

*The work orientation of Israeli State  
Ambassadors:  
Beyond the call of duty - when work is  
a 'way of life'*

By

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the work orientation of Israeli State Ambassadors: the meaning that diplomats assign to their work and what aspects of their work make it meaningful for them.

To document the perceptions and meaning making processes of this prestigious group of civil service employees, a *constructivist grounded theory* methodology was adopted for data collection and analysis: 57 Israeli State Ambassadors were interviewed, and their accounts were supplemented by media articles, video-clips, and writing a research diary.

Three core themes emerged from the participants' accounts in respect of their work outlooks: *calling*, *career* and *way of life*. In order to link the emergent themes to the extant literature, the *work orientation* model (Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin & Schwartz, 1997) which distinguishes between *job*, *career* and *calling* was adopted as an underpinning theory for the presentation and interpretation of the findings.

The findings revealed that each of the three orientations focused on different aspects of the ambassadors' work, thereby assigning different meanings to their work. Those with a *calling* orientation perceived their work as a service to their country, and felt that it was their moral obligation to undertake the work, despite the sacrifices it entailed. They also emphasised the fit between the work requirements and their abilities. It can therefore be argued that the *calling* group assigned *transcendence significance* to their work, combined with *coherence meaning*. Those with a *career* orientation manifested a traditional *career-for-life* stance, and the meaning they assigned to their work was of *status significance*. The ambassadors who displayed a *way of life* orientation referred to the international aspect of their work and its impact on their lives: the all consuming nature of work, and the blurred boundaries between work and family and social life. Therefore the meaning they assigned to their work was that of *dominance significance* where work takes priority and dictates other aspects of life.

The main contribution of this study is the refinement and further development of the *work orientation* model: it offers a new work outlook and a unique perspective on the meaning-making work-related processes that people undergo, and how these may affect their career choices, work engagement, commitment, satisfaction and livelihood.

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Why did I embark on a PhD project?

The impetus to embark on this research was the result of my social activities in Israel during the years 2004 - 2009. During this period, I initiated and led (in a voluntary capacity) the 'Infusion Project' – a gentrification project aimed to improve the living conditions in deprived neighbourhoods. During the course of the project I had the privilege to contribute to the development of local leadership by means of personal mentoring and a training programme. I was also able to witness the residents' development as leaders, and the positive effects their growth had on those around them – family, neighbours and the entire community.

At later stages, the project involved officials from the British and Israeli governments, NGOs and private companies. Driven by a strong sense of mission that was reinforced by positive feedback from residents and government officials, I found myself commuting to Israel on a bi-weekly basis, while my family resided in London. Realising the negative effects that my social enterprise had on my family, and the financial costs involved, I frequently questioned the motivation that governed my actions. On reflection, I can admit that I was inspired and energised by the project, but at the same time also consumed by it, allowing it to dominate my life. My self-justification was always around the importance of my activities for the lives of so many people. Indeed the term *calling* (which will be described at length in this thesis) was very apt to describe how I perceived my work, and the sacrifices I was willing to endure for it.

Having the opportunity to work alongside several Israeli Ambassadors who assisted in my international fundraising activities, I was particularly intrigued by their unique roles and

their abilities to work across cultures, and influence the public opinion in the countries where they were posted. Furthermore, I recognised and could easily relate to their sense of *calling* and total devotion to their work that transpired in almost every conversation. Our shared relocation and commuting experiences, with their challenges and negative consequences, raised my curiosity as to what motivated them to embark on this career, and how do they cope with the turbulence that this lifestyle entails.

The drive to embark on a PhD and explore the work experiences and perceptions of ambassadors was therefore to a large degree a response to my need to understand, perhaps rationalise, my own work perceptions and choices, by studying a population that I could easily identify with, and with whom I shared similar work-related dilemmas.

## **1.2 On diplomatic careers**

'The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) invites you to join the Diplomatic Service to represent Israel's interests abroad, while enjoying a stimulating, varied, prestigious and influential career, with unique opportunities for worldwide travel' (Israeli MFA, 2013, translated by Dan Hart).

This excerpt from an advert for the Israeli MFA cadet course depicts several attractive features of one of the most prestigious and glamorous careers available in the public sector: the diplomatic service. It involves representing the interests of one's country to other governments, interacting and influencing the opinion of world leaders, and thereby directly impacting the lives of millions of people. This demanding and rewarding job comes fully packaged with an assured career track for life, exceptional entitlements and responsibilities granted by diplomatic status, and a unique international career that involves frequent

travelling abroad, and living in different cultures. Other benefits include considerable autonomy, working in a fast pace, ever changing, challenging and exciting environment, alongside highly talented peers, and when stationed abroad enjoying generous pay and benefits, including excellent housing (Israeli MFA, 2013).

However, diplomatic work has a number of downsides that could be disconcerting. They include a career that affects not only the post holder but also his or her entire family, having to change positions and locations every 2 - 5 years, living and working in hardship or dangerous locations, having to live apart from spouse and children for extended periods, and frequent travel. Other challenges include working long and unusual hours, often under considerable time pressure (Israeli MFA, 2013).

Despite these downsides, every year some 2000 people respond to the MFA advert and apply to become cadets. They are put through a rigorous selection procedure, lasting several months, which involves several rounds of written and oral exams and interviews. Of the 2000 candidates only 1% (some 20 men and women) are recruited to begin their 5-year cadet training. After 12-18 months of intensive training at the ministry headquarter in Jerusalem, they are offered a position abroad. Most of these primary appointments are in hardship locations where public services (such as education, health and sanitation) are underdeveloped. Upon graduation, cadets rotate between positions abroad and in the ministry headquarters; it takes on average 12-15 years, and 3-4 assignments abroad to be first appointed as Israel's State Ambassador (Israeli MFA, 2013).

It is at this distinguished point in their career, that I had the unique privilege to meet some of them in the context of this study, and explore their careers and life experiences, their knowledge, observations, opinions, philosophies of work and life, and wisdom. Through

this process I have gained significant understanding and insight into the work and lives of diplomats, which I hope to share here.

### **1.3 The conduct of this study**

To document the work perceptions of the participants, I spent a year collecting data using a *constructivist grounded theory* methodology; I interviewed 57 prominent Israeli State Ambassadors and listened to them as they reflected on their careers, while pondering and questioning their work experiences and mindsets. To supplement this data I also collected and analysed media articles and video-clips.

The application of a *constructivist grounded theory* methodology led to an organic process of theory emergence from the data (Charmaz, 2006); three core themes emerged from the participants' accounts that represented their work outlooks: *calling*, *career* and *way of life*. These themes represent three distinct conceptions that capture, frame and exemplify the meaning that the ambassadors assign to their work, how meaningful work is for them, and what aspects of their work make it meaningful.

In order to link the emergent categories to existing research, I searched for relevant literature that could serve as a theoretical foundation for the exploration and explanation of the findings. I found the *work orientation* model proposed by Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler & Tipton (1985) and later developed by Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) most apt for this study. Two aspects of this model of the meaning of work made it most compatible: firstly it distinguishes between three work outlooks: *job*, *career* and *calling*, which is closely aligned with two of the core themes that emerged from the data (*career* and

*calling*). It also offers a theoretical framework for conceptualising the meaning that people assign to their work (see details in sections 2.2 and 2.3).

#### **1.4 The theoretical rationale for this study, its aim and research questions**

The theoretical rationale for exploring the meaning of work among diplomats is founded in the contemporary quest to identify the factors that can make work meaningful. Maslow (1998: 39) argued that 'all humans prefer meaningful work to meaningless work... if work is meaningless, then life comes close to being meaningless'. In recent years the search for meaningful work has become more pronounced, mainly due to the fact that the workplace has become the main source of affiliation, identification and purpose for most people (MOW International Research Team, 1987; Overell, 2009). At the same time, other social institutions (such as families, churches, and community organisations) that used to be sources of membership and meaning have gradually declined (Heil, Bennis & Stephens, 2000). As work and workplace have become the main sources of meaning and purpose in people's lives, the questions how people assign meaning to their work and what makes work meaningful have become more relevant (Kempster, Jackson & Conroy, 2011). Organisations have also been driven to offer environments that generate positive meaning, since researchers have established that meaningfulness can strengthen employees' motivation, engagement and performance (Wrzesniewski, 2003; Morin, 2008; Steger, Pickering, Shin & Dik, 2010). On the other hand many organisations experience continual turbulence and change, which was found to be a factor that erodes meaning (Burger, Crous & Roodt, 2013).

In line with the core themes that emerged from the data, and the broad rationale for exploring the meaning of work, the aim of this study was to examine the work perceptions

of Israeli State Ambassadors, and accordingly, the research questions that guided this inquiry were:

- 1) What is the meaning that the participants assign to their work?
- 2) What is the work orientation of the participants?
- 3) What aspects of the participants' work make it meaningful for them?
- 4) What aspects of the participants' expatriation and global career experiences impinge on their work outlooks?

It should be noted that the research questions and the structure of the thesis may give an erroneous impression of a linear positivist line of inquiry. I therefore want to clarify that the study followed the guidelines of *constructivist grounded theory* for data collection, analysis and writing of the findings (Charmaz, 2006). The themes reported in the Findings chapter have emerged from the data, and were only later linked to relevant literature and theoretical frameworks, which are presented in the literature review chapters. The structure of the thesis merely complies with the writing conventions in management, which tend to follow the writing format of quantitative studies (Suddaby, 2006).

## **1.5 Theoretical perspectives**

The theoretical stance adopted in this study was multi-disciplinary in nature, attempting to bring together three strands of literature: As noted above, the main underpinning theory that guided this thesis was the *work orientation* model developed by Bellah et al. (1985) and Wrzesniewski et al. (1997), which is grounded in the research on the meaning of work and what makes work meaningful (see chapter 2). The second strand of research that informed this inquiry was the literature on diplomacy and diplomats (see chapter 3). Since diplomats are considered the ultimate expatriates (Dickmann & Baruch, 2011: 54) the third



strand of research from which this thesis drew on was *Global Career* theories (see chapter 4).

## **1.6 The organisation of the thesis**

The thesis includes four main sections: literature review, research methods, findings, and discussion and conclusions.

The Literature Review chapters (no. 2 - 4) provide the theoretical underpinning for this study by offering a review of the meaning of work and the *work orientation* model, the roles and responsibilities of state ambassadors, their global work environment and the cultural contexts within which the participants operate. It is important to underline the limited scope of the reviews offered in these chapters, since further literature is integrated into the Findings chapter.

The Research Methods chapter (no. 5) describes the research perspective adopted in this study, the methods applied for data collection and data analysis, the characteristics of the respondents, the writing process, research ethics issues and my reflexive account.

The Findings chapter (no. 6) presents the core themes that emerged from the Ambassadors' accounts, and depicts the different work orientations that the participants displayed.

The Discussion chapter (no. 7) summarises the findings, and discusses the new theoretical framework that has transpired from the findings, the contributions and limitations of this study and ideas for future research. The Conclusions chapter (no. 8) brings this thesis to a close while reflecting on my own work perceptions and meaning of work.

# CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW: THE MEANING OF WORK

## 2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to offer a conceptual framework through which the themes that emerged from the data could be examined theoretically. The chapter opens with a brief review of the extant literature on the *meaning of work* (section 2.2) and a discussion on the *work orientation* model (section 2.3). Section 2.4 introduces the concept of *calling*, its antecedents and outcomes, while section 2.5 concludes the review on these topics.

## 2.2 The meaning of work

Work is a major source of meaning, membership and identity for most people, yet people vary vastly in what their work means to them. Some people perceive work as their purpose in life, while others work to pay for necessities. For some, work is a source of creative joy, passion and fulfilment, while for others it can be a tedious routine and source of strain and disgruntlement. Whether work is meaningful or meaningless, nurturing or draining, for the majority of people of working age, work consumes most of their waking hours, and it often takes over other areas of life, leading to a decline in social and civic activities and downtime (MOW International Research Team, 1987; Ciulla, 2001; Morin, 2008). Furthermore, work has become a central aspect of people's identity, as people identify themselves, and are often defined by others, through their profession, occupation or position at work; they acquire social status, affiliation in professional organisations and networks through their work (Casey, 1995; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Kenny, Whittle & Willmott, 2012).

Given the significance of work in people's lives, it is perhaps unsurprising that meaningful work, engagement and fulfilment at work, correlate highly with happiness and satisfaction

with life (Judge, Bono, Erez & Locke, 2005; Morin, 2008; Dik, Sargent & Steger, 2008; Diener & Tov, 2009); and can explain a substantial part of people's psychological well-being, quality of life and even health indicators (Kahneman, Diener & Schwarz, 1999; Wright & Cropanzano, 2000; Csikszentmihalyi, 2003; Diener & Tov, 2009).

On the negative side, the effects of meaningless work extend well beyond detachment from work, negative work attitudes, poor performance, absenteeism or burnout; they are often associated with physical illness, existential apathy and a variety of psychological distress symptoms – ranging from stress to depression (May, Gilson & Harter, 2004; Dik et al., 2008; Morin, 2008).

While from the individual's perspective, meaningful work and following one's *calling* is associated with self-actualisation, spiritual growth and finding meaning in life (Maslow, 1956; Frankl, 1969; Yalom, 1980; MOW International Research Team, 1987), from an organisational perspective, the meaning that people assign to their work has been found to mediate a variety of work-related behaviours – particularly motivation and performance (Penna, 2006; Overell, 2009; Bevan, 2012). This finding has prompted the interest of human resource management scholars to the factors that make work meaningful, as means to raise staff performance and improve organisational outcomes (Weiss, Skelley, Hall & Haughey, 2003; Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011; Cleavenger & Munyon, 2013).

Morin (2008) suggested that this fairly recent development is part of a broader quest to make work more meaningful. Baumeister & Muraven (1996) explained that this trend is associated with individualism and the increasing attention to the pursuit of self-interest and self-actualisation in the context of work. Kenny et al. (2012) argued that the ways in which people make sense of their work impinges on their vocational identity, and therefore the

meaning that people assign to their work is of high significance. Pratt & Ashforth (2003) argued that improving the 'fit' between people and their jobs makes work more meaningful for employees, which in turn enhances employees' engagement, satisfaction and fulfilment.

While the drive to create more meaningful work experiences for employees may be portrayed in a positive light by these authors, a more critical perception of this trend should caution against the manipulation or exploitation of meaning by employers, as yet another means-to-an-end to enhance staff performance and boost bottom lines.

In recent attempts to define and clarify the construct of *meaning of work*, several dimensions have been offered by scholars. Rosso, Dekas & Wrzesniewski (2010) differentiate between two constructs that are often confused in the literature: *meaning of work* – which involves sense-making and attributing meaning to one's work that can be positive, negative or neutral, and *meaningful work* - which entails positive meaning and is often equated with *calling*.

In a landmark study conducted by the Meaning of Work International Research Team (MOW International Research Team, 1987) the authors defined meaning of work as a construct that represents the significance and value that people assign to their work, that draws from the definitions, values and beliefs that they attach to working in general, and to their particular work. The authors concluded that meaning of work pertains to four aspects of work: the centrality of work in one's life, a person's perceptions of his or her obligations and entitlements to work (which reflects societal norms regarding working), the value of the work in terms of its outcomes for the person, and the goals that societal work serves and their significance.

Roberson (1990) also made a distinction between three interrelated constructs that describe the meaning of work for employees: work centrality (the importance of the work for the person), work values (the values and ideologies that employees associate with their work), and work orientation (the personal or social purpose that work serves). May et al. (2004: 11) suggested that meaningfulness in work is 'the value of a work goal or purpose, judged to an individual's own ideals or standards'. Driver (2007) argued that work meaning is derived from doing the work, as well as from experiencing the organisational life. She also made the point that meaning (both positive and negative) can occur as a result of work related suffering. Wrzesniewski, Dutton & Debebe (2003: 99) maintained that work meaning pertains to three interrelated work domains: the contents of one's job, the role or position that one holds, and a person's work identity. They defined the meaning of work as 'employees' *understanding* of what they do at work, as well as the *significance* of what they do'. Lips-Wiersma & Wright (2012) who developed the Comprehensive Meaningful Work Scale, distinguished between four dimensions that make work meaningful for employees: development of one's personality through work, relational harmony, work as a service to others, and expressing one's talents and skills.

In a recent paper published by the UK Work Foundation, Overell (2009) defined meaning of work as consisting of three elements: the value that employees place on working and on the particular work they do; the purpose and significance of the work one does; and the 'fit' between employees and their work – the 'coherence effect'. Overell (2008) also defined meaningful work as work that is 'inherently worthwhile' (p.10) because it enables a person to express his or her identity, and leads to the realisation of one's potential.

Morin (2008) asserted that meaningful work is characterised by a sense of coherence, constancy, balance and completeness. Finding meaning at work is therefore dependent on

the coherence - the degree of 'fit' between the person's needs, goals, values and skills and the actions they consistently perform at work, and the resulting sense of harmony he or she feels in their relationship to work (Sheldon & Kasser, 1995; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2011).

Another dimension of meaningful work and the importance of fit between people's capacities and their work, is the experience of *flow* (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002), which occurs when there is an optimal fit between a person's skills and the work one does. Csikszentmihalyi (2003) maintained that *flow* occurs when the challenge that a task presents to the person undertaking it, matches his or her level of skill. He argued that *flow* is essential for peak performance, and is a central dimension of eudemonic happiness.

Morin (2008) found several components that characterise meaningful work, which she sees as necessary conditions for its emergence. These are: the work has a clear pro-social purpose (it contributes to society and serves it); it fits workers' strengths and enables them to work independently and take responsibility for their work; it provides opportunities for learning and development; it is organised in a manner that is rational, safe and efficient; the workplace values justice, equity and demonstrates respect for human dignity; workers enjoy good relationships and social support, and there is appropriate recognition in terms of salary and feedback.

While Morin (2008) highlighted the *dimensions of the job and the workplace* that can make work more meaningful for employees, Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) argued that the meaning that people assign to their work emerges from their *personality characteristics* and *subjective constructions*, and are not merely a reflection of the objective dimensions of their employment conditions. Berg, Dutton & Wrzesniewski (2013: 2) argued that through

'job crafting' employees can 'proactively reshape the boundaries of their jobs' in order to make their work more meaningful for them. The authors thus emphasised the centrality of employees' cognitive and psychological sense-making mechanisms in instilling their job with value and significance.

Both Morin (2008) and Wrzesniewski et al. (2003) addressed the relational aspect of meaningful work, and argued that the relationships that employees forge with their colleagues, superiors and clients at work influence their work perceptions and the meaning that they assign to their work. Morin (2008) found that positive relationships in the workplace are key for generating a sense of meaningfulness, while Wrzesniewski et al. (2003) highlighted the collective meaning making mechanisms that shape employees' work outlooks.

However Martin (2000) argued that while the construct of work meaning is indeed subjective, it is heavily influenced by one's social and cultural milieu, and the shared beliefs, values and norms that people in a particular organisation hold about working in general, as well as about their own line of work.

It should be noted that all the analyses shown above, that attempted to define the characteristics of meaningful work, seem to include both self-directed as well as other-directed motivations. Overell (2009: 2) noted that today 'work is *both* a means-to-an-end and a means of self-expression. The financial motive in work is dominant for most people, but research has consistently uncovered a balance of motives that underlie work'. Several survey studies conducted in the past 20 years (O'Brien, 1992; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997; Ryff & Singer, 1998; Isaksen, 2000; Penna, 2006; Wrzesniewski, 2010) have shown that indeed the majority of people expect their work to become a source of meaning and fulfilment for themselves, as well as be worthwhile for society. These studies also revealed

that having meaningful work is as important as income and job security. However, it should be noted that these surveys were conducted with people who were employed. The findings may therefore be challenged since for those unemployed, the meaningfulness of work is likely to be less important compared to the economic aspect of work and job security.

On the back of this literature, the concept of *work orientation* was developed, initially by Bellah et al. (1985) as a theoretical concept and later by Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) as an empirical construct. The model, which will be discussed next, offers a concise tripartite typology of the meaning that people attribute to their work.

### **2.3 Work orientation**

*Work orientation* is described as the outlook that people assume toward work and what work means to them. It displays people's beliefs about the function and significance of work in their lives, which are reflected in their occupational goals, emotions about work and a variety of work related behaviours (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997).

Bellah et al. (1985) differentiated between three distinct types of *work orientations*:

- **Job orientation** - People who perceive their work as a *job* are mainly interested in the material gains that their work can offer them, and do not expect their work to meet their personal goals or interests. They tend to view their work as a means to an end, to fulfil their needs and desires, pay for necessities and support their families, rather than an end in itself. Thus, there is a degree of separation between work and other aspects of life, and people who hold this orientation do not expect to experience engagement or fulfilment at work.



- **Career orientation** - People who regard their work as a *career* are more invested in their work compared to those with a *job* orientation, and see it as a part of their long-term career path or professional progress. Their goal is to progress in the hierarchy of their organisation or profession and assume senior positions that would enable them to acquire social standing, authority, power, influence or prestige. They perceive promotion as recognition of their work and a sign of their success in the competitive job market, and therefore their professional positioning is strongly associated with their self-esteem (Bellah et al., 1985).
- **Calling orientation** - People who view their work as a *calling* see their work as a central part of their lives and their identities, and therefore it is deeply meaningful for them. They do not work for the material gains, career advancement, prestige or power that their work renders them, but are driven by a strong sense of intrinsic motivation and commitment to their work, fuelled by the sense of significance and fulfilment that they experience when doing the work. Their goal is to derive personal fulfilment while doing work, which they consider as beneficial for their community or the greater good.

Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) argued that the construct of *work orientation* is broader than the concept of meaningful work, since these different outlooks embody and integrate within them people's entire work related constructions and meanings, including: work aspirations or goals, work preferences, job satisfaction, commitment, fulfilment, motivation, engagement and professional identity. Thus, they argued, it can provide a useful framework through which researchers can examine the impact of work-related meaning-making processes, on relevant behaviours and outcomes.

Drawing on Bellah et al. (1985) work, Wrzesniewski and her colleagues (1997) developed the concept further, by creating a measure of *work orientation* and by conducting large

surveys involving thousands of respondents, across a variety of occupations and countries (see also Davidson & Cadell, 1994; Peterson, Park, Hall & Seligman, 2009; Shea Van Fossen & Vredenburg, 2014). Their findings revealed that workers spread equally across the three orientations, and all three orientations can be found within most occupations. Based on these findings, Wrzesniewski et al. (2001; 2003) argued that individuals performing the same job, even in the same organisation, can display different work orientations. This supports Wrzesniewski et al. (2003) and Berg et al. (2013) argument (see section 2.2) that the meaning that people ascribe to their work does not emanate solely from the objective features or functions of the job, nor from the organisational environment surrounding it, but reflects people's dispositions and subjective constructions of their work sphere.

Further analysis (Davidson & Cadell, 1994; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997; Peterson et al., 2009; Wrzesniewski, Dekas & Rosso, 2009; Shea Van Fossen & Vredenburg, 2014) revealed that those who perceive their work as a *calling* are more inclined to experience their work as profoundly meaningful, compared to those with other orientations. The studies also found that each work orientation predicted particular outcomes in terms of job satisfaction and psychological well-being: respondents with a *calling* orientation conveyed significantly higher levels of job and life satisfaction and psychological well-being, and less absenteeism compared to respondents with a *job* or *career* orientations (Davidson & Cadell, 1994; Peterson et al., 2007; Wrzesniewski, Dekas & Rosso, 2009). However, it should be noted that those with a *calling* orientation were also somewhat older, more experienced and ranked higher in terms of their occupational status and income compared to others.

It is important to note that while the three work orientations characterise three distinct relationships between individuals and their work, they are not completely separate. Each work orientation can be understood as having a relatively stronger inclination toward one orientation compared to the others (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997).

Drawing on the model of *work orientation* presented here, several authors (Weiss et al., 2003; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Wrzesniewski, 2010; Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011) focused specifically on *callings*, and analysed and developed the construct theoretically. A brief review of this line of work is offered next. It should be noted that the *job* and *career* orientations have received considerably less research attention compared to *callings*.

## **2.4 Calling**

*Callings*, originally defined as *calling in life* (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Wrzesniewski, 2010) have intrigued philosophers and theologians since the 16<sup>th</sup> century (see details in section 2.4.3), often as part of the quest to understand the meaning of life. Today, as work becomes more pivotal in people's lives, *callings* are mainly associated with work (Hall & Chandler, 2005; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Wrzesniewski et al., 2009) and continue to attract the attention of work and organisational scholars.

### **2.4.1 The defining features of *callings***

Despite the impressive increase in the research on *callings*, the term *calling* has been a subject of debate among researchers, and to date no single definition has been endorsed unanimously (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Hunter, Dik & Banning, 2010; Wrzesniewski, 2010; Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011).

Bunderson & Thompson (2009) differentiated between three types of *calling* orientations, where:

- **The secular / modern perspective of *calling*** focuses on one's self-actualisation; the person's passion toward a particular occupation, and his or her desire to express a particular skill or talent at work.
- **The classical / religious perception of *calling*** describes people who feel that they were summoned by God (or other types of higher power) to perform holy or community work. Thus they perceive their *calling* as their moral duty to serve the greater good. The emphasis of classical *calling* is on pro-social action and altruism.
- **The neoclassical perspective of *calling*** combines the modern and the classic orientations. It thus entails an inner drive to express a particular talent, alongside an altruistic desire to serve the community or society by embarking on a particular career or position.

The three approaches are further explored below.

#### **2.4.2 The secular modern perspective of *calling***

Several authors (Novak, 1996; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Wrzesniewski, 2010) who represent the secular modern perspective of *calling*, have associated it with vocations: 'work that a person perceives as his or her purpose in life' (Hall & Chandler, 2005: 160). Berg, Grant & Johnson (2010) suggested that *calling* is an occupation that a person is intrinsically driven to pursue, that is significant and satisfying, and that the person perceives it as a core aspect of the self. Novak (1996) contended that *calling* requires a person to have a particular talent that corresponds with the work, and also a desire or passion to pursue his or her *calling*.

These definitions emphasise the centrality of *callings* in people's lives as a driving force around which their lives revolve, suggesting that life meanings and career *callings* overlap, and are inseparable. They also stress that *calling* is work that is done for its own merit, because of what it means to the person performing it: it may comprise activities that lead to the fulfilment of one's unique purpose in life, a way to pursue one's core values or beliefs, or an expression of one's talents or strengths (Elliott, 1992; Novak, 1996; Weiss et al., 2003; Dobrow, 2006; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009). It also endows them with passion, engagement, a deep sense of psychological success and gratification (Wrzesniewski, Rozin & Bennett, 2002; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Duffy, Bott, Allan, Torrey & Dik, 2012).

In a qualitative study of people from a variety of domains who view their work as a *calling*, Elliott (1992) found that *callings* could be toward a specific job, a profession or a global mission. She distinguished between several characteristics of *callings*: a sense that one is doing the work that he or she is meant to do, which is often manifested through a strong sense of purpose and identification with that purpose; a compelling inner drive to do the work, which can be described as a strong intrinsic motivation or passion to do the work, even if it is not economically viable; and an outreaching element: a desire to share the work with others, and a deep sense of personal gratification and fulfilment.

Accordingly, Perttula & Cardon (2011) defined passion for work as a psychological state that entails intense emotional stimulation, internal motivation, and high level of engagement with an activity that one finds meaningful and desirable. However, Dobrow (2006) noted that while *passion* directs one's attention and actions towards a particular type of work, people differ in their degree of connectedness or intensity of passion in which their *calling* is felt. Thus, she characterised the construct of *calling* as a continuum, which can range from weaker to stronger *callings*. Elliott (1992: 150) also found that the

intensity of *calling* that people feel varies significantly between 'visionary seizures to subtle hunches'. An intense *calling* orientation is often manifested in a compelling inner drive or urge to do the work, a keen engagement and deep commitment. Perttula & Cardon (2011) saw these manifestations of passion for one's work as a strong indication of meaningful work. However, Vallerand et al. (2003) distinguished between harmonious and obsessive passion, and argued that depending on the type of passion that one experiences, work is likely to result in positive engagement, flow and healthy diligence, or may result in rigid, pressured and conflicted form of task engagement.

Dobrow (2006) distinguished between several features of *callings*, which influence the degree of intensity that the *calling* is felt: having a professional identity which is tightly intertwined with the *calling* domain; passion and deep enjoyment; experiencing a sense of urgency or an inner drive to do the work; engulfed consciousness – a continual presence of the work in the person's consciousness; longevity - sustained involvement in the work domain for many years; a sense that the work is gratifying and meaningful, and positive self-esteem regarding one's talents or skills in that particular domain.

Dobrow's (2006) research on musicians revealed that their professional identity was strongly entangled with music, and that they perceived their work as deeply meaningful for them, felt that they were predestined to do this work, and thus could not imagine doing anything else.

Hall & Chandler (2005) asserted that *callings* that originate from within, are aligned with one's life purpose, and draw on people's talents, generate a sense of meaning and clarity of identity. They theorised that *calling* and professional identity are linked through a feedback loop within which having a clear professional identification brings about the recognition of one's *calling*, which in turn strengthens and further crystallises one's professional identity.

Conversely, Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas (2011) observed that for some people fulfilment of their *calling* may not necessarily occur in the context of paid work, and indeed some people may experience unanswered *callings* (Berg et al., 2010), which brings into question the degree to which professional identities and *callings* are allied.

One of the central debates around *calling* is whether they are found, discovered, created, or made by the people who experience them. That is, to what extent are people actively involved in finding their *callings* (Wrzesniewski, 2010). Hall & Chandler (2005) argued that in order to become aware of their *callings*, people often undergo a process of introspection, reflection or meditation. In the religious context (see below) this process is defined as discernment (Weiss et al., 2003).

Dobrow (2006) and Elliott (1992) challenged this view and argued that though some people may undergo a process of self-discovery in order to find their path in life, others may find that their *calling* is such a strong force that they do not need to undergo a process of self-discovery to ascertain it. In fact, they often feel that they have always known that they would engage in this type of work. Dobrow (2006) argued that among researchers there is often an assumption that people recognise their *callings*. However, in her study of musicians she found that while most respondents felt a sense of urgency to the work, or felt driven to do it by a force that they did not understand, they rarely labelled their work as a *calling*. Accordingly, the ways in which people go about to fulfil their *callings* varies; some people are able to pursue their *callings* with relative ease, while others struggle to pursue their *callings*.

The debate around how people become aware of their *callings* is linked to the perception of the source of *callings* – whether one perceives the source of the *calling* as internal or

external. Viewing *callings* as transcendent summons from a higher power was central in the classical religious conception of *calling*, which is reviewed next.

### **2.4.3 The classical religious perception of *calling***

While the definitions of *callings* reviewed above are fairly recent, the earlier conceptions of *calling* were deeply rooted in a number of religious traditions (Weiss et al., 2003; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Wrzesniewski, 2010). Parboteeah, Hoegl & Cullen, (2009) argued that most religions tend to see work as people's civic duty to contribute to their societies, and contend that it is necessary to work in order to live the virtuous life. The bible includes several accounts of people who were summoned by God to assume a religious leadership role or to perform holy work. This often meant taking on a life-long altruistic career in the public service where work was inseparable from one's life, and leading a life style that was in accordance with the religious moral code of the era - which often required self-sacrifice, self-restraint or hardship. Pursuing their *calling* was often perceived as their duty or moral responsibility to serve a higher power, or the greater good. What gave meaning to their work was that they perceived themselves as acting on God's will or plan for their lives.

People whose work stem from their relationship with a higher force, often revealed their *callings* through a process of 'discernment', which implied attaining higher level of wisdom or spiritual growth through reflection and prayer (Hardy, 1990; Weiss et al., 2003). These people often perceived themselves and were seen by others as the chosen few whose work was a *calling*, and therefore had a superior social status, in contrast to the menial labour that the majority of people performed.



This perspective suggests that *callings* have several distinctive features: work is consciously perceived as a *calling* by the person; it is seen as a transcendent summons from a higher power to do the work, to which a person has a choice whether to respond or not; the decision whether to embark on this path involves a process of self-reflection and self-awareness; the work serves a higher purpose – often the community at large or the greater good; and it is predetermined by God, either by inviting a person to take on a particular role, or by endowing a person with unique talents that the person is expected to use to perform the work (Weiss et al., 2003).

Weber (1958) argued that this hierarchical outlook of the realm of employment characterised early Christian theology. He also made the point that it has resulted in sharp social divisions between occupations that emanated from a value judgement of their social worth. Following the Protestant Reformation, a significant shift has occurred in this view. Drawing on Martin Luther's (1520) teachings, the reformers endorsed the idea that all types of labour are *callings*, and claimed that by conducting their work duties devotedly and productively – workers serve a higher purpose (Weber, 1958). John Calvin (1536) asserted that when people use their God-given talents to benefit the greater good, they effectively fulfil their *callings*. *Callings* also bring people together with a sense of shared dependability, since each person has a duty and a responsibility to fulfil their *calling*, thereby making their contribution to the larger community (Hardy, 1990; Steger et al., 2010). Failure to do so was seen as wasting God's gifts and not meeting one's social duties, and hence morally wrong (Weber, 1958; Nord, Brief, Atieh & Doherty, 1990). Weber (1958) argued that these suggestive conceptions that all types of work can be seen as *callings* laid the groundwork for the Protestant work ethic, which later led to the

development of modern capitalism, since they provided the ideological reasoning for the compliant acceptance of one's place within the hierarchical division of labour.

The exploration of the modern definitions of *calling* reviewed earlier indicates that the religious perspective of *calling* has withered, particularly the notion that people are called by God to fulfil a special role (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Wrzesniewski, 2010). A recent study by Duffy & Sedlacek (2010) found that people with a *calling* orientation seldom associate their *calling* to religiousness.

However, several authors (Elliott, 1992; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Wrzesniewski, 2010) claimed that the pro-social values embedded in the classical perception of *calling* are still prevalent in particular occupations, and thus suggested that certain types of *calling* orientations indeed integrate the classic and modern perceptions together. These neoclassical *calling* orientations are reviewed next.

#### **2.4.4 The neoclassical perspective of *calling***

In their exploration of the *calling* orientation of zookeepers, Bunderson & Thompson (2009) found that the desire to serve and benefit others can be as compelling as the inner drive for self-actualisation. Their findings suggest that the zookeepers' sense of *calling* was central to their professional identities, and was manifested in their belief that they were following a pre-determined occupational path that they were meant to take, and that it was their moral duty to follow this course. Their *calling* orientation integrated a sense of duty and destiny, and seemed to be fuelled not only by their unique talents (which they described as a peculiar 'wiring' to work with animals) and by their zest and quest for self-actualisation, but also by a strong pro-social ideological conviction regarding the significance of their work for society.

Wrzesniewski (2003: 301) observed that the contemporary perceptions of *calling* often embody the notions that it is 'work that contributes to the world or a particular community in a meaningful way and therefore done for a greater good and makes the world a better place'. It thus serves a transcendent purpose beyond the fulfilment of a person's needs, interests, desires, passions or goals. Hall & Chandler (2005) asserted that the main purpose of *callings* is to serve the community at large. This distinction suggests that *vocation* and *calling* are not synonymous terms: *vocation* is more about self-actualisation and engaging in meaningful work that contributes to one's self-expression, fulfilment and well-being, while *callings* are purposefully conducted for the service of others, thus emphasising the moral aspect or the centrality of pro-social values of in people's work (Baumeister, 1991; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997; Dik & Duffy, 2009; Elangovan, Pinder & McLean, 2010).

This view of *calling* coincides with Maslow (1956), Frankl (1969) and Wong's (2009) conceptualisations of the centrality of self-transcendence in finding meaning and fulfilment in life. The three authors argued that in order to find meaning, people are required to shift their focus away from their own needs and desires, and find ways to contribute to others.

In line with the idea that *callings* serve the greater good, Dik & Duffy (2009: 427) observed that some modern *callings* can indeed incorporate a perception that the *calling* is originated by an external source, 'a transcendent summons, experienced as originating beyond the self'. The contemporary sources of the *calling* can be a community, government, nation or society at large. Dik & Duffy (2009) identified three components of *calling*: purposeful and meaningful work, a pro-social orientation, and a transcendent summon to do the work. They also noted that the transcendent summon is the feature that differentiates *callings* from vocations, since both *callings* and *vocations* can consist of other-oriented values or goals from which a person derives a deep sense of purpose or

meaningfulness. However, *vocations* emerge from within, while *callings* are often perceived as summons from an external source.

Bunderson & Thompson (2009) also found that their respondents perceived the source of their *calling* as emerging from an external source and not only from within. They saw the source of *calling* as society at large and the particular challenge it was facing. Thus they felt that due to their unique talents it was their moral duty to find their distinctive position in society, where they would be able to contribute to the greater good and fulfil their duty. The authors argued that this type of *calling* can have mixed outcomes: while it can offer a person a deep sense of meaning, identification and sense of transcendent contribution, when taken to extreme, it can turn into a rigid and righteous sense of moral obligation that may legitimise or dismiss the hardship or self-sacrifice involved in the work.

The discussion on the sources of *calling* and whether they emanate from within the person or from an outside entity are connected to the factors that can facilitate the emergence of the *calling* orientation, and the likelihood that the person will pursue his or her *calling* - which will be addressed in the next section.

#### **2.4.5 Pathways to *callings*: the antecedents of the *calling* orientation**

In the literature reviewed earlier on the definitions and features of *callings*, the authors seemed to agree that *calling* is a personal experience that embodies an intense and committed relationship between a person and his or her work, where a person attaches unique significance or meaning to the work. While the descriptions of *callings* suggest that having a desire or passion to pursue one's *calling* is central for developing and pursuing a *calling*, researchers have found several other factors that can facilitate its emergence, or hinder its development when absent. These are reviewed below.

The analysis of the antecedents of *callings* seems to revolve around two aspects: the first is developing or becoming aware of the *calling*, and the second is pursuing the *calling*. As the analysis below reveals, the factors that can trigger an awareness of one's *calling* are the same factors that are likely to motivate him or her to pursue it.

In her longitudinal study of musicians, Dobrow (2006) distinguished between four broad factors which she considered as central for the emergence or pursuit of *callings*, some of which were also explored by Elliott (1992) and Wrzesniewski (2010). These are:

➤ **Background characteristics** - these can significantly influence the degree to which people are likely to find the resources they may require in order to discern or pursue their *callings*. They include cultural, demographic and geographic features, socio-economic status, education or work environments that the person was exposed during his or her formative years.

Several studies (Elliott, 1992; Dobrow, 2006; Bunderson and Thompson, 2009; Dik and Duffy, 2009) have shown that the sense of *calling* often develops long before the person enters the workforce, and it is likely to be influenced by the opportunities and networks available to him or her, which are often bounded by the socio-cultural and demographic environment within which one has been raised. These aspects of people's early experiences can affect their educational or early career choices and how their professional identity and sense of *calling* evolves (Hall & Chandler, 2005; Hirschi, 2012). Later in life, significant life or work related events can alter, reinforce or undermine one's sense of *calling* and one's commitment to it (Avolio, 2005).

➤ **Having a talent or skill in the *calling* domain** - having a high self-efficacy and competence are central to the emergence of a modern *calling* orientation. It is also critical for one's ability to maintain motivation and engagement with the work, while one embarks on a path that would enable him or her to pursue their *calling* (Elliott,

1992; Dobrow, 2006; Wrzesniewski, 2010). As noted earlier, this path may not always be through formal employment or an orderly career path.

If the *calling* is pursued through formal employment, then career choices and the development of professional identities become very central to the pursuit of the *calling* (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Dalton, 2001; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Dobrow, 2006; Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007).

- **Continual involvement and direct experience in the *calling* domain** - this is central for the formation and the pursuit of the *calling* orientation. It enables the person to acquaint him or her with the domain, to set realistic goals and aspirations, to develop higher levels of mastery in this domain and to develop realistic self-perception and confidence. It also enables the person to engage with a professional community, which in turn aids the development of one's identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Dobrow, 2006; Hirschi, 2012).

Several authors (Elliott, 1992; Dobrow, 2006) made the point that the sense of *calling* is likely to evolve and change over time, and thus it might be more or less strongly felt at different periods of one's life, despite the continual involvement.

- **Social support** - the degree to which the person has a social system to support the emergence and the pursuit of a *calling*. It is a central antecedent in successful *calling* (Dobrow & Higgins, 2005), and the lack of it can result in unanswered *calling* (Dobrow, 2006; Berg et al., 2010).

Several studies (Elliott, 1992; Dobrow, 2006; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Dik & Duffy, 2009) have shown that the sense of *calling* is strongly influenced by role models or mentors, and the explicit or implicit messages and feedbacks that the person receives from different social circles. Affiliation with a professional community is also significant in shaping and moulding one's professional identity, aspirations,

professional development and career choices (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Dobrow, 2006; Hirschi, 2012).

As can be seen in this review, the antecedents that facilitate the emergence and the pursuit of *callings* do not address the questions whether *callings* originate from the self or from external sources, and whether they serve the community at large or are the expression of one's drive for self-actualisation - these remain points of contention among researchers. There is however some agreement among scholars as to their positive and negative effects on those who view their work as a *calling*, which is reviewed next.

#### **2.4.6 The outcomes of *callings***

Wrzesniewski (2010) noted that the majority of studies conducted to date on the outcomes of *calling* are correlational in their design, thus making it difficult to infer causality from them. Nevertheless, several studies offered strong indications of the positive outcomes that are associated with having a *calling* outlook. These include: higher levels of intrinsic motivation at work (Elliott, 1992; Dobrow, 2006; Wrzesniewski, 2010), elevated levels of passion and enjoyment derived from work (Elliott, 1992; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997; Dobrow, 2006; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009), high degrees of vitality, engagement, investment in and commitment to work (Serow, 1994; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011; Hirschi, 2012; Duffy, Allan, Autin & Bott, 2013), having a sense of good fit between employees' skills and talents and their work (Dobrow, 2006; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Duffy et al., 2012), positive self-efficacy and self-esteem (Dobrow, 2006; Domene, 2012; Hirschi, 2012; Steger et al., 2010), a deep sense of psychological success and gratification (Wrzesniewski et al., 2002; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Duffy et al., 2012), and a sense of significance and meaning (Elliott, 1992; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009).

As noted earlier, both the classical and neo-classical perceptions of *calling* involve holding and displaying strong pro-social or altruistic values (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Duffy et al., 2012). Indeed several authors found that employees who perceive their work as a *calling* tend to have a strong sense of purpose, and hold strong views about the moral aspect of their work and its contribution to the greater good (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997; Dik & Duffy, 2009; Elangovan et al., 2010; Hunter et al., 2010). The connection between *calling* and the desire to contribute to society was found to be particularly strong among public service employees, and has been associated with employees' motivations to work in the public sector (Perry, 1996; Rainey & Steinbauer, 1999; Vandenabeele, 2007; 2008).

As indicated in the review offered above (section 2.2) having a good 'fit' between employees' interests, skills and values and the work that one performs is essential for a *calling* outlook to emerge (Sheldon & Kasser, 1995; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Morin, 2008; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2011). A central factor in the 'fit' equation is the degree to which employees' vocational identities are aligned with the work they do (Dobrow, 2006; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Duffy et al., 2012; Hirschi & Herrmann, 2012).

In line with this view, several authors (Serow, Eaker & Ciechalski, 1992; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Dobrow, 2006; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Hirschi & Herrmann, 2012) found a strong positive association between *calling* and *vocational identity* which indicates that employees who perceive their work as a *calling*, tend to have a strong identification with their profession. *Vocational identity* is defined as a person's conscious awareness of his or her vocational skills and strengths, interests, values, and related career goals (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010; Kenny et al., 2012). It therefore entails the structure of meanings that links one's present self-perceptions and future aspirations with the work roles and tasks that the person performs (Hirschi, 2011). Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) and Hall & Chandler



(2005) explained that people who view their work as *calling*, see their work as an integral part of who they are, and thus they associate it not only with their talents and passions, but also with their core beliefs and values.

Dobrow (2006) argued that professional identification is a critical aspect of the *calling* orientation itself, while Bunderson & Thompson (2009) and Duffy et al. (2012) made the opposite argument: they suggested that having a *calling* is a key aspect of employees' professional identities. However, Hall & Chandler (2005) suggested that the association between *calling* and professional identity is bi-directional, that is: having a *calling* strengthens one's vocational identity, and in turn, a strong professional identification, promotes the perception of work of as a *calling*.

The research on university students (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007; French & Domene, 2010; Steger et al., 2010; Duffy, Allan & Dik, 2011; Hirschi & Herrmann, 2012) supports these findings, and suggests that the sense of *calling* can facilitate career decidedness and career goal clarity, thereby promoting the development of a clearer sense of vocational identity.

Additionally, several studies found that *callings* are associated with having a stronger organisational identity, and stronger identification with the organisation's goals and values (Elliott, 1992; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Dobrow, 2006; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Duffy et al., 2012). It is also associated with having a positive relationship with one's organisation, and seeing the organisation as a facilitator of the pursuit of one's *calling* (Cardador, Dane & Pratt, 2011).

As for the relational aspect of *calling*, several authors found that people with a *calling* orientation tend to establish positive, trusting, cooperative and supportive relationships

with co-workers and managers (Pratt & Dirks, 2007). They often enjoy strong team spirit and collective work ethic (Wrzesniewski et al., 2003), while setting higher performance standards for themselves and for others (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009).

In terms of the association between *calling* and well-being, several researchers found that those with a *calling* orientation showed improved psychological well-being (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997; Duffy & Sedlacek, 2010; Steger et al., 2010), increased work and life satisfaction (Elliott, 1992; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Dobrow, 2006; Duffy, Allan & Dik, 2011), improved work-life balance and less conflict between work and family spheres of lives (Elliott, 1992; Oates, Hall & Anderson, 2005; Sirgy & Wu, 2009), as well as lower levels of work related stress and depression (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Hunter et al., 2010).

At the performance level, *callings* have been found to correlate with using time more effectively at work and lower absenteeism (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). It was also positively associated with higher levels of performance and success (Hall & Chandler, 2005).

Cardador & Caza (2012: 338) defined the situations where the *calling* orientation produces the benefits listed above for both the employee and for their organisations as a 'healthy pursuit of calling'. However, they warned that for some people and in some situations, the pursuit of *calling* can become unhealthy. In line with this view, several studies highlighted the downsides of a *calling* orientation.

Wrzesniewski (2010) observed that *callings* can become detrimental for individuals if they are taken to extreme in terms of one's investment and commitment, since they might result in exhaustion and burnout. These findings coincide with Vallerand et al. (2003) argument

cited earlier (see section 2.4.2) regarding the detrimental outcomes of obsessive passion. Accordingly, Cardador & Caza (2012) noted that it may resemble the obsessive nature of workaholism, whereby employees' over-investment and over-commitment to their work often endangers their own health, psychological well-being and social functioning (Schaufeli, Taris & Bakker, 2008).

Additionally, other studies (Levoy, 1997; Ng, Sorensen & Feldman, 2007; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Hernandez, Foley & Beitin, 2011; Duffy et al., 2012) found that engaging with one's *calling* often comes at the expense of attending to other domains of life, often resulting in lack of work-life balance and interpersonal conflicts, a finding that stands in contrast to earlier findings by Elliott (1992) and Oates et al. (2005).

Several authors observed that *calling* involves willingness to endure personal sacrifices (Elliott, 1992; Serow, 1994; Dobrow, 2006). Bunderson & Thompson (2009) found that zookeepers who manifested a stronger *calling* orientation were more willing to sacrifice their time, money and physical comfort for their work, and argued that this made them more at risk of maltreatment by others.

Dobrow (2006) argued that the perception of work as a *calling* may limit one's ability to realistically assess his or her own capacities. She found that among young musicians, having a sense of *calling* was often accompanied by an overestimation of their musical aptitude (relative to how they were rated by others). This overly optimistic view of one's talents can be costly, since it is setting these individuals for a failure.

Regarding the association between *callings* and work relationships, several authors (Ashforth, 2001; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Hirschi, 2011) argued that having a *calling* may at times lead to strained relationships. Hirschi (2011) noted that those with a *calling* set high standards for their own work as well as the work of

others, and are prone to adopt a perfectionist mindset. Because they are never content with their own or other people's performance and achievements, they may generate a tensed work environment. Bunderson & Thompson (2009) found that when *callings* emanate from a strong sense of duty and devotion, it is accompanied by high expectations from management to adhere to these values and work standards. When those expectations are not met, relationships can become sour, and fused with distrust and alertness. The authors concluded that *calling* can be a double-edged sword: it is simultaneously positive, honourable, dutiful and engaging, and at the same time can become morally rigid, straining and draining.

## 2.5 Conclusions

The body of research and theorising on *meaning of work*, *work orientation* and *callings* reviewed here explored what characterises meaningful work, how people derive meaning from their work, and how perceiving one's work as a *job*, *career* or *calling* shapes people's identities and their work-related attitudes and behaviours.

The main conclusion that can be drawn from the literature on the meaning of work is that there are four factors that determine how meaningful work can be for a person:

- The organisational environment and the degree to which the organisation provides the necessary conditions for work to become meaningful for its staff (Morin, 2008; Overell, 2008).
- The degree of 'fit' between the person's vocational identity, needs, goals, values, skills and interests, and the work that one performs (Sheldon & Kasser, 1995; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Morin, 2008; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2011).

- The socio-cultural environment in which one lives and works, and its values, norms and collective sense-making processes (Wrzesniewski et al., 2003; Overell, 2009; Parboteeah, et al., 2009).
- The distinctive meaning that people assign to their work, which is shaped by their personality characteristics and subjective constructions (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997; 2003).

The review of the *calling* literature revealed that the sense of *calling* generates an intricate relationship between people and their work, a connection that integrates the person's inner life and one's outer experiences. It is characterised by a sense of coherence between the person and the work that he or she performs, to the degree that work is perceived as one's purpose in life. It becomes a core aspect of a person's identity, and a driving force that one is committed to, and around which his or her life revolves. The passionate psychological connection between the person and one's work is often manifested through the intense sense of urgency to do the work. This often results in several positive psychological and behavioural outcomes ranging from vitality, engagement and commitment to the work, to a higher level of performance, achievements, and gratification.

At the same time, especially when the *calling* orientation has strong pro-social values or ideology embedded in it, it can become a double-edged sword, which is both enriching and binding. Several challenges may emerge as a consequence of the blurred boundaries between work and life: overwork and burnout, willingness to sacrifice or risk personal resources for work, and inflexible sense of moral righteousness which can impact relationships at work.

There are several gaps in the literature on the *meaning of work*, the *work orientation* model, and *callings* that have emerged from this review. Firstly, there are two constructs that are often tangled in the literature: *meaning of work* – which is the positive, negative or neutral meaning that people can assign to their work, and *meaningful work* - which denotes a positive meaning and is often associated with *calling*. Furthermore, most literature (with the exception of Driver's (2007) and Wrzesniewski et al.'s (1997)) examines *meaningful work*, and there is less research on the meaning that employees assign to their work.

The second gap in the literature on *meaningful work* pertains to the factors that were found to facilitate positive meaning: the organisational environment, the 'fit' between the person and the work one performs, the social environment, and the distinctive meaning that people assign to their work. The current literature does not tie these constructs together, and to my knowledge no work has encompassed all four aspects, nor suggested how they may interplay in employees' perceptions of what their work means to them.

Similarly, the *work orientation* model and the questionnaire on which it draws (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997) focus only on the subjective meaning that people assign to their work. Although the authors acknowledged that people's meaning-making processes are also affected by the other three factors mentioned above (the organisational setting, the degree of 'fit' between the person and the work and collective meaning making processes that occur in the social environment), these factors have not been examined by the model nor by the questionnaire, and therefore it is unclear how the four aspects manifest themselves and interplay within each work orientation.

Lastly, as seen in the review on the *work orientation* model (see section 2.3), the *calling* orientation has received much more research attention compared to the *job* and *career* orientations.

While this study has not began with an aspiration to address these gaps, some of the findings presented later can indeed shed light on these aspects and advance our knowledge in these areas.

# CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW: ON DIPLOMACY AND DIPLOMATS

## 3.1 Introduction

In 1604, Sir Henry Wotton, a distinguished British diplomat in the service of King James I, coined one of the most renowned aphorisms about diplomacy:

'An ambassador is an honest man sent abroad to lie for the good of his country' (Eilts, 1979: 3).

This statement, though originally stated light-heartedly, became one of the most persistent and damaging observations of diplomacy and diplomats (Eilts, 1979); yet, it uncovers and brings to the fore some of the key themes around diplomacy as a process, the norms that govern it, and the skills and roles of those involved in it, which will be explored in this chapter.

The aim of this chapter is to offer a framework for understanding how diplomacy is conducted today, what diplomatic work entails, and the roles and functions that diplomats perform, in order to contextualise and relate the work of diplomats to the meaning they assigned to it. The chapter opens with the definition of diplomacy (section 3.2), and follows with a brief overview of the main players in diplomacy and the ways in which diplomacy is seen and executed by them (section 3.3). Section 3.4 explores the roles and skills of diplomats, while section 3.5 reviews the organisational behaviour and human resource management literature on diplomacy. Section 3.6 examines the varied cultural contexts within which diplomatic work is conducted, and section 3.7 concludes this chapter.



### 3.2 Defining diplomacy

Plischke (1979a: 33) defined diplomacy as 'the political process by which political entities (generally states) establish and maintain official relations, direct and indirect, with one another, in pursuing their respective goals, objectives, interests and substantive, and procedural policies in the international environment...'. According to Berridge (2010: 1) the main purpose of diplomacy is 'to enable states to secure the objectives of their foreign policies, without resort to force, propaganda or law'. Diplomacy is therefore an official, regulated mechanism that is used by states to achieve their foreign policy goals in peaceful ways, through recognised agents (Nicolson, 1988).

Several authors (Eilts, 1979; Plischke, 1979a; Nicolson, 1988) noted that the term *diplomacy* is often equated with international relations; however, as seen above, diplomacy is defined as the *operational* aspect of international relations, and it is clearly different from the strategic, political or ideological aspects of international relations. At the most basic level, diplomacy consists of establishing relationships between officials representing different states, thereby opening the channels of communication between them, in order to promote and carry out their respective foreign policies by reaching mutual agreements (Riordan, 2003). These authors (Eilts, 1979; Plischke, 1979a; Nicolson, 1988; Jönsson & Hall, 2005) also noted that diplomacy is often seen as synonymous with the communication that takes place between governments or nations. These can vary between exchange of views, clarifying intentions, lobbying, negotiating, mediating, arbitrating, conciliating or settling.

### **3.3 The main players in diplomacy**

There are several actors involved in diplomacy: states (governments), ministries of foreign affairs, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), international government organisations (IGOs), multi-national corporations (MNCs) and their respective staff – from heads of states, to diplomats and tourists (Hocking, 1993; Cooper & Hocking, 2000; Smith, Hadfield & Dunne, 2007). In order to depict the organisational and political context within which the respondents who participated in this study conduct their work, this section explores the roles and outlooks of the three main players in diplomacy: governments, ministries of foreign affairs and diplomats.

From a national or governmental perspective, diplomacy is viewed as an institutionalised and regulated function through which a state can achieve its international goals, whether these concern a relationship with one state (bilateral relations) or a group of states (multilateral relations). Foreign policies and goals are usually formulated and directed by governments, often at the ministry level, or in appropriate parliamentary committees (Barnes & Heath-Morgan, 1979; Rusk, 1979). These relationships are often regulated or overseen by international laws and mediated by international organisations (Nicolson, 1988; Berridge, 2010).

However, it is important to view diplomacy in the international context in which it takes place, where there is not only national interests and international laws that govern and regulate the ways in which diplomacy is conducted, but also hierarchical system of power relations between states and international coalitions (Watson, 1992; Chandler, 2004; Nau, 2011; Braumoeller, 2013). The more developed and powerful states are, the more likely they are to accomplish their foreign policy objectives. This means that diplomacy practised

by powerful states is likely to be very different from diplomacy practiced by smaller, less developed or less autonomous states (Riordan, 2003).

The two main functions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are to conduct the necessary background work behind the formulation of a foreign policy, and to implement these policies (Kohler, 1979). From an organisational perspective, diplomacy is the operational aspect of international relations - a mean to implement its foreign policies. It is the practice and the process of establishing and maintaining relationships between official representatives of states. It is guided by the goals and policies formulated by the government (Berridge, 2010), and it requires having mechanisms in place for quick analysis of situations and decision making that take into account local, bilateral and multilateral aspects. It also necessitates having the means for working internationally: providing the required resources, support and supervision for staff abroad, and dispatching policies and guidelines to them (Kohler, 1979; Nicolson, 1988).

In order to perform these functions aptly, most ministries of foreign affairs are divided into functional and geographical departments with overlapping responsibilities (Berridge, 2010). Functional departments concentrate on a particular task of the ministry across different geographies. They are likely to include functions such as human resource management, finance, legal matters, economic affairs, consular affairs, culture and science affairs, security and arms, information and media. The geographical departments coordinate the work of diplomats stationed abroad within specific geographical areas (for example, Asia, Europe, North America) in line with the guidelines of the functional departments.

### **3.4 Human resource management and organisational behaviour perspectives of diplomacy**

An important undertaking of ministries of foreign affairs is human resource management: recruiting, training and assigning and supporting staff positioned abroad and in the headquarters (Nicolson, 1988). From the human resource management (HRM) perspective, diplomacy requires recruiting highly talented and skilled professionals who are capable of assuming sensitive and influential positions abroad, as well as provide mechanisms for career progression. Additionally, a key aspect of the HRM department is to manage the expatriation cycles of staff and their families, and provide them with the necessary support when stationed abroad. This includes the provision of suitable accommodation, furnishing, equipment and staff who carry out regular administration, security or maintenance tasks (Berridge, 2010). It also necessitates providing special services (such as personal protection, emergency evacuation, health services and psychological support) to staff and their families who are assigned to hardship locations or war zones (Jönsson & Hall, 2005; Phillips, 2007; Berridge, 2010; Hibberd & Greenberg, 2011; Semertsidis, 2012; Dunn, Williams, Kemp, Patel & Greenberg, 2014). Another key function of the HRM is continuous training and provisions for professional development of diplomats that would keep them informed of the multidisciplinary aspects of their work (Plischke, 1979b). Hytönen, Hakkarainen & Palonen (2011) found that the socialisation process that diplomats undergo into their profession and organisational culture, involves a significant informal networking and socialising elements, through which essential knowledge, skills and professional support are acquired.

From the employees' perspective, diplomacy is a prestigious profession with significant responsibilities and unique legal entitlements (Barnes & Heath-Morgan, 1979; Plischke,

1979b) that provide a relatively secured career route which involves progressing through the ranking system from lower diplomatic roles to senior managerial roles (Neumann, 2005). At the same time it requires them to undergo several expatriation cycles, each lasting between 2-5 years (Groeneveld, 2008; Berridge, 2010). At the end of their missions abroad they may be asked to return to their homeland and assume a position at the ministry headquarters, or may be requested to continue serving abroad in a different country or position (Barnes & Heath-Morgan, 1979).

Going back to Sir Henry Wotton's remark, it is worth noting that diplomacy and diplomats have been the subject of social stigma for many years (Neumann, 2005; Berridge, 2010); the public view of them is often ambivalent, varying from appreciation, even admiration, to criticism and cynicism (Jönsson & Hall, 2005). For many people, diplomats with their prestigious social standing and glamorous life style, come across as arrogant elitists who are disconnected from their country's problems and everyday life, spending their time between their luxurious mansion, golf courses and cocktail parties. Diplomatic work is often seen as amounting to no more than networking, meetings and attending conferences, revolving around small details that do not matter. But the most forceful criticism of diplomats is around their communication style. Diplomats are often seen as people who are able to say a lot, while communicating very little substance, or those who are skilfully able to distract, mislead and misinform their audience while sugar-coating their messages (Cohen, 1985).

A second type of criticism over diplomacy and diplomats that was forcefully voiced by Riordan (2003: 1) is that diplomacy has 'a poor record in delivering policy objectives'. He went on to claim that 'diplomats are adept at finding others to blame for their failures: interfering politicians, unreasonable behaviour by other countries and the general

unpredictability of international affairs. But the consistency of failures suggest underlying flaws in the policy making machines and the functioning of the diplomatic service' (Riordan, 2003: 3). The key flaw, in his view, is what is known as 'the realist school of diplomacy' (p. 32), whereby nations pursue their *short term* interests. Neumann (2005: 90) added that 'being a diplomat is... to concentrate on the here and now, on keeping the wheels turning'. The consequence of this short-sighted approach is that international activities have become chaotic endeavours, that are managed flexibly, creatively and much of the time reactively, in an attempt to maintain stability rather than shape events (Waltz, 1990; Thies, 2002; Sharp, 2009).

Another debate around diplomacy concerns the question whether it is a profession, since in many countries it is common to assign political appointees to key ambassadorial positions. The nomination of people who are considered amateurs in diplomacy and international relations, and who have not been assessed, recruited or trained by the ministry of foreign affairs seems to erode the occupational status of professional diplomats (Boothe-Luce, 1979; Plischke, 1979c; Thayer, 1979; Yagar, 2005).

A more recent critique of diplomacy is that with the development of new communication technologies and social media, and the prevalence of 'direct-dial diplomacy' and summits between heads of states (Berridge, 2010), diplomacy has become 'technologically redundant' (Sofer, 1988; Riordan, 2003; Berridge, 2010). Today's emphasis on speed often prompts decision-makers to respond directly and quickly to events, thereby sidestepping the traditional diplomatic avenues which are often much slower in pace. This proposition which is often described as 'the decline' or 'the crisis' of diplomacy has led some commentators to describe diplomacy as an endangered species (Cooper, 1997). However

Jönsson & Hall (2002) contended that diplomats have adjusted to 'media diplomacy', and have learned how to use the new media to their advantage.

### **3.5 The roles and skills of diplomats**

A diplomat is an official representative of a country abroad (Oxford dictionary, 2014); a person appointed by a state to conduct international relations with one state or a group of states. The first function of diplomats who are stationed abroad is symbolic in nature: signalling a mutual recognition and normalisation of relationships between the two states (Riordan, 2003; Jönsson & Hall, 2005; Berridge, 2010).

The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961) defined several functions of diplomats:

- **Representing the sending state in the hosting state** – this function is considered the core function of diplomats. They are often compared to other professionals such as solicitors who are charged with advocating on behalf of those whom they represent (Sharp, 1997). Acts of representation may be ceremonial and symbolic in nature, however diplomats are also engaged in promoting interests such as economic, cultural and religious agendas. While in the past much of these tasks were performed in 'face to face' meetings, today much of it is conducted over the phone and other communication means, or indeed through public diplomacy – involving local or international media (Dizard, 2001; Riordan, 2003; Ross, 2003; Copeland, 2009). In performing these functions, diplomats are seen as voicing their current government's views, while at the same time reflecting their homeland ideologies, culture, or public opinion.
- **Promoting and protecting the interests of the sending state** - this task requires diplomats to collect information and remain continually updated in all current affairs of

the hosting country that can directly or indirectly affect the sending country or the relationship between them. This activity can cover a variety of domains, from political and commercial interests, to cultural and artistic aspects (Eilts, 1979; Jönsson & Hall, 2005; Berridge, 2010). It can take different forms, from clarifying intentions, lobbying for or protesting against a local policy or law, to persuasion or coercion (Eilts, 1979; Lerche & Said, 1979). It can be done officially or through unofficial routes, secretly or openly (Berridge, 2010).

Equally, diplomats are required to be updated in the political, commercial and legal events that unfold in their homeland, which may influence the hosting state or the relationships between the two states. When they note such events, they have the responsibility to communicate it to the host government in ways that will highlight their mutual benefits. When they are met with refusal or criticism, their task is to influence, convince and at times coerce officials to take a favourable attitude to support the visiting country's interests (Briggs, 1979; Gruber, 1983).

- **Promoting friendly relations between two states** – this function focuses on the development of political, economic, scientific and cultural relations between the countries. Building on the assumption of shared interests, this requires diplomats to identify common interests, to remove possible barriers for cooperation, and to collaborate with their counterpart officials at the hosting country to create joint policies or agreements. It often requires the establishment of joint organisations, ventures or forums through which these arrangements can be put into practice, and at times, to oversee their implementation (Barnes & Heath-Morgan, 1979; Berridge, 2010).
- **Negotiating with the government of the hosting state** – this role requires diplomats to be the legal representative of their state, and sign agreements. In view of the functions stated above, initiating discussions and taking part in negotiations are central aspects of



the diplomat's role. This involves agreeing on procedures, venues, times and delegations, participating in negotiations, and when agreements have been reached in principle – consulting with the appropriate legal authorities, packaging the agreements, disseminating the information, and following them up to ensure that they are aptly implemented (Ikle, 1979; Kissinger, 1979; Lerche & Said, 1979; Riordan, 2003; Berridge, 2010). Nicolson (1988) noted that negotiation is so central to diplomacy, to the extent that it is often equated with diplomacy.

- **Gathering information** – diplomats continually collect information about the host country by lawful means, and convey it to the sending state. This function is performed in order to produce an accurate assessment of the local situation in multiple domains, including military, political, economic, scientific, social and cultural, which is required in order to provide the foundation for policy formulation and decision making processes at home. Despite the staggering amounts of information readily available today in the public domain, this is still a central aspect of the resident embassy and diplomatic work (Berridge, 1995; Melissen, 1999; Jönsson & Hall, 2005). It involves not only collecting the overflowing streams of information, but also analysing and appraising the information, and then transmitting it to the appropriate department in the ministry's headquarters (Swayne, 1979; Riordan, 2003). Berridge (2010) noted that some types of information can only be accessed through personal ties, and therefore can only be collected by resident diplomats. He also made the point that the ways in which information is analysed and presented significantly affect international relations, and misinterpretation of information can lead to tension, even armed conflict between countries.

The information gathering function can also entails providing cover for intelligence activities and personnel, within an agreed upon and reasonable sphere of activity

(Swayne, 1979; Berridge, 2010). In this respect, diplomacy and intelligence can be seen as complementary institutions (Jönsson & Hall, 2005), though today intelligence has become a separate institution with 'no more than tacit international recognition' (Nicolson, 1988: 123).

- **Protecting co-nationals who reside or travel to the host country** - this function is mainly carried out by consular services. It entails providing assistance to citizens while abroad and ensuring their protection and fair treatment when facing legal procedures, or during war times (Berridge, 2010).

In addition to defining the functions of diplomats, The Vienna Convention (1961) granted diplomats significant legal immunities and privileges, that facilitate and enables them to fulfil the functions cited above, and protect them and their families from being harmed, especially when there is conflict or war between states. Diplomatic immunity means that foreign diplomats are not subject to the jurisdiction of local courts in respect of their official, and in some cases, their personal actions (Frey & Frey, 1999). However, countries have the right to expel diplomats whose actions are regarded as malicious, or if they breach diplomatic etiquettes, by declaring them 'persona non grata' (Nicolson, 1988; Jönsson & Hall, 2005; Berridge, 2010).

The Vienna Convention (1961) also granted embassy buildings and residences of diplomatic staff a special status of extraterritorial and inviolable (Jönsson & Hall, 2005; Berridge, 2010). Immunity also carries with it an obligation: the duty to respect the laws and regulations of the hosting state, and commitment not to interfere with domestic affairs (Vienna Convention, 1961).

To perform these roles, several skills have been identified as core competencies that diplomats are required to have or develop (AAD, 2011; Rana, 2011; Megahed, van der Heijden, Shaker & Wahba, 2012; Israel MFA, 2013):

- **Knowledge** - general International Relations knowledge and knowledge of one's own country (understanding its international goals, positions, policies, interests and strategies), knowledge of the hosting country, and importantly, ability to learn and update one's knowledge.
- **Interpersonal skills** - such as listening, networking, negotiation, conflict resolution, communication, public speaking, team work and media management.
- **Cognitive skills and personality characteristics** - such as political and analytical thinking, self-regulation, initiative, resourcefulness, motivation, judgment, objectivity, integrity and problem solving.
- **Management and leadership skills** - such as decision-making, policy formulation, strategic abilities, operational effectiveness, prioritising, crisis management, managing staff, resources and budgets, time management and empowering staff.
- **Cross-cultural skills** - such as flexibility, adaptability, cross-cultural communication (including language proficiency), knowledge and understanding of diplomatic protocol and codes of behaviour.

In examining the skills of diplomats reviewed here, the centrality of interpersonal communication is plainly evident as a vital capacity that diplomats must have in order to successfully perform their missions. Tran (1987: 8) argued that 'communication is to diplomacy as blood is to the human body. Whenever communication ceases, the body of international politics, the process of diplomacy, is dead, and the result is violent conflict or atrophy'. Indeed in diplomacy 'saying is doing' and 'doing is saying' (Jönsson & Hall, 2005:

2) and as Eban (1983: 393) articulated 'speech is an incisive form of action', which may justify the 'semantic obsession' of diplomats. This entails using a 'carefully calibrated language' (Jönsson & Hall, 2002: 3), which enables agents to engage in cross-cultural communication while minimising unnecessary misunderstandings. In their analysis of the various forms that diplomatic communication can take, Jönsson & Hall (2002; 2005) maintained that in diplomacy, besides verbal and written communication, messages are also communicated through non-verbal interpersonal gestures such as body postures, facial expressions and handshakes, as well as symbolic communications such as gifts exchange, flags raised, the types of invitations issued, the venues or formats of meetings, and even the shape of the negotiating table (Cohen, 1981; 1987). These features of diplomatic communication are labelled as 'signalling' and their ambiguity is purposeful, as it allows the sender to dispute the other party's interpretation when the situation calls for it (Cohen, 1987; Jönsson, 1996). However, this means that diplomats are not only required to think and notice the smallest details of their own communication, but also be constantly aware of the signals embedded in all incoming communications, and 'read between their lines' (Jönsson & Hall, 2002). Risse (2000) maintained that over the years diplomacy has developed a shared protocol and communication conventions in order to overcome the hurdles of multilingual and cross-cultural interaction.

In an analysis of the skills that the Israeli MFA perceives as a threshold requirement, Yagar (2005) added the following features: intelligence and analytic capacities, knowledge, nuance perception, initiation, integrity in one's contact with other diplomats, confidentiality, tact, sociability, grit, politeness, hospitality, accuracy in information exchange and reporting, composure and self control even when being challenged or critiqued, humility, charisma and excellent communication, and loyalty to his government even when not in agreement with its views or actions.

### **3.6 The cultural context of diplomatic work**

Earlier I noted (see section 1.8) that the meaning that people assign to their work is significantly shaped by the social and cultural contexts within which they operate. It is also influenced by the values, beliefs and customs that people in a particular culture hold about work in general, and their line of work (Martin, 2000; Jepson, 2010). In this section I aim to contextualise the findings of this study by exploring three cultural frameworks which may impinge on the meaning that Israeli diplomats ascribe to their work: the Israeli national culture, the (global) culture of the diplomatic profession, and the Israeli MFA organisational culture.

Before venturing into the exploration of the three cultural contexts, it is essential to define culture. Hofstede (2004: 26) defined culture as ‘the collective programming of the mind distinguishing the members of one group or category of people from another’. Hofstede noted that this definition applies not only to national cultures, but also to professional cultures (such as that of diplomats), organisational cultures, and other sub-cultures. Culture is a quality of a collective and it encompasses every aspect of life. It is strongly embedded in language and discourse (Jepson, 2010), it is learned through the process of socialisation, and it is displayed through people's everyday rituals, behavioural and communicative patterns, group affiliations and identities (Hofstede, 2005).

#### **3.6.1 The professional culture of diplomacy**

Bolewski's (2008) analysis of the global culture of diplomacy as a profession suggests that culture is at the centre of diplomatic endeavours. While diplomats bring their own national and organisational cultures to the table, they also bring their awareness of the culturally

diverse realm in which they operate, and the skill and will to bridge across these differences. Hence Hofstede (2004: 25) defined diplomats as ‘cultural bridge builders’.

Bolewski (2008) further argued that in addition to promoting their states' interests, much of diplomats' work is geared towards establishing global norms and values that promote global order and governance, and facilitate the achievement of global interdependent objectives (Commission on Global Governance, 1995; Kirton, 2001; Castells, 2008). This necessitates the creation of a common global culture of diplomacy, which according to Bolewski (2008) is already to some degree in place. This is achieved through a similar training that MFAs around the world offer to their staff, by following detailed ceremonial, behavioral and communication protocols, and by sharing certain social values and norms (such as: compromise, searching for shared interests, promoting peaceful solutions, self-control, courtesy, tolerance, patience, etc). Sharing similar professional experiences, legal entitlements, social stigmas, career structures, family issues, and having similar skills also facilitates the creation of a professional global culture. It is important to note that despite these similarities and strive to create a shared cultural platform for diplomatic work, the original cultural differences (both national and organisational) remain, and are indeed necessary for diplomats as representatives of their own country and culture (Bolewski, 2008).

### **3.6.2 The MFA's organisational culture**

In an insightful qualitative study which aimed to unpack diplomats' perceptions of *what it means to be a diplomat*, Neumann (2005) uncovered several core features of the organisational culture of the Norwegian Diplomatic Service, and argued that there are several cultural scripts that underlie the conduct of senior diplomatic staff.

The first is the bureaucratic scripts - which is about performing the small and often repetitive tasks that one is expected to do at work; 'its merits concern the fact that you go on going on' (Neumann, 2005: 73). The author found that while senior diplomats acknowledged the bureaucratic aspect of their work and closely followed its protocols, they were also somewhat cynical about it, and hence he described them as over-fulfilling this script, and at the same time as 'unwilling bureaucrats' (p. 80). Neumann (2005) made a further point that as ambassadors are managed from afar, their conduct cannot be governed directly, and hence an alternative way to manage them is to regulate 'the conduct of conduct' (p. 86) through setting up behavioural protocols that make up the bureaucratic script.

The second cultural script is the career script which concerns employees' positioning and progression in their careers, and this is linked to the prestigious social status that one acquires when assigned to senior positions. Diplomats are often described as 'career diplomats' while at the same time the often used metaphors to describe their work is that of the champagne glass and the pin-striped suit, which alludes to their high-stature and stylish life style. Here too, Neumann (2005) found an over-fulfilment of this script which is manifested in staff's willingness to bear personal and family costs in order to climb the organisation hierarchy ladder and attain the top positions. He also found however, that upon returning from missions abroad, some ambassadors were not assigned to a new position, and instead were given an intermediate roles where they are required to 'lend a hand' to others while waiting to be assigned. Neumann (2005) noted that 'the fifth floor corridor where these people had their office was known as the drying-loft' (p. 76). It should be noted that the career script described by Neumann (2005) closely resembles the career orientation in Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) work orientation model.

A third script that Neumann (2005) described is that of the clash between family life and work. Neumann detected two types of clashes: one is that work hours often stretch beyond the official job timing, and involves attending formal events in the evenings and taking phone calls around the clock. For diplomats 'it was business as usual' that private times are interrupted; as 'it is part of the job to be available 24 hours a day' (Neumann, 2005: 88). The second is when a diplomat is sent to a hardship location that cannot accommodate his or her family needs (such as schooling) and therefore taking the appointment necessitates staying away from the family for several years.

Lastly, the professional script that Neumann (2005) uncovered is that of the mediator and negotiator. When diplomats describe the contents of their work, they recount mediation and negotiation as their main roles, while seeing themselves as representing the ministry's policy or views. Neumann (2005) found that through stories about mediations and negotiation that were told and retold among staff members, new staff members are socialised into the conduct of these roles. He also noted that today mediation is more critical than negotiation, particularly for Norwegian diplomats who often take a third-party role in the international relations scene.

Neumann's (2005) findings are of particular relevance for this study as the exploration of what it means to be a Norwegian diplomat seem to be closely aligned with the features of the global professional culture of diplomats described by Bolewski (2008) (reviewed above). This suggests that organisational cultures of diplomatic services strongly draw on the global cultural features of diplomacy as a profession and tie these features together with the local organisational culture.



Since no parallel analysis to that of Neumann's (2005) can be found on the Israeli MFA, it would be difficult to extract a cultural organisational profile on it that would offer similar depth of analysis. However, there are some descriptions and analyses of the Israeli MFA work patterns, structure, policies, successes or failures (Gazit, 1981; Cohen, 1985; Bialer, 2008; Opaz, 1999; Yagar, 2005) that are incorporated within analyses or discussions of the state of Israel's international relations, that can shed a light on the internal workings of Israeli MFA which I shall briefly review below.

The first impression that can be drawn from the literature is that in terms of organisational structure of the MFA little has changed since its establishment in 1948 (Gazit, 1981; Opaz, 1999; Yagar, 2005): It's structure remains highly hierarchical, with entry to the profession, cadet training, career progression and retirement being highly standardized and systemised. Employees are expected to follow a traditional career path, where they enter the MFA at a relatively young age, and remain until retirement. In line with Neumann's findings, Yagar (2005) also described the internal competition for positions in the Israeli MFA as stressful and argued that there is a strong sensitivity to progression and nominations within the Israeli MFA among staff, and that this is a source of frustration and bitterness.

The longevity of employees' careers means that they serve alongside their colleagues for their entire careers. Hence it is perhaps not surprising that the MFA is often described as 'the MFA family' (Opaz, 1999) suggesting that there is a culture of strong familiarity, collegiality, camaraderie and trust in the MFA. Yagar (2005) noted that Israel's residential missions abroad are often small with just a few families. These families often live in close proximity and effectively create a tightly-knit community, where all members of the families befriend and spend much time together in and out of work. These conditions require the ambassador to have strong leadership skills and the ability to navigate the

delicate boundaries between family life and work. The lack of such skills can easily turn this environment into a 'pressure cooker' and negatively affect work (Yagar, 2005).

An additional cultural feature that comes across from the literature is the diligence and dedication of staff (Yagar, 2005). The work of Israeli diplomats is often described as highly demanding and testing since it is often conducted under battling conditions where the stakes are very high. Hence the common symbol of diplomats - the champagne glass and cocktail parties, are considered by Israeli diplomats as derogative and irrelevant to them (Gazit, 1981; Cohen, 1985; Yagar, 2005). MFA employees are often depicted as highly invested, diligent and committed to their work. They often show bravery and outstanding dedication when willing to go on missions abroad that put their lives at risk (Opaz, 1999; Yagar, 2005).

Another cultural feature that comes across from several papers (Opaz, 1999; Yagar, 2005) is that MFA employees see themselves as central players in Israel's international relations. They see the establishment of peaceful relations as their main purpose and mission, and indeed their work is often described as a constant battle in the international arena to prevent escalation of conflicts into wars (Opaz, 1999). Another aspect of their work is defending Israel's case and opposing the growing de-legitimation of its actions, international interests and even existence. Yagar (2005) argued that Israeli diplomats' work differs from those of other diplomats since despite its 67 years of independence, it is still surrounded geographically by enemies, and isolated in the international arena. Yair (2014) noted that the Israeli gloomy existential predicament features strongly in the Israeli society discourse, and is often voiced by political leaders. It is also reflected in the Israeli diplomatic literature and in the reports written by senior diplomats about their work (Bialer, 2008; Inbar, 2008; Yagar, 2005). Yagar (2005) commented that Israeli diplomats

are constantly conducting their work and living in hostile environments, which demand high levels of resilience, toughness, self confidence and composure.

Similar to Neumann (2005), Yagar (2005) also found that lack of work-life balance is indeed a common feature among Israeli diplomats. He further explained that when working abroad, no one looks at the clock; people work as necessary in accordance to work demands and in response to arising events. It is seen as normative that weekends, holidays and evenings are often devoted to work.

Lastly, Yagar (2005) referred to the bureaucratic aspect of work that has also been highlighted by Neumann (2005); he argued that Israeli politicians and diplomats do not always follow diplomatic behavioural protocols. He explained that this is due to the Israeli national culture that tends to be informal and often lacks politeness. Jepson (2010) commented that the relationship between different socio-cultural and communicative scripts (national, organisational or occupational) – may at times contradict or compete, as seems to be the case here.

### **3.6.3 The national socio-cultural context**

Following the genocide of 6 million Jews during the Holocaust in World War II, the United Nations allowed Jews to establish their own state, and on 14 May 1948 Israel proclaimed its independence. Less than 24 hours later, the armies of Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq invaded the newly born country, forcing Israel to defend its independence. Since its establishment and until today Israel has been involved in 14 armed conflicts with its Arab neighbouring states and with the Palestinians. Throughout these conflicts the Israeli MFA and diplomatic service have played a central role in ending armed conflicts and establishing peaceful relations with Egypt and Jordan (Kimmerling, 2005). Given that Israel

was established in response to the holocaust and its long history of wars, the national culture of Israel has a strong survivalist element (Lewis, 2005). As mentioned above (Yair, 2014; Yagar, 2005), the survivalist instinct and the sense of living under constant existential threat, features strongly in the Israeli MFA organisational culture.

Another core feature of the Israeli society is its diversity: the majority of Israel's citizens in the 1950s were immigrants, and today too, the proportion of immigrants is around 42% (Israel Office of National Statistics, 2012). Given the lack of cultural and linguistic uniformity, for nearly 40 years Israel has implemented a forceful 'melting pot' policy, which was designed to re-socialise immigrants into Israeli citizens - a policy that even todate has not been fully abandoned (Kimmerling, 2005). In the early days the most significant cultural divide was between Ashkenazim (immigrants who came from Western countries) and Mizrahim (those who arrived from Arab and other non-Western countries). However today, the divide is primarily between Jews and Arab Israeli citizens (mainly Muslim) and between religious and secular Jews. In terms of religion, 85% of Israeli citizens are Jewish, 13% Muslim, and 2% are Christian. Importantly, while the majority of Israeli citizens are Jewish, they are mostly secular, hence non-practicing (Kimmerling, 2005).

With reference to religion, Parboteeah et al. (2009) found that all major religions influence societal norms regarding work, and these norms may have an effect on individuals, regardless whether they themselves are religious. The authors further argued that most religions perceive work as essential for decent life, and it is part of people's social duty. However, within the Israeli contemporary setting, work and religiosity are often seen as conflicting obligations, as the ultra-orthodox communities often refrain from working and devote their time entirely for religious practice and reflection. Consequently these

communities and individuals are often seen by secular Jews as evading their social duties as citizens (Kimmerling, 2005).

Hofstede, Pedersen & Hofstede (2002) categorised cultures into five dimensions:

- **Individualistic versus collectivistic cultures** - this dimension describes the relationship between individuals and groups in a given culture. In individualistic cultures the individual is more important than groups, and tasks are more important than relationships. People are expected to be different and pursue their chosen course in life, and communication tends to be explicit. On the other hand, in collectivistic cultures, the group is more important than the individual, people are expected to belong to certain groups or communities, and are also expected to offer their resources for the benefit of the collective. Hence relationships are very important, and communication tends to be implicit. Israel has been known for its high collectivistic features that were manifested in strong family and community ties, as well as strong sense of national identity. Patriotism has also featured strongly in Israel's culture until the late 1970s. However, over the years, researchers have documented a decline in the collectivistic cultural elements, and today more individualistic features are taking centre stage (Kimmerling & Moore, 1997).
- **Power distance** - this dimension describes the relationships between people where there is hierarchy (teacher-student, boss – employee, etc). On one side of the scale there are cultures that are highly hierarchical in nature, where might is right, and the less powerful are dependent and are expected to respect those in authority positions; accordingly, the speech style is relatively formal. On the other side of the scale there are cultures that are more equality orientated, where there is less power distance between people. People are expected to establish relations with their

subordinates, and accordingly the speech style is relatively informal. Despite its strong military culture, Israel is often described as having small power distance and having more informal speech style (Winter, 2001). Lewis (2005) noted that Israelis are highly informal. There is little protocol, first names are used early in the relationship and dress tends to be casual. Furthermore, he found Israelis to be talkative, opinionated, poor listeners, argumentative, blunt, pushy and brash. Subtlety is not considered an Israeli strength. As can be seen from this description, these cultural features seem to be in contrast with the professional diplomatic style described earlier (Bolewski, 2008).

- **Masculine versus feminine societies** - according to this classification, masculine societies are more achievement and task orientated, while feminine societies are more relationship and care orientated. In masculine societies, material success, ambition, competition and winning are dominant values. In feminine societies achievement and competition are played down, the weak are taken care of, and conflicts are resolved through compromise. On this scale Israel seems to be situated in the middle; success and ambition are important, but relationships and caring for others are also a core value. This point is often explained by living in a war zone where people often rely on each other for survival.
- **Weak versus strong uncertainty avoidance** - this dimension classifies societies into cultures that value certainty and structure and therefore create routines and rules that are explicit and formal, versus cultures that are capable of handling instability and lack of guidelines, hence rules are limited, implicit and somewhat limited. Israel tends to be less structured and more flexible in its style and creativity, where thinking 'out of the box' and ability to improvise are highly valued (Winter, 2001).

- **Long versus short term orientation** - time is perceived in diverse ways by different cultures; some cultures are future orientated where people work hard for future gains, show persistence in pursuing their goals and learn to delay gratification. On the other side of the scale are countries where people are more focused on the 'here and now', getting quick results, and enjoying the moment. This goes hand in hand with unpredictable timetables, changes in plans, multitasking and 'pulling strings' to get things done. Israel is indeed on the 'short term orientation' side of the scale (Winter, 2001). Lewis (2005) described Israelis as highly energetic and impatient.

As can be seen from the analysis, Israel's national culture and the MFA's organisational culture are to some degree aligned. The existential anxiety that features the MFA culture seem to be grounded in the national culture, while willingness to take risks and work under challenging conditions seems to fit the Israeli masculine cultural style. At the same time, the culture of camaraderie of the MFA sits well with the collectivistic orientation of the country.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

This chapter aimed to construct a foundation for the presentation of the findings by portraying the organisational context within which diplomats perform, and by delineating the functions that diplomat assume. The chapter began with the definition of diplomacy, and followed with a description of the three main actors in diplomacy: governments, ministries of foreign affairs, and diplomats, while depicting their functions and outlooks on diplomacy.

Much of the accounts were written from a classic, state-centric functional outlook of diplomacy – which has been the leading paradigm in diplomacy for nearly a century (Melissen, 1999; Murray, 2009). This perspective accentuates the role of states in diplomacy, and therefore perceives all the activities that take place in the international arena as governed, structured, established and regulated by the states involved (Sharp, 2003; Murray, 2009). Accordingly, the diplomats' positioning is that of middlemen between the home state and other hosting state or organisations involved, while their main roles are to advance the interests of the sending state and promote friendly relations (Berridge, 2010).

This chapter reviewed the literature on human resources management and organisational behaviour scholarship in relation to diplomacy, and presented an analysis of diplomats' roles and skills, and some of the challenges inherent in diplomatic work.

It also presented an analysis of the three cultural realms in which Israeli diplomats' work is conducted: the culture of diplomacy as a profession, the Israeli MFA organisational culture and Israel's national culture. These were briefly portrayed and unpacked in order to locate the respondents' work-related meaning making processes within their cultural settings.

The review suggests that diplomats play the role of sensitive and influential intermediaries, in a complex, multi-actor and fast changing system of international relations. Additionally, they are in a prestigious profession that offers them a relatively secured career for life, while offering them high-powered senior positions with unique legal entitlements and autonomy, and a luxurious life style. Yet at the same time, they are subjected to forceful criticism on their skills and performance, and there is a debate whether diplomacy is a profession. These are some of the themes that are unpacked and developed in the Findings chapter of this thesis.



# **CHAPTER 4: LITERATURE REVIEW: GLOBAL CAREER**

## **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter reviews extant literature on expatriates and expatriation in the context of diplomatic careers, and particularly examines the aspects of expatriation that can influence the meaning that diplomats assign to their work. It should be noted that the literature reviewed here draws both on diplomacy literature as well as on the vast literature pertaining to business expatriates, and hence throughout this chapter the literature on diplomacy is linked to the expatriation literature, in order to establish the relevance and concurrence of global work theories to the group studied here.

This chapter opens with an overview of expatriation (section 4.2) and the definition of expatriation and typology of global assignments (section 4.3). Section 4.4 describes the roles of expatriates while section 4.5 explores the skills and resources of expatriates. Section 4.6 discusses the characteristics, challenges and outcomes of global work and section 4.7 concludes the discussion on global careers.

## **4.2 Expatriation – an overview**

With the emergence of globalisation nearly a century ago, the volume and scope of international business activities have expanded exponentially, and with it the number of expatriate assignments (Baruch & Altman, 2002; Dickmann & Baruch, 2011). Within the business realm, globalisation is defined as 'the process by which businesses or other organizations develop international influence or start operating on an international scale' (Oxford Dictionary, 2014).

While in the past Ministries of Foreign Affairs and their diplomatic corps were the main (if not the only) organisations operating on a large international scale (Riordan, 2003), today there are numerous non-governmental organisations (NGOs), international government organisations (IGOs) and a significant number of multi-national corporations (MNCs) with international presence (Dickmann & Baruch, 2011). These organisations and their international ventures are considered central contributors to the expansion of the globalisation process, which is described as the process of international integration that emerged from the exchange of products and ideas (Albrow, 1990; Held, McGrew, Goldblatt & Perraton, 1999).

Several diplomacy scholars (Constantinou, 1993; Langhorne, 1997; Hoffman, 2003; Riordan, 2003) maintained that there is an association and interplay between diplomacy and global business activities, since some areas of diplomacy (particularly economic activity and cultivation of networks and relations between countries) are conducted today by non-state actors, particularly by employees of multi-national corporations. This has significantly affected the ways in which diplomacy is conducted today, as ministries of foreign affairs have begun to acknowledge that modern diplomacy is no longer conducted only by nations and their appointed personnel, but also by these unofficial actors, and began to forge stronger alliances and collaborations with them (Jönsson & Hall, 2005). This suggests that the goals of diplomacy and the roles that diplomats perform may be to some degree similar to that of business expatriates - a point that will be later explored.

### **4.3 Defining expatriation**

Expatriation is described as 'a period of time spent in an overseas operating unit of the organisation' (Dickmann & Baruch, 2011: 9); hence an expatriate can be seen as a person

who is sent by his or her company to operate a unit of the organisation abroad (Dickmann & Baruch, 2011). This definition indeed corresponds with the roles of ambassadors explained earlier (see section 3.4).

Expatriation initiated by the company can take different forms (Dowling & Welch, 2004; Dickmann & Baruch, 2011):

- **Classic expatriation** - involving a period of residence abroad, followed by repatriation. The periods can vary between short term assignments lasting a few months, to longer assignments lasting several years.
- **Serial expatriation** - series of expatriation assignments with no repatriation between them.
- **Regular cross-border commuting / rotational assignment** - describing employees who work abroad but return to their homeland frequently and on a regular basis for periods of break.
- **Flexpatriation / Globetrotting** - a mission or series of assignments abroad that necessitate repeated short term visits to one or more countries. In this case the expatriate works both in the company's headquarter and abroad.

According to Marshall (1999) and Berridge (2010) all these types of assignments abroad are relevant to diplomacy (Melissen, 2005; Cull, 2008; Nye, 2008).

#### **4.4 The roles of expatriates**

The roles of business expatriates vary vastly, and are much less formally established and agreed upon, compared to those of diplomats. In their reviews of the extant literature on

expatriation, Dowling & Welch (2004) and Dickmann & Baruch (2011) described several common roles of expatriates:

- **Networking** - establishing new ties abroad and strengthening or maintaining existing relations that can help promoting the company's interests abroad.
- **Boundary spanning** - performing intermediary activities which bridge between countries, such as: representing their companies in the host country, collecting local data and sending it to the company's headquarters and vice versa.
- **Competency and skills transfer** - training or mentoring the company's staff working in its subsidiary abroad. Through these activities they transfer competencies and skills to the company's units abroad and sometimes vice versa.
- **Coordination and cohesion** – ensuring the compliance of subsidiaries with the company's goals, policies, values and culture in order to ensure organisational cohesion.
- **Language facilitation** – facilitation of meetings and negotiations that require bi-lingual mastery (when the expatriate can fluently speak both the home and host languages).

Indeed the roles that expatriates fulfill seem to be closely aligned with the roles of diplomats described earlier (see section 3.4): both take some form of representational roles and aim to promote their organisation's interests in the host country; both have an element of boundary spanning and knowledge transfer, and in both the functions of networking and building relationships are a key component (Mirvis, Hurley & MacArthur, 2014). This suggests that expatriates' and diplomats' roles require similar skills, which I will explore next.

## 4.5 The skills and resources of expatriates

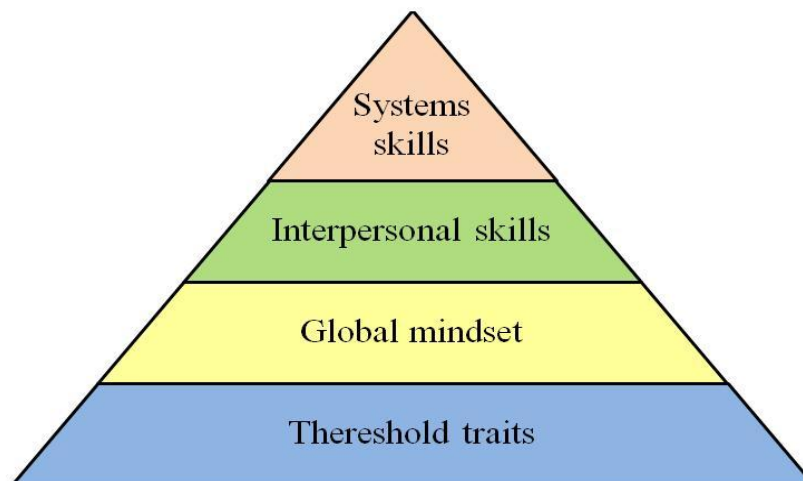
Much of the research on expatriates has been conducted from a human resource management perspective, and therefore it is unsurprising that significant part of the literature has been devoted to the examination of the skills and capacities that are essential for successful expatriation. One of the prominent models for categorising the core skills and capacities required for successful expatriation was developed by Dowling & Welsh (2004). It identifies six essential factors:

- 1) **Technical knowledge or professional expertise** - The knowledge and expertise that are necessary for performing the technical tasks involved in a position, for example: legal expertise or IT software skills.
- 2) **Organisational / role requirements** - Beyond technical skills, there are other types of knowledge, skills, capacities and work experiences that the employing organisation and its unit abroad may require in accordance with the goals they expect the expatriate to achieve. These may include capacities such as management or leadership skills, training skills, public speaking, negotiation, etc.
- 3) **Language** - The expatriate's ability to communicate in the local language is often seen as the foundation of the employee's cross-cultural skills (Ting-Toommey & Chung, 2012).
- 4) **Cross cultural suitability** - In addition to language skills, expatriates are required to possess a range of cross-cultural skills that enable them to interact productively with others across cultures, and cope well with their relocation. Dowling & Welch (2004) noted that there is no consensus as to which skills and traits comprise 'intercultural competence', and therefore it is difficult to assess candidates.

In their analysis of expatriates' global competencies, Bird & Osland (2004) distinguished between four clusters of required skills and competencies (Figure 1):

- **Threshold traits** - integrity, humility, inquisitiveness and hardiness.
- **Global mindset** - ability to handle and master cognitive complexity, and display cosmopolitanism.
- **Interpersonal skills** - culturally-sensitivity and mindful communication, and ability to build trusting relations.
- **System skills** - ability to work across boundaries, initiate change and build communities.

Figure 1: The building blocks of global competencies



Quoted from Bird & Osland (2004: 66)

The authors argued that in addition to these skills, expatriates require relevant *global knowledge* in order to be able to function well in a global environment. Additionally, they suggested that senior executive positions (particularly leadership posts) require all these global competencies, and at a high level of mastery in each, while technical and administration positions may require lower level of mastery of these skills. They also

indicated that these competencies can be developed to some degree (with the exception of threshold traits that are considered fairly stable), and suggested that they can best be learned through experiential learning while fulfilling a position abroad. However, the model does not clearly define what is the cut-off point from which a person can be defined as globally competent, and the questionnaires developed to measure global competencies (see Matsumoto & Hwang, 2013 and Mendenhall, Stevens, Bird & Oddou, 2008) do not directly correspond to this model, thus making it difficult to apply. Another construct that has been popularised in recent years is *Cultural Intelligence* (CQ) (Earley & Ang, 2003). The *Cultural Intelligence* model offers a conceptual framework for analysing people's capability to perform aptly and manage relationships effectively in culturally diverse environments (Earley & Erez, 1997). The model includes four sub-domains (Ang, Van Dyne & Koh, 2006):

- **Meta-cognitive capacities (CQ knowledge)** - a person's mental processes that enable him or her to aptly comprehend cultural knowledge, including the understanding of how cultures affect people's behaviours, thinking and communication.
- **Cognitive aptitude (CQ strategy)** - one's awareness and understanding of cultural differences in norms, practices and conventions, and ability to translate this awareness into behaviours.
- **Motivation (CQ drive)** - the motivation and capacity to remain engaged in cross cultural interaction, and willingness to learn about other cultures and socialise with people from other cultures.
- **Behavioural competence (CQ action)** - the capacity to display appropriate behaviour in cross cultural setting. This involves the ability to self-regulate and adapt one's own behaviour in accordance with the situation.

The authors developed a questionnaire that measures the four dimensions of CQ (knowledge, strategy, drive, and behaviour), and there are also a standard cut-off points for assessing low versus high CQ levels in each subscale (Ang et al., 2006; Earley & Ang, 2003). The authors contended that these competencies can be augmented, though one has to have them at threshold level at the starting point. They also argued that CQ can be effectively developed through expatriation.

- 5) **Country / cultural requirement** - the knowledge and familiarity of the expatriate with the country, its culture and language, and having ties in the host country are vital for their performance and success.
- 6) **Family requirements** - the influence of the family's psycho-social resources and attitudes on expatriates' performance (particularly that of the spouses' motivation and resilience), have been well documented (Caligiuri, Hyland & Joshi, 1998; Groeneveld, 2008; Westman, Etzion & Gattenio, 2008). Family challenges, such as dual career issues, elderly parents, and children's education, are considered key reasons for turning down a position abroad (Groeneveld, 2008), while the unwillingness of family members to relocate, their adjustment problems, lack of support or collaboration, have been argued to lead to mission failure (see Lazarova, Westman & Shaffer, 2010; Mäkelä & Suutari, 2011).

**To conclude**, the capacities and skills of expatriates reviewed here which are included in Dowling & Welch's (2004) model seems to be compatible to some degree with the skills of diplomats described earlier (section 3.4), as both entail particular role-specific knowledge and skills, management and leadership capacities, and cross-cultural competencies. However, the literature on expatriates' capacities seem to emphasise their cross-cultural skills, while the descriptions of diplomats' skills seem to accentuate both their cross-



cultural and their interpersonal skills – which are considered as a key aptitude in diplomacy (Mirvis et al., 2014).

## **4.6 The characteristics of international work**

Much of the literature on expatriation revolves around the characteristics of global work, particularly the challenges that the expatriation process and cross-cultural work present to expatriates, their families and their organisations (Dickmann & Baruch, 2011). These can be broadly classified into three categories: global work entry, work challenges and outcomes.

### **4.6.1 Global work entry**

There are three main aspects associated with global work entry: employees' choices and motivations to embark on a global career path or take on an expatriate position, family considerations, and the selection criteria and processes.

#### **➤ Employees' motivations**

Some careers are designed as global careers, while others are likely to have a global dimension to them; diplomatic career is probably the best example of the first type (Dickmann & Baruch, 2011). In both cases employees are likely to be aware of the company's expectation from them to relocate and take a company position abroad.

Employees' motivations to embark on a global career path or to assume a particular position abroad can range from career development, organisational considerations, financial and material grounds, to individual interests and location-specific attraction (Dickmann, Doherty, Mills & Brewster, 2008; Hippler, 2009; Dickmann & Mills, 2010; Doherty, Dickmann & Mills, 2011). Several authors found that while expatriates'

motivations are often a mixture of extrinsic and intrinsic factors (Suutari, 2003; Haines, Saba & Choquette, 2008), career progression continues to be a leading motivation (Peltonen, 1997; Benson & Pattie, 2008).

➤ **Family considerations**

Alongside staff's motivations to embark on a global career path, employees may have concerns regarding their expatriation which can diminish their motivation, and cause them to turn down a position offer (Stahl, Miller & Tung, 2002). These concerns can vary from deficiency of work-related skills, experience and language, to family concerns, particularly the spouse's work and his or her willingness to relocate, the children's education and cultural adjustment, and well-being of family members including those who stay behind (Stephens & Black, 1991; Brett & Stroh, 1995; Aryee, Chay & Chew, 1996; Handler & Lane, 1997; Konopaske & Werner, 2005).

The literature on dual career in the context of global work, suggests that expatriates' spouses often become unemployed upon relocation, sometimes due to visa issues, and at times because they are unable to find work in their profession (Harvey, 1998; Van der Zee, Ali & Salomé, 2005). Beyond the immediate implication that this has on the family's income and life style, and on the spouse's well-being, it can negatively affect the spouse's future career path (Groeneveld, 2008). These unfavorable prospects can in turn undermine the spouse's willingness to relocate, and dent the expatriate's motivation (Konopaske, Robie & Ivancevich, 2005; Groeneveld, 2008).

Dickmann & Baruch (2011) noted that in some companies, taking a position abroad can be seen as a pre-condition for career promotion, which may compel employees to accept a position abroad, despite their concerns. In view of this trend the authors recommended that expatriates' motivation to relocate and his or her concerns should be taken into

account during the selection process, since these matters can undermine their performance abroad and can even lead to mission failure (see section 'Success and failure', p. 70).

➤ **Selection processes**

Regarding the expatriates' selection procedures, the research suggests that expatriates selection processes are conducted through open or closed (internal) systems, and that there is often interplay between formal and informal processes, some of which may involve pre-selection (Harris & Brewster, 1999; Franke & Nicholson, 2002; Anderson, 2005). As noted earlier, there are some models for identifying expatriates' skills, and there are some diagnostic questionnaires for measuring these skills (Holopainen & Bjorkman, 2005; Huang, Chi & Lawler, 2005; Caligiuri, Tarique & Jacobs, 2009). However, Dickmann & Baruch (2011: 129) have argued that 'there seems to be a gap between the criteria that organisations should use to select international assignees, and those criteria that are being actually used'.

Another strand of literature that is related to the selection and employees' profiles and motivations to embark on a global career, is about the trials and tribulations of female diplomats, and female diplomats and business expatriates (Westwood & Leung, 1994; Yagar, 2005; Altman & Shortland, 2008; Groeneveld, 2008; Shortland, 2009). The literature reveals that women encounter 'the glass boundary' in their own companies, that undermines both their nomination to leadership positions and to positions abroad (Linehan & Scullion, 2001; Hofbauer & Fischlmayr, 2004 Conley-Tyler, Blizzard & Crane, 2014), and consequently they are less motivated to apply to overseas assignments (Conley-Tyler et al., 2014; Tzeng, 2006; Inch, McIntyre & Napier, 2008). Several authors found that females' decision making processes with regards to expatriate

positions is different to males, due to their different family responsibilities (Hearn, Jyrkinen, Piekkari & Oinonen, 2008; Tharenou, 2008) and their partners' unwillingness to put their careers on hold (Elron & Kark, 2000; Linehan & Walsh, 2000; Groeneveld, 2008). When they are sent on assignments abroad they face additional challenges compared to men; these include encountering negative stereotypes regarding female managers, and consequently less support and limited access to organisational resources (Janssens, Cappellen & Zanoni, 2006; Hearn et al., 2008; Conley-Tyler et al., 2014). Mäkelä, Suutari & Mayerhofer (2011) argued that women also experience more difficulties than men in balancing work and family roles; they often assume more responsibilities ('second shift') at home than their spouses, while male expatriates tend to rely more on the support of their wives (Groeneveld, 2008). Finally, it was found that family members are more negatively affected by female expatriation compared to male (Tharenou, 2008).

#### **4.6.2 Global work challenges**

There are three prominent challenges in global work: the relocation, the work demands and expatriates' performance, and the repatriation and its impact on employees' retention.

##### **➤ The relocation**

Expatriation entails the relocation of staff abroad, with or without their families. Changing the workplace and position, while at the same time changing home, country, and adapting to a new culture, is considered one of the most stressful and challenging aspects of expatriation (Munton, 1990; Ward & Kennedy, 2001).

The challenges of international transition, involve in the first place the practical elements of the move: arranging visas and other legalities, packing and shipping of family' belongings, arranging pre-departure visits and training, organising flights and

ground transportation, making reservations for temporary or permanent accommodation, and many other details – from banking to social security and taxation. Additionally, other arrangements must be made in advance to cater for family needs – from baby food and schooling, to providing practical and emotional support to spouses and children (Dickmann & Baruch, 2011).

To operate on an international scale, organisations are required to be more accountable for their employees, and deliver a range of activities that would not be necessary for a company that operates in a domestic market (Dowling & Welch, 2004; Dickmann & Baruch, 2011). This strengthens the relational aspect of the psychological contract between employees and their companies (Guzzo, Noonan & Elron, 1994; Gust, 1998; Pate & Scullion, 2010), which in turn heightens their organisational commitment (Gregersen, 1992; Florkowski & Fogel, 1999).

Another challenge in moving abroad is the psychological upheaval that expatriates and their families' experience. It is often depicted as the U-shaped cultural adaptation process (Berry, 1992; Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001) which begins with the euphoric honeymoon phase, followed by the culture-shock period, where the person experiences an emotional reaction to the unfamiliar environment, and then the learning and adjustment phase, which ends with normative performance and cultural and social integration (Black, Mendenhall & Oddou, 1991; Aycan, 1997a; Ward, Okura, Kennedy & Kojima, 1998).

#### ➤ **Work demands**

Beyond the practical and psychological aspects of the transition, the cross-cultural aspect of expatriates' life is described as the main challenge that employees face both in and out of work (Shaffer, Harrison & Gilley, 1999; Takeuchi, Wang & Marinova,

2005). The literature on expatriates' cross-cultural work often highlights the stress, discomfort and the draining cognitive, emotional and behavioural efforts involved in the adaptation process, and functioning in unfamiliar physical, social, cultural and linguistic environment (Takeuchi, 2010; Shaffer, Kraimer, Chen & Bolino, 2012). Cross-cultural misunderstandings and conflicts are also known problems which drain staff psychological resources (Jassawalla, Truglia & Garvey, 2004; Mahalingam & Levitt, 2007).

A large body of literature examines the expatriates' adjustment process to life abroad and to the new culture (Stroh, Dennis & Cramer, 1994; Aycan, 1997b; Thomas & Lazarova, 2006). Expatriate adjustment is described as the degree of familiarity and psychological comfort that a person feels in the new cultural environment (Harrison, Shaffer & Bhaskar-Shrinivas, 2004), and is considered a primary factor which influences employees' performance that can determine expatriates' success or failure (McEvoy & Parker, 1995; Shay & Baack, 2006).

The accumulated knowledge in this area has advanced researchers' understanding of the antecedents and consequences of expatriates' cross-cultural adaptation (Selmer, 2004; 2006; Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer & Luk, 2005), and the importance of pre-relocation cultural and language training, company support in the form of mentoring, and local network ties in facilitating expatriates' adaptation process (Hechanova, Beehr & Christiansen, 2003; Fish, 2005; Liu & Shaffer, 2005; Parkinson & Morley, 2006; McNulty, 2012).

However, there is evidence to suggest that successful adaptation often comes with an undesired consequence: identity transformations, or what is known as 'going native' (Leong & Ward, 2000; Sussman, 2000; 2002), whereby the employee's sense of self and cultural affiliation changes (Kohonen, 2008; Olsen & Martins, 2009).

Apart from the transitions and adjustment tensions, the research suggests that other stressors often emerge that can significantly tax expatriates' resources; family or spouse dissatisfaction or adjustment problems, strained family relations, difficult relations with headquarters or lack of HR support, and role ambiguity are recognised as key sources of stress, which can slow the adjustment process and lead to mission failure (Takeuchi, Yun & Tesluk, 2002; Kraimer & Wayne, 2004; Andreason, 2008; Brown, 2008; Mäkelä, Käsälä & Suutari, 2011).

In addition to having to function in an unfamiliar cultural environment, expatriates have to constantly work to facilitate the connection between the company's headquarters and its unit abroad. This necessitates not only managing work and relationships in two countries, two cultures and two languages, but also overcoming the problem of operating across different time zones, and establishing knowledge transfer practices that would ensure consistency and lucidity both ways, and facilitate cooperation (Kamoche, 1997; Björkman, Barner-Rasmussen & Li, 2004). Dowling & Welch (2004) noted that this is considered one of the main challenges of global work, which often requires companies to establish standardised language, common reporting practices, and operate elaborate control mechanisms to facilitate these processes (Marschan, Welch & Welch, 1996; Neumann, 2005).

Another challenge that has been reported in the literature is work-family role conflicts, that arise when work and family demands clash (Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2005; Neumann, 2005; Selmer & Fenner, 2009). As a result, expatriates' performance is hampered in both domains, their adjustment processes is delayed, and family relations and well-being are at risk (Grant-Vallone & Ensher, 2001; Shaffer, Harrison, Gilley & Luk, 2001; Shortland & Cummins, 2007).

Given the obstacles reviewed here, performance management and ability to appraise the success of the expatriation assignment is both limited and complicated by distance and time difference. Performance management is described as a process that enables the company to evaluate and continually improve the performance of staff, against a set of goals and targets (Dowling & Welch, 2004). As noted earlier the two factors that have been repeatedly mentioned in the literature as factors that impact staff performance most, are their cross-cultural competency and the support provided by their company (Morgan, Nie & Young, 2004; Takeuchi, Wang, Marinova & Yao, 2009).

➤ **Repatriation and retention**

While relocation and adjustment to a new cultural environment present significant challenges not only to expatriates and their families but also to the companies who sent them, repatriation is also considered one of the major concerns in global careers (Neumann, 2005; Hyder & Lovblad, 2007; Herman & Tetrick, 2009).

Dowling & Welch (2004) described four phases of repatriation: 1. Preparation, 2. Relocation, 3. Settling in, 4. Readjustment. The authors noted that in addition to enduring another international move and experiencing reverse culture shock upon re-entry to their homeland, returnees often experience re-adjustment processes that can be as trying and draining as moving abroad.

In addition, expatriates often experience career anxiety around their return (Gregersen & Black, 1996; Stroh, Gregersen & Black, 2000; Andreason & Kinner, 2005; Lazarova & Cerdin, 2007); employment prospects and uncertainty about one's own career progression, and the spouse's work upon repatriation feature strongly in the literature (Stahl, Chua, Caligiuri, Cerdin & Taniguchi, 2009; Doherty, Brewster, Suutari & Dickmann, 2008). Other concerns include the loss of status and income, and unfulfilled



aspiration to utilise the knowledge, skills and networks that one has acquired and established abroad (Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2000; Jassawalla & Sashittal, 2009).

Several studies found that expatriates' expectation for career advancement upon their return often do not materialise. In many cases they are offered positions that do not match their organisational rank and experience, do not use their accumulated knowledge and network ties, and at times, they are not offered any position with the company (Benson & Pattie, 2008; Kraimer, Shaffer & Bolino, 2009). Thus, for some, repatriation can become a career dead-end that is fused with disappointment, disillusion and frustration (Forster, 1994; Stroh, Gregersen & Black, 2000; Paik, Segaud & Malinowski, 2002). Several researchers considered these repatriation challenges as the main cause of high repatriate turnover rates (Stroh, 1995; Lee & Liu, 2006).

Given the difficulties associated with repatriation, and the risk to retention that it poses to companies and individuals, several authors (Lazarova & Caligiuri, 2001; Lazarova & Cerdin, 2007; Doherty, Brewster, Suutari & Dickmann, 2008) attempted to define measures that can relieve these tensions and challenges. Among the measures cited are clear organisational policies regarding staffing and internationalisation strategy, selection procedures, communication routines while abroad, professional development and career progression plans, pre-return planning and preparation, company support following repatriation, ensuring career progression and financial rewards upon re-entry, providing family support, and expectation management.

#### **4.6.3 Global work outcomes**

Global work outcomes can be analysed at the organisational level or at the individual level. Since this study focuses on employees' perspective, I will cover here the literature on the

outcomes of global work for expatriates and their families. The review will refer to two aspects: Expatriates' well-being, and success and failure of international assignments.

➤ **Effects on employees' lives**

Global work has been found to have a significant effects on employees' health and psychological well-being (Aryee & Stone, 1996; Van der Zee et al., 2005), job satisfaction (Suutari & Tornikoski, 2001; McCaughey & Bruning, 2005), professional and financial progression (Richards, 1996; Bolino, 2007; Festing & Perkins, 2008) personal development (Doherty & Dickmann, 2009; Jokinen, 2010), and the expatriates' relationships with their employers (Haslberger & Brewster, 2009), which are displayed in their organisational commitment (Florkowski & Fogel, 1999; Suutari, 2003).

The effects on well-being and relationships have been found to be mainly negative: poor physical and psychological health, stress, fatigue and burnout have been reported as common issues (Richards, 1996; DeFrank, Konopaske & Ivancevich, 2000; Bhanugopan & Fish, 2006), as well as lack of work-life balance and strained family relationships (Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2005; Moore, 2007). The outcomes of this imbalanced work pattern have been found to be detrimental to employees' performance, and could lead to mission failure and premature return (Lazarova, Westman & Shaffer, 2010).

However several studies cited factors that can moderate these effects, reduce stress and restore well-being; for example, family support (Lauring & Selmer, 2010; Lazarova, Westman & Shaffer, 2010), company support (Kraimer & Wayne, 2004; van der Heijden, van Engen & Paauwe, 2009) and supportive social ties (Takeuchi, Wang, Marinova & Yao, 2009; Farh, Bartol, Shapiro & Shin, 2010).

While expectations for promotion and salary rises upon re-entry are not always met (Richardson & Mallon, 2005; Osman-Gani & Hyder, 2008), professional and personal growth in terms of career competencies, cross-cultural skills, local knowledge and network ties were reported in several studies (Antal, 2000; Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009).

➤ **Success and failure**

As for success and failure, Dowling & Welch (2004) noted that the literature is more focused on failure than evaluating success - perhaps because of the high costs associated with failure, both to the company and to the employee. The authors described three aspects of expatriate failure: its indicators, its frequency, and the costs to the individual and the company.

Premature return is often seen as an indication of failure (though a person may fail but not return earlier). Other indicators of failure are poor performance while abroad, reaching a career plateau on repatriation, or leaving the organisation (Black, Gregersen & Mendenhall, 1992; Caligiuri, 1997; Baruch & Altman, 2002).

There is an on-going debate as to the rates of failure of expatriations, where some studies indicated premature returns as high as 20-30% (Marquardt & Engel, 1993; Solomon, 1995). However other studies, for example Harzing (1995), Forster (1997), Daniel & Insch (1998) and Baruch, Steele & Quantrill (2002) argued that these high failure rates are exaggerated and that there is not enough empirical evidence to support these estimations; in their studies the authors found significantly lower (less than 10%) premature returns.

Failure is often associated with the expatriate inability to adapt to the new cultural environment, which leads to poor performance or poor adaptation of his or her family (Harzing & Christensen, 2004; Lee, 2007). However, it can also be a result of selection

error, ineffective performance management or lack of company support. Other reasons for failure mentioned in the literature are partner dissatisfaction and the loss of partner's career (Van der Zee et al., 2005; Dickmann & Baruch, 2011).

The costs of failure are indeed very high both for the company and the individuals concerned. For the company it involves the loss of relocation expenses, salary and training, loss of market share, clientele confidence and reputation. For the expatriate the cost can be a decrease in self-esteem, confidence, prestige, motivation, blockage of promotional routes, vulnerable family relationships, and significant risk to his or her psychological well-being (Cerdin & Le Pargneux, 2009; Shaffer, Kraimer, Chen & Bolino, 2012).

To conclude, the literature on the challenges that expatriates face in their cross-cultural work and its outcomes seem to be highly relevant to those of diplomats. Several points that were highlighted in the expatriate literature, have also been noted by *meaning of work* researchers as factors that are likely to influence work meaningfulness, such as: The motivation to embark on a global career path (which has been found to be a mixture of extrinsic and intrinsic factors) (Dobrow, 2006; Wrzesniewski, 2010), the strong psychological contract between expatriates and their organisations, their robust organisational identity and commitment to their work (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Duffy et al., 2012), and their willingness to endure the tribulations and costs of cross-cultural work (repatriation risks, the spouse's career, lack of work-life balance, and poor well-being (Serow, 1994; Dobrow, 2006; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009). Some of these will be explored the Findings chapter.

## 4.7 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed several strands of the literature on expatriates and expatriation, in order to assess which aspects of the expatriation experience are likely to impinge upon the work orientation of diplomats, and influence the meaning they assign to their work. The aim of the chapter was to offer a theoretical framework that could later be used to analyse, synthesise and present the work orientation of the participants of this study.

The literature review revealed that there are several themes that are central to global work that are useful for understanding the professional context within which the participants operate. These are:

- 1) **The goals of expatriation** and accordingly the roles that expatriates perform (networking, boundary spanning, competency and skill transfer, coordination and cohesion and language facilitation).
- 2) **The skills and competencies of expatriates** (technical ability, professional expertise, role requirements, language, cross cultural skills, country and cultural knowledge, family requirements and networking).
- 3) **The characteristics of international work**
  - Global work entry - employee's choices and motivations to embark on a global career path, or take on an expatriate position, family considerations, and selection criteria and processes.
  - Global work challenges - the relocation, work demands, and the repatriation process.
  - Global work outcomes - expatriates' well-being, success and failure of international assignments.

These aspects, which can be seen as the core features of global work, can indeed offer a solid conceptual framework for examining the work orientation of diplomats. They also fit well with the literature reviewed earlier on the meaning of work, which suggested that there are four factors that determine the meaning that a person assigns to his or her work: The organisational environment, the person-work fit, the professional community, and the individuals' meaning making processes.

## **CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH METHODS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter details the research methods that were applied in this study for data collection and analysis. The opening section (5.2) describes the research paradigm that this study draws on, and its ontological and epistemological foundations, while section 5.3 explains how its principles were implemented in this study. Section 5.4 explores the principles of the *constructivist grounded theory* - the main method adopted in this study for data collection and analysis and how they were applied. The following sections offer a detailed account of the data collection phase, and how the data was analysed. Section 5.5 describes the tools that were used for collecting data: interviews, media articles and research diary, while section 5.6 explains how the interviews were conducted, and the networking and snowballing process. Section 5.7 describes the respondents who took part in this study, while section 5.8 describes how the data was analysed and how the theory emerged from the data. The following section (no. 5.9) offers an account of the writing process, and highlights some of the challenges involved in writing across cultures. Section 5.10 addresses issues of confidentiality and ethics that emerged in the course of the study, and section 5.11 offers a reflexive account on the process. Lastly, section 5.12 concludes this chapter.

### **5.2 The research perspective: The Interpretive Paradigm**

This study is informed by a particular research perspective – *the interpretive paradigm* - which shaped its guiding questions, theoretical stance and methodology, as well as its writing style. The following sections describe the *interpretive paradigm*, its ontological and epistemological roots, and explain how it influenced the conduct of this research.

### 5.2.1 What is a paradigm and how it informs social research?

Research paradigms are sets of assumptions that are shared by a research community (Johnson & Duberley, 2003). They define for researchers 'what falls within and outside the limits of legitimate inquiry' (Guba & Lincoln, 1994: 108) and provide standards and guidelines for conducting research – from data collection to publication (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Matthews & Ross, 2010).

According to Guba & Lincoln (1994) paradigms are founded on three tenets:

- ***Ontological assumptions*** - these are ideas that researchers hold about the nature of reality, that is: what is real, factual and true, and what is not.
- ***Epistemological assumptions*** – these are beliefs that researchers hold about the nature of knowledge. They address questions such as what is knowledge (what is truth and what is fact) and what are its sources and limits. Researchers' epistemological assumptions are therefore rooted in their definitions of reality - their ontological assumptions
- ***Methodological assumptions*** – these are ideas about methods that researchers should use to study the nature of social reality as they define it, and acquire the scientific knowledge that they consider worthy. Researchers' methodological assumptions therefore emerge from their definitions of reality - their ontological and epistemological assumptions - their perceptions of the nature of knowledge.

### 5.2.2 The research perspective: The Interpretive Paradigm

In seeking a research paradigm that would be most effective for this study, I adopted the *interpretive paradigm*, which is rooted in *constructivist* ontology and epistemology.

*Constructivist* ontology is founded on Kant's argument (Johnson & Duberley, 2003) that all human experiences are mediated by people's psychological structures, and as such, they



cannot be objective. They are, in fact, mental constructions of reality. Schutz (1967) further developed this argument and claimed that people are ‘meaning-makers’: they interpret and assign meaning to social reality and act and interact with others on the basis of their interpretations. Reality, according to the *constructivist* ontology, is a mental construction made by individuals and ‘there is no real world that preexists and is independent of human mental activity and human symbolic language’ (Schwandt, 1994: 125). Accordingly, ‘there exist as many constructions as there are individuals’ (Guba & Lincoln, 1989: 43).

In line with this assertion, *constructivist* epistemology contends that the only reality that researchers can access and study is the one that is constructed by human thoughts and represented by language. Knowledge of the social world that derives from social research should aim to ‘understand the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it’ (Schwandt, 1994: 118). Since all human experiences are subjective and relative, they can only be understood from the individual’s point of view and within their particular context (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Research endeavours should therefore aim to depict and understand the constructed meaning that respondents ascribe to social phenomena, and then to generate theories from them that can explain these constructions (Matthews & Ross, 2010).

These ideas present a significant challenge to social scholars since scientific knowledge is mediated by researchers’ own constructions of reality; hence all knowledge is open to re-interpretation and negotiation (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Reflexivity is therefore an essential part of social research adopting the *interpretive paradigm*, as it enables scientists to recognise the limits of their findings (Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

From a *methodological* perspective, in order to access the mental constructions that individuals attribute to events, the data collection must involve a dialogue between researchers and participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This requirement makes qualitative (naturalistic) methods most suitable for research endeavors that follow the *interpretive paradigm*, since they are dialogue-based, and are designed to elicit the subjective meanings that people assign to events that occur in their lives (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### **5.3 The application of Interpretive Paradigm principles in this study**

Drawing on the features highlighted above, there are several elements that make the *interpretive paradigm* most suitable for this study:

➤ **Focus on the construction of meaning** - This study explores the meaning that diplomats assign to their work, and how meaningful their work is for them. Since the *interpretive paradigm* focuses on the exploration of the constructed meaning that respondents assign to a social phenomena (in this case their work), it seems most fitting as a guiding framework for this study.

In line with the philosophical foundations of the *interpretive paradigm*, the study rests on *constructivist* ontological and epistemological principles, that state that reality is mediated by people's sense-making processes and that only reality that researchers can access is the respondents' perceptions of their reality, which is communicated by language and through culturally informed discourse (Jepson, 2009; 2010). Accordingly, the study aims to describe the constructed meanings that respondents ascribe to their work, and then to generate a theory that can explain these outlooks.

➤ **Data collection and data analysis methodologies** - The *interpretive paradigm* contends that methods for data collection must involve a dialogue between the researcher and respondents, and must be highly sensitive in order to enable the

elicitation of the meanings that people attribute to the events that occur in their lives.

The main methodological frameworks adopted in this study for data collection and analysis was *constructivist grounded theory* (Charmaz, 2006), which is indeed founded on these principles.

➤ **Research writing** - The *interpretive paradigm* involves the use of particular genre and style of writing. Those who follow this paradigm, attempt to communicate participants' voices and delineate their experiences from their standpoint and as they interpret them (Charmaz, 2006). This was indeed the approach I adopted in the Findings chapter, and I shall later elaborate on some of the challenges that I encountered in writing across cultures (see section 5.9).

➤ **Reflexivity** - One of the core aspects of the *interpretive paradigm* is that researchers are required to engage in reflective writing that exposes their own backgrounds and experiences, and enables them to consider the ways in which their own positions and constructions may have affected the conduct of the research (Charmaz, 2006).

I have applied the practice of reflexivity mainly through keeping a research diary (see section 5.5.3).

➤ **Attending to context** - Guba & Lincoln (1994) argued that the ways in which people make sense of their experiences can only be understood within their socio-cultural contexts. According to the *interpretive paradigm*, reality is socially constructed in the minds of the people who experience it, but these 'accounts of the world... take place within a shared system of intelligibility – usually a spoken or written language' (Gergen and Gergen, 1991: 78). That is, people's meaning making processes are heavily influenced by their interaction with those around them, and the cultural and linguistic realms within which they lead their lives (Schwandt, 1994; Jepson, 2009; 2010).

The experiences of Israeli State Ambassadors studied here are set in four intertwined contexts that may frame and shape their construction of reality: firstly, they are members of an organisation (the Israeli Foreign Office) that has a distinct culture. Secondly, their occupation is strongly linked with the Israeli national culture to which they belong and represent in the course of their work. Thirdly, they are members of an exclusive global diplomatic community that sets its own practices, standards, values and customs. Lastly, their individual global careers have rendered each of them with a particular combination of trans-national cultural lenses that they have acquired in the course of their overseas missions.

These contexts are explored here as spaces where collective generation of meaning takes place (Jepson, 2009). These contexts are therefore seen in this study as factors that may influence participants' work orientations (and other meaning making processes that participants experience). However, in line with the guidelines of the *interpretive paradigm*, they are examined here solely from participants' perspective (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Gergen, 1999; Schwandt, 2000).

On a personal note, my own ontological and epistemological views closely adhere to Hammersley's (1996) views that recognised that the social realm exists independently of people's thinking, but it is only accessible to researchers through the respondents' constructions.

My methodological stance is also pragmatic, and it models on Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston's (2013) work; I believe that researchers should use different methods (both qualitative and quantitative), and choose the most compatible research design for the study and research questions they want to address.

## **5.4 Methods used in this research**

This section describes the principles and methodological guidelines of *constructivist grounded theory* that were used in this study, both for data collection and data analysis, and describes how these principles were applied in this study. A more detailed description of the data collection, data analysis and writing up methodologies used in this study is offered in sections 5.5, 5.6, and 5.8 - 5.11.

*Grounded theory* is a methodology that seeks to generate a model or a theory about a particular human phenomenon from set of data, gathered through the use of qualitative methods (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Bryant & Charmaz (2007) claimed that *grounded theory* is the most widely used qualitative research method in social sciences. However, despite its popularity, there is still considerable confusion and debate over its procedures, methodological orientation and theoretical underpinning (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007) and in some areas – in particular management and leadership research – it is still undervalued and underused (Kempster & Parry, 2011).

During the past decades several variations of *grounded theory* have evolved, one of which has been *constructivist grounded theory* (Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Charmaz, 2000; 2006) which closely adheres with the principles of the interpretative paradigm cited earlier. I shall now describe its guiding principles and how these principles were applied in this study.

### **5.4.1 Developing theory from the data**

*Grounded theory* rests on a commitment to develop theory from data. Therefore, those who follow this approach often begin their research with a general question, with no

predetermined hypothesis, and gradually focus their inquiry and develop a substantive theoretical model (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). *Grounded theory* requires the application of inductive reasoning that enables researchers to extrapolate a model or a theory from a set of individual cases. This involves moving from the particular case to the general, and from detailed description to an abstract conceptual level (Charmaz, 2006). This is a particularly apt method for exploratory studies where theory and previous research are scarce (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), which was indeed the case in this study (see sections 3.5 and 5.11.1). From a practical perspective, the application of this principle requires researchers to remain flexible, to follow leads and concepts as they emerge from the data, to shift their focus when needed, and reshape their research questions and ideas. It also requires them to recognise that this type of research process is rarely linear (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Hutchinson, 1988).

In this study, I applied these principles by conducting several repetitive cycles of data collection - analysis (see details in section 5.4.5 and 5.5.1). This process has led to significant changes in my research agenda, resulting initially in the emergence of the *calling* orientation as a core theme (in the first cycle of interviews), and later (in the second and third interview cycles) the emergence of the *career* and *way of life* orientation as core themes.

As the following extract from my diary reveals, this process involved both moments of frustration and insight, and was anything but linear:

*'...Looking back on my entire data collection and analysis process, I now realise the huge shift that occurred in my research agenda and my guiding questions.... I began my research with an interest in leadership development, and ended my investigation with ambassadors' work orientation....'*

*In the first round of interviews I already noticed that my ideas and questions regarding leadership among state ambassadors were completely off track.... Some ambassadors didn't perceive themselves at all as leaders, but rather as civil servants, managers or middlemen whose role is to mediate between leaders. In some interviews when I asked about their leadership experiences – they talked about the political leaders that they worked with...*

*I remember coming out from these interviews feeling frustrated and confused.... I felt that my research lacked direction and that my questions were all over the place...*

*It was only after the third round of coding that I began to notice the repetitions in the 'calling', 'career' and 'way of life' themes, and I realised – this is it! These are the main themes here!... My 'eureka moment' occurred when I interviewed Ambassador Weiss who said: 'if you do not see this role as a calling – then go somewhere else... go make money – because here money is not an appropriate reward for your investment. Here it's a way of life!'... And suddenly, it has all made sense! Their sense of being 'called to the flag', their duty and pride, their strong sense of belonging to a 'community'; seeing their careers as 'career for life' and 'way of life'. Suddenly it all fell into place, and all the links became clear... Like a picture that is emerging from pieces of a puzzle...' (Research Diary, 12 July 2012).*

One of the challenges that this process presents is the requirement to remain open to new ideas that emerge from the data, and to collect and analyse data without being directed or biased by pre-existing ideas, whether drawn from one's cultural perspective or scientific discipline (Glaser, 1978; Blumer, 1984). To prevent preconceived ideas from being forced on the data, researchers are required to take particular care when linking the emergent theory to existing research and theory, as explained below.

#### **5.4.2 Linking the emergent theory to existing literature**

The use of literature in *grounded theory*, how to link the emergent theory to existing research, and where to place literature reviews in *grounded theory* papers, have been debated and contested for nearly 50 years (Charmaz, 2006). Glaser & Strauss (1967) argued that researchers using *grounded theory* should conduct their literature review only *after* completing the data collection phase, in order to prevent them from forcing their data into pre-existing categories. Charmaz (2006) on the other hand argued that researchers cannot realistically enter their field with no prior knowledge, and therefore encouraged authors to apply a critical stance towards earlier research and theories. She explained that in *grounded theory* studies, existing literature should be used to underpin the emergent theory; to acknowledge prior work, to build the paper's argument, to position the new *grounded theory* in relation to existing knowledge base, and to show where the gaps in the literature are, hence highlighting the study's contribution and its significance. The emergent theory, according to Charmaz (2006) should aim to refine, extend or challenge existing concepts and findings. She thus suggested that the literature review should appear in the introduction, in order to offer a conceptual groundwork for the presentation of the *grounded theory*, which should be located in the findings section.

For the data collection of this study I followed Glaser & Strauss (1967) more strict guidelines, since I entered the field with limited prior knowledge of the *meaning of work*, or the *work orientation* model. Indeed I did not expect these topics to emerge, and my initial interview questions were around their career path and professional development, and their leadership and defining moments (see Appendix 1). This study provides a strong example of Charmaz' (2006) argument that in *grounded theory* it is often the case that



unexpected themes may emerge from the data, with little prompting on the researcher's part.

In the writing of the thesis I followed Charmaz (2006) and Suddaby's (2006) recommendations, and presented the literature review first, hence laying the theoretical foundations for the topics that are discussed in the Findings chapter of the thesis.

When it became clear that *calling*, *career* and *way of life* are three core categories that form a *grounded theory* that captures respondents' work perceptions, I began to search for relevant literature in order to link these emergent categories to existing literature. I found the *work orientation* model developed by Bellah et al. (1985) and Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) (described in section 2.3) most compatible as an underpinning conceptual framework for the emergent core themes. As noted (see section 1.3) two features of the *work orientation* model made it well-suited for this study: the model differentiates between three work orientations: *job*, *career* and *calling*, and hence it closely resembles two out of the three categories that emerged from the data - *calling* and *career*. It also offers a theoretical model that conceptualises the meaning that people attribute to their work, that has been used in this study to support, consolidate and deepen the explanation of the emergent theory.

### **5.4.3 Theoretical sensitivity**

Theoretical sensitivity is a central skill in *grounded theory* tradition, that researchers must have or develop (Glaser, 1978). It is manifested in researchers' ability to build trust with respondents, gain access to information that is often highly personal and sensitive, and have the capacity to enter participants' world and see it from their perspective (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). During the data analysis phase, researchers are required to distance

themselves from the participants and the data, in order to examine the data from multiple perspectives (Charmaz, 2006).

Theoretical sensitivity is also revealed through researchers' ability to distill themes from the data, identify their properties, characterise the relationships between them, and then integrate the themes into a body of knowledge (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). An additional aspect of this skill is the capacity to develop theoretical insights that move from concrete thinking to more abstract levels of reasoning (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The applications of theoretical sensitivity in its varied forms in the course of this study are detailed below (see sections 5.6.3, 5.8 and 5.9). It was manifested most clearly during the interview phase, in the relationships that I have established with respondents. Theoretical sensitivity is indeed one of the skills that I recognise that I have developed over time, that enabled me to enter the world of international diplomacy and see the ambassadors' careers from their perspectives (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

#### **5.4.4 Sampling**

The sampling of participants in *grounded theory* is an ongoing process aimed to develop a theory rather than population representation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). There are two types of participant' sampling that take place in *grounded theory*: *initial sampling* - which is guided by the initial research questions, hence providing a starting point for the research; and *theoretical sampling* – where researchers may seek particular sub-groups among their respondents who may be able to provide data that will further explain or refine the themes that emerged (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Charmaz, 2006).

Indeed the sampling of participants in this study followed these guidelines: the *initial sampling* included retired Israeli Ambassadors (see section 5.6.1) who provided the starting point for the research, and later *theoretical sampling* principles were applied by seeking acting ambassadors, women ambassadors and senior directors, who were able to provide more up to date data on ambassadors' careers.

#### **5.4.5 Data collection methods**

*Grounded theory* can work well with and alongside other methods of data collection (Charmaz, 2006), and in this study semi-structure interviews were combined with a research diary that I wrote, and media articles that I collected (see sections 5.5.1 – 5.5.3).

As noted above, one of the main principles in *grounded theory* is the flexibility of the research process, involving several cycles of data collection and coding, where each round of data collection is informed by the themes that emerged from the analysis of the previous cycle. Researchers are therefore expected to modify their research agendas and adapt their methods as well as sampling, as their focus alters (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Hutchinson, 1988). In this study the data gathering process followed these principles by applying 8 cycles of data collection–coding–interpretation (see details in section 5.6). As noted in section 5.4.1, this process has resulted in significant shift in my focus and research questions.

Data collection ends when saturation occurs (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Charmaz (2006) explained that saturation point is reached when fresh data no longer generates new theoretical ideas or reveals new properties of the core theoretical categories.

#### **5.4.6 Data quality**

Obtaining rich data is a fundamental requirement of *constructivist grounded theory* methodology in order for the theory to emerge with sufficient depth and substance. It was of particular significance in this study because of its exploratory nature (Geertz, 1973) as there was limited previous research to draw on. This requirement involved spending considerable time and effort in an attempt to gain 'thick' descriptions (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2006) that are rich in details, capturing not only the facts about the events that took place, but also participants' interpretation of their experiences: their views, values, beliefs, needs, emotions and actions, as well as features of the organisational and cultural contexts that shaped their experiences (Charmaz, 2006).

#### **5.4.7 The relationships between researchers and participants**

The relationships established between researchers and their respondents are central to all qualitative research, but are especially significant in *constructivist grounded theory*. Charmaz (2006) argued that in order to access sensitive and personal data, researchers have to engage with participants in a way that establishes rapport and gains their trust. She also emphasised that respect and empathy (being able to understand participants' views, and seeing the world through their eyes) are critical for establishing these relationships, and without these capacities, the researcher is not likely to gain access to the quality of data that is necessary for *grounded theory*. My experiences in building relationships and establishing rapport with the ambassadors in the course of this study, are detailed in section 5.6.3, and indeed support Charmaz' (2006) assertions.

A second aspect of the relationship between researchers and participants is manifested through the research writing style. Charmaz (2000) advocated a writing style that allows participants' voices, experiences and perceptions to come into readers' views. This is to a

degree the style that I attempted to apply in the Findings chapter (see details in section 5.9), which required a sensitive balancing act in order to allow participants to retain a degree of visibility, while at the same time adhering with the conventions of academic structure and writing (Lea & Street, 1998).

#### **5.4.8 Data analysis methods**

Data analysis methods that follow *grounded theory* principles, apply several types of coding, which enable researchers to 'extract' a theory from the data, and explain the phenomenon being studied. Coding means 'labeling' segments of data with a tag that captures its core contents and properties (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). It requires looking into the data in a way that goes beyond the participants' interpretations (Charmaz, 2006). The various coding procedures applied in *grounded theory* (see below) often lead to a process described as 'gradual focusing' - progressing from the primary word-by-word coding to *theoretical coding*, where the theory emerges from the defined categories (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz (2006) distinguished between two types of coding:

- 1) *Initial (open) coding* - analysing the text word by word and line by line, and naming each segment of the data while keeping the codes open ended (Glaser, 1978; 1992).
- 2) *Focused coding* – involving one or more types of coding (see below) aimed at generating selective, conceptual codes from the *initial coding*, in order to create a more abstract analytic framework (Charmaz, 2006). It entails sorting the themes that emerged from the *initial coding*, to identify and focus on the most salient one (Charmaz, 2006).

*Focused coding* includes one or more of the following methods:

- *Comparative coding* - constant comparisons between data in order to find similarities and differences. The goal is to establish analytic distinctions (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

- *Axial coding* - relating categories to subcategories and making explicit connections between them. The result is a dense texture of relationships around each category (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).
- *In vivo coding* - preserving participants' meaning in the coding, so that their voices can be heard through the report (Glaser, 2002).
- *Selective coding* - choosing the core categories and connecting them to other categories. It involves using the most significant codes to sort, integrate and organise the data which develops the core category (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).
- *Theoretical coding* - specifying the relationships between categories, and then integrating categories to create a coherent storyline (Glaser, 1978). It is a sophisticated level of coding that 'weave the fractured story back together' (Glaser, 1978: 72).

In this study, the data analysis process followed the coding techniques described above, moving from initial word-by-word coding, to *focused coding*, resulting in the emergence of the core categories (see details in section 5.8) (Charmaz, 2006).

#### **5.4.9 Reflexivity**

Charmaz (2000) called attention to co-construction of meaning that takes place during the data collection. She contended that researchers cannot be seen as objective observers and data collectors; they are principal actors in the research enterprise, and their socio-cultural background, views and pre-conceived theoretical conceptions must be acknowledged by themselves and by their readers. Within the framework of *constructivist grounded theory*, researchers are therefore obliged to be reflexive about what they bring to the field and to the analytic process, and this will help them remain open to new ideas emerging from the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

As noted, the principle of reflexivity (Charmaz, 2000) was mainly practiced here through writing a diary, where I recognised my own positioning in this study and what background knowledge and world-views I brought to the analytic process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

## **5.5 Data Collection Tools**

The data collection phase began in July 2011 and ended in June 2012. During this period three data collection instruments were used: Semi-structured interviews, collection of relevant media articles and published autobiographies of the ambassadors who took part in this study, and writing a research diary. These methods were used simultaneously for triangulation purposes (Strauss & Corbin, 1994), and they are further explored below.

### **5.5.1 The interview schedule**

The initial interview schedule (see Appendix 1) included seven sections, each focused on one topic, and incorporated several questions: The ambassador's roles, the skills required for diplomacy, the participant's training and professional development, the respondents' career path, the nature of diplomatic leadership, the participants' personal background – particularly what led them to embark on a diplomatic career, and significant events they experienced throughout their career and lessons learned.

This introductory interview schedule was exploratory in nature, and was designed to elicit primary data; it followed *grounded theory* principles which require researchers to enter their research field with a general question, and collect and analyse the data without being directed by pre-existing knowledge or hypothesis. This indeed informed my choice of basic and somewhat crude exploratory questions in the initial interviews.

Earlier (see section 5.4.1) I noted that the data collection - coding - interpretation cycles have led to a significant shift in my research agenda. This change occurred gradually, where after each round of interviews I was required to modify the interview schedule, resulting in the final interview schedule (see Appendix 2): The nature of diplomacy, the changes that occurred in their profession, the qualities and skills required for this profession, the respondents' career path and the roles they have assumed, their training and professional development, their expatriation and repatriation experiences, their national and professional identities, and the meaning of their work for them.

I ceased collecting data once saturation occurred in the core themes (Charmaz, 2006), which mainly revolved around the ambassador's work orientation, i.e. the meaning they assigned to their work and career.

### **5.5.2 Media sources and biographies**

Ambassadors are often in the public eye, and therefore one of the most useful sources I utilised for preparation and triangulation were Internet articles and videos about their background and activities. Prior to each set of interviews I searched the Internet for articles about the respondents which enabled me to direct my questions more appropriately.

In addition, four of the ambassadors have published their autobiographies, and by the end of the first interview each offered me a copy of his/her book. Since I conducted two interview sessions with each, I made sure I completed reading their book prior to the second meeting.

During the data analysis phase I used the data elicited through these means to triangulate and complement the interviews data.



### **5.5.3 The research diary**

I began writing a research diary early on in the study, long before I started networking and interviewing. The diary had an electronic format (a computer file on my laptop) and a paper form (a notebook) – both in Hebrew. My initial notes included ideas about possible research and interview questions, who I should interview and how I could gain access. These thoughts emerged from conversations I had with my supervisor, the literature I read and courses I attended.

As soon as I started networking and gained access to the research field, I began writing more systematically and frequently. My notes included details of some pre-interview conversations, my impression of the respondents, the conduct of interviews, and ideas of other possible directions of inquiry. I also noted on my expectations, intuitions, reactions and moments of surprise or disappointment.

Once I began reading the literature, I reviewed, commented and critically reflected on some of the research and methodological literature that I read, and highlighted ideas that I felt might be useful later, as well as those I felt I needed to read more on in order to clarify or expand.

What I consider to be my principal diary notes were my research notes where I recorded my ideas, thoughts and some key writings. These notes included insights gained during or after interviews, classifications, ideas and plans for sections, chapters, papers, and most importantly, research themes that I have identified in the data. As I was analysing the data, I noted the themes that emerged and their sub-categories, and made notes which themes appear most often and may be defined later as core categories, and how they differed from other themes. At times I used the diary notes as a way of clarifying and refining themes

which were not clearly distinct in my mind and required more nuanced analyses. At a later point, when it became clear that participants were divided into three orientation groups, I noted how themes connected with each other within each group (for example: how people with a *calling* orientation displayed their sense of having a good fit or work motivation). I also made notes as to how these groups differed (for example, the different types of work motivation displayed by each group). This part of the diary documented the gradual focusing process, where the core categories and sub categories that emerged from the data began to form, and the shifts that I experienced in my thinking.

The diary also included thoughts of a more reflexive nature: comments on the similarities and differences between the respondents and me - our background, career trajectory, relocation experiences, national identity and political views. Importantly, I commented on my positioning as an outsider to this professional community, and on my standpoint as an Israeli emigrant who has left the country that they are immensely committed to. I took some time to consider how this position and outlooks may have affected the conduct of the interviews and my interaction with participants (see section 5.11).

## **5.6 Data Collection Procedures**

This section focuses on the interviews and their conduct: Section 5.6.1 describes the networking and snowballing processes, section 5.6.2 explains the sample size, and section 5.6.3 describes how the interviews were conducted.

### **5.6.1 Networking and snowballing**

One of the major challenges in this study was gaining access to this exclusive professional group. My initial plan was to interview ambassadors from different countries that are

currently positioned in London. I made few attempts to approach them through the embassies, but was unsuccessful; I was politely refused by their PA's and the most common excuse was that the timetables of the ambassadors were very hectic and therefore regrettably they couldn't see me, however they have 'wished me success in my research'. Other refusals were blunter, stating that they require special clearance in order to be interviewed about their careers, or that due to their public position they were not interested in a research that may potentially cause inconvenience to their government. I inferred from these experiences that these obstacles may well explain the dearth of research on this group. Similar challenges of gaining access to other elite groups were reported by Fiegener, Briwn, Prince & File (1994), Welch, Marschan-Piekkari, Penttinen & Tahvanainen (2002), Sendjaya, Sarros & Santora (2008), Gutierrez, Howard-Grenville & Scully (2010) and Bikos & Kocheleva (2013) – who advocated the use of networking and referral-sampling (snowballing) when gaining access to participants is difficult.

I therefore made four sampling decisions that led me to focus on Israeli Ambassadors:

- 1) To establish contacts with potential participants through my 'informal network', rather than through 'formal channels'.
- 2) To seek respondents with whom I share a language and culture in order to facilitate access and build trust.
- 3) To sample ambassadors from one country, in order to explore the cultural and organisational contexts in more depth.
- 4) To approach retired ambassadors first in order to minimise security concerns around my research.

There were additional reasons that made retired ambassadors a suitable group for this study: Their narratives offer a life-long span of a full diplomatic career, they are in a

position to provide an overview of the changes that occurred in the Foreign Office and in their profession over longer period of time, and they are more accessible and flexible with time.

My first interviews were with two senior retired ambassadors who I knew beforehand. They later became my key informants and were immensely helpful in my initial networking processes; to some degree they negotiated entry for me by telling their colleagues about me and my research. Furthermore, they took the time to 'educate' me on the principles of diplomacy. No doubt being referred by 'central figures' that are highly regarded and trusted among their fellow ambassadors has made my access to others much easier and required minimum negotiation on my part. My subsequent interviewees were also enormously helpful in the snowballing process, and with few exceptions, by the end of the interviews, most of them referred me to others.

Most of my initial contacts with prospective interviewees were conducted by phone and only in few occasions I approached new participants by email. In my initial conversations I briefly described my research, how I conduct interviews, what topics I shall be exploring, and how long the interview will take. Some of them asked about confidentiality and security issues, and I then explained that I shall not be requesting any information about their diplomatic missions, and therefore no confidential information will be elicited. I also explained how anonymity is maintained, and discussed some of the ethical laws that govern the conduct of social research, that I'm abided by (Matthews & Ross, 2010). I then ensured that they freely agreed to participate and asked them to read and sign the consent form (see details in section 5.11).

As my network expanded, I was able to apply theoretical sampling techniques, and I searched for participants who could potentially provide more in-depth data about the themes that emerged from the initial analysis. Thus I asked to be referred to acting ambassadors, women ambassadors and senior directors of the MFA.

One of the interesting phenomenons that I encountered in my networking and snowballing process was how quickly information and gossip about me and my research circulated in the ambassadors' tightly-knit professional network. On numerous occasions, when I introduced myself to potential interviewees they had noted that they expected my call, since the person who referred me to them had already told them about me.

*'It felt like the gossip and rumour has spread around in the Foreign Office, and by now everyone knew of me and my research... from the PA's to the Chief Executive'*  
(Research diary, 19 January 2012).

It is worth noting that many of the ambassadors' accounts revealed the existence and the dynamics of their dense web of collegial ties, and the many functions that this professional community fulfils for them and their families. Furthermore, when we discussed the skills required for the ambassador's role, many of them claimed that networking is at the heart of their diplomatic roles, and some perceived themselves as 'professional networkers'.

### **5.6.2 Size of the sample**

The size of the sample (57 ambassadors) was mainly affected by the need to reach data saturation around the key research question. However three additional factors lead to its current size: first was the need to capture data across two cohorts (active and retired Ambassadors), the second was the need to obtain sufficient data across genders, and third was the attempt to avoid potential network-lock and partiality which may be caused by the

networking and the referral-sampling (snowballing) process, thereby ensuring that the sample reflects the population correctly.

### **5.6.3 Conducting interviews**

The interviews were conducted and transcribed in Hebrew. In the first three interviews I used both video and audio recorders, however I soon realised that the camera was distracting and provided no significant added value. Therefore, all subsequent interviews were only audio-recorded, using two digital tapes (for backup purposes). Most interviews required two sessions, lasting between 1:10 to 5:20 hours. In total, the interviews required 91 sessions and yielded 136 hours of audio-recordings.

All retired ambassadors live in Israel and all acting ambassadors were repatriated in Israel at the time of the interviews. In order to conduct the interviews I made 8 visits to Israel, each lasted between one and two weeks. On average I conducted 2-3 interviews per day, and allowed at least a month between visits, in order to transcribe and analyse the data.

With the exception of 3 interviews that were conducted in coffee shops, all interviews with acting ambassadors took place in their offices at the MFA, and all interviews with retirees were held in their private residences.

Prior to each interview I spent 10-20 minutes introducing the research, and engaged in casual conversation. I found these conversations invaluable in forming a relaxed environment and establishing rapport, which enabled an informal and personal register from the outset. However, it is important to note that I was not alone in establishing rapport, as the following extract from my diary reveals:

*'They say that establishing rapport is one of the main strengths of diplomats. Now that I interviewed them, I can confirm: they master this trait!*

*Almost all of them have asked about my personal background, took interest in my social activities in deprived neighbourhoods, and commented on the video I sent them. Some asked about my research and why I was doing a PhD at my age, and requested a copy of the thesis once completed.*

*At the right moments, they would throw little jokes, smile and indicate in a friendly tone: 'you know what I mean...'. At times, they would link my experiences to theirs, or suggest that I was right in thinking that... or pay me a compliment. They were also very careful not to offend me when they discussed how they view 'Yerida' [immigration from Israel]. In retrospect, I can see how all these small manners combined to create a relaxed atmosphere, and I can recognise that establishing rapport was very much a collaborative effort'. (Research diary, 15 February 2012).*

At times, the interviews presented unexpected 'situations', where I had to establish rapport not only with the ambassador...:

*'My interview setting with Ambassador Inbar was unusual: As soon as I sat down and turned on the tape, their dog entered the room and sat on my lap. I do love dogs, however this dog was huge, which meant that I was unable to move my legs. At some point I decided to stroke his head, and apparently he liked it, since from that moment he kept moving his head up and down under my hand, encouraging me to continue stroking him... The ambassador seemed amused and noted that the dog is a great judge of character... so I continued stroking the dog for the entire interview.*

*No doubt it was a unique experience in establishing rapport (with the ambassador or the dog????...).' (Research diary, 11 January 2012).*

The shared language and cultural background were also of significance in the interview situation (Jepson, 2009; 2010). Though the language may not have made a difference to them (as some of them are fluent in several languages), it made a difference to me, and therefore to the dynamics and flow of the interviews. The shared language and the ability to understand the nuances of the communication, verbal and non-verbal, our shared national backgrounds, knowledge and collective memories, our parallel class standing, and indeed our shared international relocation experiences - were all significant factors in gaining access, as well as establishing rapport; it enabled interviewees to share with me their thoughts and feelings on an intimate level.

The degree to which I felt I was trusted by my interviewees is perhaps best reflected in the following episode noted in my diary:

*'I finished my interview at 2:20, and was scheduled to meet my nephew who lives nearby, at 4:00. I decided to search for a coffee shop in the area and wait there.*

*The ambassador and his wife were getting ready to go out, and while I was packing my things I commented on their lovely home - which was like an exotic museum – filled with exquisite artifacts from Asia, where he served most of his career.*

*The ambassador and his wife thanked me, and asked where I was heading. When I told them I was looking for a coffee shop in the area, they insisted I stayed at their home!!.... They gave me the key and showed me how to lock the door and where to leave the key... His wife showed me how to operate the coffee machine and offered me some home-baked cake!...' (Research diary, 27 November 2011).*

The interviewees' proficient communication style was also significant in the conduct of the interviews and reflected the culture and linguistic features of diplomacy as a profession (Bolewski, 2008; Neumann, 2005). From the very first set of interviews I became aware



that these respondents are professional communicators: they are articulated, charming and compelling speakers, who are able to spice even the dullest conversation with jokes and personal anecdotes. The interviews gave them a platform to display their skills at their very best, to a very keen listener. On reflection, I can assess that their communicative style made it effortless for me to apply theoretical sensitivity: to enter and engage with their world, and see the events that they recounted from their perspective. However, I was often astounded by the degree of sincerity, openness and reflexivity they displayed. Indeed, I often entered as a stranger, and left as a friend.

## **5.7 The participants**

In the preceding sections I have noted that all of the participants are senior Israeli diplomats who served at least once as Israeli State Ambassadors. In this section I offer some more details about their backgrounds and professional experiences.

Among the 57 participants 29 were retirees, which I approached and interviewed first, and who represented my initial sampling. Later, through the networking and snowballing processes (see section 5.6.1) I gained access and interviewed 28 acting Ambassadors. Most retirees retired fairly recently and were in their early seventies, while the age of the active Ambassadors was between 40-60 (see Appendix 3, Charts 1 and 2).

Most of the participants (n=44) were men, and a minority (n=13) were women (see Appendix 3, Chart 3). Among the retirees there were only 2 women, compared to 11 women among the employed participants. This proportion reflects the unequal position of women in the Israeli Foreign Office during the first four decades of its operation (1948-1990), and is also a known issue among other Foreign Services (Yagar, 2005; Conley-Tyler et al., 2014; McCarthy, 2014).

Ambassador Rose (female, retired) who served as a member of the National Committee for Gender Equality explained:

*'For many years – until the 1990s – diplomacy was not considered a fitted career for women.... you know - the safety issues, the amount of travelling required, the relocations, the demands on the family and the spouse... It's not a '9 to 5' job and you can't take time off to take care of your kids... Also in some countries – the more traditional or religious – you just can't send women diplomats - they will not accept them...*

*So, although there was no overt discrimination – there was nothing really preventing women from applying – there were very few women who did.... In my course there were 17 men and only 2 women....*

*Things have improved since then. Today about a third of the candidates are women and we even had a cadet course with 40% women not long ago. So while I think that there is still a 'glass ceiling' for women in the Foreign Office – I feel that we are breaking it through hard and consistent work'.*

However, Ambassador Strauss (female, active) also noted: *'Some of the women who join the MFA never get to senior positions because they leave the MFA... One of the reasons for the large 'drop out' of women is that their spouses are reluctant to leave their work and ... well, they cannot go on a mission abroad... and if they don't go on any mission after a few years with the MFA, they are required to leave...'*

Yagar (2005) confirmed that while things have indeed changed dramatically in the Israeli MFA in the past two decades, the number of women in senior jobs does not reflect their proportion among staff. He also noted that male spouses find it more difficult to leave their jobs compared to female spouses.

This suggests that while the MFA wish to create a female-friendly work environment, its policies do not always fit with tradition family gender roles that are still strongly present in the modern, yet masculine Israeli culture (Hofstede et al., 2002), and with the cultural norms of the diplomatic profession (Groeneveld, 2008; Conley-Tyler et al., 2014; McCarthy, 2014).

In terms of their background, more than two thirds of the respondents were born in Israel, and the rest immigrated to Israel (see Appendix 3, Chart 4), which means that they are bilingual. In terms of their family status, the vast majority of the respondents are married (84%), four are divorced or separated, two are widowed, one is single and one is married a second time.

Additionally, the vast majority of participants (55 out of 57) identified themselves as secular Jew, and only two identified themselves as religious (observant).

All participants have acquired an academic degree: about half of the participants have an undergraduate degree, 22 participants have an MA, M.Sc. or MBA degree, and 4 respondents have a PhD (see Appendix 3, Charts 5 and 6). In contrast to what may be expected, less than a third (15 participants), have a degree in International Relations; the rest have degrees in varied areas including Middle East, Soviet studies, History, Law, Accountancy, Business, Economics Public management, Languages and Judaism.

An analysis of their career paths revealed that the sample includes some of the most senior directors (past and present) in the Israeli Foreign Office (see Appendix 3, Chart 7): 5 General Directors, 2 Senior Deputy Directors, 13 Deputy Directors, 4 Heads of Divisions, 25 Ambassadors, and 8 Heads of Departments.

The analysis of the participants' years of service in the Foreign Office showed that on

average the retirees have been with the MFA for 33 years, while the younger cohort of active diplomats have worked (so far) for 26 years (on average).

During their years of employment in the Foreign Office, the participants have held several positions, both abroad and in the Head Office in Jerusalem. An analysis of the number of roles the participants have assumed altogether (at the Head Office and abroad) revealed that they range between 2 positions and 15, and the average number of positions the respondents have held is 9 (see Appendix 3 Table 1). A comparison between the retirees and active respondents has shown that during their 33 years of service, the retirees have held on average 10 positions, compared to 8 positions held in the course of 26 years of service of the acting diplomats.

Among the positions that the respondents' assumed over the years, 5 were based in Israel, and 4 were based abroad (on average). An analysis of the number of years that respondents were stationed abroad has shown that they lived abroad for 14 years (on average). In addition to holding positions that required them to be stationed abroad for lengthy periods, 11 participants have held between them 17 'flying-ambassadors' positions, where they were based in Israel, but flew on a regular and frequent basis to the countries where they were assigned to.

The final analysis of the countries in which participants were stationed in the course of their careers (see Appendix 3, Chart 8) showed that 12 participants were stationed in the USA, 19 held a position in Europe, 8 were in Asia, 16 served in Africa and in South America, 4 held positions in the Middle East – mainly in conflict countries, and only 2 were sent to Oceania. Several participants have explained that it is a common practice in the MFA to send staff first to embassies in countries considered as 'hardship places' –

mostly developing countries in Africa or Asia, where the embassies are very small, often staffed by two or three diplomats who do all the embassy's work. This offers junior staff the opportunity to become acquainted with all the roles in the embassy. Only then, when they have gained some experience, they are likely to be sent to developed countries – mostly in Europe or America, where the embassies are also larger in size. The larger embassies are likely to be manned by 10-30 diplomats on average, as well as non diplomatic staff. This explains the distribution of respondents across the different continents, and why more people served in the larger embassies in Europe and America compared to Africa and Asia.

It should be noted that throughout the thesis, personal details of participants were omitted from the quotes presented, and all participants' names were given pseudonyms.

## **5.8 Data analysis**

The data analysis procedures applied in this study followed Strauss & Corbin's (1998) and Charmaz' (2006) *grounded theory* guidelines described in section 5.4. As noted earlier, the data analysis process was conducted alongside the data collection phase, and thus after each cycle of interviews I transcribed the audios in Hebrew (with the help of a trusted colleague), and then re-read the text and conducted *open coding*: I highlighted key words and themes (using Word highlighter applications), labelled portions of data by their contents, and at the same time I made notes of ideas that emerged during this process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In some occasions I applied some *axial coding* techniques; this was when categories and subcategories emerged together in the text, and their 'nested' properties were easily noticeable (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This phase produced many 'primary categories' which led to the theoretical sampling described above, and to the

refinement of my interview schedule (see section 5.5.1). I also began noticing repetitive patterns in the texts and made notes of them (Charmaz, 2006).

The following stage involved *comparative* and *axial coding*, which were applied simultaneously. After the 6<sup>th</sup> cycle of interviews I began comparing transcripts and searched for repetitions or patterns around topics or themes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). At the same time, I grouped phrases and sentences by various contents headings, and then arranged them into sub-headings, thereby applying *axial coding* (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Once the data collection phase was completed, I devoted more time and thoughts into the refinement of each theme and category, and defined their sub-categories more accurately (Charmaz, 2006). Much of this stage was devoted to determining ‘the rules for inclusion’ (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) for each headed theme.

Since there is no qualitative data analysis software available in Hebrew, all analyses were conducted using Microsoft Word’s ‘cut and paste’ procedure. After experimenting with different log styles I devised a ‘coding scheme sheet’ that enabled me to compile under each heading and sub-heading the relevant themes (see Figures 2, 3 and 4 in Chapter 6).

The smallest units of analysis were single words or terms, and the largest units were episodes or stories. However, the most common units were single sentences, phrases, or paragraphs.

The last stage of analysis incorporated selective and *theoretical coding* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This was when links and relationships between categories and themes became apparent; it began when all data was transcribed and coded, and continued in parallel to the writing up process. Strauss (1987) argued that at this stage ‘core categories’ should emerge from the data, leading to the development of

*grounded theory*. He defined 'core categories' as central themes that are evidenced recurrently, that are linked to other themes and categories, and have some theoretical grounding. As noted earlier (sections 5.4.1 and 5.4.2) three core categories emerged from the data fairly early in the data collection process (*calling, career and way of life*), all of which related to ambassadors' work meaning which led to the configuration of the theoretical framework presented in the Findings and Conclusion chapters (no. 6 and 7). This stage continued for many months in an effort to make the coding scheme as explicit and lucid as possible (Charmaz, 2006).

## **5.9 The writing process**

One of the challenges faced by qualitative researchers, which indeed I have also encountered, is how to create a coherent story-line, and how to weave together the two texts: the academic text, with its citations, theoretical stance and academic genre, and the respondents' accounts, with their distinctive contents, style and tempo. As I progressed with the writing process, I noticed that while the academic text retained its themes, structure and consistency, the participants' narratives were used as 'data': they were purposefully broken into subject-centred collages of quotations, and were utilised to support, exemplify, emphasise or develop the research arguments, and at times, to 'decorate' the text.... This exercise highlighted the question of 'voice' which is central in *constructivist grounded theory* (Charmaz, 2006) and I therefore debated the question how to balance between my voice as a researcher, and the interviewees' accounts (see below).

Another challenge presented by this task was writing across and linking between several very different cultures and their respective discourses (Jepson, 2009; 2010):

*'As I move between the two texts, I often find myself assuming the responsibilities of*

*a translator, a cultural interpreter, and a mediator. At times I feel like the ambassadors' ambassador, acting as liaison between my interviewees and my readers, mediating between two national cultures – the Israeli and British, and bridging among two professional spheres - international diplomacy and academia...'*  
(Research Diary 1 June 2012).

As can be seen from this account, similar to my interviewees I also faced the challenge of working across and bridging between two cultures and languages, and the multiple discourses that each entail (national, occupational and organisational) (Jepson, 2009; 2010). When writing in my second language (English), I also faced the challenge of translating the accounts of my interviewees from Hebrew to English, since they master the art of proficient articulation, and I endeavored to preserve and present their accounts as authentically as possible.

While writing, I also encountered my own 'representation dilemmas' that were similar to those that my participants face in their day to day work:

*'Like my interviewees, one of my roles here may well be not only to describe and analyse, but to represent, advocate, and educate... In doing so, I face the same 'representation dilemmas' that many ambassadors seem to battle with: whether to display life in all its messiness – the good, the bad and the ugly, or 'be diplomatic' – carefully pick and choose what to focus on, and what to omit, to cautiously consider the wording used and how to present 'the findings', and who or what to quote...'*  
(Research Diary 1 June 2012).

I continued to dwell on this dilemma throughout the writing process, often being aware of, and resisting my own temptation 'to be diplomatic' - to present the positives and hide the negatives, and to choose the more eloquent, clever and insightful quotes. I also



contemplated on the ethical and moral responsibilities of researchers toward their research participants - a subject that I discuss in more detail below.

As part of the writing up process I also learned and have been using EndNote X4 for referencing.

## **5.10 Research Ethics**

Much of my initial thinking around the ethical aspects of this study was prompted by going through the ethical approval process (which was approved in 23 June 2011 - see Appendix 4). It gave me the opportunity to think about the entire process – from data collection to publication, and raised my awareness to potential ethical hazards along the way.

Early on in the data collection phase I prepared an informed consent form (see Appendix 5), which was signed by all my interviewees prior to each interview. Before signing the form I ensured that they understood that their participation was voluntary, and that they had the right to withdraw at any time during the interview.

As highlighted earlier (see section 5.6.3), during my introductory telephone conversations, and at the beginning of each interview, I took the time to explain the purpose of my study, how it would be conducted, and what topics I would be inquiring about. I also clarified confidentiality and anonymity matters, explaining that no personal details would be mentioned, and that pseudonyms would be used in publications. I also explained how the audios and transcripts would be kept, to ensure that only I have access to them.

An ethical issue that I battled with during the networking and snowballing process was around maintaining participants' anonymity. Clearly when interviewees referred me to their colleagues, details were exchanged, that could expose the identities of potential

participants. Often, these situations presented even bigger challenges, as the following note from my diary suggests:

*'In response to my request, many interviewees inquired who else I interviewed (or intend to interview)... In these occasions I politely clarified the confidentiality policies that researchers follow, and explained that I cannot reveal my interviewees' identities... Despite my legitimate argument, I felt awkward... At times there was almost a sense of betrayal... I was well aware that I was breaching their reciprocity norm by refusing to share 'trivial' and 'insignificant' information such as who I interviewed, just minutes after they have shared with me personal details about their lives and have offered me the same type of information..... I felt inconsiderate and bad-mannered...'* (Research diary 14 May 2012)

Another sensitive issue that bothered me, particularly early in this study, referred to confidential information related to their work (i.e., military operations, intelligence, etc.). Clearly such details divulged in the context of research can jeopardise them or their colleagues' safety or work. Therefore I emphasised from the outset that this study is not about international relations, and that I will not be asking about their missions or aspects of their work that they may not be authorised to disclose. However, as I learned along the way, this was more my concern than theirs, since they were highly skilled in diverting the conversation away from problematic or confidential matters, and were not likely to give away information that required security clearance, or could put them or anybody else in danger or in an uncomfortable position:

*'...They are after all diplomats! They are professional and highly talented speakers. They are used to communicating with reporters and the media... several of them noted that an essential part of their training is in public speaking, and that they are*

*taught how to ensure that they get their message across, and how to avoid disclosing undesired or unintended information - even when 'under fire' from aggressive news reporters and politicians... (Research diary, 26 November 2011).*

## **5.11 A reflexive account**

Much of this chapter has been reflective in nature and writing it prompted me into a period of self-reflection and self-awareness, and made me think retrospectively about the conduct of this research and my relationships with the participants. In this section, however, I shall mainly discuss two positions and outlooks that affected the conduct of this research. The first is the theoretical conceptions and background knowledge that I brought with me to the analytic process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), and the second is my positioning in this study as an emigrant who has chosen to leave the country that my interviewees were and are highly embedded in and strongly committed to.

### **5.11.1 Theoretical conceptions and background knowledge**

Earlier I noted that the initial topic of my thesis was around diplomatic leadership; however the first cycles of interviews and coding revealed that the themes emerging from the data revolved around the ambassadors' *calling* orientation, and that the *way of life* and *career* themes have also emerged as central. I therefore began to search for literature on *calling*, which quickly led me to the literature on *meaningful work* and the *work orientation* model (see Chapter 2). Further search revealed that no literature was written on the work orientations of diplomats and expatriates:

*'looking back, I can safely claim that I followed the Grounded Theory principle that require researchers to collect and analyse data without being directed or biased by pre-existing knowledge or ideas - simply because the knowledge I had at the time*

*was irrelevant... and some of the relevant literature was non-existent...'* (Research diary, 19 March 2012).

In retrospect, this was a difficult exercise, which led me to question the value of this particular *grounded theory* principle, as the following extract from my diary reveals:

*'I've just completed my first round of interviews, and ... well, it was hard work! ... I think one of the hardest aspects of it was to walk into the room with my academic hat on, and then to reveal, through my basic and simplistic questions, how little I know about the topics.... At times I felt embarrassed to ask these questions... It felt like I wasn't properly prepared for the meeting, and that I'm wasting their time... I am just thankful for their diplomatic responses...'* (Research diary, 29 July 2011).

*'I do question this Grounded Theory principle. Is it really necessary? If I had prior knowledge on diplomacy and on ambassadorial roles, or if I was 'an insider' – an ambassador or a Foreign Ministry worker myself, I would have probably been able to ask more sophisticated and in-depth questions, perhaps be aware of complexities, or pick up nuances or connections that I may have missed. Why would such prior knowledge lessen or limit in any way the value of my data?'* (Research diary, 16 February 2012).

### **5.11.2 On positions in research**

Earlier (see section 5.6.1) I observed that being an Israeli and sharing the same cultural background and language facilitated my access to this exclusive group, and helped in establishing rapport and building trust with its members. Nevertheless, as highlighted in the account above, I was not an insider in their profession or a member of their social circle. After a while, though, I slowly moved from the position of an outsider looking in, to that of a well-informed visitor (Adler & Adler, 1987). Several interviewees noted that

through my extensive interviewing I probably have acquired a wider perspective on their work and careers than they have....

There was one aspect of my positioning that was a source of concern for me, and this was the fact that I am an emigrant who chose to leave Israel – the state that they have devoted their entire lives to represent and defend. The tension between our positions was grounded in the value of 'Yerida' (emigration from Israel), which requires some explanation:

For many years, emigration from Israel was treated with disapproval and criticism. Israel's citizens were expected to bear the heavy costs of living in a war zone, trying as these might be. Emigrants were perceived as shunning their responsibilities as citizens (Sobel, 1986; Gold, 1994) and therefore were condemned. These perceptions were marked through the value of 'Yerida' and the discourses surrounding it: 'Yerida' means to fail, or going down. This term contrasts the term 'Aliyah' which describes the act of immigrating *to* Israel, which also means to succeed, or climbing up.

Despite the endurance of this value system for nearly 5 decades, it is estimated that 550,000 Israelis (nearly 8% of the Jewish Israeli population) reside abroad (Cohen, 2011). Over the years the value of 'Yerida' has slowly waned, and while the older generations in Israel still uphold this value system, the younger generations no longer concur, and according to the latest surveys (Gold & Moav, 2006) nearly 40% of Israeli youth aspire to live abroad. The current government was the first to mark the change in public opinion toward emigrants, and has brought about a significant change in policies, and a persuasive call to include and support Israeli citizens living abroad.

When I first approached the ambassadors I could not anticipate what attitudes they might hold toward emigrants. Given their age, I had ground to suspect that some of them might

still hold the old 'Yerida' value. On the other hand, given the MFA's involvement in the recent policy change, I had grounds to expect them to be supportive of the new policies... I prepared myself for any scenario, and anticipated questions as to why I have emigrated and even covert or overt criticism.

To my surprise, none of this occurred. Over the course of the interviews I learned that in fact many of them lived abroad longer than me. In the course of their missions, most were in regular contact with Israeli emigrants, and saw them as a networking resource and a source of support for themselves and their families, and upon their multiple repatriations, some of them still maintained their friendship ties with Israelis living abroad. Furthermore, a known phenomenon among the diplomat's children is that some of them return in adulthood to live in one of the countries where they grew up (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001), and indeed some of my respondents' children have chosen to live abroad, and thus were defined as Israeli emigrants themselves.... All these combined to explain the ambassadors' casual outlook towards my emigration.

Despite this, I still felt a sense of discomfort when they described their deep sense of connection and belonging to Israel, and their devotion to it, mainly since it was in contrast to my own weak sense of belonging to both my homeland and my new home – a known phenomenon among first generation migrants (Gold, 2002). This provoked my curiosity as to the ways in which their careers and unique roles worked to enhance their social identities and sense of place, and I therefore included a few questions on this topic in my interview schedule.

## 5.12 Conclusion

This chapter described the research methods applied to this study for data collection and analysis, and depicted the processes and procedures that I applied during the course of this research, and the principles that underlie them.

The chapter opened with the research perspective that this study drew on – *the interpretive paradigm* – and demonstrated how its ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions shaped and directed the conduct of this research at each and every phase – from data collection to report writing. Focusing on the construction of meaning and people’s own interpretation of reality, the chapter went on to delineate the guidelines of the methodological framework that was used in this study: *Constructivist grounded theory* which indeed was founded on *interpretive paradigm* conceptions, and followed its guidelines. The next section (no. 5.5) offered a detailed report of the three data collection methods, which were simultaneously used in this study - conducting interviews, collecting relevant media articles, and writing a research diary. It also presented the ways in which these were carried out, the changes that occurred along the way, and some of the challenges I faced. The following section (no. 5.6) presented a comprehensive account of the data collection procedures: how the interviews were conducted and the networking and snowballing process. The interviewees were at the centre of the following section (no. 5.7): their background features were presented, and some aspects of their career and global missions were explored. The next sections (no. 5.8 and 5.9) described the ways in which the data was analysed, leading to the writing up process and some of the challenges it presented, emanated from my cross-cultural perspective. The ethical issues that I have faced along the way were discussed in the following section (no. 5.10), and this was followed by a reflexive account on the conduct of the entire study (section 5.11).

This chapter captured my journey as an interpretive researcher applying *grounded theory* approach for studying the career experiences and work outlooks of diplomats. Along the way, I have created research questions for my inquiry, gathered data, analysed it and reflected on the findings. Consequently I have changed my research topic and my research questions, hence finding myself venturing into a new and somewhat surprising analytical pathway which I never expected to take.

Often when we think of *grounded theory* we may consider its philosophical stance and methodological principles, and we may acknowledge that its core idea is that theories emerge from the data, and thus they reside with the participants, and reflect their world-views. We may also acknowledge that the research process is flexible and interactive, and that the boundaries between research processes (data collection and analysis) and research product (emergent theory) are blurred. But we rarely consider the possibility of *being led by the data to an unfamiliar research territory*. I admit that I was taken by surprise. In fact, at first I resisted going into a completely new theoretical terrain, leaving an area that I consider my comfort zone. It felt like venturing into the unknown. However, of all the methodological learning I gathered along the way, the experience of having to trust the *grounded theory* process and let the data lead, was the most significant, and has given *grounded theory* high credibility in my view. I know that as a result I have come to know the world of diplomacy intimately, and rather than pitching *my* research agenda in this study, I have brought the authentic voices of my participants into view, and conveyed *their* interests, outlooks, positions and agendas.



## CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a detailed account of the three main core categories that emerged from the data, which represent the respondents' work outlooks and the meaning that they assign to their work. It also links these categories to the extant literature reviewed earlier. The opening section (6.2) offers a brief overview of the three core categories, and maps out the sub-categories and main themes that make up each core category. Section 6.3 delineates the respondents' *calling* outlook, section 6.4 depicts the *career* orientation, and section 6.5 portrays the respondents' *way of life* orientation. A discussion of the findings is offered in the following chapter (no. 7).

### 6.2 Core categories: *calling, career and way of life*

Three core categories emerged from the ambassadors' accounts that represent their work outlooks: *calling, career and way of life*. These themes display three distinct orientations that embody the meaning that the respondents ascribe to their work, how meaningful their work is for them, and what features of their work make it meaningful.

#### 6.2.1 The *calling* orientation

The majority of the respondents (n=42 out of 57) presented a *calling* orientation, where they perceived their work as highly valuable for their country, and a service to the greater good. They felt that it was their moral duty and responsibility to undertake this work, despite the challenges and sacrifices involved. This outlook was coupled with a strong ideological identification, as exemplified below:

Ambassador Gaon (male, active): *'First of all it's a calling, because not many people can do this work, and I think that those who can, should be doing it! I don't think it's very different from serving in the army... or flying a warplane....Today, more than ever, the diplomatic front is no less crucial than the army battlefields! Many of our fights today are in the UN, the EU, and in the media; no less than in the bombarded Sderot... so there's a significant element of calling here and a sincere understanding that you are working to defend your country that is under attack, in fronts that we cannot afford to lose...'*

Several sub-categories of the *calling* orientation emerged from the interviews data:

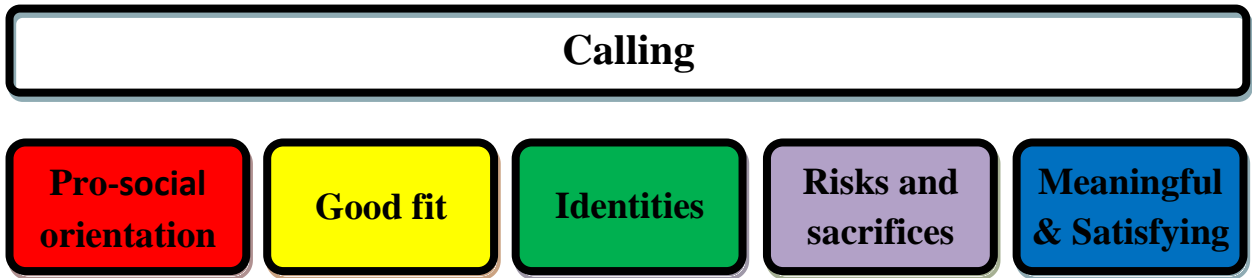
- 1) Distinct pro-social orientation: work is seen as a service to society (n=40).
- 2) Good fit: the work corresponds with the ambassadors' skill-set (n=31) and social values (n=34).
- 3) Clarity of professional identity (n=23) and strong organisational identity (n=40).
- 4) Willingness to endure the risks and sacrifices that come with the job (n=29, 69%).
- 5) Work is deeply meaningful and satisfying for the respondents (n=27).

These characteristics are detailed in section 6.3, and Figure 2 maps and links the features of the *calling* category with its five sub-categories and their themes<sup>1</sup>.

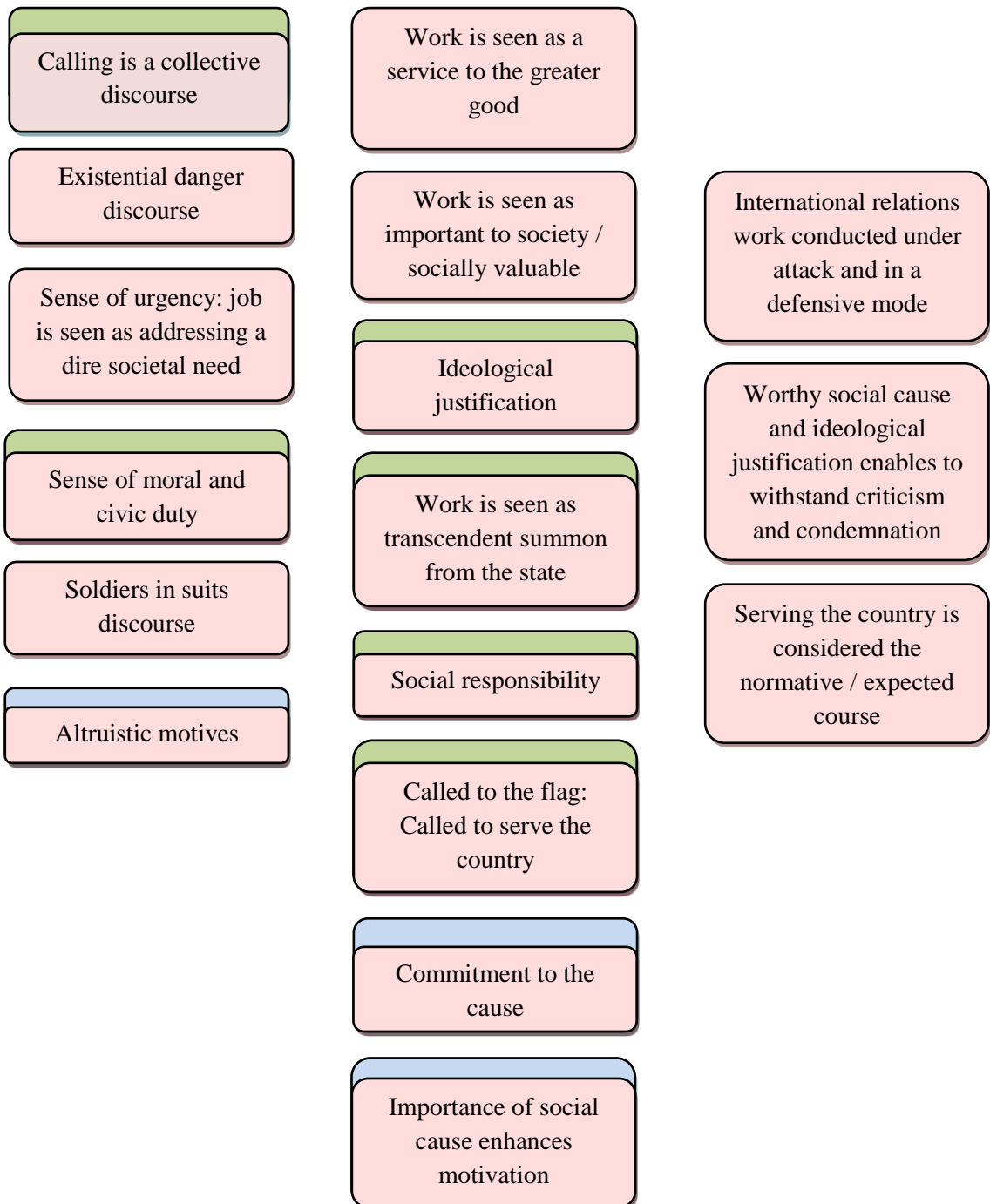
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<sup>1</sup> Note that each of the boxes underneath the *calling* box represents one of the sub-categories, and in the following pages the drawing of each of the sub-categories explains its supporting themes. Where boxes include double or triple background colours, each colour denotes another sub-category supported by this theme.

**Figure 2: The *calling* category**



**Pro-social orientation**



# Good fit

Work corresponds with employees' social values, beliefs and ideologies

Respondents identify with the objective of their work

Work corresponds with employees' national identities

Work corresponds with employees' skill-set and personality characteristics

Core skills required: interpersonal skills (EQ), sincerity, communication, negotiation, persuasion confidence, analytical skills, management skills and cross-cultural

Having the skills for their occupation is confirmed by tough and competitive entry examinations

Positive self esteem and self efficacy

Feel that they are well suited for their profession

Playing to their strengths

Sense of being good at their jobs

Sense of self actualisation: work provides opportunities to express one's talents and strengths

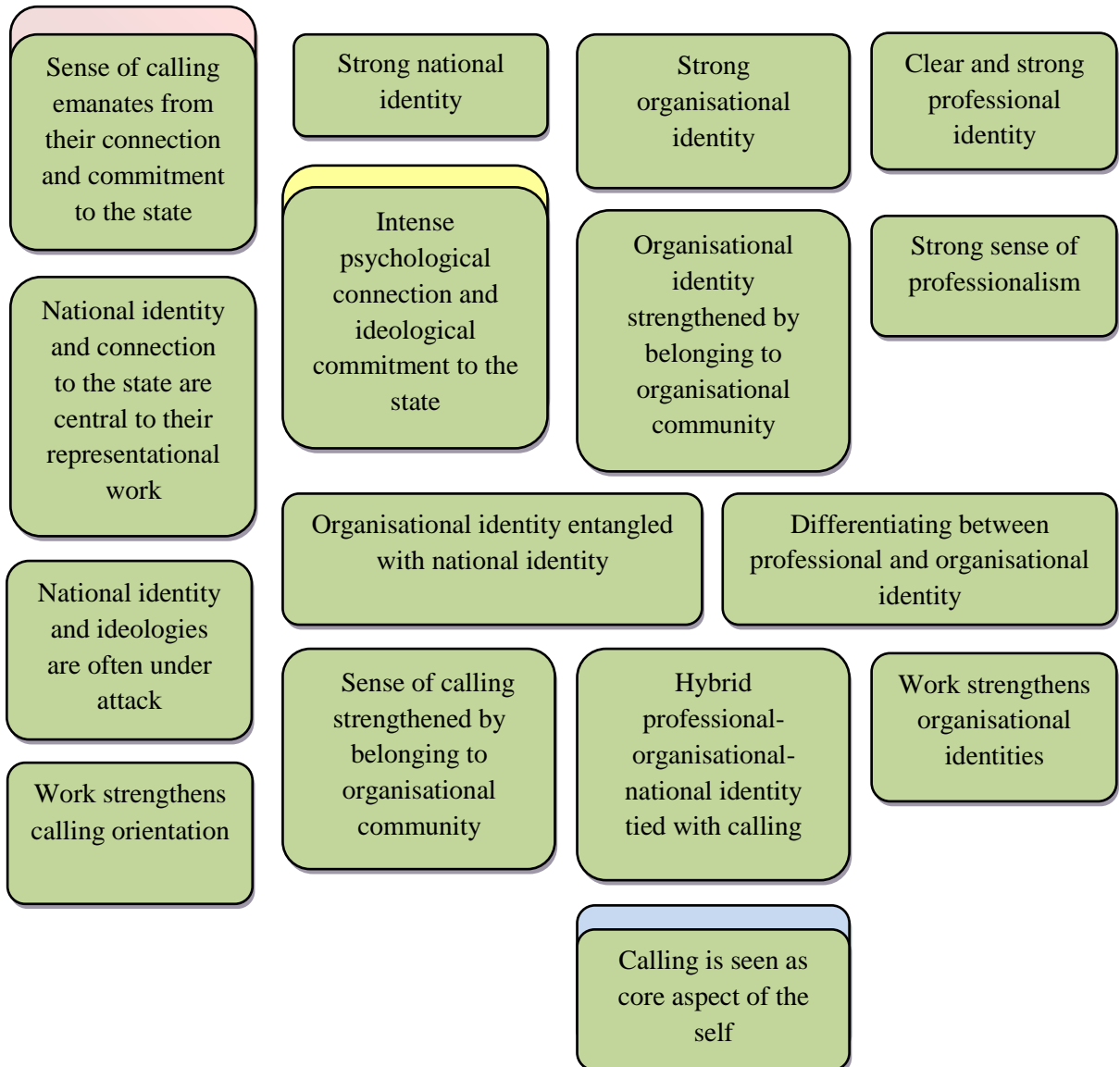
Most skills are born but can be further developed

Sense of being the 'chosen few'

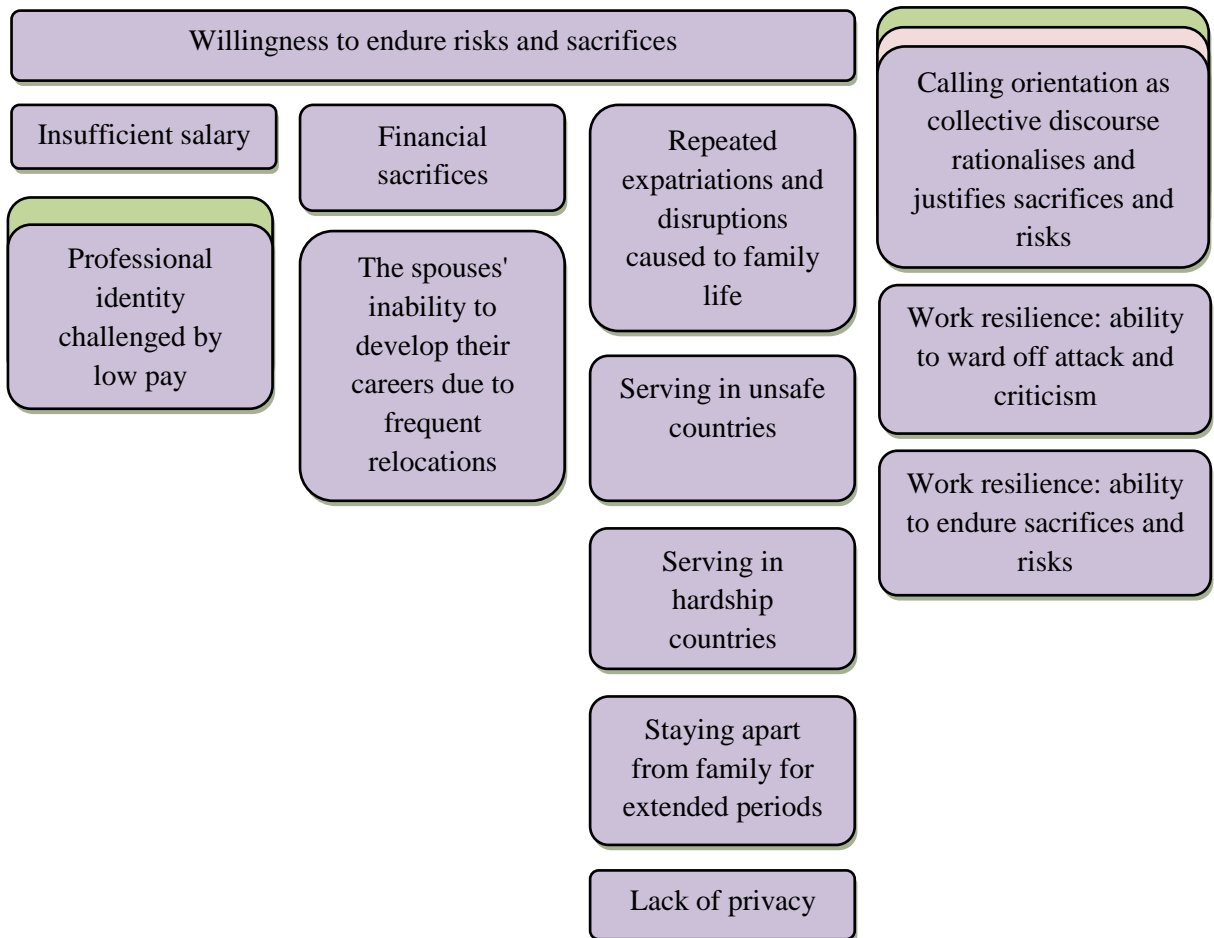
Job is interesting and engaging

Job is fulfilling

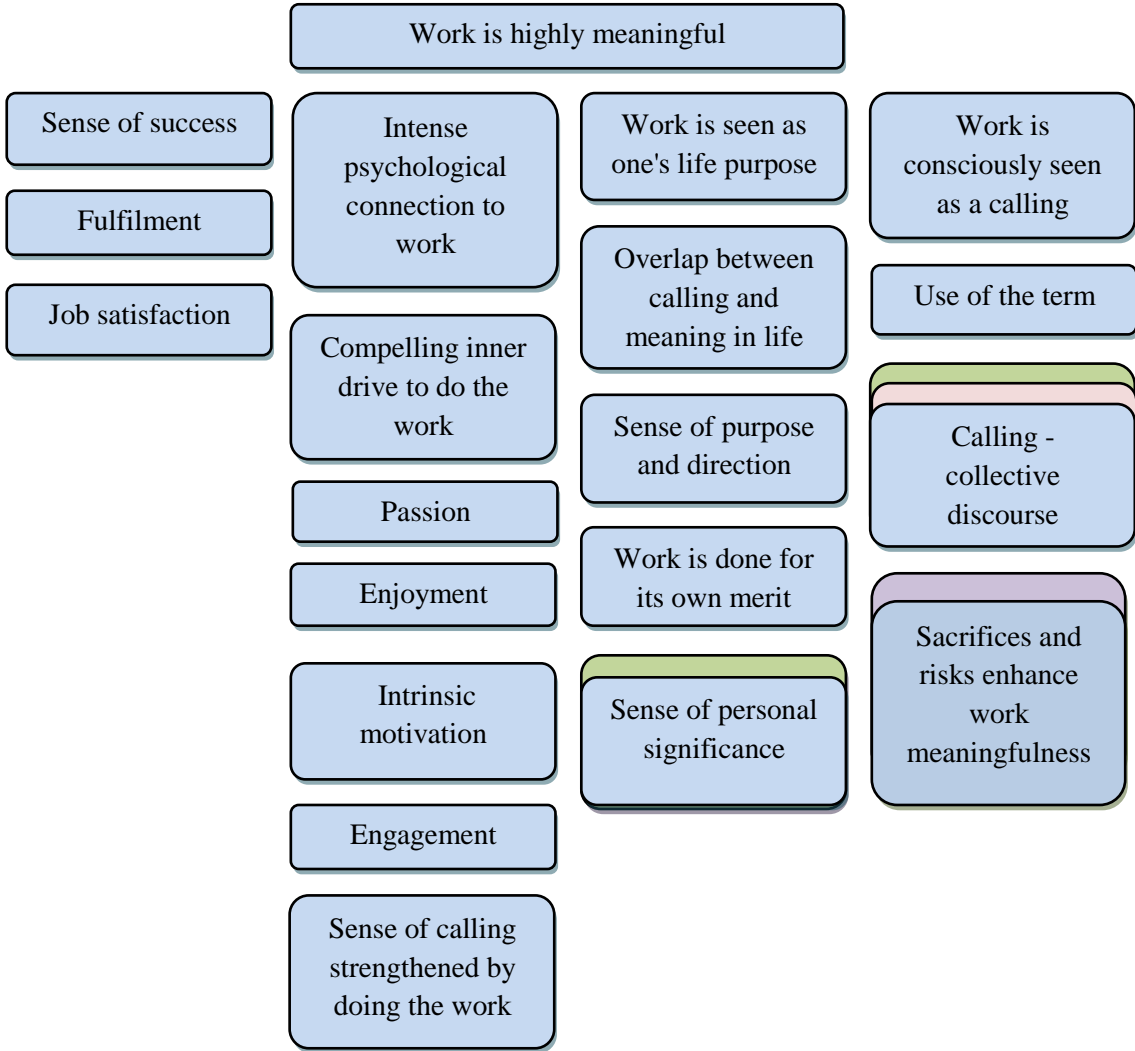
# Identities



## Risks and sacrifices



# Meaningful & Satisfying



### 6.2.2 The *career* orientation

More than a third (n=21) of the participants displayed a *career* orientation, that was manifested in a traditional *career for life* outlook; they anticipated working for the MFA for their entire work-life, with the expectation and desire to progress in the organisational hierarchy and assume senior positions. The following quote exemplifies this orientation:

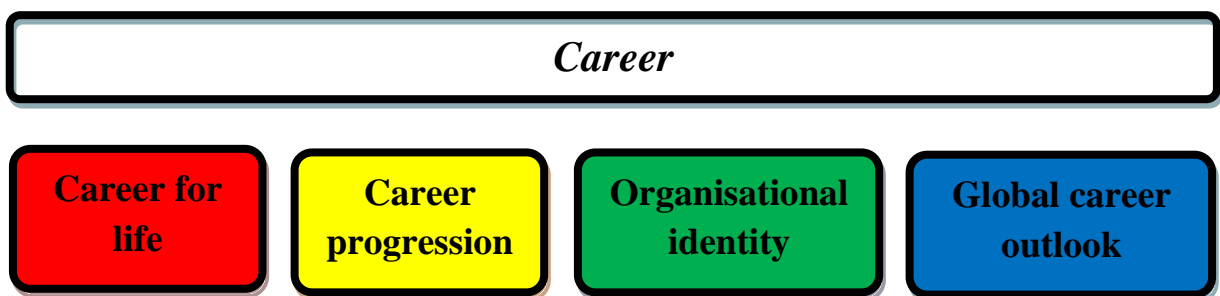
Ambassador Gazit (male, active): *'I wanted to head a mission... to be the manager... the leader. There is a hierarchical 'spice' in missions abroad... and in the two missions that I had, there was a great opportunity to do that'.*

Several features of the respondents' *career* orientation were recurrently voiced in the interviews and emerged as sub-themes under the *career* core category:

- 1) A '*career for life*' perception: a 'traditional' long-term organisational *career* outlook (n=15).
- 2) A desire or an expectation to progress in the organisational hierarchy and assume top managerial positions (n=14).
- 3) A strong organisational identity (n=19).
- 4) A global career outlook in which expatriation is considered the 'expected route' and a critical step for progressing in the organisational hierarchy (n=16).

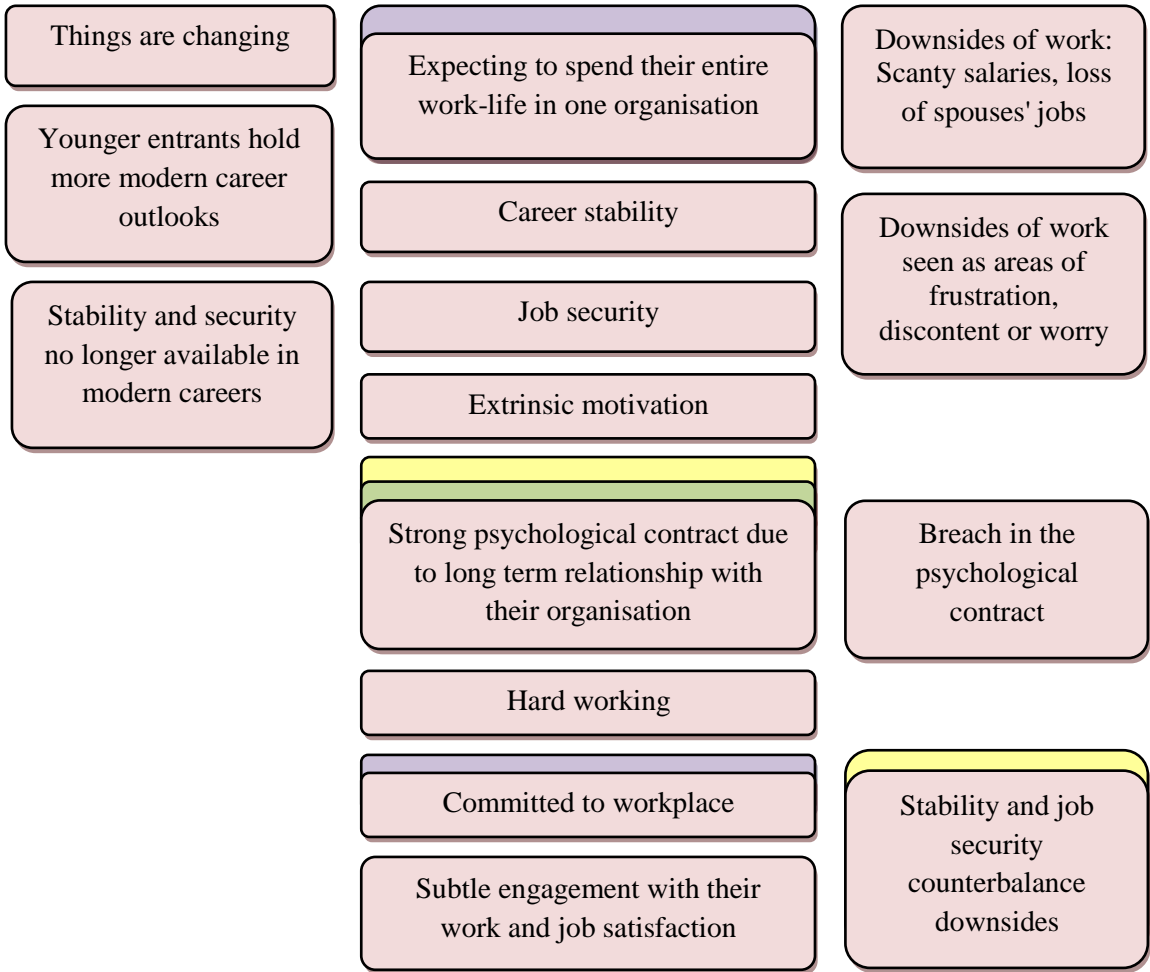
These features will be further unpacked in section 6.4, and Figure 3 maps and links the features of the *career* category, with its four sub-categories and their themes.

Figure 3: The *Career* category





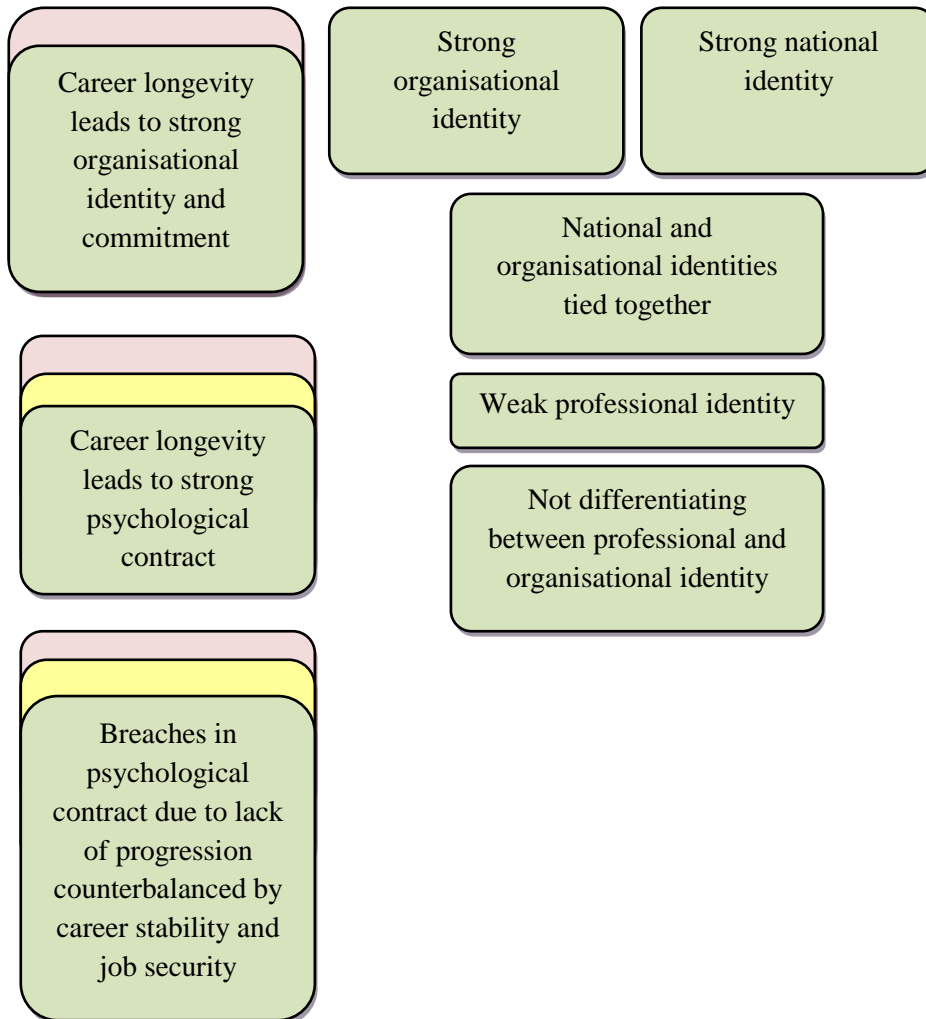
# Career for life



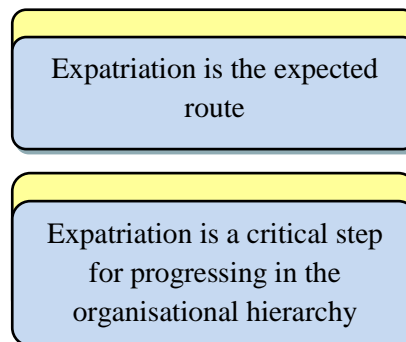
## Career progression



## Organisational identity



## Global career outlook



### 6.2.3 The way of life orientation

Nearly half of the ambassadors (n=28) perceived their work as a *way of life*. This is due to their global work (particularly the repeated expatriations) and its impact on their lives, the all-consuming nature of the work, the blurred boundaries between work and other aspects of life, and the involvement of the entire family (particularly the spouse) in the work:

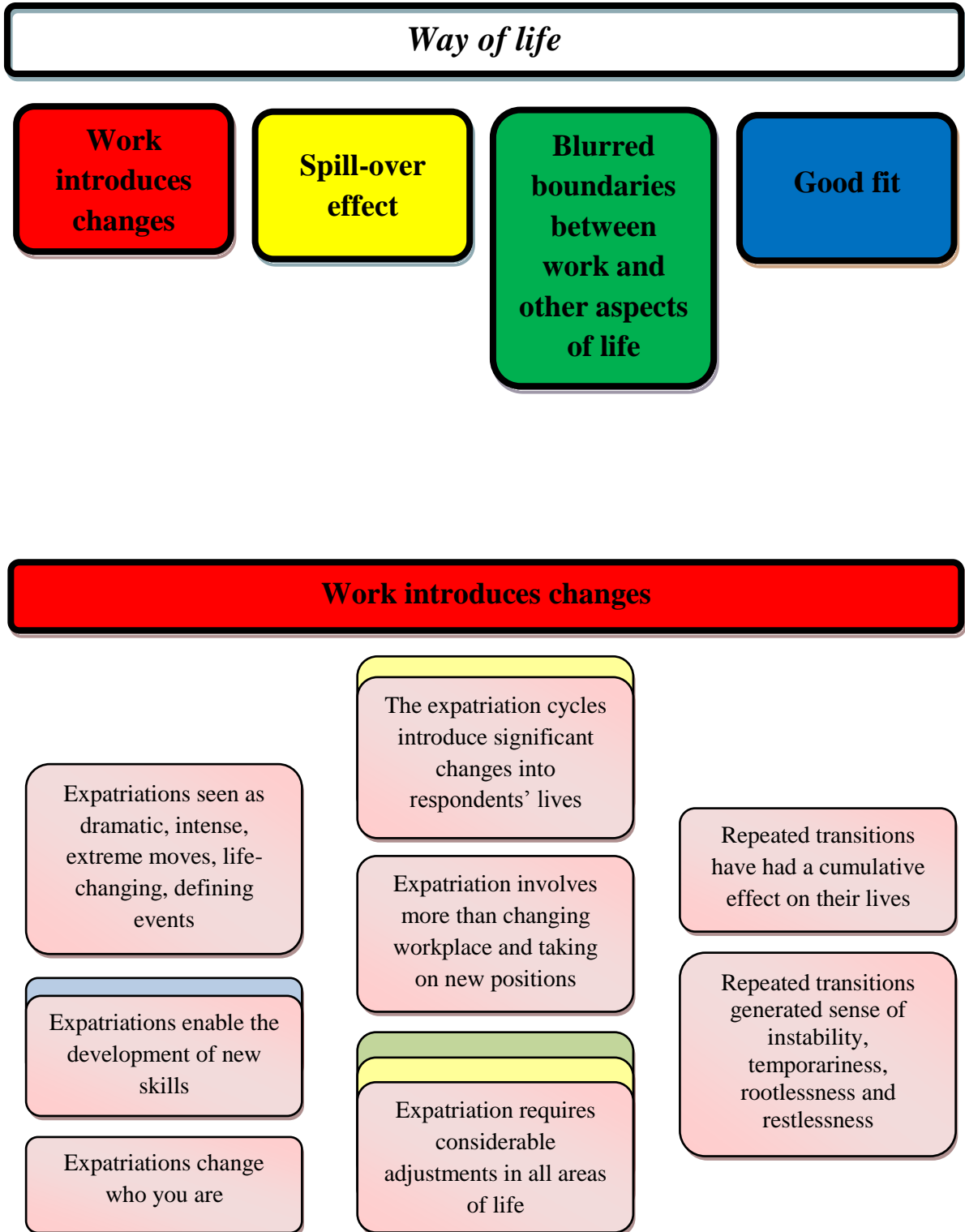
Ambassador Bar-on (male, retired): *'What makes this job unique, is that it is not a career choice but a way of life.... it's a choice that affects not only the person who is doing the job but all those around him..... A diplomat is like a turtle who takes his home with him wherever he goes... You drag your family with you abroad and back... several times... and it has a massive impact on your family life and each and every one of you...'*

Several characteristics of *the way of life* orientation emerged from the analysis as sub-themes:

- 1) The expatriation cycles introduced significant changes into respondents' lives whose impact were felt well beyond work (n=22).
- 2) Spill-over effect occurred: Their work affected the lives of those around them (n=20).
- 3) Blurred boundaries between work and other aspects of life (n=17): The work is seen as all consuming (n=21) and never-ending (n=19).
- 4) Good fit: The work corresponds with the ambassadors' cross-cultural skills (n=15).

These features will be further unpacked in section 6.5 below, and Figure 4 maps and links the features of the *way of life* core category, with its four sub-categories and their individual themes.

Figure 4: The *way of life* category



## Spill-over effect

The children face challenges upon expatriation

The relocations affect the lives of those who accompanied them

Relocation effects on the spouse

Damage caused to the spouse's career

The moves affect the lives of those who stay behind

It's a family career

Important to involve family members in career decisions and expatriation decisions

Spouses play important role in residential-missions

Spouses role is officially acknowledged but not rewarded

## Blurred boundaries between work and other aspects of life

Work is never ending

Work is all consuming

Work is 24/7

Work is constantly on their minds, necessitating investment of their attention, time and energy

Blurred boundaries between work and life - work intrudes life - lack of work life balance

Excessive work demands - work dictates life

Representational role invades their personal lives and blurs the boundaries between the private and public spheres of their lives

Representational role - they remain the face of the state even when they sleep

Social life and leisure become work

They are rarely available in terms of family life

Motivation

Initial motivation: extrinsic - responding to work demands

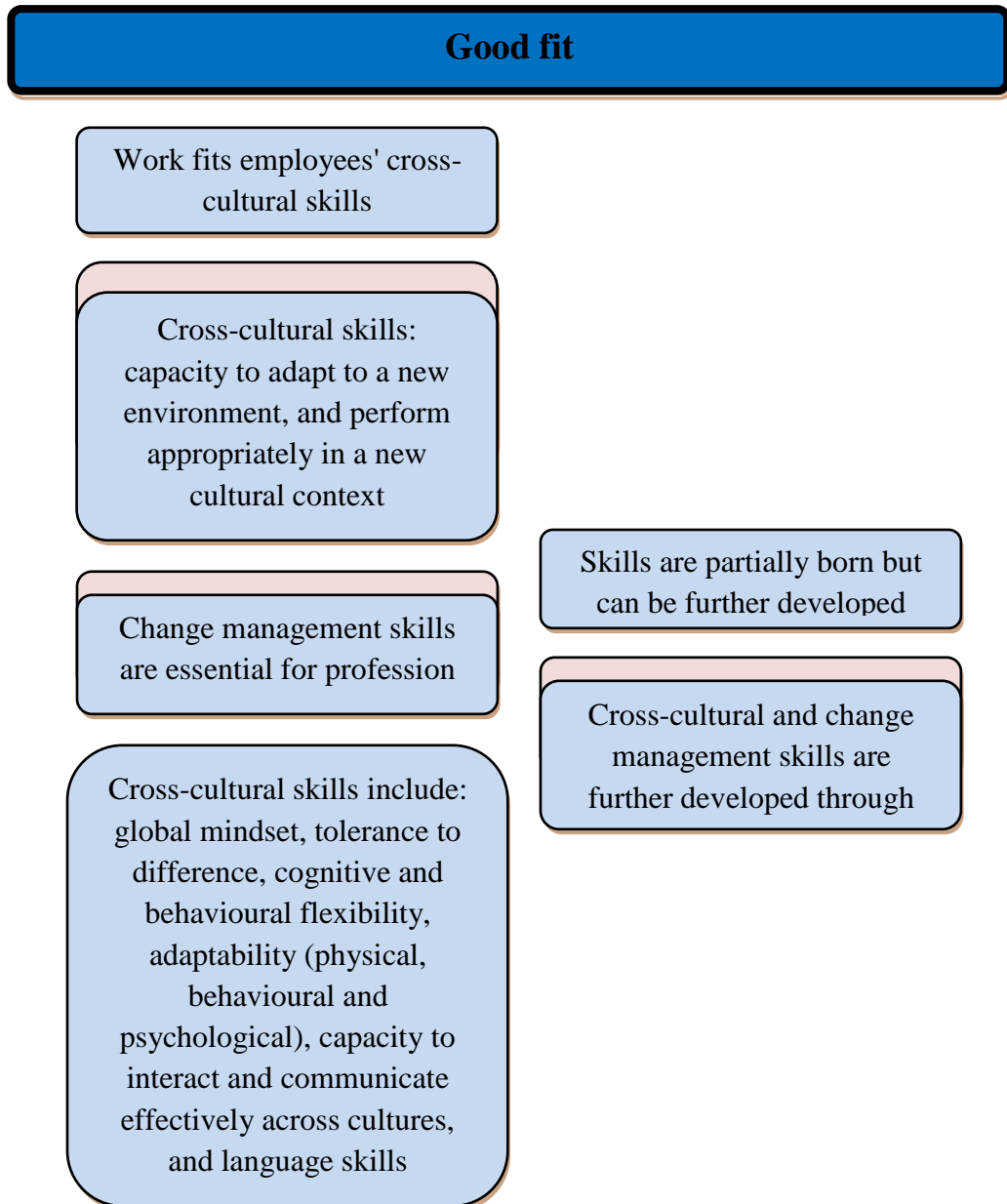
High degree of commitment to and engagement with work

Respondents may have internalised external demands

Way of life outlook - psychological mechanism that can convert extrinsic into intrinsic motivation

Way of life justifies the family costs and lack of work life balance

Way of life strengthens and validates commitment to work

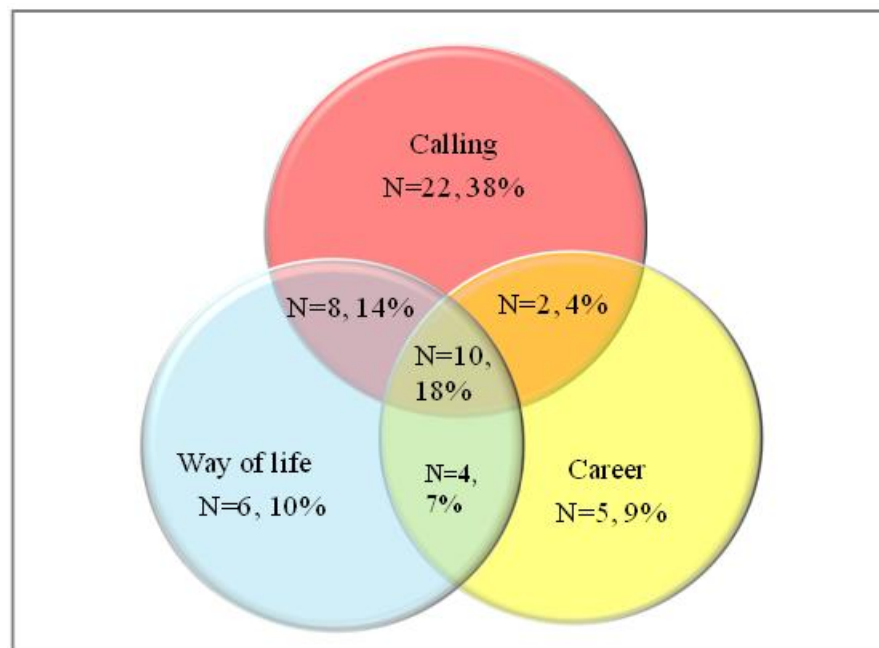


Another central finding in reference to the core categories depicted above, is that more than half of the interviewees (n=33) displayed a singular work orientation, while the rest (n=24) presented outlooks that brought together two or all three work orientations. Figure 5 below shows the distribution of interviewees across the singular and entwined work-orientation categories. The following example displays an outlook which ties together all three orientations:



Ambassador Almog (male, retired): *'It's a careerist-calling, or a calling-driven-career. When you are serving abroad it's a calling, because you are representing your country. When you are stationed at home it's more a career... because you expect to progress from one step in the ladder to the next, and aim to conquer the top.... And it's also a way of life because it engages you and your entire family, and it's a non-stop around the clock commitment! There are civil service jobs where you leave the office and that's it, but not in the Foreign Service - you and your family are constantly on call, and it's a very intense involvement.'*

Figure 5: The distribution of interviewees among *work orientation* categories



An initial comparison between the core categories presented here and Wrzesniewski et al.'s (1997) *work orientation* model reviewed earlier (section 2.3) has shown that the features of the *calling* and *career* orientations presented by Wrzesniewski et al.'s (1997) indeed closely resemble the *calling* and *career* orientations that emerged from the ambassadors' accounts. Their semblance will be explored in more detail in section 6.3 and 6.4 below.

However, the work perceptions of the participants of this study deviate from Wrzesniewski et al.'s (1997) model in two points: none of the interviewees displayed the characteristics of a *job* orientation, and the *way of life* work orientation of the ambassadors has not been found or examined earlier by any *work orientation* research; I shall later argue that the ambassadors' accounts can refine, contribute to and complement the existing *work orientation* model (Chapter 7).

In the following sections each of core categories will be described, unpacked and systematically examined, in order to portray its distinctive features.

### **6.3 The ambassadors' *calling* orientation**

One of the most striking aspects in this study was the dominance of the *calling* orientation in the ambassadors' accounts: nearly three quarter of interviewees (n=42) voiced a distinct *calling* orientation, and most have specifically used the term *calling* in their depiction of their work outlooks. It can therefore be argued that they consciously perceive their work as a *calling*.

It should be noted that in Hebrew the word 'calling' is similar to the word that is used to describe a mission abroad / expatriation – though they have different meanings. Despite the word similarity, there was no confusion between them, which is evident from the quotes.

Further analysis revealed that men and women were equally likely to manifest this orientation, which is in line with the research on work orientation and calling that found no differences between genders in the tendency to manifest a calling orientation

(Wrzesniewski et al., 1997; Peterson et al., 2009; Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011; Shea Van Fossen & Vredenburg, 2014).

However, the calling orientation was slightly more prevalent among retirees (n=24) compared to active ambassadors (n=18). The differences between active and retired diplomats can be explained by intergenerational socio-cultural differences, as the retirees who have witnessed the establishment of the state of Israel, grew up during a time when patriotism was a societal value and the norm, while the younger generations no longer hold these patriotic ideals (Kimmerling, 2005).

Among this category of interviewees, more than half (n=22) displayed a *calling* orientation solely, while the rest (n=20) displayed a *calling* orientation that was entwined with a *career* or *way of life* orientation.

As noted earlier (section 6.2.1), several characteristics of the respondents' *calling* orientation repeatedly featured in the interviews. These sub-categories will be unpacked and discussed in the following sections.

### **6.3.1 Work is deeply meaningful and satisfying**

The following quotes reveal the strong emotional bond that exists between the participants and their work, and how meaningful their work is for them:

Ambassador Sever (male, retired): *I tell the new cadets: don't go into it if you see it as a profession. This is not a profession... go into it only if you feel that what drives you is what makes someone climb the Everest – the sense that you have got to do it, and you can't live without it....That's how I felt about it.... You do not do this work in*

*order to have fun abroad.... You go into diplomacy because this is what you want to do, more than anything else!!!... because you cannot do otherwise...'*

Ambassador Nathan (male, retired): *'My wife and kids got pretty annoyed with me when every outing on Sunday began with the embassy and ended by stopping there on the way back... But that was how I treated my work....as holy work.'*

These accounts convey the intense psychological connection that the ambassadors have forged with their work. The deep *meaning* that they attribute to their work is manifested through a compelling inner drive to do the work - a strong intrinsic motivation, combined with a passionate engagement with their work. Furthermore, as seen in Ambassador Sever's narrative quoted above, some of the participants perceived their work as their purpose in life, and therefore displayed an overlap between their work-related *calling* and life meaning.

The *significance* that they assigned to their work was displayed through a strong sense of duty, responsibility, dedication and commitment to their work, and the sense that the work is done for its own merit because of its importance and what it means both for them and to society:

Ambassador Goren (male, active): *'There are more rewarding workplaces I could have chosen... and I'm not talking in financial terms only.... certainly financially.... but also from other aspects. But I chose this work because I thought it was important'*

Ambassador Amiad (male, retired): *'I did my job with utmost dedication and loyalty, and I think everybody should do it in that way...You have to be loyal to the job, the country and the government... dedication and loyalty.'*

For some, seeing their work as *calling* rendered them with personal significance, direction and purpose, and sustained their motivation:

Ambassador Ayalon (male, retired): *'I think that anyone who is sent on a mission abroad gets inspired.... and this emotional connection to your job is with you all the time... And actually, if it is not – then something is wrong! It has to be with you all the time, so that you feel that sense of calling and the weight of your duty and responsibility. I think that this sense of connection has to be with you, to give you incentive to keep doing the work. The work abroad is hard. It's never ending. It requires massive efforts and it's exhausting. So when you feel a sense of calling – it helps you sustain your efforts.'*

Ambassador Sharon (female, active): *'There are many jobs I could have chosen that would have been satisfying financially, as well as avoiding the bureaucracy and political constraints..... But here, there is an element of calling... and this strong sense of calling, for me, is very central to my work, and tremendously meaningful.'*

These manifestations of the *calling* orientation coincide with the literature; Bellah et al. (1985) and Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) characterised *callings* as work that is perceived profoundly meaningful and significant to those performing it, to the degree that they perceive their work as their purpose in life (Hall & Chandler, 2005). Other studies have found that the *calling* orientation is often manifested in intrinsic motivation (Elliott, 1992; Dobrow, 2006; Wrzesniewski, 2010), passion and enjoyment (Elliott, 1992; Novak, 1996; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997; Dobrow, 2006; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009), engagement and commitment (Dobrow, 2006; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011; Hirschi, 2012; Duffy, Allan, Autin & Douglass, 2014), a sense of direction, clarity of purpose and strong identification with their work (Elliott, 1992; Hall & Chandler, 2005;

Dobrow, 2006; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Dik & Duffy, 2009; Wrzesniewski et al., 2009), all of which correspond with the participants' accounts. These findings also concur with Maslow (1956), Frankl (1969) and Wong's (2009) argument that self-transcendence and contributing to the greater good is a key factor in finding meaning and fulfilment in life.

In line with these findings, several authors reported that people who view their work as a *calling*, often convey a deep sense of psychological success, job satisfaction and gratification (Elliott, 1992; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997; 2002; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Dobrow, 2006; Duffy et al., 2011; 2012). The ambassadors clearly conveyed these sentiments, though the question of job satisfaction was not directly posed in the interviews:

Ambassador Bar-Lev (male, retired): *'I think that there is much to be done to secure the position of Israel in the international arena. I believe that Israel deserves and needs to be there. And I thought that... I have something to give, that I can contribute...I had opportunities... to influence and make a difference... I believe that my entire career... contributed... and I'm very proud of that....'*

Ambassador Sever (male, retired): *'Of course I have a personal ambition to succeed in my work... but you do not do this work that protects your country because you expect it to increase your salary or to promote your rank. You do it because... you are committed to serving your country.... Your own success and gratification accompanies the country's success ... And this is how I felt about this work from the very beginning...'*

As seen in these accounts, the meaning that the participants attributed to their work, and their sense of gratification, was consistently linked to their altruistic sense of moral duty

and perception that their work was socially-valuable, which is the another characteristic of their *calling* orientation, that I will discuss next.

### **6.3.2 Distinct pro-social orientation**

Nearly all respondents who displayed a *calling* orientation emphasised the pro-social values that were embedded in their line of work and underlie their motivation, and viewed their work as contributing to the greater good – specifically to their country and society:

Ambassador Gaon (male, active): *'This is a holy calling – I'm not ashamed to say that. I think the work we do is important... it is in fact crucial to ensure Israel's existence... No less than that. I know it sounds pretentious, but...our international ties with other countries, is what gives us strength. And you can't do without it... It's essential, and well worth the sacrifices'.*

Ambassador Freedman (female, active): *'The difference between an Israeli diplomat and other diplomats is that the Israeli diplomat's work is around getting recognition and legitimacy.... So much of our work is about showing the world that we are a normal Western country... a country that you can safely invest in... a country that is not dangerous. British diplomats are not looking for recognition'.*

These quotes highlight the respondents' sense that they are performing not only a job, but a mission that is crucial for their country: their work is about protecting or defending the state of Israel, its right to exist and the legitimacy of its interests. In line with this view, several interviewees referred to themselves as *soldiers in suits*.

What comes across from these excerpts is the respondents' deep sense of moral obligation and devotion to the cause that fits well with the analysis offered earlier on the MFA's culture (see section 3.6.2):

Ambassador Strauss (female, active): *'My mission is to secure Israel's international position. It is a goal and a value.... To represent the normal, sane side of Israel... because people's perception of Israel is distorted... To turn Israel into an equal member in the international community...I don't think we are there yet.'*

Ambassador Sharon (female, active): *'Each of us bares the heavy responsibility of reading the political map correctly, analysing it, creating a set of recommendation from it, and creating opportunities to implement these recommendations, reflecting them to the political level, and seeing that it all happens, despite obstacles and problems.... Our job is to push through... to be the engine... to create a vision... to secure the future of Israel.'*

These findings are consistent with much of the research on *callings*, and in several studies (Wrzesniewski, 2003; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Dik & Duffy, 2009; Elangovan et al., 2010; Myers, 2013) the authors reported that pro-social goals were key features in people's outlooks. Grant's (2008) work on pro-social work attitudes suggests that deep sense of moral obligation and identification with the cause are often displayed by people who hold strong pro-social outlooks.

Wrzesniewski (2003) asserted that even modern *callings*, which essentially revolve around a person's passionate desire to express a talent or a skill, often entail a sense of transcendence whereby a person perceives his or her work as serving a larger purpose than oneself, and contributing to one's society or to a social cause. Bunderson & Thompson (2009) reasoned that when work is driven by a desire to serve the greater good, it is likely to be seen as one's civic duty and social responsibility, which corresponds with the ambassadors' accounts



Accordingly, scholars who investigated public service employees (Perry, 1996; 2000; Vandenabeele, 2007; 2008), underscored the centrality of 'altruistic motivation to serve the interests of a community of people, a state, a nation or humankind' among staff (Rainey & Steinbauer, 1999: 20). Perry & Hondeghem (2008) and Vandenabeele (2008) argued that the public sector tends to attract employees with strong altruistic motivations. They also found that once employees engaged with the work, their pro-social values were further strengthened, which seemed to be the case among the ambassadors.

In agreement with the idea that *callings* entail pro-social objectives, Dik & Duffy (2009: 427) argued that *callings* can be experienced as 'a transcendent summons' originating from an external source - a cause, a nation, community, society or God. Indeed, among the Ambassadors' *calling* group, a considerable proportion felt they were 'called to serve the country' by embarking on a life-long altruistic career in the public service:

Ambassador Bar-Lev (male, retired): *'Before the Yom Kippur War I was a student at ... (a university in Israel). Just before the war I completed my undergraduate degree in.... I won a scholarship to continue for the MA and was offered a job as a teaching assistant. ... And after the war I gave up all of this in order to serve in the MFA... I thought that what the country needed were people who could defend the country that was facing a huge threat... and I wasn't the only one who felt this way...'*

Ambassador Meir (male, retired): *'When I was at the end of my International Relations studies I applied [to the MFA].... and for me, well for all of us, going to serve in the MFA was like continuing the army service.... it was sort of the expected route....'*

It should be noted that the terms *serve the country*, and *serve in the MFA*, which were recurrently voiced by participants, are terminologies that are habitually used by Israeli

army personnel, but not commonly used by other civil service staff. As seen in these accounts, the transcendent summon to serve the country was deeply felt, and also considered the 'normative' or the 'expected' course.

The sense of being 'called to the flag' seems to be backed by a compelling ideological justification: the job was perceived as addressing a dire need of the state, and thus vital to society. As demonstrated above, it is apparent that the respondents have passionately identified with this ideology, and thereby with the objectives of their work. In several interviews there was a hint of 'existential danger' discourse that underlined the strong sense of urgency and significance that was displayed in these accounts:

Ambassador Sarell (male, retired): *'The Israeli narrative is in dire straits... Australian or Belgian ambassadors represent the interests of their states, while we have to justify the cause.... That's way beyond justifying interests... It's much more complicated...'*

Ambassador Golan (male, active): *'It is a very different job if you are an Israeli or a Swiss diplomat....in terms of the contents of the job. Because you are representing a problematic country - a country in conflict.... a country that cannot take its recognition by the international community for granted. The job has a contesting or battling element in it, that other countries do not have.... you have to justify and fight for your place.... and that element changes the profession dramatically. You have to have that ideological attachment and devotion to do it.'*

Yair (2014) indeed found this type of existential danger discourse in his analysis of the Israeli national culture (see review section 3.6.2).

As can be seen here, the *calling* orientation provided the ambassadors not only with a social cause that is perceived as critical for the survival of the State, but also with a compelling ideological justification, that enabled them to ward off the criticism and condemnation on their country, which they often faced in the course of their work abroad. Thus it may be argued that because the *calling* orientation combines both a worthy social cause and ideology, it renders them the mental durability required to work under these challenging conditions.

Bunderson & Thompson (2009) argued that this type of *calling* orientation that is driven by sense of moral duty, backed by an ideology and justified by its significance for society, can become a double-edge sword, which is both 'binding and ennobling' – where the work becomes both 'a source of transcendent meaning, identity and significance, as well as unbending duty, sacrifice and vigilance' (p. 32).

### **6.3.3 Good fit**

Most of the respondents in this category (particularly the younger generation) felt that there was a good fit between their skills, personality characteristics and interests, and the central features of their profession:

Ambassador Levy (male, active): *'I feel comfortable in this profession, because it suits my personality... It's a job where you work with people – and I enjoy working with people. It's an optimistic profession - and I'm an optimist. It's optimistic because it believes that all conflicts can be resolved by peaceful means... and I truly believe in that.'*

Ambassador Berger (female, active): *'You have got to have excellent human skills in this profession... If I try and distil what diplomacy is – it is about building personal ties.... Looking back... I think my career... proved that I have the right personality for*

*this work – I am immensely curious about people, and I love and enjoy personal interaction...'*

As seen here, these participants displayed positive self-esteem regarding their characteristics or skills, and felt that they were well suited for their demanding jobs in terms of their abilities, strengths, knowledge and character.

Several core skills were seen as critical for this profession: interpersonal skills (particularly EQ), sincerity, communication, negotiation and persuasion skills, confidence, analytical skills, management skills and cross-cultural capacities. These skills are indeed in line with the research reviewed earlier on diplomats' skills (Yagar, 2005; Rana, 2011; Megahed, van der Heijden, Shaker & Wahba, 2012; Mirvis et al., 2014). When asked whether these skills are born or made, most of the interviewees argued that while the foundations for some of these skills (particularly the interpersonal capacities) are inborn, they can be further developed:

Ambassador Barak (male, retired): *'I think that some of these skills are born and some can be developed.... Some of the skills – such as communication, negotiation, emotional intelligence, analytic capacities, can certainly be developed, but you have got to have the foundation there. But there is also a lot of knowledge required in our work – languages, cultures, local type of knowledge – these are certainly acquired. So it's a combination of both.'*

Ambassador Levy (male, active): *'I think diplomacy requires some skills that are inborn, particularly communication and other interpersonal skills, and it also requires quite a lot of other skills that can be developed. If a person is an egoist and self-centred and it's all about me, me, me...and has no patience to listen to others – you will have a hard time developing such a person into a good diplomat.'*

The interviewees also displayed a strong sense of success, of playing to their strengths and being good at their jobs, and thus they found their jobs interesting and gratifying:

Ambassador Katz (male, retired): *'I find it very interesting - it's a fascinating job... it kept me motivated and engaged. Also.... the knowledge that you can do it well.... a person likes to do the things he is good at... I felt that I can do a good job.... It's a hard life, but like other hard things in life, at the end of it, the sense of accomplishment and gratification is also high... And I really enjoyed many aspects of this work'.*

Ambassador Moav (male, active): *'My mission to... (in Asia) was a huge challenge... and it was a huge success at the end... and I came back from my mission there with a strong sense of success... I felt I can function well and excel in this profession, and that it's in my blood... you know, the ability to get to the right people, to get the information I needed, to establish the right coalitions, and make it all work...'*

The emphasis here was therefore on self-actualisation - where work provides opportunities to express one's talents or strengths, and is seen as a core aspect of the self.

In accord with these findings several scholars (Elliott, 1992; Novak, 1996; Weiss et al., 2003; Dobrow, 2006; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009) found that people who perceive their work as *calling* often have a particular talent or skill that corresponds with their occupation, which they desire to express in their work; it endows them with positive self-esteem and self-efficacy (Elliott, 1992; Dobrow, 2006; Hirschi, 2012) passion, engagement and a deep sense of psychological success (Wrzesniewski et al., 2002; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Duffy et al., 2012).

Additionally, among this group, the sense of good fit, of having the right talents and skills for their prestigious occupation, was confirmed through the highly selective entry examinations that they have undergone upon their entry to the MFA:

Ambassador Sahar (male, active): *'There were about 1200 candidates when I applied, and we had to go through all sorts of exams and several interviews... and at the end 12 of us got in. So it was very prestigious and I was ecstatic.'*

Several interviewees highlighted in their accounts the high stature associated with their desired and exclusive profession (an element that was noted earlier by research into the culture of diplomacy (Neumann, 2005; Yagar, 2005)), and their sense of being *the chosen few*:

Ambassador Bartal (male, retired): *'When I was at the end of my International Relations studies, I applied.... and for me, well for all of us, going to serve in the MFA was ...It was very prestigious... We thought it was the ultimate... I was so thrilled to be accepted... I can remember until this day how I got a telegram and how the postman came to deliver it to my parents' home.... I remember the excitement to this day...'*

Ambassador Koren (male, retired): *'For my parents, to have their son accepted to the diplomatic service...it was a dream come true... When I think of my cohort at university – we all wanted to go to the MFA; it was everyone's fantasy job. And so I submitted my application, and got in, and it was such a delightful surprise... it felt like winning the lottery.'*

These accounts coincide with the research on *callings*, as several studies (Hardy, 1990; Weiss et al., 2003; Wrzesniewski, 2010) found that people with a *calling* outlook often

perceive themselves, and may also be seen by others, as ‘the chosen few’, whose work is a *calling*, and therefore enjoy a privileged social status.

In addition to perceiving themselves as having the right skills and capacities for their line of work, the majority of interviewees in this category noted that their values, beliefs, ideologies and identities (particularly their national identities and deep connection to Israel) - were immensely important in their line of work:

Ambassador Shalev (female, active): *‘My professional choice comes from a place of deep connection to Israel, and from my own Jewish and Zionist identification...’.*

Ambassador Golan (male, active): *‘...Can you be a German diplomat and then work for Canada? I think that you can’t. Some people think that there is a professional element in diplomacy that can be transferred from one country to another, but I hold the more traditional approach: I think that your identity and the values that you believe in, and your personal connection to what you represent - in this job, they count! So there is something here... a connection... that goes deeper... beyond the work – and in this sense – this job is a calling’.*

Bunderson & Thompson (2009) argued that the ideological attachment to one’s work, combined with a desire to serve and benefit others, can be as forceful as the inner drive for self-actualisation, or the desire to express one’s unique talents, which is indeed the case here.

These narratives reveal the intense psychological connection that the respondents have with their homeland and their personal and ideological commitment to it, which is manifested in their strong national identity, sense of belonging, care and devotion:

Ambassador Bartal (male, retired): *'I have a strong connection to Israel, very strong sense of loyalty... I had no question about taking this job. I was very proud from the moment Israel was established, I was proud to serve its MFA, and to defend the policies of its governments....'*

Ambassador Rimon (male, retired): *'Why I chose this career? In a word – It's a calling. I love this job because of its Israeli aspect – that is what I found unique and what I found rewarding. This job has a subject matter – and it is this particular component that made me want to do it.'*

It should be noted that these sentiments which can be interpreted as patriotism, were more prevalent among retirees. Nevertheless, only two ambassadors used this term (somewhat apologetically), and four referred to it as outdated or politically incorrect. Kimmerling (2005) indeed noted a decline in patriotic sentiment and related discourses in Israel in the past decades.

The line of reasoning that the ambassadors presented here suggests that social identities, ideologies and values, are central aspects of their representational work and their official position:

Ambassador Strauss (female, active): *'It would be difficult to be an Israeli diplomat without being a Zionist; because if you do not believe in Israel, then how can you promote it, and how can you speak for it?...''*

In a sense, the *calling* orientation is embedded in the subject matter of the job, and their work heavily draws on their psychological connection with their homeland, their sense of belonging, their knowledge of the Israeli society, and their personal experiences as Israeli citizens. It can therefore be argued that their *calling* orientation with its strong sense of



duty, and the meaningfulness of their work is mediated by their attachment and loyalty to their country.

Additionally, several respondents noted that their sense of belonging and dedication to their country and national identity was in effect strengthened in the course of their work:

Ambassador Katz (male, retired): *'Being the official representative of the country ... the official spokesman... that has some effect on your identity.... You know, in every room I sat there was the flag, and every time you are photographed – you have the flag beside you... so you do become more attached to it'.*

Ambassador Yaron (male, active): *'You live in a foreign country, but you are constantly in an Israeli environment and dealing with Israeli topics... much of your life abroad revolve in an Israeli milieu... the constant need to defend your country when faced with criticism or opposition... all that strengthens your national identity when you are abroad'.*

Kenny et al. (2012) argued that social identities are continually reproduced by the social context within which people conduct their lives, which is indeed the case here. Since their national identity, sense of belonging to their country and drive to serve their country are the foundation of their *calling* orientation, it can be argued that the processes that bolster these identities (particularly their representational roles which are often conducted under attack and condemnation) also work to reinforce their *calling* outlook.

#### **6.3.4 Clarity of identity**

Several scholars (Elliott, 1992; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Dobrow, 2006; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Hirschi, 2012) found that people who view their work as a *calling* tend to exhibit clear and strong professional identities, which are often tightly entangled with

the *calling* domain. Hall & Chandler (2005) argued that *callings* and professional identities are connected through a feedback loop, in which having a clear sense of identity facilitates the awareness of one's *calling*, that in turn leads to higher levels of identity, clarity or crystallisation. This was indeed the case among the respondents who manifested strong professional identities alongside a strong sense of professionalism:

Ambassador Sarell (male, retired): *'I define myself as a professional diplomat. I define myself and demand from myself and from others, to be professional... Looking back, I can say that I was a professional... and I think that not many people can say that about their careers.'*

Ambassador Zilber (male, active): *'Diplomacy is my profession. I'm a diplomat. There are rules and guidelines that we all follow in our profession that are universal....'*

Nearly all of the respondents in this category differentiated between their professional identities and their organisational identities, and while they saw their profession as diplomats, and had a strong sense of professionalism, they identified themselves organisationally as *Israeli diplomats*, thereby tying together their organisational identity and national identity:

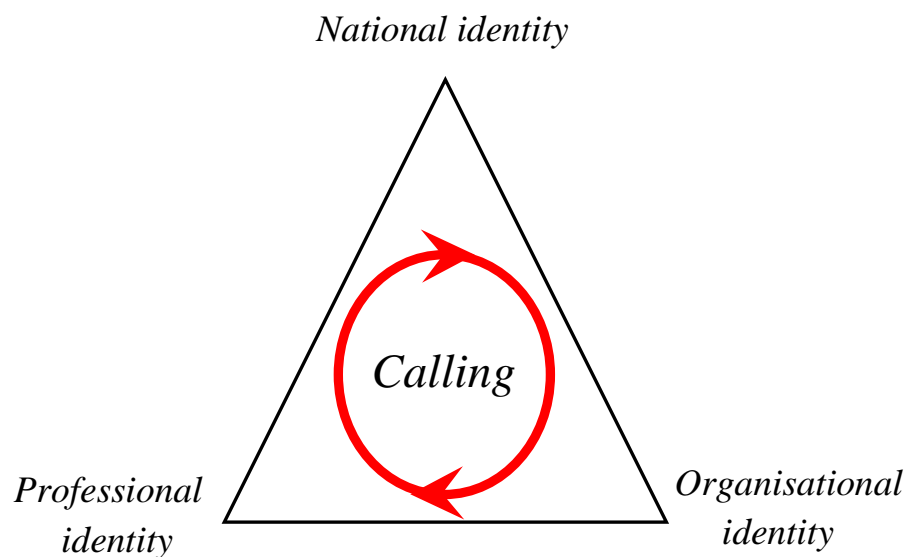
Ambassador Shalom (male, retired): *'I'm a diplomat. This is my profession. But my career is that of an Israeli diplomat... and it requires being totally committed to what and who you are representing... I'm not sure that I could serve another country [other than Israel] as a diplomat, because part of the motivation to take this job, is having a sense of calling... I apologise for the pretentious word... but it is genuinely, a strong sense of calling - knowing that what you are doing is valuable, sometimes even vital to your country. Otherwise I would not have done it.'*

Ambassador Kedem (female, active): *'I'm unequivocally an Israeli diplomat! Not that there are guidelines how to be an Israeli diplomat, but that's how I see myself.... I believe that theoretically I could represent another country - I think I have the skills and the intellect – I could do it. But in terms of my professional integrity – I wouldn't, because of my attachment to my country and the sense of calling that I have here ....'*

As can be seen in these quotes, their hybrid professional-organisational-national identities are strongly tied with their *calling* orientation, and with the pro-social ideology that is embedded in their work, which emanates from their identification with the country (see Figure 6), as one of the interviewees summarised:

*'For me, the State of Israel is my employer, the objective and the contents of my work, the calling and the ideology'* (Ambassador Segal, female, active).

Figure 6: The Ambassadors' *Calling* – identities relationship



These quotes reveal that while the respondents manifested a robust professional identity, it was fused together with their national and organisational identities, and thus they mainly

identified themselves as *Israeli diplomats*. Building on Hall & Chandler's (2005) argument cited above, it can be argued that their *calling* orientation is linked to their professional, organisational and national identities through a feedback loop, where the *calling* emerges from the synthesis between the three identities, and at the same time it serves to reinforce the connection between these identities, to the degree that they become inseparable.

The fusion of their identities is significant in light of the challenges they face to their identities. As noted in sections 3.6.2 and 6.3.2, much of the ambassadors' international-relation work, particularly when stationed abroad, is conducted under attack and in a defensive mode (Yagar, 2005; Biale, 2008; Inbar, 2008). Looking at this situation from an identity perspective, it may be argued that their national and organisational identities (particularly the values and ideologies that emanate from these identities), are often criticised by others, and as a result they are constantly on the defence. The *calling* orientation as a psychological mechanism, enables them to address and deflect these challenges to their identities, by tying their identities together, thus making them more durable.

Kenny et al. (2012) argued that vocational identities are often embedded in social relationships and organisational affiliation, and that identities are continually constructed and reproduced by the discursive acts that take place in one's social environment. The ambassadors' strong organisational identification and shared *calling* orientation are therefore strengthened by belonging to a cohesive tightly knit organisational community - their colleagues at the MFA (Yair, 2005):

Ambassador Keidan (male, active): *'The relationships I have here are founded on trust... I was never worried that someone will stick a knife in my back... I also let*

*others know that I'm here for them. The people I worked with over the years – they are my friends.... I've got 100% confidence in them'.*

Other interviewees also noted that their best friends are in fact their colleagues at work: *'the people I work with – they are my friends'* (Ambassador Gaon, male, active).

What the interviewees described here was their organisational community and the deep ties that they had forged over the years with their colleagues, that were characterised by a strong culture of collegiality (trust, loyalty and cohesion), a 'family writ-large' type of corporate culture (Yagar, 2005). Cooke & Szumal (2004) defined this type of corporate culture as 'constructive' with a strong 'affiliative' feature, where employees attempt to create a pleasant and productive atmosphere by being friendly, honest and responsive, by minimising unnecessary discord, by cooperating and supporting their colleagues and by maintaining high levels of personal integrity. This feature of their organisational culture is also mentioned as a feature of Israel's collectivistic national culture (Hofstede, 2005) (see section 3.6.2).

Several interviewees explained that this culture and the high level of trust they share with their colleagues, have been developed as a result of working together abroad, sometimes in small embassies which employ only few senior members and in challenging conditions (Yagar, 2005):

Ambassador Freedman (female, active): *'Serving in a country where the embassy is very small... it's like serving on a submarine... you find yourself working in close quarters with a small group of people... often their spouses work at the embassy as well, and the kids all go to the same schools and become friends, and ... you know, you effectively live with these people... - you see them at work, and then in the*

*evening in official events, and you celebrate holidays together, the kids' birthdays, and they become your family's closest social circle... '*

Ambassador Shalev (female, active): *'When the... disaster happened... and we had to organise an 'operation room' to deal with the situation... it was a crazy production.... nothing in life prepares you for it. It was very stressful from every direction. Later, I told the team that ...together, working as a team – there is nothing that we cannot accomplish. No mission is too big for us. We were a small team, with very limited resources... and we were stretched to the limit. But we all gave our very best. People worked around the clock and were totally committed. Spouses got together to help each other with the kids. No one complained. Everyone was fully present and contributed'.*

The strong sense of membership in a professional and organisational community, and sense of kinship among the ambassadors, was found in other studies on *callings* (Bellah, et al., 1985; Dobrow, 2006; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009). The authors concurred that a sense of shared *calling* strengthens one's sense of affiliation and identification with his or her professional community. At the same time, membership in a professional community serves to reinforce the *calling* orientation by providing a space where members can work together around a social cause, discuss and consolidate the shared values and ideologies on which the *calling* is founded, corroborate their shared sense of duty and moral responsibility, and construct together the meaningfulness of their work (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009).

### **6.3.5 Willingness to endure risks and sacrifices**

All interviewees who displayed a *calling* orientation mentioned the risks and sacrifices that they had to endure over the years. Among these, the ones mentioned most often were the

meagre salary (when stationed at home); serving in unsafe or ‘hardship countries’ where public services (such as health and sanitation) are underdeveloped; the repeated expatriations and the disruption that they caused to their family life and children’s education; the spouses’ inability to develop their careers due to the frequent relocations; staying apart from family for extended periods, and lack of privacy (due to being in the public eye and constantly accompanied by security personnel). These physical, psychological, financial and familial challenges have also been noted by several authors (Neumann, 2005; Yagar, 2005; Jonsson & Hall, 2005; Berridge, 2010; Dunn et al., 2014), and are exemplified by the following extract:

Ambassador Gordon (male, retired): *‘On a personal level I took grave risks for the country when it was required.... My wife said: you will have a ‘big account’ to settle with me if something happens to you... but nevertheless I took those risks. At least 3-4 times I was asked to go to countries with security issues... but I had no question whether or not to go.... It was clear to me that those risks are worth taking for the country, and that the purpose is important enough for me to take such risks’.*

Taking such risks in the course of one's work may be interpreted as a feature of both collectivistic cultures and masculine cultures (Hofstede et al., 2002), that have been argued to strongly characterise the Israeli national culture (Lewis, 2005) as well as that of the Israeli MFA (Yagar, 2005) (see section 3.6.2).

Ambassador Moav (male, active): *‘The main sacrifices in this job are the poor financial rewards and the wives’ careers. It’s a heavy price to pay..... People forget that I’m the one who chose this career, but my wife suffered the consequences – she had to give up her career’.*

Undoubtedly, the most frequently voiced complaint by interviewees was about the financial sacrifices:

Ambassador Haymann (male, active): *'I love this work... I think there is no other profession that is more interesting than being a diplomat, but as a single earner it is very difficult to maintain a reasonable standard of living based on this salary'.*

In 2011, for the first time since the MFA was established, the Israeli diplomatic service went on strike in an attempt to increase their salaries. In their petition to the prime-minister Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu they wrote:

*'... The Foreign Service is a critical part of Israel's national security structure...Just like the country needs the best soldiers and army officers in the security service; it needs us to defend its causes in the international arena...*

*Those of us who are facing retirement... the current pension places us below the 'poverty line'... In contrast to the average family in Israel, most of us don't have two pensions [but one], since our spouses have had to give up their careers because of our way of life, our profession and our missions abroad.*

*We recruit the best talents, people who could no doubt thrive elsewhere... They are highly motivated and driven by Zionist ideology and sense of calling.... They are sent to missions abroad... to fight for Israel's place in the international community....Often their mission means taking personal risks...*

*It pains and saddens us that the state... offers us an undignified reward for our work, efforts and sacrifices' (The Ambassadors' letter, 2011, translated by Dan Hart).*



As can be seen from the ambassadors' letter, their professional identities and organisational affiliation are challenged by the low pay, leading to an increased early departure of diplomats.

While all three *work orientation* groups complained about their salaries and other downsides of their profession, it seems that the interviewees who manifested a *calling* orientation, were more willing than other groups to bear the dangers and disadvantages entailed in their career:

Ambassador Landau (male, active): *'You pay a price and there are many sacrifices you do for this job, but that's what makes it a calling.'*

Thus, it can be argued that the *calling* orientation may serve as a means to rationalise or justify these sacrifices:

Ambassador Sahar (male, active): *'I think that we see it as a calling because it justifies this arduous way of life, the sacrifices that we make along the way, and the damages that we and our families endure... So maybe the calling is a way of rationalising our career choices....'*

Ambassador Weiss (female, active): *'If you do not see this job as a calling then go work somewhere else! Go make money, because here the money is not an appropriate reward for your investment...'*

The ambassadors' willingness to tolerate these aspects of their work is in tune with the literature on *callings* (Elliott, 1992; Serow, 1994; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Wrzesniewski, 2010). Hardy (1990) argued that people who perceive their work as their moral duty to serve the greater good, and assume an altruistic public service role, often lead a life style that is in line with their positions; that requires self-

sacrifice, self-restraint or hardship. In several studies on public service employees (Perry, 1996; Vandenberg, 2008), the authors found that self-sacrifice is a central aspect of the work that is strongly correlated with employees' motivation to perform it. Elliott (1992) and Dobrow (2006) reported that their respondents showed a strong resolve and deep commitment to do the work, even when it was not economically viable. Grant & Sonnentag (2010) found that employees' pro-social inclination can offset negative aspects of their work by focusing their attention on the valuable social goal that the work serves.

Bunderson & Thompson (2009) also found that those who manifested a stronger *calling* orientation, were more willing to sacrifice their time, money, physical comfort or other aspects of their well being for their work. The authors concluded that 'a neoclassical *calling* cannot inspire profound meaning without simultaneously requiring profound sacrifice' (p. 52). Their analysis highlighted the intricate nature of *callings*, suggesting that for one's work to be meaningful and significant, it has to entail not only moral responsibility but also some degree of sacrifice. However, the authors cautioned that because people with a strong *calling* orientation are more willing to sacrifice their time, money, physical comfort or other aspects of their well-being for their work, they are more susceptible to mistreatment by their superiors.

### **6.3.6 Conclusion**

The analysis of the respondents' *calling* outlook revealed that it emanated from two different foundations. The first is the unique talents and skills that they regarded as essential for their work, and felt that they could express in their prestigious and highly selective profession. Their drive for self-actualisation was manifested in strong intrinsic motivation to do the work, robust professional identities, strong sense of psychological

success and job satisfaction. This line of reasoning can be identified as a '*modern calling orientation*' (Dobrow, 2006; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Wrzesniewski, 2010).

The second ground from which their *calling* orientation stemmed, was their deep psychological bond with the State of Israel, and the sense that they were summoned to serve their country by embarking on this career. It was manifested in their altruistic outlook, sense of duty, conviction that their work addressed a critical societal need, a strong identification with the ideologies that justified their work and its significance, and their willingness to endure considerable risks and sacrifices. This line of reasoning can be identified as a '*classical calling orientation*' (Hardy, 1990; Weiss et al., 2003; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Wrzesniewski, 2010). Their *calling* orientation seems to bring these two lines of reasoning together, which according to Bunderson & Thompson's (2009) is what makes it a neo-classical *calling*. The amalgamation of the two lines of thought is manifested in the fusion of their professional, national and organisational identities with the *calling* domain.

Furthermore, their strong *calling* orientation was sustained and maintained through a feedback loop, where the work they did (particularly abroad) strengthened their national identities and sense of attachment to their homeland, which in turn strengthened the foundations from which their *calling* orientation emerged.

#### **6.4 The ambassadors' *career* orientation**

The second type of work orientation which was manifested by more than third of the respondents was a *career* orientation. The analysis revealed that the *career* orientation was equally prevalent among active and retired ambassadors, but slightly more prevalent

among men compared to women. These gender differences are in line with the literature on the different motivations and family vs. career priorities that women diplomats display, compared to their male counterparts (Groeneveld, 2008; Conley-Tyler et al., 2014; McCarthy, 2014).

Among this group of interviewees, a quarter (n=5) displayed a *career* orientation only, while the rest (n=16) displayed a *career* orientation that was intertwined with other orientations. The features of the respondents' *career* orientation which emerged as sub-categories are delineated below.

#### **6.4.1 A 'career for life' perception**

All respondents who displayed a *career* orientation, manifested a 'traditional' long-term organisational *career* outlook (Baruch, 2004; Neumann, 2005; Yagar, 2005), where they expected to spend their entire work-life within the MFA:

Ambassador Weiss (female, active): *'This is a career for life. You don't come here for five years and move to the next job...'*

Ambassador Katz (male, retired): *'No one leaves in the middle. It's very rare... because you get to the top jobs and the most interesting jobs at the end of your career... you do the 'porter work' at the beginning, and you get to the top when you are in your 60's... so why would they leave? Also, the system is designed to keep you there until your retire'.*

Further analysis of the participants' years of service in the MFA and the number of positions they held, provided evidence to support the traditional *career* outlook manifested here. The findings revealed that on average respondents were employed by the MFA for 29.5 years, and during this time they held on average 9-10 positions (see table 1).

Some participants in this category noted that things are changing in the MFA and that younger entrants hold more modern *career* outlooks:

Ambassador Navon (male, retired): *'The nature of careers have changed and it's affecting the MFA... 20-30 years ago the diplomatic service was seen as a career for life, so those who joined came in their early 20's expected to retire in their 60's.... But today it is becoming a contemporary 21<sup>st</sup> century career. The young cohorts... they are coming because it is a prestigious job, and they see it as a step in their careers, and so they are willing to leave midway and launch a new chapter. This was most uncommon in my time, and those who left were looked upon as betraying the family...'*

Ambassador Berger (female, active): *'When I entered the MFA, we had an understanding among us, the 21 cadets, that is it a career for life. However, by now third of us have left... and this trend is accelerating. People today see it as an experience that they want to have, not a commitment for life...'*

Regardless of their acknowledgement of the changes that are taking place in the career patterns among the younger cohorts of the MFA, none of the participants themselves displayed such outlooks, which is likely to be due to their age and relative seniority. To examine this further, a comparison was conducted between the career patterns (years of service and the number of positions held) of retirees and active participants. The analysis revealed that active interviewees showed similar degrees of stability as the retirees: while the retirees had 33.3 years of service on average, and held 10-11 positions during this period, the active ambassadors have been with the MFA for 26.5 years, and have held 7-8 positions thus far.

Baruch (2004) argued that despite the dramatic changes that occurred in the past decades in careers and the emergence of modern career concepts, there are still some sectors where the traditional, linear, organisational careers are enacted by most employees. The public service is indeed one of these sectors (McDonald, Brown & Bradley, 2005; Neumann, 2005; Yagar, 2005; Baruch, 2006; Baruch & Quick, 2007).

Several interviewees noted that the traditional organisational career path they chose to follow rendered them a sense of stability and job security, which is no longer available in modern careers' models (Baruch, 2004):

Ambassador Zehavi (male, retired): *'When I joined, I had financial and career motives... I wasn't only ideologically driven... it was during the recession, so I was looking for some financial security and stability... and although the civil service doesn't pay much – it is enough to give you a sense of security....'*

Ambassador Yaron (male, active): *'One of the risks in this career is that your spouse is likely to lose her career. It's a risk that comes with the profession. So at least you know that your career is secured for life. Yes, it's not a great income, you will not get rich working here, but it's guaranteed... and that gives you a sense of security that you don't have in other careers today.'*

Despite their appreciation of the job security and stability that the MFA offers them, several interviewees in this category voiced similar frustrations with regards to their scanty salaries and their spouses' interrupted careers, as did the *calling* group. Interestingly, while respondents with the *calling* orientation described these as 'sacrifices' that they endured for the benefit of the greater good, those with a *career* orientation described these as 'downsides', 'problems', 'disadvantages', 'minuses' or areas of 'frustration', 'discontent' or 'worry'.

In line with these accounts, Bellah et al. (1985) and Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) contended that one of the main features of the *career* orientation is employees' expectation to be rewarded financially in a manner that fits their position in the organisational hierarchy. When this expectation does not materialise, it is likely to be perceived as a breach in the psychological contract with their organisation (Guzzo et al., 1994; Black, Gregersen, Mendenhall & Stroh, 1999).

While for those with a *calling* orientation the sense of duty and the pro-social values may serve to justify or rationalise these drawbacks, for those with a *career* orientation, it is the stability and job security offered by their long-term career prospect that seems to counterbalance these areas of discontent. Nevertheless, the *career* orientation does not provide the ideological or altruistic justifications that the *calling* orientation offers, which may explain the differences in their discourses and outlooks around these issues.

Although these participants were as hard-working and devoted to the MFA as the interviewees with a *calling* orientation (Yagar, 2005), what came across from their accounts was a distinct *extrinsic* and self-enhancement motivation, which is in stark contrast to the *calling* group who manifested a strong *intrinsic* motivation (despite perceiving their work as a transcendent summon, emanating from an external source). Furthermore, compared to the participants with a *calling* orientation, whose zest, engagement with work and gratification came across vividly in their accounts, this group of interviewees displayed a more subtle and restrained sense of engagement with their work and job satisfaction.

#### **6.4.2 A desire to progress in the organisational hierarchy**

Another feature of traditional careers (Baruch, 2004; Neumann, 2005; Yagar, 2005) which was displayed by most of the respondents with a *career* orientation was a desire or an expectation to progress in the organisational ranking system and take on senior managerial positions:

Ambassador Geva (male, retired): *'My first position was at the department of... Then I was sent to ... (in Africa) for 4 years. I was the first deputy. We went back and I got the headship of one of the Asian desks. After a year I went to work at the department of...for 2 years. Then I got promoted to the position of the deputy director of the... department. I worked there for 2 years and from there we were sent to... (in North America) for 4 years. When I came back I was given a senior director's position in the... department. And then 2 years later I was asked to take the directorship of the.... department - one of the most sensitive positions in the ministry. But after a year I was promoted to become the director of the.... department – probably the most powerful position at the ministry. I was there for 5 fascinating years. Then I was offered an ambassador position in... (in North America), and I had 5 very rewarding years there. When I came back I took the headship of the... department for 5 years. Then I went on my last ambassadorial mission to... (in Asia) for 3 years, and when we returned I retired. So that was my career track... I consider myself very lucky, very privileged to have had such a varied and exciting career...the more I progressed the more interesting it became. ... I don't think many people get to have such a rewarding career.'*

Ambassador Gazit (male, active): *'Once you enter the system, you are looking all the time for progression... Naturally in our line of work the highest position is the ambassador... There was a point where I got quite frustrated because I didn't get the*



*positions I wanted... Advancing in the ranks is very important to me, and I think it's natural... All of us want to get those top positions.'*

The interviewees in this category seem to perceive the organisational hierarchy as a ladder to climb on, and expect to advance in the organisational ranks in accordance to their tenure and experience in a reasonably linear way. Neumann (2005) and Yagar (2005) suggested that the desire to progress in one's career is a core feature of diplomats' organisational culture, and is immensely important to employees. However, the MFA is portrayed as a hierarchical, highly structured, yet fairly 'flat' organisation, and thus highly competitive (Yagar, 2005), which means that for most, the expectation to reach the top may not materialise:

*'The pyramid here is very flat'* noted Ambassador Navon (male, retired), while Ambassador Meged (male, active) remarked: *'only few of us can get to the top. The rest will spend most of their careers at the bottom.'*

Ambassador Darom (male, active) explained: *'The competition here on internal positions is fierce, and it's very difficult... It's the hardest aspect of this career. There are so many intelligent and highly talented people here, and... only few can get those top jobs. The main frustration is when you return from a mission abroad, that you know you have done well, and expect to be promoted..., but then – you can't, because the few pinnacle positions that you want, are all taken... So you come back having been the ambassador somewhere with all the rewards and managerial power that it entails, and they offer you a head of project position... That's very frustrating and difficult to handle....'*

An analysis of the most senior positions that respondents have held in addition to their ambassadorial positions (which all respondents have held at least once, as this was one of

the inclusion criteria in this study) revealed that most of them indeed made notable progress, and have held some of the most senior executive positions in the MFA's head office: Five were general directors, two were senior deputy directors, thirteen held deputy directors positions, four headed divisions and eight were heads of departments. Thus, their expectations to progress in the organisational ladder were well grounded in their own experiences, and can be seen as a central component of their psychological contract with the MFA (Conway & Briner, 2005). This expectation emanates from a more general anticipation that the MFA will manage their careers, which is typical in traditional careers (Baruch, 2004).

In contrast to those with a *calling* orientation who evaluated their career success in direct relation to the impact of their work on Israel's international affairs, the interviewees' in this group seem to assess their achievements through the pace of their upward mobility, and the seniority, power and prestige of the positions they held. Those who found themselves on a plateau (like Ambassador Darom quoted above) voiced their dissatisfaction and frustration, since they considered their lack of progression as a failure.

Indeed, one of the dominant areas of discontent that was voiced by more than a third of the *career* group were having to settle for lower ranking positions, particularly upon their return from missions abroad. Some interviewees found themselves more than once in situations where they returned from ambassadorial positions abroad where they experienced a considerable autonomy, influence and status as well as a luxurious life style, to assume a lower ranking position, often unfitted with their expertise, and having to endure considerable drop in their income. These factors combined to make their repatriations one of the most challenging aspects of their careers.

Several diplomatic and global career scholars (Stroh, 1995; Stroh, Gregersen & Black, 2000; Baruch & Altman, 2002; Suutari & Brewster, 2003; Neumann, 2005) confirmed that repatriation is one of the most trying aspect of global careers, not only because of the transition and readjustment process involved, but also because for many expatriates ‘the return position is frequently a lateral move rather than a promotion’ (Dowling and Welch, 2004: 166), entailing loss of status, autonomy and income (Dickmann & Baruch, 2011). Dowling & Welch (2004: 164) noted that ‘unmet expectations or unfulfilled promises... can provoke intense feeling of betrayal and violation of the psychological contract’. Additionally, Lazarova & Caligiuri (2001) noted that companies often fail to capitalise on the knowledge that the expatriate has gained, and the ties that he or she has established abroad.

Several researchers argued that these repatriation challenges may be the cause of the high percentage of repatriates’ turnover (Black & Gregersen, 1999; Baruch et al., 2002; Doherty, Brewster, Suutari & Dickmann, 2008). However, in line with the traditional career paths described by the interviewees, this was rarely the case in the MFA, as turnover rates following repatriation remain fairly low. It can therefore be argued that the stability and security offered by the traditional career model may work to counterbalance the career setbacks that the repatriations may entail.

An additional challenge that several interviewees in this category mentioned was the ways in which the fierce competition for top positions eroded their ties with their colleagues in the MFA:

Ambassador Barnea (female, active): *‘We are working in a very competitive environment here. And as we progress... it’s a huge challenge to compete with people that you are so close to, people that you spend your entire life with, that you raised*

*your kids with, and shared your most intense life experiences with... how do you maintain your humanity and your collegial values, when the competition is that fierce and cruel. I find this aspect of the career difficult.'*

Ambassador Lev-ran (male, active): *'There is a strong collegial spirit among us... strong commitment and trust. But this sense of collegiality is challenged every time you apply for a position... The competition is fierce and very unpleasant for us. It can destroy friendships. It creates tensions. We had situations where people pulled out their candidacy in order not to compete against their friends.'*

Similar to the *calling* group, the *career* group also described their organisational community as one that has a strong culture of collegiality (trust, dependability and unity). Their desire for upward mobility, which is at the centre of the *career* orientation, comes with considerable costs. It introduces a competitive element into the MFA's cohesive corporate culture and tightly-knit organisational community, and it endangers the friendship ties that participants forged with their colleagues and their families during many years of service. Cooke & Szumal (2004) described this competitive element of organisational cultures as 'aggressive', and argued that it encourages competition through emphasis on status and power, and a 'win-lose' mindset which is often accompanied by opposition for the purpose of recognition and political gains. Thus, it can be argued that the cohesive corporate culture serves to some degree to de-legitimise the competitive inclination that is built into respondents' *career* orientation.

#### **6.4.3 A robust organisational identity**

All of the interviewees who displayed a *career* orientation also showed a strong organisational and national identity, and thus without exception, they all identified themselves as 'Israeli diplomats':

Ambassador Darom (male, active): *'I'm an Israeli diplomat. And I mean that in every sense of the term.'*

Ambassador Arieli (male, retired): *'I felt like an Israeli diplomat. Not just a diplomat - but an Israeli diplomat, in its fullest meaning. I wanted to represent Israel, its heritage, traditions, its history, its raison-d'être... This is what I wanted to represent and what I did'.*

In contrast to the interviewees with a *calling* orientation, who displayed a strong professional identity alongside their organisational identity, those with a *career* orientation did not display a professional identity that was separate from their organisational affiliation and several noted that:

*'...there is no such thing as a 'general' diplomat...'* (Ambassador Geva, male, retired), *'I don't think you can be a generalist in this profession'* (Ambassador Yaron, male, active), *'diplomacy is not like law where you take any client who knocks on your door and asks for legal representation...'* (Ambassador Barak, male, retired).

Thus it may be argued that their professional identity is weaker compared to those with a *calling* orientation, yet both groups displayed an equally robust organisational identity.

The strong organisational identification demonstrated here is perhaps unsurprising given the respondents' long-term *career* outlook and their expectation to spend their entire career-life within the MFA. Cheney & Tompkins (1987) found that organisational commitment (that is typical in traditional career models) and organisational identification, are strongly associated. In contrast, the organisational identity of the *calling* group seems to emerge not from their connection to their organization, but from their attachment to the country, and the pro-social outlook they hold.

#### **6.4.4 A global career outlook**

A considerable proportion (n=16) of those who displayed a *career* orientation seemed to hold a *global career* outlook, and thus they referred to their expatriations as the ‘expected route’ in their profession;

Ambassador Weiss (female, active) noted: *‘It’s part of the ‘parcel’ of this line of work’*, and Ambassador Geva (male, retired) commented: *‘when you join the MFA you know that this is part of the deal’*. Ambassador Harpaz (male, active) who delayed his first expatriation for seven years due to family considerations remarked: *‘at this point I felt I could no longer delay what seemed like a mandatory course - which is an absolute must if you want to progress here - and we went on a mission abroad.’*

Ambassador Almog (male, retired) further elaborated that *‘The way it works here is that you undergo cadetship training, working in several department. Shortly after, you go on your first mission abroad. Normally you would take the position of Second Officer in a small embassy... it is likely to be in a hardship country. Then you return, and a few years later you take the position of First Officer in a medium size embassy, and then you take more senior positions... on average, assuming that you have done well in previous missions, it takes about 10-12 years – around 4 missions abroad – before you take an ambassadorial position, first in small embassy and later in a larger one...’*

Dickmann & Baruch (2011) noted that in many multi-national corporations, taking at least one position that requires a long-term stay abroad is perceived as the normative and prescribed career move. It may be deemed as a pre-condition for progressing in the organisational hierarchy and for attaining certain levels of seniority, which is consistent

with the respondents' accounts presented here. As can be seen in the excerpts shown earlier, once diplomats have served abroad, there is an expectation on their part that upon repatriation the MFA will appoint them to 'appropriate' positions. This expectation can be seen as a manifestation of their psychological contract with the organisation, which Guzzo et al. (1994) have found to be often strengthened by the expatriation experience.

#### **6.4.5 Conclusion**

The analysis of the ambassadors' *career* orientation presented here revealed that they hold what career scholars define as a 'traditional' outlook (Baruch, 2004), that is combined with a *global career* outlook (Dickmann & Baruch, 2011).

According to Baruch (2004), traditional careers have several defining features:

- 1) Career longevity - employees make a career choice at an early age, and are likely to pursue it until retirement.
- 2) Organisational career - they are likely to be employed by a single organisation for their entire career.
- 3) A robust organisational identity.
- 4) Abiding psychological contract - the organisation offers stability and job security, in return for employees' loyalty and commitment.
- 5) Career responsibility - employees expect the organisation to manage their careers, professional progression and growth.
- 6) Linear progression - employees expect to advance in the organisational ranking system in a linear manner, according to tenure and experience.
- 7) Evaluation of career success - employees assess their own career success through their rate of advancement in the hierarchy and seniority of the positions they hold.

As exemplified above, all these features were manifested by the interviewees who displayed a *career* orientation.

As for the interviewees' *global career* outlook, the ambassadors seemed to perceive embarking on international missions as a central aspect of their career paths, and a precondition for advancing in the organisational ranking system. Thus it seems that their *global career* perspective ties well with their *traditional career* model. Additionally, there is evidence to suggest that the *traditional career* outlook seems to offer the respondents some sense of stability and security that counterbalances the instability introduced by their *global career* pattern and the potential career setbacks that the repatriations may entail. It also provides some compensation for the mediocre financial rewards and the damage inflicted on the spouses' careers.

## **6.5 The ambassadors' *way of life* orientation**

The third type of work orientation that emerged from the data is directly associated with the respondents' expatriation experience: nearly half of interviewees (n=28) referred to their work as a *way of life*, and noted that:

*'...the fact that you are moving, with your family, from one country to the next... is what makes it a way of life...'* (Ambassador Meir, male, active).

The *way of life* orientation was equally prevalent among active and retired ambassadors, and among men and women. As noted earlier, it was typically voiced alongside other work orientations (n=22), and only few (n=6) participants displayed this type of work orientation on its own.



Further analysis revealed that the participants experienced on average 4-5 expatriation cycles, each lasting between 2-5 years, and thus have lived abroad on average for 14.3 years. Several retirees recounted as many as eight missions abroad, living a total of 26 years abroad.

Additionally, a considerable number of participants in this category (n=20) experienced periods of ‘globetrotting’ (Dickmann & Baruch, 2011), where they were based in the MFA in Jerusalem while assuming ambassadorial positions or heading projects abroad, that required frequent overseas visits (often on a weekly basis).

Several characteristics of *the way of life* orientation emerged from the analysis as sub-categories, and they are further explored below.

### **6.5.1 The impact of the expatriations cycles on respondents’ lives**

Several participants who displayed a *way of life* orientation argued that their international relocation experiences introduced dramatic changes into their lives:

Ambassador Shilon (male, retired): *‘The transitions... there were so many of them... some of them were very hard... In two of my missions we had to move from one country to the next without repatriating... I can’t even describe how difficult and dramatic that transition was...there was civil unrest, people were killed on the streets... it was a sudden move, as well as moving from one extreme to another in terms of culture and life-style; and security-wise... My wife didn’t want to go... It took us a long time to settle. And then, a few years later, we had another intense transition. It was very hard... because we felt that we have just settled-in, you know, we finally felt comfortable there, made a few friends, and suddenly we had to start all over again... It was a huge challenge.... The kids found it really difficult... so you*

*see, this way of life involves sharp, dramatic, sometimes even traumatic transitions...'*

The interviewees explained that when they were sent on a missions abroad, in addition to changing their workplace and taking on new positions, a transition that required considerable adjustments in itself, the experience of moving abroad has dramatically transformed and shaped other aspects of their lives – from daily habits to life-style (Yagar, 2005):

Ambassador Adler (male, active): *'You change not only your workplace and go through the massive learning curve that come with that, but have to gain an expertise in the country you are sent to – learn the language and the culture, adjust to their everyday customs, to the pace of life, the landscape, the weather, the food.... and on top of that you change homes, life style, family routines... The kids – they change their schools, afternoon activities, friends... the wife quits her job... leaves her family and her friends behind.... So it involves intense changes and adjustments every time...'*

Similar narratives were recounted by other interviewees who described their expatriations as *'dramatic'*, *'intense'* or *'extreme moves'*. Several ambassadors described these moves as *'life-changing'* or *'defining events'*, and noted that these experiences have had a long-term effect on their lives because *'they change who you are'* (Ambassador Dayan, male, active).

The main argument conveyed by the interviewees was that the changes that occurred in their work domain, spilled-into and affected all other aspects of their lives, which is why they viewed their work as a *way of life*. In line with these perceptions, much of the literature on *global careers* (Earley & Erez, 1997; Javidan & House, 2001; Harris,

Brewster & Sparrow, 2003; Dickmann & Baruch, 2011) examined the physical, psychological and social changes that expatriates and their families undergo upon their relocation, and attempted to map out the challenges that they face, and their impact on employees' performance. Hofstede (2005) observed that the biggest relocation challenges are coping with the culture-shock, and exerting the psychological and intellectual effort required for successful cultural adaptation. He noted that in the long run, these cross-cultural experiences can alter one's self-concept and core beliefs, which indeed coincided with respondents' accounts. The ability to handle change and adapt quickly can also be seen as a feature of the Israeli culture: as noted earlier (section 3.6.2), according to Hofstede et al. (2002) cultural classifications, Israel is characterised by low uncertainty avoidance (Lewis, 2005).

Additionally, several respondents in this group noted that the repeated transitions have had a cumulative long-term effect on their lives;

Ambassador Almog (male, retired) noted that *'I have never lived in one country for more than five years continuously...'*, while Ambassador Goldman (male, retired) said: *'the longest that my children have been in one place was 4 years...'*. Other participants remarked: *'we have changed homes 21 times...'*; *'I have not lived in the same house more than 2-3 years'* (Ambassador Stern and Kaplan, males, active). These accounts bring to light the interviewees' sense of instability, which they described as engendering a sense of 'temporariness', 'rootlessness' and 'restlessness'.

Interestingly, a comparison between the three groups in the ways in which they described their expatriation experiences revealed that while those with a *way of life* orientation emphasised the changes and challenges that they faced, those who did not hold this outlook

did not experience their relocations as a life-changing experience, and even dismissed it as no more than a minor nuisance. Others did not perceive adapting to a new culture as major challenge, either because they were sent to countries that they were familiar with (through family ties or childhood experiences), or because they mainly lived in the confines of an expatriate community, which necessitated minor cross-cultural adjustments.

### **6.5.2 Spill-over effect of their global work**

Another aspect of the expatriation cycles that seemed to prompt the *way of life* outlook was the ways in which these moves and changes affected the lives of other people around them – those who accompanied them, as well as those who stayed behind (Yagar, 2005; Groeneveld, 2008):

Ambassador Goldman (male, retired): *'What makes this job a way of life... is that it's a career that affects everybody around you - your family – especially your spouse and children who are trailing behind you ...'*

Ambassador Strauss (female, active): *'This way of life dramatically affects your relationships with your family, your social life, and your friendships, because every time you go on a mission abroad, you leave behind your family – elderly parents, siblings, extended family and friends... '*

Similar to the *calling* group, the interviewees in this group also complained about the damage caused to their spouses careers as a result of the repeated expatriations:

Ambassador Gaon (male, active): *'We all marry women who are talented and capable of having a great career, and then we tell them 'I'll have a career – but you can't have a career, because we will be moving around every 3-4 years'.*

Others commented: *'It's an exciting way of life, not a dull moment... but it comes with a heavy price - the spouses' careers...'* (Ambassador Harpaz, male, active). *'It*

*destroyed my wife's career....* ' said Ambassador Gazit (male, retired) remorsefully, while one of the female ambassadors commented about her husband's experience: *'with every repatriation it became harder and harder for him to find a job'* (Ambassador Weiss).

Yagar (2005) and Groeneveld (2008) noted that dual career and the disruption that international relocations cause to the spouses' careers are often a principal consideration in diplomats' decision to embark on an international mission. Brett & Stroh (1995) reported similar findings for business expatriates. Dowling & Welch (2004) argued that a disgruntled spouse, who has had to give up a thriving and gratifying career, can negatively influence the expatriate's performance and capacity to handle the trials entailed in the move. Dickmann & Baruch (2011) considered the changes that occur in employees' relationships - whether within the family or with those left behind, as a significant challenge involved in the expatriation experience, which heavily features in expatriates' decision-making processes, and can directly impact one's performance.

Several interviewees described some of the challenges that their children faced as a result of the repeated expatriations:

Ambassador Yaron (male, active): *'After the third mission, my daughter decided not to join us... she was tired of leaving her friends... she said she couldn't handle the effort of making new friends and then leaving them again in a few years... she wanted stability... '*

Ambassador Zilber (male, active): *'When we moved to ... (South America) one of my sons... didn't want to see anyone socially, didn't want to go out and play with his friends. It was his fourth move... We had to bring in a psychologist to understand what was going on. And what happened is that in the previous moves he put the effort*

*to make new friends, get to know them, they became close friends, and then – he had to move.... So he decided – better not have any friends at all, then it would not be so bad having to part with them....’*

Similar challenges have been noted by researchers who studied the experiences of Third Culture Kids (Useem & Downie, 1976; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001; Fail, Thompson & Walker, 2004). Additionally, several interviewees in this category commented that one of the factors that made them perceive their work as a *way of life* was that it was not an *individual* career, but rather a *family* career:

Ambassador Abramov (male, active): *‘Diplomacy is a combination of a profession and a way of life. The fact that you are moving from one country to the next, and dragging your family with you...It’s not only your job – but the entire family is involved... My wife had a key role in managing and hosting ceremonies and dinner parties, and accompanying me to events... So it’s a way of life for you and your family’.*

Ambassador Stern (male, active): *‘In the MFA guidelines it states that representational tasks should be conducted together with the spouse. So my wife was invited to and participated in all events and ceremonies. And when it involved hosting events – it has always been regarded as the spouse’s territory. So there are tasks and responsibilities that go with my position that are seen as her formal duties.’*

As seen in these accounts, the ambassadors’ spouses seem to play an important role in diplomatic missions, which despite being officially acknowledged they are not directly rewarded for it. Similarly, Groeneveld (2008) found that among Dutch diplomats there is an expectation that spouses (usually the women) will trail behind their partners on their

missions abroad, and thereby sacrifice their own careers. She also noted that by assuming the role of a supportive spouse, the wives have become part of their husband's career, which is indeed in line with the ambassadors' accounts presented above. Yagar (2005) also noted that the role of the diplomats' spouses has changed in the past decades, and with it the awareness of their contribution and significance; In the past diplomats' spouses were expected to host events and accompany the diplomats to official events, and while their work was acknowledged, they were not formally MFA employees. Today several diplomatic services in the world employ spouses and reward them financially for their work.

In line with this notion, several ambassadors commented that *'the decision to join the MFA has to be a joint decision because it's a family career...'* (Ambassador Rimon, male, retired), and *'It's not the type of career that you can decide on your own to embark on, because it will determine your entire family's way of life, and your spouse's career....'* (Ambassador Strauss, female, active).

Others noted that it is vital to involve all family members in expatriation decisions:

Ambassador Weiss (female, active): *'You have got to take into account in your decisions the welfare of those around you. I consulted my husband and the children regarding every mission we took. I considered carefully when it would be a good time to go and also to return in view of the children's education and my husband's career. It massively affected my decisions as to where and when to go.'*

Dickmann & Baruch (2011) recommended that decisions regarding expatriations should indeed be taken together by expatriates and their spouses. However what the ambassadors clarified here goes beyond each expatriation decision, and suggested that the decision to embark on this career path has to be a joint decision.

Another theme that emerged from the data regarding the spouse involvement was about the vital, yet somewhat concealed function of their spouses in stabilising and normalising the family life following the frequent moves:

*'it is my wife who held the family together during these turbulent times'* Ambassador Stern (male, active) noted and explained: *'You have got to have a stable, supportive and strongly connected family – because your entire life is in flux... The only stable thing in your life is your family. And if it's not stable, these moves can tear it apart....'*

Ambassador Goldman (male, retired) also hailed his wife's support: *'We are a very close and united family, and in the chaotic context of diplomatic life, where your family moves every few years – that is an absolute must! And I accredit the stability and normality of my family-life to my wife. She was the anchor at home...'*

Dowling & Welch (2004) argued that expatriates' spouses often carry the heavy, yet unacknowledged burdens of dealing with the settling-in arrangements, and the upheaval of the move. Dickmann & Baruch (2011) also maintained that the spouse's willingness to relocate their on-going support and ability to cope with the relocation tribulations, are major factors that can make a difference between successful expatriation and failure. The GMAC (2006; 2008) surveys repeatedly found that among expatriates whose missions abroad were prematurely terminated, the most often cited reasons were the spouses' inability to adjust.

In view of these findings, it may be argued that the *way of life* orientation enables the ambassadors to include and involve their spouses in their work, in a way that the other orientations do not, since it projects a sense of inclusiveness, and a sense of embarking on



a joint mission, which invites the spouses to take an active role. However, while this outlook may offer the spouses a sense of partnership, a role to play and a sense of place, it may also serve as a mean to write-off the costs they bear upon relocation.

### **6.5.3 Blurred boundaries between life and work**

While the participants quoted in section 6.5.1 discussed the aspects of their expatriation cycles that made them perceive their careers as a *way of life*, several interviewees commented on the diplomatic representational aspects of the work, that contributed to their *way of life* outlook:

Ambassador Sarell (male, retired): *'Your work doesn't end when you go home at the end of the day and lock the embassy door... you remain the ambassador of Israel in your sleep and wherever you go, and you are seen as a reflection of your country. It doesn't matter if you like it or not – that is how others see you.'*

Ambassador Kaplan (male, active): *'I learned in my first mission abroad that when I go out in my shorts to wash the car – that's how I represent Israel.... everywhere I go, and whatever I do – I'm not a private person – I'm constantly carrying the state on my shoulders... and to some degree so do my wife and kids.'*

Representation in diplomacy can occur in different ways, some official and open (such as ceremonial representation, taking part in summits, conferences, social events, one-on-one meetings or negotiations, or appearing in the media), and some may be unofficial or secretive (Jönsson & Hall, 2005; Berridge, 2010). However, what the ambassadors described here is the symbolic aspect of their representational role: it is where they personify their country (Jönsson & Hall, 2005). As seen in these quotes, this role extends well beyond their official and unofficial functions, and the embassy's opening time,

invading their personal lives, while blurring the boundaries between the private and public spheres of their lives.

Additionally, a number of respondents described other ways in which work spills into their family lives:

Ambassador Baum (male, active): *'It's a way of life. I can't define it in any other way.... I cannot come home and say, now is my family time, or my down time... no more work today. I hear the news and I can see how it's going to affect my work, and work dictates your life.... Especially when you are abroad – it's 24-7. I get phone calls after office hours all the time – the work just takes over your life... My wife thinks that I'm a workaholic. She says: you live and breathe your work. Work is your life – you bring it home, you constantly think about and talk about it, and you never really let go....'*

Ambassador Shilon (male, retired): *'The life style of those who do this job is that... they are rarely available in terms of family life.... Especially when you are the ambassador, the amount of investment of time and effort that you need to give is massive... so the sacrifices that you have to make are mainly family sacrifices. Those are the hardest aspects of the job. The job comes with a heavy price... because you cannot be both a good ambassador and a good family man at the same time. The job becomes your whole life... it takes over and there are no boundaries... '.*

Similar accounts were reported by Neumann (2005) and Yagar (2005) who found that diplomats often feel that being accessible and available around the clock is an accepted aspect of their work.

Several ambassadors also remarked that one of the areas where work and life interlace most tightly is *'your social life - it becomes your work...'* (Ambassador Kedem, female, active), since the main means through which diplomats establish relationships with key people in their host country is by meeting them socially (Yagar, 2005):

Ambassador Strauss (female, active) explained: *'One of the most important aspects of our work is to establish relationships with key people in your host country, and the way to do this is to meet them socially. So you meet people... you can go out to dine, or go to their home, you can host them at your place... There were times where we went out almost every night to ceremonies and official events...So your work and your social life - are mixed together....'*

*'Problem is'* added Ambassador Baum (male, retired) *'that you rarely get to spend quality time with your family and friends...'*

Here the lack of boundaries between their demanding work and their family life, social life and leisure time become apparent. As exemplified, work is seen as inseparable from life, and the balance between work and life is heavily tilted toward work (Neumann, 2005; Yagar, 2005). The interviewees described their work as never ending and all-consuming, in the sense that it is constantly on their minds, necessitating a continuous investment of their attention, time and energy. The literature on the phenomenon of 24/7 professions (Arvidsson, 2006; Ransome, 2007; Land & Taylor, 2010) provides further evidence to suggest that recreation activities can indeed become work-driven.

Several authors who studied the work-life balance of diplomats and business expatriates (Neumann, 2005; Van der zee et al., 2005; Yagar, 2005; Fischlmayr & Killonger, 2010) found similar levels of imbalance where work intrudes or spills-over into employees' down time and family life. Fischlmayr & Killonger (2010: 464) noted that 'more than half of the

expatriates felt overworked and overwhelmed'. Lazarova, Westman & Shaffer (2010) found that the main stressors for international assignees are long working hours, high volume of work, and having to work across different time zones. Time spent on travelling and arranging it, are also significant time consumers. Other common stressors include adapting to an unfamiliar cultural context, and working in a second language that demands more effort (Fischlmayr & Killonger, 2010). Role conflicts, role ambiguity, inadequate support from head office, vague psychological contracts and isolation, have also been identified as factors that are detrimental to performance (Van der zee et al., 2005). In addition, negative emotional cross-over effects from families to employees, increase employees' stress and strain their relationships (Lazarova, et al., 2010). The authors warned that these factors put employees' well-being at risk, causing stress, fatigue, exhaustion and mental illness (Shortland & Cummmings, 2007). They often result in decreased organisational commitment, job dissatisfaction, burnout and high turnover rates (Grant, Vallone & Ensher, 2001; Hill et al., 2008; Black & Gregersen, 1999).

It should be noted that several studies on *callings* (Elliott, 1992; Dobrow, 2006) found that their respondents perceived their work as inseparable from life, and reported experiencing engulfed consciousness (sustained presence of the work in their thoughts), which was similar to the experience of the interviewees with the *way of life* orientation. However, while these features may *accompany* the *calling* orientation, they are not a *central* characteristic as they are for the *way of life* orientation.

Another feature that comes across from these accounts is the high degrees of commitment and engagement that interviewees sense toward their work, which resembles that of the *calling* group, but without its pro-social rationalisation. Morrow (1993) defined work-commitment as adhering to one's work-ethic standards, which is displayed through hard

work and diligence. According to Schaufeli & Salanova (2007) work-engagement is characterised by a person's willingness to invest time and effort in his or her work. It is associated with motivation, dedication, grit, absorption in one's work, and lower absenteeism, as well as good performance, job satisfaction and sense of significance, which were indeed present in this group's narratives.

Because commitment to one's work can manifest itself as high degree of work-engagement, it can indeed be mistakenly interpreted as workaholism (Schaufeli et al., 2008; Shimazu & Schaufeli, 2009), as observed by Ambassador Baum's wife (see citation p. 177). However, while workaholism is characterised by high work-home intrusion and inclination to work excessively hard (Schaufeli et al., 2008), it also entails an uncontrollable obsession with the work (Scott, Moore & Miceli, 1997; Schaufeli, Shimazu & Taris, 2009), which was not manifested in the interviewees' narratives.

It may therefore be argued that while the initial motivation of the *way of life* group was extrinsic and they were acting in response to the excessive demands that their work exerts, the levels of time investment, effort, commitment and diligence displayed here suggest that they have internalised these demands (Deci, Eghrari, Patrick & Leone, 1994). The *way of life* outlook may thus be seen as a psychological mechanism that can aid in converting an extrinsic source of pressure into an intrinsic motivation.

The findings thus suggest that similar to the *calling* outlook, the *way of life* conception may serve to justify the challenges involved in their global work, particularly the family costs, and the intermix between life and work. At the same time, it strengthens and validates the ambassadors' deep commitment to their work. In contrast to the *calling* orientation, where the grounds that justify the sacrifices are pro-social and ideological, the *way of life*

orientation does so by amplifying and overstating the dominance of the work in employees' lives, and by accepting that '*work dictates life*', as Ambassador Baum noted (see citation p. 177).

#### **6.5.4 Good fit**

Similar to the *calling* group cited earlier, a significant proportion of the *way of life* group felt that there is a good fit between their work and their skills. However, while the *calling* group referred mostly to their diplomatic skills, this group accentuated their cross-cultural skills - particularly their capacity to adapt to a new environment, and perform appropriately in a new cultural context:

Ambassador Bar-on (male, retired): '*Adaptability is essential in our line of work. Even physically, you know... we moved to places with different heights, or where it was freezing cold and dark 9 hours a day, or the opposite – very hot and humid, and you have to adjust physically, and function quickly....*'

Ambassador Adler (male, active): '*One of the things that I thoroughly enjoy is to wake up in a new place. The experience of exploring the unknown excites me. I move very easily from one place to another....as soon as I unpack my suitcases – I feel at home.... All the rest is the fun part – going around to explore*'

Ambassador Dayan (active): '*I think I integrate in a new cultural environment quite quickly... I adopt the behaviours, the way of thinking, the local life style. I absorb these things - and I immensely enjoy this process*'.

What the respondents described here is their ability to handle physical changes with relative ease, as well as to re-orient themselves quickly in a new environment (Hefstede, 2005).

Importantly, the interviewees cited below highlighted in their accounts their capacity to perform appropriately in a new cultural context, and interact effectively across cultural differences, which is a central aspect of their profession (Hofstede, 2004):

Ambassador Almog (male, retired): *'Diplomacy requires you to bridge between cultures and to bring people together around mutual interests. So you have got to be able to communicate and interact with people from completely different cultures, without causing incidents or conflicts...'*

Ambassador Goren (male, active): *'Flexibility is a must in this profession... I mean you have to be flexible in your thinking, in your behaviour... flexible in terms of your expectations'*.

As can be seen here, these interviewees felt that they are well-equipped for their diplomatic work and global way of life, both of which require highly proficient cross-cultural skills. Several abilities were mentioned: global mindset, tolerance to difference, cognitive and behavioural flexibility, adaptability (physical, behavioural and psychological), capacity to interact and communicate effectively across cultures, and language skills - all of which the respondents saw as different dimensions of their cross-cultural skills.

In accordance with the interviewees' accounts presented here, a large portion of *global career* literature is devoted to examining the cross-cultural skills that are essential for successful expatriation, and to assessing these skills for the purpose of staff selection (Dickmann & Baruch, 2011; Dowling, Festing & Engle, 2013). A central theme in this body of literature focuses on the diplomats' and expatriats' capacity to work across cultural differences - network, communicate, interact, collaborate and negotiate (Bolewski, 2008). Similarly, the literature on diplomacy also highlights the importance of the diplomats' cross-cultural capacities (Rana, 2011).

One of the recent developments in this field has been the Cultural Intelligence (CQ) framework (Early & Ang, 2003; Thomas & Inksen, 2009), which integrates several of the capacities mentioned by the respondents into a concise construct. Cultural Intelligence is defined as a person's capacity to function effectively in culturally diverse settings, where one is required to interact with others whose cultural assumptions and expectations differ from one's own. It necessitates an ability to discern and comprehend cultural cues, to rapidly adjust to unfamiliar environments, and to produce culturally appropriate behaviours (Earley & Ang, 2003; Earley & Mosakowski, 2004; Ang et al., 2006; Bolewski, 2008). The Cultural Intelligence framework seems to fit well with the skills mentioned by the ambassadors.

Early & Ang (2003) claimed that while the potential for CQ may be inborn, it can indeed be developed. Several *global career* authors (Gregersen, Morrison & Black, 1998; Harris & Dickmann, 2005) made the point that cross-cultural capacities are often developed through multiple overseas experiences and through working in culturally diverse settings. These assertions were echoed by the respondents, who felt that their cross cultural capacities were partly inborn, but also vastly developed over the years:

*'I think you kind of born with the ability to adjust quickly to a new environment, though it does develop over time...'* noted Ambassador Kaplan (male, active) while Ambassador Adler (male, active) remarked: *'over the years we developed not only skills, but also techniques for accelerating language learning and the acculturation process.'*

Ambassador Abramov (male, active) highlighted the learning curve that he had experienced and how his cross-cultural capacities and ability to handle changes developed over time: *'The first mission is the hardest in terms of confronting the new environment and adjusting to it. The second time is much easier. The third time is a*



*piece of cake. So you just learn as you go how to handle the move and the newness, and how to overcome the hurdles... Things become easier with each move because you become better at it...'*

Ambassador Stern (male, active) added: *'When your routine involves so many changes, it makes you develop certain capacities – such as how to handle changes, how to adjust quickly – and these become part of who you are...'*

Ambassador Baum (male, retired): *'The changes are quite extreme in our profession... Each of these cultures that you have lived in - leaves a mark on you. It changes you. Of course you don't retain everything that you have learned, but some things remain with you for life...'*

As can be seen from these accounts, there are significant changes and challenges embedded in this way of life, and considerable personal and family costs (Neumann, 2005; Yagar, 2005). But it also offers unique opportunities to develop superior skills to tackle these challenges, thereby promoting personal and professional growth through experiential learning. Furthermore, both the costs and the learning gained from the recurrent moves seem to have a cumulative and lasting effect on the diplomats and their families, which seems to further augment the ambassadors' *way of life* outlook.

### **6.5.5 Conclusion**

The analysis of the ambassadors' *way of life* orientation described here revealed that it is directly associated with their multiple expatriation experience and its impact on their lives. Much of this conception is about the ways in which the ambassadors' global work invaded their private lives and influenced those around them.

At the centre of this conception is the notion of *blurred boundaries*, where work necessitates working across national borders. The challenges entailed in this experience, break-down the normative boundaries between work and other aspects of life, and spirals work-life equilibrium out of balance.

The analysis offered here suggests that this work orientation emerged from two different, yet interconnected grounds, both of which entail some form of *boundary work* around *blurred boundaries*; the first type of boundary that the ambassadors routinely travel and work across are international borders. As seen here, this is a journey that they repeatedly undergo in their line of work, as well as the very essence and the primary goal of their diplomatic missions. This experience seems to form the groundwork from which the *way of life* outlook emerged and is tightly associated with their cross-cultural capacities, which they viewed as essential for their profession.

As the term '*way of life*' suggests, the second foundation from which this work orientation emerged, is the notion that work, particularly global work, expands well beyond its normative grounds, and can become a dominant factor that shapes employees' lives. As seen here, the interviewees' global work violates the boundaries between their private and public spheres, affecting their life style and their families' lives (both those who accompany them abroad as well as those who remained behind).

The analysis also suggests that the *way of life* outlook often entails high degrees of work commitment, while at the same time it seems to justify and rationalise the multitude of ways in which work invades life, and the sacrifices and costs that all those involved bear.

## CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION

This chapter summarises the research findings, ties together the three core categories, and extrapolates a theory of work meaningfulness from the three core categories.

This study examined the work orientation of Israeli State Ambassadors. Its aim was to explore the ways in which this elite group of civil service employees perceived their work, and the meaning they attributed to their life-long global work and careers.

The application of *constructivist grounded theory* approach in this study led to a process of organic theory emergence from the data. Early in the data collection phase, three central categories emerged from participants' interviews: *calling, career and way of life*. The emergence of these themes as core categories (which was not prompted by the initial research questions and thus unintended) was indicative of their prominence in the ambassadors' work perceptions. These themes were repeatedly evidenced in the data, and were found to be linked to other themes and categories. They were also found to have strong theoretical grounding in the extant literature on the *meaning of work*, and particularly the *work orientation* model developed by Bellah et al. (1985) and Wrzesniewski et al. (1997). These themes characterised three distinctive work-orientations which depict and represent the different meanings that the ambassadors assigned to their work, how meaningful work was for them, and what features of their work made it meaningful.

## 7.1 Addressing the research questions

### 7.1.1 The work orientation of diplomats

One of the central questions in this study which emerged from the data and was later linked to Wrzesniewski et al.'s (1997) work orientation model, explored the work orientation of the respondents. The exploration revealed that within one profession and a single organisation, employees display different outlooks. This finding corresponds with Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) observation, and supports their argument that the meaning that people ascribe to their work do not merely originates from the objective characteristics of the work, but reflects people's personality, traits and meaning-making patterns: how they interpret and give meaning to different aspects of their work, and what aspects of their work they take into account or leave out when they construct their work outlooks.

An additional finding that parallels that of Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) was that most interviewees displayed outlooks that combined two or all three work orientations, a finding that I shall attempt to address and explain below.

The analysis of the participants' work orientation revealed that none of the interviewees displayed a *job* orientation, which may not be surprising given the seniority of the sample. However, the respondents displayed three distinct work orientations: *career*, *calling*, and a *way of life*. Each orientation focused on different aspects of the ambassadors' work, thereby assigning different meanings to their work:

The majority of the respondents presented a *calling* orientation where they perceived their work as a service to their country, and felt that it was their moral obligation to undertake the work, despite the sacrifices it entailed. Several features of the respondents' *calling*

orientation have emerged, namely: Work is deeply meaningful and satisfying for the respondents, distinct pro-social orientation (work is seen as a service to society), good fit (the work corresponds with the ambassadors' skill-set and social values), clarity of professional identity and strong organisational identity, and willingness to endure the risks and sacrifices that come with the job.

Further analysis revealed that their *calling* orientation emanated from two grounds: The first was their sense of good fit between their capacities and their work, and their desire to express these skills at work. It was reflected in their intrinsic motivation and engagement, strong professional identification and a sense of fulfilment. The second foundation was their deep connection with the State of Israel and their pro-social desire to serve their country by joining the diplomatic service. It was manifested in their sense of duty and commitment, their belief that their work addresses a vital societal need, an ideological identification with their work, and their willingness to bear substantial sacrifices. Their *calling* orientation seems to tie these two motives together which is manifested in the synthesis of their professional, organisational and national identities, with the *calling* domain.

This model of *calling* corresponds with Bunderson & Thompson's (2009) *neoclassical calling* since it blends a person's wish to apply a particular skill at work and gain meaningfulness through self-actualisation (which is the core feature of modern *callings*), together with an altruistic pro-social motivation to serve the greater good by embarking on this career path (which is the core feature of classic *callings*).

It should be reiterated that the term *calling* and its structure of meaning emerged from the interviews with no prompting on the interviewer part. The use of the term *calling* among

such a large proportion of the ambassadors suggests that it is a core feature of the MFA's organisational culture and discourse. Jepson (2009) commented that when particular types of discourses are repeatedly used by employees, it suggests that people's meaning making processes are shaped by such expressions. Furthermore, they are reflected in their perceptions and behaviours, which seem to be the case here.

More than a third of the ambassadors displayed a *career* orientation, which was manifested through a traditional *career* model, combined with a *global career* outlook. Several characteristics of the respondents' *career* orientation featured in interviewees' accounts: A *career for life* perception (a long-term organisational *career* outlook), an expectation to progress in the organisational hierarchy and assume top managerial positions, and a strong organisational identity. Additionally, the interviewees displayed a *global career* perspective in which expatriation was considered the 'expected route' and a critical step for career progress.

Additional analysis revealed that their traditional *career* orientation was manifested in career longevity, sense of security and stability, a single-organisation career path, a strong psychological contract and expectation that the MFA will manage their careers. It also included a desire to advance in the organisational hierarchy and assume top executive positions, despite the relative flatness of the organisational hierarchy, evaluating their career success through their pace of progression.

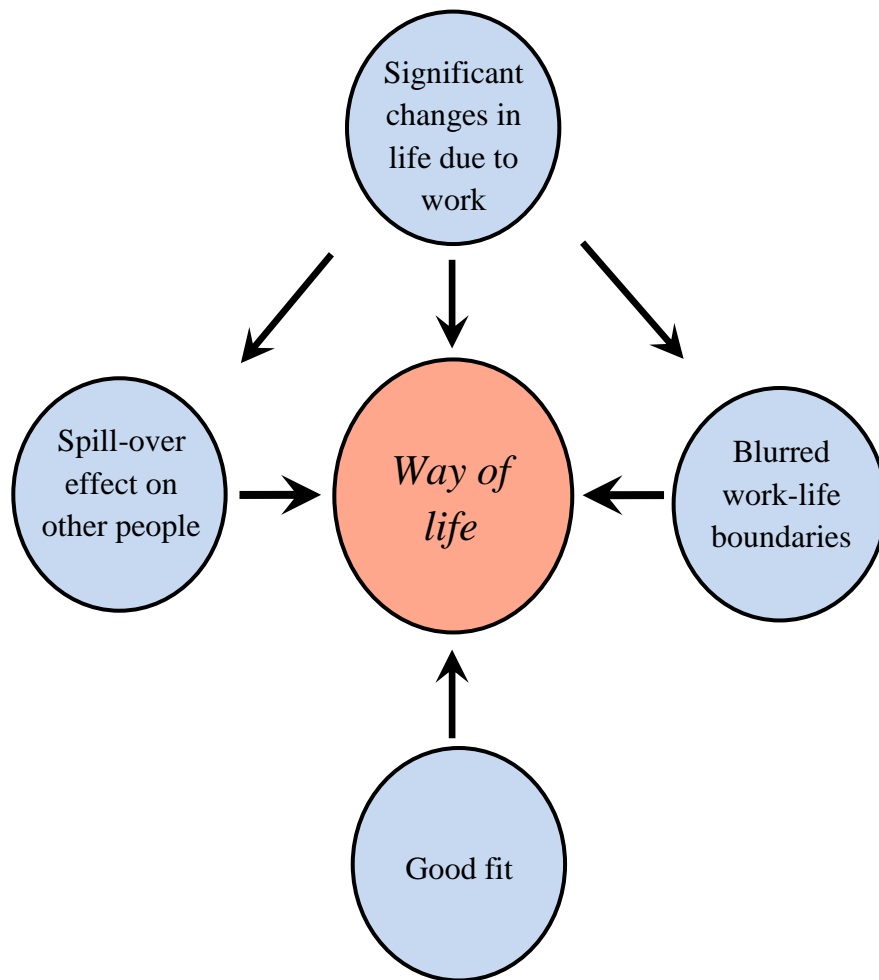
**A new category of work-orientation emerged from the data:** nearly half of participants described their work as a *way of life*. This orientation is associated with their global work and its impact on their own lives - the all-consuming nature of the work, and the blurred boundaries between work and other aspects of life.

Further analysis revealed that this work orientation is grounded in two experiences, both of which entail some form of *boundary work* (Dickmann & Baruch, 2011). The first type of boundary that the ambassadors regularly work across is geographical borders and cultures, which is the essence of their expatriation experience and diplomatic work. This experience seems to structure the foundation from which the second boundary work experience emerged. As captured in the words *way of life*, this orientation symbolises the idea that global work can upset the normative boundaries between work and other domains of life. Work then becomes an overbearing factor that dictates employees' lives and determines their life style, family time and social lives (Neumann, 2005).

On an abstract theoretical level, the *way of life* orientation can be characterised by the following features (see also Figure 7):

- 1) Work introduces significant changes into employees' lives that impinge on every aspect of life.
- 2) Spill-over effects: their work affects the lives of those around them.
- 3) Work is all consuming and never-ending; the boundaries between work and other aspects of life are blurred.
- 4) Good fit: The work corresponds with employees' skills.

Figure 7: The characteristics of the *Way of Life* work orientation



The synopsis of the findings shown here suggests that the original tripartite *work orientation* model (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997) was only partially applicable to the group studied here; due to the seniority of the respondents, none of them perceived their work as a *job*. On the other hand the global aspect of their work that featured strongly in their outlooks could not be absorbed into any of the other *work orientation* categories.

It should be emphasised that the term *way of life* and its meaning emerged naturally from the interviewees' accounts with no prompting on my part, and since a large proportion of them used the term and provided similar explanations as to what it means, it can be seen as a marked feature of the MFA organisational discourse. Jepson (2010) argued that the



collective and repeated use of particular linguistic terms (such as *way of life*), are representations of the organisational culture. Such discourses shape people's construction of reality, which in turn affects their behaviour and actions, which is indeed the case here.

### **7.1.2 The components of meaningful work**

Beyond the exploration of the *work orientation* of the respondents, three additional questions guided this inquiry: What is the meaning that the participants assign to their work? and what aspects of the participants' work made it meaningful for them?

The findings showed that each of the groups focused on different aspects of the work, and thus derived different meanings that emanated from their different perspectives: Those with a *calling* orientation viewed their work through the lens of the social purpose that it serves. Thus, their ideological, pro-social and dutiful attitudes, and their social and work identities were aligned with this social agenda. It may be argued that the *calling* orientation describes the identification of the person with the social cause that his or her work serves.

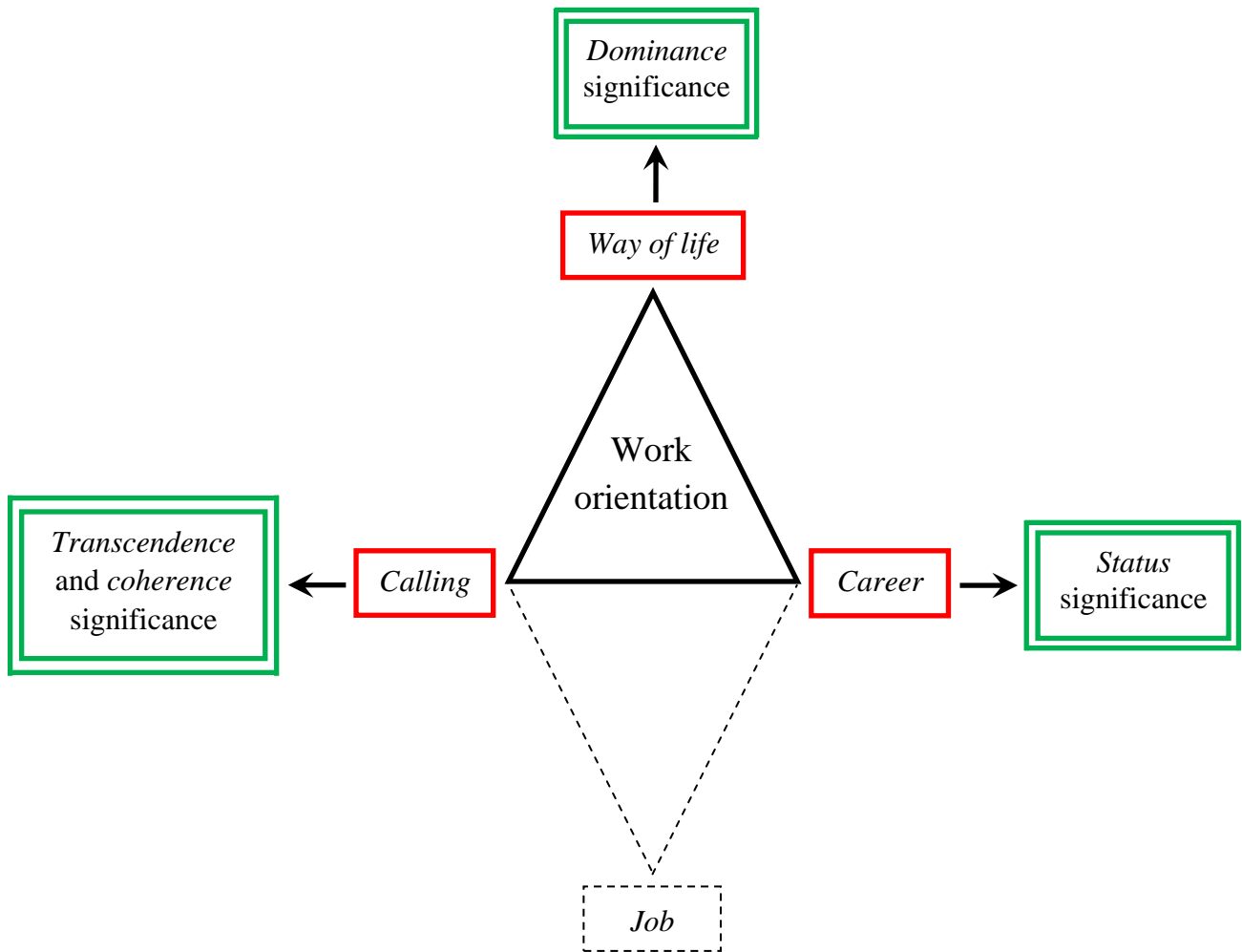
The *career* group's focal point was their own career paths, and thus their outlook revolved around their progression trajectories, their positioning within the organisation and their relationship with their employer. It can therefore be claimed that the *career* orientation describes the relationship between a person and his or her organisation.

The respondents with a *way of life* outlook viewed their work through the lens of its dominance in their lives, and thus highlighted those aspects of their work (particularly the expatriations) where the boundaries between work and life became blurred, and where work took priority. Thus it can be argued that the *way of life* orientation describes the centrality of work in a person's life.

This suggests that the meanings that each group assigned to their work differed in its contents. The meaning that the *calling* group assigned to their work is that of *transcendent significance* – where one’s work has a purpose: it contributes to a social cause, and offers opportunities for self-transcendence. This was combined with *coherence meaning* – in the sense that work fits with core aspects of the self and enables one to realise his or her potential thereby it facilitates self-actualisation. The *career* group communicated a type of *status significance* – in the sense that one’s self-worth derives from his or her positioning at work. And the meaning that the *way of life* group conveyed was that of *priority* or *dominance significance*, in the sense that work takes priority and dominates one’s life. Figure 8 exemplifies these different perspectives.

Each group thus applied a different lens through which they viewed their work, and focused on different aspects of the work. This can explain why the three orientations can exist side by side and why some people can manifest all three orientations: there is no conflict between these domains and they may even complement each other.

Figure 8: Model of *work meaningfulness*

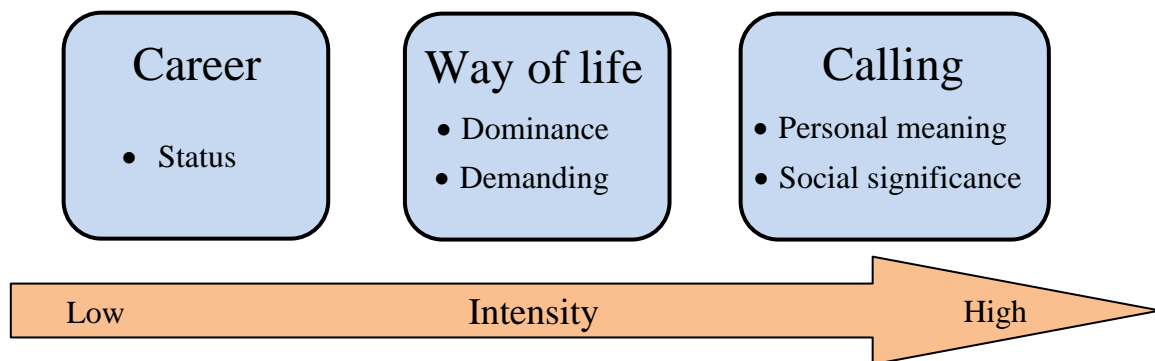


- Work orientations identified in this study
- ..... Work orientation that is part of the model but has NOT been identified in this study

In line with the different perspectives and focal points that each group adopted when they described what their work meant to them, they also showed different levels of *intensity* in terms of *how meaningful* work is for them (Figure 9): The **calling** group exhibited the highest intensity of meaningfulness which derived from the deep personal *meaning* they assigned to their work, and the sense of *significance* that emanated from the social cause that the work serves. The high intensity in which the work meaningfulness is felt can be attributed to two forms of meaning that are fused together in their outlook: the personal

meaningfulness and the social significance. The *way of life* group displayed a lower intensity of meaningfulness compared to the *calling* group: they seemed to assign high levels of significance to their work, to the degree that they perceived their work as a factor that dominated their lives, and justified its dominance by work being highly demanding and consuming. The *career* group demonstrated the lowest intensity of meaningfulness since their sense of meaning derived primarily from their positioning within the organisation.

Figure 9: The intensity of work meaningfulness



As for the motivations of the three groups, they seem to vary in accordance to the orientation they displayed (Table 2): The *calling* group displayed a compelling intrinsic motivation, despite acknowledging that they have responded to a transcendent call to serve their country. The *way of life* group seems to have internalised the demands that their work presents to them, and converted these external pressures into an intrinsic source of motivation. The *career* group exhibited a clear extrinsic self-enhancement motivation in their desire to progress in the organisational hierarchy and assume the top positions.

Table 2: The motivation of each work orientation

Work orientation	Motivation
<i>Calling</i>	Intrinsic
<i>Way of Life</i>	Conversion of Extrinsic to Intrinsic
<i>Career</i>	Extrinsic

Each group also used their work orientation as a mean to counterbalance, justify, or to some degree rationalise the sacrifices, hardship or setback their work entails (Table 3): The *calling* group *rationalised* the personal risks they have taken and the loss of their spouses' careers, as they positioned these sacrifices against the commendable higher order societal goals that their work serves.

Table 3: The psychological model of the meaning of work

Orientation	Source of meaning	Overcoming
<i>Calling</i>	Social cause	Sacrifices and risks
<i>Way of Life</i>	Work Demand	Hardship and turbulence
<i>Career</i>	Career for life	Setbacks & financial issues

The *career* group argued that the stability and longevity offered by the *career for life* arrangement counterbalances the progression setbacks they encountered upon repatriation, the loss of the spouses' careers and the meagre financial rewards. The *way of life* group

justified the intrusion of work into their private lives, and the turbulence that they and their families endured in the course of their careers, by prioritising their demanding work and seeing it as all consuming and never-ending.

It can therefore be argued that the meaning making processes described here (the type of meaning that respondents attributed to their work, and the intensity of the emotional tone attached to it), seem to serve as a means to build resilience and defuse some of the challenges, risks and frustrations involved in this work. The more meaningful their work was for them – the better they were able to face, endure and accept those challenges.

### **7.1.3 How global work experiences shaped participants' work orientation**

The last question that guided this study was what aspects of the participants' expatriation and *global career* experiences impinged on their work outlooks? The findings revealed that their global work, particularly the expatriation experiences, featured heavily in people's outlooks, and seemed to shape what their work meant for them. The emergence of the new category of work orientation – the *way of life* – which revolved entirely around the participants' global work, and the turbulence that it introduced into their lives, demonstrated the centrality of the global experiences in their outlooks. Furthermore, the *calling* and *career* groups also referred to the global aspect of their work, and showed how their global work shaped their outlooks. The *calling* group referred to the global aspect of their diplomatic work, and discussed the battles that they faced in the international arena as part of their representational roles. Their international-relation work was thus the core of their *calling* perspective. The *career* group referred to their expatriations as the 'expected route' in their profession, and described the re-entries as one of the challenging aspects of their careers. Both of these global elements served to shape their *career* orientation. It can

be therefore concluded that the global aspects of their work featured in all three orientations.

## **7.2 Limitations and recommendations for further research**

The use of *constructivist grounded theory* methodology has facilitated the elicitation of complex meaning-making processes that underlie people's work-orientation, and the emergence of a novel work orientation category. However, the qualitative methodology adopted here limited the scope for generalisations that could be made for other populations:

- **Country specific** – while the dataset is indeed robust since it is founded on the accounts of 57 respondents representing two generations (retired and active ambassadors) and mixed gender (men and women), it is based on the accounts of Israeli Ambassadors only.

Since no generalisation of the findings can be made beyond the group studied here, future research could benefit from conducting similar studies among ambassadors representing other nations. It is indeed conceivable that diplomats serving other countries may convey different work orientations, as these have been shown to be affected by the organisational culture, the challenges they face in their work, and the positioning of the country in the global power scale.

- **Profession and organisation specific** - this study focused on a specific population in the public sector (Foreign Affairs). In order to establish whether the *way of life* orientation is relevant to, and can be applied to other professions and sectors, similar studies should be conducted among professionals in both the public and private sectors, such as business expatriates, business leaders, pilots, army personnel, politicians, performers, medical doctors and policemen.

- **Rank specific** - the focus of this study was on elite population (Ambassadors) in the Foreign Affairs. The research could benefit from going beyond this high ranking group, to investigate the work orientation of other staff members in the diplomatic corps as well as in other organisations.

### **7.3 Theoretical contribution of this study**

The main theoretical contribution of this study is the emergence of the *way of life* work orientation, which further develops Bellah et al.'s (1985) and Wrzesniewski et al.'s (1997) tripartite *work orientation* model. Although this outlook has emerged in the current study in the context of global work, it is plausible that people in other occupations (such as pilots, army personnel, performers, medical doctors, policemen, business leaders and politicians), whose work dominates and shapes their lives, may identify with this outlook; however further research is required to establish this.

This study also enables the refinement of the other *work orientation* categories. As noted in the introduction, the *calling* orientation has received much more research attention compared to the *job* and *career* orientations. This study offers an in-depth exploration of the *career* orientation, which unpacks the construct and its substructures in a way that was not conducted before. It also suggests that career orientations may vary in accordance to the type of career (traditional or modern) that respondents follow, an issue that to-date has not been examined or addressed.

This study is the first to examine the *work orientation* model through the use of qualitative methods, hence offering richer, detailed and finer distinctions of each of the *work orientation* categories – a level that cannot be obtained through the use of quantitative



methods. However, as noted in the literature review (see section 2.4), *callings* have been studied through qualitative methods, though separately from the *work orientation* model.

Another significant contribution that this study makes is the exploration of the HRM and organisational behaviour perspectives of diplomats. This research is the first to systematically investigate the meaning of work in the context of global work, particularly among diplomats. It therefore offers insights that can significantly enrich our understanding of the work of diplomats, their expatriation experiences and work perceptions.

Additionally, the study embeds the meaning that employees assign to their work in three entwined cultural contexts: the cultural of diplomacy as a global profession, the organisational culture, and the national culture. As shown here, while meaning making is a subjective endeavour, it is shaped and influenced by these cultural contexts and their respective linguistic repertoires and discourses. The conclusion that can be drawn from this examination is that any analysis of the meaning that employees assign to their work must take into account the socio-cultural and linguistic milieu in which these meanings are created and displayed.

Importantly, this study enhances our understanding of the meaning of work and its consequences. As described earlier (section 2.6), much of the extant literature on the meaning of work examines *meaningful work*, and does not make the distinction between the meaning that people attribute to their work, and *meaningful work* (which is equated with *callings*). This study looked into both: it explored the meaning that the ambassadors assign to their work, while investigating what can make work meaningful.

The findings of this exploration revealed a complex structure of work-meaning: Each *work orientation* group has derived meaning from three different aspects of their work: the *domain* on which they focused (the social purpose it served, one's positioning in the organisation, work demands or one's fit with the work), the *type* of meaning they ascribed to their work (transcendence, coherence, status, or dominance), and the *intensity* of the meaning of work they felt (low to high). It can therefore be argued that the meaningfulness of work is the result of these three aspects combined, and the more robust the structure, i.e. the more elements one combines in his or her work perception – the more meaningful work is in one's life.

Furthermore, this study makes a key contribution is to our understanding of the association between meaningful work and work-resilience. As shown above (section 7.1.2), the findings revealed that the meaning that employees attribute to their work seems to counterbalance the downsides and sacrifices that come with their work. As seen in the analysis, the more meaningful work is for a person, the easier it is for the person to ward-off frustrations and difficulties, and withstand the challenges and sacrifices that he or she may encounter at work – simply by engaging more intently with what their work means to them.

#### **7.4 Managerial implications**

The key managerial implications that can be drawn from this study pertain to the association between meaningful work and employees' motivation, performance, commitment to their work and resilience. As noted earlier (section 2.2), human resource management practitioners have long been interested in the factors that can make work meaningful. The findings of this study indeed support the claim that people who find their

work highly meaningful are likely to be intrinsically motivated, highly dedicated to their work and also perform better at work compared to those who find their work less meaningful. The findings further suggest that when employees find their work meaningful, they are more resilient and are able to offset work challenges. From a human resource management perspective this implies that promoting positive meaning at work can benefit both employees and organisations, and may be a fruitful intervention to consider.

However, while human resource management attempts to create a more meaningful workplace may be seen as a positive trend, the findings of this study suggest that this may put employees' well-being at risk. As highlighted earlier (see section 7.1.2), employees are willing to bear more risks, downsides and sacrifices when they perceive their work as highly meaningful. These findings should therefore raise awareness and caution against the exploitation of meaning by employers, as yet another means-to-an-end to increase bottom lines at the expense of employees' well-being.

The second managerial implication of this study relates to the work-life balance of expatriates, which came to life in this study through the exploration of the *way of life* work orientation. As shown in the literature review (section 4.6.3), global work has been found to have a significant and mostly negative effects on employees' health and psychological well-being, and one of its main stressors has been noted to be lack of work-life balance. As the term *way of life* conveys, the group of interviewees who featured this outlook showed strong commitment to their work, and inclination to work excessively hard, to the degree that high work-home intrusion occurred, and work-life equilibrium was thrown out of balance. This situation, particularly if it is prolonged, puts the well-being of employees at risk of exhaustion and burnout, and can negatively affect family relationships. It has also

been found to hamper employees' performance, and can lead to failure of the expatriation mission.

The message to diplomats and other expatriates is to maintain a healthier balance between work and family life, and to ensure that relocation decisions are taken together with partners, in consideration of theirs and the children's needs. The message to Foreign Ministries and global organisations is to offer pre-relocation training to expatriates and their spouses, which includes a time-management component, to monitor employees carefully for symptoms of exhaustion, burnout and workaholism, and where needed, to offer training or psychological support to employees and their families during their time abroad.

The third managerial implication draws from the *career orientation* findings and pertains to the longitudinal career outlook. The findings suggest that job security and having a long-term career horizon in the organization are important factors that can counterbalance some of the family losses resulted from expatriation and repatriation. The message to international organizations is to offer long-term employment contracts, together with career planning to expatriates. Early repatriation planning is also vital in light of the level of frustration that it may provoke and the breach in the psychological contract that may be difficult to repair.

Lastly, I refer to the effects that global careers have on expatriates' spouses. The message to expatriates is to make decisions regarding assignments' timing and locations together with their spouses. The message to Foreign Offices and international organizations is to offer assistance to spouses in finding employment abroad, and upon repatriation.

## CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS AND MY OWN MEANING OF WORK

As I bring this thesis to a close, I want to share my reflections on my journey of self-discovery into the meaningfulness of my work. As I noted in the introduction, my primary drive to conduct this research was the desire to understand my own motivations to embark on a five year voluntary project in Israel, and my willingness to endure the costs that it bore for me and my family. I wanted answers as to why and how my work has become so dominant in my life, and what were the psychological mechanisms that worked to justify and rationalise the toll that it took on us.

Indeed as I analysed the ambassadors' accounts, a group with whom I shared the rewards and burdens of global work, I got answers to some of these soul searching questions.

My work was profoundly meaningful to me because it entailed a worthy social mission that I regarded as my *calling*. It therefore rendered me what I described earlier as *transcendent significance* – it offered me opportunities for altruism and self-transcendence. It also fitted well with my interests and skills and enabled me to express my strengths, hence provided me with a strong sense of self-actualisation. Similar to my respondents, my *calling* orientation was neo-classical: it included a modern *calling* component because of the fit with my skills and the drive to self-actualise, and it also included a classical *calling* component because of the social mission that it served. The fusion of these components is what made it a *neo-classical calling*.

At the same time, I also saw my work as a *way of life*. Because of my frequent commuting schedule, work has come to dictate my life (*dominance significance*) and like my respondents, it has thrown my work-life scales out of balance.

The two types of meaning that I combined, resulted in meaningful work that was deeply felt, which easily translated into high level of motivation, engagement and commitment.

Finally, similar to the ambassadors, the meaningfulness of work has become a mechanism that enabled me to rationalise and justify the sacrifices and hardship that I was willing to tolerate. At the same time, it also helped me to build resilience in order to defuse these challenges and frustrations.

The conclusion that can be drawn from this study and from my own journey is that the meaning of work as a sense making psychological mechanism is indeed very compelling. It can generate passion, engagement and sustain one's sense of duty and commitment. It can also build resilience to ward off work challenges and bounce back from setbacks. But at the same time, it can work as a mechanism that rationalises and justifies illogical choices, unnecessary risks, irretrievable costs and unreasonable sacrifices.

My PhD journey has come to an end with a richer and deeper understanding of the meaning of work, and how it is construed in the minds of employees. The story of the ambassadors depicted here, is in a sense a mini-world in which the drama of meaningful work comes to life. It therefore has implications far beyond this professional group, since it is a reflection of wider struggles that many people experience in our frantic world of work, about the centrality of work in our lives, what work means, what is the social purpose of work, and where are the boundaries between life and work. The story of the Israeli ambassadors recounted in this study is therefore a chronicle of the struggle over these issues, and there is no neat and tidy ending and no value judgments that can be offered, as people will continue to construct different meanings to their work, and bear the consequences of their sense making processes.

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## Appendix 1: Initial interview schedule

### Interview questions

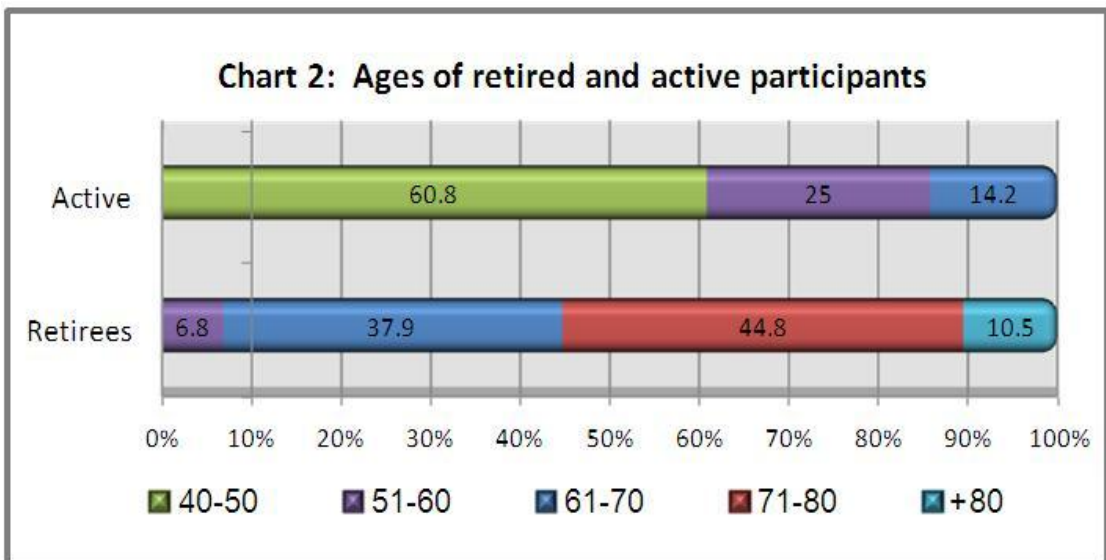
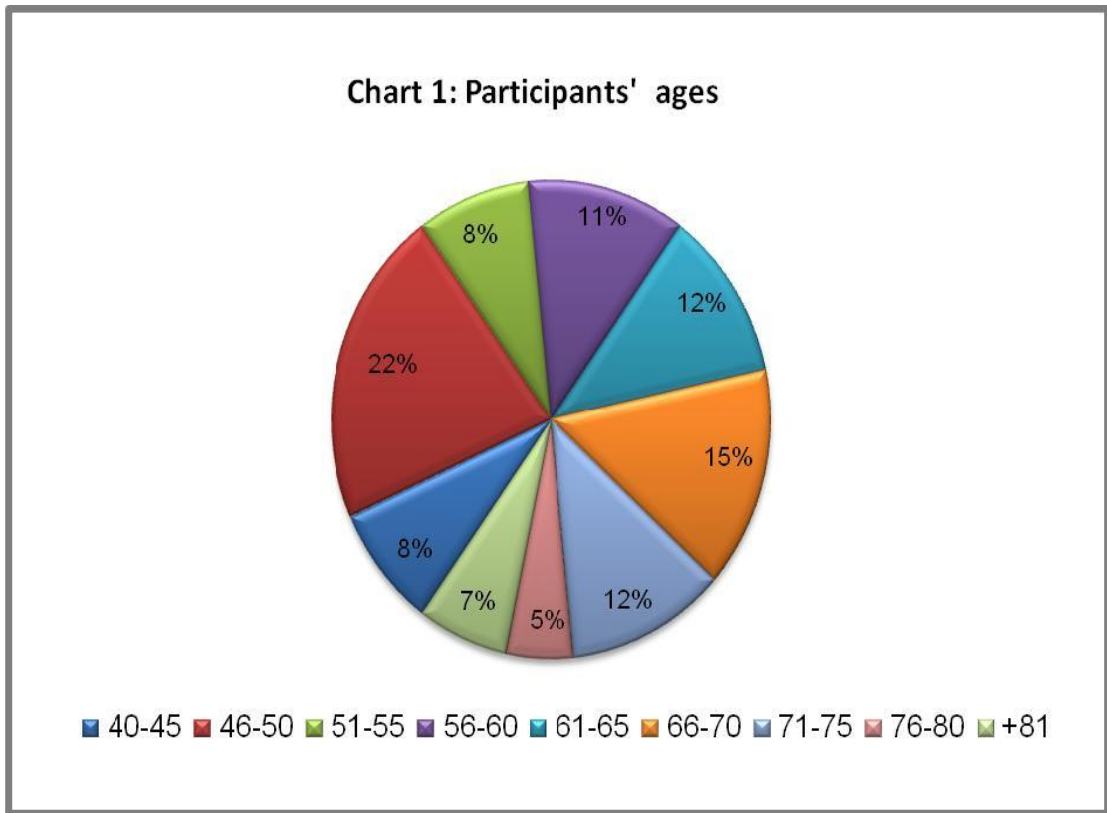
1. Can you tell me about the ambassadorial role? What does it entail?
2. In your opinion, what qualities and skills are required in order to perform the ambassadorial role? Are they innate? If developed, can anyone develop these qualities?
3. Can you tell me about the career path that led you to your current job?
4. What training / formal education have you had over the years in preparation to become an Ambassador? If you have undergone formal training, how effective was it for your professional development?
5. In your opinion, what is leadership? Are Ambassadors required to be leaders? If so, can you describe and provide examples of your leadership?
6. Can you share with me your family setting and significant events in your early life to explain why you wanted to become a diplomat?
7. Can you describe the most negative and most positive events that you feel that have made you grow personally or professionally throughout your career?
  - 7.1 How did you view these events at the time, and how do you view them now?
  - 7.2 What did you learn from them – in particular in the context of your job?
  - 7.3 Were you able to implement your learning? If so, in what way?

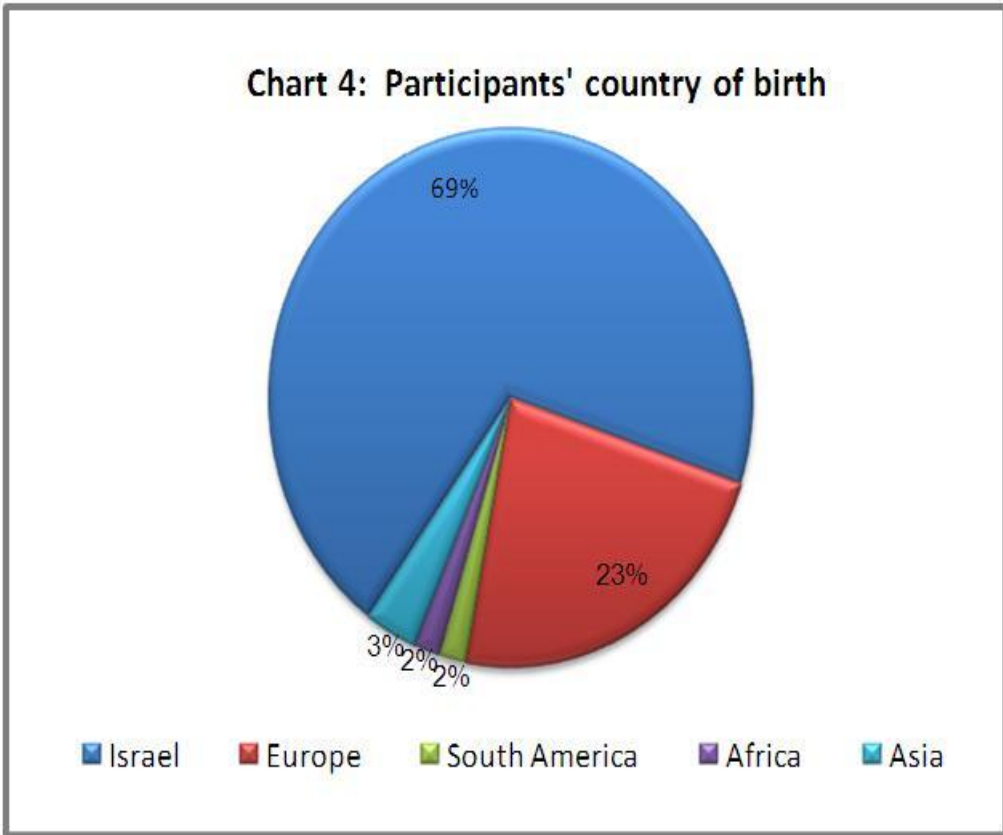
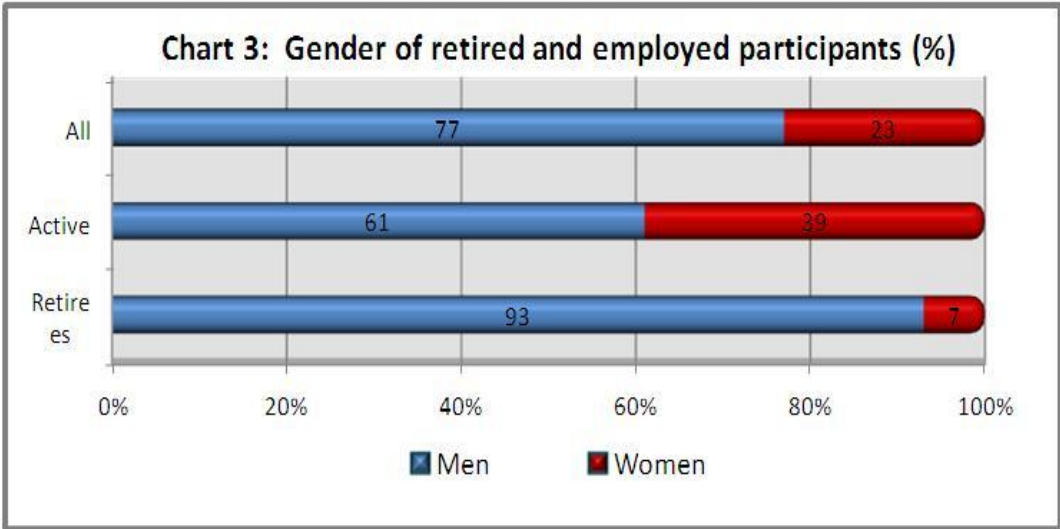
## Appendix 2: Final interview schedule

### Interview questions

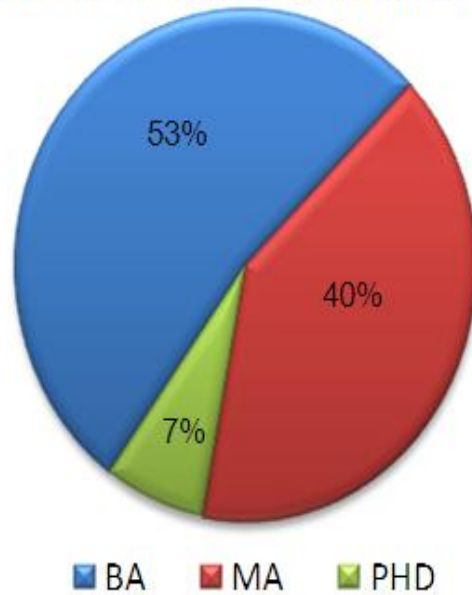
1. What is diplomacy in your view?
2. What changes have you witnessed over the years in diplomacy and the MFA?
3. In your opinion, what qualities and skills are required in order to perform the ambassadorial role? Are they innate? If developed, can anyone develop these qualities?
4. Can you tell me about the career path that led you to your current job?
5. What training / formal education have you had over the years in preparation to become an Ambassador? If you have undergone formal training, how effective was it for your professional development?
6. How was the expatriation experience for you and your family? What have you and your family found easy or difficult?
7. Do you consider yourself a diplomat or Israeli diplomat? Could you work for another Foreign Office? Why?
8. How do you see your work? How important is it for you? Why?
9. What do you like about your career, and what do you (and your family) dislike about it? Why?
10. What were the highlights of your career?

### Appendix 3: The participants' profile

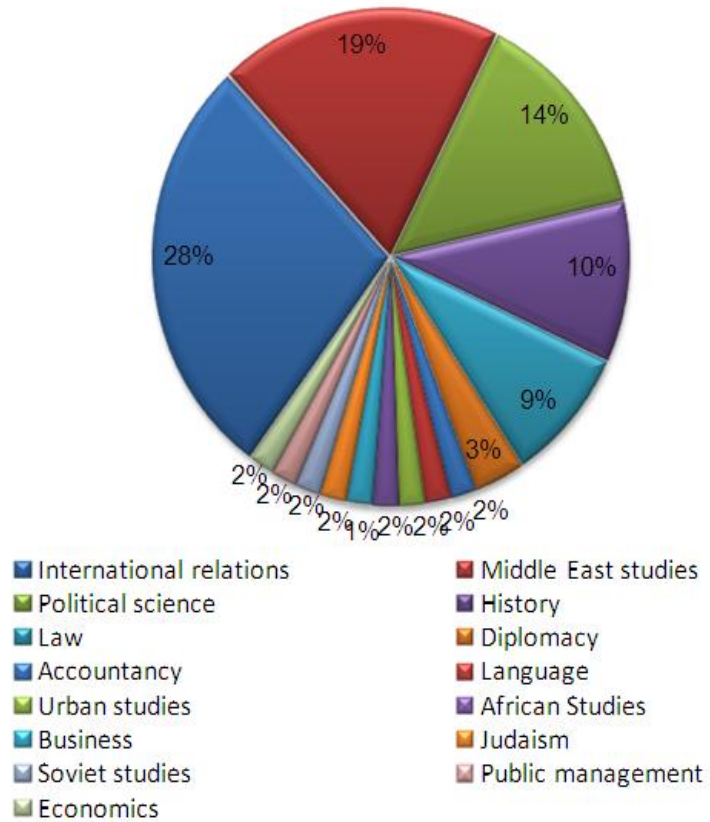




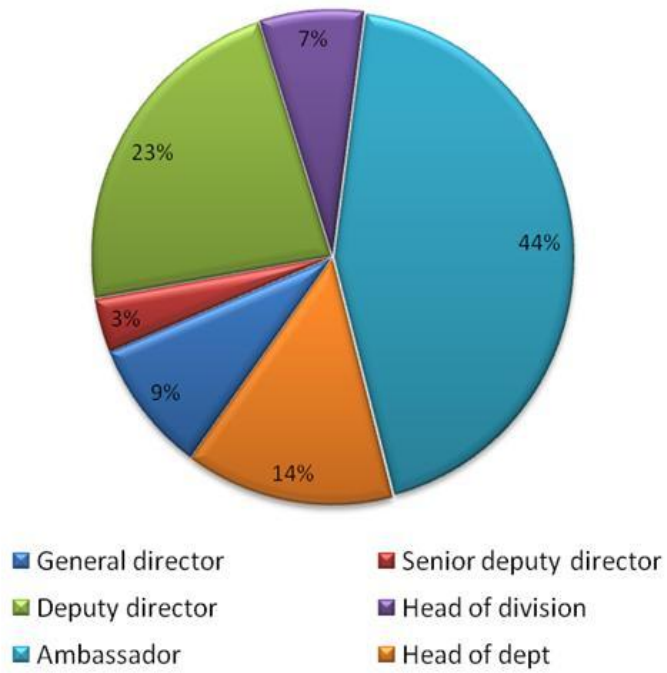
**Chart 5: Participants' education: degree**



**Chart 6: Participants' education: topic**



**Chart 7: Participants' most senior position in the Foreign Office**



**Chart 8: Participants' service countries by continent**

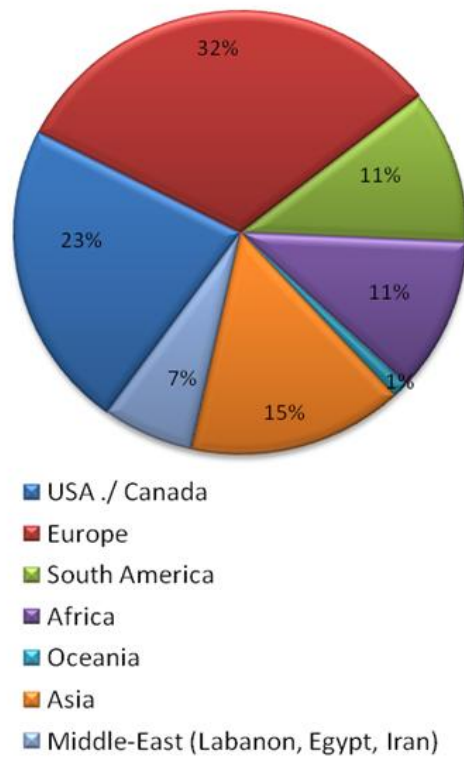
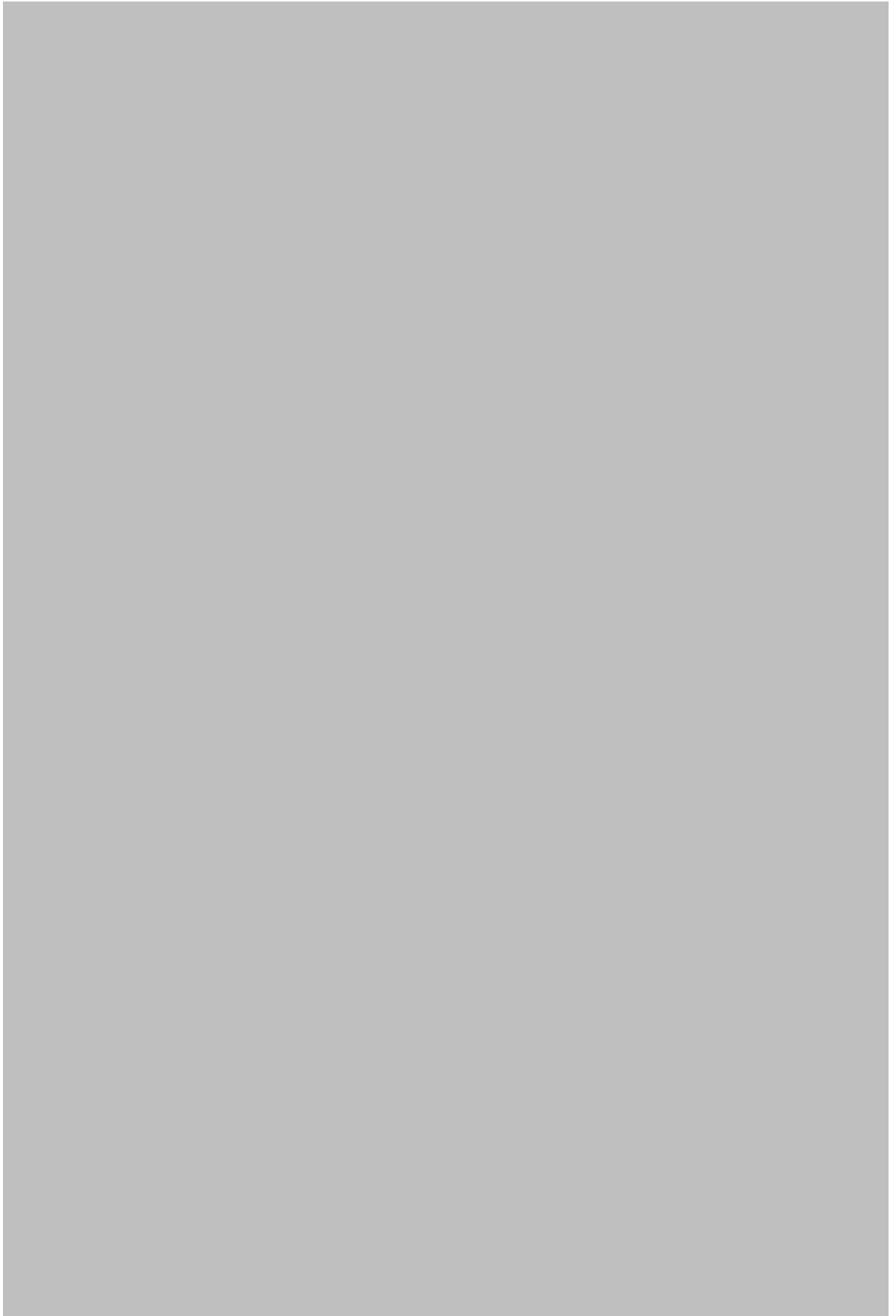




Table 1: Positions held by participants

Parameter	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
No. of positions held at the Head Office	2	10	4.98
No of positions held abroad	1	8	4.33
Total no of positions held	2	15	9.10
Total no of years stationed abroad	4	26	14.27

## **Appendix 4: Ethics approval**



## **Appendix 5: Consent form**

