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**Welcome Home?:
New Zealanders' Experiences
of Return Migration**

A thesis
presented in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in
Sociology
at
Massey University, Albany,
New Zealand.

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2012

Abstract

There has been considerable public concern over the exodus of New Zealand citizens, with estimates of as many as one million New Zealanders living offshore. Consideration has been given to intentions of expatriates' to return to New Zealand and to what might draw them 'home'. There has been relatively little consideration, however, given to the approximately 24,000 New Zealanders who do return each year as Permanent and Long Term (PLT) arrivals, after 12 months or more overseas. Research that is available on the topic tends to focus on their recent return and, in particular, the experiences of PLT 'Overseas Experience' (OE): sojourners coming home from typically fewer than three years of residence outside of New Zealand. What is absent is a longer-term perspective that examines what becomes of the return migrant beyond the initial arrival period. What are the experiences of the extended PLT return migrants who I describe and define as New Zealanders returning from an 'extended Overseas Residence' (OR) of five or more years? This study seeks to redress these gaps and provide insights into the experiences of one of New Zealand's least considered migrant groups and specifically those returning from five or more years extended OR. Using a multi-phased, multiple methodology research design, including pre-interview questionnaires and exercises, in-depth semi-structured interviews and post-interview video exercises, this study explores their decision to return, the integration challenges upon re-entry, return migration outcomes and what can be learnt from these experiences. The results of the research reveal that those migrants who return to New Zealand from extended OR do so under different circumstances and at a different life-stage to OE sojourners and, as a consequence, have distinctive re-entry and reintegration experiences and outcomes that are often quite different to other migrants who arrive in New Zealand. These findings provide the basis for the development of the argument that these returnees are a distinct migrant group who have specific integration challenges and settlement needs. This thesis concludes that there are opportunities for the government, Auckland Council and other local authorities, corporate New Zealand and the country in general to facilitate and encourage positive return migration experiences and outcomes, and suggests future research to duly consider this migrant group.

Acknowledgements

This study would not have been possible without the generosity and candour of my participants in sharing their stories and their willingness to do so not only with myself but with all New Zealanders. You have my deepest gratitude and respect.

I would like to extend my appreciation to my supervisors, Ann Dupuis and Paul Spoonley, for their astute input and critical eye and also for their patience, encouragement and commitment throughout this journey. I would also like to thank Allannah Ryan for guiding me back to the academic path.

Thank you to the academics, artists and music publishing companies who gave their kind permission to use the figures and lyrics included in the thesis. All of the photos that have been included are participants own, used by permission, or under license from Shutterstock.com.

Lastly, I would like to thank my husband, Philip Kelly, for sharing all of the highs and lows of our return journey with me and our family and friends, for their love, support and good humour as Philip and I found our way home.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Tables	viii
List of Figures	viii
Chapter One: Introduction	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Research Objectives	3
1.3 Thesis Outline	4
Chapter Two: Background	6
2.1 Introduction	6
2.2 My Personal Journey	6
2.3 New Zealand's Tradition of 'the Big Overseas Experience' (OE)	7
2.4 New Zealand's Diaspora: Evidence of a Big Overseas Exodus?	8
2.5 Conclusion	13
Chapter Three: Literature review	14
3.1 Introduction	14
3.2 International Literature on Return Migration	14
3.2.1 Return Migrants: Who Comes Home and Why?	16
3.2.2 Re-Entry: The Shock of Return Migration	16
3.2.3 Key Factors That Intensify Re-Entry Shock	18
3.2.4 Beyond Re-Entry: Return Migration Outcomes	20

3.3	New Zealand's Return Migration Literature	23
3.3.1	New Zealand's Return Migrant Profiles	23
3.3.2	Re-Entry Experiences of New Zealand's Return Migrants	25
3.3.3	Limitations of Existing Return Migration Research	28
3.3.4	Potential Return Migrants: Expatriates and Return Intent	30
3.5	Conclusion	36
Chapter Four: Methodology		38
4.1	Introduction	38
4.2	A Multi-Phased, Multi-Methodology Approach	38
4.3	Research Parameters and Sampling	41
4.4	Profile of Participants	44
4.5	Conclusion	46
Findings		
Chapter Five: 'Coming home': The Decision To Return		47
5.1	Introduction	47
5.2	Return Migration: The Original Intention	48
5.3	The Call of Home: 'You'd Better Be Home Soon'	51
5.3.1	The Push: 'This Isn't Working Anymore'	52
5.3.2	The Pull: The Lure of Home	54
5.3.3	Timing: Triggers and Windows of Opportunity	58
5.3.4	Not Without Reservations	61
5.4	Hopes and Dreams for the Return	63
5.5	Advance Preparations: A Blind Leap of Faith	65
5.6	Conclusion and Comparison: The Return from Extended OR versus OE	67

Chapter Six: ‘Touching Down’: Arrival and Re-Entry	68
6.1 Introduction	68
6.2 The Return Arrival ‘Extended Honeymoon’	69
6.3 The Honeymoon is Over: Re-Entry Shocks	70
6.3.1 Personal Challenges: The Loneliness of Re-Entry	72
6.3.2 Practical Challenges: The Cost of Paradise	78
6.3.3 Professional Challenges: Re-Entering the Workforce	80
6.4 If at First You Don’t Succeed: ‘Re-Re-Entry’	85
6.5 Finding Their Feet: What Helped Participants through Re-Entry	86
6.6 Conclusion and Comparison: The Return from Extended OR versus OE	89
Chapter Seven: ‘Settling’: Return Migration Outcomes and Wisdom	91
7.1 Introduction	91
7.2 Return Migration Outcomes:	92
7.2.1 Labour Market Outcomes	92
7.2.2 Economic Well-Being	94
7.2.3 General Well-Being	96
7.2.4 On Balance, a Positive Outcome	99
7.2.5 A Philosophical Perspective: Change Was Inevitable and Came at the Right Time	100
7.2.6 Return Longevity: Settled and ‘Here for Good’?	101
7.3 Return Migrant Wisdom: ‘Tips I Wish Someone Had Told Me’	103
7.3.1 Personal Return Wisdom	104
7.3.2 Practical Return Wisdom	108
7.3.3 Professional Return Wisdom	109
7.3.4 Return Migrant Wisdom Summary	111
7.4 Welcoming Return Migrants and Easing Their Transition	112
7.4.1 Why The Country Should Care (More)	112

7.4.2	What New Zealand Might Do to Help	115
7.5	Conclusion	118
Chapter Eight: Conclusion and Recommendations		120
8.1	Introduction	120
8.2	Summary of Findings	120
8.3	Limitations	123
8.4	Future Research	124
8.5	Recommendations	124
8.5.1	Recognise and Welcome Return Migrants	124
8.5.2	Foster Return Preparedness	125
8.5.3	Encourage Return Migration	126
8.6	Contribution of This Study	128
8.7	Conclusion	129
References		130
Appendices		143
Appendix A:	New Zealand's International Diaspora	143
Appendix B:	Information Sheet	144
Appendix C:	Consent Form: Research Participation and Information Usage	146
Appendix D:	Pre-Interview Questionnaire	147
Appendix E:	Pre-Interview Exercise Worksheet	150
Appendix F:	Interview Schedule	151
Appendix G:	Post-Interview Video Exercise Instructions	152
Appendix H:	Confidentiality Consent Form	153
Appendix I:	Participant Post-Interview Videos (see DVD sleeve, back cover)	154

List of Tables

Table 4.1:	Key Characteristics of Participants	45
Table 5.1:	Main Reasons for Return	54

List of Figures

Figure 2.1:	Expatriates as a Percentage of all Native-Born, OECD Countries	9
Figure 2.2:	Annual Permanent and Long-Term Migration Flows, 1947-2011	11
Figure 2.3:	Permanent and Long-Term Migration, by Citizenship 1981-2011	12
Figure 3.1:	W-Curve Theory	18
Figure 3.2:	Rhinesmith's Ten Stages of Adjustment	27
Figure 3.3:	The New Zealand Return Sojourner Experience	27
Figure 3.4:	Factors Causing Attraction Away from/Attraction to New Zealand	31
Figure 3.5:	Factors Causing Attraction Away from/Attraction to New Zealand, New Zealand Returners versus Overseas Stayers	31
Figure 7.1:	Still Images from Participants' Post-Interview Video Exercises	98
Figure 7.2:	'It's a Great Place to Bring Up Kids in the Great Outdoors'	105
Figure 7.3:	'It's Quiet Down Here'	106
Figure 7.4:	'Watch Out for Natives ... '	106
Figure 7.5:	'All of these Pressures and Challenges Can Split You Apart ... '	107
Figure 7.6:	'It's Expensive!'	108
Figure 8.1:	The Return Migrant Experience of New Zealanders Coming Home from Extended OR, compared to Sojourners	122
Figure 8.2	Welcome	125
Figure 8.3	Wisdom	126
Figure 8.4	Expatriates Plans to Return to New Zealand, by Age	127