related to his view of organizational politics, which he detested. The following comment made towards the end of our sessions illustrates his strong feelings:

GA: Where do you want to position yourself?

NB: I am going to say something that I don’t necessarily want to hear from myself. I am actually getting to the stage now where I am getting tired of getting my expectations dashed. I know it is going to sound very defeatist but if you don’t expect then you don’t get disappointed. Rightly or wrongly, I feel that much of it is out of my control. Whether it is in my control or not, I don’t know how to grasp it. Maybe it is their political skills? I am going to give an example. This community is fairly small and you are going to know the people I am talking about. One particular person came out of the meeting and said, ‘Wow, we really got good input.’ It was Craig’s comment. I didn’t say anything and I didn’t want to be churlish and we are not competing at the moment. All that person had done was to spend the meeting regurgitating other people’s ideas in different ways. He had the floor for 35% of the time and didn’t come up with one original idea. I thought I could have been unfair. But a friend of mine, we were having beers and he said that the meeting was incredibly boring because, ‘Everything was in fucking stereo.’ But the boss was, ‘Wow!’

GA: But you don’t want to do that?

NB: It is like being asked to face Glen McGrath. I don’t have the ability to invite you around for dinner and pat you on the back if I don’t like you just because you are the boss. Maybe I should but I don’t. I am not going to cry in my milk about it.

GA: Do you have to do that to be successful?

NB: There seems to be a lot of it. Maybe that is my jaundiced view because I don’t feel I am being successful and maybe I am looking for a reason to avoid saying I don’t have what it takes?

In retrospect, I may have been able to explore this issue a little deeper and possibly assisted Neil in recognizing and managing a tension between his and the company values, using an approach informed by cognitive dissonance theory. We could have explored various
options for reducing the dissonance triggered by working in an environment where one’s fundamental values were not given much priority. This could have included testing the truth of Neil’s apparent assumption that organizational politics is dishonest.

The other point of tension for Neil was the value he placed on making an impact but the limits that were currently in place on his capacity to make impact (including perceptions of his senior management capacity and the slow expansion in the region). This was an issue we discussed in the coaching sessions and may have helped Neil clarify his thinking a little for future reference.

**Limitations of Coaching**

In this case, I did not have the company or industry credentials to support Neil as a mentor. Had the coaching continued, we might have worked to identify a mentor who could give him a connection in the company in ways that he wanted. Possibly, he had expected his supervisor to play that role. Ideally, coaches would have some inside company connections and experiences. I suggested that Neil build some alliances himself. Neil received some mentoring or at least support from a family contact – his step father:

> NB: I had a chat with my step dad who is in human resources. He is qualified in psychology and has gone out on his own. He says you get shit in big corporations. You get some things in return - a bigger environment, salary cheques, but you pay for it with politics. He doesn’t even have secretarial support. Something my step dad says is take a decision on the best information you have at the time and there is not point in looking later with new information and agonizing over it.

A coach was subsequently engaged by the company who was a potential mentor for managers, having had senior management experience in the industry in Europe and Central America. I referred Neil to him.
Chapter 6.3 Neil Barber

Impact

At the time, Neil was appreciative of the coaching and thanked me for helping him to regain control of his career. However, his decision not to continue the coaching after Session 5 was a definite indication that he did not believe it would be of further value to him. The turning point seemed to be when he received news that he had new opportunities working to Ian, the regional manager, whom he respected enormously:

NB: I’ll tell you what happened. And I’ll take your comments here. Ian suddenly asked me when I can get out of the work I am doing. The document he was reading on the plane - all the work I was expecting is happening. Nothing formal has happened. But sometimes at this company the fact is better than the formality if that makes any kind of sense. I am doing it. The human resources manager was getting fancy about re-grading of jobs. There is lots of talk but I don’t see anything happening. I don’t really care. They can grade whatever they like - though the extra money would be good.

His comments over a year later in the Post-Coaching Questionnaire were mildly supportive of the process, but critical of my lack of industry or company specific knowledge and experience. Of all the participants, Neil gave the lowest rating on most of the scale items, averaging approximately 3.5 out of 5.

He did not see the process as helpful in equipping him to set goals in the future (2 out of 5). He felt that coaching had made him aware of options outside of the company. He rated coaching as a positive experience (4 out of 5). The following extract from the final interview illustrates his issues:

NB: There is one comment overall in a nutshell, my perception of the sessions. I am being fairly blunt. Inherent in the role of the coach is something that is quite necessary. You are doing expat coaching in a country that is not your home country which exacerbates this. I have no qualms about your abilities but that was quite severely handicapped by your knowledge of the company networks and niceties.
GA: That is good to know. I am finding that generally that having an understanding of the organizational culture is very important. Also, there are advantages the other way of an innocent outsider.

NB: I believe I needed more assistance in negotiating the company’s world perceptions about me. Maybe you need two coaches.

GA: My role as I saw it was to talk to you about tapping into internal networks. The danger is that if I become involved I become part of the problem.

NB: If you were a guy who was an executive director for a while and knew the players and had grown up in the environment. I have a distrust of human resources so I would not talk to them.

GA: So someone who understand the intricacies of the system but is not part of it?

NB: Here is an example. The interface here is Roger as the conduit back to the group. There is a guy you saw here, Robert. Roger is aware he is not happy. He has resigned and gone to another company. If the conduit was working, why did they not know that? Now they want him to stay and it is too late.

GA: The same thing happened to a friend of mine here. He left and they were too late.

NB: If Roger is not batting for me, how does anyone know? With Robert, they promised him a future human resources role. They said they would meet the salary.

GA: You don’t think the interface is working?

NB: Ian tries to make it work with the best of intentions. Others try to do skunk work and go around it. It is broken and he keeps working on it. As an external person there is little you can do for me. If you knew the company you could suggest who I could talk to. I don’t think you knew enough about the specific relationships, or the network issues at my company to be able to provide concrete steps to help me meet my objectives.

I became a little defensive at this point, and explained that the role he was describing was more like a mentor:

GA: Let me explain this. It is almost more of a mentor role you are describing. You are saying here that you probably needed a mentor. I talk with clients about the task of finding a mentor. That is very useful and perceptive which I can use with the research. In another
company I am working with all seven of the top executives. Very different than just working with one person. I have a better understanding of the networks.

But, Neil’s perception was accurate. It was his Empirical reality. He needed me to have company knowledge. Many coaches only work with clients in industries and environments where they have operated themselves. This was a limitation for me working in that industry, and also it was fairly early in my own sojourn in Central America.

The short-term role of the coaching in helping him through a difficult period was important. I felt I had more to offer him in encouraging him to take a more active role in developing his position in the company. As noted earlier, I think what was holding Neil back from working towards this goal was that the perceived cost was too high. Such a course would have meant him working too hard in opposition to his own values by playing organizational politics.

Longer term, I think the coaching might have given Neil some insights about himself that would have been useful if he wanted to move on an independent course outside the environment of a multinational. Through the sessions I encouraged Neil to broaden his contacts and alliances with a view to opening up new possibilities inside or outside the company. Neil indicated in Session 2 that he could do more in this regard:

*GA: Alliances help. Ian can work for you. It is a process happening and everyone is aware of it. People are going with it. Craig might be an ally. Seeing what has happened to you and knowing that it has hurt you, I would think he would want you to have some sort of opportunity. So any noises coming out from here about you are attached to this opportunity. It gets momentum. At the same be aware that it might not happen. Skill yourself up in ways that can open things up outside the company.*

*NB: That is something I have neglected.*

Several months later, I sent Neil a copy of the draft case study and his reply gave me some additional insights as to how he had viewed the coaching process:
I did and still do view our relationship as very positive. Perhaps simply the fact that you offered me perspective and alternatives was enough - that and the obvious ‘anger vent’. I do feel I am doing better in my career and it is not coincidental that we spent time together. I spent time with a senior guy in the company and explored ways of being ‘heard’ better (he has a psychology degree if that means anything). He gave me some tools which I have used. I also used the opportunity to chat to Ian who gave me different tools and objectives, and another view which suggested that he thought my approach was fine. But then he is not the archetypal company man is he?

These reflections indicate that the impact of coaching can be indirect and subtle, facilitating change in ways that might not be clear at the time of the intervention. In the expatriate situation, this post-hoc impact might be particularly difficult to assess because of the rapid movement of managers to different positions and countries.
CHAPTER 6.4

CASE STUDY: PAUL PLUMBER

Profile

Paul was a 36 year-old financial manager with a South African multinational company when we commenced the coaching in late 2003. He moved from finance to marketing and was later appointed to a senior director position. Paul was Kenyan and married with two daughters. El Salvador was his third overseas assignment with the company. He intended to move to Australia to start his own business when he finished in Central America.

Reason for Inclusion in the Study

Paul provided the perspective of a senior expatriate manager in a multinational corporation, but at the same time he was going through a period of major transition as he contemplated moving to Australia as an entrepreneur.

Issues and Goals

Paul’s major focus was the shift to entrepreneurship from a corporate career. He wanted to get clarity about the type of business he could set up in Australia and ensure that the transition was as smooth and successful as possible.

Paul felt restricted in his corporate role - lacking exposure. He felt socially and professionally boxed-in and saw a new more entrepreneurial future as exciting. He envisaged working with rather than within large corporate organizations.
Coaching Techniques and Perspectives

We spent a considerable amount of time in the first few months working on Paul’s preparation to move to Australia. We followed a goal-setting process where Paul initially examined his core values, then refined his goals, investigated and researched options and took actions. This process continued in cycles of action and reflection. The first major action was a trip to Australia to look at opportunities. It was to be an exploratory trip as Paul was not firm on the shape of his career at this point:

*PP:* There is nothing concrete to hang my hat on at the moment.
*GA:* You might be getting to the point of pinning those and taking it another step.
*PP:* Absolutely.
*GA:* What now would you like to concentrate on?
*PP:* I don’t know honestly. I am hoping this trip will give me an understanding. I can be idealistic and get aim to purchase a small business on day one. Consultancy work would be a stop gap.

I used a ‘letter from the future’ technique (Grant & Greene, 2001) to help Paul visualize where he was heading. The idea is to write a letter to yourself five years down the track to describe where you are and how you got there. The technique was effective with Paul:

*PP:* The letter opens up many things and I didn’t want to rush through that. It is good to look back and see what you want to achieve. It is a good excuse to stop and think. We are expanding it to include family life and everything. In terms of the team, that was interesting. I feel a bit silly for not having thought about it before - to be in a team - but not thought about my role in it.

As Paul reflected on his situation, I showed him a copy of the Transition Curve (Chapman, 2003). Paul found this useful for understanding his situation and direction:

*PP:* I like the curve where you realize the point here (near the top) where you are starting to plane. It is a business cycle - the time to reinvent is just before it starts going down.
Paul was comfortable with self reflection, to the degree that the coaching bordered on psychotherapy with reference to his early experiences with his father and grandfather. He seemed to be energized by this. He explored his values and vision.

Paul expressed his preference for action above words and I sought to ensure that reflection was connected to planning and specific actions. This exchange, just before Paul went on the reconnaissance trip to Australia, was typical. Paul had determined a set of core characteristics and values of his new business:

*GA:* Then when you see a business opportunity you can see if it is what you want.
*PP:* Exactly. Does it fit to this? Does it come back to the core? It kind of focuses your thinking as well. In the back of your mind are the possibilities. It is a précis of my main feelings. A lot more analysis is not really required. It's basically what I feel and transferring that into a business.

*GA:* So it’s basically what you feel. Creating an environment in which you can operate freely without the corporate restrictions.

*PP:* Yes. I think there is a lot of baggage. Having a father as an entrepreneur is difficult. You find that their ideas and beliefs become part of your expectations. They become part of you. Is that what I really think or has that been drummed into me?

*GA:* Yeah. Is it what somebody thinks I should think?

*PP:* Yeah. Is it my thought or am I sharing my father’s view? My father is a great business man and I have gained a huge amount from his knowledge. But I am wondering if I am doing it for me? When I analyse it years later when I am ready to start my business, is it true to my core and is it applicable still? I have these expectations I have never really questioned. I was wondering why I was feeling a little bit uncomfortable with some of these things. It is a useful exercise. I am not sure what else we can do right now.

Paul drew a connection between his current approach to situations and his parents’ difficult relationship:

*GA:* It’s about allowing your feel of things to come into play. By doing that you are opening up a whole new range of opportunities and ways of looking at things. If you don’t let your feelings in then you are going to miss some pretty important things.
PP: Sometimes I do that too much.
GA: But you are very practical and that is a strength.
PP: Sometimes I think I am looking for the ideal and I push hard for those ideals. I came from a very turbulent childhood in terms of my parents and I keep looking at trying to fix that for them because it is just not right how they are behaving. In that aspect I think sometimes I have to take a step back and say to them, ‘This is your problem.’ I guess there is a balance between looking at the fairytale and thinking this is how it should be and trying to fix it. It reaches a point where you have done what you can and you can walk away in the knowledge that you have done what you can.

On Paul’s return from Sydney I worked with him to develop options:
GA: So senior director here is an option. What about Sydney and Brisbane?
PP: Tourism.
GA: So there are three options.
PP: Four tracks really. I could go into general management. There is a company here which is a transport business and they wanted to make me managing director of that. Also, there is one in Panama that is small enough to cut your teeth on but big enough to be a challenge.
GA: Four things. Out of 10, what would you give them?
PP: Sydney Recruitment 8/10. Senior director here - if that was a career I wanted to pursue - about a 7. The tourism opportunity in Brisbane is an 8. The management role here is an 8 also. That doesn’t help much.
GA: It does, you’ve got four bloody good options.

In a later session, I talked with Paul about the loosening on the timing:
GA: You said June you are definitely going to take your family and go.
PP: That is the intention.
GA: Last time, you had had some discussions and that was loosening a bit. Going a bit longer?
PP: That is still the case. If I don’t find anything in the next six months then I will look again and take another trip out. If my explorations were desperate and we got a new
country in the region I might take it for another year. I never say never. By June, I am optimistic. To get me off the starting blocks I want real traction to develop. I am very serious by 40 of having it established.

The coaching challenge was to work with Paul’s frustration about not being able to determine a good business model to move into. He became rather exasperated, particularly when one of his good friends moved to Eastern Europe to start a business:

PP: What do you think I need to do Geoff? You have heard what I am thinking and planning. I want to get the diagram drawn. In that creative stage, I draw and rub and draw and rub. In an hour the whole thing changes.

GA: You said a lot of times, you draw and write and chuck it away. It might be time to use the computer and graphic skills and try to draw it.

PP: Maybe I should keep a book?

GA: In the diagram put in the family and the golf. Sort out in your mind. You talk about June. If they offered you something though, you’d stay.

PP: Only if... Let me clarify. I am moving. The worst case would be that if there is no starting block, I’ll consider it as a back up.

In the next meeting, Paul was even more frustrated:

PP: I have been very frustrated because I have not spent a decent amount of time on the project. It has been frustrating to start and stop. Lots of work has been interfering. January was so crazy and now to refocus to get things back on track. It is frustrating. The momentum has gone and I have to start again. I have to get back on track. I am struggling. I have so many ideas and interests. I feel I am going backwards.

Before moving ahead with new ideas, I used reflective listening and let Paul talk through the frustration:

GA: So you haven’t reached that threshold where you are ready to go. You are developing new ideas still.

PP: I want to start it now. I need something to get my feet in the starting blocks rather than aimlessly looking for the right track.
Paul moved into a discussion of his ideas for a boutique hotel and conference centre in Australia. He realized this was not the immediate answer. He asked me to articulate his vision as best I could. I tried, in order to give him another perspective. It was difficult and we both realized his thinking was not there yet.

PP: It has a feel to it, but it doesn’t have legs.

I kept working with Paul’s vision by encouraging him to further develop the letter from the future, to develop a possible timeline and to work on the ideas in his journal. We agreed that it was a frustrating time that had to be worked through. The timeline idea gave him some perspective:

PP: Your timeline suggestion, it comes back to that. Don’t abandon the tourist thing, but put it later. My longer term passion... I can see myself getting tired of business in 10 years. I could take something over and develop it while I am still young enough.

A month later Paul was still not making progress:

PP: A rather dismal time - more frustrating or depressing with trying to assess what is happening across there. I feel like I am in no man’s land. I am drifting Geoff.

GA: And you want to stop drifting and grab something.

PP: I don’t like beating myself up.

I used reflective listening to summarize one cause of Paul’s frustration:

GA: Not having a structure or plan to get on with it. You don’t like agonizing over decisions and taking ages.

PP: No, I hate it.

We spent some time discussing whether or not Paul was deliberately delaying the decision to go to Australia through leaving open other options. The coaching aims were to (1) allow Paul to reflect as fully as possible on what he was doing so that he would be comfortable with the decisions he finally made, and (2) to support him through a difficult time by
demonstrating understanding. I also suggested Paul seek out a suitable mentor if he could find someone. He considered the idea.

**Coaching from a Cultural Perspective**

We talked about culture from time-to-time but it did not have a direct influence on the coaching. Indirectly, I was aware that part of Paul’s unease about staying with his current company was that the company culture reflected aspects of South African culture which he found unattractive. This issue was a little raw with him as many people did not distinguish between South Africans and Kenyans:

*PP: Coming from Kenya, people think you are a South African. But the difference with the Kenyans, Zimbabweans or Malawians - they are quite similar. That is because we are a real minority. In the developing market your upper class is small and the proportion of whites is high. It affords you a privileged lifestyle with a servant and a boat on a lake. There are a lot more in South Africa. People are very competitive, aggressive and materialistic. You would not see that immediately here. But when you get to know us you will see that they are.*

Paul was concerned that Australians might be more like South Africans than Kenyans, based on his experiences travelling to Australia some years ago. We talked about this issue a little. We talked about generally positive attitudes in Australia (particularly Sydney) shown towards the gay community which Paul saw as a yardstick for tolerance.

**Insights on Coaching Expatriates for Acculturation**

Paul’s experience demonstrated that company training can assist expatriates in a similar way to coaching by provided information about acculturation. The consultant his company engaged was formerly a company employee:

*PP: It was a crash course for five days for the family who was moving. It was a package based on research, so you would go through some basic Spanish just enough to get you excited about learning it. He would then give you a course or recommend one. This is just*
the initial package. He would talk to you on what to expect psychologically. You are a new person and you are really up there. Everyone is really interested and you peak. Then suddenly people go back to normal, the interest dies down and you don’t feel like a celebrity. You have to deal with things on your own - people don’t hold your hand so much. You come down. Then you slowly come back to where you were - probably higher than you were. Some people get depressed and react in different ways. It was hard to manage that and it was through identifying that there will be this process of ups and downs and you are not alone. When it happens you are not surprised. You see the things to recognize – the little indicators. I haven’t been on the course but I had a long talk to him. It was very interesting. Most of the guys here have been on it. There is no law that everyone does the same thing, but there are some general things.

Paul had some observations about the suitability of executive coaching early in the expatriate manager sojourn:

PP: The first eight to ten weeks are ok because you are so busy you have no time to think anyway. Then things settle and you have time to consider - I am suddenly here.

GA: That is an important issue. With Jerry and Michael [new arrivals], that is an important point. Perhaps in that whirl of activity you don’t need someone?

PP: I think you need somebody before you move - to give you a brief. At that time it is nerves and anticipation and excitement, and getting some background counsel, an explanation of the curve. Then after six to eight weeks you remind them of the curve.

Paul felt that spouses would benefit from earlier interventions when they were isolated in hotels or new homes without support or friends and with their husbands at work.

Paul referred an Australian employee of his company (Raul) to me as a possible research participant. He had been in the country for about eight weeks. Raul subsequently became a participant in the research. This referral demonstrated how coaches working within multinationals may be utilized with new employees, as Paul explained:
PP: To me he appears to be going through the classic expat downturn, the curve that goes up and down. You can manage the curve better. I think he is looking for someone who knows it. I have shared my experiences.

The executive coaching process was useful for Paul at a time of great frustration with the company. Underlying his urgency to get to Australia was anger with the company, and in particular with a senior manager in headquarters:

PP: He said, ‘Come back to Africa and I will look after you’, and all that crap. I just thought, ‘Fuck off’. This is the most pious man I have come across. Because of the fall-out between Eric (my ex-boss) and him I was then offered a job in Europe, Africa or here. I chose here to continue with Eric. Eric then left. As a result, anyone who was associated with him was tainted. There were six of us and there was this big taint, ‘He was Eric’s boy. They are all a bit lightweight. They haven’t had the experience’. None of it was true. One of the other guys is one of the best finance people in the company. After two years we have proven ourselves. The corridor talk has ceased and we have been recognized again. It has almost been a battle to prove ourselves.

The coaching allowed Paul to work through the anger and seriously consider other options. Once his reputation was repaired in the company sufficiently for him to be confident of being given other opportunities, the reason for rapid movement to entrepreneurship dissipated.

At one point, Paul received word from head office that he was still on an informal blacklist for positions outside the region. This reignited his anger, given that this flew in the face of his value of integrity. The coaching sessions may have helped in giving him a place to vent. Reflective listening was the main technique I applied:

PP: My only option is Central America because of this taint. Why would I go somewhere to try to prove myself again? This is just bullshit. I don’t think the noise has been shouted out loudly enough here to counteract any of that.

GA: Very frustrating - to do the right thing and not get the support.
PP: The people here are acting in good faith. It is all good stuff but they are hiding behind the fact that there are fewer opportunities in the region. But fuck, they knew about this. They made a decision not to expand into the region. So why weren’t they honest up front?

I challenged Paul about his approach in several ways.
GA: I don’t like to be provocative, but are you still waiting for them to do the right thing by you? You think one day they will come in and do the right thing.

I challenged Paul on whether he could simply announce his move to Australia and go. While accepting that he probably could do that, he wanted to know more of what he was going to do – unless he felt he had to leave. In a later session, Paul looked back at his time in the company and realized he had expected too much from the company. He thought that this might have been part of a search for approval that had not been forthcoming from his step father who was a very cold and distant figure. He parents had divorced when he was young and he and his younger brother had run away from their father’s house to join their mother. He now realized that the events in Saudi Arabia that had tainted his career in the company were partly of his doing. In fact, he said the outcome was one hundred percent his responsibility. He had been aware of the tension between his two bosses in Saudi Arabia but had decided to go with Eric.

Once Paul had worked through these issues, he was more receptive to staying with the company, provided it met his professional objectives. Paul agreed to take on a marketing-related project role which he found very satisfying, yet was still frustrated about not fixing his move into entrepreneurship:
PP: My only concern now is that I wish I had something a little more concrete to move to. I am moving in a direction but I can’t see the shoreline.

We talked again how he might present a consultancy proposal if he went to Australia right then and looked for connections. Paul was not convinced:
PP: If I was listening to someone like that, I would be thinking, ‘What the fuck does this guy want? He sounds confused.’ I need to define who I am. If I walk in to someone and sit
across the desk with someone I want to meet, they should be embracing me. They are not going to do it. I have to have something to differentiate myself, some sort of reason for being. Do you agree with me or not?

GA: I do and I don’t. I agree it has to be clear in your head but I don’t think you have to have too much else. At that level you are going to be selling your skills to motivate people at a high performance level. You have evidence of where you have done it in the past.

PP: I need to get a lot more specific. I need to stop the talk and set something up - my own business. Everyone wants to have their own business, but only one or two percent actually do.

Around the time that we finished the coaching sessions, Paul agreed to take up a senior director role in the region. Paul’s situation illustrates how important the patronage and support of one company can be to the expatriate manager whose immediate options are limited. If a manager perceives he or she is being treated badly by the company in ways that clash with core values, the ‘What next?’ question can become a cause of anxiety, urgency and also anger. In one’s home country options are more numerous and certainly easier to take up if there is disillusionment with the company. For Paul, the move out of the company would have been very difficult, even though he had a determination to move.

Paul spoke directly on his view of how executive coaching could help expatriates:

Executive coaching is of particular benefit to expatriates for because they face many sensory bombardments – culturally, emotionally, physically. That leaves a period of angst and uncertainty. The time of coaching before reaching stabilization has immense benefits. It allows people to understand the graphs and the dips. The expatriate experience alone is a tremendous challenge. There is by definition a level of uncertainty about the future. Coaching can be useful at various times; when you have finished school, post-university, early 30s, late 30s for grounding, late 40s crisis and finally pre-retirement. The problem in many instances is that it is unsuccessful because of the wife or family. Coaching is therefore very applicable to the professional and the partners and family. If the partner is happy, it takes burden off professional. Expatriate postings by nature expose the couple.
Executive Coaching as Action Research

Paul said that he was reassured by the theoretical basis for the coaching work:

_PP: That’s where I find your study side so interesting. It kind of gives me a sense of comfort that the experiences I am feeling, without being able to explain why, it makes sense to me from a scientific or study point-of-view. It is something to hang it on._

There was a flow-on effect from the coaching which definitely fitted with the pattern of action research. Paul referred me to one of his local staff (see Appendix A4, Case Study, Rafael Luz,) whom he thought would benefit from coaching:

_PP: A person who works for me, a Salvadorian, is struggling with decisions. I have asked Rafael a number of times for his objectives. He is one of the people I am grooming for here. He doesn’t know that. He might benefit from some sessions from you. He is also interested in coming to Australia and doing some work with me in Sydney. I thought he might be interesting to you as the other side of the coin._

_GA: That would be interesting._

_PP: I know he would benefit._

_GA: I have quite a few people from this side but the receiving side would be interesting._

_PP: He has benefited from me being here but also gone through a tough patch of me pushing harder and demanding more. I was thinking that Geoff would make an impact on this man’s life and it would also fit with your studies._

_GA: This could be a useful change in direction for an action research project._

There was a cultural dimension to this referral as Paul was struggling to get Rafael to look ahead with his career – a trait that I subsequently found to be relatively common with Salvadorian managers. In the action research model, this snowballing effect was a strength since it gave me scope to cross fertilize ideas, themes and approaches within the same organizational environment.


**Coaching and Pragmatism**

We had many discussions of consequences of particular actions – ‘What if?’ questions:

*GA:* *So if the regional manager walked in and offered you a senior director role and you had to decide now, what would you say?*

*PP:* *How long would it be for?*

*GA:* *All the conditions would fit your requirements.*

*PP:* *I’d do it. The other options would be enhanced. I would make the mistakes here and be paid for it!*

*GA:* *So there may be another leg in the corporate?*

*PP:* *Maybe this is why I haven’t committed to the other two? I need to be firm in my mind.*

*GA:* *What do you need to know?*

*PP:* *I need to have time to let my mind wander over those two options. Is it a butterfly 18 year-old effect or a mature option?*

These sorts of discussions showed that the idea of entrepreneurship was firm, but it was a question of timing.

An issue came up in Paul’s selection of language about his wife’s family role in Australia:

*PP:* *I know like any mother her role or ambition is to have a happy family life as a good mother. Her ambition is having a nice home - not a mansion - but a nest that she can raise her chicks into.*

I didn’t immediately voice my feeling that if Paul used that kind of language in corporate board rooms in Australia he might not be doing himself any favours. I was torn between (1) being direct – which Paul appreciated - but risking his discounting the message as simply a form of political correctness, or (2) avoiding the issue altogether and exposing him to potentially negative reaction, or (3) dealing with the issue indirectly. I followed option (3) for pragmatic reasons – I thought it had the best chance of working. Three sessions later, there was a natural flow in the conversation. I talked with him a little about the contrast between the roles of women in the workplace in Australia and in the expatriate community.
where women were generally not working. I explained how the wife at home with the children model was less of the norm in Australia. He was curious as to why I raised it and said that the company culture was like something from the 1970s. The aim of this indirect approach was to leave a perspective or idea with Paul that may be useful for future reference without offering a grand principle that Paul should follow (i.e. through a lecture on how to use appropriate language in corporate Australia when referring to women). I raised an issue and let him decide his approach (an example of pragmatic anti-foundationalism). Maybe I should have been more direct, given what I knew about Paul’s preferred way of operating? Perhaps I was following my preferred way of operating. In the Post-Coaching Questionnaire, Paul commented:

When you did not agree with me, you could have been more forceful. I would have been happy to debate issues.

The Role of Values

From the start, Paul explained that he was passionate about the things he undertook and his values framework was very important. Part of his dilemma in beginning a business was that he wanted to create something lasting – not just a business for the sake of it. The idea of vision was important to him. We talked a lot about values early in the program. Paul highlighted passion, interaction, integrity, leadership, diversity, vision, constructive conflict, fun, team, and belonging as some the things he valued. Through our discussions and also some work Paul had done separately, he decided that integrity was his core value. He explained this as follows:

PP I found in my twenties - finding out what you like and who you are. At the end of the day I had to be true to who I am. That is why I find this so useful. I have to do things that are true to me. It has to be the real thing or I can’t give it my all. I guess that was a useful exercise. So anything I look at for the future has to be benchmarked back to these. If it doesn’t fit these then I can reject it.

GA: It might help in identifying things that are not going to work.

PP: It also gives direction to what I want to do.
We explored the values fit with Paul’s ideas for a model for his new venture in Australia.

*GA*: Your core values of integrity, stimulating, interactivity and sustainable - somewhere there is another one.

*PP*: A block?

*GA*: I don’t know what you call it. An ingredient about owning the vision or something like that, though that might be a corny way of putting it? It seems a pretty core part of the ingredients.

*PP*: Owning the vision.

*GA*: Being a driving force.

*PP*: That is almost right - owning the vision, but not 100%. I don’t need exclusivity on ownership. I can’t quite put my finger on it. You are quite right. In many respects I want to be part of a team but in others I want to be the team leader.

*GA*: But that’s alright if you know that. The people you work with will need to be respectful of that. If you get yourself with people who want to be the leader then that is a potential clash isn’t it?

*PP*: Right. I will need to dwell on that a little bit.

At a midway point, Paul explained how his anger over the way his reputation had been unfairly tainted in the company was still there. He realized it affected his judgment:

*PP*: The fact that I am still angry about it and I can’t understand why. I have got a fuse. It will come and go. For something to linger is quite out of character.

*GA*: You seem to have a strong sense of justice.

*PP*: This goes right against that. How do you release that?

*GA*: It is affecting your decisions still?

*PP*: Not really, but it is part of the noise and I want to get rid of the clutter. And I am disappointed in myself that I still have the feeling it is ridiculous. I know it is illogical and I am generally logical.

I missed an opportunity to explore this issue through Paul’s value set, starting with his main value of integrity. However, we picked up the theme of integrity at a later session to help Paul deal with some residual anger from this incident.
Impact

After four months working together, Paul reached a point of frustration about not being able to fix on an idea for a business. We talked about the impact of the coaching:

*PP:* On the one hand it has been good about understanding and learning about myself. You have done quite a bit of probing and questioning and that sort of stuff. At the same time it is frustrating because it is a dead end.

*GA:* It might also be confusing.

*PP:* It is confusing.

*GA:* If you hadn’t dealt with me it might have been simpler. You might have brought less things into the equation?

*PP:* Geoff I don’t think so. What you have offered is some sort of process. The confusion and the noise are there. The ideas and process you have offered have helped in addressing that. The noise and confusion is always going to be there. It is a sort of discovery. What you are doing is - or I have done - is taken a preconceived idea with a feel and really analysed it.

*GA:* What is left? In terms of certainty, what do you know for 100 percent certain that you are going to do?

*PP:* I have taken a step backwards. I have questioned so many things. I am in this void of confusion at the moment.

The main impact of the coaching for Paul was to stimulate his reflective thinking which then worked with his capacity for action. Paul commented that the process was impressive in its flexibility and fluidity, but it was also professional. The fluidity was a feature. He thought that had the process been too structured it would have negated the impact of follow-up ideas. He said:

The outcome of goals was thinking. The process was fluid not rigid, meandering to a point. It was a journey which is ongoing.
Paul said that coaching allowed him to release some baggage. He commented:  
*It was almost like a lying on the coach. I could rationalize and contextualize, unbundle and unburden.*

For Paul it was useful for big picture issues which he could then use in his work and family life:  
*It was not simply about a career but also about how my wife viewed things, my family in general and my responsibilities.*

The coaching may have helped Paul in his developmental process. He observed:  
*My self confidence has grown because of a maturing process and the coaching was part of the process. I learned to get rid of things that were not worth worrying about. Coaching helped me to prioritize. The ability to prioritize and rationalize life issues in the context of my values systems was the main ability I gained. My values system now, it is my starting and ending point.*

He also commented:  
*There was no real goal other than to explore.*

Paul described executive coaching as:  
*Using an independent professional to assist you to answer the questions that you would normally have to answer yourself. It is an experience where you see through yourself. Coaching is a cross between psychology, self help and honest assessment. Executive coaching is looking in the mirror, warts and all.*

Paul gave high ratings (5) for most items in the Post-Coaching Questionnaire, including on whether executive coaching assisted him in improving work performance and enhanced his personal well-being. Paul was direct and open with feedback so I was fairly certain that these ratings accurately reflected his views of what had transpired.
CHAPTER 6.5

CASE STUDY: WESLEY TRUDEAU

Profile

Wesley Trudeau was a 35 year old Canadian American who came to El Salvador with his wife who had taken up a US government position in San Salvador. Prior to this, he had been running an election monitoring project in Poland. Wesley was a qualified lawyer. He was proficient in Spanish, and also spoke French (his first language), Polish, and Portuguese. For his first six months in El Salvador he remained at home to care for two sons. He then applied for and gained the position of country manager for a project with a US non-government aid organization to assist local craftspeople with product development and access to international markets. Shortly after the coaching commenced, Wesley was made regional manager. Wesley was referred to me by the director of the local American Chamber of Commerce.

Reason for Inclusion in the Study

Wesley provided a different perspective on the expatriate experience because he arrived in the country as the ‘trailing spouse’ of an expatriate and subsequently moved into an expatriate manager role. Wesley offered the cultural perspective of a French-Canadian, married to an Iraqi-American, working in El Salvador after a lengthy period working as a manager in Poland.

Issues and Goals

Wesley was interested in cross-cultural aspects of executive coaching, having observed strong differences between American and Salvadorian ways of doing business. In his role in the development organization he was frustrated by the limited ability of Salvadorian producers to meet timetables and achieve a sufficiently high quality of production to be
successful in marketing their products overseas. He felt executive coaching might be of value in assisting him manage the cultural connection between the USA and El Salvador.

Wesley’s initial coaching goals were to (1) increase his management effectiveness, and (2) overcome a tendency to be risk-averse. The latter goal he viewed as preparation to run his own business. Wesley had always had a vision of running his own company but was unsure of the shape it might take. He discussed his future in the context of his personal finances. Other issues emerged through the period of the coaching, in particular Wesley’s relationship with head office in the USA. His relationship with marketing was particularly fraught, though none of his disagreements with head office detracted from his reputation there as a model country manager.

Running through the coaching sessions was the ‘What next?’ issue - for himself, his family, and his work team. The funding for El Salvador ended in February 2006 and the project was due to wind down towards the end of 2005. Wesley had started the project in El Salvador, was committed to its aims and had developed a high-performing and committed team. He was therefore very concerned about the future and put considerable effort into developing options to carry the project forward. Just before leaving El Salvador, he succeeded in gaining a further three years of project funding.

A particular challenge in working with Wesley was his tendency to see things as ‘all-or-nothing’. His competitive instinct emerged during our discussions. He became aware of his tendency to see only two outcomes when arguing a case; (1) his ideas were accepted in full, or (2) his ideas were rejected. This was particularly evident as he put forward a proposal to head office for a regional model for Central America. Wesley was seeking US$12m. Head office agreed to fund a lesser proposal of US$9m. This was initially viewed by Wesley as a failure or rejection. Our discussions helped him to reframe the situation more positively. Self-awareness around this issue was useful for Wesley in later negotiations on other issues. He did not feel quite so obliged to get one hundred percent of what he asked for. A few sessions later I challenged him as to whether he had really changed in this regard or was still looking to achieve one hundred percent of his objectives or viewing it as a failure. He
acknowledged that sometimes his behaviour was not changing in-the-moment but he was more aware of the issue, often post-hoc. Wesley felt he was better able to navigate through difficult situations if he was prepared:

GA: You did change?
WT: It was a change in perception. I am having an issue with applying that on the fly. It is different to have a beer and say that I should have seen it before. If I am in a meeting with June and she is saying yes to eighty percent and all I hear is no to twenty percent.

I suggested he use a symbol of some kind to remind him in meetings about the issue:

GA: She is thinking, ‘I am giving him eighty and he still wants more.’ It is about your level of consciousness with it in the meeting. Maybe give yourself a cue card or a symbol on a page that might remind you of the potential damage? A voice in your ear to raise awareness, ‘Am I doing it?’ No I am not, or yes I am.

WT: Is that a text book theory or something you came up with?
GA: It came from coaching. When you are looking at developing values and priorities, sometimes it is useful to have a symbol. This is a subset of that - the need to focus on something important.

WT: I like the symbol idea.

Wesley reflected after the coaching program that he found the symbol technique extremely useful.

**Coaching Techniques and Perspectives**

The entry point for the coaching was the cross-cultural perspective yet this perspective was not directly discussed until well into the coaching sessions when an issue came up about the group culture of the company’s El Salvador designers. Wesley asked me during Session 6 why I had not mentioned cultural issues except once in relation to his wife. I explained that coaching deals with the issues presented by the client and it seemed to me artificial to introduce cultural issues when they weren’t relevant.
Wesley had considerable talent, experience, and expertise in cross-cultural management situations. He did not expect nor need advice or training on cross-cultural management. What seemed to work was questioning around his approaches which encouraged him to reflect on issues and come up with solutions that were better suited to the cultural context.

Our conversations were a mix of playful with the serious, the tone suggested by John Dewey (1910) as the ideal mental condition for learning. The following conversation was on a serious issue. Wesley’s senior staff did not seem to understand his vision for El Salvador. However, the tone of our conversation was light:

*WT:* The vision of the company is quite clear. There is a coherent vision for El Salvador. It took me a year of testing and experimentation to work that out.

*GA:* The passengers now have a better idea of where the bus is going?

*WT:* It surprised me in July when they said they didn’t know where it was going.

*GA:* If I asked your managers to articulate, ‘What is the business doing this year?’ would they say the same [as Wesley had just explained to me]?

*WT:* [pause] I would expect so - three out of four, maybe four. When it comes to details they have issues with this. I did a formal exercise. One of the first questions was, ‘What are the objectives?’ Only two or three could spell out one, two or three. This might be an issue here.

*GA:* How would you know?

*WT:* Bring in the consultant and try to figure out what is going on.

*GA:* Or you could just ask them?

*WT:* True. I should do that.

An analysis of the coding of the sessions revealed that issue of the home office relationship was the topic we discussed most often in the early sessions. Encouraging Wesley to look at his situation in the full context of the company was useful to him in his managing the relationship. He realized in Session 9 that his role was quite limited in terms of formal power but that his reputation and success in El Salvador, plus the isolation, meant he had enormous autonomy. This was a valuable insight which inspired him to further action in his role as regional director. It disengaged him from tiring and fruitless fights with head office
and marketing. I began this discussion with a rough sketch of the organizational structure and where Wesley sat in it:

GA: [GA draws diagram] There’s the headquarters and you’ve got the regional bits and then this, and then this, and then you. It is a very frustrating chain of command for you. You are working a very commercial, focused and go-ahead way through all these levels, each of which has its own level of inefficiency. It is melting whatever you are putting into it. This is not to say they are not going to do it – but not at the level you want.

WT: So I should expect that and not be surprised by what I got in many ways?

GA: To some extent. Not to say you can’t improve it which I am sure you can, but your capacity to make it perfect is limited unless you are operating at that level. You can then start to get at the core problems. But down here at this level working with marketing people and finance people...

WT: Which I am getting to realize that my place is here [points to diagram] and I should not worry about what is up here but who is below me.

GA: You can’t change the whole system from where you are. It is hard enough to change anyway. If they made you president it would be very difficult to make the sort of changes that needed to be made. It is the nature of cultural change in organizations. And trying to do it from down here is nigh on impossible. You can only make very limited changes around the people you deal with.

WT: And make a shit load of change from here down.

GA: Yeah, you can make a lot of change down here and get a model which other people, if they chose to, can use. Or you can put yourself further up the ladder to institute changes.

WT: So from that perspective, waging war with people up here is a wasted effort. I would much rather focus on marketing in the region and doing whatever I do here and keeping my reputation intact at this level. That is the crux of it. I want to do more than my job allows me to do. My function within the organization is five levels down the structure.

After this discussion, the issue of the home office relationship moved into the background. Wesley related the situation to a more general characteristic in his life to expect too much:

WT: I think my expectations towards the organization and the people are off balance with reality which is a big part of why I am frustrated.
GA: Expecting too much?

WT: Expecting too much. That is a consistent trait of character throughout my life is that I expect too much and that often leads to disappointment. If I don’t expect too much I will be happy and not be a depressed individual, [laughs] since I am just happy to be alive anyway. [Wesley had an accident in his teens when he almost lost his life.]

Wesley gradually developed his business ideas but he did not use the coaching sessions for this. I sensed that he wanted to do this by himself and he thought (correctly) that it was not an area of expertise for me. In Session 10 we talked about his dilemma about what kind of business to create and the complexity of planning the next step:

WT: There is a lot happening. I got completely drunk with Jack and one of his investors two weeks ago. The investor who has a lot of contacts and clients who deal with $10m businesses said he will support me. I just have to let him know when I am going to start. My head is spinning to make something useful. I am just dying to start something. I will need to know what my wife is doing - if we are out of here before next summer. I am tempted to start a business similar to the project I work for here when it finishes. I don’t know what the legality would be.

GA: Do you have any idea of the type of business you would like to get into?

WT: I would have to go out and get drunk again to spit out all the ideas. Here it would have to jive with this business production of stuff to hit the US stores. Maybe water fountains - wall murals with natural stone.

In the next session, the issue of the business came up again:

WT: I don’t know if talking with you will give more puzzlement than ideas. I need to sit down with someone and probably get a bit drunk and spit out all the ideas I have had.

GA: The king of craft one?

WT: King of craft is one [laughs]. I just need to spit out a number of ideas. Do it first myself and then maybe with you and Jack. That is how Jack did his own business.
I worked from self efficacy theory, noting Wesley’s lack of experience in commercial business. I encouraged Wesley to reflect on his commercial success with the development organization and how it might transfer to a business future:

*WT:* *I have had a businessman come to me and say if you want to start a business he will fund me.*

*GA:* *I wouldn’t have hesitation in backing your commercial ability the way you have gone from running a very family crafty touchy-feely organization to move it up to something better. That is commercial savvy. You have taken it and developed it.*

Wesley had ongoing problems with his back, particularly towards the end of the coaching program. He had an operation in the USA and was out of action for some time and on limited duties when he returned. The impact of health problems on expatriates can be more marked than with people at home who are surrounded by friends and family and in a health system with which they are familiar. There was one session in particular where Wesley was in a negative frame of mind most likely related to his back. Every issue we touched upon was given a negative twist, which was out of character for him:

*GA:* *You have to motivate them [his local staff] around something else. Their focus is beyond the current company now.*

*WT:* *And that is exactly what I am trying to pursue.*

*GA:* *How can you leverage that to motivate people here?*

*WT:* *I have been encouraging them to look at the numbers. They need about $150k a year to start. There is money out there if they get a bid together. Another similar organization is ready for a proposal that can bring the companies together. If they were constantly saying they wanted to create something then it would become my number one objective to help them with funding and to give them shielding and support with sponsors. I don’t want a repeat of Poland where I did all the set up work but there was no real interest beyond keeping their jobs. You can see I am in a good mood today [said sarcastically].*

Wesley found the work I did with him on situational awareness to be helpful. As a result our work together, he was constantly encouraging the head office to think about their strategies:
GA: If you did a blue skies - imagine the LA Gift Show had never existed. How much did they spend on it?

WT: If you add the costs it would be $200k

GA: Imagine you got a cheque for $200k for marketing for this organization, what would you do with it? If they come up with LA, then fine. If they come up with a range of other things, you might ask why they are spending $200k on LA - if you were doing a corporate exercise in rethinking direction?

WT: [laughs] Blue sky? I am having a problem with this blue sky...

GA: Green fields, flat earth...

WT: Scorched earth? I know the answer to my question. It is very simple in what you presented, but it is so vivid. My question is, ‘How do you get to that level of analysis to look at things from such an angle?’ My answer is that you have been doing a PhD and you have been doing this kind of thing for 15 years.

GA: I also have the advantage that I can look at it from outside. You are in it. That is the advantage of executive coaching. You can get someone from outside who can look at it and say that doesn’t look right. If you are in your own shit it is hard to sort it out.

WT: I will do the blue sky.

**Executive Coaching as Action Research**

The assignment with Wesley evolved into a more traditional action research project in that I became involved with coaching people at various levels in the company ranging from the president and vice-presidents in the US head office, to country directors, a deputy country director, a production manager and four owner-producers.

Wesley’s actions to improve his relations with the home office (particularly the head of marketing) demonstrated the action research approach. We developed various approaches, he tried them, they had little or no impact, so he tried something else. The initial approach he decided to follow was to be more inclusive in his decision making and to listen more to the home office perspective. When the situation did not improve, this was followed by a strategy to deal with marketing through his local marketing manager. This was followed by
a final strategy towards the end where he decided to proceed almost regardless of home office. By that stage, he had developed sufficient credibility in the role to be trusted to go it alone. When we began the sessions, his relationships with home office would not have allowed him to exercise such freedom. He was able to work on what he had established to develop more effective approaches that suited the context, always keeping an eye on the consequences of taking certain actions.

Coaching Expatriates for Acculturation

Wesley and his wife were an example of a dual career couple who struggled to ensure that both have satisfying work lives. The decision of ‘What next?’ seemed to be an ongoing point of tension, with Wesley’s wife initially unhappy with the choice of Latin America, then being fairly reluctant to leave. For Wesley, it seemed the other way around. The focus that Wesley had to bring to what to do after El Salvador was a product of the fact that there was no ongoing role for him outside of El Salvador. Essentially, if he did nothing he would be returning to the USA with nothing. He could have gone back to his former role as a consultant but he didn’t want to do that. Thus, the move helped him to pursue his business ideas. The coaching sessions provided an ongoing opportunity for Wesley to talk about the various options and how to approach the task of deciding what to do next:

WT: I know my needs much better through this time. My wife is much happier in El Salvador now. She is even thinking of staying here now. She has realized it is a great place now. I said in Chicago how good it was to be in a civilized country without the high walls etc. I am ready to move on. My frustration level too with the company is going to go up rather than down. But my wife now sees the gardens here are beautiful and the weather is perfect.

The coaching processes enabled Wesley to contextualize his work and family life. I asked general questions to allow him to reflect on issues that were pertinent to the moment. This approach took us down a variety paths, such as in this discussion in Session 8:

GA: What else is happening?
WT: On the family front we have been having a lot of discussions. We have some books. There is a weird one about wanting to marry your parents. It is about your subconscious search beyond the communication.

Succession management planning came up repeatedly during our conversations. The issue was salient for Wesley because a successful project he ran in Poland ended up falling apart after he left. He did not want a repeat performance. One fear was that he would choose the wrong person to take over, something he felt he had done in Poland. His initial enthusiasm for Magdalena was therefore easily tempered when he began to see her limitations in people management. By the time he had left he had gathered quite a few attractive candidates for the director position. I brought the issue of transition up several times and I think he found it useful to ensure that he did not make the same mistake again.

**Coaching from a Cultural Perspective**

The coding analysis showed that cross-cultural management was a major issue in the coaching, even though my impression was the these issues sat more in the background than as explicit coaching points. By browsing the node, I found that I had indeed been working explicitly from a cultural perspective at many points. In Session 8, Wesley suggested I might be able to assist the artisan producers with a coaching approach that would go beyond the training programs and technical assistance provided by his company:

*WT: These small companies that have less than thirty employees who do business for export. There is a lot of interest here in export and you could work with other companies.*

*GA: That specific area is not where I have experience - not to say that I couldn’t do it. It doesn’t jump out as my expertise. Also there is language as an issue.*

*WT: The ones that are serious for export have English.*

*GA: Working with people like that would be more of a coaching approach - encourage individuals to look at what they are doing.*

*WT: Maybe a mix with a workshop and seminar with onsite coaching. You can do wrap up later with a seminar. I don’t know what would be most effective. I was struck with how it is a problem for everyone - communication with the US buyer.*
GA: So it’s marketing?
WT: It’s not marketing. I think it is cultural. You get an email from the buyer and you don’t answer for three weeks. The buyer says, ‘What is happening?’ Buyers want a rapid response, even if the answer is a holding reply. People here either answer late, don’t answer at all or don’t answer what they wanted.

GA: I was talking with another US client who management issue. He has been told that he is intimidating sometimes. And we talked a lot about it and we thought one approach might be to come at it from a cultural perspective. Quite often an American way of doing business can be quite confronting and intimidating to people who are not from that background. The way I would come at that is to look at it as a starting point - a discussion about culture. What is it about doing business with these people that is different from the way you normally do business? And communication issues - more individualistic, less hierarchical, task focus, less relationship focus. There is an online rating system on communication style of people - the Peterson cross-cultural style [Peterson, 2004]). I would even suggest that people do that.

WT: Five minutes with you would be worth two weeks of research with somebody else. I am sure a lot of that is culture.

GA: And the stuff that isn’t will come out in discussions. There is a lot of individual difference there. For example, lots of Salvadorians who are more comfortable with an American style.

WT: We could start on a small scale with three individuals. Do you have more questions on this?

GA: Not now, it is enough to get me started.

Separate from my coaching with Wesley and outside of the scope of this research, I did move on to conduct coaching programs with artisan companies, with a generally positive outcome.

**Coaching and Pragmatism**
Pragmatism encourages a view of multiple realities and multiple entry points to different issues. The entry door for our coaching relationship was cross-cultural issues, yet once inside the coaching experience we explored other issues and did not focus much on the issue of culture. This is pragmatism in action – of moving where there is impact and utility rather than sticking with an initial principle or approach that has ceased to be relevant. The impact of the coaching would almost certainly have been less had I redirected discussions back to original presenting issues.

Values

Wesley had a passion for improving the conditions of people in developing countries. We often went back to his fundamental values of making a contribution in this area. I went with Wesley on a trip to a project in a small town about three hours from the capital. Thirty local families were working with kilns in their homes to produce black clay pottery for sale into the USA. We visited the house of Sandra. The conditions were extremely basic, with nine people living in very dark and cramped conditions and with few opportunities for advancement beyond the possibilities of the project. The visit had a big impact on Wesley:

GA: With your commercial savvy, I would have thought you could line yourself up with something more interesting from here in the US - and more lucrative - even before you go. Unless you have other altruistic reasons?

WT: Altruistic... Since we went together to Sandra’s house - the one I thought was serene. It has pulled me back completely, grounded me like you have no idea. It has become part of my nature. I want to go home and take ninety percent of the toys and stuff and give it all away. When I saw the conditions Sandra and her family live in it really brought me back to where we are working and why we are doing all this. That is very motivating. The more I stay in this role the more I think of the missionary type of work. They commented I am pastoral! But I am also driven to business. I love to be my own boss and I want my own business. I talk to people in the private sector and what motivates them is money. I don’t share that motivation. I like the income and money and a nice life and all that. But as I told you before and it is not bullshit, I don’t see myself as a multimillionaire. I would like to get
my vacations and education and the basics in life and I like to work. I need a balance. I have to go somewhere where I bring a value added to the equation.

GA: Your interest is making sure the bottom level is connected to the capitalist system from the commercial side rather than Government. Is that the kind of thing?

WT: Sure. I think the government side is more like welfare.

GA: The handout mentality.

WT: Here bringing someone from Los Angeles police to show people how to handle gangs etc. has high value. Giving food aid has no value. Teaching people how to export like we do has a kind of value but it is an agonizing process. There is a big lunch soon about business responsibility. That is the direction though that I am thinking of going.

In the coaching sessions we came back to Wesley’s core values at various points and it seemed that this was valuable to him as he put together his plans for the future.

Impact

Wesley was extremely positive about all aspects of the coaching and believed it had helping him considerably in achieving his goals, particularly of making him a better manager. From the start, Wesley was determined about achieving success in the form of better sales that would position him for the future was a factor in assisting him to make use of the coaching process to move more quickly. This is also consistent with goal-setting theory and research (Latham, 2003) which suggests that ambitious and specific goals are effective in generating action.

Wesley gave full ratings of 5 against all the items in the Overall section of the Post-Coaching Questionnaire. He described a coach as, ‘A personal mentor or trainer who listens to you, asks probing questions and allows you to align personal and professional goals.’ He saw the process as, ‘Mental management massage.’ Wesley found that the timing of the coaching was perfect as he prepared himself for the next chapter in his life, ‘And since my accident I have been running on fuel for 15 years more or less and being in
El Salvador and meeting you and working with you has given me personal and professional skills I did not have before.’

Wesley had set a goal of moving into a more risk-associated career in business. We did not reflect much on the impact of the coaching on risk-taking, but in Wesley’s actions there were indications that he was prepared to take risks. He demonstrated this by launching into his new business before leaving the company and also by actions he took on a personal front as he managed the transition from El Salvador to the USA. My sense was that by the end of the coaching he was much more prepared to take risks, even if there were possible negative consequences in the short term, because he realized that in the end he was going to be highly successful. After leaving El Salvador, Wesley did set up a business in the USA.

After Session 13, I spoke by phone to Wesley. He mentioned that he was starting to have conversations with me in a coaching mode when I am was there, meaning that he was able to frame coaching questions for himself. It was around this time that we began to have sessions less frequently and eventually shifted from coaching client to friendship status. This is probably the ideal point in the coaching process. Wesley indicated that he found the coaching useful when there were pressing issues in his life but once he felt he was on top of things he found the coaching unnecessary.

He found the coaching useful for cross-cultural relationships and management:

*The job relationships would be different [without coaching] in that I am now more effective in handling psychopathic exporters and artisans. I don’t try to teach them communication and values. It is really a 30 year process. It is an enormous challenge to bridge the gap between the designer-beast from LA with this Opus Dei family in El Salvador. My effectiveness in working across this gulf was improved by coaching. I am much better at it.*

A major insight for him from the coaching was to be able to contextualize his role in El Salvador within the larger landscape of international development organization. In doing so, it may have contributed to his personal satisfaction through a very stressful time. Wesley said that coaching had helped him, ‘*in realizing that it is not possible to solve*
everything.' Wesley gave this a cultural perspective, contrasting the American belief in control of environment with the Salvadorian approach, 'Here, volcanoes will erupt and what will happen will happen. Some things don't have solutions. It is a more agrarian view.'
Profile

When we met in November 2003, Jack was country manager for an American multinational company. Jack had been in the country for five years and was fluent in Spanish. He had been in Costa Rica in a previous expatriate position. Jack was married with two daughters. Soon after the coaching began, he was promoted to regional manager for Latin America. In October 2004, he left El Salvador to begin his own beverage company in the United States. We continued coaching by phone (and face-to-face when Jack visited El Salvador). Jack was referred to me from the American Chamber of Commerce, El Salvador.

Reason for Inclusion in the Study

Jack fitted the profile of a typical expatriate manager in many ways. He was in his mid 30s, white American, and married. The company was mainstream multinational. The fact that Jack had been in El Salvador for several years added a perspective that would include overcoming culture shock (if experienced) and developing through various stages of acculturation. For me as a new expatriate, he offered insights on the country and culture that would be valuable for building my knowledge and understanding of El Salvador.

Issues and Goals

The coaching covered my issues and events. I worked with Jack through:

- Promotion to regional manager;
- Consolidation at the new level;
- Development of a new company as an entrepreneur;
- Succession planning for a new country manager for El Salvador;
• The move from El Salvador back to the USA;
• A change in employment from a salaried manager to owner-founder-president of a new company; and
• The move of the company from uncertain start-up toward functioning business.

Jack was interested in self-help and saw coaching as an opportunity to learn more about himself and to increase his effectiveness as a manager. Jack emailed me his goals for 2004 which included extremely detailed measurement criteria and sub-goals. His rather daunting gap analysis included:
• Dealing with ambiguity and paradox;
• Decision quality and timeliness;
• Problem-solving;
• Political savvy;
• TQM;
• Humour;
• Confronting reports;
• Action-orientation;
• Perseverance; and
• Priority Setting.

The coaching became more focused and important for him as he took on two new challenges. Firstly, he was promoted to regional manager and was interested in gaining assistance in stepping up into his new role. The coaching sessions were directed to assisting Jack in working at the new level. This included some detailed sessions on planning for his first country manager conference in Miami and discussions about how to deal with specific issues in each country. Secondly, Jack developed a goal with a higher priority – to leave the multinational and to set up his own business in the USA. During the time we worked together he pursued and achieved this aim.
The tension between his ongoing career with the multinational and his desire to break out into entrepreneurship was a major element of most of our sessions for almost a year. In Session 2 we talked about this tension:

GA: The better the job you do here the more difficult it is do decide not to be here. This is a paradox.

JT: It is an absolute paradox. It is not my nature to do the job poorly to make the decision easier.

GA: No. That would be against some of your prime values.

JT: Right. And what is funny is that I - how do I say this? I am inherently very lazy.

As Jack’s new business venture began to take shape with investors and product development and testing, the content of the sessions moved more towards the business. Then, as he become more confident with the direction of the business, Jack began to turn his attention towards an expanded vision of sustainable development, including the development of a foundation. On a personal level, Jack was devoted to his family and leaving a legacy. He was also interested in writing a novel.

Coaching Challenges

Jack offered considerable professional challenge because of the level and pace at which he was operating. His Excel spread sheet of goals and actions for 2004 was extensive. Jack had achieved most of the 2003 goals by the end of November which suggested to me that his self-critical gap analysis was overly tough! The pace of Jack’s life meant that as his coach I needed to move quickly and be flexible and adaptable in preparing and facilitating the sessions. It was never the case that we decided in advance what the topic was going to be and stuck to it. The coaching sessions moved from topic to topic, often moving far from the issues we identified early in the session.
Coaching Techniques and Perspectives

I was mainly a sounding board for Jack, particularly in the way in which he managed professional relationships. At times, I was coaching from a cultural perspective, suggesting to Jack ways of approaching situations in his role as regional manager and later with investors and with some difficult issues in the business. However, Jack’s comfort with cross-cultural situations was a strength and I probably learnt more from him than he learnt from me.

To some extent, the coaching was done from a counselling perspective with an eye to Jack’s levels of anxiety. It was not counselling from the point-of-view of fixing a problem, but more a positive psychology approach (Seligman, 1994; Seligman & Csikszentmihayli, 2000) of moving away from anxiety through enhanced self efficacy and confidence.

The developmental perspective was useful in assisting me to work with Jack. Jack was self reflective and able to step away from the situation and look at himself objectively. He was also comfortable with paradox. However, he used coaching as a way of enhancing this capacity. He was less able to do it himself. Once I realized this, I was encouraged to challenge Jack’s perception of himself quite freely without being too concerned about triggering resistance. Jack said that one of his limitations was that he was essentially lazy, though in terms of efficiency and pace of his activities this was hard to accept!

Nevertheless, one of the outcomes of his laziness was an unwillingness to question himself and sort through paradoxes and contradictions. Coaching allowed him to go a step further and overcome his limitation. Jack observed:

There is a risk in that coaching requires a level of emotional maturity on behalf of the client. There is a risk of a cross into psychology. If clients have not dealt with some core life issues then coaching is probably less effective and it is potentially risky to open those doors if the coach doesn’t have skill set.

Jack liked to push the boundaries in his professional work. However, as he stepped up to each new level he became anxious about his capacity to handle the new challenges. The
coaching sessions therefore concentrated on issues which tended to be triggering his anxiety at the time. Once he became confident in those areas, we moved on to new areas.

In most of the conversations I asked a lot of questions that would help Jack to see his situation more clearly and help him to develop workable solutions to issues. For example, early in his negotiations with investors for the new company Jack hit an issue of investor confidence. He had received some unexpected resistance to important changes in the rates of return for investors. I asked him questions and made simple reflective observations about what he was saying. I asked over 50 questions in the session, and made 27 relatively short statements, 20 of which were simple reflection. The use of this technique was deliberate because (1) it was not a content area where I had expertise and could make suggestions, and (2) Jack had been quite explicit in wanting me to examine and explore the issues, particularly when I sensed he might be missing something with his relationships with investors:

GA: It makes me slightly uncomfortable going through this conversation, which is good because I know I add some value. But I am not from that mindset, the entrepreneurial mindset, and sometimes I feel uncomfortable.

JT: Well I am not coming to you for that.

GA: I should hope not, otherwise I suggest you stop the business now!

JT: Not at all. I thought of you specifically for these types of questions you know, how are they seeing it? You are adding value in those particular areas. Don’t worry. I am not going to hold you liable! From my personal perspective on my thought processes on the way I am evaluating this, you give good feedback.

Jack described the coaching as ‘business psychotherapy’, reflecting the use of psychoanalytic techniques. Jack found my questioning to be of immense value in enabling him to gain new perspectives. Jack used me as a reasonable, insightful and informed person who could give an independent perspective of his situation and encourage him to look at things differently. I encouraged Jack to examine underlying issues that might be guiding his behaviour. In the following passage he talks about his procrastination (a recurring theme):
JT: It was one of those things I just couldn’t deal with. I felt it happening. I had an email not long ago. It is a training course. I don’t know what to do with it. I want to get all our managers together here at the beginning of the year. I also want to train people on deal-making. We put these complex deals together and not many can do that well. I want to run a training session and do some other things. I cannot for the life of me decide what this meeting needs to be. It is simple. I do this all the time. All I have to do is sit down and write it. In fact, there are different people involved and different ways it could go and I have been sitting on it for two months. I don’t know why at times I make great decisions and other times let things sit forever. I don’t trust myself that I am so good subconsciously that I know this is one of those times not to make a decision.

GA: Because it might be.

JT: I know it might be. Maybe, but shouldn’t I know that? Shouldn’t I know if it’s instinct? Shouldn’t I know that I am not going to make the decision until I get back?

As we explored this issue, Jack realized that in fact he was working subconsciously on not making a decision, an insight he valued immensely. Jack observed after the coaching had finished:

This was critical. You helped me to realize and trust that I needed more information to make the right decision. Previously I was self critical if doubtful about a decision. I realized that maybe that is a sign that I don’t have information. This was one of the golden nuggets.

Jack realized he had been unwilling to trust his instinct, even while knowing that often it had proved correct in the past. Through the course of the coaching he began to better trust his instinct, and himself.

Impact

Jack had worked with a coach before but had found the experience to be of limited value. He was forthcoming in praise for our coaching and rated a 5 for all of the ‘Overall’ category items in the Questionnaire. Jack said that the coaching encouraged him to reflect
and to take practical steps to change. He emphasized the value of the issue noted above about learning to trust his instinct. These were examples of outcomes from coaching that contributed to his work performance. Jack and I continued to talk regularly as his US business grew. His continuation of the coaching for almost two years was an indication that he felt it was useful. He gave direct credit to the coaching for the progress he had made with the company.

In terms of personal satisfaction, the coaching seemed to have the greatest impact in increasing Jack’s general confidence and positive mood when faced with situations that previously would have been anxiety-provoking.

**Limitations of Coaching**

The only occasions where Jack found the coaching less helpful were when I in a sense lost my nerve and doubted my own impact. He commented:

*There were times when I sensed that you questioned the applicability of some of the things you were suggesting to my new situation. You had self-doubt on how to do that when you proved you don’t need to do that. Lack of expertise is not a factor.*

**Executive Coaching as Action Research**

My experience with Jack was notable as an action research project because the impact was not just limited to the client. I learnt a considerable amount from him about how coaching worked because he was able to reflect on the experience so effectively. This project also showed the flow-on effect of an action research intervention when the assignment broadened to assist Jack’s sales manager to be groomed for position of country manager (to which he subsequently was appointed).

The flexibility of the action research model was a major asset. I did not feel obliged to stay with a predetermined area of research interest, which freed me up to go with Jack at his pace and in his preferred directions. At the same time, we were both anchoring the process
in super-ordinate goals (Latham, 2003) set early in the process and revisited from time to time.

A good example of an action learning process within the coaching sessions was Jack’s work in organizing a country managers meeting in Miami. We used an entire session to prepare it and he took ideas from the coaching and adapted them in the final model. I made a suggestion for an exercise where they imagined a deal had failed. This got Jack thinking about various issues:

JT: Yeah. That would be a lot of fun. That’s a great thought. What is even better is that the ex-manager of Chile is there and we have got our top equipment person there, and the top marketing person. To kind of answer your question, I’m sort of over my fear of whether or not I can do this. I am now looking to take the steps that are necessary. I haven’t completely answered the question about my goal and my approach to the region. The question was, in my interaction with these managers, whether they are autonomous and we interact occasionally as autonomous professionals, or whether there is a formal hierarchy and decisions are made through me. Do they interact as independent professionals or as linked peers? I haven’t worked that out yet. This meeting is going to help because we will draw out from the individual businesses what are the common needs.

He subsequently ran the session. Then we took another half session to reflect on the experience. The debriefing was useful in cementing Jack’s individual approaches with his managers on closing customer deals. The coaching was therefore drawn into the system of the organization, although I was not actually present in the country manager conference. This episode raised in me the question of the role of the coach and whether in fact it would be a good idea to use the coach with the management team as far as possible. The action research model would lead down this path, rather than have the coach just working independently with the manager.

Coaching Expatriates for Acculturation
Jack’s case demonstrated how a coach can assist in working with an expatriate manager through various stages of the sojourn. Jack was extremely well acculturated to El Salvador, yet was going through a dramatic career change and homeland re-entry after a long time away.

Subsequent to Jack leaving El Salvador, his wife experienced some adjustment problems. Our discussions helped to inform Jack about the nature and risks of re-entry. He was able to use this information in discussions with his wife to assist her with the adjustment process and commented on how valuable this information was to both him and his wife. In later conversations, it seemed natural for Jack to discuss with me how his wife was coping and to explore ways of working through the transition from multinational manager to entrepreneur. Jack was extremely happy to be home in the USA and experienced no obvious culture shock, demonstrating an exception to the common research finding that re-acculturation is a major hurdle.

**Coaching and Pragmatism**

The choice of method here was pragmatic in meeting Jack’s specific needs. An objective view of Jack’s situation would have probably indicated that his situation required someone who was skilled in private enterprise entrepreneurship. In practice, Jack was looking for an independent view of the way he was dealing with himself and his relationships. The coaching was psychodynamic in focus which was what Jack valued. He had the business acumen, or knew where to find it.

The assignment with Jack increased my skills as a coach and enabled me to offer more to other clients. My interest in and use of the psychodynamic approach increased during the process. This case provided some of the motivation for me to attend the group psychodynamics program at the Professional Development Institute in Belgium. I also picked up knowledge and skills about business development which I subsequently used with other clients. This process of coach development was in the pragmatic tradition of not being confined to one theory or approach and being able to build on previous experiences.
Jack’s use of the coaching to assist him in building on his solid career foundations to tackle new challenges was pragmatic. I was constantly reminding Jack of his strengths and achievements and capacities as a way of tempering his anxieties and encouraging him to move ahead with his goals. New situations were therefore less intimidating because Jack was, with the assistance of the coaching, better able to adapt and apply his existing strengths. While the situation was new, Jack’s solutions were generated by past successes.

Coaching from a Cultural Perspective

Jack’s interactions with his local employees and other Latin American country managers revealed a cultural orientation that ran counter to the expected USA-Latin America pattern. Jack was having problems with indirectness, contrasted with the American cultural preference for direct communication. Over several sessions we worked on his taking a more direct approach in situations where he was not making the progress he wanted:

*JT:* What would happen is that I would get tired or I would feel sick and get bogged down and less inclined to address the issue because it was confronting - instead of just dealing with it. It’s not a burden for someone to give them feedback. With my assistant, I asked her to call someone to let them know I couldn’t make a meeting she tried to call and left a message but they wrote me back and said, ‘Hey, what happened with the meeting?’ So I said to her, ‘When you call, just tell them the reason why it is at the same time.’ She said, ‘Ok, great’. Previously I might have ummed and ahed about how I was going to do it to get the right message to her at the right time.

This change in approach emerged in some larger issues:

*In Colombia we have some major issues where we have an audit that came back very poorly. So I got in touch with the manager, sent him some information and when I was on the phone to him it was very matter of fact and very direct. He has got a problem and this is something he needs to work on. It wasn’t taken as a personal affront. I had to give him some feedback on things he could do to protect his own ass. I think he took it as exactly that - something constructive rather than just bitching him out.*
Partly what was going on here was that Jack was aware of Latin sensitivity to directness, and was therefore reluctant to follow his instinct to deal with the problems. An inherent reluctance to confront people, coupled with what he described as his laziness, held him back. Coaching gave him clarity about what was happening and encouraged him to make behaviour changes. At no point did I direct him towards these changes. They were self-generated.

Succession Management Issue

The succession management issue was relevant to coaching from a cultural perspective. Jack’s sales manager in El Salvador was a natural successor to Jack but there were problems with his polish and communication skills. We discussed this issue at some length:

*GA*: It comes back to the extent to which you are prepared to confront difficult issues and how you do it?

*JT*: Right. Well, that is a good point. I need a different approach to him because I have addressed this with him again and again. I am getting through to him to a certain extent because I have seen him make an effort to take this job. I see him making some effort with English. But the style thing has been difficult. Part of the problem is that I am not sure I have the right words for it and I am uncomfortable with it - with the fact that you know this is something I really think shouldn’t matter. I feel frankly a little bit guilty about.

*GA*: Is it a cultural thing in the company?

*JT*: No, it’s like, you know. I guess I have come to accept the fact that, um, how do I say this? [pause] I generally get the benefit of the doubt. I feel like I have had, um, a lot of lucky breaks. I feel that the reason I am in this role is certainly I have proven I do good work. But it certainly doesn’t hurt that you know that I am white, American, not ugly, in reasonably good shape and I can charm a lot of people. I recognize in a certain way that those are assets, those are skills and abilities that serve me well. They would serve anyone well in a business environment. Yet at times I think I feel a bit of guilt. When I sit across from somebody like this guy that doesn’t quite get that - doesn’t quite see it.

*GA*: But he can’t be white American. That’s one of the limitations.
JT: Right. He can’t. But he is also not - like my boss’s response was... You have some way to really hone in on issues. It’s uncanny I tell ya. My old boss’s response when I suggested that he be a candidate was, ‘Jack, is he part of ... the class?’ He meant the class in all Latin America – including El Salvador - that runs things. I said, ‘No, he’s not.’ He said, ‘Are customers really going to accept him? Are partners really going to accept him at their level?’ I said, ‘Well he is not from that group of families. He doesn’t run in those circles.’ But that really bothered me, you know, because I just think I believe in a certain level of meritocracy and our company should be that way and the world should be that way but it’s not, it’s just not. Yet, yet... I look around and again and again I see people that aren’t from that class who have achieved positions of power and authority - up to Presidents of the countries.

GA: Tony Saca [then- Presidential candidate in El Salvador, now President].

JT: Certainly. So I know that can happen. And so I thought about that a little bit and I said, ‘Listen, Ken, I know what you are going after. I understand that and I know I am still an outsider despite my 13 years experience in Latin America, but you know I think you need to get to know this guy a little bit better.’ And he did, and he changed his perspective and he was willing to give him a chance. We went through a very fair process and another candidate won out. So I have had discussions with this guy about that. We have had them formally and casually over beers. It is a very tough one. I have tried to be direct. I have tried to be casual about it.

GA: When you were discussing it, what was the point you were trying to make?

JT: The point I was trying to make is that he has got to recognize that the way he dresses, the way he presents himself, the way he writes a report, makes a presentation, his language - all those things do not have the level of polish that give other people the confidence that he knows what he is talking about. And I compared him very frankly with this other woman in the company that is our marketing manager. She is not from that class either. But she is polished, always looks great, speaks eloquently, her memos are flawless and her presentations are very high quality. Yet the substance of her work is not near to this guy. This guy knows the business inside and out but when he makes a presentation and when he drinks a little too much - he gets a little bit sloppy. He doesn’t come across with quite the polish that others come across with.
GA: Do you say it in those words?
JT: Yes.
GA: And what does he say?
JT: He, you know...
GA: This is not about class is it? This is about - as you say - this is about skills you can acquire and still deal with people from that class.
JT: Exactly. And I guess that is where I may have missed an opportunity and that is calling it skills. These are the same as technical skills. These are the same as intellectual ability. These are the same as rational skills. Some people have it. Some people don’t. But anyone can acquire it.
GA: They are things you can learn in the American School here when you grow up they teach it to you.
JT: He didn’t go to that school but this woman did.
GA: That’s where you get it.
JT: That’s where you get it.
GA: I have met people from the American School who are complete losers but they have that charm.
JT: If he could combine both of those he can score professionally. And he reacts emotionally. At times he has started to get a little teary. At times he is like, ‘I don’t care about that. I thought this company was different from that. I thought it was more of a meritocracy.’ And I sense that this is deep for him and I can only imagine in this society that it is always there.
GA: He may perceive a block that isn’t there or may not be as big a block as he perceives?
JT: I don’t think it is. There are a lot of little things he could do that could make a difference. The sense I get is that this is deep for him. I am always cautious. When I was younger I played psychologist a lot - a lot of friends, girlfriends. I am out of my league in that. I am cautious to really go deep with him on these issues but I think that is what it would really take.
GA: If you think it would be worthwhile I could have a talk with him.
JT: I think that would help a lot. I was working with a coach previously, with all of our managers. One of the main reasons I brought this guy in was for this person. And I think it
helped. This guy was good but you are much better. He was a professional, a life long coach and quite successful at it I understand, but he would get distracted. He would get philosophical and he had a difficult time getting focused. I know he brought up some of these issues. There was some progression but not as much as there needed to be.

This element of the coaching was a good illustration of the complexity of the expatriate coaching situation. In the one segment above, the following observations were possible:

- The issues of an expatriate manager from the USA attempting to bring in a local manager as country director – creating a potential tension with head office culture;
- The need for careful succession management where people are moving reasonably regularly;
- The capacity of coaching to work on the psychodynamic perspective;
- Evidence of the coaching process exploring beneath the surface to assist the client gain clarity on a difficult issue which touched on some of his underlying issues and assumptions; and
- Cultural influences across national, organizational and social class boundaries.

From an action research perspective, this issue showed how the coaching was able to work in the situation with the issues of the client and the client organization. Also, it demonstrated that a coach does not necessarily come up with solutions. Jack commented that, ‘You helped me to reach my own conclusions, which was ultimately more valuable.’ The characteristics and skills of the coach were important. In this case Jack was not looking for business expertise but for someone who could facilitate dialogue that would take him into a space where he could freely reflect on his work and life.

**The Role of Values**

The mission and values of Jack’s business reflected his personal values. As an entrepreneur, Jack was interested in making profit. However, he was also passionate about environmental sustainability. The company mission included to, ‘Create a market for an
alternative agricultural product that stimulates development in certain tropical countries in an environmentally and economically sustainable way.’ The values of the company reflected the way Jack aimed to live his own life:

- **We aim high and are action oriented;**
- **We deliver results, while caring about the means;**
- **We value ingenuity and take risks;**
- **We constantly pursue self awareness and reflection;**
- **We are passionate about our work, have fun and value balance; and**
- **We bring love into all we do.**

I found that the knowledge that these values underpinned Jack’s work gave me confidence to return Jack to basics when he doubted his direction with the company and his career. I suggested to Jack that he revisit his motivations for the business venture at regular intervals. Towards the end of the coaching process, I took him back to that exercise:

*GA: You did that exercise of going back to basics on what you are in it for. Maybe you could put it in your diary or do it every six months or so?*

*JT: That’s a great idea. I used to do this, and I haven’t done it - laminate those points and put it somewhere. I am so glad I did those and it makes it clear why I am doing this.*

This case provided an example of how potentially a coach can partner with a client to affect the values and ethics of a company. Jack was beginning a potentially large international business. From the start he had shown an interest in a charitable foundation. My own interest in the ethics of multinationals led me to reintroduce this idea on two subsequent occasions as a way of keeping it fresh in Jack’s mind. It was not my idea so I felt free to raise the issue. We discussed the point that if it was not set down early in the structure of the company, it might be very difficult to reintroduce the idea later. Jack set a level of 5% of company profits to be put into a foundation once the business became profitable.

*JT: I am going to try to do that early. One of the things I am working on is a founders’ or shareholders’ agreement. I am going to build it into that.*

*GA If you insert it at the end it might be difficult to make it part of the ethos.*
JT: Exactly. What I am not sure about is that I have always said 7% of profits. I don’t think the investors are going to go for that, but nothing less than 5%. What I am doing is building the branding around social and environmental responsibility.

In a later session Jack talked about this in more depth:

Size matters to a certain extent to do what I want. To spur alternative agricultural products in Latin America, $10m is not going to do it. For a $100m business, we have suppliers in El Salvador, Brazil, Africa, Asia etc. helping them into new alternative businesses in coconut fibre etc.

GA: That is something you haven’t talked about much before.

JT: Oh yes, certainly that is very much a part of this. We are going to designate a certain amount of profit to go back to social projects almost exclusively in my opinion to the place where we obtain the product. We are going to set very high environment and social standards with our suppliers. It is a very big goal for me to come back and find a plant here that employs 50 people and a coconut plantation with 200 people meeting environmental and world safety standards and labour practices to supply us. If they then open up a fibre unit for housing in the states that would make me excited. You need a certain scale to have impact in those areas. I want to reach an audacious goal. I remember well and feel very good about what was driving this. I feel there is a lot of good that can come from this business for the world, or for certain parts. We are committed to do this in the right social environment, including expanding this as a kind of community development into different Latin and Asian countries. From a family standpoint it is about financial independence. We can have flexibility. It is also a model for our girls. Anything done with integrity is a good model. It has taken me so long to come to a sense of how limitless one’s life is. My parents lived in this very organized structured world of companies and universities and entities that were responsible in a certain sense for their context within the world. For me, it is about finding my own way in the world. I have led an exciting rich life but it has always within somebody else’s context in a corporate or university or non profit. I love the fact that this is on a path toward me defining my own projects. It is a chance for learning development which I am obsessed with. I love the idea of some day having been successful at this and bringing it into so many other ideas bringing on other young entrepreneurs or in NGOs -
how to raise money and get off the ground. It is all part of proving to myself that I can take on a challenge like this.

GA: When you are reaching this point where things have come to a bit of a halt, is it part of getting through the barriers - part of what you expected to happen?

JT: Yeah. I knew there were huge barriers and I know there are going to be many to come.

GA: You knew the walls were there and now suddenly...

JT: One’s there.

By bringing Jack back to these issues I was helping him to maintain his direction and motivation, while at the same time working in accordance with my own values.
CHAPTER 6.7

CASE STUDY: RAUL HERNANDEZ

Profile

Raul was a 28 year old Australian who was born in El Salvador. He moved to Australia with his parents when he was five years old. Raul was a qualified chartered accountant and had worked in one of the top accounting audit firms in Sydney. He said that he moved to El Salvador to reconnect with his cultural roots and to begin a career in a multinational company. He came to El Salvador without a job but quickly found a junior managerial position with a European multinational, working to a Chilean. Raul married a Salvadorian several months after his arrival. Julia did not speak English but was keen to learn the language and move to Australia. Raul was referred to me by one of my other clients, Paul Plummer. Paul befriended and informally mentored Raul when he recognized his Australian accent. (Paul was intending to relocate to Australia.) We had twelve coaching sessions together over a year.

Reason for Selection in the Study

Raul offered a different insight on the expatriate manager experience because he was engaged essentially as a local hire but was in effect an expatriate. His first language was English. However, in the company he did not receive expatriate benefits and support, leaving him exposed to the effects of culture shock and to gaps in conditions between local and overseas hire.

Raul’s inclusion in the study was part of my response to Stake’s (2000) rhetorical question, ‘Isn't it better to learn a lot from an atypical case than a little from a seemingly typical case?’ (p.446). The inclusion of Raul was also in line with action research methodology because it happened naturally as an outcome of my research work with another participant. This was an excellent demonstration of the advantages of having a fluid methodology
where I could add a case which increased the richness of the data. A more traditional design of a fixed sample with a start and end date for the coaching would not have allowed the inclusion of a unique perspective.

**Issues and Goals**

Raul’s overall goal was to develop his management skills. Our sessions revolved mainly around his development as a manager. Raul wanted to gain promotion within a multinational company. He articulated an aim of becoming a senior manager. The major focus of the coaching was on helping Raul to develop strategies for networking, developing management skills and finding a suitable MBA course. Initially, Raul was concerned about his adaptation to El Salvador, having experienced ‘culture shock’ in the form of unhappiness and lack of connection in his workplace. A sub-goal emerged of managing a particularly difficult staff member.

**Coaching Techniques and Perspectives**

Initially, I mainly used counselling techniques of reflective listening, at the same time connecting Raul to knowledge about culture shock and cross-cultural communication issues. I moved with him into discussing his role as a manager, including how to deal with his staffing issue.

In the early sessions, I gave Raul an opportunity to reflect on his view of management rather than direct him towards any particular model. Raul had a gut feeling for the type of manager he wanted to be but his ideas were quite raw:

*GA:* What do you think makes a decent manager?

*RF:* Knowing the business. You can be a good technical person but if you don’t know the business you are not going to succeed.

*GA:* Knowledge of the business and its environment.

*RF:* A major one is how to communicate with people and manage them.

*GA:* How do you manage people?
RF: There are many characters and personalities that you have to control. The manager has to get the best out of them.

GA: How do they do that?

RF: By understanding people, talking to them and knowing where they come from.

Once I got a sense of where he wanted to go with his management and leadership style, I often worked in a training mode, reflected in the heavy bias in my loading of material under the coding node Management Theory’. Raul said he wanted to do an MBA and was comfortable moving into discussions of theory. I explained my own interest in management trends in an introduction to cultural and emotional intelligence in Session 4:

GA: I tend to bring to my coaching the latest thing I have read. Something I have read consistently about is intelligence. Recent theories talk about different forms of intelligence - cognitive skills, the ability to apply it, and the motivation to apply it. Without having the motivational aspect covered, the intelligence is not complete. The other extreme is the strong motivator who doesn’t explain why you should do it or what it means. Intelligence is the mixing of the three.

In the same session, I became more specific about the work of Daniel Goleman (2000), with suggestions about cultural application of his leadership theory:

Management is a lot about context. The Goleman article talks about different leadership styles, but you need to know when to use them. In some cultures certain styles work very well, in others they don’t.

We talked about different approaches to management and I helped Raul design strategies in relation to the difficult staff member who was eventually dismissed. This pattern demonstrated the value of coaching as a means of enhancing management training at the level appropriate to the client. The difficult staff member became a major issue over several sessions. He had implied physical threat to Raul. The impact of this on Raul was exacerbated by the fact that Raul was robbed twice over the period I was coaching him. Initially, Raul did not have much confidence in his ability to handle the situation. I
encouraged him to think of different approaches. He tried different things and had some success as illustrated by this exchange in Session 4:

**RF:** I have been more serious with him. I don’t joke around. It can’t be too serious or he thinks it’s a joke anyway. Everyone else says that the other bosses have always had trouble with him. If you say something, he tries to contradict you. He thinks his way is the best way. He has been independent for several years and is used to getting his own way.

**GA:** Do you think it is improving, or the same, or... ?

**RF:** I think it is improving.

I felt, in retrospect, that I was too instructive with Raul regarding his approach, for example:

**GA:** Don’t let it get you. He wants to frighten you.

**RF:** That’s what he did to the last supervisor he had. She just quit. She couldn’t handle him.

**GA:** You are not going anywhere but he is by the sound of it. I wouldn’t play that game.

**RF:** No, well...

**GA:** If you can, look him in the eye, ‘This is in one way of reacting to a request to do something by five o’clock. The other is to just go and do it.’ Use a bit of humour maybe. Get your manager to back you. Get in control of the situation. If he doesn’t respond, start the new track. At the moment he is doing what he wants and he is still getting paid. Who is winning? There is one person who is not - you. You can start with this approach then move to another one if that doesn’t work.

**RF:** Yes.

**GA:** Be strategic about it. Be a manager.

**RF:** That is what it is all about isn’t it, looking at the options?

**GA:** And trusting your gut feeling. What is happening isn’t right and you want to do something about it. You have kind of decided the option that you want is to get rid of him I suspect?

**RF:** The thing is I am not... I don’t think I am expected to sack him. I have put forward my suggestion to my manager and now I expect him as manager to sack him.

**GA:** Who is his manager?
RF: I am his supervisor.
GA: So you are his manager.
RF: I am his boss.

On the other hand, this challenging approach encouraged Raul to take action. In the end, Raul was successful in managing the employee into working more efficiently and causing less disruption, as illustrated by his comments in Session 6:
RF: I ask for the work. Do this. Do that. I think that situation has fixed itself.
GA: It didn’t fix itself. You fixed it. If you hadn’t done anything and taken the path in the middle then he would still be doing it. He would still be stuffing around. You decided what you wanted and you did it.

Raul’s manager eventually had the employee removed. As a result, Raul’s status in the work area improved. His confidence in his ability to have impact increased and his relationship with his supervisor improved. Raul’s grasp of the issues and capacity to take actions towards a fair and reasonable outcome were strong. The successful outcome here anchored him for future difficult experiences. Paul’s comments in Session 9 reveal a sense of satisfaction:
RF: The guy that was a problem. They sacked him. The manager did.
GA: Very good.
RF: My manager called me up and said he couldn’t stand it any more. He had a chat to him and sacked him.
GA: Did they get someone else?
RF: Yes, a week after.
GA: But you came out of that smelling like a bed of roses.
RF: Everyone is saying in a joking way, ‘You bastard Raul.’ No one had stood up to him before.
GA: You not only got rid of him but you controlled the situation.
This stressful work issue played out from April to December 2004 and demonstrates how having a coach working alongside a manager through stressful adjustment times can be of value.

I was working mainly from a cognitive behavioural framework in assisting Raul in his development as a manager. This included encouraging him towards new understandings of his role as a manager and helping him frame new behavioural approaches. I found Raul receptive to this strategy.

Later in the coaching process, Raul mentioned he was experiencing high levels of stress. I explored this with him, shifting towards the role of a counselling psychologist, but keeping focused on the coaching aims. I reflected to him the advantages of his capacity to remain calm under pressure, thereby reinforcing his chosen management style:

*GA:* How do you react under pressure?

*RF:* I get hot - my blood pressure.

*GA:* Physically?

*RF:* Yes, when things are moving very fast like this month.

*GA:* Is it a problem?

*RF:* No. I haven’t been eating but I have been doing exercise. My energy levels are low. I haven’t been eating three meals a day.

*GA:* What are you eating?

*RF:* Maybe one meal a day.

*GA:* Can you change that?

*RF:* Yes, but I don’t get hungry in the morning.

*GA:* But it is not a problem?

*RF:* No.

*GA:* That is good if it the worst that is happening. I had another client who got stressed in meetings, went red, and walked out. You can imagine what it was like with her as a child. You were probably a calm child?

*RF:* I was.

*GA:* It is great to work with people who get calm under pressure.
RF: In Australia, I learned a lot by watching them under pressure. I liked the ones who were calm. It made everyone else calm too.

I did not feel obliged to refer Raul to a professional for stress management as he twice commented that he didn’t have a problem and he was completely functional.

Raul was comfortable reflecting more generally on his career and his life and used the coaching sessions to do this as he planned his future:
RF: There is Australia which is a great country. But I didn’t want to be just a number in Australia. Over here I am a bit different, you know. I don’t know if it is selfish. I know I am different. People look at you differently as an Australian.
GA: I can relate to that.
RF: I have got used to being here except for the violence.
GA: What would have happened in Australia if you had stayed? Would you have been different?
RF: I know something about myself. When I want something I set a target and go and get it. I went to a good uni. My ambition was to get a good job in an accounting firm, be a manager, and be a partner in a firm. I have got most of that.

Raul commented that he felt he was very impatient. I challenged him and he reflected on his motivation to succeed:
GA: How long did you spend at university?
RF: Four years.
GA: How long in the company afterwards?
RF: Five.
GA: That doesn’t sound very impatient.
RF: Why? I want things to happen. I was happy.
GA: You spent four years...
RF: At uni.
GA: Five years in the company. You didn’t disappear to the Himalayas. You are ambitious. You could have looked at this job and thought, ‘What a bunch of losers!’, and gone back to Sydney.

RF: Easily.

GA: You were tempted yet you were sufficiently patient to look at what you wanted and plan ahead and say, ‘Alright, I can get through this period.’

RF: You know a lot of that has to do with Julia because when you are in love you can do anything.

The strength in the coaching process lay very much in Raul’s openness to personal reflection and capacity to incorporate new ways of looking at issues and situations.

Initially, I felt that Raul’s unhappiness was possibly bordering on depression that would require professional counselling beyond the coaching work. I was travelling to Australia just after our first session and I gave Raul the name of a local counsellor in case he wanted to pursue that option. I felt that Raul was leaving something out in his explanation for his return to El Salvador. A few months after we started the coaching, he told me that he had met his future wife Julia on a trip the year before and had decided to return to marry her. I remained unsure of the underlying issues around Raul’s situation and considered that working from a psychodynamic perspective might be of value to him if our assignment continued.

The Action Research Process

The element of action research that was most prominent with Raul was our revisiting of strategies to increase his profile and contacts through the process. Each meeting, we discussed how he was progressing and examined the impact of various strategies. Some worked and some did not. We decided new strategies when existing ones were not being effective.
Insights on Coaching and Expatriate Acculturation

Raul wanted to get ahead, but he faced a difficult situation of being locked into a middle-management accountancy role in a multinational where rapid advancement was unlikely without action. His pay of $US1500 per month was good for El Salvador but way below wages for comparable roles in the USA or Australia. He received a small pay rise after about six months. We talked about various actions he could take. The strategy we came to included networking and taking on new projects within the company. If that didn’t work within a six to twelve month timeframe, Raul was happy to consider seeking alternative employment:

RF: It’s difficult. I can’t just ask for $3000.

GA: You can put it another way. Say you are looking for different opportunities and ask them how to do it. There is an article called ‘The Coffee Machine’ which talks about the informal selection processes which happen in multinationals. It is a matter of being top-of-mind. If you do your organizational politics well it will come through. At the same time look around.

RF: There are not much bigger companies around here.

GA: It is huge. But it is a multinational. It is a traditional aggressive, ruthless company that is looking for money. They are not just here to make products, they want to get profit. And they do some good for the community along the way. I would not feel guilty about squeezing them a little.

RF: It is the right way to go about it.

GA: You have other ambitions about management.

RF: Yes. I can’t be stuffed staying in accounting. I have learnt what I wanted to learn. Now I want to do something big. I will send Andrea [in a recruitment agency] the résumé.

GA: It may get around that you are looking.

RF: Yes. If I talk to Roger, Paul and Jerry [managers in the multinational] and explain what I feel like. I wonder sometimes whether it is in their power to make a decision. ‘We haven’t got something now’, is what I think they will say.
GA: They can do what they like. And they know the budget and the expansion strategy. They will know what they can do. If the underlying message is that you are getting itchy feet and they might lose you, they might be jogged enough to do something. The standard reply is, ‘Go back to your desk’. But they will see you are persistent and they like that the South Africans. Persevere. They move quickly when something is happening. It could be overnight, literally. But one thing is 100% sure. If you just sit there and do nothing except the job, you won’t move it along quickly.

RF: I want more money, I don’t know why.

GA: You are a professional person with qualifications and experience. There is nothing stopping you going to Australia and having $70k when you get off the plane. Julia could get her language skills and earns that too!

RF: I have always wanted to work for a multinational outside Australia, and experience a different working culture. I want to be part of the big picture.

Raul did persevere and gained a promotion into Paul’s area as a trainee executive at US$2000 per month with possible opportunities to move overseas.

Raul was interested in my talking with his wife who was having considerable problems with her work situation (with a demanding and erratic supervisor). She was subsequently dismissed. Raul felt that my perspective might assist her and I went to his house for dinner and we talked generally about her issues. I did not enter into a formal coaching relationship with her, partly due to my limited Spanish and her limited English. Dealing with her distress was one of the issues Raul and I discussed. Raul used ideas from our sessions to inspire her beyond the immediate problem, for example by encouraging her to work on her English skills.

Many expatriates marry local people (including one of the other research participants). This adds complexity to the challenge of career development for both the manager and the spouse. Executive coaching can assist in dealing with this complexity.
Raul’s unofficial mentor – Paul – was of valuable assistance to Raul, particularly when he first joined the company. My impact as a coach in assisting Raul with management development and cross-cultural work contrasted with the specific role of Paul as a locally-situated mentor. Paul was able to check up on Raul and be a fall back when Raul was going through stressful times. The mentor role therefore had a value beyond executive coaching in some respects. Raul recognized the difference when he said, ‘I found the mentor also useful because he was within. A coach would not have too much of the inside politics. A mentor can be more specific with rough seas inside.’ Raul enjoyed the opportunity to speak in English in the coaching and with his mentor, since in the workplace he was operating in his second language – Spanish. This was a strategy for him to cope with the stress of the cross-cultural situation.

Coaching from a Cultural Perspective

Raul was very interested in the cultural perspective on management. We had many discussions about cultural values and differences and how they played out in the workplace, and how he could leverage difference given his bicultural and bilingual status. Culture became particularly salient when Raul’s new manager arrived from Chile. The following extract illustrates the complexity of culture and how executive coaching can assist managers to develop strategies in-context. The situation was a Salvadorian-born Australian, working in a South African multinational in El Salvador, with a Chilean manager, talking with an Australian coach:

*RF:* Juan said, ‘If you want to do business here [El Salvador], *if you want to interact, you have to not let people give you crap.*’

*GA:* What does that mean?

*RF:* I experienced this last week. *When you are doing work with someone they tend to give you a lot of crap.*

*GA:* What do you mean?

*RF:* *If you are looking for an answer they give you a different answer. He said that you need to make sure that you verify that is the correct answer and not be so trustworthy.*
People here will give you a lot of bullshit. That is what he said. I didn’t think about that until recently. That was interesting.

GA: Why do you think they give you bullshit?

RF: It hadn’t happened to me in Australia. I am used to an honest reply if I ask questions.

GA: Australians are very direct.

RF: If I ask questions, especially in auditing, they give you an answer. They don’t beat around the bush. Whereas here I am learning stuff and as you do you ask more questions and people give you a lot of crap, I don’t know. I wish I had the answer.

GA: One of the theories - I have a book which is more about Mexicans but there is a similarity in business practice. [(Condon, 1997)] It is ok to give bullshit. If you are the boss and you want information and I don’t know the answer, if I say, ‘I don’t know’ it is not helping because you don’t get the information. It’s not helping me because I lose face. You will think less of me. In Australia, you don’t lose face because if someone says they don’t know, you don’t lose face. They just go to someone that does, and not waste time. Here, it is a different way of operating. Bullshit is not a bad thing - engaging with people in business that way. How would you handle someone who is doing that to you? What would you say to them?

RF: If I knew it was bullshit?

GA: If you wanted to find out.

RF: Get support - to see if it is the correct answer.

GA: Get used to cross-checking?

RF: Verify everything?

GA: Would you tell the person it was bullshit?

RF: No. I wouldn’t say actually it was bullshit. Because if I found it was bullshit I would say it was wrong. I wouldn’t be so nasty.

GA: If you had to deal with them again, how would you handle that situation that would not be nasty?

RF: I wouldn’t be angry.

GA: Let’s imagine I am working for you and I have given you this not very reliable answer and you have found out it is wrong, what do you say to me?
RF: I would tell you to be clear to think about what you are doing. And if you want to take time to research a question and to look at different channels for the answer- stuff like that. GA: And perhaps to describe about the nature of the advice that you are requiring - give them more detail about your requirements and the quality of advice. If they feel the advice they are giving you is anything less than 100 percent, it would be helpful for you to know. You can then follow up with them ways of verifying accuracy. It is a cultural thing. RF: Have you found that here? GA: Yeah, a little bit. Face is very important and this society is probably in the middle - less than many Asian cultures. That is a generalization. There are many people here who are not full of bullshit! Generally people like to help.

The coaching intervention was reflecting the situation of the client while at the same time injecting ideas from management theory, cultural research and experience that informed the client as he developed a strategy in-context.

Impact

Raul was extremely enthusiastic about the coaching. He gave 4s and 5s for all responses in the Post-Coaching Questionnaire. He said he would continue to have a coach through his career and intended to engage me professionally when I finished the research work. He found the coaching particularly useful early on in coping with initial adjustment. Raul commented in the Post-Coaching Questionnaire:

Initially, the coaching was more for personal satisfaction rather than financial rewards. I was very emotionally unstable at the start. Without the coaching I think I would have gone back to Australia.

Raul said that he found coaching helped him learn how to survive in a corporate environment through goal-setting and knowledge of his peers. He found that coaching gave him more self confidence. It helped him to realize his potential, find out who he was and where he wanted to be in the future. Raul saw the cultural side of the coaching as a great
strength in helping him sort out how to fit into a multinational and make a stable life in a new environment.

My observation was that the coaching was of assistance across various areas of Raul’s life. From a professional perspective, I believe that the main contributions were in giving Raul (1) self confidence in his management approach, (2) in-context training on management issues, and (3) perspectives on managing organizational politics. On a personal level, coaching assisted him with coping with culture shock and stress.

**Coaching and Pragmatism**

There were many levels operating and I was moving in and out of different frameworks during the coaching to assist Raul in meeting his objectives. Together, we developed strategies and actions that suited his immediate purposes. At the same time we remained within the boundaries of what Raul (and I) viewed as ethical and reasonable. Cultural pluralism was a recurring theme. Raul identified with the position of his Salvadorian work colleagues and subordinates while at the same time sought to enter a different world of the international expatriate. Coaching assisted Paul to accept the tension between two perspectives and on the one hand support his colleagues while on the other pursue his career. With each issue, including the difficult staff member, we developed approaches to situations that would work and which were appropriate to Paul’s established goals and preferences as a manager.

**Impact of Values**

Raul’s fundamental value of respect for others was an underlying issue in the coaching which took the discussions beyond the Empirical and Actual levels. We entered into some deep consideration of ethical underpinnings of the multinational business world, even to the point where Raul began to doubt his own future as a senior manager. Unsolicited, Raul showed great concern for the plight of the workers below his level in the company who were not given pay rises and had little opportunity for development.
Raul was working with a tension between his desire to earn a high wage in line with what he could earn as a chartered accountant in Sydney and his realization that in El Salvador the salary level he wanted was way of out reach of the majority of workers. He was sensitive to the difficult situation of his work mates. This was an ongoing tension:

RF: I know I can earn $3000 [US$3000 per month].

GA: It is double what you earn now. Money is an issue. When that is fixed, other things will become important. Things like dining out with your wife or a holiday to Miami, these are things that can become part of life. You have done the work professionally so why not? Do you feel guilty about wanting more money?

RF: A lot of people say, ‘Why do you want to earn that much?’ But I don’t care.

GA: It is still less than you had before.

RF: The buying power here is much more.

This comment was contrasted in the same session with:

GA: If you are running a company, how would it be?

RF: It would have to be responsible and good for the environment.

GA: I know you get pissed off with the low wages paid at the lower levels.

RF: That’s right.

GA: But maybe you wouldn’t get to the top?

RF: The only way to get to the top is if you were greedy?

GA: Maybe the current culture would expect something different from management.

RF: Responsibility to shareholders? At the top they don’t care for the lower people.

GA: You are aiming to go to the top of the organization.

RF: Maybe I wouldn’t get to the top if the only way was to treat people like shit.

GA: It is an open debate about the sustainability of multinationals of that style.

RF: Look at Nike with the low wages and child labourers.

GA: Look ahead, at what you are prepared to do.

RF: I have seen a lot of people get to the top by not caring about others.

GA: Would they admit it and realize it?

RF: You would have to be very stupid.
GA: People are very good at blocking out, ‘It is in the interests of the company if I get the job so I can step over someone else who might not be so good.’ They rationalize getting to the top and then ignore the bottom by focusing up. I went to a party with a group of executives who had never been on a bus here.

RF: If was earning $5k a month I would not have met Julia. I never went on a bus when I got here. I used taxis, but I have taken buses. I went with a laptop and backpack.

GA: That was risky. You are sensitive to those things – from your background. As you go up you can get others aware.

RF: Is it selfish that you only focus on you and your family? I think everyone has a sense of responsibility not to be evil, though it is hard. Corporate responsibility is to look after the environment.

GA: It can become token unless you have people in those positions who genuinely believe in it.

The coaching assisted Raul to work between the two values without compromising either – a position of leveraging difference. The aim was to help Raul finding a way of dealing with the apparent contradiction, to deal with paradox and complexity.

Other Observations

Underlying Raul’s experience was a sense that he was coming to El Salvador to both find and avoid something. Coaching may help the client to identify and explore underlying issues that may be leading to tension in their lives. The sequence of seeking overseas assignment when major issues are unresolved seems to occur relatively frequently. I interviewed the human resources manager of a major multinational company in El Salvador about why people in the company became expatriates. She reported considerable reluctance by managers in the US home office to go overseas. She indicated that many who chose the expatriate life were struggling in their careers or were moving away from awkward personal situations. This is anecdotal and would require further research evidence. If it is a pattern, coaching would be well-placed to assist people in exploring underlying issues while in a foreign country that they may otherwise have been tempted to put aside.
Raul, Julietta Carboni (Appendix A2) and Gillian George (Appendix A5) were undertaking or considering undertaking further study with a university. This was useful for the coaching because it created a link between the academic background and interests of the client and the coach. In all three cases, our discussions moved into an informed discussion of theories of management, cross-cultural communication and psychology. The expatriate literature suggests that the expatriate can become disconnected from their careers and find re-entry difficult. Enhanced qualifications and engagement with management and cross-cultural ideas through education, stimulated by interactions with an academically qualified coach, may go some way to addressing that issue.
CHAPTER 6.8

CASE STUDY: RANDY PETERS

Profile

Randy was a mechanical engineer with considerable experience in public utilities in the USA and Latin America, including some experience with the US military. He had recently left his position in Honduras to become Environmental Health and Safety Manager with a public utility in El Salvador, owned by a US multinational. He was married to Alicia Peters, a Salvadorian (who was also a participant, see Appendix A1). He had lived in El Salvador off-and-on over 18 years, including during the war in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Randy turned 50 during the coaching program. I started working with Randy shortly before he took up his new position. Randy was referred to me by the pastor of the English-speaking church. Randy had been attracted by the concept of ‘situational awareness’ which I had put in an information sheet about coaching.

Reason for Inclusion in the Study

Randy was moving into a challenging new position and the timing allowed me to work with him as he commenced his work and moved back to full-time residence in El Salvador. The company was interesting from a cross-cultural perspective. It was primarily US-owned but with Chilean interests. Randy was the only American in the Salvadorian operation which provided an opportunity for cross-cultural perspectives to come into play. Also, Randy was very familiar with the local culture through his marriage and other connections which gave me some important insights relatively early in my own acculturation.

Issues and Goals

Randy had a work goal of achieving health and safety standardization in a large public utility with a poor record in safety. This was a new assignment and he was conscious that
his time in Honduras had not been entirely satisfactory. He had struggled to make an impact with senior management and had not left with a high opinion of company ethics. Randy was determined to make a success of his new assignment.

Randy wanted to increase his situational awareness. He believed that he was missing important information about context that this was limiting his effectiveness. Randy perceived that he had a weakness in the area of emotional intelligence.

**Coaching Challenges**

While Randy was extremely eager to learn from his experiences in Honduras and to make a success of his job, his efforts were hampered by his limited capacity to step out of the immediate situation and to make long-term decisions about how he would operate. His anxiety and stress about day-to-day issues meant that his capacity to self-reflect was initially limited. The challenge for me was to seek ways of encouraging him to step back and look more objectively at what he was doing. This proved difficult until the end of the coaching sessions when it became apparent to Randy that his past approaches had been limited and he needed to do something different if he was to succeed in a new role as a country director with a US government organization in Estonia.

**Coaching Techniques and Perspectives**

Towards the end of the assignment, the developmental perspective was extremely useful in giving me an explanatory framework for where we had been together and also a good degree of optimism over Randy’s capacity to increase his performance and gain more satisfaction from his work. Increasingly, it seemed that Randy was able to step back from his environment and objectively view his actions, feelings and thought processes. This ability was consistent with stage four in Kegan’s (1982) five-stage constructive-developmental process where one owns oneself rather than be owned by the context.
Much of the coaching work centred around encouraging Randy to see the world from other perspectives and to add an empathetic dimension to his interactions with people. We spent a good deal of time on situational awareness and analysing where Randy had gone wrong – or right – and how he could have a more effective impact in future situations. This example illustrates Randy’s challenge:

**RP:** I failed miserably once. I knew it was crucial to talk with the human relations person because in a lot of these utilities the gatekeeper is a human resources person. They are usually women and usually psychologists. I sat down with her in the company lunch room purposely to try to get a conversation going. As fast as she could gulp down her lunch and get away she did. And I quit pursuing it after that, but that was the start of serious problems.

**GA:** So what went wrong?

**RP:** You never can know what is going on in another person’s mind. But basically there were serious union - management problems. She didn’t want to share those with me for whatever reason.

**GA:** A red light has gone off in my head about what you did then.

**RP:** I probably should not have sat with her in the lunch room. I probably should have gone somewhere private.

**GA:** That was my thought. If she is sitting there with a gringo surrounded by employees...

**RP:** Absolutely - cultural awareness. I didn’t pick that up - situational awareness. I didn’t pick that up until now. Good point. That’s probably a very good point.

This example came from early in the coaching process (Session 3). It was clear at this point that Randy was able to see where his judgment of situations was not good. The cultural intelligence theory was quite useful in this area. I felt that Randy often understood his situation, and sometimes wanted to change his approach but wasn’t able to make the necessary behaviour change.

I asked Randy a lot of questions about upcoming events in his work. For example, he was hosting a multinational taskforce doing a safety audit in El Salvador and we went over the
situation carefully. I asked focused questions that related to his various issues running in the workplace. The following extract shows the questioning approach:

**RP:** I have a visit of senior people from headquarters; an environmental engineer, an occupational specialist, health and safety - all world class. I should listen as much as I can until I understand what they want.

**GA:** That sounds good.

**RP:** They want a full briefing at 4pm. I have prepared things that give them the facts without opinions or my philosophy. I am sure they are going to ask a lot of questions. I am going to be the only English speaker probably. I don’t want to spill my opinions out. It is better to know what they believe in before they hear from me what I believe in.

**GA:** Who is going to be there with you?

**RP:** The operations officer who is a kid of 32 who speaks English and my right hand man who doesn’t.

**GA:** So how does your right hand man contribute?

**RP:** Through translation but we don’t have anyone so I have to do it. I want them to think I don’t have the budget and I don’t. There is no budget item. I want them to see the reality.

**GA:** Is doing the translation going to distract you?

**RP:** Sure, it is very stressful. Why don’t I ask my boss to solve the problem by asking him to assign me a translator?

**GA:** Your ability to read the situation - situational awareness is incredibly limited by not having a translator.

**RP:** Ok. Can we go through the agenda?

**GA:** What happened when you asked what the purpose of the visit was?

**RP:** Basically three things; (1) let them know who their safety team is in headquarters, (2) talk to as many people as possible about safety to get some feedback about what supervisors think, and (3) get the perspective from the management about how we are going to improve safety. There are standard measurement tools they are not using. This is bullshit. They are just walking around a foreign country without the language skills. I don’t want to come across as the arrogant know-it-all, but I probably know more than them about a lot of this.

**GA:** Let’s go back. You are going to talk to them at 4pm on the first day - for how long?
RP: Short as possible - two hours. I have thirty slides.
GA: Do you meet them at the airport and then have coffee?
RP: That’s a good idea - no slide show, nothing fancy - at 4pm. Let them take the lead.
GA: Did they ask for a briefing?
RP: I suggested it.
GA: When you talk to them as they arrive, you can get a feel for how much detail they want.
RP: How would you do that?
GA: You can talk with them. Check out what would be useful for them on their first day.
RP: Do we have the afternoon tea with operations people or just top management?
GA: What are the advantages?
RP: The country manager knows nothing. The ops manager has been here 20 years. Below him is a good guy who is young, then my man who is good but not professional. And I could bring in others. I don’t want the new guy there - the country manager.
GA: Is he going to be nervous about that?
RP: No, he said, ‘Keep us out of trouble.’
GA: The afternoon meet-and-greet and a short briefing.
RP: Or I could hand something out?
GA: Or just a short briefing. The first meeting is important to get the impact. Then it is a strategy over several days. What is the biggest thing you want to get out if?
RP: I think the first objective is to know their goals, long and medium term.
GA: An environment where they can talk. An informal low key environment is good for that.
RP: The tour - that is beautiful.
GA: The initial tour you get a chance to hear them. You will find a lot from what they ask. Listen to what sort of questions they are asking. Have they done other country tours?
RP: That’s a good question. I’ll find out. If I see they are really tired I will leave them alone after the tour. Maybe ask them for dinner? It is less risky on the second night when I know their philosophy. They may really break some good things.
GA: You want them to remember the trip.
RP: I wrote a book about this country. I’ll give them one each.
GA: Good idea. When they think back, they will remember the trip and your key issues.
A good example of the difficulty Randy had in changing his behaviour was the safety conference in El Salvador where senior people from other countries came together to discuss safety programs and issues. Randy and I discussed the benefits of his saying very little except when asked for an opinion, given his tendency to say too much about the problems and create waves of resistance to attracting interest and funding to important projects. We joked about his having a voice in his head which said, ‘Shut up Randy’. I saw him after the conference and he said the strategy worked well for two days but on the third day he stood up and spoke about problems in El Salvador and managed to severely embarrass his boss, thereby straining his relationships in the company. His inability or unwillingness to control his emotions had influenced his behaviour to his professional detriment (at least in the short term).

**Impact**

Randy was very positive about the coaching experience while it was happening. He judged its effectiveness on how successful he had been in his work. In that respect he was more critical. He considered that the goals he set were too nebulous and he did not follow through sufficiently. His comment was that I should have been tougher on him. He acknowledged the effect of coaching in helping him to understand and deal with his situation:

*I would have failed miserably at my environmental health and safety assignment. I would have got into trouble earlier and pushed to point of being asked to leave. I would have been like a bull in a china closet.*

In retrospect, I think Randy was right that we should have focused more on implementation. I became enmeshed in the day-to-day dramas of the company and Randy’s stress and anxiety in response to them. My deliberate approach was to listen to Randy and allow the coaching sessions to be fairly informal and unstructured as a way of allowing him to deal with stress. This included our explicit agreement to have discussions on the way to golf, during golf, and on the way home. As Randy observed retrospectively:
Golf is a great way to make friends but a bit too informal for coaching execution. I needed to de-stress and talk about problems, but you can’t do value clarification on the golf course.

Very perceptively, Randy commented:

*If I had executed I would have had less stress.*

We did discuss the informality of the coaching and on various occasions made efforts to tighten the structure. We did not make many changes because of Randy’s ongoing level of stress about day-to-day activity. He also seemed satisfied with the session format. I made a memo after Session 7 regarding my concern:

*Our informal sessions, while valuable, are a little too informal in my view. However, I need to run this past Randy who seems very happy with the situation.*

We agreed an agenda for subsequent meetings in Session 13, though again we did not stick rigidly to it because we continued to react to hot issues or events. The agenda we decided was:

1. Focus on safety;
2. Building Relationships;
3. Introducing a Questioning Style; and
4. Concentrating on Providing Shorter Reports

Randy suggested that some sort of software might help in tracking the coaching process. I raised the idea of more formal sessions on several occasions and made three file notes about the issue. But, the session formats remained unstructured. To push the issue a little, I sent Randy an email which began:

*I was transcribing a tape of our meeting from two months ago. It reminded me that we are not tracking the actions and goals very closely. Here is a summary of the things you decided to do. It might be helpful to you to write down a couple of notes on progress beside*
each one. This might be a useful system to track future actions from the ideas that come through in sessions. The idea is to keep it all short, simple and focused.

Yet, we still did not develop a formal structure.

This was probably the most difficult yet most professionally satisfying of the case studies. I believe that Randy’s continual interactions with someone who was asking him to look at the world through other eyes assisted him to shift through a developmental stage more quickly than might otherwise have happened. Randy’s determination to anchor himself in his core values was a demonstration of his move to a more identifiable self, rather than embed his identity in the church, his company and other organizations. This shift in Randy’s approach might have happened without coaching. Turning 50 had a big impact on Randy as he realized that for the first time in his life he was the oldest person in the room at meetings. Also, the jolt of having someone appointed over the top of him might have been sufficient to trigger development.

Before heading off to Europe to his new country director role, Randy made a commitment to do things differently:

*If I fuck this up I might as well go and paint houses for the rest of my life. Also, my wife will divorce me.*

When analysing the notes from the Session 1 with Randy, it was clear that the issues we worked on for over a year and a half remained the issues that Randy faced when he got on the plane to Estonia. It remained to be seen whether Randy’s experiences in working with me and his experiences in his last position had equipped him to deal with the new situation in ways he found satisfying.

This case demonstrated that coaching can be effective while not achieving immediate results. Many of the ideas and strategies that Randy and I played with - but didn’t necessarily implement - became more relevant to Randy after the coaching had finished. During the coaching, Randy continued to act much the same as he had before, while at the
same time a voice-in-the-ear was speaking louder and louder to him to suggest that what he was doing might not get him the results he was seeking. My view was that in the Post-Coaching Questionnaire, Randy rated himself rather than the impact of coaching per se. This raised a research and coaching-practice issue of how to assess coaching interventions.

Executive Coaching as Action Research

I gained a sense with Randy that we really were a partnership in tackling some of the issues in his life. I was an active participant in feeding in ideas and working with him to develop solutions to his issues as we moved through a hectic time. We went through action cycles as Randy addressed a major issue of building work relationships:

RP: I find now that when I need time I work right through lunch. That works but it is not a good way of making relationships. Lately I have built my relationships pretty strongly with my closest colleagues at the level below me who work for me. But I have not made much with the high levels. I think I need to work up the ladder a bit.

GA: How receptive are they to that sort of approach?

RP: Since I have never asked them, I really don’t know. I guess I have to be a little bit more extroverted. I can just go in the office and ask, ‘Let’s go and have lunch together.’ If they say no then they are busy.

GA: What would you do then?

RP: I could say why not have lunch this week? I have all these courses so I could bring in a couple of courses and say do you want to look at them and talk about it over lunch one day.

GA: So you make it a working lunch.

RP: That’ll work.

Several sessions later, Randy said that he had little success in organizing lunches with the senior people. In fact, he tended to avoid them because of increasing stress from budget issues. However, he was determined to continue the plan:

RP: I think I need to go back to our original game plan. I have never been out socially with them - once with the Salvadorian at Christmas time. The other, the Argentinean, came to
my birthday party. That’s it, the only two times. I think it would be wise for me to push to have lunch one more time.

I observed that doing the same thing again would lead to a similar result and suggested we revise the strategy a little by looking at ways of making contact with Randy more agreeable for the senior people. I confronted Randy by suggesting that it was not surprising they avoided him if he was constantly attacking them over budget shortages for safety.

This triggered a negative response from Randy who said:
These people are paid fairly gracious salaries to do a job. Part of their job is to listen to their top technical people to make decisions.

But, after talking through his frustrations, Randy saw that he had to try something new:
RP: I have to find a better way to talk about those things without people feeling threatened.
GA: And the building of relationships is part of that because if people understand what you are doing they might be less threatened. At the moment they have limited contact with you which makes it more difficult. Getting to know them could help.

RP: What else can I do to get to know these people? I have gone out of my way to get to know these people. I can charge into their office and ask them if they want a cup of coffee and say how are you doing?

GA: What sort of people are you talking about?
RP: Just those two top guys.

GA: At the moment they know you want more resources and money and you represent a risk area. What can you present them that is more positive?
RP: We have been sent a safety system and guidelines that say that the general manager has to ensure the company complies with them. I could use that and say I would like to work with them to make sure we comply with the document. I could say, ‘I would like to meet with you to discuss it’.

GA: Maybe look to present positive ideas so they see you as a chance to look better in head office and make their position stronger?

RP: That is probably a good thing.
GA: You are probably seen as bit of a gloom-and-doom merchant because you are telling them what the situation is. That’s not a very pretty picture.
RP: No it isn’t and unfortunately you have to do that once in a while.
GA: Resisting that and at the same living up to your own responsibility to make sure things are right. What if you went to the Salvadorian managers and said, ‘I have this good idea for handling the new safety system and I want to tell you about it quickly. It would give us a way of getting through the system.’ Rather than telling them the gloom-and-doom. Say, ‘We have got a difficult situation but here is the answer.’ It is solution-focused.
RP: That is exactly right. Absolutely, and they don’t want to get many emails because they don’t respond. That’s what I will do - talk to head office and later go and see them in their office for a cup of coffee. The secretaries always say they are too busy. They say, ‘I’ll call you’, and they don’t.

Randy had some success with his lunch strategy with the finance manager:
GA: What about the finance guy you were going out to lunch with?
RP: I went out with him and we smoothed things over. But they do some terrible things. They won’t spend money on basic safety stuff but the guys at the top get bonuses. We had a pleasant lunch and sorted some things out. The finance guys wanted to build a warehouse and take space from operations. I called him and said they can’t do it for safety reasons. And it is ok. They stopped construction and shut it down.
GA: You think if you had not gone to lunch?
RP: There would have been a big fight. I sent him an email saying he did a great thing. I made sure that he knew that the company had done a lot of wrong things in eight years. They have changed general managers every 14 months. It is terrible. They have never placed a decent manager here.
GA: Is he going to do anything differently?
RP: He acknowledged the company had done some things badly and he is going to try to do what he can. I asked him to lunch remember. I have been telling him for days we have to do inspections. I showed him some things and we went to lunch.
GA: Did you talk about safety?
RP: Not really. We talked about his experiences in Chile and Poland.
Randy went on to explain that he had talked a lot about his problems. I confronted him with some effect:

GA: Maybe you are not comfortable with listening?

RP: [pause] Not comfortable with listening - I release stress. This is very interesting ... this is the first time I have realized this. I get rid of stress by dumping on other people. I dump all the stuff that is worrying me. The way I release stress is to share it. I have never realized it until we were talking about this. Roberto [the Chilean finance manager] told me, ‘I cannot be your psychologist.’ I was releasing my stress. I really dumped it on him, ‘We could do a lot if we got a bit more money.’

GA: It is not a lot of fun for lunch is it? Does it actually help?

RP: No it doesn’t. It is just a nervous habit of mine that has helped me cope over the years. There are times when you are placed in a situation where someone is hurt or has died. It is incredibly stressful and you are the only one in the company who sees that. You have to have a mechanism to cope. One of my mechanisms is to dump.

GA: The ambulance people...

RP: Tell jokes.

GA: ... with really black humour.

RP: If I did that it would work for a little while. I only know two ways to get rid of this. Solve the problem or dump.

GA: What if you don’t solve the problem and don’t dump?

RP: We have these poles piled up and this guy is digging a hole next to it. I took a picture. I went to everyone to stop it and I knew if I did not act then I would be thinking about it the rest of my life. There are cheap tools that these people don’t know exist. I see that they don’t buy it and it drives me mad. I can’t get it out of my mind and it drives me crazy.

GA: The lunch got more results than dumping?

RP: That was a good move - a blessing in disguise.

GA: Imagine if all of those relations were good and the senior executives all wanted to have lunch with you. Tuesday lunch with Randy – great to relax as two professionals talking about all sorts of things. An hour with Randy - instead of the death, gloom, destruction. It is the paradox. The real impact can come with the first approach.
The other aspect of the process which was consistent with action research was our constant reviewing of goals. For example, by the end of our sessions Randy had realized that implementation was a major issue with his work and life in general and we began to shift towards actions that would assist in implementation.

An element that emerged during the coaching was Randy’s increasing lack of comfort with the ethics of multinationals working virtually unfettered in developing countries. We agreed that we would write an article together (yet to be written) discussing this issue and using Randy’s experiences as a case study. This is an excellent example of how coaching can trigger research activity beyond an immediate intervention and how it provides a natural pathway to partner academic knowledge and skills with on-the-ground practical experience.

**Coaching Expatriates for Acculturation**

The coaching discussions gave Randy different cultural perspectives in a number of areas. Though he was not particularly quick on acting on the perspectives he was gaining, this proved useful in preparing Randy for his future challenges. With Randy, I used an instrument designed to assess cross-cultural effectiveness, the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ) (Van Oudenhoven & Van der Zee, 2002). Randy’s scores are summarized in Table 6.8.1. The MPQ, discussed in Chapter 4.9, has five subscales of *cultural empathy, flexibility, open-mindedness, social initiative* and *emotional stability*. *Cultural empathy* was the weakest area for Randy. Four of the eighteen statements in the cultural empathy section were:

- ‘Understands other people’s feelings’;
- ‘Tries to understand other people’s behaviour’;
- ‘Is able to voice other people’s thoughts’; and
- ‘Senses when others get irritated.’
Table 6.8.1
Scores on Multicultural Personality Questionnaire: Randy Peters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>No. of Items</th>
<th>Score possible</th>
<th>Score possible</th>
<th>Mean /5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural empathy</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>2.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-mindedness</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social initiative</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>3.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Stability</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>2.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>2.61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Randy made a link between his levels of stress and his lack of cultural empathy. This issue is one which is not made explicit in the literature:

*RP In the MPQ, cultural empathy - I am weak at that. I feel like sometimes when I am under stress I get very short and a little unstable. I cut people off and go into an American approach, ‘Give me the facts.’*

This example illustrates that while expatriates might be knowledgeable about the need for cultural empathy, emotional elements trigger cognitive and behavioural responses that are culturally inappropriate. This is consistent with the theory of cultural intelligence.

Looked at post-hoc, the work with Randy also revealed one of the traps into which a coach can fall when working with a manager under crisis. I bought into Randy’s crises and in a sense helped him to fuel them by giving lots of ‘helpful’ suggestions and offering a sympathetic ear. Our sessions became part of the cycle of never-ending action and crisis. We resolved very little, but added to the task list!
Coaching and Pragmatism

Utility is the main thrust of pragmatism. The use of the MPQ was a good example of how a particular approach can suit a particular context. Randy was an engineer by training and used to metrics. He was attracted by the idea of a questionnaire so we used the MPQ which was designed for people working in cross-cultural situations. In using a psychometric test I was working slightly against my own preferences. But, with Randy it was something that seemed attractive to him and would give me leverage in the coaching sessions. Not only did we use it but we came back to it in three subsequent sessions. Because it suited his individual preferred style of communication and reporting, Randy himself referred back to it rather than me as coach.

Coaching from a Cultural Perspective

Randy was concerned about the need to increase the formal safety inspections to raise the level of awareness about safety and seek standardization. His standard practice was to walk around the facility and do informal inspections:

*Randy Peters (RP):* I should probably do more formal inspections. I am very nonchalant - the nice guy. With a formal inspection they know you mean business. The union doesn’t like formal inspections.

*General Assistant (GA):* What are the benefits of the walking around?

*Randy Peters:* People trust you. It is a nice friendly way of getting them to do what you want.

*General Assistant:* You don’t want to knock that down.

*Randy Peters:* I get the trust. I did the formal inspections a few times and I got into pretty serious endeavours with the union steward. We had it out a couple of times.

*General Assistant:* They didn’t know the inspection was coming?

*Randy Peters:* No, it was a surprise inspection. I was inspecting a truck and the union steward comes up and we start discussing some standards in front of everybody. He’s smart. He knows what he is doing. He has been in this industry for 30 years.

*General Assistant:* Does the formal have to be a surprise?

*Randy Peters:* No, it doesn’t. The difference is that you have to write it down.
GA: So you can signal ahead that the formal inspections are taking place?
RP: Excellent idea. That’s good.
GA: It’s a joint thing that will be built on trust. It might make things a little less bitter
RP: Excellent idea. That’s a good goal.

Another issue which involved coaching from a cultural perspective was to give Randy ideas on reframing his view that being an American was a disadvantage in his situation. Leading into a major safety conference in El Salvador I suggested that being the only American could be an advantage in that his superiors would see him as having more open conversations with the Americans from head office.

**The Role of Values**

Randy, retrospectively, felt that the coaching had not connected him strongly enough with his core values. An examination of the transcripts of the early sessions indeed showed that we did not get into an explicit discussion of what was important to Randy. From my point-of-view, I was swayed in this by Randy’s very direct presentation of his Christian faith, and my erroneous assumption that he was working with his values front-of-mind through his regular meetings with business contacts through his church. Towards the end of the coaching sessions, Randy moved the discussions back to what he saw as his key values, which he decided would be the starting point of his work in the new post in Estonia.
Profile

Danielle Powell was a 40 year old computer services manager for a US government organization in El Salvador. She came to El Salvador in September 2004 from Ecuador with her husband (Drew McLaren, Case Study 6.10) who was a senior manager in the same organization. They had three sons. Danielle had six previous overseas assignments and had moved ahead in her career at a face pace. Danielle was referred to me by a contact in the organization who was aware that she and her husband were on their way to El Salvador. Danielle was certain that she was going to retire from Government service at age 50. We had five sessions together over seven months. The low number of sessions reflected the disjointed nature of Danielle’s assignment in El Salvador, with training courses and family issues intervening in the flow of the sessions.

Reason for Inclusion in the Study

Danielle provided the perspective of a senior female expatriate manager who was newly arrived. Danielle with her husband Drew provided a dual-career couple perspective. Both were highly talented managers in mid-career and with multiple previous postings.

Issues and Goals

Danielle was initially unsure of what she wanted to get from the coaching. However, her husband was aware of the popularity and effectiveness of coaching in the USA and saw potential benefits for Danielle as she pursued a career in management. The major issues we discussed concerned Danielle’s management approach, including her role as a mentor and the handling of a particularly difficult staffing issue.
Coaching Techniques and Perspectives

To assist Danielle gain clarity around her goals from the coaching, we talked broadly about issues of management and her career ambitions. Danielle was aware she had not had any formal management training, though she had a mentor in the USA whom she had met in Europe. She mentioned that her management style was low key, with clear standards and an emphasis on clarity of instructions and customer service. Flexibility and open-mindedness were key elements. I gave Danielle feedback that these types of management traits were common among highly effective managers. She appreciated the feedback. Danielle also mentioned that she had a habit of taking on unpopular tasks that others were not prepared to do.

It seemed that although Danielle had her sights set high, she lacked some confidence in her management ability. A node search and examination of the NVivo character counts confirmed that self efficacy theory was informing many of my interventions. I made sure I reinforced Danielle’s achievements and potential when discussing her career direction:

GA: In 2007, you have the War College after getting a promotion here?
DP: I may not get it here.
GA: Headquarters in the US in 2009, then another senior post?
DP: Two years in headquarters, then a big post for four years then I am out. But Drew doesn’t think I will be. But I don’t see anything that will keep me in.
GA: How long will it take to get your promotion?
DP: Around five years. I had a great boss in my previous post in South America. That got me a promotion.
GA: But your manager here did not pick you out of the team to act in the senior role because of your last boss?
DP: No, that was all from here.
GA: So you are doing something right.
DP: I haven’t done anything wrong. With computer services, if you hear things then that is bad. When you are not hearing complaints, things are good.
GA: It is all about complaints.
DP: Exactly. Things are rolling along.

GA: More than rolling - rushing. Does the pace concern you?

DP: I had a session with my boss and he suggested I keep in mind that I might need to slow the ball down because I am going to be here for three years. However, computing is different because you have to keep the ball rolling to keep ahead.

GA: What an extraordinary piece of advice from your boss, ‘Stop developing.’

DP: I thought it was ok coming from him!

In later sessions, I suggested Danielle become a mentor, partly as a way of encouraging her to reflect on her own success. She found this suggestion quite challenging and we talked at length about mentoring:

GA: Are you a mentor?

DP: Am I a mentor? I love teaching new hires - getting them in the right direction. I wouldn’t say a mentor.

GA: How is a mentor different?

DP: I had a mentor. I almost left the service when I was in Rome. I had someone who led me in the right direction. I don’t know if it was the right direction but somewhere I found interesting.

GA: You chose him?

DP: I don’t know. He saw I was bored and was going to leave. I needed more.

GA: He was sending out a message?

DP: Absolutely. He chose me.

GA: It would be so valuable for someone else to have you as a mentor. It would be fabulous for someone say who had been here two or three years.

DP: I don’t know.

GA: Have you been successful?

DP: I have. I don’t know why though.

GA: Your management style?

DP: A mentor has to be more educated in their management and personal skills. They should have - I should go to school to hear that I am doing it right. You are actually doing
that. You are the first person that I have been able to talk to who has said, ‘Well it sounds like you are doing things right, because things are going right.’

I followed up in the next session and encouraged her to take actions, which she subsequently did:

GA: Last time we talked a bit about mentoring.
DP: Yes. I have been thinking about professional mentoring. My director and I discussed it. Our deputy is an official mentor of a junior staff member. It goes both ways with benefits.
GA: How would that work? Would you put your hand up?
DP: I don’t know. There is a professional program I would have to explore.
GA: How would you explore it?
DP: The website, asking people.
GA: The human resources manager.
DP: I’d like to do it.
GA: What would stop you?
DP: Nothing. I am just busy but I will do it.

Danielle’s situation demonstrated the value that expatriate managers - particularly women - can potentially gain from mentors:

DP: The dean of the institute - I would like her to be my mentor. I wasn’t going for the official mentor role but I admire her career. She has done very well. She is young enough and a woman. I like what she has done. I sat with her at the conference in New York. I asked about her career path.

Coaching from a Cultural Perspective

I assisted Danielle with specific work issues, in particular with a difficult staff member who was clashing his supervisors and colleagues. Juan was a Peruvian and the spouse of another employee. I worked with Danielle as she tried different strategies with Juan, including formal counselling. It was a complicated situation with few attractive options. I suggested that he might get benefit from coaching:
DP: As a spouse Juan wants to be working in the day. We hired a second person and he can’t stand working with Juan either. He is not training him properly. I sent Juan to a course in Miami and he was meant to teach Robert but he won't.

GA: The trap I guess is to address so many resources to Juan - you, your manager, Juan’s direct supervisor, now me - and Miami. What are the chances it will be successful, success being a happy rest of tour?

DP: Out of 10, maybe 4. He is very hot tempered, excitable and emotional and he is going to read a very negative report with us.

Having heard Juan talk at a seminar about his experiences, my assessment was that there were a number of cultural issues related to his situation. At the time, I did not raise this with Danielle. In retrospect, this may have been more valuable than thinking of taking him on as a research participant! I could have given Danielle ideas from a cross-cultural perspective. As it was, I drew on Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP), reflective listening and empathy. Danielle seemed to find this useful:

GA: What do you do when people are abrupt and rude?

DP: Probably ignore it at the time and get the task finished, then go back to it later.

GA: Another way is to reflect or acknowledge it, ‘I find this difficult, that you are not very receptive to what I am saying.’

DP: I could do more of that.

GA: Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP) talks about reflecting and connecting with the mood of the other person.

DP: I don’t tend to do that very much. I will try that in our meeting when I get back.

GA: You can be very direct, ‘You seem to find this very difficult? Is there something we can do to make it easier?’

DP: I like that. I try not to be abrupt. It is something I could try with him.

GA: If someone is very angry and you are very calm, it can make it worse. The calmer you are the more annoyed they get. If they are rushed and you slow down, it can make the person more agitated.

DP: I like the idea of matching with him, to be more assertive with him. Thanks - a happy medium of not going too far, because I feel it with him.
Circumstances did not allow me to follow through with Juan, but this is an example of how coaching could flow from one client to another in a natural way and work within the client system. It drew together the themes of the suitability of coaching for expatriates, coaching from a cultural perspective, action research and pragmatism.

**Insights on Coaching Expatriates for Acculturation**

Danielle experienced some personal crises during the seven months we worked together and I found that we needed to move at a pace that accommodated her circumstances. Danielle’s father died and her mother’s house in Florida was destroyed by a storm. Danielle also experienced a burst appendix and had extensive dental surgery. Although all executives have crises, this case illustrates the particular vulnerability of expatriates to crises in their personal lives. The separation from friends and family and the unfamiliarity of health and other support systems in the new country are contributing factors.

**Executive Coaching as Action Research**

I was conscious when talking with Danielle that she was working within a strong system in her organization, made stronger by her and Drew’s commitment to continue their careers long-term. Working individually with them was a little frustrating from an action research perspective because I felt that there would be more impact by working within the system. I had gained considerable insights about Danielle’s situation from interacting with others in the organization in different work and social settings, including attending a seminar for spouses of employees with Drew and two of the other participants.

**Coaching and Pragmatism**

We spoke at length about the consequences of Danielle pursuing her study at the military college and of going very hard with her career at the expense of time with her family. We also explored the personal consequences of failure. This approach proved powerful:
DP: I am definitely more focused from this. I was much more focused on just doing this career direction. Now I have re-evaluated whether it is as important as I thought it was. I have about seven years left after this then I would be happy. I don’t want to turn into one of these people - they are so common - who don’t care or do a good job.
GA: By thinking of those things now it will prevent problems later.
DP: Exactly.
GA: And if it doesn’t work and you gave it your best?
DP: If I tried to do that and I failed it would be really awful.
GA: What would it mean?
DP: They put their trust in me out of all of us... so rare... and then I was not able to do it.

This conversation lead to Danielle planning some specific actions to make sure that the college was what she wanted:

GA: Do you know the course?
DP: I know the basics.
GA: Have you been there?
DP: No. I could go to the one in the US. I have a couple of good friends who got through. They are really bright.
GA: You are not?
DP: I don’t know.
GA: It would be a challenge.
DP: One is a regional security officer. She did it and loved it. It was really hard and intense and lots of readings. She has no children. She did it at 10pm at night. The other one is a single woman too. She will be an ambassador. She said it was intense.
GA: Do you know women with children who went through?
DP: No.
DP: Find out how they did it. With young ones you can’t just say, ‘No’ to a five-year old. It is interesting. I am going to head office in September. I’ll check it out.
GA: You could even find someone who failed.
DP: I don’t know if they would admit it. I could go online and look at the failure rate.
The Role of Values

Danielle believed in service and this drove her dedication to her work. She said that her passion was in drama and theatre but that work and family had priority so she was not going to pursue this until she retired. I acknowledged this decision and worked from the priorities that Danielle set on service. She placed value on work-life balance which began to gain more prominent later in the process as we looked at the consequences of pursuing her government career with complete focus. The realization of the tension between her values was useful for Danielle in understanding her situation and considering her future. The following exchange, where Danielle discussed her interest in attending a prestigious military college in the USA, illustrated the tension:

GA: The difference between the idea of a drama school and a military college is huge.
DP: It is. I am interested not so much in war but in the learning. The content is not important. It is a privilege to go, coming from a computing background.
GA: And as a woman?
DP: Yes.

Danielle also had some personal issues around the political situation in the USA which we discussed in the coaching sessions. Danielle was nervous about discussing this in the coaching sessions:

DP: I got very excited with Colin Powell. We had a lot of money and we could put forward initiatives and things would happen. Communication changed dramatically. With money it could happen. We will see what happens next.
GA: He seems very well respected.
DP: The last member of the cabinet... I know. I feel a bit strange talking with you about it. It is my own personal private view. Put that down.
GA: Do you talk politics here?
DP: A little bit. On election night we went to the party and we had to wear Bush and Kerry badges if we wanted to wear any. I would guess by my friends and acquaintances, we are very much like the rest of America - split down the middle.
**Impact**

After just five sessions, Danielle was quite forthcoming about the value of the coaching program:

*DP:* I have used a lot of the coaching ideas already. I have focused on things I probably would not have focused on such as my interaction with some of my employees, such as Juan. Different ways of getting to a solution.

*GA:* Trying different strategies and working individually?

*DP:* Yes. I am a focused person but with coaching it kind of brings it to a head in ways you normally wouldn’t because we talk about me for an hour - what I want to do, the fact that I might not want to pursue the highest level and hardest path. Second best could be ok; it could be ok; which I never thought really.

*GA:* Second best might give you the best in another way?

*DP:* In another way it would be the best choice. You have to aim for the very highest in the past. But if you look at it in that way it could make you just as happy, or happier - a more complete life.

*GA:* And if you choose to take the hard path you will have done it from a more informed decision.

*DP:* Yeah, exactly, taking the hard path I will have researched and made sure it was not an impossible goal.

*GA:* You will be looking at the consequences of making the decision.

*DP:* If it is going to be an impossible goal it truly wouldn’t be worth it.

In the Post-Coaching Questionnaire ratings, Danielle scored most items highly, except on cultural adjustment since she and Drew were already old hands at this and didn’t really need support. Danielle commented that what made executive coaching effective for her was that it assisted her to identify and develop her individual management style. She was able then to develop alternative solutions to issues that she had not thought about before. Danielle also found it useful for reflecting on her long-term plans:
DP: It has given me a comprehensive set of tools I can use in my workplace. It has made me think out of my box. I would recommend executive coaching to any manager that wants to improve their ability to manage.

I felt that the major impact was in affirming that Danielle’s management style. In general, I believe that the coaching was useful in reminding Danielle that she was a highly talented manager. My view was that coaching increased her self confidence and self efficacy (though this was not formally measured).
CHAPTER 6.10

CASE STUDY: DREW McLaren

Profile

Drew McLaren was a 40 year old American. He was human resources director for a US Government organization in El Salvador. He was married to Danielle (previous Case Study 6.9). We had eight sessions together over eight months. Drew and Danielle were referred to me by the director of the spouse employment program in the organization. Drew joined the organization after following his wife to their first post in the Caribbean 17 years ago. He moved from a junior position to senior management. He was promoted to the same level as his wife during the time we were working together.

Reason for Inclusion in the Study

Drew and Danielle provided the perspectives of an expatriate husband and wife working together in the same organization. Both were new arrivals and both had extensive experience in other posts. An added perspective was that Drew was a human resources specialist and was interested in doing his own research on executive coaching. Drew was a case of someone who had successfully shifted from the role of a ‘trailing spouse’ (in US government language) to an expatriate manager.

Issues and Goals

Drew was initially uncertain about what he wanted from his association with me. He just wanted to explore coaching. Also, he thought I might be able to play the role of an independent mentor. So we moved ahead and explored. Drew indicated he was interested in increasing his sensitivity to cues from people in meetings, and generally getting a better feel for situations and people so that he could increase his effectiveness. This included improving his relationships and impact with his superiors.
Drew was interested in gaining a promotion in the short to medium-term and saw this as an associated coaching goal. To gain promotion, Drew needed to make an impact with a new program:

*DM: I want to do a really cool training program here. I did one in Ecuador but it is extremely time consuming and I have already done it. I can do a new version of that but I want something new.*

In the short term, Drew indicated he was concerned about his secretary’s lack of performance. His secretary was Salvadorian so this issue had a cross-cultural component. I discussed with Drew the idea of using the coaching sessions to try new approaches with motivating staff, with his secretary being the starting point. In an email to Drew, I suggested:

*This could be a test case of doing something different - motivating someone who does not appear to be receptive to your normal motivational techniques.*

Drew found it useful to have someone independent, supportive, and friendly with whom he could bounce around ideas. We often met in a café and shared a beer while we talked. Drew seemed comfortable with this format:

*DM: You know sometimes somebody like you - and this I have thought about quite a bit - it is interesting. I used to chat with Rob [a consultant while Drew was in Ecuador] quite a bit and it was a personal friendship and he used to do some training for me. We got together for coffee and we just hung out from time-to-time. Sometimes as a boss just having somebody outside the organization to sit down and talk with - talk over these situations. You simply validate what you know is the right thing to do.*

**Coaching Techniques and Perspectives**

I generally concentrated on explaining the coaching process to Drew and in talking with him about his issues, without discussing specific actions he might take. Essentially, it was a case of two professionals talking about matters of professional interest. In doing so, Drew was able to reflect on his work. It seemed that this process resulted in his making some
changes in his approach to his work. In Session 2 he commented on his efforts to pick up
more in situations with his superiors:

*I was in disagreement with my boss and the security officer but I think it went well. I don’t
think I missed any subtleties and I was very conscious to hold back and listen a lot to try to
understand what people’s positions were before I put my position on the line.*

Drew worked over several months to motivate his secretary, including through encouraging
her self confidence through task achievement:

*GA: The strategy now is to work with her on individual projects to give her confidence.*

*DM: To raise her confidence.*

*GA: And when it is up a bit, then...*  

*DM: I don’t think now she can understand now what we are organizationally. When she
has the parts then she can put them together.*

Drew felt Cessi was making some progress, though slowly. In the end, she left. While she
achieved some short-term improvements in performance, Drew felt that she had not risen to
the occasion:

*DM: I just turned up the pressure on her and she left for a new job. I would not buy into the
games she was playing. I pushed her to get her work done. I was not really hard on her. I
was just very clear in my expectations.*

*GA: She knew she was not there?*

*DM: She had been manipulating her bosses. And I wasn’t sympathetic to her personal
issues of her husband working away from home five days a week. She wanted to chat all the
time. I make time to do that on a weekly basis but not on a daily basis.*

Drew seemed to gain value from reflecting on his progress and using the coaching to
support and reinforce his ongoing progress – which was obviously rapid. Where possible, I
connected the theory to Drew’s practice to reinforce his efforts:

*GA: It sounds like things might move quite quickly for getting this how you want it. Your
capacity to move things more quickly seems to be increasing.*
DM: It seems so. The biggest issue is my confidence is going up because you know I will sit in a meeting and something comes up and I know what to do and how to do it. It is very clear in my mind. I don’t have to sort of run back and scratch my arse and figure it out.

GA: There has been quite a lot of stuff done how experts make decisions. It is an American, Gary Klein. He has written about firemen, nurses, military people - a range of professions. The expert is how you describe. They don’t say, ‘Now we have this approach and that approach’ and look at the options. They go, ‘I know what the answer is’. They might get someone to double check it but basically the gut-feeling is what they are acting on. It is like a mental template.

DM: Things they are ticking off.

GA: Yes. They don’t have to go off and scratch their arses. The experts know straightaway. The novices go off and examine options. The experts look at it later to justify the first decision.

DM: That is interesting. When one finds oneself making decisions like that and doing what needs to be done without having to suffer over it they are starting to be able to recognize that they have developed an expertise in the area.

Drew wanted to look at ways to position himself for promotion. I explored with him several avenues where he could pursue an interest and do the positioning. Learning Spanish at a higher level and doing more study relevant to his work were two areas:

GA: Where can you go up and have fun?

DM: There are so many areas for self motivation to put on my front line. There are some management courses and they are bull shit. I could take some university studies in human resources or psychology to help me become more skilled at what I do. Improving language skills is one of those. Stress, time management, supervisory, Covey courses - they are good.

I took every opportunity to encourage Drew to reflect on possibilities in situations:

GA: Do you see yourself getting to the senior executive?

DM: I do, but if I am going to do that I am going to have to move fields into a broader management area.

GA: If you have some room to play, can you make some alliances?
DM: It is going to take some time. In my evaluation, I told my boss I felt cut out of stuff. But I am not well known.

GA: How can you do that?

This kind of stimulation seemed to result in Drew taking a broader view of his role over time, with a rekindling of his interest in leadership training.

Coaching from a Cultural Perspective:

Drew was very aware of cultural issues, having lived in many different countries and been on the cutting edge of human resource management of local and US staff. I was aware that his experience in this regard was well in excess of mine. I concentrated on encouraging reflection and self awareness and introducing new ideas where possible.

An issue arose which revealed the potential influence of cultural distance between the coach, the client and the local culture. I was having a lot of difficulty getting through the security to see him at the US office. It often took half an hour, due to a combination of rigidly applied procedures and my difficulties communicating with the security staff. I got impatient. I asked Drew to meet outside the Embassy because of the inconvenience of getting through security in the US Embassy. On reflection, I think this was a lack of cultural sensitivity on my part. Firstly, as a cross-cultural coaching in a Spanish-speaking country it would have been highly advantageous to be more competent in Spanish. Secondly, I knew that low-level employees in El Salvador are given little latitude to vary procedures. Thirdly, the USA is highly sensitive to security and I should simply have set aside more time and prepared myself more carefully. At the time, I didn’t give sufficient attention to these cultural nuances. I mentioned it Drew in a later meeting. He didn’t see it as an issue – but he could have.

In Drew’s situation, talking about cross-cultural issues was a natural part of our conversation because he enjoyed cross-cultural interactions:

GA: The cross-cultural work is a big opportunity.
DM: I enjoy that immensely. That is one of my favourite parts of this job. The whole international cross-cultural situation - nothing is ever too awfully routine or boring. Through a 360 degree feedback process (discussed below), it was clear that Drew’s staff respected his cultural sensitivity.

Drew introduced a major issue in Session 5. He was a central player in a process of bringing his organization and another together for resource functions. I introduced culture early in the conversation. I pushed a little on the importance of developing trust in cross-cultural relationships. On reflection, I was probably suggesting to Drew that there was a gap between what he was saying about trust and better communication and what he was actually doing – and the language he used to describe it:

DM: I can send a shot across the bows. I said today, ‘Why do we have these differences?’ It was very small - just opening a door for communication to take place. If this goes well, we might have other possibilities.’

GA: Underlying this is trust. Do they know you well enough?

DM: Not yet. I am planting the seeds.

GA: Maybe you could do some things to make them see you are the good guy? They don’t trust you now.

DM: And they are probably pissed because I bailed out on their language program. They pay $25 per hour. I pay $14.

GA: Are they still running theirs?

DM: Yes. They have an institutional lady who has been doing it for thirty years.

GA: There may be some ways of shifting her.

DM: That is the reality - $25 per hour. She said it is eight people in the class. I said, ‘I can get the class done for $13.’ We are bit more efficient and harder. That is part of the cultural difference.

GA: Is she any better?

DM: Maybe. But I don’t need anything sophisticated. For maintenance staff I want them to do the simple things. When I got done she kept on telling me how she teaches English. I wasn’t explicit but I indirectly suggested he might be wise not to push it too hard.

DM: This brings me back to - I could get bored.
GA: A highly competent manager who is bored is dangerous. They meddle.

We had various conversations in which I encouraged Drew to look at himself and cultural differences in as many different ways as possible:

DM: Do you find people get caught up on their own assumptions and miss out on what is going on around them a lot?

GA: I look at myself. I operate with a background in government, media, education - an Australian. I am sure I have ways of operating. This is useful for me to step out of that and look at how I do things.

DM: If I asked you to give me five assumptions about Americans as a rule, you could do that? Can you apply that model to me? That is where people go wrong on cross-cultural issues. We quickly categorize and stereotype people in organizations. I think they are good indicators going into something but making them hard and fast assumptions is dangerous. For instance, I have assumptions about the other organization. They don’t follow the rules and think they are above it. And they do and I have facts that dictate that. But to assume someone on their management team operates from that area is dangerous. I have to go in and say they are reasonable assumptions and I will keep my eyes open but I have to give the person the opportunity.

GA: And be keen to be wrong. You can test to prove them or to open a window to see if it is there.

DM: You might end up offending a person or creating an adversarial position.

GA: If you are aware of your own assumptions you can let go of things. And get them into a dialogue where they do the same to see what is possible. It is hard for some people to do.

DM: I can recognize that I have a hard time separating out my assumptions. When opposition comes up I tend to challenge it.

GA: Can you think of an example?

DM: Not off the top of my head - or - working with the other organization, I want them to collaborate. I know they don’t want me to cooperate and when I go to make the offer I assume they will say no. Then I add it to my list.

GA: To reinforce what you know?

DM: Yes, to reinforce my view.
I encouraged Drew to look at options for using his knowledge of culture to advantage – i.e. extending through the cultural intelligence model to include behaviour change:

GA: What can you do?
DM: Wait until I see what the directions are going to be.
GA: In the meantime?
DM: Build good relations so they see me as a trustworthy colleague with high standards.
GA: Building trust.
DM: Yes, trust is crucial. We have to show that we don’t want screw them. I am the new kid on the block.
GA: And you are intimidating to some people.
DM: My size.
GA: Also the way you operate to get things done. You take action.
DM: More than one person has told me that.
GA: You are powerful as an individual in various ways. They might prefer someone low key. What might build trust? Someone has to start.
DM: It is interesting as a conversation, but they have made it clear until they are made to do something then they will do nothing.
GA: Is that an assumption?
DM: We have made various offers and they have rejected it.
GA: I know I am naive, but can you start some informal networking?
DM: Sure, but not on this. This is where I am hoping to build trust by cooperating on other things. This is the same group whose language program I pulled from under their feet.

**Insights on Coaching Expatriates for Acculturation**

Drew and Danielle had many family problems during the coaching period. Drew’s father had died not too long before he came to El Salvador. My role as coach was to be supportive and also to understand that goal-setting processes may not be that important at certain times:

DM: My boss was gone for a lot of the time. It was quiet. Last week I was a wreck with Danielle coming back, being at home taking care of things. Trying to make sure our
mothers were taken care of. The week was something of a blur, almost lost. I haven’t been that depressed and detached for a long time. It was really tough.

GA: It is going to take a bit of time to level it out.

DM: The kids are in a decent routine now. The house help is working nicely. We are starting to level out. I am. Danielle is riding the ups and downs.

GA: I haven’t contacted her again yet. I thought I would leave it...

DM: I talked to her and she said that was fine and she was just not - not where she needs to be. But she is started to get engaged in her work again, she engaged a new staff member.

GA: Maybe next week?

Executive Coaching as Action Research

Drew’s familiarity with the theory and practice of human relations in organizations meant that often we just talked through issues without delineating particular strategies. He was kind of a research partner. At times, I felt that we should have been more focused on him, but that didn’t seem to be Drew’s need. Drew was conscious of my research needs and seemed keen to be part of the process. In one wrap up, he commented:

DM: Good. And you are all set, doing well? I hope our time has been productive for you.

GA: Yes. It doesn’t matter because my role here is to do what I do in executive coaching and if it is useful to you then great. If not, it is still good to know from a research point-of-view. And in coaching you ask the client, ‘Is this useful?’ If they, ‘No’, you ask them what might be more useful.

DM: And occasionally I guess some people just don’t respond.

GA: In some cases we have gone through a particular incident and they don’t need it any more. They have got what they wanted.

Yet, the coaching sessions seemed to be encouraging Drew to explore his development at a deeper level. In the same exchange, he added:

DM: I am trying to figure out - we’ve talked about the mentoring stuff - where I am at and what I really need. I am sort of wanting to have someone outside the organization around as a sounding board.
Drew was aware professionally of the need for organizations to support family members. In one of our conversations he talked from an organizational perspective of this issue. It then became immediate and personal:

DM: It is hard with the overseas lifestyle. The role of us as expat managers is critical. If you have an unhappy family member at home it means that the employee is not focusing on their job. They are not doing what they need to be doing. We think it costs around $300,000 per year to keep the average family abroad. If I divide that by the number of hours an employee supposedly works in a year, it is $104 per hour.

GA: By any measure that is a lot.

DM: We need the families to be settled and relatively happy so that the employee is not distracted and unhappy and is focused on what they are doing. Our ability to make an impact in a four year tour is very difficult.

At that point, Drew’s wife phoned:

GA: How is Danielle?

DM: Fine. She is doing well. She is doing a lot better. Her mother is having a lot of issues. She is in one of those ugly cycles. She has to get everything out of the house and packed up. But she doesn’t want to let go and they can’t start on the house until she moves it.

Understanding Drew’s interest in management and leadership theory, I made some quite explicit suggestions about his taking this interest further and expanding his knowledge outside his department into academia. He was a little interested, though nothing eventuated.

DM: I don’t think the top executives are keen about me advising them on how to handle senior officers.

GA: Touchy but fun.

DM: Depends on your risk tolerance. In Ecuador, we had two serious problems - a divorce issue and other serious issues. My boss was forced in with me. We got to know one another and he had a lot of respect for me. I said I studied leadership and it was an area where the department lacked - leadership and coaching. I shared articles and ideas with him. He used those to formulate his management style.

GA: Feed ideas but not tell them what to do.
DM: Like what you do with me. Here are some ideas.
GA: Get some skills in leadership - some articles and ideas.
DM: An in-house expert. I would like to write articles on management and leadership.
GA: And send copies around.
DM: Publish it in the newsletter.
GA: How about a more official bit of writing in a journal?
DM: Never done that... it might be interesting. I generally leave that to the academics.

Coaching and Pragmatism

As noted earlier, over the two years of the fieldwork, I developed a 360 degree feedback instrument specifically designed for managers in a cross-cultural environment. Although the starting point was a journal article by Luthans and Farner (2002), I worked up the instrument by drawing on various coaching texts, course, theories, and experiences with clients. My aim was to develop something that would work in the field and be useful to clients, while at the same time fitting the tests of rigor and relevance of pragmatic science. The version developed for Drew was therefore a culmination of two years of accumulated knowledge and experience rather than an ‘off-the-shelf’ product. I administered the feedback process with Drew towards the end of the process, as he became more comfortable with our relationship and the concept of ‘being coached’. (A copy of the instrument, with Drew’s summarized feedback is at Appendix C.) Drew found the process useful in confirming his own views and giving new insights about his response to criticism and new ideas.

The Role of Values

Drew received a promotion quite quickly. This proved an impetus for him to look ahead further, consistent with the value he placed on self development, and opened the door to deeper and more expansive conversations in the coaching:
DM: I have never left a job the same as when I took it. I always turned it into something more. I think that is the key to success. If you want a job and collect a pay check – to put
your widgets in the hole day after day - that is fine. Personally, that is not where I am at in life. I need to continually expand and move forward to get satisfaction. I just really haven’t gotten my priority plan organized and together for what exactly I want to accomplish here. But it is starting to come together.

A little later in the conversation, this shift was reflected when Drew turned a common question from-me-to-him back towards me:

**DM:** How do you see your role? How do you see yourself in terms of working with me and what you can provide me?

**GA:** I was thinking about that. I don’t know to be honest. What we would typically do is to work out a series of goals but when I get with people who are at a higher level I find that they don’t do that because the reason they are at a higher level is because they are able to do it themselves. They don’t need to go through basic goal-setting. I don’t have to remind you to do something.

In a later session I explored with Drew his interest in learning Spanish and we moved into one of his values:

**DM:** Spanish motivates me because I want to be a solid speaker in another language. It is just so appealing. It opens doors in my life. It eases my life. It is self fulfilling.

**GA:** Why self fulfilling?

**DM:** It is something I have always wanted, to have a command of another language. It eases my life, allows me to fit in better. I find people of other cultures very interesting but I find myself communicating in English at the higher end. I want to talk with everyone.

I went further with this conversation and Drew referred to the motivating impact of the promotion as he discussed his passions a little:

**GA:** There is a lot of ‘should’ and ‘need’. On the other side is ‘want’ and ‘feels good’.

**DM:** As you become more skilled you get motivated.

**GA:** You really like communicating with people. Forget the job. You followed Danielle from post-to-post, not just for love?

**DM:** I really liked the travel - the moving around.
GA: Something was there to motivate that. Go back to the fundamental stuff about connection, communication, friendship. Strip away your job stuff.

DM: That last promotion really pumped me up. I am really pleased the way that part of my life is going. I am not willing to sit back and not to develop my skills as a manager and a leader.

This lift took Drew towards exploring his interest in leadership which became a theme for later discussions. As mentioned above, we also talked about the idea of his publishing something in a journal. This led to a discussion about risk, and about how much he was following his own values:

DM: It is a possibility. I would have to think about how to do it and impact - possibly controversial.

GA: Is that ok?

DM: It would not get me fired. I would have to think about it.

GA: And visibility.

DM: With head office and also negatively in the field with those that don’t want to change. It is the big picture level - where I want to go. I have to think it through clearly, to make sure you are not going to hurt your career.

GA: Managing risk is part of the more senior levels - managing that carefully as you go up and pushing the boundaries.

DM: I have not done a lot of that. I am just reaching the level where I might be doing that and I am getting seen by senior people.

GA: There is a progression model in coaching. Initially assist clients try to find focus and build relationships, then align values with their work, and finally to set their own values.

DM: I am still working with others’ values.

GA: The high level people are able to develop more of what they want within the boundaries of the organization. You are with a fixed organizational structure.

DM: Which is government.
Drew’s comments about his working with other values resonated with me regarding his developmental stage in Kegan’s (1982) five-stage model. The following conversation about values flowed naturally:

**DM:** Government moves slowly and people resist change more than most. Some of it is bureaucracy.

**GA:** I am sure you have seen people in your career who seem to get things done.

**DM:** They are usually political within the organization. I don’t necessarily think they have strong values and want to do the right thing - outstanding performers, hard workers, good ideas, dynamism to break the boundaries.

**GA:** Can you think of someone with strong values and you thought, ‘How could they do that?’

**DM:** I think our deputy in Ecuador was one of those. There have been some - Colin Powell.

**GA:** They retain values but take action?

**DM:** We have people who have. Some in my view are really bad managers. They are movers and shakers who play the game. They sacrifice you to the wolves and would not think twice about it. The majority are incredibly political to take the right job and know the right people. If I went to head office and did two or three jobs and went after jobs that put me in the spotlight with influence I could move up.

**GA:** Would you have to sacrifice your values? You seem to be drawing a dichotomy between being political and having values? For example, Colin Powell.

**DM:** He doesn’t get on with Bush. He has the clout and respect of the American people. He could still be Secretary of State if he had been more political. Bush could not touch him because of his respect in the eyes of the people. His politics was based on values.

**GA:** For four years he was successful in a top position.

**DM:** And he would have played politics to become a top general, though the military place high priority on values and honesty.

**GA:** In your career?

**DM:** Not always knowing if I am with my values. I am not comfortable in the political area because I am not good at it. I was thinking after this job of maybe going back to Florida and getting into local politics, but it is so damned dirty.
Limitations of Coaching

Drew spelt out an issue which is common across executive coaching. He suggested that by coaching expatriates, coaches are assured that clients will make progress by the nature of the people who go into those jobs. He suggested that coaching might push those people even further.

*DM:* I guess your group is skewed. The expats are a productive group. They have to put a lot of money into people. In many cases you are getting a high level sector - making the successful more successful.

This issue raised questions about how to measure the impact of coaching on the progress of someone who is already being successful. Certainly, each participant experienced a very obvious level of success. Many attributed some of it to coaching, but how is it possible to know?

Impact

At times, I questioned the value I was having with Drew. In Session 3, I commented:

*GA:* It is good to talk but there isn’t any point if you don’t see value. There may not be in your case. You may not get much value from this.

Drew’s response illustrated one of the difficulties in assessing the impact of executive coaching – its indirect impact:

*DM:* I don’t think so. I certainly enjoy talking to you and I feel like I learn. Every session that we have I am learning things. I think you are influencing me more than I realize in terms of motivating me to think and examining things a little closer than I would and maybe consider approaches that I wouldn’t consider - although it is hard to lay it in concrete terms. I feel like there is value in it because I am bouncing things off you. I tell you I am heading in this way and you ask me questions, and you tell me there was guy that did this study. You are giving me some good insights into a lot of things.

*GA:* A lot is affirming what you are already doing I think.
Drew rated the coaching highly in the Post-Coaching Questionnaire, giving scores of 4 or 5 out of 5 for most items. He noted that that he was now more specific in his upfront goals: *Mostly, I gained ability to better interpret the not-so-obvious indicators from bosses and colleagues. Alter ego, self-questioning, self-analysis, looking inside - the process of continuously asking yourself how you can do better. I think overlooking the cross-cultural issues would be a huge mistake.*
CHAPTER 7

CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

7.1 Introduction

This cross-case analysis focuses on what was happening across the Empirical level of reality in Bhaskar’s structure, thus moving the analysis into the Actual level of reality. My role as coach-researcher provides the linkage across the cases. I looked across the Empirical worlds of the participants to explore a series of related questions:

- How was executive coaching impacting in the expatriate situation?
- What seemed to be common across the cases (and were there exceptions)?
- What was unexpected?
- What do the cases add to knowledge about executive coaching and acculturation?

There were different perspectives – those of the coach-researcher and those of the participants. The themes that follow were identified and analysed using three interrelated methods described in the methodology chapter (pp. 120-121):

- my ongoing observation and reflection through the coaching, transcribing, coding and analysis stages (recorded in memos and notes);
- NVivo analysis of transcripts and other textual data; and
- analysis of the Post-Coaching Questionnaire and interview.

Reflection on action and interpretation are essential in action research (Dick, 1997; Greenwood & Levin, 1998) and therefore in coaching when conceptualized as action research. I was mainly using my reflective, interpretative and integrative skills to draw out major themes.
A recurring theme was that at virtually every point of the analysis the processes of executive coaching and acculturation were intersecting and interacting in complex ways across the affective, cognitive and behavioural domains. This was consistent with the theory behind various models of cross-cultural adaptation (Earley & Ang, 2003; Peterson, 2004; Ward et al., 2001) and also with models of executive coaching (Grant & Greene, 2001). The coaching seemed to be promoting reflective thinking, generating action through goal-setting processes and utilizing the affective domain through fostering trusting relationships and anchoring clients in core values. I provide separate discussions of the cognitive behavioural elements and affective elements of the interaction.

7.2 The Impact of Executive Coaching: Work Performance and Personal Satisfaction

The impact of the coaching process on participants was a major focus of the study. As discussed earlier, I examined two common measures of success of both coaching and expatriate acculturation – enhanced personal satisfaction and improved work performance. The main assessment methods were:

1. the participant’s feedback in the Post-Coaching Questionnaire and interview;
2. coach/researcher observations of changes; and
3. participant progress on concrete criteria such as promotions, pay rises, new opportunities and bonuses.

Table 7.1 (next page) provides an assessment for each participant on these three levels of assessment. All of the participants rated the process as effective in improving work performance and enhancing personal satisfaction. All of the participants (in my view and theirs) made some progress against their objectives. They appeared to have gained new insights about themselves and their situations which in turn equipped them to operate more effectively at both a personal and professional level. There were no apparent negative impacts from the coaching; though one participant suggested that I may have raised his salary expectations a little too high, a little too early.
Table 7.1  
Participant Self-Ratings of Coaching Impact on Work Performance and Personal Satisfaction and Observable Progress Made During Coaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Self Rating: Assisted Performance</th>
<th>Self Rating: Enhanced Satisfaction</th>
<th>Coach and Participant Observation Changes/Benefits</th>
<th>Concrete Progress/ Achievements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Gateau</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Slowing down. Self reflection</td>
<td>Promotion. Better relationships – supervisor, subordinates</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Cross-cultural communication</td>
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<td>6.2</td>
<td>Redmond</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Awareness of management style</td>
<td>Applications made to private consultancies. New job in Washington DC</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Greater capacity to empathize</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Awareness of non-government options</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>Barber</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Increased self awareness.</td>
<td>Maintained position with company after major setback</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Assertiveness.</td>
<td>Promotion.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Awareness of need to build skill base for future</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>Plummer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Release of baggage. Self confidence</td>
<td>Two promotions in company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Capacity to prioritize</td>
<td>Opening up of options overseas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>Trudeau</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Improved relationships (specially cross-cultural).</td>
<td>Successful sojourn. New funding for project. Started own business. New consultancy jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Focus on future goal of business. Self awareness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>Trimboli</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Situational and self awareness</td>
<td>Seamless transition from multinational to own business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Relationship management and cross-cultural skills</td>
<td>Promising start to business</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>Hernandez</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Increased self efficacy</td>
<td>Pay rise</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Increased management skill</td>
<td>Promotion</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Support through culture shock</td>
<td>Recognition in company</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>Peters R</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Situational and situational awareness</td>
<td>National award for his department</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Increased capacity to reflect</td>
<td>Appointment to US organization country director</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Grounding in values</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>Powell</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Long-term planning review</td>
<td>Ongoing career success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Consideration of consequences of failure.</td>
<td>Successful transition to senior job</td>
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<td>Team empowerment</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>McLaren</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Self confidence. Situational awareness.</td>
<td>Promotion</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Goal-setting</td>
<td>Successful transition to job</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Capacity to risk.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Comfort with change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Carboni</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Increased self efficacy</td>
<td>Training modules delivered</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Focus on future opportunities. Goal-setting skills</td>
<td>Study success. Article published</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Grounding in values</td>
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<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>Rivers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Self confidence and efficacy</td>
<td>Organization of informational interviews in USA. Solid job hunt strategy. Successful move</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Self awareness</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Management of perfectionism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4</td>
<td>Luz</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>People management</td>
<td>Promotion. Appointment to head a department he designed</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Self confidence</td>
<td>Lost 60 pounds</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cross-cultural communication</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A5</td>
<td>George</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Goal-setting tools.</td>
<td>Completion of master’s Better teaching position.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Opening up of new ideas for future.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
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My communications with participants well after the coaching had finished indicated that the impact of executive coaching could be indirect and subtle, facilitating positive changes in ways that during the coaching were often not clear to either the coach or the participant. For example, the participant who found least value from coaching at the time (6.3 Neil Barber), seemed to gain from the experience in the longer term as he challenged himself and sought additional advice on how to go further in his career. In the expatriate situation, this post-hoc impact of executive coaching might be particularly difficult to assess because of the rapid movement of managers to different positions and countries.

There is a caveat to the very positive results at the Empirical level. The participants were productive and capable professionals who would have achieved some success regardless of coaching. The expatriate sojourn is an experiential learning process which could in itself have spawned the kinds of insights and advancements that participants attributed to the coaching program. The power of the expatriate experience in generating transformational change across different domains is well documented, particularly in the qualitative research work of Osland (1995). However, the analysis provides some persuasive evidence that the experience of executive coaching was related to improve work performance and enhanced personal satisfaction. It was not possible to determine exactly what may be attributed to coaching and what could not. This is not necessarily a weakness in research design but more a recognition of the nature of the phenomena under investigation. It is arguable that any research technique could effectively separate out the pieces because of the complexity of the contexts and the multidimensional relationships between the various factors which are related to expatriate success. This study confirms research that suggests there are no textbook approaches that will offer predicable results. McCall and Hollenbeck (2002) observe that the complexity is such that expatriates virtually need to make up their own rules to achieve success. Aycan (1997) stresses the multifaceted nature of cross-cultural adjustment.
7.3 Common Participant Issues

A major feature of the coaching programs was that there was an incredible diversity of issues and experiences among participants, even though they shared a common environment and had the same coach. I identified over eighty different participant issues. This is consistent with the multidimensional and multifaceted nature of the experience reflected in the literature and noted above. Even when the issues were the similar, they played out in different ways. This finding reinforced my view going into the research project that training alone cannot meet the demands of expatriates as they face various challenges during their sojourns. The advantage of executive coaching was that the coach could explore these various issues on an individual basis. The coach must work with the unique nature of the change transition that the manager is going through. Chapman, Best and Casteren (2003) explain the danger of anticipating the efficacy of set coaching models, ‘We have observed too many coaches attempting to 'shoehorn' an existing model into a coaching transaction when it is clearly inappropriate. Although commonly practiced by academic researchers, the act of forcing the fit of errant data to an existing model is not good scientific practice’ (p. 22).

Another observation was that even though I was presenting as a coach interested in studying cross-cultural adjustment, the content of the sessions was often not directly related to culture. Culture was a significant issue but it often influenced events in indirect ways. A cultural perspective gave new insights to common problems in management such as manager-staff relationships and office communications. The coaching conversations served to raise awareness of culture at various points. Self and situational awareness are crucial elements in general change processes (Greene & Grant, 2003) and particularly in a cross cultural environment, as discussed by Earley and Ang (2003) in the context of cultural intelligence.

In addition to examining the issues that I selected for inclusion in the case studies, I went back to the original coding structure and examined the node ‘Client Issues’ across all cases.

7.3.1 Work Relationships

Most participants spent a good deal of time discussing relationships with direct reports, peers and supervisors. These coaching discussions grouped around nodes of Organizational Politics, Work Relationships and Home Office Relationships. Participants seemed to be using the coaching sessions in a strategic way to better understand and manage relationships in the workplace. I often introduced the idea of empathy into the discussions, particularly when the relationships were cross-cultural. Trust emerged as a key element across all of the various relationships. This is discussed in more detail below.

7.3.2 Day-to-Day Life

The second theme was around the immediacy and pressure of day-to-day life, mainly coding on the nodes of Work Crises, Stress and Anxiety. Clients used the coaching to cope with day-to-day stress and issues that were in-the-moment. In the pressured and complex context of the expatriate manager, the unexpected was expected. The coaching sessions took in what was happening, regardless of what we might have planned beforehand. On many occasions, coaching sessions began not with the text book ‘review of previous session’ but with an immediate presentation of a hot issue. As coach, my task was to assist the participant to manage the issue, while at the same time keeping focus on longer term goals and values. Goal-setting theory (Latham, 2003) emphasizes the need to engage in this kind of ongoing shift between immediate events and long term considerations. As is apparent from the case studies, sometimes I succeeded, and sometimes I was less successful.
7.3.3. Looking Ahead

The third theme was about looking ahead under the nodes of Career Planning, What Next?, New Business and Further Education. Participants used the opportunity to look beyond the assignment in El Salvador to contemplate the future. It is a normal part of the coaching process to encourage participants to look ahead three to five years (Grant and Greene, 2001). However, it seemed with this group of expatriates that this element was often top-of-mind. This is likely to be the case with most expatriates due to the relatively short nature of sojourns and the uncertainty of expatriate career development. Even new arrivals were looking beyond El Salvador virtually as soon as they arrived. This point is not emphasized in the existing literature on expatriate acculturation. The forward planning theme related also to an issue under the Cross-Cultural Management node of Transition Planning covered below under the Culture section.

7.4 Acculturation-Specific Themes

Culture was interwoven through the fabric of the coaching in many ways. Expatriate acculturation is, by definition, cultural in its focus. I introduced myself to clients as interested in issues of acculturation and described the practice of coaching as including the cultural perspective. After that, the client took the main running on how much or little culture was directly or indirectly dealt with in the conversations though of course my natural interest in this area would have had an influence.

7.4.1 Cross-Cultural Management

A major coding node was Cross-Cultural Management. This could be expected given the nature of the coaching project. However, only one participant initially talked about cross-cultural management as being a focus on the coaching as a ‘Participant Issue’. Issues of culture generally emerged by way of other topics such as Workplace Relationships rather than explicitly through the goal-setting process.
The related theme of *Cross-Cultural Communication* was a major issue and high on the character count. Both of these nodes were intricately related to the context of the coaching assignment. It would have been very unusual had they not surfaced as regular topics of discussion. *Language* emerged as a regular topic of conversation, consistent with the literature which highlights the importance of being able to communicate in the local language (e.g. Peterson, 2004). Of the thirteen non-Salvadorian participants, three did not speak Spanish with sufficient fluency to conduct business. The others were able to function at varying levels of proficiency. However, even with those who were fluent, language was still an issue as a potential barrier to communication.

The way in which culture had a significant place in most of the discussions (directly or indirectly) confirmed my initial view that coaches working with expatriate managers must be well-educated and skilled in the area of cross-cultural management and communication. Without training and experience it is hard to see how they could be effective in assisting clients with their day-to-day challenges. Preferably, they should be familiar with the language and culture of the host country. In other words, they should be high in cultural intelligence as defined by Earley and Ang (2003). Coach selection in the context of the expatriate environment is crucial, particularly the need for the coach to be informed by cross-cultural theory and experience. A limiting factor for companies looking for coaches in developing countries is availability. During the time of the coaching, I was the only formally-trained executive coach in El Salvador. This may become less of an issue in the future because of the rapid growth in executive coaching internationally, including in Central America.

### 7.4.2 Cultural Dimensions

In the coding process, I developed child nodes under *Cultural Dimensions* to pick up where we touched on differing dimensions which seemed to map against research findings (e.g. Hofstede, 2001; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998). However, I did not fix the terminology to any one cultural dimension schema, allowing the context to dictate the
language. The results were revealing and I have listed them here in rank order of character count (high to low):

1. Direct/Indirect 12492
2. Task/Relationships 11559
3. High/Low Power Distance 11514
4. Collaboration/Competition 5477
5. Present/Future Focus 5202
6. High/Low Uncertainty Avoidance 3105
7. Individualism/Collectivism 2280
8. Harmony/Control 2062
9. Monochromatic/Polychromatic 1551
10. Being/Doing 1310
11. Formal/Informal 1035
12. High/Low Context 878
13. Optimism/Pessimism 621
14. High/Low Openness to Foreigners 502
15. Fast/Slow Pace 461

This list is open to multiple interpretations. My interpretation is that the high counts reveal the cultural dimensions where there was the greatest degree of contrast between the expatriates and the local population. I found that Salvadorians generally favoured an indirect communication style. This contrasted with the more direct style of the Western expatriates (particularly the Americans). Similarly, the expatriates as a group tended to be task-focused while Salvadorians tended to give more emphasis to relationships in the work place. Also, my impression of Salvadorian business culture was that there was high power distance, meaning that work place relationships tended to be hierarchical with the use of formal titles. These findings were not unexpected as they reflected patterns suggested by the cultural dimensions for El Salvador reported by Hofstede (1980, 1997, 2001) and also were typical of ‘non-Western’ thinking styles as described by Nisbett (2003). My task as a coach operating from a cultural perspective was to bring these contrasts to the surface and
develop ways of leveraging the differences to the advantage of the participant in-context. One significant observation was that as a group the individuals confirmed the expected patterns across the dimensions, yet individually each provided an exception in some way. For example, Jack Trimboli (Case Study 6.6) ran into some difficulties because sometimes he was too indirect, in contrast with the American tendency towards directness. This confirmed the need for coaches and expatriates to carefully apply findings from cultural dimension measurements.

7.4.3 Transition Planning

All research in this area reports that the life of the expatriate manager is one of change and complexity (e.g. see Osland, 1995; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). Even within the sojourn roles are likely to change as circumstances change. Without exception, in this study the research participants experienced shifts in roles and responsibilities through the time of the coaching. Some shifts were dramatic, involving a change of continent, a change of profession or a major promotion. Others were more subtle, involving new duties or altered supervisory arrangements. Around them, other expatriates arrived and left. New opportunities regularly presented themselves.

The sense of constant change seemed to make expatriates (and locals involved with them) extremely conscious of the ‘What next?’ question. A regular related issue was, ‘What will be left behind when I move to something different?’ This emerged in the form of an issue labelled Transition Planning. It was one of the highest character counts and was a consideration for all participants in various ways. The issue emerged with several participants as part of their decision to become mentors. They were conscious of the need to skill-up locals (and sometimes other expatriates) so that the functions for which they had responsibility would continue efficiently after they moved on. The coaching process seemed to be helpful in generating reflection and associated planning regarding transition.
7.4.4 Multinational Corporations and Ethics

Seven of the fifteen participants were directly or indirectly involved with multinational corporations. Many of our discussions centred on structural and ethical issues regarding the operation of multinationals in developing countries. All of the participants were acutely aware of the potential damage that multinational companies could do in the country as well as the potential benefits. For the seven involved with multinationals, there was an ongoing potential tension between their involvement and some of their individual beliefs about the interaction of their companies with the host country. The coaching sessions provided a forum where they could discuss this tension openly and work through some of the issues that were salient to them in their particular situations.

The American participants were conscious about the impact of American multinationals, particularly at a time when America’s role in Latin America and the world generally was such a contentious issue. Coaching provided a forum for them to reflect on the positive and negative impacts that multinationals were having and to work with their own values in deciding their positions. For example, the arrival of an American computer call centre in San Salvador caused considerable debate among the American expatriates, mainly around whether an American company should be situating call centres offshore, thereby potentially depriving Americans of job opportunities. At the same time, the benefits of job creation in the local market were obvious.

7.4.5 Spouse and Family Member Acculturation

The research literature has repeatedly found that spouse and family adjustment are important elements in predicting success of expatriate sojourns (Hechanova, Beehr, & Christiansen, 2003; Van der Zee, Ali, & Salomé, 2005). Analysis of the coaching discussions revealed that how the spouse was situated was a major issue for the participants in this study. My experience working with spouses was that the coaching relationship was a welcome part of their lives. At least in the El Salvadorian context it seemed that spouses who decided to operate outside the expatriate communities to pursue their own directions
and careers put themselves in a slightly isolated position, though recent research suggests that dual-career couples are becoming more common in expatriate assignments (Harvey, 1998). My role as coach was partly to provide a sounding board and support.

The core relationship between the expatriate and spouse came up in various ways during coaching sessions. I made no conscious effort to introduce discussion of the participants’ partners. However, with each participant we talked about how the partner was coping – sometimes in depth and at length. Confidentiality agreements precluded me from including many details. Suffice to say that in these case studies, the state-of-mind of the expatriate manager and his or her capacity to perform at full capacity at work was often influenced by how the spouse and other family members were coping. Coaching seemed to provide a useful outlet for discussions about relationships. In the goldfish bowl of a small expatriate community it seemed that such opportunities for confidential discussions were few and far between.

7.4.6 Mentoring

The practice of mentoring regularly surfaced in the coaching sessions, consistent with much of the expatriate literature that stresses the value of expatriates having an appropriate mentor (Harvey, Buckley, Novicevic, & Weise1999). Some participants saw me in some ways as a mentor. Others were mentors, had mentors or had had mentors – or all three. The discussions contrasted executive coaching with mentoring but also showed where there was overlap. The coding demonstrated the diversity of situations in which mentoring can emerge or be of value in the cross-cultural situation, including the role of mentors in the homeland and of the potential for expatriates to develop local staff through mentoring. Those participants who were already mentors showed an interest in using coaching techniques in this role. There could be a general trend in this direction. Stead (2005) reviewed the mentoring literature and her subsequent explanation of mentoring included the role of the mentor-as-coach. Adopting a pragmatic approach from the ‘and’ perspective, it makes good sense for corporately-savvy mentors to operate as coaches, thus combining the best of both worlds. Companies with formal mentoring programs might give consideration
to giving coaching training to them to enhance their effectiveness and to overcome some of the limitations of mentoring mentioned earlier in the dissertation (pp. 48-49).

7.4.7 Timing

This study suggests that timing of the coaching intervention is important. Counter-intuitively, early in the sojourns when the expatriates were under most stress were not times when they were necessarily receptive to commencing coaching. While having a coach during this time might on the face of it appear to be of value, in practice the expatriate managers in this phase had neither the time nor the emotional or cognitive space to engage in reflective coaching conversations. Two potential participants declined an offer of coaching early in their sojourn. Similarly, two other potential candidates said they were simply too overwhelmed to set aside time for the executive coaching program. Four of the final participants were slow to start due to stresses and pressures. The message from this experience was that a flexible approach to individual circumstances would help ensure that executive coaching is delivered at an appropriate time and in an appropriate way. Early on, short sessions with a focus on practical issues would typically make good sense. Pre-assignment coaching sessions would also assist in preparing executives for the early challenges, although experienced sojourners usually understand and accept the reality of initial chaos. Careful consideration of the timing of the coaching intervention is important. This is consistent with good coaching practice, as explained by Morgan, Harkins, & Goldsmith (2005), ‘In coaching, as in life, timing is everything’ (p. 247).

7.5 Cognitive-Behavioural Factors

7.5.1 Reflection

The coaching had a heavy cognitive emphasis. In the pragmatic tradition of John Dewey and consistent with theories of cognitive behavioural psychology (Beck & Emery, 1985; Ellis, 1996), I was consciously endeavouring to encourage participants to reflect on their actions, their feelings and their thoughts. There were high character counts against all nodes
in the cognitive area (e.g. *Cognitive Perspective, Reflective Thinking, Situational Awareness* and *Self Awareness*). Most participants commented retrospectively that the opportunity for reflection was a major strength of the coaching, generated by perceptive questioning at key points.

The capacity to generate deeper reflection is commonly cited as a strength of coaching. Coaching is not concerned with knowledge but with knowledge application in-context. Peterson and Millier (2005) suggested that this in-the-moment reflection gives insights to already stored knowledge, ‘What makes coaching effective is that it makes … simple insights tangible and visceral at the precise moment they matter.’ (p31). My observations in this study accorded with their view that coaching is about cultivating a deeper level of insight that leads to the right action at the right time. (Grant, 2001) concluded that coaching may help people to go beyond self reflection into self regulation. The capacity to step back and reflect on oneself in context is also a sign of later-stage development in Kegan’s (1982, 1994) constructivist-developmental theory. Most participants appeared to increase the depth of their insights during the coaching and were increasingly comfortable with stepping back to look at themselves, suggesting that coaching may have been facilitating a move to later stages of development.

### 7.5.2 Challenging Participants

I regularly challenged the participants. In this respect, the coaching approach moved well beyond reflective listening. My style of challenging was not aggressive and occurred more in the way of indicating contradictions, for example between participants’ stated goals and their planned actions. Kilburg (2000) views confrontation and challenge as important elements in effective executive coaching processes. Participants rarely resisted my interventions when I challenged them and found it a useful way of prompting deeper reflection on the issues under discussion. I made many suggestions, demonstrating that the coach was playing an active part in the process. Suggestions were usually made in the style of, ‘What would happen if you…?’ rather than, ‘What you should do is…’
As well as simply questioning to generate reflection, I worked to bring to the participants’ Empirical worlds some of my knowledge regarding cross-cultural communication, management, and psychology. To some extent, this knowledge transfer constituted one-to-one training rather than coaching. Coaching came more in the application of the ideas. I coded this as Linking Theory to Practice. I was regularly connecting what participants were doing with what others were doing, informed by the literature or by my interaction with experts and other participants. Early in the project, I tended to be a little too enthusiastic about the theory, forgetting a basic principle of action research (and coaching – to focus on assisting the participants to achieve their desired outcome. Reason and Bradbury (2001) emphasise that, ‘a primary purpose of action research is to produce practical knowledge that is useful to people in the everyday conduct of their lives’ (p. 2). Later, I adopted an approach of succinctly introducing a particular theory, testing with participants if they found the idea helpful and then assisting them with the application of the theory in their context. Often, the theory informed my comments without my explicitly naming the theory. This was particularly the case with the psychodynamics of the coaching discussions where the theory-practice link was often speculative and tentative. The litmus test in how to or whether to introduce a theory was utility. The work of William James is relevant in the international business context today. James (1907) viewed theories as instruments (p. 21). Beyond the immediate context, the knowledge derived from the theory-in-action can then contribute to societal progress and well-being (Reason and Bradbury, 2001).

One theoretical perspective which participants found particularly helpful was in the area of expert decision making where I drew on research by Klein (1999, 2003). The impact was usually to validate the participants’ actions in working from intuition. I adding my own input by cautioning that the mental templates built up from experience in one culture may not always be effective when applied in a new cultural context.
7.5.4 Pragmatism: Utility and the Consideration of Consequences

The emphasis on utility noted above is quintessentially pragmatic. However, utility does not mean lack of connection to longer term goals or broader ethical issues. Howard (1993) makes this point when putting James forward as the founder of the scientist-practitioner model. James’ (1907) wrote of action being judged on what proves itself to be good for, ‘definite, assignable reasons’ (James, 1907, pp.76-77). My rule-of-thumb was that if a particular line of discussion was not of use to the participant either directly (the issue at hand) or indirectly (longer term goals and values) then we should move on. I asked this explicitly with participants when I was in doubt, referring back to participant-set goals and participant values as reference points for the measurement of utility.

I had many discussions with participants about the possible consequences of actions that they were contemplating. This was consistent with the pragmatic nature of coaching, including the emphasis on reflective thinking and contemplation of the future. The coaching sessions were a medium for participants to answer variations of the question, ‘If I did X, what would happen and is that consequence consistent with the broader goals I am aiming to achieve?’ Barbalet (2004) observed that in James’ pragmatic vision, the human is an active, creative and forward-looking animal, reflected in the very human activity of science (p. 220). Pragmatism emerged in the discussions through my encouragement to participants to build on what they had already achieved. A regular question was a variation of ‘Have you faced a similar issue before? What worked then? Can you try a similar approach here? The coaching-as-action research approach used in the case studies was consistent with pragmatist basis of action research in connecting action with reflective thought (Greenwood & Levin, 1998), which in turn derives from the ideas of John Dewey (1910).

7.5.5 Goal-Setting

Goal-Setting was highly prominent in every aspect of the coaching, as would be expected given its central nature in the modern practice of business coaching (Greene & Grant,
2003). In fact, most session content was either coded directly against aspects of goal-setting, or could have been. High counts were recorded under the Goal-Setting tree node. The major child nodes in this group were Strategic, Stretching, Timing, Initial, Creating Options, Priority Setting, Taking Actions, Monitoring, Changing Goals, Attainment, Taking Action and Monitoring. The analysis revealed that the structure of coaching was goal-setting. The particular application here was supported by rich evidence from research and theory - particularly the work of Latham and Locke (e.g. Latham, 2003; Locke, 1996; Locke & Latham, 2002).

The prominence of the goal-setting process reflected the action research nature of the executive coaching process. Goal setting with participants was anchored as far as possible to their core values. This is consistent with Argyris’ (1993) belief in the centrality of goal-directed action in giving meaning to life (p. 1). The flow of the conversations revealed the non-linear, cyclical nature of action research goal-setting processes when applied in a coaching program using sound models. We revisited goals, tried new strategies, planned and so on. The approach was extremely pragmatic in the constant search for solutions in the Empirical worlds of the participants.

7.5.6 Self Efficacy and Self Confidence

Coaching sessions regularly centred around the related themes of participant Self Efficacy and Self Confidence. Self efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997) is situated in cognitive psychology but also involves an affective component. Coaching generally aims to increase client self belief (Kilburg, 2000) and belief in the capacity to reach goals that are stretching and realistic (Greene and Grant, 2003). In several sessions I used a quote from Henry Ford (unreferenced), ‘Whether you think you can or think you can't, you're right.’ Participants found an explicit discussion of self efficacy theory to be useful in grounding the goal-setting process, affirming decisions they had taken or were about to take and in encouraging them to expand their horizons a little.
7.6 Affective Factors

7.6.1 Intelligence

Intelligence would normally come under a heading of ‘cognitive factors’. However, the coding revealed regular discussions about emotional intelligence (EQ; Goleman, 1995, 1998, 2000; Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2000) and rarely touched on the traditional measurement of intellectual intelligence (IQ). EQ is commonly used as a concept in executive coaching (Peltier, 2001). In fact, many executive coaching interventions aim to increase the level of EQ. I found that many participants had some awareness of EQ and enjoyed discussing how to increase their EQ. I used Daniel Goleman’s work because of its accessibility, even though in academic circles there has been debate about Goleman’s operationalising of the construct (Earley & Ang, 2003). Participants found EQ a useful theory and several bought one or more of Goleman’s books and reported that his work was extremely insightful and applicable in their situations.

I also introduced the concept of cultural intelligence (CQ; Earley & Ang, 2003; Earley & Peterson, 2004; Thomas & Inkson, 2004) with most participants. CQ proposes that successful acculturation comes from expatriates (1) wanting to be culturally sensitive and adaptive (affective), (2) knowing how to be (cognitive), and (3) being able to put it into action (behavioural). I found that CQ was more useful to me (as coach-researcher) than to the participants. I found that participants did not engage with the concept as easily as they did with EQ, perhaps because my explanation of it sounded too theoretical. It may be that CQ’s power in coaching is to better-inform coaches about clients’ patterns of feeling, thinking and acting in cross-cultural situations rather than as an explicit idea to be discussed in the sessions. My regular application of the House of Change model (Grant and Greene, 2001) to the expatriates’ cross-cultural situations was really a play-out of the theory of CQ. That is, we were working across the different domains and looking at interactions of affective, behavioural and cognitive elements in the process of acculturation.
Trust was discussed through all fifteen case studies and emerged as a major issue. Prior to the coaching project, ‘trust’ was not one of my major research interests or a concept that was necessarily top-of-mind in the coaching context. However, I increasingly found that interpersonal trust was an essential element of a successful coaching process and for business relationships more generally. In this study, it seemed that trust was a particularly salient concept in the cross-cultural context. Both the expatriate managers and local employees were conscious of cultural differences and in many cases the initial levels of trust were not high. Low trust was not just a feature of expatriate-local relationships. My observation of the relationships that were operating at the senior levels in multinational corporations in this study – among people with a common cultural background - was that authentically trusting relationships (see below) were rare.

The action research methodology encouraged me to explore trust in the literature as I was conducting the fieldwork and to give it more attention in the thesis than I originally envisaged. This section briefly canvasses some of the major issues around the importance of interpersonal trust in coaching and the implications this might have in cross-cultural contexts. Hwang and Burgess (1997) described trust as a fuzzy concept. Jeffries and Reed (2000) defined interpersonal trust as involving confident positive expectations about another’s motives with respect to one’s self in situations entailing risk. Trust can be both affect and cognitive-based (McAlister, 1995), which suggests that the ABC model of acculturation (which emphasizes interactions between affective, behavioural, cognitive domains) might provide some insights about the dynamics of trusts in cross-cultural coaching.

I found the model of authentic trust developed by Solomon and Flores (2001) to be useful in the coaching context. Fernando Flores was a cabinet minister with the government of former Chilean president Salvador Allende. He is a writer and management consultant. His work about trust seemed particularly appropriate evidence to apply in this Latin American context. Solomon and Flores (2001) argued that true trust is what they term authentic trust.
Authentic trust is, ‘an ongoing, delicate dance of trust and distrust, the tests and trials of commitment, the careful scrutiny and reassessment of the relationship’ (p.102). It is built up through routine, experiment and experience. The routine of a successful coaching process over an extended timeframe is perfectly positioned to promote and develop such a relationship. Flores’ work has had a major influence on the development of a stream of ‘ontological coaching’ from the Newfield coaching network in the USA, established by Chilean coach and educator Julio Olallo.

There is no shortage of support for the role of trust in business relationships in the management practices and research literature. Zeffane and Connell (2003) claimed that ‘the development of trust within workplace relationships is critical to the success of any company’ (p.8). Fukuyama’s (1996) analysis placed trust as a major variable in determining national prosperity.

Many writers on trust observed that the decision to trust is not always rational (e.g. Hwang and Burgess, 1997; Fukuyama, 1996; Lagerspetz, 1998). The participants in this study trusted me with confidential information in our first session without having any evidence of my credentials nor or my ‘trustworthiness’. Mutual trust developed. As the coaching progressed many participants reflected on the nature of the trust between us. At the same time, they were also making judgments on whom and how they trusted in their lives. In some cases the trusting relationships we formed provided a model and inspiration for initiating other authentically trusting relationships. The way that participants’ various relationships developed was consistent with Johnson and Cullen’s (2002) cross-cultural model of trust. They commented that, 'Beyond the initializing trust levels in the exchange relationship, trust becomes a dynamic, cyclical, and reciprocal phenomenon’ (p. 343).

In putting the case for group coaching with leadership teams, Kets de Vries (2005) noted that trust isn't easy for leaders who are generally highly competitive people (p. 70). Bennis (2003) had conversations with twenty-nine of the top business leaders in the USA and concluded, ‘I believe that trust is the underlying issue in not only getting people on your side, but having them stay there’ (p. 150). Kralj (2001) noted that increased trust was a
major outcome of a leadership coaching intervention. My experience in this project was that the coaching relationship provided an ideal trust-learning environment. Learning outcomes regarding trust were not forced, but flowed naturally from a healthy coaching relationship and process.

Trust is an area that illustrates the overlap between executive coaching and action research. Argyris (1993) suggested that action research requires trust between the researcher and participants. Brotman et al. (1998) saw trust and integrity as core competencies in executive coaching. Gratton and Ghoshal (2002) researched the nature of dialogue in organizations and found that creative dialogue (high in analytical rationality and emotional authenticity) only occurred in atmospheres of trust and mutual respect (p.222). Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2002) observed that effective executive coaching conversations require high levels of trust and confidentiality.

In the cross-cultural environment, the development of trust is particularly challenging, partly because the two parties begin from a position of difference. I found evidence in this study that the development of trust between the American expatriates and the local Salvadorians was often impeded by different understandings of the symbols, gestures, and behaviours that combine together to facilitate trust. For example, the American way of building trust was through open and direct conversation about the issue at hand. The Salvadorian way was more diffuse. The preferred approach was to establish a relationship first and then move towards the task or issue at hand. Thus, when both pursued their culturally appropriate ways of building trust, the effect on the other was to undermine rather than build trust. This finding supported research by Johnson and Cullen (2002) that made reference to a general trend for Americans to be overly direct when dealing with negotiating partners from different cultures (p.359).

Osland et al. (1999) found that Latin American cultures generally had a fairly low level of trust in people who were not family or close friends (p. 224). My experiences in this study confirmed that finding, though research findings indicate that a low level of initial trust is not necessarily the end of the story. Johnson and Cullen (2002) concluded that efforts at
trust making, regardless of the cultural appropriateness, can in the long run themselves contribute to the building of trust and be part of the trust-building cycle. Coaching could play a part in starting and reinforcing the cross-cultural trust cycle.

This discussion of trust, generated and supported by the research findings, illustrates a link between the affective, behavioural/situational, and cognitive dimensions in the dynamics of coaching and expatriate acculturation. The example of trust demonstrates the power of the ABC model for conceptualizing the coaching-expatriate relationship. In this study, the trust-building tended to develop as follows:

1. The coach and participant created a structure and process of regular meetings for the coaching (mainly in the Behavioural-Situational domain);
2. After establishing rapport, a commitment was made by both parties to an initial level of authentic trust (mainly Affective);
3. Following success in the relationship over several sessions, a rational process followed (mainly Cognitive) that reinforced the levels of trust; and
4. On the basis of the successful trust model established through coaching, the participant decided to take risks and to extend trust to others in the work environment (ABC interactive).

During these steps, the coach worked across Bhaskar’s three levels of reality to extend the impact of the intervention, though not explicitly. The coach explored the nature of the client’s current relationships (level 1, Empirical), worked with the client to develop a new and different type of trusting relationship in the coaching situation, and in some cases provided a model for other relationships (level 1, Empirical and level 2, Actual), and then provided opportunities for discussions on how trust worked as a tendency or principle at higher levels across organizational and national boundaries (level 3, Real).

Lowman (2005) recently proposed seven testable hypotheses for future executive coaching research. The first was that, “the ability to establish a relationship of trust may be critical to
the success of an intervention’ (p.95). My research here would provide some support on several levels for such a hypothesis.

7.6.3 Values

Discussions about values were common through the coaching conversations. The discussions about personal values and motivations required and reflected a level of depth in the coaching relationship. The level of trust and intensity of the connection between the coach and the client were more akin to a therapist-client relationship than to a researcher-subject relationship. Some participants mentioned that the experience was in some ways akin to therapy. Even in action research projects, participants are rarely asked to explore deeply personal issues at depth and over time.

Values emerged as significant influences in the coaching for motivating participants towards articulating and pursuing their goals. The critical realist framework encouraged a multilevel treatment of values, beginning with a discussion of personal values which expanded to contextual matches between company and local cultural values (Empirical and Actual levels), then extending to deeper level discussions of how values and ethics impact on expatriate life and society more generally (Real level).

It is common in executive coaching to ground client development in the personal values of clients. In the cross-cultural context, values can surface in different ways particularly through the influence of values at a national level. In this coaching context I was explicit about my own interest in the role of values and my view, supported by theory and research, that they are major drivers of behaviour (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992, 1999; Schwartz & Bardi, 2001; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987; Schwartz & Sagie, 2000). An analysis of the case studies and coding revealed that I usually grounded the process in values, often moving participants back to discussions conducted early in the sessions about their value priorities. Participants reported that this strategy was very effective in engaging them in reflection and motivating action.
The findings in this study are supported by theory and research. Recent international research on values gives some indication as to why values seem to play such a part in change processes, and why executive coaching is effective as a change management intervention. Schwartz and Bardi (2001) found that three kinds of value clusters were rated across cultures as being the most important values:

1. Benevolence (the preservation and enhancement of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact e.g. Helpful, Honest, Forgiving, Loyal, Responsible);
2. Self-direction (independent thought and action-choosing, creating, exploring, e.g. Creativity, Freedom, Independent, Curious, Choosing Own Goals); and

They suggested that this ‘pan-cultural’ value hierarchy could be understood as reflecting adaptive functions of values in meeting three basic requirements of successful societal functioning of:

1. cooperative and supportive primary relations;
2. productive and innovative task performance; and
3. gratification of self-oriented needs and desires (p. 287).

Research into the functioning of values in an organizational setting has confirmed that there seems to be a link between these three value clusters and the way people commit to organizations. When enacted as the values of organizations, these kinds of values can result in positive workplace behaviours and attitudes by people working in those organizations (Abbott, White, & Charles, 2005; Finegan, 2000). Values often associated with traditional management models, such as bottom line focus, security and conformity are low in the Schwartz and Bardi (2001) pan-cultural hierarchy and have not been found to have the same impact in forging positive commitment when included in organizational value sets.
Cultural dimensions as measured by Hofstede and others are to some extent measures of cultural values. Value cluster research (Schwartz, 1992, 1999; Schwartz & Bardi, 2001; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987) provides a way of quantitatively investigating the relationship between values with other processes and variables – such as executive coaching and expatriate acculturation. This study used the findings from these large-scale Actual world quantitative research on values to qualitatively examine what was happening in fifteen Empirical worlds. My conclusion from the study (at the Empirical, Actual and Real levels) was that coaching was giving attention to the same three values clusters as those identified in the pan-cultural hierarchy, which are the same clusters that triggered positive workplace attitudes and behaviours in the studies noted above. The coaching interventions were particularly powerful when they allowed the participants to reflect on their own fundamental values – which normally resided within the clusters of benevolence, self-direction, and universalism.

7.7 The Practice of ‘Coaching Research’ as a Form of Action Research

Coaching provided an unparalleled vehicle for studying the acculturation process. The full data set of transcribed coaching sessions was incredibly rich material on virtually every aspect of the experience. The advantage of the coaching-as-research model was that the coach was in the centre of the decision making process. Further, the coach was engaged with the expatriate manager to create workable and in-context solutions. It was a unique research perspective and consistent with the model of ‘researcher-as-participant’ which is so central to action research methodology. For example, I was working with Jack Trimboli (Case Study 6.6) as he designed his transition strategy for his exit from El Salvador. He made decisions with me. Raul Hernandez (Case Study 6.7) decided how to deal with his recalcitrant local staff member in discussions with me. Rafael Luz (Appendix A, Case Study A4) worked with me in improving his communication skills. He was then successful in persuading senior management to establish his model department which he subsequently headed. Danielle Powell (Case Study 6.9) questioned her commitment to join the War College with me and felt better-prepared to make a final decision whether or not to attend.
Neil Barber (Case Study 6.3) worked through his anger and stress with me. Julietta Carboni (Appendix A, Case Study A2) reflected on the pain of the death of her father with me. Randy Peters (Case Study 6.8) agonized with me over his failure to connect with his managers in the public utility. He developed a determined strategy to meet the challenges of Estonia with me. In all of these cases the participants may have pursued similar courses of action without coaching, but most likely in different ways. The role of the coaching was not the initiator of action, but a facilitator of effective outcomes. Coaching provided a forum for participants to connect their values and goals to their actions. As a research tool, the coaching processes offered invaluable insights on the worlds of executive coaching and expatriation.

The preceding analyses in the case studies and the cross-case observations demonstrate the power of coaching as a research tool. The model here is slightly more complex because the research tool (coaching) is also a focus of the research. Coaching is being used widely in international business. There is enormous scope for coaches to work in partnership with academia to examine aspects of international business. For example, researchers interested in management decision-making processes in joint venture companies could partner with a coach who was working with a joint venture project. If a coach was already connected to academia, then such research could be done by the coach in partnership with the executives he or she was coaching. In such research there would of course be confidentiality issues. This research project indicates that these issues can be successfully navigated if there is authentic trust between the coach and the participants. Like all action research, there is the potential for researcher bias since the coach-researcher has a stake in the outcome of the program. Transparency provides some protection against bias (Saunders, 2003).
CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Overview

This dissertation records and analyses the interaction of the processes of executive coaching and expatriate acculturation through multiple case studies and a study of relevant literature. The coaching interventions were highly pragmatic, consistent with the epistemological position proposed for executive coaching in Chapter 3. The results and contribution of study span the three levels of reality which make up the ontological framework of critical realism as conceptualized by Bhaskar (Archer, Bhaskar, Collier, Lawson, & Norrie, 1998; Bhaskar, 1975; Bhaskar, 1997, 1998, 2002). The major finding at the Empirical level is that the coaching intervention seemed to be related to improved work performance and enhanced personal satisfaction with this group of expatriates. At the Actual level, the main finding is that coaching seems well-suited for expatriate acculturation because both processes are highly individual and can work interactively across the affective (A), behavioural (B) and cognitive (C) domains of expatriate clients (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001), giving particular attention to the often-ignored affective domain. The findings provide evidence that coaching conceptualized and practiced as action research is a flexible process which is well-suited to the culturally diverse environments of change and complexity in which expatriates are generally situated. In providing evidence of how complex issues related to culture can be explored in coaching, the findings go some way towards validating the relatively new practice of coaching from a cultural perspective (Rosinski, 2003). The application of the coaching perspective in the expatriate environment revealed that the coaching of expatriate managers might be enhanced if it included team and organizational dimensions. At the Real level, the findings of the dissertation give weight to the theory that personal values are fundamental drivers of human behaviour that are particularly salient in diverse environments where value systems are likely to come into conflict. Further, the findings are consistent with theories of trust that suggest that productive interactions between humans require a mature and dynamic level of authentic
trust (Solomon & Flores, 2001) that is not always present in international business relationships, particularly in cross-cultural situations. Reflective thought (Dewey, 1910) brings the powerful emotional forces related to trust and values to the surface. The levels of reality comprise a heuristic to assist conceptualization of the coaching and expatriate processes. They are not rigid and the following explanations of the dissertation conclusions reflect the interactivity and fluidity of the epistemology and ontology of coaching and the various models that were at work within the expatriate acculturation processes in the study.

8.2 Evidence of Impact in One Context

In one context (El Salvador) with one coach-researcher and fifteen participants this study provides evidence that executive coaching can work to assist expatriate managers to face the challenge of acculturation. It is not possible to accurately separate out the exact nature of the coaching impact. Yet it is possible to refer to comments and assessments made by individuals themselves and to observations made by me as the coach and researcher operating with them in their contexts with knowledge of the broader research literature. Coaching seemed to (1) help them navigate the uncertainty and complexity of their cultural and professional environments, and (2) be related to improved work performance and enhanced personal satisfaction. I concluded that coaching made an impact in this study because it:

- was tailored to the individual needs of diverse participants in diverse contexts - a major strength of executive coaching generally (Kilburg, 2000);
- applied sound models from coaching (Grant & Greene, 2001) and acculturation (Earley & Ang, 2003; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001) to operate interactively across the ABC domains;
- encouraged participants to operate from a basis of authentic trust (Solomon & Flores, 2001) in professional cross-cultural relationships;
- clarified and worked from the personal values of the individual expatriate managers in relation to values of their organizations, engaging particularly with pan-cultural values of benevolence, self-direction and universalism (Schwartz & Bardi, 2001);
• facilitated reflective thinking (Dewey, 1910), allowing the expatriate managers to step back from their complex and pressured situations to better-understand themselves and their contexts and to plan and execute effective actions in an action learning cycle (Argyris, 1993);
• provided a medium to transfer and apply knowledge (theory, research and experience) from other contexts into the local situations of the individual expatriate managers; and
• from a cultural perspective, promoted the leveraging of individual and group differences (Rosinski, 2003).

8.3 The ABC Model of Coaching and Acculturation

Looking across the case studies, I reflected on what the executive coaching programs had to offer as observations about the expatriate experience, about evidence-based coaching and about the interaction of the two. As noted above a major conclusion was that evidence-based coaching had impact because it worked in-context and interactively across the ABC dimensions of the expatriate experience, thereby offering advantages to other interventions such as training or mentoring. The successful interaction of executive coaching with expatriate acculturation was explained through a melding of three related models of change:

2. the theory of cultural intelligence for cross-cultural interaction (Earley & Peterson, 2004); and
3. the House of Change coaching model (Grant & Greene, 2001), based on social cognitive theory of Bandura (1997) and others.

Behaviourally, the cases studies confirmed a common finding that the mechanics and structure of most coaching interventions happen through goal-setting processes. Regular coaching sessions provided forums for the participants to set goals and take actions. Cognitively, goal-setting was driven by reflective thinking. Coaching triggered reflection on complex issues through questioning and challenge. It provided a forum to determine possible consequences of contemplated actions. Another cognitive element was that the
evidence-based coaching offered sound theories from cross-cultural research, management and psychology with which clients engaged intellectually. However, these behavioural and cognitive dimensions were not enough to make coaching highly effective.

The fire in the belly of the coaching came from the affective dimension. There were two affective ‘fuels’. The first of these was the values of the participants. Coaching was powerful when it assisted participants to examine what was fundamentally important to them. When it failed to ignite (and there were occasions) it remained at the level of goal-setting for goal-setting’s sake, even when participants reflected on their actions and we moved pragmatically to a successful technical outcome. The participants in this study made sustainable progress when they stepped out of their comfort zones to consider their values in relation to those around them and to match their fundamental values with their actions.

With most participants, the values that seemed to trigger individual action and commitment were invariably those found in the clusters of benevolence, self-direction, and universalism as delineated by Schwartz and others (Schwartz, 1992, 1999; Schwartz & Bardi, 2001; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987). These values are perhaps not always prominent in international management practices. Speculatively, executive coaching may be growing as an industry because it takes executives back to their fundamental motivational values and consequently enhances satisfaction and improves performance.

The other affective element that provided fuel for the coaching process was trust. There was a high level of authentic trust (Solomon & Flores, 2001) inherent in my professional relationships with the fifteen participants. This trust created environments in which I could provide genuine support to the participants because they felt safe to engage with the various coaching strategies. The level of trust evident in the participants’ various relationships with their colleagues, managers and employees was not always high. Coaching provided an attractive model of a trusting professional relationship. Many participants sought to create similarly authentic relationships with others, even if it meant taking some risks. In a cross-cultural environment, the development of trusting relationships can be challenging because one is often relating across different value systems. The coaching process gave participants
an opportunity to reflect on their diverse relationships and to construct strategies to build trust. At the Real level of critical realism, the popularity of executive coaching could be explained as a response to a fundamental human need for trusting relationships.

8.4 Individually-Based

Each participant had a different coaching experience. This is a major advantage of executive coaching over training in the field of expatriate adjustment. There was an enormous variety of participant issues not all of which could be found among common expatriate issues discussed in the research literature. None of the participants faced exactly the same issue and certainly not at the same time. Executive coaching dealt with issues in-context (Kilburg, 2000; O’Neill, 2000). The coach offered support to the participants in many forms – with theories, suggestions and challenges, or by just providing a friendly presence. The selection and timing of the support was part of the coaching challenge.

Training programs are not designed to meet the various individual needs and challenges, though there is evidence (including from this study) that training programs can be of value to expatriate managers at various points in the sojourn – before, during and even after (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). I see executive coaching as best-operating as an adjunct to appropriate expatriate training programs. Executive coaching can assist expatriate managers to select and make sense of training. It can assist them to apply theories and ideas from training and help them to follow through with useful approaches that they may otherwise discard or forget.

Mentoring is a long-established as an effective support mechanism for expatriates (Andreason, 2003; Harvey, Buckley, Novicevic, & Weise, 1999), though it has its limitations which were noted earlier. In this study there seemed to be a blurring of the boundaries mentoring and coaching. Some of the participants had mentors who provided ongoing and useful coaching and advice about professional and personal issues. However, they were not always accessible nor did they always have contextually-informed advice that was relevant to the circumstances of the individual expatriate. The executive coaching in
this study was based on the values and issues of the participants and was conducted with the participants in their cultural contexts. One possibility is that as coaching becomes more accepted and understood as a management practice; mentors will increasingly operate in a coaching mode. There are already signs this is happening, though practical issues remain of mentor location and the structure of the coach-mentor program. Coaches and mentors working together with expatriates would be an even better scenario that could meet individual expatriate needs to a very high degree.

The needs of individuals and the needs of companies do not always match. For coaching to be effective as an intervention to facilitate expatriate acculturation, international companies have to find coaching attractive because. They, after all, would be the sponsors. The coach service-provider has to be pragmatic in offering a structured process that:

- appeals to legitimate company concerns about bottom-line results;
- is connected to company objectives;
- fits with the local and home company culture(s); and
- at the same time retains sufficient independence and flexibility to meet the diverse needs of individual expatriates.

8.5 Need for a Team Approach

While the strength of individual executive coaching is that it can be tailored to the specific needs of the expatriate, there is scope for executive coaching to have greater impact by engaging with client systems. The results of this study indicate that in one context one-to-one executive coaching is related to improved performance and enhanced personal satisfaction. However, I felt that my role as coach was limited by receiving information almost exclusively through the participants. This filter was generally quite strong, particularly with newly arrived expatriates who were unfamiliar with local and organizational culture. This study and other cross-cultural research indicate that cultural influences are pervasive (e.g. see Rosinski, 2003, Hofstede, 1997, Adler, 2002). The coach might have more impact with the executive if he or she was also engaged with other
executives (local and expatriate) and ideally with the executive team. As a result of my experiences in this project and consistent with the action research methodology, I developed a model of how this might work which I presented to the 2005 International Coach Federation Conference in San Jose, California. An audience of ninety coaches from many different countries considered the model and feedback suggested that this approach of leveraging team and individual approaches would have merit, particularly in a cross-cultural context. It is an area that requires further research.

8.6 Executive Coaching from a Cultural Perspective

The dissertation further develops and validates a cultural perspective in executive coaching. Rosinski (2003), Chapman et al. (2003) and others have given some guidance on how coaching from a cultural perspective might work, using frameworks that draw on cross-cultural management, psychology, business, economics and other sources. The case studies provide evidence that evidence-based coaching from a cultural perspective, informed by theories and practices from many sources, may assist expatriate managers to develop strategies to maximize opportunity in their contexts. In the international business environment in which these expatriates operate, culture sits in the mix as a fluid and often hidden influence at the individual, company and national levels (Hofstede, 1997). Cultural diversity in its many forms offers opportunities through the creative synthesis of differences (Rosinski, 2003). The case studies provide limited evidence that executive coaching from a cultural perspective is effective in raising the awareness of the significance of culture in the emerging global business environment.

8.7 A Philosophy of Evidence-Based Executive Coaching

The dissertation uses and provides evidence for a philosophical foundation for executive coaching from a cultural perspective based in pragmatism and critical realism. I have shown that pragmatism in the scientific tradition, as originally espoused by thinkers such as William James (James, 1890a, 1890b, 1907a, 1907b, 1907c, 1997) and John Dewey (1888, 1910, 1916, 1917, 1925) informs the methodology of cross-cultural coaching. With each
participant I took advantage of many different strategies and approaches. The aim was to explore the situation with the participant and find something that would work for them and which was consistent with their objectives and values. I brought in new ideas and suggestions that seemed appropriate. I encouraged them to work with what had worked before and to consider the consequences of planned actions within a framework of goal-setting theory. The driver of change and development within this process was participant reflection. The role of the coach in questioning, challenging and listening – illustrated in detail in this dissertation – encouraged deep reflection. Deep reflection connected them with the powerful affective influences of their personal values as discussed above. This pragmatic approach provides an attractive epistemology for coaching from a cultural perspective and for evidence-based coaching more broadly.

I have illustrated that critical realism provides a useful ontology for executive coaching from a cultural perspective. Within the critical realist framework, the Empirical reality operating in local cultural contexts is where the coach works with clients on a day-to-day basis. In this study, I worked with participants to help them within their immediate environment to create approaches that were effective. At the same time, I made a contribution by expanding each participant’s perspective by introducing ideas, theories, examples and approaches from other Empirical worlds. Without the coaching, this evidence would have remained outside the world of the participant – in the world of Actual reality – technically accessible but not accessed and synthesized.

The dissertation illustrates that coaching can be a means of identifying and critically evaluating some of the Real laws, tendencies and forces that operate beneath the surface in society. Coaching from a cultural perspective is ambitious and seeks to engage with global issues and with fundamental moral and societal principles and tendencies. Critical realism offers an ontology of the Real world that validates such exploration. Coaches working across cultures will be sitting with executives in multinational companies discussing the conduct of international business. They will be part of the ongoing processes of economic globalization. They will be working with the leaders of business who have immense power to shape the living conditions for their employees and families. This is a privileged and
potentially powerful position from which executive coaches can make a contribution to the health of the global society through facilitating creative synthesis of cultural, economic and ideological dichotomies.

Examining the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of evidence-based executive coaching at this point in the growth of the industry is important. Pragmatism and critical realism describe plural social worlds where active human agents can create better futures by critically drawing on diverse solutions and approaches. If the future development of coaching is anchored in such a philosophy that embraces cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural approaches within a democratic tradition, then it is likely to grow into a rigorous and relevant profession – a pragmatic science.

8.8 Research Relevance and Rigor

My aim was to conduct research with the characteristics of pragmatic science, i.e. high in relevance and rigor (Anderson, Herriot, & Hodgkinson 2001). The research is relevant to the global business environment because executive coaching is a rapidly expanding management intervention about which there is a lack of empirical research. There is every indication that the global world of the expatriate manager is becoming a more complex place (Drucker, 2001). There have been few satisfactory answers to the challenge of how to support expatriate managers as they face assignments of increasing complexity. Executive coaching potentially provides one strategy.

This research is important because there is limited research on how executive coaching works and virtually none on how it works with expatriates. Readers of this dissertation can get a sense of what was really happening for fifteen people engaged with the coaching process through the experience of expatriate acculturation. The extensive documentation, including dialogue extracted from actual transcripts (rather than post hoc accounts), makes this work unique. This approach also gives readers opportunities to make their own interpretations.
The rigor of the research was enhanced because action research methodology matched acculturation. The method allowed me to engage with the complex and changing worlds of the expatriate participants. That is, the chosen methodology of action research was also the methodology of the coaching intervention. Rigor was injected through thorough data collection, multiple layers of analysis, transparency of process and so on. Immersion in the process allowed me to observe and analyse the impact of coaching in considerable depth. As discussed through the thesis, paradoxically the major source of methodological rigor – involvement of the research-coach in all aspects of the research and the coaching - also leaves the study open to criticism that it lacks rigor because of the potential for researcher bias and same source contamination.

It was difficult to capture the essence of the coaching and acculturation processes in the written report because the final document needed to be linear in moving from the introduction to conclusions. However, I have endeavoured to convey the cyclic and non-linear nature of the research. Initial theories, such as the development of a philosophy of coaching, shaped the coaching interventions and the way that the research was conducted and then firmed into research outcomes and conclusions.

8.9 Limitations

The fieldwork was limited to one location, one executive coach and fifteen participants. There is considerable potential for researcher bias, an issue addressed at various points in the dissertation. Like most limitations, the immersion of one coach-researcher is also a strength of the design because it allowed in-depth investigation of a group of people who were working in related contexts. Cross-case analysis was done by someone who was completely connected to the world of the participants, rather than through detached questionnaire or interview techniques.

As a practicing coach, I had a stake in achieving a successful outcome. I formed a strong relationship with each of the fifteen participants and they were keen to assist me in every way possible. Nevertheless, at the Empirical level of analysis, I am confident that the
coaching intervention did have a positive impact on the work performance and personal satisfaction of the participants. I encouraged open, honest and critical feedback from participants and I believe this is what they offered. My experience from the coaching sessions was that all of the participants were prepared to say what they felt. This is illustrated in the dialogue and post-coaching comments recorded in the case studies. However, stepping back to look across the whole field of expatriate acculturation and coaching to the Actual level of analysis, what can be said is that the study provides some evidence that there could be a relationship between executive coaching of expatriates and improved work performance and enhanced satisfaction.

The coaching interventions were initially arranged by the coach with the individual participant, rather than through the company. That is, there was no corporate sponsor. The proposed use of the expatriate coaching is for an organizational-level intervention, sponsored by a company as a corporate strategy for facilitating more effective expatriate acculturation. The fact that the interventions had high impact without direct corporate sponsorship is encouraging. Studies done in partnership with corporations could extend the preliminary work done in this study and enable and investigation of executive team coaching with expatriates and host nationals.

Another limitation of the study was that the participants received the service for free while commercial services of this kind can cost several hundred dollars per hour. There was no indication, however, that participants undervalued the coaching. They may, however, have been inclined to give positive comments as an indirect form of payment for the service.

The themes and findings of this study need to be explored through more extensive, larger scale studies incorporating quantitative elements. Larger studies could make use of control groups and base-line measures with psychometrically valid instruments. Other techniques that would add power to such studies would be the use of multiple assessors of the coaching impact, multiple coaches, and the conduct of coaching programs in different locations. Multinational companies could provide a medium for the conduct of larger scale
studies, using the model of Geert Hofstede (1980) who conducted his quantitative research work on cultural dimensions through the international network of IBM offices.

### 8.10 Application and Utility of the Findings

The pragmatist underpinnings of this dissertation dictate that the findings be useful. There is an issue as to whether or not these results can be generalized. Would other coaches in El Salvador operating with other participants achieve similar or better results? Would there be similar or better results in other contexts? Can managers and human resource professionals use the knowledge from this study to inform decisions about hiring coaches for expatriate managers? There are no certain answers to these questions. However, the technique of analytic generalization (Yin, 2003) offers a way of approaching them. I will consider the findings of my research when I am working in other contexts and make judgments as to whether or not specific patterns that emerged here are useful to me as I work with different cultures and different individuals. Other coaches, expatriates and researchers will make their own judgments according to their circumstances.

Based on this research, my training and education, my work as a coach, and my knowledge of the expatriate experience and of executive coaching, I see scope for the future use of evidence-based executive coaching in international business. I make two very general recommendations, both of which would rely on others to make judgments based on individual, company and cultural considerations:

1. Coaching be delivered in combination with mentoring and training (e.g. through mentor-as-coach initiatives); and
2. The current individual focus of coaching (inspired by the traditions of Western thinking) be expanded into a greater consideration of family, organizational, community, and societal systems and cultures.

There are potential limitations in respect of the implementation of executive coaching on a wide scale for expatriate managers. Identifying and assigning coaches with skills in cross-
cultural environments is one major challenge, particularly in developing countries where executive coaches are currently few and far between. The incredible growth in executive coaching world-wide is likely to make this a temporary limitation. Cost is a factor. Whilst good executive coaches with the ability to meet the various challenges are expensive, the potential financial benefits of success are considerable.

Expatriate managers are on the frontier of cross-cultural interaction. They impact upon the host cultures, and the host cultures impact upon them. Choosing the right manager is one challenge. After that, ensuring appropriate support is vital. Failure to provide such support can lead to early departure or an ineffective and dissatisfying sojourn experience. The former is costly and disruptive. The latter can have negative effects on the organizations, local staff morale, home-field office relations, the individual manager and even relations between countries. Coaching can play a role in bringing together the various pieces in the challenge of the expatriate sojourn experience.

I see value for executive coaches in using the three levels of critical realism and the three domains (the ‘ABC’) of coaching and acculturation to examine their own practices, particularly when they are working in culturally diverse environments. By using these frameworks coaches can examine if their interventions are extending their clients’ Empirical worlds and also if the coaching is interactively engaging across all three of the ABC domains.

There is no script or textbook approach to the effective coaching of expatriate managers. There are many theories, approaches, and perspectives and the task of the coach with the client is to use what works for the client. In the context of developing training programs to enhance cultural intelligence, Earley and Peterson (2004) proposed a flexible approach, ‘The challenge facing a global manager is daunting from a cultural perspective, and it is critical to provide interventions tailored to the individual’ (p.113). Initially, coaching is quintessentially individual. However, once a coaching process begins there is potential for impact well beyond the individual. This dissertation demonstrates that the addition of a cultural perspective in coaching can assist clients to better understand themselves in their
contexts and to engage others in leveraging differences for personal, organizational and societal development.

8.11 Building on the House of Change

Expatriate acculturation and evidence-based executive coaching are both processes of rapid and sometimes profound change. The model of change I used with virtually every participant with great impact was the House of Change (Grant & Greene, 2001). This elegant metaphor conceptualizes client goals on the roof of the house emerging through the interplay of situation, behaviour, emotion and thinking within the four walls. It is a powerful model which is well-grounded in theory and research and is invariably well-received by clients. To conclude, I will operate in Dewey’s ideal mental condition of playful seriousness in extending the metaphor of the House of Change.

To me there was something slightly sad about the House of Change. Its self-contained isolation did not entirely capture the broader forces that I found at work in cross-cultural settings. In particular, it did not seem to reflect the deep-rooted impact of culture operating at an individual, organizational, societal and national level through values and cultural orientations. The House of Change lacked connection. It reflected the traditions of Western psychology that begin with the individual. In the spirit of pragmatism, I will build on what has already been done rather than tear down the house and start again. The House of Change requires connection and sustenance. The Remodelled House(s) of Change (see Figure 8.1) has foundations in the form of personal values which anchor coaching conversations and client change. It is also has brothers and sisters. The potential for authentic trusting relationships is established. It is situated within a community of other houses and is thus serviced with electricity, water, heating, transport, food and communication. Running deep beneath the surface are the currents of culture and client systems, accommodating other laws and tendencies that might be at play such as the Jungian concept of the collective consciousness and human instincts. Coaches operate fluidly between and within the different client systems, working through trusting relationships to expand and connect the Empirical worlds of the client systems through
whose doors they are invited. William James (1907c) uses the metaphor of the corridor to describe the pragmatist methodology:

It has no dogmas, and no doctrines save its method. As the young Italian pragmatist Papini has well said, it lies in the midst of our theories, like a corridor in a hotel. Innumerable chambers open out of it. In one you may find a man writing an atheistic volume; in the next someone on his knees praying for faith and strength; in a third a chemist investigating a body's properties. In a fourth a system of idealistic metaphysics is being excogitated; in a fifth the impossibility of metaphysics is being shown. But they all own the corridor, and all must pass through it if they want a practicable way of getting into or out of their respective rooms (p.22-23).

Coaching is a relational process of growth and connection. The coach moves freely in the corridors between the individual houses, encouraging connections, bringing evidence to clients in many forms, and assisting them synthesize the new knowledge with their existing Empirical realities through dialogue and reflection. Reflection by clients also continues privately between coaching sessions and – ideally – forever.

Both evidence-based executive coaching and expatriate acculturation are processes that can operate effectively just at the level of the individual. However, this research suggests that the impact of executive coaching can be greater and the experience of expatriate acculturation will be richer where the two are done with a mind to extending the worlds of the clients into the many cultures and systems with which they have contact. This is consistent with findings from research on acculturation by Bennett (1998), Berry (1992, 1997) and others that active interaction with new cultural influences is a crucial element of successful acculturation. Without such an outward-looking perspective, the client and coach remain largely in narrow Empirical worlds, without contact with other Actual realities and without making a contribution to the understanding of broader tendencies and laws of the Real world. Like all models and metaphors, the remodelled House(s) of Change has limitations. Its factory-like image has connotations of Taylorism. The two houses in the model are identical. In Empirical realities, houses will often be radically different. The relationships between coach, client and the various interrelated systems are much more
fluid, human and active than the model portrays. However, its contribution is to display the role that executive coaching might play in expanding client worlds and connecting people and communities beyond the individual focus that the coaching profession currently uses as its base. Perhaps the next phase of development for the coaching profession can be an exercise of leveraging individual and collective approaches for greater impact on clients and client systems. For expatriate coaching work in cross-cultural environments, such an approach would make good sense.
Executive coaching is still in a pioneer stage of development. The role of the expatriate manager in international business is evolving as the concept of the global marketplace takes hold. No one model of coaching intervention is going to be appropriate for each expatriate situation. The challenge for both companies and for coaches is to be sufficiently flexible to provide interventions that suit the context of the expatriate manager. The way to do this is to ensure that the processes remain client-centred. That is, the fundamental driver of the coaching intervention must be the expatriate manager within his or her work and cultural environment. Coaches will need to be prepared to adopt and adapt the tools, techniques and approaches that the managers need. Pragmatism coupled with a multilayered situational analysis informed by critical realism provide a solid foundation for a fruitful interaction between coaching and the international business world.
APPENDIX A.1
CASE STUDY: ALICIA PETERS

Profile

Alicia Peters was Salvadorian, 41 years old and married to Randy Peters (Case Study 6.8). She was senior sales manager with a major Salvadorian paint-distributor. She had been in sales for 10 years with the company but was looking for a change. Their two boys were in their early teens and in five years time would be going to university. Alicia considered they would need to have both Randy’s retirement funds and her income to afford their education and a comfortable life in the USA. We had eleven sessions over nine months. Alicia moved to Estonia with Randy shortly after the cessation of the coaching program. In Estonia, Alicia began teaching computing.

Reason for Inclusion in the Study

Randy suggested to me that his wife would benefit from working with me. This seemed a natural progression consistent with the action research model of the project and coaching. Also, I was keen to include several spouse perspectives of the expatriate experiences. Alicia provided a Salvadorian perspective not offered by other spouses.

Issues and Goals

Alicia felt trapped in her role as a sales executive. She said that she wanted a change from the company and also from sales, having been in similar roles for over ten years. Her initial thought was that she would like her own company. Her aim was to position the company internationally so that when it was time for the family to move back to the USA, she would be able to extend its operations.

We spent the first five sessions looking at the goal of developing a new business. Gradually a new goal emerged of increasing Alicia’s management effectiveness. This was not explicit but
became a central part of the content of the sessions as Alicia discussed her day-to-day management issues and sought ideas on how to approach them differently.

Initially, Alicia was nervous about the coaching and struggled to communicate her ideas. I was concerned that her English might not be sufficiently fluent for us to work at depth through the various issues. However, once she relaxed her English fluency quickly improved. Later, Alicia reflected on her tendency to be quiet when she lacked confidence, which explained our slow start:

AP: When I have high emotions I get quiet. When I am worried I get quiet. When I am expecting something new I am quiet. When I am talking with my boss and there is respect.

GA: When something intense is happening?

AP: When I don’t have confidence - that I don’t know someone. But when I know you I am how I am.

It was clear in the first few sessions that Alicia was risk-averse and hesitant about moving out of her current role, even though she didn’t want to stay where she was. It was a challenge to deal with Alicia’s uncertainty. She ebbed and flowed around leaving her current job and at times I felt she wanted to renew her commitment to the sales role. The goals were fairly distant and the coaching was more around exploring the current situation than setting firm objectives for the future. A creative tension developed between staying in her current role and focusing on management development, and moving on to a new business.

**Coaching Techniques and Perspectives**

The early sessions were mostly reflective listening and encouraging Alicia to see the potential for change. This included reinforcement of the value of her experience in the current role as a sales executive, reference to her educational background, her linguistic skills and her personal qualities. We also spent a lot of time looking forward to the type of environment Alicia would like to work in and the work she would like to do.
It was fairly clear that Alicia was not going to make dramatic changes to her life in the first few months of our engagement. I shared this perspective with Alicia, with the idea of freeing her from immediate pressure for change and allowing her to reflect broadly and deeply about what she wanted to do next. There was in reality no urgency because she was secure in her job and Randy was secure in the medium term. Initially, Alicia looked to other people for ideas. I didn’t discourage that entirely but at the same time pushed her to take responsibility for change as her decision rather than Randy’s, her sister’s, her friend’s or her sons.

Gradually, Alicia became comfortable with the idea of change even though there were gaps of several weeks when she did little to pursue her objectives. I concentrated on being there with Alicia and supporting her at her pace and celebrating with her as she became more comfortable and adventurous in her thinking.

Later in the coaching program when Alicia seemed more comfortable with the idea of change we used a visualization exercise with a selection of postcards to assist her to look ahead at the environment she wanted and the type of life she wanted to create. Alicia reflected about her choice of a quiet beach scene with a couple walking together:

*AP:* All things can become easier when you have that attitude - simpler, like ready for a change. Those were emotions. I can manipulate and create them. It is the attitude you have what counts. For a millionaire maybe this is more interesting than a suite. For me, I prefer the New York penthouse, though maybe the beach is better for your health.

*GA:* You want more peace, companionship and simplicity?

*AP:* That would be nice.

*GA:* You can also think and reflect in that environment.

*AP:* I never have time to think.

*GA:* Is that deliberate?

*AP:* No, but I just don’t take the time to do it.

*GA:* You talk about being ready for a change.

*AP:* I gave a speech about change at this meeting. We were talking about Shell and St Jacks closing their offices here. They are closing. We have to be ready to change and sometimes you don’t control them.
GA: You have to be ready.

AP: I have been thinking about that since Saturday. I know that many changes are coming in our life. Maybe we have to move because Randy finishes his contract. Maybe we stay doing less income. Maybe I have to quit my work because we are not selling. I have to be ready. If I have a positive attitude I will come out of it. We are not going to die not working for a year - that is what I learned from thinking about this picture.

GA: You don’t seem concerned about the change. When we started talking this would have been very worrisome.

AP: Yes, I think I was the one worried about our economic situation. I know we have stability but change is ok. I have to be prepared.

GA: Manage change.

AP: I don’t know what is going to happen.

This degree of comfort with change was a major shift for Alicia through the time of the coaching. Alicia’s reaction to Randy’s appointment to a new position overseas (initially thought to be in the Caribbean but later changed to Estonia) reflected her shift:

AP: Randy has had many opportunities he has not taken but this one will be good for us.

GA: Like a forced break.

AP: Opportunities but I cannot earn money. I want to get involved with the boys. And it is only two and half years, or five. I can maybe study.

GA: What would you study?

AP: I would like to study business again.

GA: Are there universities there?

AP: I suppose. I could travel. A new culture because it is British. I don’t know. I have to study diplomacy. I have to give parties, talk properly. It is like being the first lady of the country.

GA: You seem excited.

AP: I need the change.

We had a number of discussions about management style and Alicia’s struggles in motivating her sales team. I tended to be instructional in inserting ideas from management theory and to
encourage Alicia to be more empowering with her staff. The following conversation reflects the nature of our conversations:

AP: We have lost two people and it is more complicated. I am managing but I am stressed. I am always tired. I am not giving them the support they want. They want me with them with clients for lunch and for quotations.

GA: See all those books. Every one says if you focus on results you only get part of the story. You will be good for a while but they will not respond. They are not motivated only by money. This Myers Briggs report is saying you focus on structure and results and you are not always sensitive to the emotional side of work. You are now telling me the same thing in your office, and people are not always happy with that.

AP: It is the style of the company.

GA: If you use other things you will get better results.

AP: I don’t only ask them for results in sales, I tell them what needs to be done.

GA: How do they feel?

AP: It is a lot of work if you want results.

GA: You are focusing on results. I am not explaining this very well. To get better results, focus on the people. Instead of telling them how they should do it, ask them how they can do it best.

AP: I have done that and they tell me they want like an extra truck or an extra secretary.

GA: It is all things on the results side.

AP: They don’t want to have a commitment.

GA: I would not get committed to a company that only did that. Only results. I am a researcher in the area of organizational commitment and companies that focus only on bottom line results don’t get organizational commitment. The thing that drives production is commitment. Companies that focus constantly on results don’t get them. You become the victim because the people that work for you don’t respond only to results. They need to feel empowered and the company is a nice company. It is not just success.

AP: They have to be proud of the company. Some are proud and some are not. My style is paternalist that I am telling them to get results. I don’t want to change the people because it is hard to train the people.

GA: What sort of conversations do you have with them? What kind of things are you talking about?
AP: We do the plan, what they need, the presentations. I invite them to my house.
GA: Do you praise them?
AP: I do not do it always. Sometimes they do bad things. Some of my painters are not the best painters but they come to work every day. Sometimes that is better than being the best painter. I tell them the good and bad things.
GA: What do you say?
AP: ‘I like that, I don’t like that.’ Mostly I say the bad things.

On reflection, my approach was too directive and too focused on a Western management perspective. It may not have been immediately transferable to Alicia’s situation. I may have been more useful to Alicia had I listened more about her situation.

**Coaching from a Cultural Perspective:**

A cultural perspective on the coaching sessions was useful in that my familiarity with Salvadorian business culture attuned me to some of the difficulties Alicia was experiencing in managing her sales staff. She was practicing very hierarchical management practices and her sales staff were expecting her to tell them what to do. She was very independent and wanted them to be equally independent. We discussed this tension in the context of the organizational and workplace culture, taking into account Alicia’s own background and individual preferences as revealed by a Myers Briggs test.

One of the tensions for Alicia was that she seemed to be at the opposite end to her Salvadorian colleagues on several cultural orientations. In particular, she was very task focused rather than relationship focused. My exposure to Salvadorian culture, particularly women in the workforce, indicated that people are highly relational in their work style. This is revealed to some degree by their feminine measurement on the Hofstede dimensions. The following exchange is illustrative:

GA: I have noticed that when we get close to talking about your relationships with your staff, you take me away. You change it to talk about systems and structures results. Every time you go near to talking about a relationship with somebody...
AP: Maybe I have never had a class in relationships in my MBA or engineering,
GA: You move it away to results and you miss opportunities. It limits capacity to improve. You can be good but not excellent.

AP: It is easier for me to get the goal by myself.

GA: The super performers are good at the relationship side.

AP: Why do I do that?

GA: I don’t know the reason but you do. It is natural. What I am saying is that you can be successful doing it or you could take a risk and work with relationships where you are not comfortable and possibly get better results.

I presented this as an ‘either, or’ situation, which in retrospect was a mistake. It may have been more effective to take an ‘and’ approach and build on Alicia’s strengths by adding relationship focus to her results focus.

We discussed how Alicia might focus more on relationships:

GA: Maybe you just introduce more relationship stuff with them without a structure? Be with them, walk with them. If your son is doing his homework, just be with him and ask him how he is going. Enjoy being with your staff.

AP: Go with them to do a client? They like that. I need a structure to do that. I don’t have time now.

GA: What if you had time?

AP: I would be with them. Tomorrow I have two meetings to have technical visits.

Insights on Coaching Expatriates for Acculturation

The coaching work with Alicia demonstrated the uncertainty faced by spouses of expatriates and how executive coaching can assist them to deal with this uncertainty and become more comfortable with idea and practice of change. Alicia’s position at the start of the coaching was secure. Her husband had a secure job with a major multinational and the family seemed certain
to be remaining in their house with their friends and family around them. Alicia had a secure job where she was valued and which would remain as a backstop regardless of other things she might decided to do.

By our last coaching session, her husband had left for a position in Estonia. Alicia had left her senior sales role and been moved to a new and uncertain regional sales role in the company. At the same time, she knew that the whole family was about to relocate to a new country where neither Spanish nor English were spoken and where they had few contacts. However, Alicia’s view of this uncertain future was that it offered opportunity and excitement and provided her with a welcome impetus for change.

Executive Coaching as Action Research

I worked with Alicia as a natural flow-on from my work with Randy. Had the methodology been different, with a fixed sample and timeframe, we would not have worked together and I would have missed a valuable perspective for the research. Also, Alicia and Randy would not have received the benefit of having received the coaching experience as a couple, thereby giving them an opportunity to work on ideas and projects more effectively together.

Another aspect of the coaching that mirrored action research methodology was the expansion of the coaching into an extended network. As a way of introducing new ideas to Alicia, I suggested as homework she talk to other people with different views and experiences in business, including my own contacts through the coaching work and people known to Randy and Alicia. This approach proved effective in seeding the process with new ideas. It was also an example of coaching expanding the Empirical world of the client into the Actual world of others with similar experiences and challenges.

We moved back and forth to the original goal of establishing a business. It was always open to review and our sessions included several discussions about the merits of staying in her sales role. This cyclical movement around goal-setting, planning, acting, monitoring, and reviewing goals is typical of action research methodology.
Coaching and Pragmatism

My approach with Alicia was essentially pragmatic. I did not go into the sessions with the idea of applying principles or theories of change and transition that she would apply and thereby find a solution to her dilemma of how to get out of the situation in which she felt trapped. Together, we approached the situation with a degree of lightness and openness that allowed different experiences and ideas to take hold when they were appropriate to the context. Had I for example pushed Alicia to develop a business plan on one of the many ideas we canvassed, and encouraged her to take it forward, she may have finished the coaching without any new insights to take forward. Instead, I felt that Alicia left our sessions equipped to face the future with an open mind and sense of excitement.

I may have deviated from pragmatism in advising Alicia on the ‘best way’ to handle her staffing issues. On reflection, my approach was not sufficiently sensitive to her cultural context.

The Role of Values

Alicia talked about her religious beliefs, but not at length. She linked her work values with the values from the Bible. At work, Alicia introduced the idea of having a new value each month. For example, when we spoke about this approach, the value was ‘discipline’. I discussed with Alicia the implications of changing values each month, suggesting that the values of previous month’s value might be lost as they moved from one to another.

In Session 7, we moved to a broader discussion of values which Alicia seemed to find useful in allowing her to disconnect from the immediate stress of her day-to-day life and focus on what could be shaped in the future. I tried to connect the broader picture to some of the values she was working with in the work context:

GA: Come back to me next time with three situations where you have been more connected - like at the beach - with less of the results focus. Describe to me what you were doing and how it was feeling - the emotions around it. Focus on the person you are with. Hold the connection even if
something interrupts. Stay with them even if you take a phone call. See what happens. You might try for a while and it does not make a difference. Try something else.

AP: Every day I am working on a different value from the Bible.

GA: Maybe stick at one?

AP: We do one a month at work.

GA: Pick one that best fits your beach scene. When you find the quotation that best fits it, write it on the back with the three situations - briefly.

AP: I like that - to be at peace.

Impact

Alicia rated the coaching strongly on all aspects except on cultural issues, mostly because Alicia was not working in a cross-cultural work environment. Alicia gave ratings of 5 out of 5 for all items in the Overall section. Alicia said that the coaching experience freed her to dream and to reflect on what she wanted to do. She said it made her more comfortable with change, but not completely.

Alicia mentioned several times the impact the coaching seemed be having with her husband. She felt that coaching was useful for expatriates:

AP: For an expatriate it is interesting because the coach interacts with many people and can be like a moderator with good advice for expatriates.

From my perspective, I saw the impact of the coaching as giving Alicia an understanding that it was ok to be independent and to plan the future, even in times of uncertainty. It was to that extent empowering for her. The timing of the coaching was fortuitous since around the time that Alicia seemed more comfortable with change, change occurred in the form of her husband’s relocation to Estonia.
APPENDIX A.2
CASE STUDY: JULIETTA CARBONI

Profile

Julietta was a 41 year old Filipina-American and wife of a manager in a US government organization. Julietta had been a ‘trailing spouse’ in Saudi Arabia for three years where she did not work, and also in New York where she worked in administration in a small company. She was doing a master’s level course in international management by distance with a US university. Julietta was working part-time with the organization in the area that handled visas for Salvadorians wishing to visit the USA. Her role was to fingerprint people. She was also developing a training consultancy. Julietta had a six-year old daughter. We had eleven sessions together over thirteen months. Julietta was referred to me by a consultant with responsibility for organizing spouse employment in the organization where Julietta worked.

Issues and Goals

Julietta aimed to use coaching to achieve good grades in her master’s course and also to initiate career reinvention. Her husband was near retirement and she anticipated becoming the sole income-earner. Julietta’s work in the organization, although at a low level, could give her access to permanent status in government employment and a degree of future security. Our work was primarily focused on Julietta using her studies and peripheral role in staff training at the organization to develop her skills and profile as a consultant in cross-cultural management. Initially, Julietta also showed interest in training to be a coach, though this idea seemed to fade. During the time of the coaching, Julietta experienced a number of distressing family events.

Coaching Techniques and Perspectives
Although Julietta was well advanced with her master’s program, had solid work experience and had successfully adjusted to a new culture several times, she seemed to lack confidence in her ability to develop an independent career in global management consultancy. I drew on self efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997) in supporting Julietta in developing her new career profile. My main strategy was to remind Julietta of the gap between (1) her current work roles in junior positions, and (2) her capacities as demonstrated to me in the coaching sessions, her studies and in past positions. Julietta noted in the post-coaching interview that I was stretching her beyond her initial aims:

JC: The main thing is that you have pointed out other options. I looked at the [government] and being overseas but with coaching you have broadened my options. I could do other stuff. I would not have thought about consulting otherwise. I have set my sights higher.

This moved into some specific actions which Julietta sometimes followed through – and sometimes not:

GA: The kind of role you are talking about is not a human resources role. But human resources people might bring you in. They would do the contract and course organization.

JC: That’s right. I’ll have to look at that on the Internet and see who is doing that sort of work. Being self employed is ideal but it is kind of scary. And you take a lot of risks. It is different when you are younger!

Julietta struggled through the time of the coaching on several fronts. The major challenge was to assist Julietta in making progress during a time when she was extremely busy and under personal pressure. Her mother-in-law and her father both died within a year. The death of her father was particularly difficult and this happened at a time when Julietta was on the edge of making significant steps towards developing a consultancy business. Her work was demanding because of staff shortages. The reality was that Julietta’s life was full – with a demanding study schedule, a part-time job five days a week, a son and a husband. Her scope for pushing beyond this was limited.

In our early sessions, when Julietta’s life was rather less complicated, she was quick to move ahead with her consultancy business ideas. I took a role of supporter, using reflective listening
and being someone who she could talk to about her various issues. Julietta continued with her study with great success and took pride in her achievement as a ‘straight A’ student. Early on, I felt that Julietta was expecting her teachers from the online course to direct her through her course. I encouraged her to take an independent, self-learning approach:

JC: *We get a weekly grade and a team grade by the teacher. I am a straight A student. I want to do my best and get my money’s worth. She says to use non-text sources such as on the Internet. That is not good research - it is not even peer-reviewed. She says she wants realist research. But that doesn’t mean real research on the Internet.*

GA: *It might be a matter of learning in spite of her. Find out what she wants and what you want to get from it.*

Julietta was receiving positive feedback at work on her talents as a trainer, and also from her online teachers regarding her capacity to motivate and instruct her classmates in a virtual project team. Although Julietta presented as wanting to be a coach, I moved with her as she leant towards a training role. I encouraged her to talk directly to the organization’s human resources manager about training opportunities, suggesting she ask him to rate her training modules. (Drew McLaren was also a research participant, though Julietta did not know this.) Julietta responded enthusiastically and received a positive response. I did not inform Drew that Julietta was going to approach him. I took the role of opening up experiences rather than shaping outcomes, with an action learning approach. It was clear that Julietta was successful with her training and I used this as an opportunity to encourage her. In Session 11, Julietta reflected strong self-confidence which was not there in our early sessions:

GA: *You have done some sessions and are close to a master’s degree with straight As. According to your classmates and teachers you are brilliant. The things you are doing are happening successfully. You mentioned lack of confidence in presentation skills.*

JC: *I would like to give a presentation without looking at my notes.*

GA: *You don’t lack ability.*

JC: *No. And people like it. And the feedback form was good.*

I reflected back to Julietta that I felt she was losing sight of her original goal of developing an independent consultancy. She seemed to appreciate the reminder, as evidenced in Session 11.
when she realized that if she did slip back to her comfort zone, paradoxically it would not be very comfortable:

GA: Sometimes you seem to allow yourself to slip back.

JC: That is right. I get caught up as though the government is all there is. It is my comfort zone which is why I keep coming back to it.

GA: Do you want to go back to it?

JC: There is my fear. I actually might end up in the government and liking it and there goes my other potential.

The Action Research Process

The action research cycles were quite marked with Julietta. I worked closely with her on developing her goals around a cross-cultural consultancy and became an active participant in providing a sounding board and suggestions on directions. I was also able to work with her to monitor progress and to look at where things had not worked and to revisit original goals. The various issues that confronted Julietta meant that some strategies did not go far. We tried new things, and revisited goals (such as the shift from a coaching to training focus for Julietta’s future). There was a lot of reflection and testing and moving ahead, keeping in mind Julietta’s day-to-day reality in various competing roles as a mother, spouse, student, daughter, consultant and administrative officer.

Julietta commented that, ‘The relationship makes or breaks the coaching.’ This observation was consistent with the role of action researcher as a partner in the process. This was not just goal-setting, nor research-observation. It was a fluid and complex interaction that is typical of action research.

Insights on Expatriate Acculturation
Julietta gave me considerable insight into the challenges facing a ‘trailing spouse’ who was also interested in pursuing a career. She told me several distressing stories of wives whose husbands had left them during an expatriate career. The wives had not established their own identities and careers and had been left very exposed. Julietta was driven by the desire not to be left in a vulnerable position were circumstances to take a turn for the worse. Julietta’s recent experience in Saudi Arabia, where she had not worked, kept her focused on establishing a career. There was a contrast between Julietta’s work and study direction, and the activities of many spouses of expatriates in El Salvador whose lives were dominated by social groups, sport and travel.

Julietta had basic level Spanish. It was one of her goals we discussed, though Julietta did not pursue it while we worked together. Julietta noted that one advantage of having a coach was to encourage her to work on priorities. Spanish took a back seat while she finished the study, spent time with her son and worked in an administrative position where advanced Spanish was not required. An analysis of transcripts revealed four discussions about language in the first five sessions, and this exchange in Session 8:

*GA*: Maybe it is a good time to set some goals? Have you got time to spend on Spanish?

*JC*: Depends on how much time. I talk with my driver all the time. I probably should make time for it.

*GA*: What is realistic?

*JC*: I probably could do it on a Wednesday when I am not in class.

Julietta’s conversational Spanish improved slowly. Formal Spanish tuition remained an aim for her future time in El Salvador.

Julietta’s situation demonstrated the value of coach as a connector of people with common interests within the expatriate community. I had spoken socially with Anna, a spouse of an executive in a European multinational company, about her interest in writing fiction. Anna was struggling with adjustment in El Salvador and was in ‘culture shock’. Knowing Julietta’s interests in writing and in supporting other people in the expatriate community, I put them in touch and they met and discussed their stories and ideas for a writing club. Julietta shared one of her short stories with me about an embassy officer in Manila during a terrorist attack.
**Impact**

Julietta rated the coaching very highly across all criteria except in cultural adjustment where she felt she did not need much support. In the Overall section, she rated every item at the top level (5). Julietta saw coaching as holding up a mirror to her. This helped her reflect on what she was doing and take some steps to extend her horizons. It also allowed her to balance priorities. She was highly successful in maintaining high grades on her master’s course and was close to finishing at the end of the coaching. Julietta achieved her work goal of gaining government employment status. She also managed to pursue her training and coaching consultancy work. Additionally, Julietta maintained strong social contacts and worked with her husband to sponsor a newly arrived couple.

I felt that my impact with Julietta was positive and useful. She experienced difficult times and I was able to give her support – albeit at a distance – to help her maintain direction. At the same time I was a voice-in-the-ear to take action to achieve goals. Julietta seemed to enjoy having the challenge from me – of knowing that someone whom she respected believed that she could achieve considerable success in a demanding area of cross-cultural consultancy work. I think this caused Julietta to reflect a lot on what she was actually capable of and take some steps out of her safety zone.

**Coaching and Pragmatism**

Julietta took an aggressive attitude into her study work, aiming at A’s and being critical of her classmates and her teachers if they did not apply a similar degree of diligence to the task. We looked at the result that Julietta wanted to achieve and worked pragmatically. One teacher was disorganized and unclear in her instructions. Julietta’s principles and past patterns of behaviour drove her towards confronting the teacher and demanding better tuition. However, when she considered her aim of achieving personal excellence, complaining did not seem so important. Instead, she sought and received clarity on what was required and proceeded to complete the tasks with excellent results (A).
The changes and pressures in Julietta’s life required that I look at various strategies that would assist Julietta in moving in the direction she wanted to go. Combining different approaches (listening, providing support, challenging and provoking) was a delicate task.

The coaching moved out of the Empirical world of Julietta into the Actual and Real worlds of the life of expatriate spouses. Julietta’s short story about terror and its impact on expatriates drew into our conversations more general concerns about the state of the world, including issues of whether or not people had control over their lives.

**Impact of Values**

One value that came through which appeared to drive Julietta in the early sessions was safety. Although she was close to completing her master’s course and the family was in relatively sound financial shape, she was conscious of the need to establish a safe career platform in the US government, even if it meant doing menial tasks in the short term. Julietta was successful in establishing the base that she wanted, yet also laid an excellent platform for the future as an independent consultant. This was a good example of her leveraging differences – the value of safety with the value of pushing oneself to a higher level for personal satisfaction.

An analysis of the text indicated that our discussions did not specifically focus on values, which was a limitation of the intervention. The focus was more on goal-setting which reflected the emphasis of my training at the time. On reflection, had I begun the work with Julietta now I may have explored her motivations more carefully rather than making assumptions around her values based on her actions in taking a study course and initiating work in human resources at a low level. On the other hand, between the two of us we seemed to work this pathway rather effectively.

**Insights on Coaching for Acculturation**
There were two bereavements in Julietta’s family which had a strong impact in different ways. The death of her father was a personal impact plus it took Julietta away from her routine of study and her efforts in creating a consultancy presence. I asked Julietta about her trip back to the Philippines (in Session 6):

JC: I overnighted in Hong Kong but I didn’t plan the trip. Coming back I could have shopped but I didn’t think of it.
GA: How was it?
JC: It was very emotional. A lot of things have changed. Shocking I guess. It needed adjustment.

The coaching shifted from goal achievement through to underlying support where action became less important. In Julietta’s case, her life was full of action and our work was more around the nature of the action that she was undertaking. This was an excellent example of the role of context, where the coaching process could run counter to the normal action research cycle. It was also an example of timing being extremely significant. Sometimes, expatriates are not in a position to receive coaching of the intense action-focused type that is normally put forward in business coaching models. They may just need a supportive person in the background encouraging them through difficult times, while at the same being prepared to challenge them to action when the moment was right. In Session 7, I reflected to Julietta how so many things were slowing her down, but that there would be opportunities ahead:

GA: The new study unit is a downer and will pick up when you get control of it. The new computer - that will appear. On the home front you are still having trouble, but it’s going up. It is a tough period.
JC: I am getting back, getting over it.
GA: A lot of things - next door building work.
JC: Dos meses más!
GA: Everything is going to be moving in the right direction. When we first met there was no problem with class, computer work etc. Now you are in a space where things are not quite right and it is going to take a bit of time to get on top of it. Don’t beat yourself up on it
JC: Right.
Julietta’s situation showed how a coach can assist a spouse to work against the prevailing culture of an organization to pursue educational, employment, and career development objectives.

Julietta and I formed a good professional relationship and we also became friends, though we did not meet all that often. The personal connection became stronger when Julietta mentioned that she and her husband were assisting a gay couple as a sponsor family. This was a formal part of the acculturation assistance provided by the government organization. I mentioned at that point that I was in a relationship with a man and we met the couple socially. This kind of connection between coaching a client seems more likely in a close-knit expatriate community than in a large city where people have established social networks. The balance of friendship and coach was an issue across many of the cases.

**Coaching from a Cultural Perspective**

Julietta provided a good example of someone who seemed high on cultural intelligence. As a coach, I gave her opportunities to tell the stories of her work and demonstrate to herself her skills and knowledge in cross-cultural communication. I was not teaching her about it, but allowing her to reflect and reinforce lessons from her own experience. In Session 2, we had the following exchange:

*JC: I kind of like this lifestyle - being in a different culture every 3 or 4 years and getting to know the place. It is good for children to be exposed to other cultures. It is a different experience to growing up in the US. This job is lots of face-time with lots of interviews. It is very intensive work.*

*GA: There is other work on cultural intelligence. You have high cultural intelligence - the ability to adapt to different cultures - and other things about the way you operate. For many people a job that [taking finger prints of locals seeking US visas] would be high emotional labour. For you it probably wouldn’t be.*

*JC: It is fairly easy for me. I think it has to do with how you are with personality.*

*GA: And those skills you have.*

*JC: One of our junior officers who is my supervisor was doing a cable to tell other posts that this is our experience. The thing is to get them to cooperate with you as soon as you can and move
on, but they won’t be able to do that if they are nervous or scared. You have to watch how you react because that in turn is how they react back to you. And you have to have patience and think of this job as actually assisting them. It would be frustrating if you don’t have that mindset. I haven’t got really frustrated so far.

GA: It is empathy?

JC: Sometimes I make a joke but I have to keep myself from making it too often. I say in Spanish, ‘The light doesn’t bite’.

Julietta struggled with Spanish yet was still able to turn potentially difficult situations around into positive experiences for local people and herself:

JC: Yesterday I told this nice old lady. I said, in Spanish, ‘Your finger is sweaty’.

GA: What is that in Spanish?

JC: Mohado? I said, ‘Dedo mohado. Secarlo la ropa por favor’. She started taking off her clothes! She thought I was asking her to take off her clothes. I had a local employee who was there and she said the same thing and she still did not get it. I think she was just very nervous. The local employee says, ‘Help her put her finger on the box’, and then we all laughed. That was fine and she thought that was funny. I burst out laughing and there we were all laughing. The next person was actually her husband but we did not realize that. He also had wet fingers. We did the same thing and we thought he understood it. He was directly behind his wife and he started fiddling with his buckle and doing the same thing. Everyone included them started laughing.

I was able to recount this story to other clients as a way of encouraging humour when there are language barriers.

One reflection on Julietta’s situation was that a short coaching engagement may not have had much impact. It may be that coaching assignments with expatriates need to be longer than the industry standard of around three to six months. This is counterintuitive because expatriate assignments are generally of short to medium-term duration. For Julietta, whose life seemed comfortable from a distance, there were strong pressures imposed from the expatriate experience throughout our time working together. This included:
• the ‘What next?’ factor when her husband reached retirement age;
• the death of two family members;
• distance online education without local support and with computer failure;
• responsibility for bringing up a son while working part-time and studying at home; and
• an underlying sense of insecurity from observing the experiences of other expatriate spouses who had been forced to find careers later in life.

There were times when it was simply not reasonable to push Julietta through a change process. This was common with the participants. The high pace of expatriate life meant that there are times when it was necessary just to ride the waves rather than try to create them! As coach I tried to assist through those times by being in the background as a supporter.
APPENDIX A.3
CASE STUDY: PATRICIA RIVERS

Profile

Patricia was a 46 year old public health professional married to a manager in a US government organization. She was in El Salvador as a spouse of an expatriate but had pursued an independent career as a research project manager in public health in El Salvador. Patricia and her husband had been in San Salvador since 1999 and had adopted two Salvadorian children. Patricia finished her PhD shortly before arriving in El Salvador. Patricia was fluent in Spanish. We had twenty sessions together over fourteen months leading up to the family’s departure from El Salvador in June 2005.

Reason for Inclusion in the Study

Patricia provided the perspective of a female expatriate spouse who was developing a career of her own during her first overseas posting. Patricia had been in the country for an extended time and provided a retrospective view of acculturation. This case also provided an opportunity to see how coaching might work with preparation for re-entry to the home culture. Patricia was referred to me by the director of the spouse employment program in her husband’s organization.

Issues and Goals

A major focus for Patricia was the family’s imminent return to the USA and her objective of re-entering the US workforce at a relatively high level. She presented as having a major issue with work-family balance, with tendency towards perfectionism. Patricia was concerned that she was taking on too much work and failing to find a balance between her family life and her work. There was a gap of six weeks between our first meeting and our first coaching session, a reflection of how busy Patricia was with her work and family. She had four projects running related to HIV education in El Salvador:

GA: *In terms of priorities, what are the key things for you at the moment?*
PR: It has got to be with my family. Sometimes I forget when I get drawn into interesting work. I like it too much. I think I am a workaholic. Whatever temporary hit I get from scoring a good project or publishing one of those articles, it is just not worth it for the stress it puts on my family. It has got to change now with the children in the picture. I really think that is going to be the key to my happiness, to let go of work.

GA: So family now is the priority. When you think about it family is more important but when the actual process starts, the work takes over.

PR: I found myself actually saying this to my four year old, ‘I don’t have time to read you stories tonight because I have to get back to work’. Is that horrible or what? After I thought, ‘Am I a monster or what?’

Patricia was concerned about her transition back to life in the USA. She viewed her professional position negatively. She mentioned age discrimination, a concern that she had not been in the mainstream workforce and a worry that she would not be able to secure a position appropriate to her qualifications. Even later in the coaching process, Patricia was struggling with both the reality and the perception of her circumstances:

PR: There was one job I thought I was well qualified for. I got a form letter saying I had not qualified as a candidate! This is very unusual. The only thing I can think of is they said they wanted someone with an experience level of 12 or 13 in government. I had put in my daily rate very low at $160 per day because of the local economy. Maybe they did not think I was at the level?

GA: Maybe.

PR: That is grossly unfair. I am giving up my career for my husband in government.

A related goal was for Patricia to publish journal articles related to her research work. She set an initial goal of publishing three articles by the time she left El Salvador. Although this goal was not met, she made progress. Later during the coaching program, we moved towards a goal of anxiety and stress management. It emerged that this issue was often quite paralysing for Patricia during times of change.

Coaching Challenges
The major coaching challenge was dealing with Patricia’s lack of confidence in her work and in planning an independent career. While she was determined to succeed, often I sensed she was working against herself and a little reluctant to set high goals. At the same time, I had to balance my enthusiasm for Patricia’s potential with the realistic facts of her situation where she was re-entering the US market after a substantial period away and was also balancing her career with the needs of her young family.

**Coaching Techniques and Perspectives**

A lot of the time I was reminding Patricia of her potential, her experience, her qualifications, her determination and various other elements of her life that would equip her to take on whatever goals she set her mind to. Patricia recognized the value of this approach:

*PR: I would probably be further mired in lack of confidence without the benefit of coaching. I could have been paralysed instead of moving on. I could have been overwhelmed. Woe is me!*  

Patricia took up my suggestion of organizing some preliminary informational interviews in the USA on a visit in 2004. Our discussions about this illustrate the self esteem issue and also my approach to it in the coaching sessions:

*GA: If you turn up in a job fair in November you will be with thousands of other people. Maybe you could do something before then?*  
*PR: Start now?*  
*GA: You don’t lose anything by talking to people - by making the connections to find out more about your own business and what others are doing.*  
*PR: I am conscious that I am taking up someone’s time with informational interviews.*  
*GA: Let’s look at it another way. You are very credible, high quality, experienced, and qualified, and working in the field.*  
*PR: I can see a theme coming out this afternoon. I am really undervaluing myself. I don’t know where I get that from. I don’t think that I have that much worth that someone like you can say, ‘Hey, look you’ve got this, this and this.’ I had better start pumping up my self esteem more.*  
*GA: Those people who see you will be getting something.*
My aim was to help Patricia to reframe some of her experiences and talents in a more positive light so that she would be more positive in her approach to job seeking. In the following example, this reframing triggered an additional positive thought from Patricia about her additional language skills and work in a Latino culture:

_PR: I have expertise here that the others didn’t. But back in the USA, that is not going to be. I brought expertise. I did learn some new things so I will have some new skills._

_GA: You have expertise, established credentials, recent experience in the field - direct and fresh. You are not part of the established history. Those things give you a certain shape._

_PR: And the Hispanic market is becoming more important._

One of Patricia’s tendencies was to say ‘yes’, including to projects at the local university, community work, family obligations and additional work responsibilities. We were therefore constantly running into timing issues with goal-setting, particularly in finishing the journal articles. Patricia would set herself a homework task and then not complete the task. This initially caused some additional anxiety. We tackled the problem by setting slightly more realistic goals and agreeing that not meeting them was not in itself a problem. This resulted in a smoother and less stressful process, but still allowed Patricia to set stretching goals:

_GA: With articles it is a matter of trying to keep it simple - focusing on high impact with minimum extra effort._

_PR: Being pragmatic!_

_GA: And estimating the time then making sure you finish before the deadline. Make it realistic and make sure you meet it._

_PR: Right, even doubling the time estimate. That is a good strategy so I don’t keep feeling like a failure because I can’t meet my deadlines._

Our conversations about Patricia not reaching goals with the articles became matter-of-fact rather than stressful. The reality was that there were other priorities:

_PR: Would you be surprised if I told you I hadn’t finished the article?_

_GA: I wouldn’t be shocked._

_PR: I accepted the UCA job [an interesting university research project Patricia wanted to do]_

_GA: I got the impression you might._
PR: It felt right and I don’t regret it. I have made some strides in the article. I have engaged an email buddy to give me a kick in the butt and review it. I finished some additional analysis.

GA: Good.

I looked at ways of reframing situations that were preventing Patricia from moving ahead with her major goals. For example, she had some problems with the sign-off from the manager on a project in Nicaragua. The effect was that she stopped making progress on other goals because of the anxiety:

PR: I need to resolve that. It is driving me crazy. That is an action I have to do today. This is a significant barrier.

GA: Is it an irritation rather than a block?

PR You are right. It is not a block.

GA: The worst that could happen is that you waste a little bit of work when he says no. More likely you will be able to proceed.

PR: If the worst happens I have wasted minimal time and I can go to article two.

By helping Patricia reframe the situation, she was able to move ahead more easily.

Patricia identified a major issue she had of going back to her research data and reanalysing, thereby delaying the progress of studies. We worked directly to alter her habit:

PR: Ok, if justified, consider redoing analysis.

GA: Give careful thought to the benefits of that, given the amount of time it will take to get across the new software.

PR: I just love diddling with the data. It is a major flaw. I just won’t leave it alone.

GA: How about this? If you want to change that habit, why don’t you leave it alone?

PR: Ok.

GA: Right now, just rule a line.

PR: I just did.

GA: Can you stick to it?

PR: Yeah?

GA: So you can stick to it? Next time we meet you are not going to say, ‘Well, I had a go at it’
PR: I might be twitching.

GA: Finishing the article is the priority you set yourself. You have a line there. Is it nice and thick? Are you comfortable with it?

PR: Hmm... it is making me a little anxious. My heart rate has just upped a notch.

I asked Patricia to reflect on her experiences with the Nicaraguan project when it was finally completed. She said she had learnt not to be so apologetic. I encouraged Patricia to reflect on what she had done to gain insights for future situations that might be similar:

GA: If you did that again would you do anything different?

PR: If there were problems I would use my feminine instinct to approach issues. I don’t think I can be demanding like a man.

We talked about Patricia’s lack of confidence and the ‘impostor syndrome’ experienced by many skilled people and managers. Patricia feared she might get ‘found out’ as being inadequate by the client, even though cognitively she realized she was experienced and competent. Using the House of Change model, I explained that Patricia might be able to use her cognitive skills to reframe her competence and replace ‘impostor’ with something else so that her behaviour with clients was more confident and appropriate for a quality consultant.

There were many discussions around issues of perfectionism and Patricia’s tendency to undervalue what she achieved:

PR: I can’t help comparing myself to people who are more efficient.

GA: You say, ‘more efficient’?

PR: I am functioning on a pretty high level. I have to stop beating myself up about that.

Patricia mentioned that she had been a very high achiever in school and university and much was expected of her in her career but she felt she had somehow lost her way after her late twenties with an unsatisfactory first marriage and other things that had held her back. She showed me a photo of herself during the time she was viewed as a ‘wonder kid’. We discussed the idea of going back to that time and seeing if she could take forward some of the ideas and vision she had then:
GA: What about our discussion last time about going back to the time of the wonder kid. Did you reflect on that? We looked at the photo.

PR: Yes. I have been kicking it in when I am making decisions. What would the 27 year old have done and is it realistic?

GA: Realistically there does not seem to be much limitation on what you can do now.

PR: But there is when you have got young children.

GA: 27 year-olds have children and still are high achievers, particularly if they have financial resources. You can make it a limitation. I don’t know. I do know that you want to put focus on the children. Anita Roddick for example had kids when she set up the Body Shop. You can see it as a limitation.

PR: The women I admire most have a good family life and remarkable achievements. My assessment of myself is that I have a lot of natural talent but I am not big-league natural talent. I do have commitment, interest and intensity. Given enough time, I can compensate for a lack of cutting-edge brilliance.

GA: What do other people think?

PR: When I was 27 they thought I was super-woman. I set my sights very high. I use as my benchmark people who are really brilliant. I am not saying I don’t have any talent. But it doesn’t come as easily to me as these other people.

Coaching from a Cultural Perspective:

Patricia’s knowledge of the cultural context, her linguistic skills and her contacts across cultures were in excess of my own. For this reason, there were limited occasions where what I was doing could be described as coaching from cultural perspective. Nevertheless, culture entered our discussions in many forms. Perhaps the major contribution in this area was on the cultural issues regarding re-entry to the US culture. There was a discussion about the impact of the move to the USA on the children and on Patricia’s maid Elsa. Elsa was Salvadorian and spoke little English and was moving permanently to the USA to live with Elsa’s family.
I was also able to help Patricia contextualize through culture some differences in findings between a study she did in El Salvador and studies done mostly in Western societies:

*PR:* Originally I had the idea that we were going to show one of the fundamental principles of social marketing - the more messages and channels you employ the more effective your outcome. My [American] colleagues wanted an article that shows if you spend more you definitely get more.

*GA:* That is not what you found though?

*PR:* That’s right, so I will be the single author on this.

*GA:* This is a great cultural example of people coming here and putting their models into El Salvador. They are not the same. That is the nature of the context in the culture. Budgets are small. That’s a difference.

*PR:* Right. Hmm... put it in a cultural context.

*GA:* Communication channels are not as easy. It is not Sydney or New York.

*PR:* You are going to review this for me - you and my ex-employer!

**Insights on Coaching Expatriates for Acculturation**

Working with Patricia highlighted the difficulties for couples in managing dual careers. The value of a coach was to give support to the spouse in pursuing an independent career, where others around her were not giving her explicit support on a regular basis. Many of the wives of her husband’s friends did not work (nor did they want to) and Patricia relied on one or two other women who were following career objectives. Coaches can play a role in providing an additional layer of support. It was particularly helpful here where Patricia had children at home. Home visits can provide expert support and company in an isolated situation. There was, I sensed, a deal of suspicion regarding my house visits to Patricia. Particularly in a culture where many man have mistresses, it seemed unusual for a man to be visiting a woman at home during the day without some form of relationship being involved. On one occasion I got the impression Patricia’s husband was not entirely happy, possibly until he found out I had a male partner!

Patricia recognized the particular pressure that the expatriate experience puts on people. She commented on the effectiveness of coaching in assisting expatriates through a major change of
One aspect we discussed about the expatriate lifestyle was of friendships and their short-term nature:

PR: It has been the hardest part. I find myself going through the stages of being torn apart and angry about it. Then I went into a stage of avoiding relationships with new people because I did not want to say goodbye. But now I realize it is part of the lifestyle that you have all these lovely people who you know are going to leave. It is ok, and you get used to it. It took six years. You intend to keep in contact by email. But you will be lucky to stay in contact with more than one or two people. It was excruciating. When June and July come around, I still get depressed. It is not just saying good bye there is also the anxiety of the new wave. I like new people but it is overwhelming. This is the first time I have been overseas. Before, it was not so much transition and I was the one moving and saying good bye.

GA: I am the same. Now I am on the receiving end and it does not feel good.

PR: Osland [(Osland, 1995)] did not talk about that.

GA: No she didn’t. Did you learn anything from that book?

PR: I did. It gave me good talking points about the things I gained. I copied the bit about re-entry which was good practical advice.

GA: I think she said that you get about a minute to talk about your experiences and people then turn off.

PR: Yes. It is a major deal with this friendship issue which she didn’t mention. You see literature about that in the Foreign Service.

The sessions with Patricia continued by phone after she left El Salvador and I continued to assist her with gaining employment. This happened with one other client – Jack Trimboli (Case Study 6.6) – and is likely to be a feature of coaching expatriates.

**Executive Coaching as Action Research**

Patricia and I worked jointly on her issues and I was very much a participant in the decision making process. Also, I identified closely with Patricia’s situation as we shared an interest in research methodology and I was also in a major career transition and facing challenges of re-entry in the future.
With Patricia’s tendency to take on too much, we were constantly juggling dates and revising goals. For example, Patricia scaled back from a target of three journal articles to two after realizing the scale of activities she had in the remaining time in El Salvador:

PR: I am not quick at this you know!

GA: It is not a quick process. You have run into some barriers.

PR: And finishing up other things like teaching and projects.

GA: How many articles?

PR: Three. Is it doable?

GA: Do you think it is doable?

PR: I’ll try for three but more realistically two.

GA: By when?

PR: June 29.

We revisited a goal that Patricia had been unsuccessful in managing through several months – blocking-off time to do articles:

GA: If it didn’t work before, what can you do differently?

PR: This time I am going to be more consistent.

GA: What would make you more consistent?

PR: It is untouchable time.

GA: It was untouchable last time.

PR: No, I let other things intrude.

GA: With those dates you set before, you were quite sure you were committed to doing it. If we go away having made the same commitment, then in a week you have not made progress, it could make you feel less efficient?

PR: I can work with the support of my husband who is very good at barking at me.

GA: Who else?

PR: Maybe my friend Dianne?

GA: What else could be different? Can you write down rigid times in your diary - less but more rigid?

PR: It was probably unrealistic to put down a whole day.
GA: What is realistic?
PR: Mornings from 8.30 to 11.30.

Coaching and Pragmatism

One pragmatic approach I took with the coaching sessions was to encourage Patricia to look at consequences of actions she was contemplating, particularly where I felt there might be a potential for her to take on too much:

GA: Is the UCA thing likely to develop into something that is going to take over your life?
PR: I hope not. I am only getting $500 per month and I don’t want to put more than 15 hours a week into it.

Where Patricia ran into problems with her Nicaraguan project, I used a pragmatic approach to look at the consequences of taking action to unblock the process. Patricia was concerned that the project manager was not going to sign off on the project and give her negative feedback:

GA: At the moment you are upset about it?
PR: Paranoid.
GA: Yes, but you are thinking about it differently than you are feeling.
PR: Right, I owe them nothing.
GA: So how can you change the emotion?
PR: Good question.
GA: One way is to change your behaviour, or to work on the thinking to generate a change in emotion. Or replace it with another emotion. What can we do? How would you like to feel about this other than paralysed and annoyed?
PR: Urgency for something else.
GA: That is no so much a feeling.
PR: A sense of satisfaction and accomplishment.
GA: What would give you that?
PR: Getting the article done.
GA: That is kind of behaviour. So by doing that it might generate the emotion to get rid of the other feelings?
PR: It is holding me back and tiring me emotionally and probably physically.
GA: So we need to find ways to blanket it. Get some new feelings by doing some of those things. A telephone call to him is an easy way out. Do you want to be paralysed by it?
PR: Of course not. On the other hand would I prefer a state of unknowing or my worst fears and paranoia coming true? I would prefer a state of unknowing.
GA: If the worst did happen, what would happen then?
PR: I would need a day or two to lick my wounds, listen to my Johnny Mitchell blues album.
GA: What would happen then?
PR: I’d be better.
GA: Let’s imagine it happened. It’s a complete disaster. He calls and he says, ‘Patricia...’
PR: ‘You’ll never work in this town again.’ [laughs] ‘That’s fine. I’m leaving in a year.’
GA: ‘This town ain’t big enough for the both of us.’ What happens then? What are the consequences?
PR: I’d have to do some damage control. How would this affect my job search in the USA? The answer is probably not. I wouldn’t have a reference but I would have an interesting report. It would be a big blow to my confidence
GA: So you listen to music?
PR: Yes.
GA: Then you get through it?
PR: With myJohnny Mitchell Blue album. And by just getting through it while trying to be productive. And I might be pleasantly surprised.

The Role of Values

Values played an important role in Patricia’s life and in the coaching process. The incentive for Patricia’s work life was ‘doing good’. She wanted to make a meaningful contribution with high impact. Values were a lever to encourage Patricia to think positively about herself and her contribution to potential employees. I asked Patricia to focus on her values as she prepared for her return the USA:
PR: There were five most important values. Thirst to learn and keep bettering myself. See things through to completion. Kindness respect and dignity to all. Honesty. I call a spade a spade. I
admit when I have screwed up. I value nurturing and mentoring. That is very important to me since I have been a professional. I am quite proud of that. The gifts - experience and technical competence. That would be number one. I have other gifts.

GA: What about values? Maybe that is your greatest gift? Many don’t have that.
PR: Maybe. My strong sense of values - without sounding like a neo-conservative.

Patricia considered values as she considered potential jobs in the USA:

PR: So the salary is right. But the reason I may not be enchanted with it is the Bush emphasis on abstinence. I don’t think I could work with that. It is because the White House has to answer to the very conservative group.

Impact

Patricia was extremely positive about coaching. On her assessment form she scored 5s on most items. She described the coaching as, ‘therapeutic, refreshing, and worthwhile.’

Approximately six months into the coaching we reviewed progress as part of the coaching program:

GA: In terms of where we started, how are you in terms of where you wanted to be?
PR: I am still hard on myself for not having two articles done.
GA: The aim was to do it before you left and you had various things that slowed you down.
PR: Although I am hard on myself on those things, I think the sessions have helped me do what I should have been doing from the beginning in terms of focusing on the positives and the strengths. That was very important for the exercise in the USA.
GA: Which was a very successful expedition by the sound of it.
PR: Yes.
GA: What would you have given yourself out of 10 for that?
PR: At least a 9.
GA: That is pretty good.
PR: If I had been able to contact those two references it would have been a 10.
I believe the coaching had an impact on keeping Patricia focused on her objectives and supporting her when things became a little overwhelming with job contracts, family and community engagements. Also, by raising her belief in herself, coaching empowered Patricia to be more independent in setting her future direction.

**Emerging Themes**

Patricia’s attitude to confidentiality was typical of the participants:

*PR: In my case it would be easy enough to use a pseudonym. Other people might not want to disclose stuff but in the interests of research I am ready to reveal all.*

This is a highly significant issue in terms of using coaching as a research method in the future. It does appear that confidentiality is not a huge issue, provided there is a level of trust over how material is handled. This contrasts with psychotherapy where client confidentiality is complete and necessary for the process to work.

**APPENDIX A.4**

**CASE STUDY: RAFAEL LUZ**

**Profile**

When I met Rafael, he was working in a middle management project role in finance and information technology with a European-based multinational. Rafael was former manager of operations and administration at the national airline. He was Salvadorian with an engineering degree from a major American University. He saw himself as an engineer at the core. He had an MBA from the top business school in Central American. We had seven sessions together over eleven months.

**Reason for Inclusion in the Study**
Rafael provided the perspective of a local manager working with expatriate managers in a multinational company. Also, he was one of three participants from the same organization, giving an organizational systems dimension.

**Issues and Goals**

Rafael was dissatisfied with the limitations of his role as an expert in finance and information technology. He was interested in developing his career and eventually becoming a general manager:

*RL*: *I came from a really technical area. You were told to solve problems. Things have changed and I have been trying to move out from technical to management.*

In Session 2, Rafael clarified his goals, in particular his interest in improving his communication skills:

*GA*: *Last time I think we talked about you deciding on what you wanted to focus on in the coaching.*

*Rafael*: *One of the areas I don’t really see as a weakness but one I would like to strengthen is communication. I don’t see myself with problems on content. It is more externalizing those ideas to others.*

*GA*: *You had feedback you had too much detail and you also said you liked detail.*

*Rafael*: *But I would be willing to trade it off if I could transfer it.*

Rafael achieved his goal of becoming a manager in the company. The goals then evolved to what type of manager he was going to be.

**Coaching Techniques and Perspectives**

We talked about different strategies for improving Rafael’s communication skills, particularly in presentations. I was essentially conducting one-to-one communications skills training. I suggested that Rafael anticipate what people need in meetings, give the main ideas upfront and then let them ask for detail:
RL: After our meeting last time we had another presentation and I tried to make some changes and I think it worked. You told me that you have got to get in someone else’s shoes. What is it that this group wants me to tell them? I did that and I finished it and went back to figure out facts to support questions they might ask.

GA: That is good. Thinking of that presentation, what was the reason for it?

RL: The meeting was already called to present the country manager with figures for the year.

GA: What was the moment of truth? Was it a whole series of slides?

RL: There was a single slide with a summary. He wanted to go into that. At other occasions I did that at the end. This time I brought it forward.

GA: You gave him the confident picture straight away. You just had to give him the big picture showing him that things are fine. Give him more detail then show him the summary slide again at the end. That is a good model.

RL: It really did work.

I had used the metaphor of a back office full of well organized files which were available to Rafael at the front desk if requested. To reinforce the ideas, I continued the metaphor in a subsequent conversation:

GA: The big picture is to give him what he wants to know - leave him with the major impression, instead of a weight of detail that he could not digest.

RL: On this occasion I presented the tip of the iceberg. Through the slides there were questions for further information. It was not confusion but some questions about the way it had been done. And we did a separate analysis. The conclusion was that it was correct.

GA: You were able to do that in the meeting?

RL: Yes.

GA: I think we spoke last time about the room being full of facts but not presenting all of them because you cannot absolutely anticipate what the manager wants. You need though to be able to turn to the detail when you need it. The alternative is to show him the whole room of facts straight away. He couldn’t handle it. It is joyful for a manager to have the big picture but to be able to get detail when they need it.

RL: I have got all the detail. But I do find it is rare that I can’t provide the answer when it is needed.
GA: Provided the big picture is clear. You could test it by asking yourself some questions as though you were Douglas [the country manager].

I did a lot of work with Rafael in encouraging him to look at other people’s approaches and perspectives. For example, I asked him to look at the presentation style of his South African supervisor. Rafael found this quite difficult to do at first:

GA: If Paul was the presenter, what would your perspective of him be?
RL: He has the knowledge.
GA: But he might not have written the presentation.
RL: [pause] Very professional - you can tell by the way he is delivering the message. He knows the facts - the confidence. You know that with Paul.
GA: So you can say that he is confident. You could probably make some other judgments about Paul. What sort of manager would you think he would be?
RL: His style is good - [pause] - the coaching style, and he has authority when it is needed.
GA: What could you know from his presentation? Imagine you have never met him. Would he laugh?
RL: Yes, he would have fun. He would be a really social person.
GA: Humour, social.
RL: Intelligent, bright.
GA: You can tell beyond the content if he talks rather than just reads. So he is bright.
Confident, social, bright - what else? Would you be attracted to work for him?
RL: Yes. Sometimes depending on the way people says things you can tell how they operate with managing. He is someone that doesn’t say ‘I’. He uses ‘we’ and gives credit.
GA: You struggled to give me anything at the start, now you have given me all this just on the basis of the 15 minutes. So for you, what would you like to get across? People will be left with a list of impressions.

This coaching strategy was to encourage Rafael to draw from other ways of operating to build on his own style and strengths:

GA: You have some tools for impact - knowledge, form, personality. You have passion about knowledge and solutions which Paul might not have.
In Session 5, I came back to the communications issue by reflecting my own difficulty in understanding Rafael’s response to a question. I was direct:

_GA_: I asked you a question, ‘What are the issues you see?’ You said to me, ‘Structural issues.’ I then asked if the project has the mandate to get involved in those structural issues. You started to tell me a story, but you did not answer the question. In terms of communication, I found that a bit confusing. Let’s start again. Does your project have the mandate to get involved in the big structural issues?

_RL_: Um, probably, it is very simple.

_GA_: Well you just made it complicated.

_RL_: The project will... The members of the project...

_GA_: What about answering the question?

_RL_: We have been told that we will be able to have...

_GA_: Forget the, ‘We have been told.’ Answer the question.

_RL_: We have been given the opportunity to...

_GA_: Answer the question. My question was, ‘Has your project got the mandate to be involved in high level structural change?’

_RL_: Yes, We have.

_GA_: ‘Yes,’ if we start with that. This is like the presentation.

_RL_: Come straight to the point?

_GA_: Get known as a direct communicator. If you can, consciously remember to respond directly - practice being direct.

_RL_: Ok, I’ll keep that in mind.

Rafael said that the ideas we discussed were not new but the coaching had given them focus for him:

_RL_: These are things I have thought about before but bringing them all together like this is important.

While we worked on the specifics of day-to-day communications and presentation skills, I also worked with Rafael on the bigger issues of his career direction into management. I did this
through asking him to sketch out his ideal job. I also encouraged him to use his strengths and to build on them. He listed four aspects of his ideal job and we explored these:

GA: What percentage of your ideal job in the future is going to be each of these - Project Management, People Management, Problem-Solving, Communication?

RL: 50% People Management, 20% Project Management, Communication 15%, Problem-solving 15%.

GA: So this is the ideal? What about your job now?

RL: 15% People, 30% Project, 20% Communication, 35% Problem-solving.

I encouraged Rafael to do a gap analysis and decide his strategy:

GA: You have an option - keep an eye on the things you are not so good at but go to another level on your strengths because this is where you future is. If you are going to be a managing director you need to look at the people management. And almost everyone needs good communications skills.

We talked a lot about how to line up short to medium term goals and decisions with longer term ‘fuzzy vision’ (working from an approach set out in Grant and Greene, 2001). I encouraged Rafael to reflect on how others in decision-making positions might view him. Rafael referred back to a diagram which I drew showing the fuzzy vision (as a general manager) and how it was important that the decisions he made moved him gradually towards that vision:

GA: They have selected you to do problem-solving and project management - their expectations. Yet you are telling me you want to do more of those? Are you sure it is as close to your future path as you told me before? The direction towards your ideal seems to be heading away from it. Is that fair?

RL: You could say the ideal job is not as close as it could be - but it could be closer. It is moving further away maybe.

GA: This doesn’t sound like management. It is project management and problem-solving. But you want people management.

RL: It is not exactly what I want. It is an opportunity to move on from what I am doing now.
In Session 4, he referred again to the diagram when he was discussing his move to a project leader role. He redrew it:

**RL:** You can say it was one of your diagrams. *This new position is more a step out. This is what I want - but when this is over I might move back here.***

**GA:** Provided you train the senior people so they know where you want to go.

**RL:** There is no value-added if I end up back here.

**GA:** *A quote from Abraham Lincoln, ‘I walk very slowly but I never walk backwards.’*

We came back to his future plans in Session 5. He had been giving this some thought:

**RL:** *An employee of a big company, to the head of a small one, then the head of a big one.***

**GA:** Not a bad plan.

**RL:** An interesting career move.

Increasingly, I encouraged Rafael to be more involved in shaping his direction rather than reacting to the events around him (working from a cultural perspective on the dimension of control of environment):

**GA:** *To take an active role in developing your career you need to think of some active ways to build in some people management or it could be zero.*

Sometimes, I challenged him:

**GA:** Out of 10, what would you give yourself as a manager?

**RL:** Probably an 8.

**GA:** If you asked around the business here, what would they say?

**RL:** A lower score or they would say that they have not had a chance to see. I want to change that perception. You can work things around sometimes but on other times you don’t have much space.

**GA:** And sometimes you have the space but don’t take advantage of it.

I also encouraged him to think about what type of manager he wanted to be:

**GA:** *Another question - how do managers behave? Think about yourself in your view of how you want be as a manager.*
Subsequently, Rafael moved into a senior management position, and I followed this idea through, reflecting that his language of management was very ‘hard’:

GA: The people at the top are very good with people. They build relationships - trusting personal relationships. When you are talking to Paul, to the senior people, they get the hard systems stuff right. But to get to the top the strength is relationships. People trust them. You are doing a fantastic job. If you get the relationship stuff right you will go even quicker. The relationships have taken a bottom rung.
RL: I need to work with that if I am going to succeed.
GA: Do you like doing it?
RL: Yes.

Again, I was direct, which Rafael responded to because of our high level of trust:

GA: You have achieved an amazing amount. What is missing is fun, humour, emotions. The level of your voice is very flat. The control is there and you never let it go. You have got the hard stuff under control. Relax, enjoy other people. Know yourself.
RL: It is interesting to hear this. I have noticed it but not in the way that you put it.
GA: When do you really enjoy yourself?
RL: When I exercise and go to the beach. I used to do other things like having drinks with friends.
GA: You can modify that and relax at the same time - keeping the weight off.
RL: I have not had a chance to have fun and relax at work with colleagues - once I started to lose weight and also work is a higher priority.
GA: When do you laugh a lot?
RL: [pause] It has to be really funny.
GA: When did you last do it?
RL: Not at work - maybe with my family.

Coaching from a Cultural Perspective:

The way I worked with Rafael on his communications skills issue was an example of leveraging cultural difference. Rafael was receiving negative feedback about his communication and
presentation skills, even though he rated himself highly on these. Also, he had a lot of experience in Latin American companies with giving training presentations and had not received negative comments:

*RL: I have done some training and sometimes people tell me it is great. The transfer of knowledge - the detail of Excel - explaining how to use them. 70 employees and the feedback was excellent.*

The context of training and management presentations are different. From a cultural perspective, Salvadorians tend to be indirect and detailed in their communication style, giving a lot of description. South Africans are usually direct and expect to be told what is going on. My work with Rafael focused on his being more direct. In text analysis, I could not find any conversations where I had raised this as a cultural issue. Perhaps it was more an underlying assumption of mine that good communication is direct, supplemented by my knowledge of the individuals to whom Rafael was making presentations (including Paul, his supervisor). My approach was to encourage Rafael to keep control of the detail (his strength and preference) but to present the main ideas upfront, thus meeting the needs of his audiences who were not interested in receiving detail:

*RL: There are several areas where the detail is important.*

*GA: But if you do the detail stuff at the wrong time, it could be a problem. Pick the right content, the right spot and the right form and you can probably get the same response as your Excel group.*

There was also a cultural dimension to the coaching in the way Rafael viewed his career. In El Salvador, people tend to move ahead on experience or because of family connections rather than on self-development or on talent alone. Rafael’s supervisor referred Rafael to me because of his frustration that Rafael was not planning ahead with his career. I challenged Rafael to take control of his future. He initially resisted this idea but once he understood the possibilities, he moved ahead quickly. This was also related to the indirect cultural orientation favoured by many Salvadorians:

*GA: To be direct I think sometimes you don’t take advantage of opportunities. For example, with this one there might be some room to have a say in the make up of your job as to whether or not...*
there is management. Or if you don’t do that, in nine months time you will say that they have not
given you the chance. To be explicit is one approach.

RL: That is right because up until now I have not taken the initiative of letting them know that I
want personnel. I have had it in the past.

I sometimes challenged Rafael to keep him moving in the direction of his vision. In this
exchange, Rafael is talking about how senior management perceives him:

RL: I am seen as being into more technical work. I have never been given a chance.

GA: Hang on, ‘I have never been given a chance’ is different from, ‘I have never pursued an
opportunity.’

RL: And that is what I need to do.

GA: They will give you what they think you can do and what they think you want. If you want to
change it, the message you send out is, ‘Sure, I am good at that stuff but the thing I am really
interested in is this. Sure, I’ll do all the technical stuff but as I am doing it I want you to be
aware that when opportunities come up I want to be considered.’

RL: It is something realistic and can be achieved.

One discussion about job titles illustrates the complexity of cross-cultural management. I
suggested one way of Rafael shaping his future might be to have a new job title that described
his management role:

GA: You want to be a manager. One simple thing you can do is to ensure that the title you have
fits what the type of manager you want to be.

RL: I remember when you came here the first time we met, you told me you were doing a thesis
on the expats, but in my case it wouldn’t be that because it would be more like how you react
during change and transition in the company. Well basically they told us that the whole company
was restructured. You could say there was a downgrade process. We were told that titles were
really not what mattered. What matters is what you do.

GA: Did they feel that the culture here was about titles?

RL: You could say what they feel is that this is a culture in which titles are important. I am a
person who is not much into titles but I can see in this country - less in America - it is really like
that where people were really eager to give you their business cards and to put their titles really
in bold or upper case. For me it is not really shocking not to have an important title. I prefer to do something that I really like than a nice title and not like what I do.

GA: What you don’t want to do is to go to your manager and say, ‘A title is very important to me.’ But on the other hand, to describe neatly what you do in a way that you can tell other people is important.

RL: Also in this context, with this project, the whole project is important and not really into titles. It is expecting to achieve goals and achieve activities. As a company they will focus on what everyone is doing rather than what they are called. You can say you care more about what you do than what you are called, as long as you stay inside the company. But if you are eventually planning to move out, the title becomes an issue. Inside it is not a big deal but the truth is there is a business world out there and the companies in the country give importance to titles.

The situation seemed to be:

1. From Rafael’s perspective, he didn’t really care about titles, though he would like one that fitted his job;
2. From a Salvadorian business perspective, titles are important and Rafael wanted to be viewed appropriately when and if he left the South African company;
3. From a company management perspective, the South Africans had noted (2) and downgraded overblown titles and instructed managers to focus on function not title if they wanted advancement. Rafael did not want to appear as the ‘typical’ Salvadorian manager by pushing for a new title; and
4. From a coaching perspective, Rafael was trying to shape his individual future as a manager to differentiate him from his technical role, therefore having an appropriate manager title might help.

We came back to it later in a light-hearted way:

GA: That is interesting what you said about titles. Maybe not having a title at all doesn’t matter if you are acting the part.

RL: Have a blank business card [laughter]
GA: Something catchy but simple, ‘manager-without-assignment!’

RL: It is funny in this country you see guys my age or even a bit younger but they have their own business and you see they have president but it may only be four people. That is the way it is here.

GA: Maybe titles aren’t that important!

In the end, we did not pursue the issue, but it was on the table for later. This was a pragmatic decision. This episode and Rafael’s situation in general illustrate the complexities of dealing with expatriate manager situations – both for the expatriates and for those who deal with them.

**Executive Coaching as Action Research**

I found that working with Paul and Rafael enabled me to work within the system and to look at organizational and group issues consistent with action research methodology.

**Coaching and Pragmatism**

A simple example of a pragmatic approach of using what works was in the use of humour. Presentation skills courses push humour as a tactic. With Rafael, I suggested he tread carefully with this in presentations since it was not an obvious strength. Instead, I suggested he work from his existing strengths – another platform of the pragmatic approach:

*GA: You have some tools for impact - knowledge, form, personality. You have passion about knowledge and solutions which say Paul might not have. Use that. Some people can’t tell jokes, so it’s better not to. Or practice a lot with friends to build the skills up. A bad joke can have the exact opposite effect - turn off the audience. A gentle and effective joke can help. In terms of preparation and practice, run it past Paul for example.*

**The Role of Values**

Rafael placed a high value on knowledge. In the coaching I encouraged him to retain his passion for knowledge. This helped him to accept alternative approaches to management because he was not giving anything up but building on his strengths and values.
Limitations of Coaching

At times, my advice or suggestions reflected my cultural biases and perspectives. I was not always operating from knowledge of his company culture which meant that he could be potentially exposed if he blindly accepted suggestions at face value (for example, in regard to the issue of title noted above). This case was another example of client attitude being crucial in coaching. Rafael was highly receptive to improving his management style. At the same time, he did not accept ideas uncritically. He tested them against the reality of his situation. Had he been less critical, I would have been less enthusiastic about making suggestions.

Impact

Rafael rated the coaching very highly across all the sections except in culture and adjustment which he did not consider to be relevant to his situation. Although we did not work on culture explicitly, this is an area from my perspective was possibly high impact, in terms of navigating cultural differences around management style.

He commented in the Post-Coaching Questionnaire:
*I was able to achieve better people management and also career planning. After the sessions I realized I could do a much better job than I had originally thought.*

Rafael saw executive coaching as an opportunity to talk to someone to express concerns and constraints for improvement. He said:
*The coaching session made me realize I had the answer myself. It is like looking at a mirror. I was answering the questions. You did not tell me what to do. The coach helped me find the path. We put things in a way that allowed me to determine the proper thing to do.*

The independence of the coach was important for Rafael:
*Many executives are aware their skills and expertise they would like to improve but are afraid to talk to someone internally. They might be afraid of the impression it would have on others.*
Rafael was successful in setting himself a clearer vision for where he wanted to go in his career with the company – a goal of the coaching. Also, he understood that the management culture in the company required directness in communication style:

RL: I have a good idea with what I want to do in the next couple of years and I can go back to Paul with a plan.

GA: And present it well. Surprise him in the way you do it. What would a manager do in terms of making an impact with someone? What would you do?

RL: Usually managers don’t have spare time to waste. They are direct.

There was one area where the coaching may have had an indirect impact, though this is speculative on my part. There was a long gap between sessions, over six months. Between Session 5 and Session 6, Rafael had managed to drop from 210 pounds to 155 pounds through exercise and diet:

RL: I have taken out mayonnaise, beer, certain cuts of meat, butter. I prefer one glass of wine per-day and I drink a lot of water. When I was really fat I only did one meal a day for seven or eight years that would be really late. I went to see a doctor and she gave me a diet that was custom made. I have been able to make a difference in at least five other people’s lives who have gone to see the same doctor. I have spoken to someone who had seen the doctor and had lost four pounds in two weeks and she was really happy.

He had also managed to engineer himself into a position of head of a new department:

Last time we spoke I was looking at some options, some realistic and some ideas. I realized there was a great opportunity from this project. I have followed your advice of designing this new position and a new department. It is much more work than being in an existing department. I have had to do presentations. I will have my own department. I had to explain why it was necessary and what the department would be doing. I prepared a really detailed document with specifications of the department. I got the main bullet points down and I was able to combine my expertise. I presented the organizational chart and details. I compared it to other areas of the business. It is a new department that is going to work across three areas. I was able to do a
series of presentations. I never presented myself as the candidate but it was obvious and I was told I had been selected as the head of the department. I had to do the work to set it up.

GA: Do you feel like a manager now? We were talking before about that.

RL: Yes. I have had to prepare so many presentations and summarized things to get to the main messages. I have had a chance to sell my ideas and everything is understood.

GA: You created it. What happens in the future?

RL: You told me that I tend to work in the details. I am now going to have an opportunity to look at the company at a higher level and to look ahead for a couple of years.

Rafael was also able to see the long-term implications of the success he had had in setting up the new department:

RL: It is a big opportunity for the department and for me. I am working with so much detail. It is good and bad because I have become such an expert it is going to be hard to move on.

Rafael told me that he had been coaching others, partly in order to manage his transition to a different position:

It is like a skating effect. If you have been coached, you can coach others. I have one person I am acting as a mentor to them. I don’t want to stay in the same area so I need to train someone else.
APPENDIX A.5
CASE STUDY (PILOT): GILLIAN GEORGE

Profile

Gillian George was a 27 year old teacher from the USA. She came to El Salvador in August 2003 with a two-year teaching contract in a leading English language school in San Salvador. San Salvador was her first overseas assignment of any length. Gillian subsequently extended her stay by one year. Gillian was the pilot study for the project. She does not have management responsibility. We had seven sessions together over seven months. I was referred to Gillian by the human resources manager of the school, after I had an initial one hour meeting with the Principal of the school to explain the research and coaching processes. Gillian had little initial understanding of coaching but was keen to participate.

Reasons for Inclusion in Study

Although Gillian was not a manager, she was a professional and unique among the participants in being under 30 years of age, female, and on first assignment overseas.

Issues and Goals

El Salvador was to be a time in her life when Gillian wanted to connect with herself and the world in positive ways. Gillian wanted to learn Spanish and move outside the teachers’ residential compound to interact with different people. An underlying issue through the coaching was a doubt by Gillian that her career lay in teaching.

Major Coaching Approaches

Much of the coaching work was in developing approaches to tackle a difficult class which was making Gillian’s work life very unpleasant. This included a shadowing exercise where I watched Gillian in action with her two classes and fed back to her my observations under the House of
Change (Grant & Greene, 2001) areas of Situation, Behaviour, Emotions, and Thinking. I was explicit with Gillian about the theory as we planned new actions with her class:

GA: *It might be useful here to draw the coaching House of Change. There is a relationship between situation, behaviour, thinking and emotions. In setting goals we are mainly dealing with the situation and the behaviour but we also need to take into account how we feel and how we think about things. In this case, you are dealing day-to-day with their behaviour in a particular situation. The changing of seats is very much a case of changing the situation to get at their behaviour. You might give some thought to how they are going to feel and think about it. What is their emotional reaction going be like?*

GG: *Some of them will be disappointed because they like where they sit. Some of them will be pleased because they don’t like who they are sitting next to.*

GA: *And some will be angry. So how about the thinking process? You could explain why you are doing it or you could just do it. The aim is the behaviour. Later the broader aim is to get them excited. Initially, the change in situation is going to make them a little bit different. The goal is to get them excited in learning isn’t it?*

Gillian struggled to make an impact. I encouraged her to look at possibilities for change:

GA: *At the moment it doesn’t look like a situation that is going to change. You haven’t told me anything that is going to alter the pattern that is there.*

GG: *I would like for it to change, but is it going to? I don’t know.*

GA: *In six months time, what likelihood is there that it is going to be any different from what it is now - on a scale of one to 10?*

GG: *Low, a 3 or 4.*

GA: *If you wanted to get improvement, how high could you take that, a realistic aim? If you took on challenge, how much could you improve things to get that group going with the help of your allies?*

GG: *Maybe a 6.*

GA: *How about a 7?*

GG: *6.*
Gillian resented putting too much energy into managing the difficult class. I was meeting resistance because it clashed with her main goal of having a good time.

GG: *I have put a lot of energy and it has not given me positive results. I am trying to be realistic not pessimistic. Maybe it is the profession that is just not for me. Maybe I will come back to it. I am certified for life in Texas.*

I was using a solution-focused approach, with an aim to assist Gillian take actions that would move blocks to her enjoyment and professional progress. As early as the second session we were into actions:

GA: *So if you wanted to get over the grading paper problem, how would you do it?*

GG: *I don’t know. I’d probably have to set a time where that is what I do.*

GA: *When might that be?*

GG: *It would probably have to be after school in my planning times - every day.*

GA: *Could you do it every day?*

GG: *I could do a little every day.*

GA: *Would that be enough to get rid of it?*

GG: *I think it would.*

GA: *Would you do it, or is it like a New Year resolution?*

GG: *If I could come and talk to you about whether I was doing it or not, I suppose [laughs]. If I am held accountable for something, if I know I have something that has to be done by the end of the day it would be fine. If I have to have something done by a certain time I usually have it done. It is like a New Year’s resolution. It is hard to enforce it upon yourself.*

GA: *One simple way of doing it is through reward systems.*

GG: *I get one more beer if I grade one more journal [laughs]. What sort of rewards are we talking about?*

GA: *Here’s a homework task. Come up with something for yourself - to motivate yourself to do the grading at a set time. Be a bit creative. Apply the sort of thinking that got you over the planning problem. Work out how to bring down the pile for a start then maintain it.*

After I had observed Gillian’s professional work I encouraged her to feel confident in her work in the class, working from self efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997):
GA: Come into the classroom as a 9 or 10. Before you start the day, tell yourself, ‘I am a bloody good teacher.’

GG: [laughs]

GA: Come across like that and see what they do differently.

I explored options with Gillian to interact more with Salvadorian life outside the narrow cultural boundaries of the teaching compound. Gillian appreciated these interventions when reflecting on the coaching:

GG: It made me think about what I was doing here and the importance of getting out and about. You were very encouraging in making suggestions and including me in things you were doing to get to know people outside the school.

I gave Gillian many opportunities to reflect on her time in El Salvador and in her general career direction. In Session 4 she reflected with me:

GG: I’m in vacation mode. I just have to go to work Monday to Friday. No, I’m definitely better off. It is perfect in some senses but in other senses, ‘Is this right?’ I don’t know but it’s cool.

GA: How it’s working out is more or less how you thought it probably would when you decided to come here?

GG: More or less. I mean you know. Nothing is like the ideal picture you had in your mind.

GA: It might be better.

GG: Exactly. I mean I live in a good place. I have great friends. I don’t have to think about work too much when I am not there - not too much like before. It’s fine.

In Session 7 she commented:

GG: I guess I can just pop in and see how things are going [on possibilities for a change of teaching responsibilities in her current school.] Let them know I am still there. I don’t know. Then there is a part of me - I am ok with teaching fourth grade next year and I’m done. So I haven’t been so active as I could have been. I would feel an obligation to do at least two more years. I don’t really know. I can honestly go either way - teach fourth grade next year or maybe move to middle school and do another year?
**Action Research Process**

Gillian was keen to explore outside the compound and through the coaching I worked hard with her to develop actions that would help her reach that goal, e.g.:

GA: *You’ve got the church, the cycling and the soccer. See if you can find some things that you haven’t thought of before - maybe come at it from a different angle from outside the school following your interests?*

GG: *Like cooking classes. I like to cook but I am not very good at it. That would be cool.*

GA: *In Spanish?*

GG. *Yeah.*

GA: *Could you follow those things up in the next couple of weeks?*

GG: *Sure.*

I followed up on the actions. Her efforts to interact with local people and learn Spanish occurred in action cycles of planning, acting, reflecting and so on - with varying degrees of success.

**Coaching Expatriates**

Our experiences were somewhat similar in that we arrived at the same time and lived close by. However, my family relationship to the culture gave me much more access to local Salvadorian life. Towards the end of our coaching sessions Gillian reflected on her progress:

*You know, I have only been in El Salvador for like seven months and it is definitely normal, but if feels like there are things I am still adjusting to. Adjusting to the kids and my learning curve is huge right now.*

These kinds of opportunities for reflection seemed valuable for Gillian in motivating her to keep trying new things and work on her Spanish and adjustment to the new culture. Even without discussions of specific follow-up actions, I sensed that the coaching helped Gillian to keep on track with her goals and objectives.

**Coaching from a Cultural Perspective**
The work with Gillian was done quite early in my own sojourn and before I had become fully conversant with some of the techniques of coaching from a cultural perspective. I therefore tended to use less of this direct perspective than with later clients when I had a range of new techniques related to leveraging cultural difference. This is a good illustration of how techniques and training can aid general awareness of the role of culture in coaching. I think Gillian might have gained some benefit from some more direct work on leveraging cultural differences in her work and social environments.

**The Role of Values**

In Session 3, I encouraged Gillian to look at her current role in relation to the values she articulated earlier:

*GA: Values can often underpin the other things. If you’ve got a set of goals and they don’t match the underlying set of values then they’ll probably fade away. If they line up, you are likely to go further towards where you want to be - or find out more of where you want to be. If the sorts of things you do are the things you value then it is more likely to be interesting and relevant to you. And it will help you to make the most of your day. Is what you’re doing (1) helping people, (2) intellectually challenging, and (3) important?*

*GG: Yes and no. I mean I am helping people and what I am doing is important. I think teaching kids is very important. There is definitely problem-solving because you are working with a whole range of abilities and personalities. My patience is challenged, and I have a reasonable amount of patience but I am just not interested in challenging them.*

On several occasions, I referred back to discussions we had about values as a way of assisting Gillian to remain motivated:

*GA: Looking more generally at teachers you have worked with or been taught by, who would be the most inspiring?*

*GG: A couple of ladies I taught with in Maryland.*

*GA: What do you think their values were?*
GG: They most definitely felt that what they were doing was important. They cared a lot for the kids.

GA: What else?

GG: They were good at individualizing, knowledgeable and very experienced in their content area.

Impact

Gillian rated the process highly, giving 5s on almost all items, including a 5 for assisting with cultural adjustment. Regarding our specific objectives, Gillian made some progress. She did not have much success with her troublesome class, but then she did not see this as a failure of coaching, nor of herself. It was more a realistic assessment that the particular group of children was not going to behave well for anyone.

I felt that my capacity to work with Gillian was somewhat limited by the stage where she was in her life of wanting to explore and experiment socially without worrying too much about professional development. Yet, it seemed she valued the process highly, possibly due to our personal connection where she had both a friend and a coach to give her a different perspective on life outside the compound. When in July 2005 I asked Gillian to review the process she commented as follows:

We finished our sessions over a year ago, but I still think about our chats. The part that I think has had the most lasting impact is your persistence in getting me to verbalize what it is I actually want and put it into a tangible, measurable goal form. You have a very calm demeanour and a knack for asking the right questions to guide and focus my thoughts. So when I'm thinking about my Spanish progress, or am frustrated with work, I think about the little things you and I talked about that would make a difference each day. So, yes, our sessions have had a lasting impact on the way I think about and do things.
### APPENDIX B

#### PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Sessions</th>
<th>Nation.</th>
<th>County of Birth</th>
<th>Previous assignment Years</th>
<th>First Lang.</th>
<th>Languages Proficiency</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Position in El Salvador</th>
<th>Date of Arrival</th>
<th>Depart</th>
<th>Level Of Education</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Mar Stat</th>
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<td>French</td>
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<td>Audit Mgr</td>
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<td>Aug 07</td>
<td>Mint Dypt, BBAd</td>
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<td>USA</td>
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<td>Foreign Service Dvpt Officer</td>
<td>Office Dir US Govt Agency</td>
<td>Feb 01</td>
<td>Jun 05</td>
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<td>South African</td>
<td>Sth Africa</td>
<td>None</td>
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<td>Grp Fin Mgr</td>
<td>Jan 02</td>
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<td>Sth Africa</td>
<td>England (2) Hong Kong (2)</td>
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<td>Fem</td>
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APPENDIX C
NVIVO NODE STRUCTURE AND CHARACTER COUNT

A. CLIENTS

Client Issues in Coaching
1. Age 687
2. Anger Management 8645
3. Anxiety 8043
4. Career Planning 15670
5. Communication Skills 7828
6. Journal Articles 2563
7. Data Fiddling 2906
8. Difficult Staff 828
9. Empathy 3370
10. Expatriate Re-entry 443
11. Gaining More Thinking Time 346
12. Home Office Relationship 19290
13. Implementation 987
14. Industry Standardization 2674
15. Job Hunting 786
16. Leadership 8802
17. Listening Skills 3968
18. Local Staff Management 3876
19. Management Effectiveness 5651
20. Managing Change 2388
21. Managing Risk 2529
22. New Business 29396
23. Organizational Politics 27329
24. Perfectionism 2321
25. Personal Finances 1328
26. Personal Relationship 2507
27. Procrastination 3802
28. Promotion 946
29. Results focus 2664
30. Situational Awareness 9692
31. Slowing Down 2170
32. Stress 19247
33. Supervisor Relationship 7590
34. Transition to Management 2630
35. Unwillingness to Confront 1369
36. What Next? 15896
37. Work Crisis 10195
38. Work Life Balance 5528
39. Work Relationships 21129
40. Workaholism 3550

Client Vision 40053

Client Miscellaneous
1. Attitude to Coaching 390
2. Coaching Others 6601
3. Further Education 18854
4. Health 2228
5. Reading 4236
6. Resistance 1036
7. Interaction with Each Other 1990

B. CULTURE

Types of Culture
1. General Discussion 9628
2. Gender 761
3. Group 4694
4. National 2108
5. Organizational 7090
6. Professional 988
7. Regional Head Office 2406

Cross-Cultural Communication 40403

Cultural Dimensions
1. General Discussion 24198
2. Being/Doing 1310
3. Collaboration/Competition 5477
4. Direct/Indirect 12492
5. Formal/Informal 1035
6. Harmony/Control 878
7. High/Low Context 2280
8. Individual/Collective 1551
9. Mono/Polychromatic 11514
10. Openness to Foreigners 502
11. Optimism/Pessimism 621
12. Past/Present/Future Focus 5202
13. Power Distance 11559
14. Task/Relationships 3105
15. Time Pace 461
16. Uncertainty Avoidance 3105

Leveraging Cultural Differences 5807

Cross-Cultural Management
1. General Discussion 93094
2. Multinationals 10960
3. Transition Planning 47462
Expatriate Experience 130335
1. Acculturation 3601
2. Change 2410
3. Cultural Adjustment 3855
4. Culture Shock 1799
5. Curiosity 154
6. Empathy 2959
7. Family Adjustment
   a. General 4780
   b. Spouse 25433
   c. Family Crises 6695
8. Flexibility 88
9. Ghettos 1956
10. Home Office 6020
11. Homesickness 423
12. Isolation 1246
13. Language 21465
14. Reason for Assignment 693
15. Relationships
   a. General 877
   b. Coach 3597
   c. Colleagues 730
   d. Employees 4985
   e. Family 671
   f. Friends 2187
   g. Manager 1683
   h. Wife 7888
   i. Other 1698
16. Role as Ambassadors 544
17. Selection Process 1315
18. Stages
   a. General 420
   b. Pre-Departure 108
   c. Beginning 512
   d. Six Months 417
   e. Re-Entry 11849
19. Success Measures
   a. General 375
   b. Satisfaction 427
   c. Leave Assignment 2005
   d. Work Performance 1715
20. Taking Action 2755
21. Turnover 538

C. COACHING

Coaching Perspective
1. Cultural 2813
2. Psychodynamic 5665
3. Developmental 2605
4. REB 2457

Coaching Process
1. Client Views of Process 1089
2. Engagement 1194
3. Session Wrap Up 720
4. End of Process 577

Coach Independence 1149
Coach Role 678
Coaching Confidentiality 488
Coach Self Disclosure 322
Coaching Definition 5050

Coaching Techniques
1. 360 Feedback 9373
2. Challenge Client 18374
3. Counseling 5797
4. Diagrams 1909
5. Empathy 4395
6. Empowerment 505
7. Exploring Assumptions 1086
8. Follow-up Emails 1903
9. Gap Analysis 318
10. Use of Graphs 1984
11. Homework 5147
12. Humor 5462
13. Linking Theory/Practice 40659
14. Magic Question 1437
15. Make Suggestions 18929
16. Metaphors 1278
17. NLP 2920
18. Positive Focus 1934
19. Postcards 3997
20. Provide Support 1965
21. Psychometrics 12047
22. Reflective Listening 5794
23. Experiences of Other Clients 3802
24. Scaling (1 to 10) 6172
25. Shadowing 11072
26. Solution Focus 1835
27. Strength Focus 7300
28. Symbols 4731
29. Training 2160
Goal Setting
1. General 168315
2. SMART Goals 12543
3. RE-GROW Structure 1222
4. Dreams Aspirations 4338
5. New Tool 523
6. Strategic 10190
7. Stretching 9077
8. Timing 10795
9. Stages of Process
   a. Initial 22221
   b. Create Options 12613
   c. Priority Setting 5101
   d. Planning 2954
   e. Taking Actions 31427
   f. Monitoring 31076
   g. Changing Goals 1554
   h. Rewards 1287
   i. Attainment 12532

Coaching Approaches (ABC Model)
1. Affective (Total 20786)
   a. General 7471
   b. Passion 4545
   c. Personal Satisfaction 2189
   d. Work Motivation 6581
2. Behavioral/Situational 10029
3. Cognitive (Total 76687)
   a. General 6736
   b. All or Nothing 2923
   c. Awareness (Self) 23813
   d. Awareness (Situation) 18342
   e. Either/Or Thinking 4555
   f. Faulty Thinking 156
   g. Feedback 137
   h. Reflective Thinking 31468
   i. Reframing 31386
   j. Set Priorities 102
   k. Western Thinking 3551

Coach Attributes
1. Business Skill 1245
2. Confidential 329
3. Level of Expertise 18
4. Fit with Client 154
5. Industry Knowledge 3722
6. Local Cultural Knowledge 1222
7. Organizational Knowledge 161

Coaching Questioning 22787

Coaching Strengths
1. Expand Perspective 218
2. Fluidity 861
3. Focus 218
4. Follow-Through 1671
5. Independent Perspective 1578
6. Individualized 83
7. Relationship 175
8. Structure 1967

Coach Error 8900

Coaching Timing 1348

Coaching Impact 13389

D. IDEAS AND THEORIES
INTRODUCED BY COACH

Intelligence
1. Emotional 13116
2. Cultural 13598
3. IQ 2400
4. Spiritual 5134

Decision Making
1. General 8215
2. Expertise 1911
3. Intuition 5437

Complexity 2001

Contradiction/Paradox 9852

Uncertainty 2180

Self Efficacy/Self Confidence 29328

Values 75391

Communication skills 7577
1. General 6157
2. Emails 1420

Change Models 17858
1. General 5549
2. Bridges 340
3. House of Change 6492
4. Transition Curve 2286
5. Transtheoretical Model 3191

Pragmatism 32858
1. Anti-Foundationalism 953
2. Build on Past 1373
3. Consequences 22146
4. Systems 4744
5. Utility 3642

Action Learning 2363
E. OTHER

Action Research 8182
Risk 1248
Trust 57986
Ethics 14534
Context 1424

Learning Method 688
Teams 824
Mentoring 14867
Role Models 1910
Responsibility 521
Failure 3344
APPENDIX D

LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS 360 DEGREE FEEDBACK INSTRUMENT

Summary of Results
Example: Case Study 6.10 Drew McLaren

The first scores in brackets are the raw responses.
The second score in is an average of responses
The third score with a DM is Drew’s rating of himself.

Instructions

For each of the statements below, give a rating of 1 to 5. Write your response in the brackets after each question.

1 = disagree
2 = slightly disagree
3 = neither agree nor disagree
4 = generally agree
5 = agree

There are six sections. At the end of each there is space for additional comments. Please feel free to make any comments you feel might be useful to the executive.

Where you do not feel qualified to answer a particular question, leave it blank.

A. Technical competence

1. Accurately answers questions relating to his/her area of expertise (5554545) (4.7) (DM5)
2. Is technically competent (5555544) (4.7) (DM5)
3. Is able to solve complex problems (5554533) (4.3) (DM5)
4. Is up to date with professional knowledge (5555544) (4.7) (DM4)
5. Is usually correct when making decisions from instinct or gut feeling in his or her area of expertise (4555534) (4.3) (DM4)
6. Is connected to a network of experts in his or her field (45555 33) (4.3) (DM5)

COMMENT
An excellent resource of information regarding HR-related matters.
Knows his stuff.
Occasionally has not shared information with colleagues as quickly as he might have.
B. Managerial skills

1. Focuses on getting the job done (4554555) (4.7) (DM5)
2. Achieves effective workflow through coordination and scheduling of Resources (3544544) (4.1) (DM4)
3. Takes initiative, shows inventiveness, and is willing to try new ideas (4553535) (4.1) (DM5)
4. Is able to manage multiple tasks (3544444) (4.1) (DM5)
5. Provides timely and effective feedback and information to staff (3543443) (3.7) (DM5)
6. Understands and manages office and organizational politics (5545544) (4.6) (DM4)
7. Is able to maximize the individual talents of staff (4553534) (4.1) (DM5)
8. Has a good understanding and appreciation of work areas other than his/her own (5444434) (4.1) (DM4)
9. When presented with a competing or alternative position to his or her own, looks for ways of finding a final position that is superior to both original positions (5544343) (4.3) (DM5)
10. Is patient when interacting with people whose talents, experience, and/or expertise are considerably less than his or her own (4545545) (4.4) (DM5)
11. Gives clear directions and explanations about work tasks (3454444) (4) (DM4)
12. Recognizes and gives credit to those who deserve it (5545445) (4.6) (DM5)
13. Is prepared to take tough, unpopular decisions when necessary (3555443) (4.3) (DM4)
14. Delegates well (4554333) (4) (DM4)
15. Is good at building a team (5544433) (4.3) (DM4)
16. Views criticism as a healthy source of information about alternative ways of doing things (3453343) (3.7) (DM5)
17. Can influence managers who are in more senior positions (5554433) (4.1) (DM4)
18. Is fair (5544444) (4.4) (DM5)

COMMENT
An effective leader, creative, positive thinker, talented, knowledgeable, persuasive, good listener, who works towards enhancing people’s abilities and skills.
Knows how to delegate, and is clear on establishing priorities and deadlines.
Excellent interpersonal skills.
Employees feel at ease even when working under pressure.
Inherited a dysfunctional office and has done an excellent job of improving operations
Operation is hindered by a couple of employees who do not know their stuff and don’t understand customer service.

C. Interpersonal and communication skills

1. Is a good listener (5453545) (4.4) (DM4)
2. Builds effective professional relationships
   a. peers (4554454) (4.6) (DM5)
b. subordinates (4553444) (4.1) (DM5)
c. managers (5554444) (4.4) (DM5)
d. people outside the organization (3553x 33) (3.7) (DM5)

3. Has an empathetic concern for others (seeks to understand a situation from the point of view of the other person) (5553444) (4.3) (DM5)
4. Keeps calm when under pressure (5555544) (4.7) (DM4)
5. Is able to be assertive in putting forward a point of view, without being aggressive or unnecessarily confrontational (5554544) (4.6) (DM4)
6. Converses in an interesting and engaging way (5554544) (4.6) (DM4)
7. Is able to participate effectively in a meeting (5554544) (4.6) (DM5)
8. Is self aware (3554545) (4.4) (DM4)
9. Trusts other people appropriately (44434 44) (3.9) (DM4)
10. Is trustworthy (4555544 ) (4.6) (DM5)
11. Manages his/her emotions in a manner appropriate to the work context (5555544) (4.7) (DM5)
12. Is authentic when dealing with others (i.e. operates from a clear sense of his or her own beliefs, values, and ways of operating) (4554554) (4.6) (DM5)
13. Has a good sense of humor (5555554) (4.9) (DM5)
14. Has the capacity to make other people feel respected (4554545) (4.6) (DM5)

COMMENT

Excellent people and communication skills.
Difficult to ruffle.

D. Leadership effectiveness and potential

1. Leading others appears to come naturally (3554533) (4) (DM5)
2. Is well-suited to be in a leadership position in the current or another organization (4555534) (4.4) (DM5)
3. Strategic thinking is a major strength (5553533) (4.1) (DM4).
4. Can be decisive (5555544) (4.7) (DM5)
5. Adapts leadership style to maximize opportunities from different situations (3543544) (4) (DM4)
6. Promotes a learning environment in the workplace (3554534) (4.1) (DM5)
7. Is at his/her best when things get difficult (3554x43) (4) (DM5)
8. Has a clear vision (4554543 ) (4.3) (DM5)
9. Focuses on the organizational mission (4554x44) (4.3) (DM5)
10. Can inspire others (35544 x3) (4) (DM4)
11. Adheres to high standards of ethical conduct (4555555) (4.9) (DM5)
12. When things reach crisis point, is able to step back and take a broad view of the situation before moving forward (4554444) (4.3) (DM5)
13. Provides a role model for others (4554534) (4.3) (DM5)
E. Cultural Sensitivity and Adaptability

1. When in a new situation, seeks to understand the customs, traditions, and ways of operating (4554444) (4.3) (DM5)
2. When in a new situation, can adapt his/her way of operating to suit the context and maximize effectiveness (4554543) (4.3) (DM5)
3. Enjoys experiencing different cultures (team, organizational, national) (4554544) (4.4) (DM5)
4. Is comfortable with people who are different from himself/herself (4555544) (4.6) (DM5)
5. Relates well to people who are different (4554534) (4.3) (DM5)
6. Has a natural sense of curiosity (4554x33) (4) (DM5)
7. Sees difference as opportunity (rather than an obstacle or threat) (4553534) (4.3) (DM4)
8. Understands and appreciates the humor of those who are different from him or herself (4553544) (4.3) (DM5)
9. Is empathetic (i.e. has the ability to see situations from the point of view of the other person) (4553545) (4.4) (DM5)

COMMENT
Integrated with Salvadorian culture easily.
Interested in personally meeting office contacts.
Shows a great interest and puts his best efforts to learn Spanish.
A good listener and makes the speaker feel information will be kept in confidence.

F. Confidence/Efficacy

1. Puts in considerable effort to effectively complete his/her duties (5555545) (4.9) (DM5)
2. Persists when encountering obstacles or problems (5554x 44) (4.5) (DM5)
3. Shows confidence in being able to successfully complete the job, even when the going gets difficult (5555544) (4.7) (DM5)
4. Is positive in his/her attitude to his work (5555545) (4.9) (DM5)
5. Focuses on solutions rather than problems (5554544) (4.6) (DM5)

COMMENT
The best HR Officer I have worked with.
Intelligent, aware of other’s views and works to bring it all together.
Is able to function comfortably within all Administrative sections.

Geoffrey Abbott
REFERENCES


