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## The intercultural adaptation of expatriate spouses and children

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## ***Chapter 7***

### ***The Effect of Expatriates' and Spouses' Work-Home Interference and Home-Work Interference on Expatriate Spouses' Intercultural Adaptation***

- 7.1 Introduction**
- 7.2 Theory and model**
- 7.3 Method**
- 7.4 Results**
- 7.5 Discussions**

*The study presented in this chapter examines the determinants of expatriate spouses' intercultural adaptation in terms of expatriates' and their spouses' Work-Home Interference (WHI) and Home-Work Interference (HWI). This chapter starts with an introduction to the theoretical background of WHI and HWI. Next, the model of the present study and hypotheses are presented. Then, study methods are introduced and the results of the study are presented. The chapter ends with a discussion and recommendation for further studies.*

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## 7.1 Introduction

Expatriates and their family members enter new environments upon relocating abroad. In the host country, they have to adjust to a new life and the culture of the host country. This new environment brings about many changes to expatriates as well as to their family members, which may lead to several problems of adjusting. Previously, international companies have paid little attention to the ability of the expatriate family members to adjust and to function within the new cultural environment (Black, Gregersen, & Mendenhall, 1992). This is a surprise since family-related factors, such as spouses' adaptation and satisfaction seem to play an important role in the successful fulfillment of international assignments (Shaffer & Harrison, 1998). Even though many expatriate spouses consider their stay abroad as an opportunity from which they may reap many benefits, they in practice are also faced with many obstacles in the process of adapting to the host country (Jones-Corley & Van Oudenhoven, 2002).

Expatriate spouses in a host country are not only confronted with the loss of their social network but also with a change of home environment and the potentially problematic adaptation of their children. Expatriate spouses usually have the idea that they will stay abroad for a relatively short period of time (two to three years on average) and they are mentally prepared for that duration. Nonetheless many women may suffer identity conflicts during expatriation. This is especially true for young expatriate spouses. In many host countries it is difficult for them to find a job, due to the impossibility of obtaining a work permit (ExpatriPlus, 2001). Many expatriate spouses had jobs in their home countries but instead end up as homemakers in the host country. This may be incongruent with their self-perceptions. For expatriate spouses with children this may be less problematic. Often, their time is fulfilled at home with the role of parenting, possibly in combination with volunteering to assist in their children's extracurricular activities, and volunteering at social clubs.

Due to a change in role division, expatriates and their spouses have to find a new balance in roles they perform at home and outside home. Expatriates and their spouses have to cope with differing role demands. In both situations there are tasks and demands that have to be dealt with. These tasks may at times cause conflicts, such as when the children have to be brought to school at a time when there is an important meeting at work. These conflicting role demands may lead to stressful situations. Furthermore, expatriates and their spouses face an extra hindrance due to the fact that their culture is different from the host country. This may cause poor communication with the local people, which may necessitate more time and energy in their daily tasks and responsibilities compared to their situation in their home country. With respect to their partners,

i.e. the expatriates, who also have to adjust to the new situation, demands at work for example may cause them to have less time and attention for their spouses and children. Conversely, the time and attention that are needed at home may interfere with the demands they experience at work. Empirical research conducted by Jones and Fletcher (1996) confirms the existence of spillover effects of home and work and vice versa. What are the effects of work-home and home-work interference of both expatriates and their spouses on the intercultural adaptation of expatriate spouses? The present study will shed some light on this issue.

## **7.2 Theory and Model**

The present study examines the determinants of intercultural adaptation of expatriate spouses in terms of work-home interference and home-work interference of both expatriate spouses and their partners, i.e., the expatriates. These determinants have been assimilated in a model (see Figure 7.1). The following paragraphs will discuss these determinants in greater detail.

### **7.2.1 Work-Home and Home-Work Interference**

Most expatriates have to divide their time between work demands, parenting, their spouses, and other role-related activities such as membership of a society, political party, or congregation. A balance between these roles has a positive effect on feelings of self-esteem and well-being (Marks & MacDermid, 1996). When there is no balance between the different roles, this may lead to feelings of strain and role conflicts. Research conducted by O'Neil and Greenberger (1994) provided support for the hypothesis that fathers who are in dual career marriages and who undertake a high degree of involvement with parenting and a low degree of involvement with work experience the least amount of role-related stress. In addition, Kluwer (1998) found that wives more often initiate conflicts between them and their husbands because of the allocation of household chores. Work-home conflicts develop when one of the following situations is encountered. The first situation is when demands of one role are so time-consuming that it is difficult to meet the demands of the other role. Second, when tension in one role makes it difficult to fulfill the demands of the other. Thirdly, conflicts occur when certain behaviors in one role make it difficult to fulfill the demands of the other (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). These conflicts may be conceived of as interference between the roles at home and also at work. Expatriates and their spouses may be especially at risk because the roles of both partners may change and become different from what they were used to in their home country. Hence, the present study was aimed at work-home interference in relation to the intercultural adaptation of expatriate spouses.

Wagena and Geurts (2000) have defined work-home interference as *a process in which the possibilities to act (and the behavior) of a person in one domain are influenced by the (quantitative and qualitative) task demands from the other domain*. Four types of interference are distinguished. The first type is negative WHI (WHI<sup>-</sup>) in which the task demands in the *work* situation have a negative influence on the possibilities to act in the *home* situation. For example, an expatriate has to cancel appointments with his spouse and children due to work-related commitments. In the second type, task demands in the *home* situation have a negative influence on the possibilities to act in the *work* situation (HWI<sup>-</sup>). A good example is an expatriate who arrives at work in an exhausted condition because his wife suffers from depression and he has to take care of the children. In the third type, positive WHI (WHI<sup>+</sup>), task demands at *work* have a positive influence on the possibilities to act in the *home* situation. One example is an expatriate who comes home cheerful after a successful day at work and positively affects the atmosphere at home. The final type is positive HWI (HWI<sup>+</sup>), in which task demands in the *home* situation have a positive influence on the possibilities to act in the *work* situation. A good example is the expatriate having more energy at work after spending a pleasant weekend with his/her spouse and children. This typology will be employed in the current research.

Thus, the starting point for this research will be that WHI<sup>+</sup> and HWI<sup>+</sup> of both expatriates and their spouses have a positive influence on the adaptation of expatriate spouses whereas WHI<sup>-</sup> and HWI<sup>-</sup> of both partners have a negative influence on the spouses' intercultural adaptation. Respectively, HWI and WHI are expected to be influenced by demands and resources at work and also at home (see Figure 7.1), which leads to the following hypotheses:

*H1 : WHI<sup>+</sup> and HWI<sup>+</sup> of both partners are positively related to expatriate spouses' intercultural adaptation.*

*H2 : WHI<sup>-</sup> and HWI<sup>-</sup> of both partners are negatively related to expatriates' spouses intercultural adaptation.*

## **7.2.2 Home and Work Demands**

Both expatriates and their spouses are faced with demands. Demands may be encountered at work and also at home. Examples of both domains are taking the children to school and picking them up, and assignments that have to be finished on time at work. These tasks require mental effort and may lead to strain. Mental effort is defined here as the costs associated with activating those processes that facilitate the best possible performance (Gaillard, 1996). When the energetic state is not optimal, due to fatigue for example, one will encounter difficulties performing well. The Effort-Recovery Model (Meijman & Mulder, 1998) is

based on the notion that performance depends on the person's ability to cope and the motivation to invest time and energy in activities in work and home domains. How people cope with environmental demands thus depends on the person and his or her motivation. When someone does not experience control over a number of tasks and demands, this may lead to stress.

Within the Demand-Control-Support Model, regulatory and support possibilities take on a central role (Karasek & Theorell, 1990). An assumption of this model is that strain-related symptoms develop in situations that are characterized by task demands that are high (high workload) and at the same time few control and support possibilities exist (social support). The next hypotheses of this study are that demands at work and at home have a positive influence on WHI<sup>-</sup> and HWI<sup>-</sup> and a negative influence on WHI<sup>+</sup> and HWI<sup>+</sup>.

*H3 : Demands at work and at home of both expatriates and their spouses are positively related to WHI<sup>-</sup> and HWI<sup>-</sup>*

*H4 : Demands at work and at home of both expatriates and their spouses are negatively related to WHI<sup>+</sup> and HWI<sup>+</sup>*

### **7.2.3 Home and Work Resources**

Expatriates and their spouses receive social support from each other, their family members, and also from other people. Karasek (1990) states that social support is an important determinant of coping with work demands. This model proposes that when work demands are high, high control and support possibilities will enable employees to regulate their workload, which stimulates motivation and activity. When there is enough social support, employees experience the workload as being less straining. Research conducted by Kraimer et. al (2001) demonstrates that organizational support that expatriates receive can be classified into organizational support in the host country and organizational support in the home country. They found a positive relationship between perceived support from the organization in the home country and overall expatriates' adaptation in the host country. In addition, perceived support in the host country was positively related to expatriates' facilitation of daily activities and interaction with others.

Besides support at work, support at home is also important. The presence of children influences the degree of support that expatriate spouses experience (Ishii-Kuntz & Seccombe, 1989). Different types of relationships lead to different types of networks. In this case, it is about informal social relationships with partners, family, and neighbours. All these relationships provide support in different ways. Interaction with partners, for example, is long term and based on

intimacy while interaction with friends is based on reciprocity and on having similar experiences. Hence, we expected that home and work resources have a positive influence on  $WHI^+$  and  $HWI^+$  and a negative influence on  $WHI^-$  and  $HWI^-$ , which leads us to the following hypotheses:

*H5 : home and work resources of both expatriates and their spouses are positively related to  $WHI^+$  and  $HWI^+$*

*H6 : home and work resources of both expatriates and their spouses are negatively related to  $WHI^-$  and  $HWI^-$*

## 7.2.4 Summary of the Hypotheses

The research model that is central to the current study is described in Figure 7.1. A *negative* relationship was expected of expatriates' and their spouses'  $WHI^-$  and  $HWI^-$  with the adaptation of expatriate spouses. Next, a *positive* relationship was expected of expatriates' and their spouses'  $WHI^+$  and  $HWI^+$  with expatriate spouses' intercultural adaptation. Furthermore, demands at home and at work of both expatriates and their spouses were expected to have a *negative* relationship with  $WHI^+$  and  $HWI^+$ . Thus, higher demands were expected to cause higher interference. However, it was expected that demands of both expatriates and their spouses would have a *positive* relationship with  $WHI^-$  and  $HWI^-$ . In addition, a positive relationship was expected between resources at home and at work and  $WHI^+$  and  $HWI^-$ . The available resources, such as social support at work, were anticipated to lead to positive interference. It was also expected that resources would lessen negative interference. Finally, we examined whether the relationship between resources and demands and expatriate spouses' adaptation is mediated by  $WHI$  and  $HWI$ .

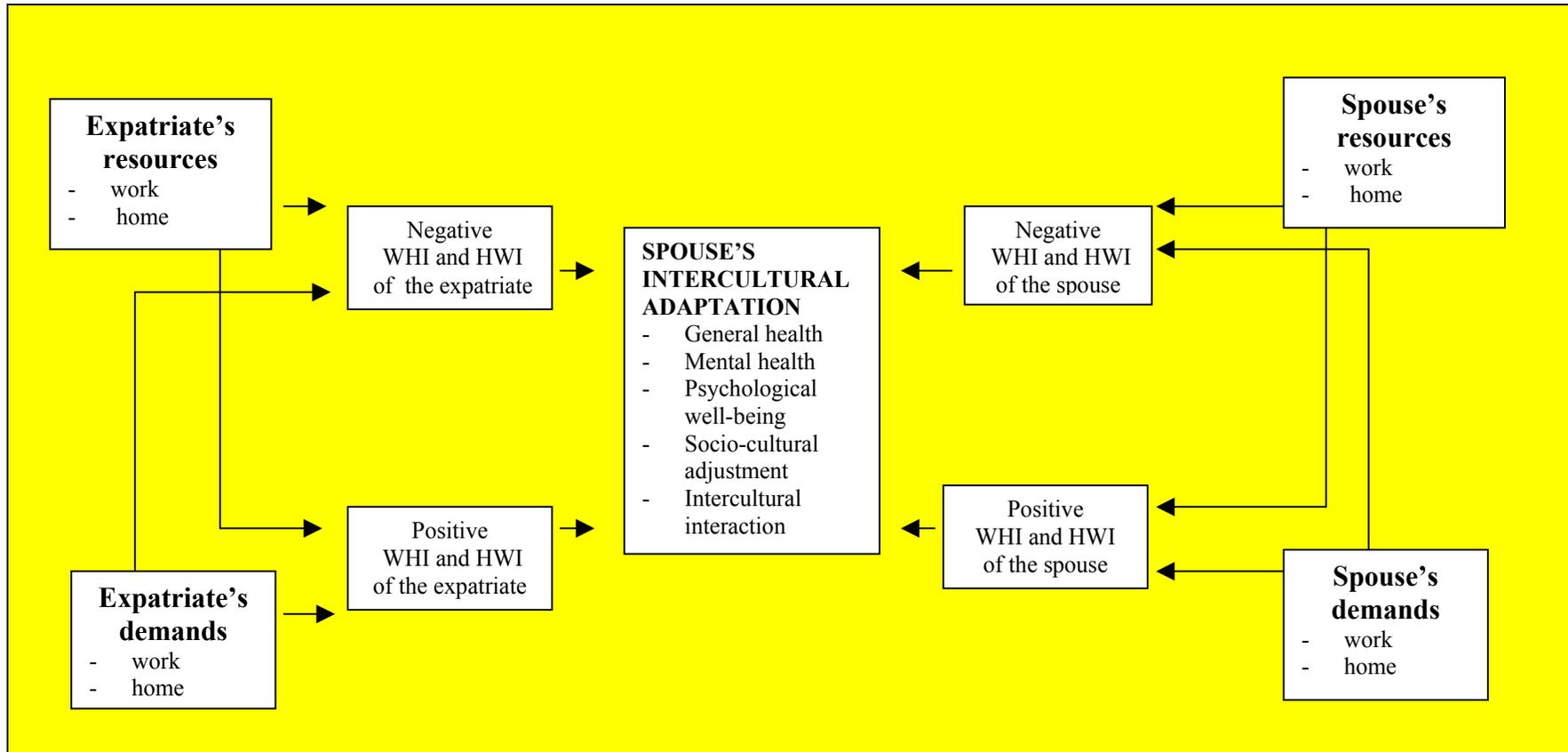
## 7.3 Method

### 7.3.1 Respondents

Participants in this study were expatriate spouses that had participated in the first study (Chapter 5) and who had indicated their willingness to participate in the follow-up study. Participants (N=150) received the questionnaires either by mail or by e-mail. In addition members of Dutch organizations in different countries, for example in Greece and Canada, expatriate organizations in the Netherlands, and English-speaking church congregations in Utrecht, Den Haag, and Assen were approached with the request to participate in the study. In total, 400 questionnaires and cover letters were sent. They were asked to enlist their partners' cooperation, i.e., the expatriates, to respond to the relevant sections of the questionnaire. Altogether, 93 (23% return rate) of the questionnaires were returned. Of this group, 50 expatriate spouses came from the sample that was

Figure 7.1

The Effect of WHI and HWI of both Expatriates and Their Spouses on Spouses' Intercultural Adaptation



used in the prior study (Chapter 5). Of the 93 expatriate spouses, 88 were female. Only 46 of the expatriate spouses worked part-time, full-time, or as volunteers. In total, 72 expatriates (i.e., the partners of the expatriate spouses) completed the expatriate questionnaire. Among the causes for expatriates not completing their section of the questionnaire were that they were on business trips or busy with their work. The host country language was spoken at an average to good level by 87% of expatriate spouses and by 75% of the expatriates.

### 7.3.2 Instruments

Data for this study were collected using questionnaires for both expatriate spouses and expatriates (see Appendix C.1 for questionnaires for expatriate spouses and Appendix C.2 for questionnaires for expatriates). The questionnaires were constructed in the English language. Both questionnaires contained the following components: a measure of social support at work (SWING), a measure of work pacing and emotional and mental strain, a measure of perceived home support, a measure of home demands, and a measure of mental and general health. In addition, the expatriate spouses' questionnaire contained a section in which their intercultural adaptation was assessed through scales of general and mental health, psychological well-being, socio-cultural adjustment, and intercultural interaction.

#### 7.3.2.1 Expatriate Spouses' Intercultural Adaptation

Again, in the present study, we made use of psychological well-being, socio-cultural adjustment, and intercultural interaction as indicators of expatriate spouses' intercultural adaptation (see chapter 5 for a complete description of the scales). In the present study, the reliabilities of the variables were acceptable,  $\alpha = .84$ ,  $\alpha = .88$ , and  $\alpha = .79$ , respectively.

In addition, we added general and mental health as indicators of intercultural adaptation. We employed a scale from the RAND-36 (Van der Zee & Sanderman, 1993) in order to assess both expatriates' and spouses' general and mental health. Three scales of the RAND-36 were used, being general health, mental health, and vitality. The scale for general health (5 items,  $\alpha = .79$ ) consisted of items such as, "In general, would you say your health is..." measured with a 5-point scale ranging from (1) *excellent* to (5) *poor*. Additionally, there were four statements that could be evaluated on a 5-point scale ranging from (1) *definitely true* to (5) *definitely false*. An example of such

a statement is, “My health is excellent”(+) . Mental health and vitality were combined into one scale, that was referred to as mental health (9 items,  $\alpha = .84$ ). Factor analysis revealed that the items from both scales loaded on one component that explained 45 percent of the variance. Items on this scale could all be answered on a 6-point scale, varying from (1) *all of the time* to (6) *none of the time*. Two examples of items from this scale are, “How much of the time during the past 4 weeks have you felt calm and peaceful?” (+, mental health) and “How much of the time during the past 4 weeks did you feel tired” (-, vitality).

### 7.3.2.2 Work-Home Interference

The Survey Work-Home Interaction – Nijmegen (SWING) was developed by Wagena and Geurts (2000) to assess both work-home interference (WHI) and home-work interference (HWI) for expatriates and their spouses. SWING is a questionnaire that consists of 27 items that can be split into 4 clusters, i.e., WHI negative, HWI negative, WHI positive, and HWI positive (Table 7.1). Response possibilities on the items ranged from (1) *never* to (4) *always*, with a fifth option for expatriate spouses (5) *not applicable*. This option was added to the work-related questionnaire because we assumed that not all the expatriate spouses were employed in the host country.

**Table 7.1**  
**The SWING**

Cluster	Number of items	Expatriate spouses $\alpha$	Expatriate $\alpha$	Exemplary items: How often does it happen that...
WHI negative	9	.76	.84	you are irritable at home because your work is demanding?
HWI negative	6	.88	.72	you arrive late at work because of domestic obligations?
WHI positive	6	.77	.61	you manage your time at home more efficiently as a result of the way you do your job?
HWI positive	6	.81	.80	you have greater self-confidence because you have your home life well organized?

### 7.3.2.3 Resources

The resources were measured by the scales for social support at work and environmental social support from family, friends, and neighbours. Resources at work were assessed by two scales adopted from the work quality questionnaire (Van der Doef, 2000): supervisor social support (5 items, expatriate spouses  $\alpha = .93$  and expatriate  $\alpha = .90$ ) and social support from coworker (6 items, expatriate spouses  $\alpha = .86$  and expatriate  $\alpha = .80$ ). Response categories ranged from (1) *strongly disagree* to (5) *strongly agree* for the expatriates and with an extra category (6) *not applicable* for expatriate spouses. An example of an item from the supervisory social support scale is, “My supervisor is concerned about the welfare of those under him”. An example of a statement from the coworker social support scale is, “The people I work with are friendly”. Analyses revealed that the supervisory social support scale and the coworker social support scale were strongly correlated ( $r = .49$ ,  $p < .01$ ). A factor analysis at the item level revealed that the items from both scales of social support loaded on one component which explained 44 percent of the variance. In further analysis these scales were combined into a scale labeled as social support at work (11 items, expatriate spouses  $\alpha = .92$  and expatriate  $\alpha = .88$ ).

Home support was measured with a scale that is used to measure social support from the environment. Eleven items (expatriate spouses  $\alpha = .94$  and expatriate  $\alpha = .90$ ) were adopted from the social support questionnaire (SSL-I) that was developed by Van Sonderen (1993). The answers could be provided on a 4-point scale ranging from (1) *seldom or never* to (4) *very often*. A sample item from this scale is, “Does it ever happen to you that people in your home environment in the host country pay you a compliment?”.

### 7.3.2.4 Demands

The work pacing scale, mental strain scale and emotional strain scale of the questionnaire Experience and Evaluation of Labor (Van Velthoven & Meijman, 1994) were used to assess work demand. Expatriates and their spouses could answer on a 4-point scale ranging from (1) *never* to (4) *always* for the expatriate and (5) *not applicable* for expatriate spouses who are not working. Items from the work pacing scale (10 items, expatriate spouses  $\alpha = .88$  and expatriate  $\alpha = .90$ ) are, for example, “How often does it happen to you that you can do your work at ease?” (-). One example of the items from the mental strain scale (7 items, expatriate spouses  $\alpha = .92$  and expatriate  $\alpha = .83$ ) is, “How often does it happen to you at work that you have to remember a lot of things?” Finally, the emotional strain scale (7 items, expatriate spouses  $\alpha = .81$  and

expatriate  $\alpha = .76$ ) has items such as “How often does it happen to you at work that your work is emotionally difficult?”.

The home demands were assessed with a parallel version of the VBBA work pacing scale that was developed specifically for the present study (10 items,  $\alpha = .88$ ). The categories available for responding were the same as in the scales described in the above. Two examples of the items on this scale are, “How often does it happen to you at home that you have to work fast?” (+) and “How often does it happen to you at home that you do not have anything to do?” (-).

## 7.4 Results

In this section the results of the present study are presented. Within the next paragraphs, the relationships between expatriate spouses' adaptation and the demands, resources, and both types of interference that they experience will be discussed. Subsequently, the relationships between expatriate spouses' adaptation and the demands, resources, and expatriates' both types of interference will be presented.

### 7.4.1 Results of WHI and HWI on the Working Expatriate Spouses

The results to be discussed here concern the expatriate spouses who were working in the host country. The non-employed expatriate spouses did not complete the items pertaining to work-home interference and resources and demands at work. The group of working expatriate spouses was small ( $N = 46$ ). Thus, regression analysis was not feasible. First, the relationships between the demands and resources and WHI and HWI will be discussed. Secondly, the relationships of WHI and HWI with intercultural adaptation will be examined. Finally, the differences in demands and resources at home between the group of employed and non-employed employed spouses will be presented. Table 7.2 displays an overview of the correlations between the intercultural adaptation, demands, resources, WHI interference, and HWI interference. A positive relationship between demands at work and at home with WHI<sup>-</sup> and HWI<sup>-</sup> was expected. This expectation was confirmed by a strong relationship of demands at home and at work with WHI<sup>-</sup>. The more demands expatriate spouses perceived the more they experienced negative work-home interference. It was shown that HWI<sup>-</sup> correlated only with the demands at home. In addition, it was expected that the resources would have a negative relationship with WHI<sup>-</sup> and HWI<sup>-</sup>. This expectation was not empirically confirmed by the present data. The next hypothesis predicted that resources both at work and at home would correlate

**Table 7.2**  
**Correlations between Intercultural Adaptation and Independent Variables of Expatriate Spouses**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
<u>Adaptation</u>														
1. General health	1.00													
2. Mental health	.50**	1.00												
3. Psychological well-being	.24	.57**	1.00											
4. Socio-cultural adjustment	-.09	.21	.57**	1.00										
5. Intercultural interaction	-.30*	.03	-.06	.18	1.00									
<u>Interference</u>														
6. WHI -	-.04	-.30*	-.24	-.02	.11	1.00								
7. HWI -	-.16	-.28*	-.23	.10	.21	.36*	1.00							
8. WHI +	.36*	.37*	.28*	.19	-.07	.10	.03	1.00						
9. HWI +	.34*	.51**	.26	.20	.08	-.23	-.11	.70**	1.00					
<u>Resources</u>														
10. Work support	.45**	.07	.07	-.01	-.12	-.14	.17	.16	.05	1.00				
11. Home support	.33*	.16	.16	.09	.05	-.18	.13	.11	.03	.46**	1.00			
<u>Demands</u>														
12. Work pacing demands	-.19	-.24	-.40*	-.13	.01	.47**	.00	-.01	-.13	-.43**	-.28*	1.00		
13. Mental work demands	.07	-.01	-.29*	-.17	.05	.38*	-.11	.02	-.06	-.48**	-.30*	.55**	1.00	
14. Emotional work demands	-.27	-.15	-.27*	-.19	-.06	.37*	.20	.06	.06	-.42**	-.26	.59**	.54**	1.00
15. Home demands	-.06	-.39*	-.14	.03	.00	.38*	.34*	.02	-.17	-.10	-.18	.30*	.10	.42**

\*\* .Correlation is significant at .01 level (1-tailed)

\* .Correlation is significant at .05 level (1-tailed)

<sup>a</sup> In this table only the working expatriate spouses are represented, N = 46

positively with WHI<sup>+</sup> and HWI<sup>+</sup>. However, no confirmation of these relationships was found.

In addition, we expected a positive relationship between expatriate spouses' WHI<sup>+</sup> and HWI<sup>+</sup> and their intercultural adaptation. Moreover, a negative relationship was expected between expatriate spouses' WHI<sup>-</sup> and HWI<sup>-</sup> and their intercultural adaptation. Five scales assessed the adaptation of expatriate spouses: general health, mental health, psychological well-being, socio-cultural adjustment, and intercultural interaction. As shown in Table 7.2, positive correlations were found of WHI<sup>+</sup> and HWI<sup>+</sup> with general health, mental health, and satisfaction. WHI<sup>+</sup> and HWI<sup>+</sup> correlated positively with all indicators of intercultural adaptation except for intercultural interaction and socio-cultural adjustment. Furthermore, negative relationships were found between WHI<sup>-</sup> and HWI<sup>-</sup> and mental health.

#### 7.4.2 Demands and Resources at Home and Expatriate Spouses' Intercultural Adaptation

Working expatriate spouses constituted 50% of the sample of the present study. The previous sections above described the relationships between the model variables only among expatriate spouses who are working in the host country. We were interested in the relationship between home demands and resources and intercultural adaptation of both working and non-working expatriate spouses. Intercorrelations between these variables are presented in Table 7.3. For both groups significant positive relations were found between the home resources and the scales for mental and general health. For all adaptation scales the relations were stronger for non-working expatriate spouses than for the working expatriate spouses. The home demands correlated negatively with intercultural adaptation of the working expatriate spouses, but were unrelated to the adaptation of the non-working expatriate spouses.

**Table 7.3**  
**Correlations of Working and Non-working Expatriate Spouses Between Adaptation and Home Demands and Resources**

	Working expatriate spouses		Non-working expatriate spouses		All expatriate spouses	
	Home demands	Home resources	Home demands	Home resources	Home demands	Home resources
General health	-.06	.33*	.13	.37*	.03	.34**
Mental health	-.39*	.16	-.16	.44**	-.30**	.25*
Psychological well-being	-.14	.16	.23	.20	.04	.17
Socio-cultural adjustment	.03	.09	-.02	.10	.01	.09
Intercultural interaction	.00	.05	.03	.13	.03	.09

\*\* . Correlations are significant at .01 level (1-tailed);\* . significant at .05 level (1-tailed)

### 7.4.3 Results Concerning Expatriates

Within the following sections, the relationships between expatriates' demands and resources with WHI and HWI will be discussed. Subsequently the correlation of expatriates' WHI and HWI with expatriate spouses' intercultural adaptation are examined. Finally, we will study whether WHI and HWI play a mediating role in the relationship between demands and resources on expatriate spouses' intercultural adaptation.

#### 7.4.3.1 Relationships Between Expatriates' Resources and Demands and Negative WHI and HWI

The hypothesis that a negative relationship exists between support and WHI<sup>-</sup> and HWI<sup>-</sup> was confirmed by the correlations of support at home and at work with WHI<sup>-</sup> and HWI<sup>-</sup> (see Table 7.4). No significant correlation between WHI<sup>-</sup> and the resources variables was found.

The following hypothesis concerned a positive relation between demands and WHI<sup>-</sup> and HWI<sup>-</sup>. A strong relationship was found between home demands and WHI<sup>-</sup> and HWI<sup>-</sup> (see Table 7.4). The more demands an expatriate faces at home, the more work-home and home-work interference he or she experiences. The relationship between the home demands and HWI<sup>-</sup> was stronger than the relationship between home demands and WHI<sup>-</sup>. For the work demands the converse was found; demands at work correlated stronger with WHI<sup>-</sup> than with HWI<sup>-</sup>. Unexpectedly, we found a negative relationship of mental work demands with WHI<sup>-</sup> and HWI<sup>-</sup>.

**Table 7.4**  
**Results of regressions of demands and resources on WHI<sup>-</sup> and HWI<sup>-</sup>.**

	Negative WHI		Negative HWI	
	$\beta$	r	$\beta$	R
<u>Resources</u>				
Work support	-.04	-.06	-.10	-.26*
Home support	.06	.01	-.10	-.27*
<u>Demands</u>				
Work pacing demands	.56**	.58**	.09	.13
Mental work demands	-.23*	.16	-.31*	-.06
Emotional work demands	.14	.42**	.27*	.23*
Home demands	.32*	.29*	.53**	.44**
	R = .66		R = .64	
	R <sup>2</sup> = .43		R <sup>2</sup> = .41	

\*\* . Correlations are significant at .01 level (1-tailed);\* . significant at .05 level (1-tailed)

### 7.4.3.2 Relationships Between Expatriates' Demands and Resources and Positive WHI and HWI

The hypothesis was that the home and work resources would show a positive relationship with WHI<sup>+</sup> and HWI<sup>+</sup>. This relationship was partially confirmed, as can be seen in Table 7.5 Work resources correlated significantly with WHI<sup>+</sup> but not with HWI<sup>+</sup>. The converse was found for the home resources. These turned out to have a significantly positive relationship with HWI<sup>+</sup> and not with WHI<sup>+</sup>.

A negative relationship was postulated between expatriates' home and work demands and WHI<sup>+</sup> and HWI<sup>+</sup>. The relationship was confirmed only for the work pacing scale. The more demands an expatriate experiences as a result of work pacing, the lower the positive work-home and home-work interference will be. The other demands scales did not reveal any significant relation with WHI<sup>+</sup> and HWI<sup>+</sup>.

**Table 7.5**  
**Results of Regression of Demands and Resources on WHI<sup>+</sup> and HWI<sup>+</sup>.**

	Positive WHI		Positive HWI	
	β	R	β	r
<u>Resources</u>				
Work support	.29*	.25*	.06	.10
Home support	.06	.11	.21	.21*
<u>Demands</u>				
Work pacing demands	-.26*	-.20	-.28*	-.24*
Mental work demands	.06	.11	.17	.14
Emotional work demands	.10	.04	.05	.01
Home demands	.20	.16	.20	.13
	R = .40		R = .40	
	R <sup>2</sup> = .16		R <sup>2</sup> = .16	

\*\* . Correlations are significant at .01 level (1-tailed)

\* . Correlations are significant at .05 level (1-tailed)

### 7.4.3.3 Relationships Between Expatriates' WHI and HWI and Their Spouses' Intercultural Adaptation

It was expected that WHI<sup>+</sup> and HWI<sup>+</sup> would relate positively to expatriate spouses' adaptation. In addition, we hypothesized that expatriate spouses' adaptation would relate negatively to expatriates' WHI<sup>-</sup> and HWI<sup>-</sup>. This was

investigated through a hierarchical regression analysis. A strong negative relationship was found between expatriates' HWI<sup>-</sup> and their spouses' adaptation (see Table 7.6). The higher the home-work interference experienced by the expatriates the lower their spouses' intercultural adaptation will be. The indicators of interference revealed no significant relationship with the scales of both socio-cultural adjustment and intercultural interaction. Expatriates' WHI<sup>-</sup>, WHI<sup>+</sup> and HWI<sup>+</sup> appeared to be unrelated to expatriate spouses' adaptation.

**Table 7.6**

**Results of Regression Analysis of Expatriate WHI and HWI on Expatriate Spouses' General Health, Mental Health, and Psychological Well-being**

	General health		Mental health		Psychological well-being	
	$\beta$	R	$\beta$	R	$\beta$	r
WHI <sup>-</sup>	.09	-.05	.06	-.05	.08	-.03
HWI <sup>-</sup>	-.37**	-.33**	-.27*	-.24*	-.26*	-.23*
WHI <sup>+</sup>	.05	.04	-.06	.01	.17	.17
HWI <sup>+</sup>	-.07	.00	.07	.08	.01	.13
	R = .40		R = .40		R = .40	
	R <sup>2</sup> = .16		R <sup>2</sup> = .16		R <sup>2</sup> = .16	

\*\* . Correlations are significant at .01 level (1-tailed)

\* . Correlations are significant at .05 level (1-tailed)

#### 7.4.3.4 The Mediating Role of Expatriates' WHI and HWI

A mediator is a third variable that generates the mechanism by which an independent variable affects a dependent variable (Baron & Kenny, 1986). In the model of the present study, WHI and HWI are postulated to be mediators. The home and work resources are the independent variables and expatriate spouses' adaptation is the dependent variable. To test whether WHI and HWI do in fact mediate the effect of demands and resources on intercultural adaptation a number of steps were undertaken. First, the direct relationship between the independent variables (i.e., demands and resources) and the dependent variables were examined. The correlation analysis indicated that only expatriate home demands were correlated strongly with expatriate spouses' general health ( $r = -.27, p < .05$ ), mental health  $r = -.24, p < .05$ , and socio-cultural adjustment ( $r = -.38, p < .01$ ).

Secondly, we examined whether there were any significant relationships between the independent variables and the mediator. In order to achieve this, a

correlation analysis was conducted (see Tables 7.4 and 7.5) that investigated the relationship between expatriate home demands and the negative and positive expatriate WHI and HWI. A significant relationship was found between HWI<sup>-</sup> and home demands ( $r = .44, p < .01$ ). A correlation between home demands and WHI<sup>-</sup> ( $r = .29, p < .05$ ) was also found.

The third step was to examine the relationship between the mediator and the dependent variables. Negative HWI was found to correlate highly with general health ( $r = -.33, p < .01$ ) and mental health ( $r = -.24, p < .05$ ).

The final step consisted of performing a regression analysis in which the independent variable was entered in the first step and the mediator in the second. In the case of mediation the  $\beta$  value for the effect of the independent variable will cease to remain significant. These three steps were conducted for the relationships between home demands and general health, with HWI<sup>-</sup> as the mediator. As Table 7.7 reveals, support was obtained for a mediating effect. The beta-weight for home demands decreased from  $-.27$  to  $-.15$ . In addition, this regression analysis was conducted for the relationship between home demands and mental health with the addition of HWI<sup>-</sup>. In this analysis no support was found for a mediating role of HWI<sup>-</sup>.

**Table 7.7**  
**Regression Analysis Between Home Demands, General Health, and HWI<sup>-</sup>**

	General health		R	R <sup>2</sup>
	$\beta$ step 1	$\beta$ step 2		
Home demands	$-.27^*$	$-.15$	.26	.07
HWI <sup>-</sup>		$-.27^*$	.30	.13

\*. Correlations are significant at .05 level (2-tailed)

## 7.5 Discussions

### 7.5.1 Major Findings of the Present Study

In the present study the influences of work-home and home-work interference of expatriates and their spouses on the intercultural adaptation of expatriate spouses were examined. On the basis of the present study's model (Figure 7.1) the relations of the determinants and expatriate spouses' intercultural adaptation were studied. The group of expatriate spouses was dissected since only 50% of this sample was working and it was only possible to examine the effects of WHI and HWI on the intercultural adaptation of this subgroup. The most important findings will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

The specific relationships that were found between the determinants of the working expatriate spouses and their adaptation are presented in Figure 7.2. The most important results for the group of working expatriate spouses are:

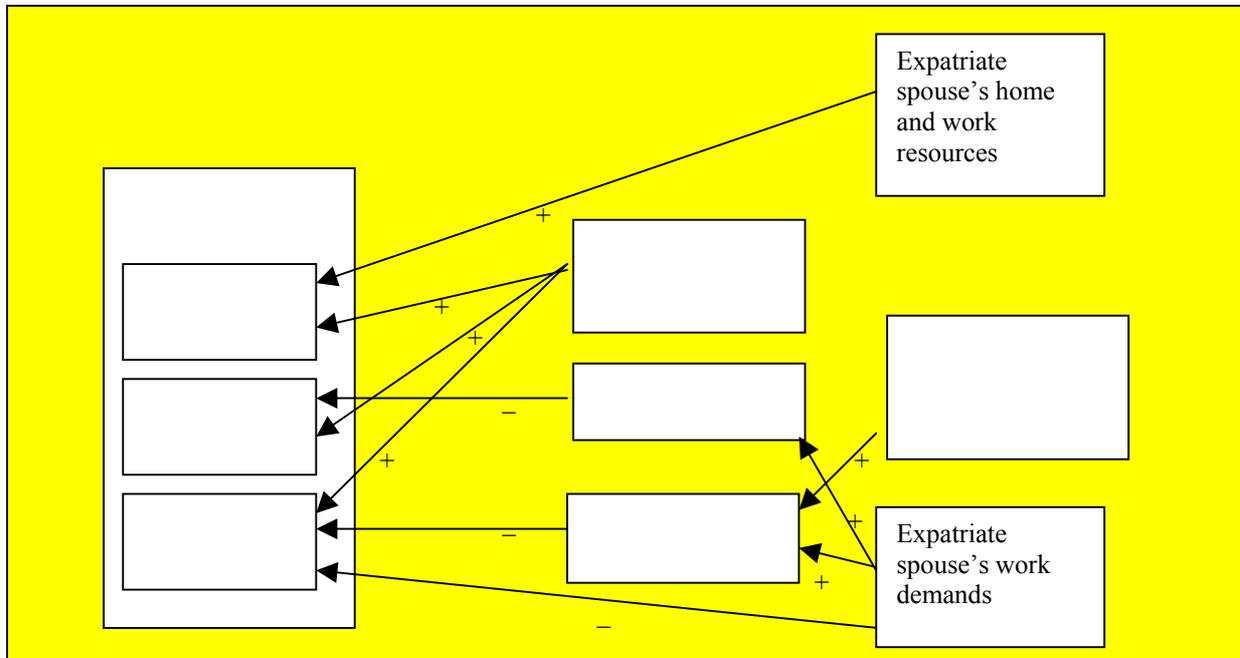
1. All four types of interference had effects on expatriate spouses' adaptation. WHI<sup>+</sup> had the strongest effect on expatriate spouses' adaptation.
2. Work and home demands correlated positively with WHI<sup>-</sup>.
3. Work and home support had a positive effect on spouses' adaptation.
4. Work demands had a negative effect on spouses' adaptation.

The results of our study confirmed the assumptions of Wagena and Geurts (2000) who assumed that different roles might interfere so that participation in one role may cause stress in another role. We expected that home and work support would influence expatriate spouses' adaptation through WHI and HWI. However, we only found a direct relation between support and expatriate spouses' adaptation. The more support expatriate spouses experience within the different roles, the better their adaptation to the new environment. This finding is consistent with Kraimer et al.'s (2001) findings.

For the group of non-employed expatriate spouses only the relationship between demands and home resources could be investigated. It was remarkable that home resources were more strongly associated with intercultural adaptation among non-employed expatriate spouses than among employed spouses. Apparently, social support at home is an important determinant of expatriate spouses' adaptation if they are not employed. The employed expatriate spouses also experience support at work, which also contributes to their intercultural adaptation to the host country. On the other hand, too many demands at work may impede expatriate spouses' adaptation, which is corroborated by the

negative relationship between work demands and expatriate spouses' psychological well-being.

**Figure 7.2**  
**Established Relationships for Working Expatriate Spouses**

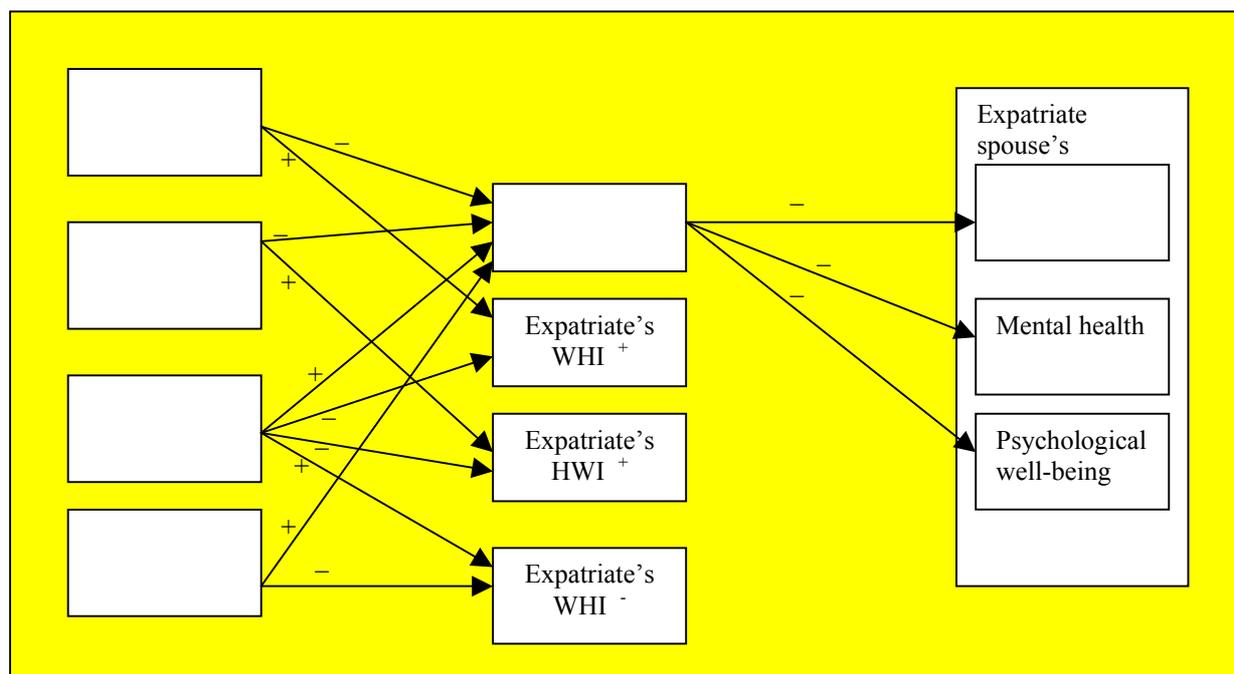


Finally, the influence of expatriates' determinants on expatriate spouses' intercultural adaptation will be discussed. The most important relationships that were found are summarized below:

1. HWI<sup>-</sup> had a negative effect on expatriate spouses' adaptation.
2. Work resources affected HWI<sup>-</sup> and WHI<sup>+</sup>.
3. Home resources affected HWI<sup>-</sup> and HWI<sup>+</sup>.
4. Work demands influenced all four types of interference.
5. Home demands correlated positively with HWI<sup>-</sup> and WHI<sup>-</sup>.

The most important findings are summarized in Figure 7.3. We can see that a negative home-work interference correlated negatively with expatriate spouses' adaptation. Expatriate spouses' adaptation suffers when expatriates experience a negative influence of their role at home on their role at work. In addition, the home and work resources and demands influenced all forms of experienced interference. The strongest associations were found between expatriates' HWI<sup>-</sup> and spouses' intercultural adaptation. This was an unexpected result since it is more logical to see expatriates' WHI affecting spouses' intercultural adaptation.

**Figure 7.3**  
**Established Relationships Between Expatriate Variables and Spouses' Intercultural Adaptation**



The present study not only highlights demands and resources interferences both at home and at work as important determinants of expatriate spouses' intercultural adaptation but also it supports interference theories in a number of ways. First, on the whole, support was found for the expected relationships within the model. Second, home and work resources had the strongest effect on positive interference and home and work demands had the strongest effect on negative interference. Finally, among expatriates, home resources and demands are most strongly related to positive WHI and negative HWI, respectively, while demands at home and at work are most strongly related to negative HWI.

Furthermore, it must be noted that the concepts of WHI and HWI assume that the behavioral possibilities of a person in one domain are influenced by the task demands in the other domain (Wagena & Geurts, 2000). In the present study, the demands are defined as task demands in the different domains. Strong relationships between the demands and WHI and HWI could have occurred simply as a result of conceptual similarity between the constructs. This could also be true for the relation between resources and WHI and HWI.

A demanding home situation may lead to negative interference with the work situation while a demanding work situation may lead to negative interference with the home situation. In this way the present study supports the theory in the area of home-work interference (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). The

more support the expatriate experiences at home the more positive the effects on the work situation of the expatriate.

When expatriates experience too many demands, this negatively influences expatriate spouses' intercultural adaptation through the mechanism of negative interference of home roles with work roles (HWI<sup>-</sup>). A healthy balance between demands and resources in expatriates' home and work roles contributes to expatriate spouses' adaptation (Marks & Mac Dermid, 1996). It is important for international companies to gain insight into the networks and life situation of the expatriates and their family members. Such information is helpful to prevent imbalances in demands and resources that may even lead to premature termination of the international business assignment if stress levels exceed acceptable barriers.

### **7.5.2 Restrictions and recommendations**

The present study employed a cross-sectional design. All indicators were assessed through the use of questionnaires. Although correlations indicate the existence of a relationship, no conclusions can be drawn about their direction. The direction of the relationships has not been confirmed within the present study. A second restriction of the present research may be attributed in the small sample sizes. The level of cooperation from respondents approached for the second time and of members of Dutch organizations abroad was less than expected. The sought-after sample size of 150 respondents was unfortunately not achieved. In addition, expatriate spouses in the present study had different types of employment; they worked full-time or part-time, and some of them worked as volunteers. Even if they were working, the majority of the expatriate spouses were not engaged in full-time employment and this might have affected the results. It is likely that their jobs were not that stressful and serious negative spillover effects on their home activities were therefore not likely to be experienced.

