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**CAREER DECISION MAKING OF SELF
INITIATED EXPATRIATES (SIE): PAST, PRESENT
AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES**

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FOREWARD

“Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours”

Mark 11:24

As unfeasible as it seemed to me to be able to complete my studies; during the course of the program, I prayed to God to help me complete this difficult task. In answer to my prayers, He gave me the strength and surrounded me with all the persons who in one way or another contributed in helping me achieve this goal. I thank you God for listening; thank you family and friends for believing in me, and thank you to my supervisor for the guidance. I will forever be grateful.

Vaasa, 20th of September 2013.

ABBREVIATIONS

A.E.	Assigned Expatriate
BU	Business Unit
CDM	Career Decision Making
CSIE	Corporate Self Initiated Expatriate
E.A.	Expatriate Assignment
IB	International Business
HQ	Head Quarters
MNC	Multi National Corporation
O.E.	Overseas Experience
SIE	Self Initiated Expatriate
STF	Systems Theory Framework

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ABSTRACT

Globalization and an open economy present worldwide have allowed individuals the possibility to expand their career choices to places other than their home countries. Typically, expatriates have been characterized as individuals who develop their career according to their overseas assignment; in contrast, individuals who are keen to seize the opportunity to expand by their own efforts the development of their careers are defined as self initiated expatriates (SIE); however, although these individuals are characterized by being independent in their career choices, there are a series of factors that will influence their career decision making during the course of their life.

Hitherto, literature has mainly focused on the analysis of career development and choices surrounding organizational expatriates and less attention has been bestowed to the career decision making of SIE, which has been in constant growth over the last 16 years; therefore, in order to contribute to the dearth of SIE research; this study aims to determine the influential factors that have an impact on career decision making of SIE, within past, present and future contexts, by applying a role theory perspective and systems theory framework theories.

Drawing on the qualitative research design, to capture properly the factors that influence career decision making of SIE, within the past, present and future context; this paper reports the answer to six semi-structured interviews conducted and fully transcribed for further analysis.

The results show four main groups within the SIE subject to this study: Studies, dual career earner, corporate self initiated expatriate and job seeker. Depending on the group and their life stage, the influences differed, leading as prominent influential factors: the individual itself, family, organization and employment market.

KEYWORDS: Career, career decision making, self initiated expatriates, role theory perspective, systems theory framework.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Research Background

“No man can succeed in a line of endeavor which he does not like”

(Napoleon Hill, 2007)

Being part of a working force where global mobility allows individuals to expand their horizons around the globe leads to assume that reaching a successful career within the line of endeavor that interests an individual is easier to achieve in today’s world, than over 70 years ago when this famous line was originally written. This increased mobility in careers is resulting from the thrust toward personal liberation in our society (Hall 2002: 13); in addition to a volatile and globalized economy which has led to the emergence of new strategies adapted by individuals; creating drastic changes in the means individuals utilize to succeed in the line of endeavor they like, that is to say, the means to reach their career goals.

It has been noted by researchers that everyone who works has a career (Arthur & Rousseau 1995: 3); additionally, everyone who spends time in and/or seeking employment has a career (Arnold 1997: 17). Hence, when analyzing the theories of career, an array of approaches used as viewpoints of this concept emerge, such as: Psychology, social psychology, sociology, anthropology, economics, political science, history and geography; which is why the concept of career is not viewed as the property of any one theoretical or disciplinary view (Arthur 1989).

Furthermore, when examining the concept of career utilizing as point of convergence the individual’s choice, scholars agree that CDM is an individual decision; in addition they concur that it is a lifetime long process (Arthur 2008: 166; Hall 2002: 90; Arthur & Rousseau 1996: 5; Super 1980); related closely to interpersonal influences such as personality, ability, gender, and sexual orientation (Patton & McMahon 2006b) and a series of external factors that will also have an impact in the individual’s decision during a specific period of time (Arthur, Inkson & Pringle 1999).

Within these external factors lies the organization, which had a primary role in an individual's CDM in a traditional career concept; however this role has shifted gradually alongside the global changes organizations and working individuals face. As oppose the decades ago, it is no longer necessarily seen as undesirable to have changed jobs frequently; rather than suggesting personal instability, it represents varied experience and personal drive (Arthur 1999).

In this context, several authors view careers as “new” careers and “traditional careers” (Andersen & Bieman 2010: 207). The traditional career implies an individual's vertical progression through positions carrying increasing responsibility, status and rewards defined by the organization (Hall & Mirvis 1995); whilst the concept of “new” careers has often been described as boundaryless (Arthur & Rousseau 1996) and protean career (Hall 1996).

The boundaryless career, characterized by individuals changing constant jobs, organizations, fields of work and career has gained vast attention from career researchers. The interest in boundaryless career is marked by the fact that, although organizations retain career systems through which they plan and manage people's careers, it is people who *have* careers (Baruch 2004); within the context of boundaryless careers emerges the SIE, which is the central point of this study.

The concept of SIE emerged in the 1990's with the ground breaking article from Inkson et al. (1997), who made a comparison between O.E. (overseas experience) and assigned expatriates (A.E.). In his study, Inkson (1997) described SIE as a homogeneous group, in an early career phase, and of young age. These findings were later supported by Suutari and Brewster (2000); Inkson and Myer (2003) and; Jokinen and Suutari (2009).

The main characteristic noted of a SIE is the fact that the individual is the one being in charge of the development of his/her career as oppose to the O.E., whose career is mainly guided by the organization he/she works for. So far, the development of SIE has given rise to a growing awareness of this form of mobility as a potentially powerful force in the increasingly varied global labor market (Doherty, Richardson & Thorn 2013: 6).

This awareness is noted in the additional studies that followed Inkson's (1997) research; such as SIE adjustment (Peltokorpi & Froese 2009); SIE implications for HRM (Howe-Walsh & Schyns 2010); SIE repatriation (Tharenou & Caulfield 2010); gender effects of SIE expatriates (Tharenou 2010); SIE academics (Richardson & McKenna 2006; Selmer & Luring 2010); their overall career development success and career capital (Jokinen 2008; Crowley-Henry 2012; Cao, Hirschi & Deller 2012) and most recently the only edited book focusing on SIE on a multi-level perspective by Andresen, Al Ariss and Walther (2013). Within the same context; in the city of Vaasa, Miettinen et al. (2008) also analyzes SIE, in a study focused on CDM among young graduates from a self-initiated expatriation perspective.

These studies have allowed a better understanding and a wider perception of the importance of this occurrence and at the same time, due to the novelty and yet somewhat limited research, there are also gaps and contradictions (Doherty, Richardson & Thorn 2013; Doherty 2010); additionally as this is a form of international mobility that is very recent, and constantly undergoing analysis, there are still different perspectives regarding SIE that need to be analyzed in a more diverse and profound matter.

Among the topics in need of further study and currently generating interest in researchers is how SIEs are distinguished from migrants. In this context, Al Ariss and Crowley-Henry (2013: 85) note that SIE scholarship often employs the term "SIE" and "migrant" without fully questioning their meaning and the implication of their use. This leads to enhancing an image of the expatriate who is full of agency, able to make free career choices, while enforcing an image of migrants as "second-class expatriates" who are subject to exclusion and structural barriers.

This previous concern brings to the fore how it is challenging to researchers who would need to have data regarding the prior distinction within the city of Vaasa; up to date, according to Vaasa's citizenship and mother tongue report from 2000-2012 (Kommonen 2013), for the year 2012 there were 3 678 (5,6%) of foreign citizens living in the city of Vaasa; however their reason for reallocating abroad is not clearly established. Nevertheless, in this study the definitions of what constitutes a SIE will be determined utilizing as basis the existing research, although this aspect lacks of clarity.

Consequently, the aim of this study is to uncover the various aspects that influence CDM of SIEs working in a MNC with HQs in the city of Vaasa. As mentioned previously, having that deciding on a career is a lifetime process, the various aspects that influence CDM will be analyzed from a past, present and future perspectives. The empirical section of this study will intend to uncover these aspects within the previous mentioned perspectives, by applying Patton and McMahon's (2006, 2006b) systems theory framework (STF) and; Werbel and Roberg's (1990) role theory perspective on career decision making framework.

1.2. Research Question and Objectives

As previously mentioned, the CDM process is an individual process; nevertheless there are a series of factors (internal and also external) that will influence on the CDM of an individual. In this manner, although SIEs are defined as individuals who are in control of their career, these individuals are also subject to an array of influences that will also affect their CDM; additionally their career choices made in a past perspective will affect in present, and perhaps future decisions within this context.

Utilizing Patton and McMahon's (2006a, 2006b) systems theory framework (STF) and Werbel and Roberg's (1990) role theory perspective on career decision making framework, this study aims to examine the influential factors on CDM for SIEs, within past, present and future perspectives. Therefore, the research question of this study is as follows:

What are the factors that affect CDM on SIE within the present, past and future context?

In order to answer this question, semi-structured interviews, each lasting approximately 20-40 minutes, were conducted to each individual chosen for this study. At the moment of the research, all individuals were currently employed by a MNC corporation in the city of Vaasa and had moved from their home countries with the purpose of examining new life possibilities, leading them to search for career options on their own.

1.3. Structure of the Thesis

In order to reach the objectives of this study, the remainder part of this paper will be divided in six chapters. The introductory part of this study focused on the study's background; a brief overview of the research method and additionally, the research question and objectives of the study were introduced.

In chapter two, the main concepts of career and career development are analyzed. The first portion of this section focuses on career concepts and traditional career theory; consequently organizational careers are discussed leading to the analysis of contemporary career, in which the protean career and boundaryless career are assessed.

Chapter three focuses on a general review concerning SIEs. In this chapter the research regarding this phenomenon is discussed; differences between SIE and migrant are assessed; and the different classifications reached amongst researchers are also analyzed.

Chapter four reviews CDM. In this chapter the different CDM approaches and frameworks are discussed, and the two main theoretical frameworks are analyzed in separate sub-sections within this chapter: Patton and McMahon's (2006a, 2006b) systems theory framework (STF) and Werbel and Roberg's (1990) role theory perspective on career decision making; consequently leading to the theoretical framework of the study.

Chapter five delineates the research method, where the data collection, validity and reliability of the study are presented; succeeded by chapter six, detailing the findings of the study, in which the factors that influence CDM on SIE are discussed, within the present, past and future contexts.

Finally in chapter seven, the summary and conclusion of the study are presented; additionally the managerial implications, suggestions for further research and limitations of the present study are drawn.

2. CAREER CONCEPTS AND DEVELOPMENT

The word *career* originated in the mid 16th century (Oxford dictionaries 2012); thus far and in constant analysis, the concept of career and also its' ramifications have evolved to attract experts in sociological, psychological, political, economical, vocational ; and organizational fields, leading to an array of studies created within the literature of this phenomenon.

In the remaining part of this chapter the main concepts of career will be discussed; in addition, traditional career; the individual and organizational careers will be assessed, followed by the discussion of contemporary career. Within the discussion of contemporary careers, the protean and boundaryless careers are analyzed, which are closely related to SIE.

2.1. Concept of Career

According to Oxford Dictionaries (2012), the word *career* is defined as an occupation undertaken for a significant period of a person's life and with opportunities for progress. In the popular and the behavioral science literature, there are four distinct meanings in which the word career is used: career as advancement, career as profession, career as a life-long sequence of jobs and; career as a lifelong sequence of role-related experiences (Hall 2002: 16). Since the concept of career can be visualized from different angles; the definitions from Arnold (1997) and Hall (2002) will be utilized as main concepts for this study. The authors note the following:

Arnold (1997: 16) defines career as the sequence of employment-related positions, roles, activities and experiences encountered by a person. In the same manner, Hall (2002: 12) avers the career is the individually perceived sequence of attitude and behaviors associated with work-related experiences and activities over the span of the person's life.

These definitions consider the individual as focal point in a career, hence the fact that the career is a personal decision can be assumed; moreover it also involves experiences and employment the individual has during his/her career. These assumptions are supported when the ramifications of career previously mentioned are considered; however an individuals' career is not only limited to an individuals' personal decision or the organization he/she works in; the time factor is also important to take into consideration (Arthur 2008: 166; Arthur & Rousseau 1996: 5); furthermore there are also a series of stakeholders that will impact in an individual's career decision, such as formal and informal organizational stakeholders and family stakeholders (Werbel & Roberg 1990).

The stakeholders taken into consideration by Werbel and Roberg et al. (1990) will be discussed in chapter 4; however it is important to incorporate into the definition of career, the types of career distinguished within the extant literature regarding this particular topic, such as internal or subjective; external or objective; and organizational career.

The internal career involves a subjective sense of where one is going in one's work life (Schein 1996: 80); moreover, it involves setting subjective career goals and evaluating one's own achievement in reaching them (Baruch 2004: 43).

On the other side of the continuum lies the external career. This concerns how other people and organizations perceive a person's career- the development, advancement, and fulfillment of the person's goals (Baruch 2004: 44); furthermore, the formal stages and roles are defined by organizational policies and societal concepts of what an individual can expect in the occupational structure (Schein 1996: 80).

Seeing as the concept of career involves a range of roles, activities, experiences, and individuals' subjective and objective perspectives, which takes place in an individuals' life span; the development of career theories have also been analyzed from different perspectives divided in two broad categories: traditional career theory and contemporary career theory. These theories have evolved in the context of the career mobility engaged by individuals due to liberation in western society, individuals taking advantage of better job opportunities and searching for a better match between job characteristics and

personal interests and needs (Hall 2002); in addition to the economic fluctuation and constant organizational changes, which have forced individuals to adapt to a changing world. The main aspects of these theories will be discussed in the subsequent sections.

2.2. Traditional Career Theory

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the concept of career dates back from the mid 16th century; in the same context, the development of career theories dates from the early 21st century. During this era, person-environment fit and trait factor frameworks came into use by career counseling and human resource management. Pioneers in these fields were Parsons (1909) and Holland (1973).

The center of Parsons' theory was the concept of matching. Parsons avers in his theory that occupational decision making occurs when people have achieved an accurate understanding of their individual traits (aptitudes, interests, personal abilities); knowledge of jobs and the labor market and; a rational and objective judgment about the relationship between their individual traits, and the labor market. Parsons suggests that when individuals are in jobs best suited to their abilities they perform best and their productivity is highest (Parsons 1909). John Holland's theory of person-environment fit avers that most people fit into one of six personality types: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising and conventional; in addition there are six types of work environment, which are directly linked to these personality types. The proposition of this theory states that people who choose to work in an environment similar to their personality type are more likely to be successful and satisfied (Holland 1973).

Development Theory also contributed to the understanding of career development of individuals. Donald Super's career development theory included propositions from trait theory (Brown 2002: 5); in his theory, Super et.al (1980) states that self-concept changes over time and develops as a result of experience; hence career development is a lifelong experience.

Super's theory incorporated some of the stakeholders that influence in career decision making, which consequently have been used in new career theories. According to Super

et al. (1980), people play a variety of roles; some which start from an early stage of life and may also start in a late stage of life. These roles were compiled into nine groups: (1) Child (including son and daughter), (2) Student, (3) “Leisurite” (leisure activities, idling), (4) Citizen, (5) Worker, (6) Spouse, (7) Homemaker (Parent), and (8) Pensioner. These roles are played in one or more theaters; these theaters are: (1) The home, (2) The Community, (3) The School (including College and University), and (4) The Work Place.

Parson’s (1909) and Holland’s (1973) theories, although later criticized for lacking of sufficient analysis regarding sex, race and socio economic status; and limited views on the range of individual variables (Betz, Fitzgerald & Hill 1989: 35); have largely contributed to the understanding of career decision making of individuals, and have also been used as complementing theory for subsequent studies, such as System Theory Framework (Patton & McMahon 2006a, 2006b). Furthermore, it has been stated that the greatest values of Parsons’ theory is the focus on careers as organic entities, with developing life-cycles, which are shaped by complex interaction between personal make-up and choice, and the external forces of family, class and economic, and organizational circumstance (Arthur, Inkson & Pringle 1999:5).

In addition to being grouped by theorists into traditional career theories, Parsons and Holland’s theories can also be grouped into theories of context, which refer to the influences on career development which are either intrinsic to the individual themselves or emanate from within the context in which the individual lives (Patton & McMahon 2006: 9). In the same manner, Super’s theory is grouped by the prior authors mentioned into theories of process, which refer to interaction and change over time and is depicted in some theories as a series of stages through which individuals pass. These three theories will also be mentioned in chapter 3, when discussing career decision making.

Traditional career theories focused in large part on the organization as oppose to only the individual, however this concept has changed over the course of the years, leading to a more open relationship between the individual and the organization which will be discussed in the following sub-section.

2.3. Organizational and Individual Career Perspectives

Although in contemporary career theories, the way an individual decides and develops his or her own career is a personal decision; an extensive part of an individual and his or her career will evolve around an organization. In this manner, an organizational career can be defined as the path people move along, in terms of the positions, and the roles they fill during their work life (Baruch 2004: 44).

Arnold et al. (1997) argues that, technology combined with the demographic trends has changed the world of work which he grouped into twelve points: 1) *Workload*: People are working more and more stressed than before, and from a career perspective it may mean that things aren't working out as hoped; 2) *Organizational changes*; 3) *Organization of work*: Effective use of labor, creating project teams, training in order to have personnel flexibility; 4) *Outsourcing*; 5) *Short term contracts*; 6) *Disappearance of organizational career structures*; 7) *Changing skill requirements*: Various skills needed from employments to satisfy the demands of customers; 8) *Diversity in labor force*; 9) *Aging populations*; 10) *Small organizations*; 11) *Working at or from home and*; 12) *Insecurity*: Due to the constant economical changes, employees have a constant insecurity that in any given time they will no longer be employed by their employer.

Regardless of the shifts from traditional to contemporary career theory; other theorists have differed in their opinion. Larsen (2004: 864) has reported that traditional career theories have stressed that individuals and organizations are both dependent on each other as an indispensable consequence of their interaction, though not dependent in the same way or the same extent. On one side, the organization sets the framework for global career but the employees do not necessarily accept or adhere to this framework. The organization "sets the agenda" due to its power as an employer with the rewards and sanctions related, but the employee may resist, turn down or even veto an offer from the company.

The individual will think of which strategies are best in order to reach career goals in addition to financial stability. This stability is affected, as mentioned by Arnold et al. (1997), due to the transformation in organization which has changed the structure and

positions available for individuals; and for many individuals being part of an organization in order to develop their career is important; however this argument does not necessarily apply to those owners of small businesses or entrepreneurs. In the same context, organizational strategies have also changed taking into consideration the individual's willingness to change, this phenomenon becomes more noticeable when it is analyzed within the globalized career concept. In addition, career progress or advancement can be quite objective and measurable within a single organization or between organizations with equivalent promotion scales (Baruch 2004: 44).

Additionally, due to the development of global mobility, the focus on career development based mainly on the individual's decision started to evolve. Supporting the premises of the individual orientation managing its' career is the emergence of contemporary career theories. Among the theories that have surfaced within this context the boundaryless career (Arthur & Rousseau 1996); protean career (Hall 1996); systems theory framework (Patton & McMahon 2006a, 2006b) and role theory perspective on career decision making (Werbel & Roberg 1990) have been discussed within this context.

2.4. Contemporary Career Theory

There has been an increased mobility of individuals resulting from the thrust toward personal liberation in our society (Hall 2002: 13). In traditional careers it was the norm for individuals to be in one job for a long period of time; however due to the new mobility surrounding the employment force worldwide, it has become part of the norm for individuals to change jobs frequently as a means to reach their goals, this particular feature has contributed to the emergence of contemporary careers.

Other aspects that have influenced the development of contemporary career theories have been the constant organizational changes attributed to the economical variations faced on a global scale; an additional influence in the contemporary career literature has been the expansion of global careers which have been mainly practiced by expatriates when going on international assignments from their organizations, and in recent years by SIE; characterized as individuals being focused on developing and deciding how to

build and expand their careers in a more determinant manner (Inkson 1997). Amongst the theories that have focused on the individual as the center of CDM and career development are the protean career and the boundaryless career, discussed in the following sub-sections.

2.4.1. The Protean Career

The concept of protean career was first introduced by Hall (1976); the author defines the protean career as the ability of individuals to be a continuous learner and to redirect one's life and career. The author also avers that protean career is a process which the person, not the organization is managing; consequently the protean person's own personal career choices and search for self-fulfillment are the unifying elements in his or her life; therefore, the criterion of success is internal (psychological success), not external (Hall 1996).

Psychological success is defined as the person's feeling of success, as opposed to external measures of success (Hall 2002: 73); according to Hall's theory, this success is achieved when the person sets a challenging goal for himself; when the person determines his own means of attaining the goal; when the goal is important to his self-concept and when he actually attains the goal. The notion of the protean career suggests that the individual attempts to take control of his work life (Crowley- Henry 2009: 302). Individuals who hold protean career attitudes are intent upon using their own values (versus organizational values for example) to guide their career ("values-driven") and take an independent role in managing their vocational behavior ("self-directed") (Briscoe & Finkelstein 2009: 25), which consequently leads the individual to reach self-fulfillment.

In order for individuals to reach self-fulfillment, there are a series of factors that will be influential in the achievement of this goal. According to Crowley-Henry & Weir (2009: 302), cultivated beliefs regarding responsibilities to family members (for instance), impact to a greater or lesser degree on individuals at different periods of time; objectifying them to fitting in with societal expectations. In the same context Sargent and Domberger (2007) concur that values such as work with meaning and maintaining

work-life balance constitute important factors in CDM; hence although self-fulfillment is a personal matter, external factors will have an impact on what an individual will perceive as satisfactory. Within the same context of contemporary career, although differing from the protean career, the boundaryless career has also gained the attention of researchers and will be discussed in the following sub-section.

2.4.2. The Boundaryless Career

The concept of boundaryless career came to surface during the early 1990's, due to the changing nature of work in a changing economy; leading to the theme of the Academy of Management annual meeting named "The Boundaryless Organization", which in turn gave to a symposium proposal on "The Boundaryless Career" (Tams & Arthur 2010: 629).

Pioneers in analyzing the concept of boundaryless careers were DeFillippi & Arthur (1994) who viewed the concept of this new form of career as a sequence of job opportunities that goes beyond boundaries of any single employment setting. The central premise of this new career trend was the argument that there were new forms of careers depending increasingly on criteria determined by the external environment (such as marketability of expertise), external networks and information, and less on traditional organizational career arrangements (Arthur & Rousseau 1996: 6).

The distinctiveness of the boundaryless career closely relates to SIE, which will be discussed in further detail in chapter 3; in this context, when an individual has a boundaryless mind set he/she enjoys new experiences and enjoy working in an open environment, outside of an organizational framework; it also implies individuals wish to work in multiple organizations within the course of their career (Cerdin 2013: 68).

However, it is not the physical mobility of an individual that strictly describes a boundaryless career; in this context Sullivan and Arthur (2005: 26) define the boundaryless career as one that involves physical and/or psychological career mobility; in addition the authors aver that such a career can be then viewed as characterized by varying levels of physical and psychological mobility. Therefore, whilst some individuals embark in boundaryless careers by changing organizations; for other

individuals crossing boundaries implies changing tasks within the same organization; possibly when individuals seek for personal growth outside the workplace; or by individuals introducing new ideas into the work place (Sullivan and Arthur 2006: 24).

As noted in this chapter, the concept of career, in addition to traditional and contemporary careers are not as self-explanatory as they may seem; however they have allowed researchers and scholars to realize the importance of this occurrence for both organizations and individuals. Furthermore, it has also been noted how the shift of this occurrence has gone from an organizational to a more individual adjustment. This new form of career adjustment is explained in the next chapter as the focus will shift to SIE.

3. REVIEW ON SELF INITIATED EXPATRIATES (SIE)

It is widely known by organizations and scholars that the use of expatriates becomes an important resource for the development of an organization on an international and global level; traditionally, the term expatriation has often been used to describe the process of international transfer of managers (Harzing & Ruysseveldt 2004: 258); in addition, Inkson et al. (1997) avers that the initiative for international experience comes primarily from the individual and not the organization.

Edström and Galbraith et al. (1977) hypothesized as of why multinational organizations used the transfer of managers; they concluded that there were three main motives as of why organizations made use of this strategy: To fill positions, to develop managers and to develop the organization.

Following this study, extant literature regarding expatriation and its' development has been provided to organizations and researchers; in addition, with the emergence of boundaryless career (DeFillippi & Arthur 1994), protean career (Hall 1976), career capital (DeFillippi 1994) and global careers in general, new studies of international career emerged; amongst which was the emergence of SIE addressed first by Inkson et al. (1997).

Inkson et al. (1997) defined SIE as individuals characterized of being in charge of their careers, as oppose to the traditional A.E. In his study the author also makes a comparison between expatriate assignments (E.A.) and overseas experience (O.E.) using a sample from New Zealand, where he noted four aspects that differentiated O.E. from E.A.; the aspects that initiated these two groups to embark abroad; the goals in the country of destination; who funded the expenses of these individuals and which type of career each group had (see table 1).

Table 1. E.A. and O.E. Comparison (Inkson 1997)

Contrasting Qualities of Expatriate Assignment		
	E.A.	O.E.
	(Expatriate Assignment)	(Overseas Experience)
Initiation	Company	Individual
Goals	Company projects (specifics)	Individual development (diffuse)
Funding	Company salary & expenses	Personal savings & casual earning
Career Type	Organizational career	Boundaryless career

Although the concept of SIE is continuously attracting scholars; hitherto the research regarding this phenomenon is limited. Studies contained by this phenomenon focused primarily on comparing SIE with A.E. (Inkson 1997; Suutari & Brewster 2000; Jokinen 2008; Peltokorpi 2009; Biemann & Andresen 2010 and Doherty 2011). These studies have clearly stated that A.E.s and SIEs represent two different types of internationally mobile employees, and research results cannot be transferred between these distinct groups (Andresen 2013: 3).

Self-initiated expatriates have been defined by some researchers as being a homogeneous group, in an early career phase, and of young age (Suutari and Brewster 2000; Inkson & Myer 2003). However, it has been noted that a number of these studies focus on persons with a high education moving from and to a developed country (e.g. Suutari and Brewster 2000); whilst the analysis of people with high education from developing countries to developed countries has been scarce. In order to define and classify the SIEs subject to this study, in the subsequent chapter, the distinctions between SIE and migrants will be assessed.

3.1. Migrant or SIE

In a study conducted with a sample of Lebanese self expatriates in France, Al Ariss et al. (2010) tackled the lack of research within the context of migrant and SIE by shedding light into the aspects that hinder career development for skilled migrants moving from developing countries to developed countries, such as ethnic discrimination and legal barriers; nevertheless, according to the author there was a possibility for SIE to decide to develop their career abroad by challenging and breaking down inequalities.

Another aspect noted by Al Ariss et al. (2010) is that in migration studies, individuals who move from developing countries to more developed ones are typically defined as migrants; whilst those moving from developed countries to developed countries are considered as SIE. However, Cao and Deller et al. (2011) aver that the distinction between migrants and SIE seemed to be unclear; nevertheless a further study partially filled in this gap by clarifying that the term migrant is an umbrella term including all kinds of A.E.s and SIEs (Andersen, Bergdolt & Margenflod 2013: 32). According to the later authors, the main reason behind this premise relies on the geographical relocation across national borders plus change in dominant place of residence (center of one's life); therefore both groups, although different when focusing on their CDM, are considered to be within the same group migrants when in a foreign country; however as noted by Al Ariss et al. (2013), due to the lack of research within this subject, an agenda for further studies regarding this differentiation needs to be implemented. Upon analyzing this distinction, in the subsequent sub-section, the characteristics and classification of SIE will be addressed.

3.2. SIE Characteristics and Classification

In addition to defining SIE and the differentiation between the prior mentioned groups, an important and still in process to be clarified by researchers is their classification. At the time of the data collection of this study, there were three distinct characteristics in the SIE interviewed, this fact was in accordance with the characteristics noted by

Selmer and Lauring's (2012: 667) study which are: Employment (either permanent or temporary), foreign national and self-initiated (see figure 1).

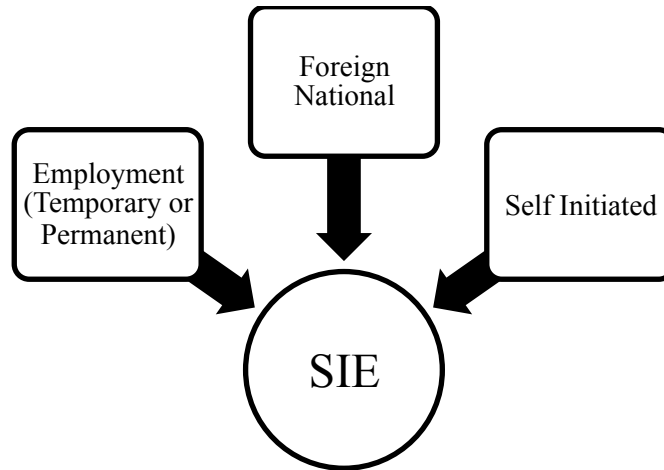


Figure 1. Characteristics of SIE

Additionally, the novelty of SIE in comparison to A.E., has led researchers to classify the prior in different ways. However, hitherto there is not one classification that can be defined as being most relevant or predominant than the others. This disparity is a result of the variation in the samples utilized in the numerous studies regarding this phenomenon. Consequently, these classifications will be briefly discussed, leading to the classification that will be utilized in this study.

Following Inkson's (1997) study, Suutari and Brewster (2000) analyze the self initiated expatriation of a sample of engineers from Finland. In their findings they are able to classify their sample in six sub-groups: *Young opportunists*: Which is a group similar as the one analyzed by Inkson et al. (1997), young people searching for work abroad; *job seekers*: Individuals moving abroad in search for a job; *officials*: Individuals working in international organizations; *localized professionals*: This subgroup covers the global specialists or "mercenaries" who often have long experience of working in international operations and *dual career couples*: The major reason for seeking job abroad is the expatriate assignment spouse.

This previous sub-group has been studied deeper by other researchers as a result of the significant effect on career patterns of employees the rapid rise in dual-earner households has had (Eby 2001: 345). In the same manner, Suutari and Brewster (2000: 433) noted that 66% of the SIE spouses analyzed in a study conducted in Finland, had worked in the country and that in 88% of them the spouse had also moved abroad. The reasons are probably related to the more equal distribution of working lives between Finnish partners and their higher proportion working in Europe, where work permits for EU citizens are not required.

However, some authors note a slight difference among this sub-group, Harvey & Buckley (1998: 99) aver that a *dual earner couple* can be defined as a couple in which both members earn income to support the family unit, whereas a *dual career couple* emphasizes that both partners are psychologically committed to their professions.

In the same manner Selmer and Luring (2012) proposed four categories of SIE based on Richardson and MacKenna's (2002) study of SIE academics, these categories are: *The Refugee*: Manly motivated by life changes. Individuals take an overseas position in order to escape the home context; *The Mercenary*: Motivated by financial incentives including the opportunity to make and save a large amount of money. This may be related to supporting one's family; *The Explorer*: Mainly motivated by a desire for adventure and travelling. This classification is very similar to the young opportunists in Suutari and Brewster's (2000) classification; and *The Architect*: The individual is motivated by career considerations including a desire to enhance career prospects.

Recently, a new classification has emerged amongst SIE group, which is active within MNCs, this new group is named corporate self initiated expatriate (CSIE); within this sub-group of SIE there are a series of characteristics which have been noted by Altman et al. (2012), amongst which is the fact that as oppose to traditional expatriates and SIE, the individuals that fall within this category are proactive in getting themselves expatriated (within the organization). The organization may facilitate the expatriation process but is not the driving force; additionally there are two drivers that lead these individuals to search for expatriation within the corporation: 1) The will to develop a long-term corporate career, whether within or outside the corporation (career oriented) and; 2) motivation for unspecified personal development in an alien environment, where

a yearning for adventure, exploration and discovery may overshadow the corporate goal-directed career motives (non-career interests) (Altman 2012: 242). Another noticeable characteristic of the CSIE studied by Altman et al. (2012) was the notion that all the individuals that became CSIE were previously in an expatriation assignment.

During the data analysis in this study, four groups within the classification discussed in this sub-chapter became prominent: studies, dual career earner, corporate SIE and job seeker; the results of these groups will be analyzed further in chapter 6.

However, it is necessary to assess the actions and factors that lead individuals to decide on their career, therefore in the next chapter aspects of CDM and its' ramifications will be addressed.

4. CAREER DECISION MAKING

Career choices can deal with decisions among many different types of alternative-occupations, job assignment, transfers, promotions, competing job offers, education, approaches to job performance and so on (Hall 2002: 76). In addition, according to Arnold et al. (1997) career decisions are often assumed to be decisions about what type of occupation to enter. Furthermore, the concept has two misassumptions: First, careers are not confined to one field of work and second there are other decisions people feel the need to make, such as:

Whether to return to employment after childbearing;

Whether to continue their education;

Whether to apply for a particular job;

Whether to accept that job if offered;

Whether to become self-employed.

Career decision making is a case of deciding which aspects of self to bring to the fore and why; additionally career counseling literature looks at the process of decision making and assumes that a well-made decision made in an appropriate manner is likely also to have positive outcomes for the individual concerned, and a key element is being ready to make a decision (Arnold 1997: 96-97). Good decision making may well depend on using appropriate concept of how people and occupations differ; which is related to person-environment fit and trait factors already discussed in chapter 2.2.; hence it can be assumed that a person can consider to be ready make a decision when they are aware to search for jobs best suited to their abilities; and moreover choose to work in an environment similar to their personality type; however that is only part of the process of CDM; therefore it is imperative to analyze career decision making focusing initially on the early stages of CDM.

4.1. Early Stages in Career Decision Making

There is a large range of CDM models that have been developed in order to understand vocational behavior; Phillips and Paziienza (1988) group the most influential CDM theories into three models: *Descriptive Models*, which aim to answer the question “how are decisions made?” and focus on the conceptualization of CDM involving a series of stages; *Prescriptive Models*: Address the question how decisions are *best* made and; *Descriptive Models with Perspective Implications* which involves the quality in decision making. Although these models allow a wider understanding of CDM, according to Arnold (1997: 96) before looking in detail how decisions are made, it is important to start with what leads up to them, which includes *career exploration, career information and self-assessment*.

Through *career exploration*, individuals are able to find a perfect fit with their desired career option (Zikic & Hall 2009: 189); however it is also a matter of career maturity, which refers to a person’s readiness to tackle the career management tasks that face him or her and are based partly on attitude and partly on ability, nevertheless there have been debates on whether it is helpful to think about career maturity (Arnold 1997: 96).

Regardless of the presence of career maturity, exploration before decision making is necessary, which can take many forms such as: Trying out a particular activity, looking at job advertisements, talking to one or more individuals and the work they do (Arnold 1997: 97). In addition, exploration also requires a deep understanding of one’s options in the broader context of life- taking into consideration national, cultural, societal and family influences (Zikic & Hall 2009: 189). In the context of SIE, career exploration can be a stage that will be extended beyond the initial stages of CDM, since when individuals are able to act as proactive agents in their own careers, they are often seeking to change some aspect of their current situation, and engaging in career exploration is a necessary step in this process (Zikic & Hall 2009: 182).

In order to be aware of aspects regarding career information and self assessment, Arnold et al. (1997) avers that it is necessary for individuals to have information about themselves and the world of work, and in order to do so aspects regarding personality, talents and interests must be taken into consideration. In addition, the author continues

to argue that it is debatable whether general personality constructs are very useful in choosing a type of work; however any given type of work tolerates different personalities, in the background studies regarding SIEs it has been stated that they are characterized by being a homogeneous group (Inkson 1997; Suutari and Brewster 2000); hence personality aspects are to be taken into consideration when analyzing SIEs.

Regarding interests, these refer to fairly specific activities or bodies of knowledge, unlike personality and values (Arnold 1997: 101); additionally, talents are more general than specific skills, but they undoubtedly contribute to them; they are probably at their most useful when a person is considering what type of work he or she wished to enter; additionally they become an important aspect in CDM because they dictate whether is it worth trying to learn a specific skill, which consequently is also clearly relevant to effective CDM (Arnold 1997: 102).

Arnold et al. (1997) notes that whilst most people tend to become interested in things they are good at, and become good at the things which interest them, this is not always the case. Some people who seek a change to a different type of work do so because although they are competent at what they currently do they do not enjoy it. Subsequent to realizing the early stages of CDM, the process of deciding on a career will be discussed in the next section.

4.2. Career Decision Making Process

Personality, interests and talents are initial aspects to be taken into consideration in the process of CDM, some of these aspects will be present during other stages of CDM; additionally the process is not standard (Arnold 1997: 96), therefore the emergence of career decision making styles have been distinguished amongst researchers in the field, some of which will be noted in this section.

Mihal, Sorce and Comte (1984) integrate a number of theories into a descriptive model of CDM. In their study the authors propose a series of premises, amongst which is that a significant factor in the process is the reality of individual differences; moreover the

career decision making process is always active, albeit often at a low level of intensity. Thus, the process is not just a description of triggered job change action but a constant set of self and situation evaluation. In the same manner, Arnold (1997: 115-116) states that individuals need to get behind surface statements about the self, which may not be a simple process, hence theorists have created distinctions regarding decisions making styles, which is also used by some career counselors.

Phillips et al. (1985) describes three decision-making styles: *Rational*: This involves a systematic appraisal and logical deliberation using a long-term perspective; *Intuitive*: based on emotional factors and *Dependent*: Here the person does not accept responsibility for decision-making.

Another aspect related to CDM process noted by researchers relates to super's (1980) career roles, examined already in chapter 2. When there are discrepancies among the roles of individuals, feelings of career dissatisfaction will result and may lead one to begin career decision making process, which has been defined by Mihal, Sorce & Comte (1984: 95) as problem recognition; the authors aver that for the CDM process, a variety of factors could change satisfaction with the actual state, which could include reduced opportunities in a current job, awareness of advancing age and/or change in family life cycle; changes in role set demands; or the incompatibility of roles with an individual's interests and abilities.

Once individuals have identified the aspects of dissatisfaction, they will proceed to a strategy formulation. This strategy is likely to include a preliminary solution (e.g. getting a new job, getting a divorce), specification of sub goals in achieving this solution, identification of what resources are needed (e.g. information, money) and a time frame (Mihal, Sorce & Comte 1984: 96-97); consequently the next step is to search for information related to the strategy formulation of their career.

Two sources of information are commonly used by individuals, an internal and external search (Mihal, Sorce & Comte 1984: 99), which is closely related to internal and external career discussed in chapter 2. Once the individual has analyzed the sources of information, the last step would be to evaluate and choose. It may occur that an individual only had one option to choose from, hence the evaluation and choice process

would be easy; however sometimes two or more options are quite closely matched and on other occasions it may not be easy even to identify what the options are (Arnold 1997: 114); nevertheless, this will be an ongoing process which will lead to a series of efforts and outcomes for the individual according to the approach taken.

In addition to the CDM theories briefly mentioned in this chapter, there are two theories integrating a series of aspects that are more closely linked to self initiated expatriation, these theories are: A role theory perspective on CDM (Werbel & Roberg 1990) and systems theory framework (Patton & McMahon 2006a, 2006b), which will be discussed in the following sub-sections.

4.3. A Role Theory Perspective on Career Decision Making

According to Werbel and Roberg's (1990: 68) model of role theory perspective on career decision making, there are interpersonal factors associated with role expectations that affect career choices. It makes two assumptions about the CDM process:

1. There are multiple stakeholders in career choice; that will most likely be involved in the CDM process and will attempt to influence the decision maker to make a choice that is perceived to be the most beneficial for the stakeholders.
2. The decision maker is most likely to compromise his/her preferred career choice when confronted by preferences of other stakeholders.

Stakeholders are all those interest groups, parties, actors, claimants and institutions-both internal and external to the corporation- that exert a hold on it (Mitroff 1983: 4). The current model assumes that CDM is influenced by the role expectations of different stakeholders; furthermore, conflicts between stakeholder role expectations and the career preferences of the decision maker promote compromise in CDM. The stakeholders involved in CDM in Werbel and Roberg's model are shown in figure 2.

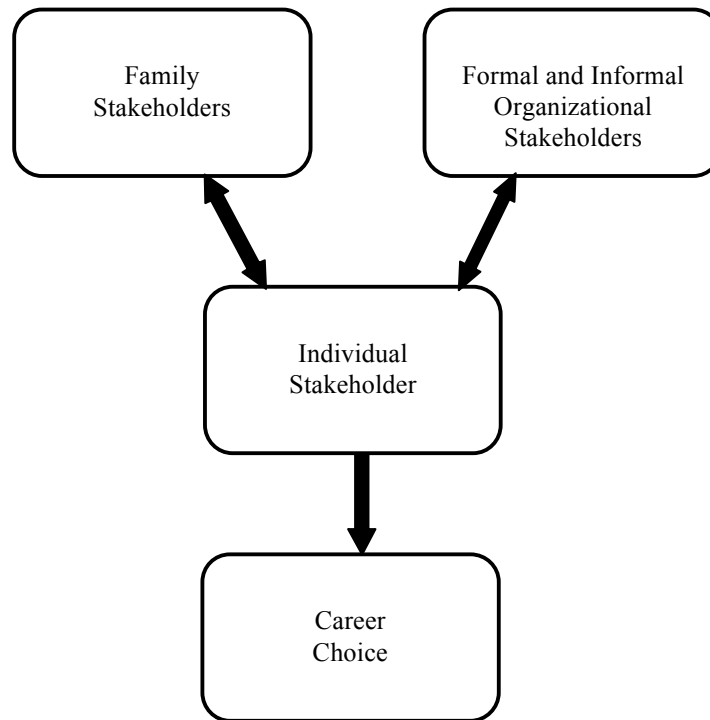


Figure 2. Career Decision Making as a Boundary Spanning Activity (Werbel & Roberg 1990: 70)

According to Werbel and Roberg's model *the family*, and in particular the spouse is probably one of the most significant stakeholders in a career decision. *Organizational stakeholders* may be formal, which are usually represented by hierarchical chain of command and informal stakeholders, encompassing peers, coworkers, or mentors. Finally, as a stakeholder, the career preferences of the decision maker need to be considered; in this context *the individual* is the link between the other stakeholders and also has a high influence in the final decision.

There may be conflict about a career choice within the decision maker's mind. Individuals are likely to have an array of valued outcomes or needs. Trying to find a career choice, which simultaneously meets the requirements of the different needs and interests, may be difficult. It may be likely that one career choice may maximize a set of important needs and that other choice may maximize a separate set of needs (Werbel & Roberg 1990: 77).

However, not only the array of needs and interests will affect the individuals CDM. There are other sets of stakeholders that will also influence the CDM of an individual which are not widely analyzed in Werbel and Roberg's model. In this context, STF involves a larger range of stakeholders and external influences affecting and individuals' CDM; consequently this theory will be discussed in the next sub-chapter.

4.4. Systems Theory Framework (STF)

The systems theory framework (STF) has been proposed as a potential overarching framework for dealing with many issues in human behavior, it is drawn from many fields such as physics, biology, anthropology and psychology (Patton & McMahon 2006b: 153). Central to the STF is the individual whose system of career influences is represented by the framework (Patton and McMahon 2006a: 106); which consequently is depicted by a range of intrapersonal influences on career development, such as personality, ability, gender, and sexual orientation (Patton & McMahon 2006b).

According to the STF, the aim is to identify two broad components of career theory: Content and process. Within the content, the framework identified variables applicable to the individual and to the context and within the process. The framework identifies the existence of recursive interaction process within the individual and within the context, and between the individual and his/her context. This recursive interaction contributes to the micro process of CDM (Patton & McMahon 2006a: 106-107). As mentioned previously, this theory encompasses a series of aspects that have not been compiled together by the other theories previously analyzed; in this manner STF has the individual system, the social system, the environmental-social system; additionally the recursiveness and chance and change over time which affect the process as a whole (see figure 2).

Each system is an open system, which is subject to influence from outside and may also influence that which is beyond its boundaries. Such interaction is termed recursiveness, noted with the dotted lines in figure 2. The complexity of an individual's life may lead to make decisions that may not always be 100% planned therefore; in the context of STF, chance can impact on any part or combination of parts in the system, which is

pictured in figure 2 in curved double arrows. As noted by Patton and McMahon et al. (2006a) an accident or illness may produce a disability, a chance meeting could open up new employment and it occurs only as it is perceived by the individual observer; additionally, all of the systems of influence are located within the context of time- past, present and future.

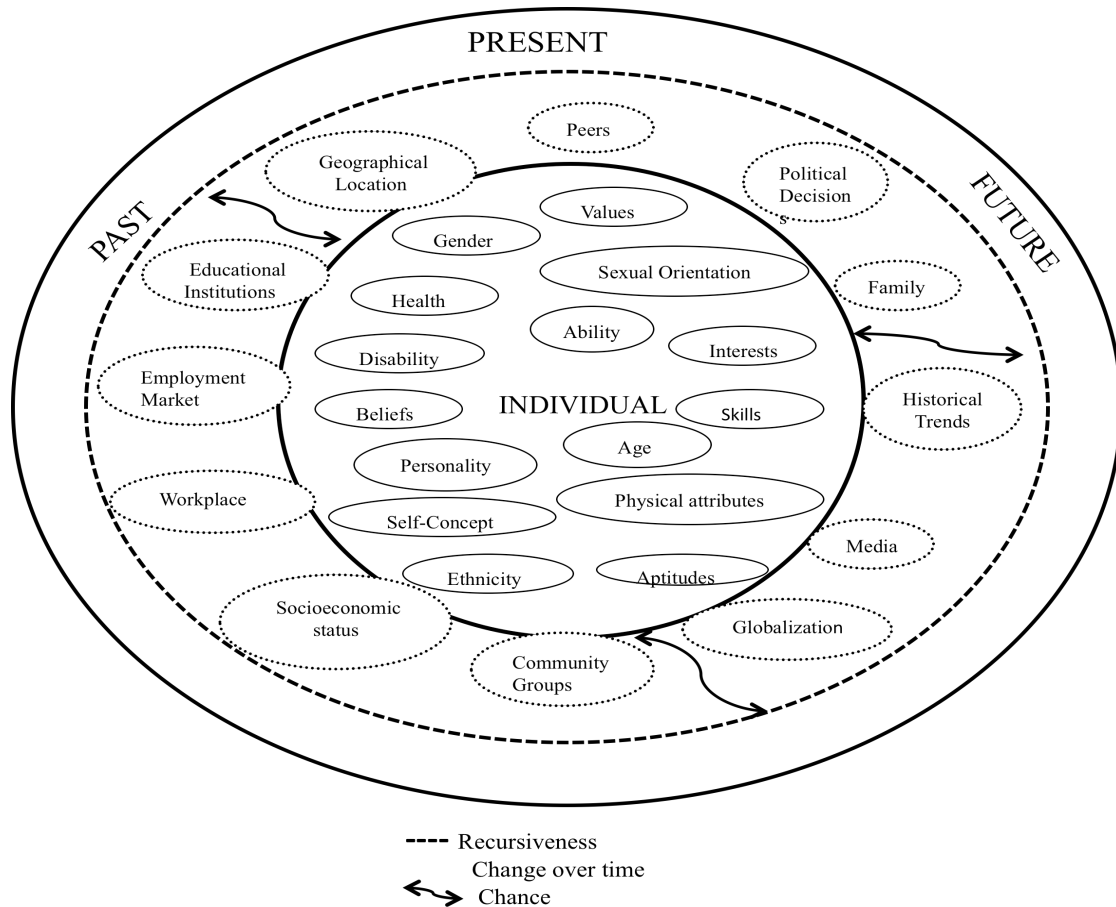


Figure 3. The Systems Theory Framework (Patton & McMahon 2006)

The *individual system* illustrates aspects of the individual which have been noted by other theories previously discussed in this study; however the authors added aspects which in their consideration have received little attention in career studies and/or need to be part of each individual's system of influences, such as ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, health and disability. The *social system* has also aspects noted

previously and it will change throughout life as the individual moves into and out of groups. These groups are education institutions, peers, family, media, workplace and community groups and; finally the *environmental-societal system*, that although may seem less directly related to the individual, may have a profound impact on an individual's CDM; these groups are the geographical location, political decisions, historical trends, globalization, socioeconomic status and employment market. (Patton & McMahon 2006a)

One of the aspects in the environmental-societal system which is of major impact in CDM for SIE is globalization. In this context, the authors aver this aspect has only recently been given attention; nevertheless has a strong presence in the context of SIEs.

STF also notes that CDM is a life time phenomena, in this context according to Patton and McMahon et al. (2006a) this theory is adaptable and elastic; meaning that influences in an individual's lifespan will change within time, where some influences will be more dominant than others depending on the life stage the individual is in.

An interesting aspect noted by Patton and McMahon (2006a) is that STF can be used to map an individual's career story throughout his or her career development. In this context, the authors analyzed the career paths of an individual from early life stages, up to 30 years after the individual graduated high school, leading the authors to aver that the constellation of dominant influences in the individual varied, and the degree to which the influences impacted on his life changed. Upon discussing these CDM theories, in the subsequent chapter the CDM of SIE will be addressed.

4.5. Career Decision Making of SIE

Literature research regarding CDM and SIE has been discussed in chapters two, three and the current section; consequently, upon analyzing the divergent theories, the individual as the center of CMD became a common factor for most of these approaches. In the same context, it is interesting to view this phenomenon intertwining STF and role theory perspective on CDM; which as a result serves as basis for the theoretical framework of this study, illustrated on figure 4.

Following the assumptions of previous research, depicted on the upper section of figure 4 is the individual; this aspect relies on the fact that central to the CDM process is the individual itself; therefore in each stage of the process leading to answer the research question of this study, the individual is a stakeholder that is constantly active.

Additionally, one important aspect that has been noted throughout the discussion of career concepts, career theories and frameworks concerning CDM is that the process of an individual deciding on a career is a lifetime process, in this manner when developing the framework of this study, the factors that influence CDM will be analyzed from a past, present and future perspectives (depicted on the left section of figure 4).

Consequently, it was also possible to craft three dimensions in this research; each dimension brings forth a series of sub-dimensions which are illustrated in the matrix of the theoretical framework.

In the first dimension, the *early stages of career decision making* take place. The main focus at this stage is regarding career exploration (sub-dimension). The presence of the individuals' personal traits intertwined with the identification of possible careers choices were of major importance. Upon the identification of the career of choice, the transition from being an individual deciding on a career, shifts to the second dimension named *reasons for self-initiated expatriation*.

The second dimension of the framework comprises the reasons why the individuals chose to move to and work in Finland; consequently this dimension brings forward the classification of the SIEs in this study: Studies, dual career earner, corporate SIE and job seeker (sub- dimension).

The third and final dimension focuses on the *influences in career decision making*, which centers on the stakeholders that have an impact on the samples in the study regarding their career choices. The main stakeholders within this final dimension were the family, the organization and the employment market (sub-dimension).

INDIVIDUAL

PAST ↑	Dimension Number	Description	Sub-Dimension
	First	Early stages of career decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career exploration
PRESENT	Second	Reasons for self initiated expatriation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studies • Following expatriate spouse (dual career earner) • Corporate SIE • Job seeker
FUTURE ↓	Third	Influences in career decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family • Organization • Employment market

Figure 4. Theoretical Framework

In the following chapter, the research method utilized in this study will be discussed, followed by data collection and finalizing with the validity and reliability of this study.

5. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the empirical data collected in the study. In order to do so; the research method will be explained in the following sub-section; consequently, detailed information regarding data collection will be discussed, finalizing with the validity and reliability of the data collected.

5.1. Research Method

There are two research methods that are traditionally utilized in business and management research studies: quantitative and qualitative research. When choosing among these strategies, or any other within the research field, the importance is to choose the strategy that will enable you to answer your particular research question and meet your objective (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2007: 135); hence these two methods will be briefly discussed in order to determine which of these methods will allow to answer the research question accordingly.

Numerous studies have focused on what qualitative research is not in order to explain what it is and the differences between these two approaches (Stephens 2009; Marschan-Piekkari & Welch 2004); however one way to distinguish between the two is the focus on numeric or non numeric data. The term quantitative data is predominantly used as a synonym for any data collecting technique (such as questionnaire) or data analysis procedure (such as graphs or statistics) that generates numerical data (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2007: 145).

Additionally, quantitative research can also be distinguished from qualitative research by considering that the former is also regarding studies that use most mainly quantitative data, most usually to follow the validation strategy of proposition development and empirical testing. These studies aim at testing a theory driven series of casual relationships, using formal propositions as a device for probing, statistical testing methods, statistical analysis and linear attributes (Marschan-Piekkari & Welch 2004: 466; Stake 2010: 11).

However, the qualitative term is used predominately as a synonym for any data collection technique (such as interview) or data analysis procedure (such as categorizing data) that generates or uses non-numerical data (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2007: 145); hence qualitative research highlights the qualities of entities and process meanings which are not experimentally examined or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity or frequency (Denzin and Lincoln 2005: 10). Following the same analysis as the authors previously mentioned, when defining qualitative research by what it is not; it can be averred that, due to the nature of the research question, this study is not based on quantitative data, nor is it based on doing empirical testing using formal propositions or any sort of statistical method.

Nonetheless, when determining how to best capture the information from SIEs regarding the factors that influence their career decision making, the qualitative research design had the characteristics needed in order to reach the objective of this study. This premise is built upon the fact that qualitative data relies primarily on human perception and understanding (Stake 2010: 11); additionally qualitative research has the ability to access directly what happens in the world, that is, to examine what people do in real life (Silverman 2011: 166).

Upon choosing the research method, the means to gather the data was to be determined. Stake (2010: 88-98) identifies four types of data-gathering methods qualitative researchers rely on: Observation, interviewing, exhibit questions, survey and record keeping. Within these types, the interview method became a better fit considering that in interviews the sample can be relatively small population of possible respondents (Daniels & Cannice 2004: 186); in addition interviews are tailored to the individual person and it is often conversational, with the interviewer asking probing questions to clarify and refine the information and interpretation (Stake 2010: 95) which was an important aspect when determining the history of the interviewees career choices in this study.

Finally, interview based data-gathering allow researchers to develop a deeper rapport with informants than is possible through written questionnaires. This may be necessary to gain honest and accurate responses (Daniels & Cannice 2004: 187). Subsequent to

determining the research method it is fundamental to specify the data collection in this study, which will be described in the following sub-section.

5.2. Data Collection

Once the research approach was determined, it was necessary to establish the means to collect the data. The samples in the study were chosen from one MNC established in the city of Vaasa where the researcher of this study was employed at the moment of gathering the data; each interviewee and the MNC chosen for this study which will remain in anonymity. By utilizing snowballing networks within the corporation it was easy to determine the individuals that were SIE and after interviewing a series prospects, no additional information was provided in their stories; moreover, according to Maylor and Blackmon (2005) the point of theoretical saturation is reached when additional data no longer brings extra information to the research; hence the total of the interviewees in this study were 6 individuals.

Table 2 depicts the characteristics of the 6 individuals interviewed in this study. In order to have balanced results, the individuals in the research were chosen within a similar age group between the ages of 26-35 (n=2) and between the ages of 36-45 (n=4); of foreign origin and with bachelor's degree (n=2), vocational degree (n=1), master's degree (n=2) and doctor's degree (n=1). At the time of the study, these individuals had been living in Finland as SIE between 4 and 10 years and were currently working in supporting tasks (n=4) and managerial tasks (n=2) within the MNC. Finally, in order to have a balanced perspective from both genders; 3 males and 3 females were interviewed.

Table 2. Samples in the Study

Interview	Nationality	Gender	Age Group	Education	Marital Status	Years as SIE
1	German	Male	26-35	Undergraduate	Married	7
2	Colombian	Female	26-35	Post Graduate	Married	4
3	Korean	Female	36-45	Vocational	Married	4
4	Japanese	Female	36-45	Undergraduate	Married	10
5	Italian	Male	36-45	Undergraduate	Relationship	6
6	Polish	Male	36-45	Post Graduate	Single	4

It is often sensible to try different styles of questioning prior to the main study (Silverman 2010: 197), in this manner when analyzing the pilot interview the researcher will be aware of improvements needed in the questionnaire, hence before interviewing the actual sample, one pilot interview was conducted and modified accordingly. According to Stake et al. (2010) although interviews are usually structured by the issues of the researcher, it sometimes is better to ask an open question (what was your experience early on?), letting the interviewees just comment or tell stories (structuring them around their own emic issues); hence semi-structured interviews were utilized in this study.

Additionally, in order to make proper use of the time with each interviewee when meeting face to face, basic questions regarding their age, education, marital status and gender were asked in advanced via E mail and a general concept of the study was provided, without revealing the main question of the research, in order to allow them to recollect information in relation to their career choices and life in general.

Consequently, when meeting each interviewee, 10 open questions were asked in regards to their career choices before they decided to self initiate expatriation from their home countries, following their stories when arriving to Finland, their current situation and finalizing with their future plans also regarding their careers and life in general. These questions included issues such as studies, work, influences from institutions, social networks, family, friends, peers, teachers, economical situation and any other issues mentioned by the interviewees that would have an impact on their career choices.

Each interview was recorded and fully transcribed, and as noted by Scapens, R.W. (2004: 107) it is important of being able to communicate with the subject of the research; additionally the impact the choice and use of language, as well as the researcher's and the interviewee's language skills affect the dynamics of the interviews in various ways (Marschan-Piekkari & Reis 2004: 227) when interviewing in a cross-cultural environment such as the settings in this study. Albeit the challenges posed by diverse languages in cross-cultural interviewing, all of the interviewees were very fluent in English, hence interviewing in the English language did not pose a challenge in this research; nevertheless five of the six interviews were conducted in English; and one was conducted in the Spanish language, having that it was the mother tongue of one of the interviewees and also one of the mother tongues of the researcher, additionally it was requested by the interviewee. The latter interview was translated and also transcribed into the English language.

5.3. Validity and Reliability

The two central concepts in any discussion of the credibility of scientific research are 'validity' and 'reliability' (Silverman 2011: 360). Reliability refers to the extent to which data collection techniques or analysis procedures yield consistent findings

(Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2007: 149); moreover according to Silverman et al. (2010) ‘validity’ is another word for truth, or as Lewis & Thornhill (2007: 150) aver “*validity is concerned with whether the findings are really about what they appear to be about*”.

For interview data, reliability can be increased by test interviews (Uwe 2009: 385), which has been applied in this study, as mentioned in section 5.2, this pilot interview was recorded and after analyzing the information several times the final questionnaire was modified accordingly. In the same manner all interviews were transcribed and analyzed thoroughly in order to capture on paper each detail provided by the interviewees.

Uwe (2009: 388) affirms that “*the production of the data becomes one starting point for judging their validity*”. In this regard, it is important to note this study has its’ limitations: The sample in the study was small, therefore the purpose of the study was not to create a new theory applicable to other studies, nor can these findings, conclusions and theory in this study be generalized; additionally each member of the sample was of different nationality which could generate diverse points of view regarding career choices and finally, although objectivity has been implemented to the highest degree in this study, the researcher of this study is also a SIE, hence to a certain extent, this could have certain influence in the final outcome of the study.

Upon determining the research method, in the next section of this study the analysis of the data collected will be presented.

6. DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the results of the interviews carried out with the SIEs sample of this study. By analyzing these interviews, the main question of the study regarding the factors that influence career decision making on SIE will be answered. In order to do so; it is important to note, as discussed in section 4.5, that central to the CDM process is the individual; in addition, decision making is a life time process (Arthur 2008; Arthur & Rousseau 1996: 5), hence the narratives of the interviewees are assessed from their career decision making in the early stages of life until the present time, and the future plans they have regarding their career development.

Additionally, in the theoretical framework of the study it was also possible to craft three dimensions. In the first dimension, the *early stages of career decision making* take place. The main focus at this stage is regarding career exploration (sub-dimension). Upon the identification of the career of choice, the transition from being an individual deciding on a career, shifted to the second dimension named *reasons for self-initiated expatriation*; this dimension comprises the reasons why the individuals chose to move to and work in Finland; consequently this dimension brings forward the classification of the SIEs in this study: Studies, dual career earner, corporate SIE and Job seeker (sub-dimension). The third and final dimension focuses on the *influences in career decision making*, which centers on the stakeholders that have an impact on the samples in the study in their career choices. The main stakeholders within this final dimension were the family, the organization and the employment market (sub-dimension). The results of these dimensions will be discussed in the following sub-sections.

Additionally, when analyzing the narratives of the interviewees' early stages of their career decision making in their home countries; it is taken into consideration their socio-economical status, family situation, employment market, education and personal feelings regarding their career at this stage in their lives until they decided to self initiate expatriation abroad, that may have had an impact in their decision.

Subsequently, the reasons for their self initiated expatriation to Finland are assessed; taking into consideration the same factors analyzed in their early stages of career decision making; in addition, their current employment and career decision making is discussed; finalizing with the assessment of the interviewees future plans.

6.1. Early Stages of Career Decision Making

For all the interviewees in the sample of this study, their major decisions regarding their career initiated after they had finished their secondary studies and/or bachelor's degree studies. Whilst analyzing the narratives in this stage of their lives, three subcategories emerged, which go in accordance with Arnold's et al. (1997) and Zikic's et al. (2009) work, namely: Career exploration, economical stability and personal interests (see figure 5). In the subsequent sections the narratives of the interviewees within the prior subcategories will be discussed.

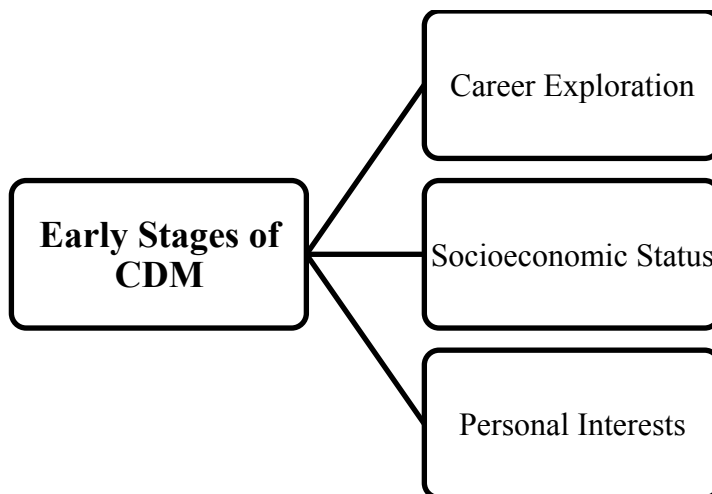


Figure 5. Subcategory in Early Stages of CDM

6.1.1. Career Exploration

At this phase, the individuals are still deciding on what career path to choose; for them, it was important to acquire an education in a field of their own interest in order to be able to develop their career in that specific field, and for all of them at this stage of their decision making; it was a personal decision that was not directly linked to any external influences, as expressed by the native German:

“I was interested in working with people, I really liked it. During my civil service in Germany I worked with older people and I also worked for one year as a trainee in a home for handicapped persons; after that I wanted to work with kids also so I went to a youth center; and that is why I decided to study social work.”

In the same manner, the native Italian also concurred that his career decision making at early stages was closely related to the field of study he chose to be in:

“When I was young, I did well at school and I chose a field of study (engineering) that would open doors to get a good job, and it worked well. It was my access to the working world in a safe way, because a degree protects you and it has proven to be my passport out of my country. I was able to choose what I wanted and I chose that”.

It was the norm in the interviewees’ respective countries to acquire an education in their field of interest as a way of deciding their own carriers; in addition they all had a very positive relationship with their families, friends and other related social groups.

6.1.2. Socioeconomic Status

The economical situation of all the interviewees was stable at this stage in their lives, as it was in their respective countries’ economy in general, except for the Italian and Polish interviewees who expressed concern regarding the socio-economical situation in their country and/or work. The Italian interviewee expressed the following:

“I had the feeling that something was going wrong in the economy, society, development of the future...”

In the same manner, the opportunity for economical development for the Polish interviewee in the field of work at the time was not satisfactory, which led this interviewee to pursue other options:

“Financially, I was not satisfied because you can’t expect to get too much money in this field of work... I did not expect to get high salary...”

Nevertheless, for all the interviewees their main goal at this point in their career was for personal development; consequently the achievement of economical rewards was on a secondary level:

“..It (the salary) was not very good, but money was not that important, I wanted to change work because I wanted to change the routine.”

6.1.3. Personal Interests

Conversely, two out of the six persons interviewed did not develop their careers in their field of studies since their expectations, once entering into their field of preference, was not as anticipated. This factor was narrated by the native Japanese in this study:

“I studied to become a teacher; after I graduated I worked for a language school in the public sector, but I was disappointed of how the education system worked in Japan: When I went to work as a trainee they were square, there was not space for the teacher to enjoy teaching.... I was not happy so I decided to look for another job.”

This aspect did not hinder their opportunities to choose a carrier later in the future that was according to their needs at the time. This same interviewee decided to look for a job in a different field in order to fill the gap her previous work had.

6.2. Reasons for Self Initiated Expatriation

As discussed in the literature review, there are many reasons as of why individuals choose to self initiate expatriation; in the same manner it has been stated that SIE is a heterogeneous group. This assumption is supported by the diversity of reasons as of

why the subjects in this study chose to move abroad. When analyzing the sample, four characteristics became prominent among the group, illustrated in figure 6.

In the group interviewed, two of the interviewees moved to Finland in order to continue the studies they had initiated in their home countries. Within this group, a subcategory emerged, which has been noted by Jokinen et al. 2008, namely *career development*. Consequently, two interviewees decided to move abroad to follow their spouse during expatriation assignment; bringing to the forth a sub-category grouped, named *family values*.

In the same manner, one interviewee moved due to interest in pursuing a more demanding career abroad, additionally acquiring international experience and; the remaining interviewee also wanted to pursue a more demanding career, however in the form of corporate self initiated expatriate. These two latter groups are within a subgroup named *career expectations*. In the following sub-section the details of each category combined with the subgroups will be discussed.

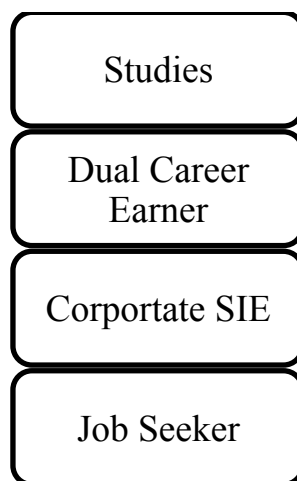


Figure 6. SIE Classification

6.2.1. Studies Abroad

As a means to continue to develop their career, two samples in the study decided to move to Finland in order to achieve a higher education abroad, that would have the following characteristics: a) Better than their home countries, regarding the opportunities and varieties of courses and aids provided to students; b) Financially affordable; and c) Allow them to acquire international experience in order to have better possibilities to develop their careers in their home countries or abroad.

Regarding the affordability of education in Finland, an aspect that becomes desirable for students when choosing to study abroad; is the fact education in Finland is free; in addition there are degrees that are imparted fully in English which makes studying in Finland more attractive to those who wish to continue to develop their studies abroad.

Within this context of CDM, the aspects concerning *career development* surfaced in the narratives of the interviewees, as expressed below:

“I could have studied in my home country but I thought it added more value to study abroad and I wanted to do it in English to improve my English skills in an international environment... I had also applied to other places but I declined, because when I compared all my expenses Finland was affordable since I did not have to pay for the studies, just for my accommodation, and the degree was in English which was what I wanted”

However, not only the affordability regarding studies was the only factor that inclined these interviewees to choose Finland; it was also the varieties regarding career options, as opposed to what was offered in their home countries, which also affected their decision to study abroad:

“I realized that my studies did not succeed that much... I wanted to study something else... I was suggested to come to Finland, because the country offered better opportunities to study...”

Although for the interviewees the decision to study abroad was on a personal level; it is important to note that to a certain extent these individuals were influenced by close

friends to come specifically to Finland to develop their studies. This fact will be discussed further in section 7.3.

6.2.2. Dual Career Earners

In the sample subject to this study, two of individuals came to Finland because of their expatriate spouse. Both being of Asian nationality, once getting married their career development became secondary, whilst marriage became first.

For the Japanese native, *family values* were noted, as this aspect became evident at an early stage in this new life phase:

“I met my husband in the same company and we got married, it was very hard to keep work at the same office, so I quit and started working from home freelancing, analyzing data base, or making some training material”.

In the same manner, the South Korean native also expressed the shift of focus from an individual perspective to a family perspective:

“I stopped working after delivering my first son and then my husband found a job and I decided to quit”.

Although these now SIE had their careers in their home countries, they decided to leave their careers aside in order to support the career development of their spouses. From their perspective, this was seen as a good career move, which consequently would have a positive outcome for their families and relationship at the time of the decision.

Both of the expatriates had several options to choose from as to where to expatriate, and although these now SIE came to Finland to support their spouses' decision to move abroad; these SIE had a major influence in their spouses when choosing Finland as option to move abroad, as narrated by the Japanese SIE:

“My husband wanted to move from Japan because he did not feel he had the opportunity to develop himself, and we had the choice of some places, I thought Finland was the safest because HQ was here, and I thought it was more stable, so we moved here.”

However, it was not only the opportunity of these expatriates to develop their careers' that inclined them to move to Finland; sociological, economical and environmental aspects of the country also had a major influence. At the moment of deciding to move abroad, it was also significant to choose a country that would provide them general safety, appropriate schooling for their children, proper day care and a social system that would be the same or better than their home countries or any of the other options they had at the time.

6.2.3. Corporate SIE

Working for a MNC is an aspect that became an important feature for several of the interviewees in the study, due to the opportunities for professional development considered to be wider than working for a domestic firm.

For the CSIE in this study, the desire of adventure and international exposure was a factor that influenced an internal move; this desire became evident once he was able to perceive the positive aspects of this new working environment as oppose to the local working environment:

“The first thing I wanted was to enter and then to learn about the work; and I liked the Nordic style of collaboration... I discovered that the reality was much better in this MNC ... it was more open and everybody was trying to help.”

Having a proper concept of the corporate culture within the organization prior to moving to Finland showed to be also an important aspect for the CSIE. Combining the concept of being global and local within the BU the CSIE worked for, gave the security of knowing what type of working environment was ahead.

Within the sub-groups noted in chapter 3.1., the motivation of this interviewee was within the non-career interest category; in this sense when discussing with his superior about his desire of adventure, the superior of this interviewee assisted in making the internal move:

“I told my boss in advance about my plans ... one day he said: ‘we are looking for a person for your same position in Finland, since you are saying you want to go abroad, why don’t you try?’”

The possibility of facing new challenges and being able to embark in a new adventure led the interviewee to accept to proposition.

6.2.4. Job Seeker

As mentioned previously, the economical aspect when deciding to pursue a career abroad has not been the main reason for deciding to self initiate expatriation for the interviewees’ sample of this study. This aspect applies specifically to the job seeker.

Having a post graduate education in addition to working in the same field of studies did not seem to fulfill his expectations career wise.

The feeling that in his home country the possibility to change the routine of work was limited; the logical option for this interviewee was to search abroad in order to achieve personal development that was not available at home, additionally the stage in the job seekers’ life seemed to be the appropriate one to search for other options:

“I wanted to learn as much as possible, to develop myself while I was still young so changing from one Polish company to another was not helping my situation that much, I wanted a drastic change.”

Similar to the CSIE, the superior of this job seeker was of assistance when searching for work abroad; in addition Finland was not the only option provided to this interviewee:

“My superior gave me some links from France, Germany, Japan, UK, Canada and Finland for different types of work.”

Being in a country that could offer new experiences and involvement with different cultures, in addition to being in a firm where English was the corporate language was also important. For this interviewee Finland had these characteristics as oppose to the other countries which were an option at the time of the decision.

6.3. Influences in Career Decision Making

Deciding on what career to choose in different life stages for the interviewees in this study was an individual decision. Their personalities, ability, family situation and ambition to develop their careers outside of their home countries were key influences in their choices. However, although their decisions were mainly based on their own choices; other influences were also important factors during their career decision making: Family, employment market and organization; hence for the individuals subject to this study there were three main factors that influenced their decision, as shown on figure 6: Employment market in home country, family and the organization they were working for that the time of the study. These three factors will be discussed in the following sub-section.

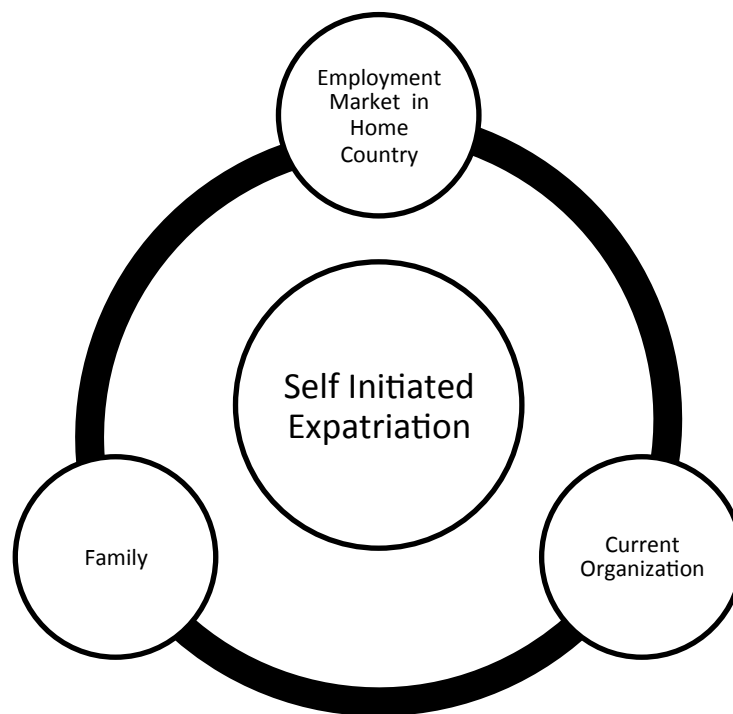


Figure 7. Influences in Career Decision Making

6.3.1. Family

Starting from childhood years until the present time, the family influence for the SIEs sample of this study was present during different stages of their CDM; these influences impacted directly or indirectly their current job situation.

For the job seeker, although the reason for SIE was a personal decision, the choice of career, which in the future would influence the reasons for self initiated expatriation, started from a young age, by seeing his father working in a field which he later decided to study and also develop professionally:

“My father was a propulsion engineer, and he liked working with engines. When I was young I liked helping him at work and I knew right then what I wanted to be when I grew up, so I decided to study propulsion engineering and I’m currently working in that field”.

For the CSIE the influence of the family in CDM was present during a later stage in his life, which consequently served as basis for the decisions made in the future. The CSIE narrated as follows:

“For choosing the career I studied, my family told me to choose what I preferred, but to keep in mind what was better for the future... My family went to talk with people from my town who were older than me, that had studied engineering and had the experience to say how the working market was, and they recommended mechanical engineering”

In the same context, for one of the SIE in the dual career earner category, the influence on her CDM was present at the moment of choosing a company for which to work for. For this individual there was no influence at an early stage of life, or at the moment of choosing a career; nevertheless the family influence was present:

“My sister influenced me. My sister was dispatched to the company from a recruiting agency but she already had a new assignment from the recruiting agency, so instead she suggested me to take that position, because she thought it would be good for me to work in that type of company”.

In the same context of SIE in the dual career earner category, in a later stage of life, after getting married and thinking of the prospect of children; the focus on the personal development of career shifted to a career development convenient for the family, which in both cases inclined to the spouses' career development, as expressed by the other interviewee within the dual career earner category, who traveled with her husband from her home country to Taiwan and from there to Finland:

“When I was in Taiwan I did not search for work because ... it was and Asian country and back then when women got married, had children and they focused on their family... I had to take care of my son, I was pregnant and I was happy to take care of my house, husband and children”.

The family influence was stronger for the interviewees at the moment of the study that were married and had children. This is as a consequence of a shift in priorities from a personal perspective to a family perspective; which was not the same for the two remaining interviewees (the CSIE and job seeker); these individuals had no direct family influence at the moment of the study.

6.3.2. Organization

Globalization and the mobility of employees within organizations are reflected deeply in the CSIE. Realizing the pool of talent within the organization, for the case of the CSIE, the superior of this employee realized the win-win situation at hand by providing the opportunity for the CSIE to obtain the adventure he was looking for; and at the same time filling in a position from BU to HQ, with an individual possessing the knowledge and competences needed for that specific position; in addition of having an individual that was aware of the corporate culture of the MNC.

Very open to express their desire of gaining experience and knowledge in order to continue to develop their careers, and the willingness to take the necessary actions in order to achieve these goals is among one of the characteristics of SIE. This aspect was noted by the majority of the interviewees in this study. They all expressed that they were content with their jobs at the moment, and that they did not feel the need to change

jobs for the time being; and if they were to change jobs it would be within the corporation and if possible in Finland. The stability and opportunity for development offered by the organization was among the reasons most of the SIE in the sample were pleased with the organization:

“...I have development discussions every year and I can always discuss with my superior what I want to change in my profile, what I want to learn, how I want to develop myself...”

Other interviewees in the sample felt that the novelty in their jobs at the time of the interviews influenced their career decision making, since as long as they had challenges in their day to day work they were satisfied with their career, as expressed by this SIE:

“...at the moment I still have challenges at work so it is OK like this”.

6.3.3. Employment Market

The employment situation for the sample in this study before moving to Finland was diverse; five out of the six SIE interviewed were employed in their home countries before moving to Finland, one dual career earner SIE was living outside her home country before arriving to Finland, to accompany her spouse who was working as an expatriate before moving to their current country of residence. For this interviewee the work situation in her home country was also stable and she was satisfied with her work situation:

“I graduated from school and then I worked in a cosmetic company in Korea for 10 years. I liked that kind of job and I would have had the opportunity to continue working ... but he (husband) was offered a job as an expatriate in Taiwan, he had a good chance to have new challenges and I was satisfied with the situation”.

For the CSIE, although the work situation on a personal matter was stable, he felt a sense of uncertainty in the general situation of his country, which led him to look for further challenges outside of his home country:

“....When I read the newspaper I felt uncomfortable with the same stories and there was no progress. I saw my friends having no possibility to develop themselves, it did not matter if they were good or bad, it was all about productivity and it was annoying”

For the remaining interviewees the employment market was stable at the time of deciding to self initiate expatriation; however for the job seeker the challenges were not interesting enough to stay home, and the others just felt the need to seek for better opportunities abroad.

6.4. Future Plans

Although the interviewees arrived to Finland for different reasons, and did not have any plans of staying in the country permanently, at the moment of the interview, all of the interviewees felt a sense of satisfaction living in the country and had no immediate plans of moving back to their home countries.

For the job seeker, the current job offered the challenges lacking in his home country:

“I am planning on staying in Finland on a regular basis. At the moment I don’t think about changing, because I still have challenges at work so it is OK like this. I’m not the one looking for career changes, if everything fits to my life and it’s enjoyable I can continue my work as it is”.

These positive challenges led this interviewee to establish in the country on a permanent basis, leading to make investment in Finland, due to the work stability:

“I’m just grabbing opportunities. I don’t have any plans of leaving Finland; I bought an apartment one year ago, so I think I will stay here for some time”

For the CSIE, the work challenges also have proven to keep him satisfied with work; in addition to these challenges, the sense of freedom in Finland as oppose to his home country also keeps him satisfied and with no plans of moving abroad:

"At the moment I just focus on my job, instead of exercising how to manage people, and adopting the style that is appreciated in other companies, and without the style of

having the appearances. I have not been taking care of this which I will do at some point, but right now I rather enjoy the taste of freedom, it is a choice. One day I will change it when I feel like it”

However, for the remaining interviewees the future plans on CDM evolve strictly around their spouses and children. Both of the SIE who moved abroad due to studies, were married to a Finnish spouse and had children, hence their future plans evolve around their family situation:

“I’ve been thinking that it is nice to do something different, if I would do so I would look for something within the company because the salary is good..... At the moment work is a way to finance my private life. I am not constantly seeking to advance in my career; it’s more that I’m checking I do not work too much so I can have enough strength to be a good father and so on.... Right now I don’t have time for myself because my children demand a lot of time from me.... maybe in the future when they are older”.

The same perspective was expressed by the remaining SIE who moved to Finland due to studies, married to a Finn with a small child; the idea of moving abroad to pursue new career challenges would be a possibility if this would not set back the spouses’ career, however the option of transferring abroad with her spouse as an expatriate is considered as feasible option:

“If I think only about my career then I have to think about my family, and since we are in Finland, if my husband would want to do a career change then I would go with him anywhere, because we are in Finland and he has better opportunities than I”.

6.5. Personal perspectives as SIE

During the narratives of the six interviewees, their perspectives regarding the advantages and disadvantages of living abroad were questioned. In general they all felt a sense of satisfaction living in Finland, because the Finnish society offers a series of benefits that are not the same in their home country. For the female SIEs interviewed,

the advantages leaned towards the social aspects of the country, for instance the paid maternity leave by law offered in Finland, which is higher than any of the countries the interviewees in this study were from; in addition, the Finnish education system was highly appreciated, as noted by one of the SIE:

“I like the fact that there is a long maternity leave.... we have a choice for a good education for the kids; the government supports quite well education”.

In the same context, two of the interviewees with an Asian background, also noted the sense of achievement and independency do to equal treatment for men and women as oppose to their home countries:

“My son used to hate the fact that I started working because he wanted to have me full time, but now he said he liked my lifestyle because his friends mom’s were also working, and women in Finland work, but for my generation it was not the same”

In the same manner, other interviewee commented:

“Living in Finland there are a lot of advantages: We have a choice for a good education for the kids; the government supports quite well education... If I were living in my home country and working, I don’t think I would be able to take care of my kids”

Additionally, although the majority of the interviewees moved from a developed country to Finland, these interviewees noted that there were higher advantages when comparing their home countries to Finland regarding the developmental aspect of the country:

“You are in the center of an area with all the services with the advantages of being in a city that allows movement in town and it is an industrial town that is in development and taking care of the environment...”

For the CSIE, the fair treatment received at work as oppose to the home country was a major advantage:

“Fairness!, it is possible to say what you think and others can say to you what they think and it is possible for me to recognize when I am wrong, I have opportunities to develop my career if I grab the opportunity, here I live in a sense of meritocracy”.

When questioning the interviewees about the disadvantages of living in Finland, all of the interviewees noted that there were no major disadvantages. Both of the SIEs within the dual career earner category said that they felt lucky and appreciated the fact to be able to work and have a sense of independency in a foreign country. Only two aspects were noted as a disadvantage but not of major impact in their living and/or working situation, these aspects were related to local language knowledge. In this manner, one of the interviewees commented:

“The lack of knowledge with the local language can hinder possibilities to find better jobs”.

The same was noted by another interviewee when she narrated the following:

“I don’t have time to learn the local language since we are living permanently here and all documents are in Finnish or Swedish, and I want to be able to integrate well in the society”

The second aspect was living far away from close family and friends, as noted by two of the interviewees:

“My family is far away; my mom is getting old and I can’t be there when she needs me”

“I’m far from my friends and family. My friends from my home country will always be more important for me than Finnish friends”

Upon analyzing the interviewees subject to this study, in the next section the summary and conclusion of this research will be presented.

7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this final chapter, the summary of this study will be addressed; in addition the conclusions drawn upon the synthesis of the literature review and data analysis will be analyzed; consequently leading to the managerial implications, suggestions for further research and limitations of this study.

7.1. Summary of the Study

The aim of this study was to determine the influential factors that have an impact on CDM of SIE, within past, present and future contexts. Drawing from the literature review, and utilizing Patton and McMahon's (2006a, 2006b) systems theory framework (STF) and Werbel and Roberg's (1990) role theory perspective on career decision making as main theories, the theoretical framework of this study was developed. Within the theoretical framework three dimensions related to CDM of SIE surfaced: Early stages of CDM, reasons for self-initiated expatriation and influences on CDM.

Additionally, as mentioned in the study, central to the CDM process is the individual, therefore when analyzing the factors that influenced CDM of SIE within past, present and future contexts; the individual was an influential factor that was constantly present in each stage of the process. The different stages within the prior context were: Early stages of CDM; factors influencing CDM and classification of SIE. The latter classification was comprised by: Studies, dual career earner, corporate SIE and job seeker.

Consequently, upon elaborating the theoretical framework, a series of interviews were carried out. The narratives of six SIEs living in the city of Vaasa, employed by a MNC with HQ in Vaasa, were recorded and transcribed in order to determine which factors were influential during the different stages of their career choices; in addition, their future perspectives regarding their career choices were also discussed.

7.2. Conclusion

The main findings of the study suggest that there are three influential factors affecting CDM of SIE: Family, organization and employment market. These factors differed according to the life stage of each individual and the classification each interviewed belonged to.

In this manner, for all the interviewees in the study, during the early stages of CDM, the need to acquire a proper education in their field of interest was seen as a means to achieve career goals in the future.

Following Patton and McMahon's et al. (2006a, 2006b) assumptions, central to CDM is the individual itself; this affirmation is applicable to the early stages of CDM; as for the interviewees analyzed in this stage, the decision was personal and there were no external factors that influenced their decision at this early stage in their lives, which for the purpose of this study was considered to be within the past context.

Shifting from past to present context, the findings show that according to the reasons for moving abroad, the SIE group classification emerged; consequently the influential factors regarding CDM also changed, depending on the group each individual was categorized in. The change in influences is supported by Mihal, Sorce and Comte's proposition where they affirm that a significant factor in the process of CDM is the reality of individual differences.

Within this context, two of the interviewees decided to move to Finland in order to continue their studies away from their home countries; for these individuals the decision was still at a personal level.

Subsequently, two of the interviewees moved abroad to join their expatriate spouse; hence within this latter group, classified as dual career earner, emerges the first influential factor in CDM of SIE which is the family. Although these individuals had careers that were within the line of endeavor they liked, they felt it was important to support their spouse's career development which consequently would benefit the entire family. This was as a consequence of a shift in priorities from a personal perspective to a family perspective; as noted by Arthur, Inkson & Pringle (1999), Crowley-Henry &

Weir (2009) and Zikic & Hall (2009). In addition, the fact that these interviewees decided to search for work once established in Finland; goes in accordance to Suutari and Brewster's (2000) study, in which they noted that 66% of the SIE spouses analyzed in their study conducted in Finland had also decided to work in the country.

The remaining two interviewees had external factors influencing in their present career situation. For the job seeker, the employment market in his home country influenced his decision to move abroad. Although this individual was working within his line of choice, the need for new challenges led him to consequently become a SIE in Finland, which consequently is a characteristic of the protean career, noted by Crowley- Henry (2012: 136) when stating: "*The combination of past experiences in developing future career pathways is a central element of the protean career concept*".

However, it is important to note that it was not due to lack of work in the home country, or due to a unstable economy; it was rather the lack of novelty within his line of expertise; leading this individual to search for challenges and adventures abroad.

Similarly, the CSIE who was also seeking for adventure and novelty in his line of work; was influenced by the organization currently employed; however, a slight contradiction between Altman's (2012) study and this research occurred. According to the previous author, the individual itself is the driving force in order to achieve expatriation and the organization is a tool assisting in reaching this goal; however in this particular case it was the employee's superior who suggested the move abroad.

However, it is also important to note that both of these individuals had expressed within their respective organizations their desire to expand their knowledge across borders, which resulted in suggestions from the job seeker and the CSIE's superiors for change. In this context, the results in this section of the study are in accordance to Werbel and Roberg's framework (role theory perspective on CDM); regarding the influence organizational stakeholders have on CDM. As mentioned in the literature review in section 4.3., organizational stakeholders may be formal, which are usually represented by hierarchical chain of command.

Regardless of the amount of time these SIEs have been living in Finland, all of them seemed content at the time of the study with their life situation. In addition, within the future context, they had no plans in the immediate future to move abroad; this aspect was attributed to the safety, fairness and general development present in the Finnish society; which go in accordance to Patton and McMahon's (2006a, 2006b) STF. The authors proposed that the environmental-societal system, although less directly related to the individual, may have a profound impact on an individual's CDM.

Arnold et al. (1997) avers that career decisions include other decisions people feel the need to make, which are not only related to an individual's occupation. In this manner, the interviewees subject to this study noted, the possibility to move if circumstances changed, created an open window for these individuals to move abroad without any second thoughts; supporting Arnold's (1997) assumptions.

This prior aspect applied with greater impact to the CISE and job seeker who had no personal ties in the country; nevertheless since these individuals had a sense of possibilities of development within the corporation they were currently employed at the moment of the study; this move was not in their near future plans.

7.3. Managerial Implications

There is a growing body of research regarding SIE; however, the more globalization evolves, the more likely it is that self initiated expatriation will increase; hence organizations should focus on realizing the reasons that lead individuals to search for a successful career abroad, in order to attract new talent and/or retain the talent.

In this matter, by assessing the competencies of the foreign employees currently working in corporations, which have acquired their employment by their own means, corporations can make use of the adaptability, cultural knowledge and global mindset already existing in these individuals due their characteristics as SIE.

In the same context; posting positions for new graduates in universities and employment offices for young talent; will attract those individuals who move abroad for study

purposes. These individuals also have the advantage of being easy to adapt to new cultures, which has proven to be beneficial for MNC doing business in our current open economy.

7.4. Suggestions for Further Research

As noted by Al Ariss et al. (2013), there is a lack of exiting literature regarding the difference between SIE and migrants. In this context, additional studies focusing on differentiating these two groups could shed light to the needed clarifications not only as of what differentiates these two groups; additionally if there is a point of convergence in which a SIE could eventually become a migrant, and what impacts would this classification have on the development of the individual's career. These studies should focus on sociological issues; individual perspectives; economical standpoints; and organizational views.

In addition, further qualitative studies focusing on CDM of SIE utilizing STF as main framework, utilizing a larger sample would contribute to the current growing literature regarding SIE and their CDM.

7.5. Limitations of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the influential factors that affect CDM of SIE; having that this was a qualitative study and within a limited frame to be completed, the sample of the study is limited; which constitutes a limitation in this research; additionally due to this limited amount of time, a further limitation of the study was the use of snowball system in order to obtain the sample.

In the same manner, the individuals interviewed in this study were from different nationalities, hence results with groups of same nationality or from countries with cultural similarities, could lead to different results.

In addition, having that the sample utilized in this study was relatively small; the results of this study cannot be generalized. Finally, although objectivity was utilized strongly in each aspect of this study, the researcher of this study is also a SIE; hence a certain degree of influence may have affected the final results of the research.

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