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**RETURNING TO THE FAMILIAR, OR THE FOREIGN?
EXPECTATIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF
SELF-INITIATING REPATRIATE NEW ZEALANDERS**

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requirements for the degree of

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Abstract

This study explores the expectations and experiences of self-initiating repatriate (SIR) New Zealanders. It builds theory based on empirical data from distinct ‘before’ and ‘after’ repatriation phases. This research has particular relevance to the contemporary context due to the pace and scale of international mobility, the competition for skilled labour, and the high volume of New Zealanders returning home to live and work.

The SIR field remains not only under-researched, but also insufficiently scoped, demanding further exploratory work. This study responds to this, utilising a qualitative, interpretivist approach. This is characterised by semi-structured interviews with 32 participants and analysis of their narrative fragments, to explore their pre-move motives and expectations, their post-move experiences, and the level of congruence between them.

In relation to repatriation motivation, the study identified a difficult and frail decision to repatriate, incorporating frustration, relationship conflict, and reconciliation of positive and negative expectations. Participants formed expectations through an unbroken connection with New Zealand during expatriation, including maintaining social ties and remaining current in events. This continuous connection was enabled by visits to New Zealand, social media, and news feeds. Additionally, participants took proactive steps to further inform themselves about work and life in New Zealand before repatriating, resulting in a relatively high level of congruence between participants’ expectations and their experiences, in both work and personal domains. Where misalignment did occur, some represented positive surprises, such as the ease of securing employment, while others represented negative surprises, such as the exceptionally high cost of living relative to incomes. In addition, participants contributed perceived reasons for the relative ease of their repatriation experiences, including attributing it to luck.

The primary theoretical contribution of this study is that traditional reentry theory is not applicable to the contemporary SIR New Zealand context. The social information age now enables expatriates to remain better connected with their home countries. The effect of this is that many of the theory-positing ‘unexpected’ elements of home country life are no longer unexpected. The study therefore provides a necessary revision to reentry theory, which takes account of this technological age, and identifies that surprises and shocks occur much earlier in the repatriation process, often before the move home itself. This suggests a consequent reduction in repatriation adjustment difficulties. Further, it is likely that the continued rise of the information age is such a significant development that it necessitates a revision of international mobility theory.

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Chapter One

Introduction

This study explores the expectations and experiences of self-initiated repatriate New Zealanders. It builds theory based on analyses of data from two distinct interview phases: prior to the return move to the home country, and after the move. This introductory chapter begins with a discussion of the background of the study, before identifying the research aims and their significance. Theoretical and empirical perspectives on repatriation are then outlined. The research approach is then introduced, and is followed by disclosure of the researcher's rationale for, and potential bias in, selecting the topic and designing the study. Finally, the remainder of the chapters of the thesis is outlined.

1.1 Background of the Study

Understanding and effectively managing self-initiated repatriates (SIRs) is increasingly important, given the pace and scale of international mobility (Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010) and professional talent shortages (Tarique & Schuler, 2010). However, despite the significant volume of SIRs now contributing to the global economy (Andresen, Al Ariss, & Walther, 2013), research into their experiences, issues and career outcomes remains scarce.

New Zealand is a worthy illustrative context. An estimated 800,000 (one in every six) New Zealanders live abroad (Statistics New Zealand, 2012), the majority likely of their own volition as self-initiated expatriates (SIEs). Expatriate New Zealanders are generally well educated, and have high incomes (Kea New Zealand, 2013). Furthermore, nearly half of the New Zealanders abroad will either ‘definitely’ or ‘probably’ return home, and of those, more than one-third intend to do so within the next five years (Kea New Zealand, 2013). Indeed, many are already returning. The number returning after at least 12 months abroad has been more than 22,000 per year for the last 10 years, and recently reached 27,000 per year (Statistics New Zealand, 2014). Given the professional talent shortage in New Zealand, there have been managerial calls to better prepare for New Zealanders’ return (Watson, 2011, April/May).

Self-initiated expatriates who return home of their own volition are known as self-initiated repatriates, (SIRs). To date, only four scholarly papers have focused on the motives and readjustment difficulties of SIRs to a handful of countries: Australia, China, Denmark, France, Germany, and Ireland (Andresen & Walther, 2013; Begley, Collings, & Scullion, 2008; Guo, Porschitz, & Alves, 2013; Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010). Despite the now elaborate expatriation literature, and the growing assigned repatriation literature, not one study has focused on the expectations and experiences of SIRs to New Zealand.

However, the corporate repatriation, or more general ‘international assignments (IA)’ literature suggests that ignoring the needs of repatriates is generally perilous. Theoretical contributions have posited that repatriates brought home by employers

experience reverse culture shock (Martin, 1984), which, as confirmed by multiple empirical contributions, has negative flow-on effects for organisations. Understanding the expectations and experiences of self-initiated repatriates (SIRs) is therefore critical, and a prerequisite to building knowledge about effectively managing them.

1.2 Research Aims and Significance

This study is a response to the issue framed above. The objective is to explore the pre-return expectations and post- return move experiences of SIR New Zealanders. This exploration should contribute much-needed contemporary theory which specifically addresses SIRs' readjustment and work-related experiences and outcomes. The research questions are:

1. How do SIR New Zealanders experience repatriation?
2. How does the experience of repatriation compare with pre-repatriation expectations?

The significance of this study is twofold. First are the empirical and managerial implications. The study contributes knowledge on the formation of the repatriation decision, as well as the expectations of a sample of people who have decided to return to New Zealand. Similarly, it contributes knowledge on the work and personal experiences of the same group of participants. This contributes to a gap in knowledge which has managerial as well as academic implications. Managerial groups with the potential to benefit include human resource management (HRM), hiring/line managers and recruitment agency consultants. The study also offers insights for people intending to return to New Zealand, or contemplating returning. In particular, an understanding of the work and personal issues of SIRs and an informed managerial response to those

issues has the potential to ease SIRs' return to the New Zealand work environment and help ensure their international experience is utilised. The consequent improved experience for SIRs could encourage more highly skilled New Zealanders to return (Global Career Link, 2012).

The second broad area of significance is the theoretical contribution, which is derived from the empirical data discussed above. There is no prior theory relating to the readjustment of SIRs. As explained below, this study contributes contemporary theory, which takes account of the modern information age. At the same time, it contributes knowledge that renders early reentry theory irrelevant and inapplicable to SIRs today. While these contributions are specific to New Zealand due to the study's sample, this is the first New Zealand contribution to an emerging yet under researched topic. In addition, the knowledge may be significant to a range of Western countries with SIR populations, such as Australia, the United Kingdom and USA.

1.3 Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives

Given the lack of SIR research, the theoretical and empirical perspectives of this topic are informed by the international assignments (IA) literature. The recurrent message here is that repatriation is fraught with difficulties. The theoretical basis for much of the research on returners is 'reverse culture shock'. This occurs when repatriates experience unexpected readjustment ('reacculturation') difficulties (Martin, 1984), which are often of greater magnitude than those encountered during original expatriation (e.g. Sussman, 1986; Szkudlarek, 2010). These difficulties occur in part due to changes in cultural identity expatriates have typically undergone in adjusting to life in their host countries (Martin & Harrell, 2004).

The notion that readjustment difficulties are unexpected is key here, as emphasised in work in which the gaps between expectations and reality are emphasised (L. Stroh, Gregersen, & Black, 1998). In particular, negative career-related outcomes following IA repatriation exacerbate reverse culture shock experiences, especially when expectations are unmet. Consequently, corporate repatriates often tend to resign (Paik, Segaud, & Malinowski, 2002; Stevens, Oddou, Furuya, Bird, & Mendenhall, 2006). In the related yet distinct 'overseas experience' (OE) sojourner field, research has reported elements of reverse culture shock in the personal lives of repatriate New Zealanders (Pocock & McIntosh, 2011). This is important because personal readjustment difficulties can have spillover effects into the work domain (Begley et al., 2008). Reducing the expectations-experiences gap in IA repatriation is therefore a prescription often written in the repatriation management literature (e.g. Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2001; Dickmann & Baruch, 2011).

However, it is not yet clear how, or even whether, this similarly applies to SIRs. Existing research may not be directly transferable to SIRs due to differing characteristics. For example, SIR issues are likely to differ to those experienced by IAs due to the company-supported nature of IA repatriation, and are also likely to differ to those of OE sojourners, considering that OEs are invariably of fixed duration due to visa restrictions, and expatriation for OEs is initiated for different reasons than it is for self-mobile professionals (Thorn, 2009). The existing body of knowledge is therefore inadequate in an SIR context, and it is important that any peculiarities of the SIR situation are better understood. This context legitimises the calls for more SIR work found in the literature (Begley et al., 2008; Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010).

Some work in this area has now begun. Initial SIR research in Ireland has suggested work readjustment might be more difficult for SIRs than for IAs (Begley et al., 2008), and a subsequent study has found significant differences in the reception of SIRs by French, German and Danish employment markets (Andresen & Walther, 2013). In addition, an Australian study has explored SIRs' motives for repatriating (Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010), while a Chinese study has also explored repatriation motives, in addition to the career outcomes of SIRs (Guo et al., 2013).

However, no SIR work has yet been conducted in New Zealand, and therefore none has taken account of any peculiarities of the New Zealand context. Indeed, the variance in SIRs' experiences in the few countries explored to date further supports the need to understand this complex issue at a country level. Given the fiercely competitive global market for talent (Tarique & Schuler, 2010), countries and organisations that recognise repatriates' needs and issues will fare better than those that fail to do so.

1.4 Research Approach

No research approach is inherently superior to any other. Rather, the identification of an appropriate research approach is best conducted by consideration of the state of prior research in a topic area (Edmondson & McManus, 2007). In this study, given the absence of research on SIR New Zealanders, and the near absence of SIR research overall, an inductive, qualitative approach to building knowledge was utilised. This is because the entire SIR area still requires scoping, in order to identify issues for future focus. As mentioned, empirical SIR data collected to date do not take account of the New Zealand context. Moreover, much of the theory relating to reentry is dated, due to

the rise of new technology and the increasing scale of international mobility, and additionally this theory does not take account of any peculiarities of the SIR context.

In this study, interpretive analysis of the narrative fragments provided by 32 participants across two separate interview phases (before and after repatriation) is utilised as a contribution to this scoping exercise. This study reports some findings that clearly conflict with those found in the IA literature, and it offers new theories that may well not have surfaced through a quantitative study. Indeed, the approach utilised here enabled richness and flexible exploration (Alvesson, 1996), which as discussed in Chapter Three are not always possible when using quantitative methods early in the development of a topic area (Edmondson & McManus, 2007).

Although this study has a human resources management foundation, the non-work elements of repatriation are a secondary focus, due to research suggesting that work and non-work domains can affect each other (Begley et al., 2008). However, the focus of this research is on each individual rather than on his or her family, although family related issues are included when raised by participants. This individual focus, too, aligns the present study with the extant SIR literature.

1.5 The Researcher's Selection of the Study Topic

It is important to disclose the role of the researcher in selecting and shaping this topic, as this inevitably contributes to the way the findings are interpreted (Van Laer & Janssens, 2011). The researcher is a New Zealander who left New Zealand at the age of 30, and in the eight years since then has lived in the United Kingdom as an SIE, and in Belgium, Switzerland and the USA as the spouse of an international assignee. This project began when he lived in Belgium and has continued throughout his time in the latter two countries. His reflections on the work and non-work difficulties faced by people who choose to be mobile as well as the near absence of non-anecdotal information available about the outcomes of people who decide to return, contributed to the selection of this topic.

1.6 Overview of the Thesis

Chapter Two explores the literature relating to SIR. Given that SIR is an emerging research topic, the literature review also provides critical analysis of literature in the parent stream, SIE, as well as the considerable literature in company-assigned expatriation and repatriation. It also discusses the relationship between SIR and return migration as well as overseas experience sojourners. This wider review is undertaken to inform the development of the topic, and to aid the identification and prioritisation of research gaps in SIR. In terms of a theoretical foundation, the work in reacculturation, reverse culture shock and cultural identity theories is also explored. The chapter culminates in the identification of a research gap, which leads to the research questions.

Chapter Three provides a detailed outline of the research method used to address the research questions identified in Chapter Two. The research philosophy and approach

are considered, before justification of the semi-structured interview and narrative fragments as the data collection techniques. Data analysis processes are described in detail, in addition to a discussion of the use of NVivo software to support these processes. Finally, consideration is given to the necessary critical and ethical dimensions of this study.

Chapters Four, Five and Six present the findings of this study. The first two chapters methodically address the expectations and experiences phases in turn. This format corresponds with the two interview phases of the study. Findings in each chapter are discussed in relation to work and non-work elements of participants' repatriation. Chapter Five also begins to consider explanations and contingencies for the early post-repatriation outcomes experienced. Then, Chapter Six presents findings of the data analysis undertaken to compare participants' pre-move expectations with their post-move experiences. Both the similarities and the differences between the two are detailed here, as well as consideration of the positive and negative surprises experienced.

In Chapter Seven, key themes from the preceding findings chapters are related back to the contextual literature. Mobility motivation, reentry theory, international assignments literature and SIR work are all considered. In addition, new theory seen to emerge from the current study is presented and discussed as it relates to the prior work. Chapter Eight presents the conclusions of the study. It ties the discussion chapter back to the specific objectives of the study identified in Chapters One and Two. In addition, the implications of the study are considered as they relate to academic theory as well as managerial practice.

Chapter Two

International Mobility Literature

Repatriation is notoriously a troublesome time for expatriates.

(Altman & Baruch, 2012., p. 244)

2.1 Introduction and Literature Identification

This study explores the pre-move expectations and post-move experiences of self-initiating repatriate New Zealanders. Since there have been only four studies on self-initiated repatriation to date, it is necessary to position this study and its topic within broader related streams of literature. This also aids in identifying and prioritising research gaps and questions.

First, relevant terms are defined. Self-initiated repatriation (SIR) occurs when an individual returns to his or her home country to live and work, under the following three conditions. One, the return move is initiated by the individual rather than an employer; two, the individual also returns unaided by an employer; and three, the individual also initiated his or her own expatriation (is a self-initiated expatriate, or SIE) (Begley et al., 2008; Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010)

The self-initiated element of the return positions SIR alongside an increasingly developed literature stream, self-initiated expatriation (SIE). Together, the SIE and SIR streams comprise an umbrella stream, which although currently unlabelled in the literature, can simply be called ‘self-initiated mobility’ (SIM). Just as SIRs return to their home countries unaided and of their own volition, SIEs initiate living and working abroad themselves (Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010) and they expatriate unaided.

However, assuming that all SIEs become SIRs is an inaccurate over-simplification of SIM. Several other options are available to SIEs than SIR. Many self-mobile individuals move from host countries to other host countries (Thorn, 2010), and others stay permanently in their host countries or are moved abroad from their host countries by employers, either temporarily or permanently. In addition, former SIEs may be repatriated by home country employers.

In this chapter, SIE and SIR are considered alongside the more traditional assigned expatriation literature, in order to provide context and identify parallels and differences. The chapter begins by analysing the scarce literature in the area of core focus: self-initiated repatriation, and finds that this body of work has been unable to establish an agreed definition of the SIR construct, in addition to gaps in knowledge due to the research questions asked and methodologies deployed. The theoretical foundation for repatriation, reentry theory, is then explored as a potential theoretical foundation for SIR, with specific emphasis on the difficulties associated with returning to one’s home country. Theories relating to repatriate expectations, and cultural identity, are also

discussed, and it is argued that reentry theory as a whole has only speculative application to SIR.

Because of this, empirical findings in three additional related areas are addressed in the remainder of the chapter. The first is IA repatriation, in which a misalignment between repatriates' expectations and experiences has led to a range of negative post-repatriation outcomes. The second is the parent stream of repatriation: expatriation, in which findings in relation to IAs and SIEs are explored as they may relate to SIR. The third area is the wider mobility literature, which has also contributed empirical findings but which is identified as sufficiently distinct from SIR to consider it primarily of contextual value. The chapter culminates in the identification of research questions to address a core gap in knowledge identified.

2.2 Self-Initiated Repatriation

Specific research on SIR is now beginning to emerge. Earlier work had highlighted the relevance of SIR (Suutari & Brewster, 2000), however this included SIEs repatriating with the promise of a job from current host country employers. This is potentially confusing because the expectations and experiences of repatriates who are technically intra-company transfers might be quite different from those who are genuinely self-initiating their own repatriation. As indicated above, to date only four papers have focused on SIR, and these are addressed chronologically here.

The first two papers not only excluded those repatriating with employers, but also those who had expatriated with employers (international assignees, or IAs). The first study explored the labour market readjustment experiences of SIRs in the Republic of Ireland

(Begley et al., 2008). The authors utilised a mixed methodology beginning with 27 survey responses, but the purpose of this initial research stage is unclear from the paper. From these responses, a smaller sample was selected to participate in a focus group (n=7) and interviews (n=11). Within these smaller groups, participants had been back in Ireland between less than one year and 10 years earlier. In general, they perceived employers to value international experience negatively, evident through an under utilisation of the skills and experience acquired abroad. In addition, they perceived a higher degree of value placed on recent Irish experience by employers, since they were more successful in finding potential roles once they obtained this.

The participants also reported more work readjustment problems than typically reported by IA repatriates. Specifically, not finding a job before repatriating led to “feelings of frustration, disappointment and dissatisfaction with life back home” (p.279), suggesting a spillover of work impacts to life satisfaction. The authors prescribe training for SIRs similar to that often prescribed to IA repatriates, and highlight the difficulties in convincing organisations of this need. While this paper reinforces the relevance of completing the SIE cycle, it has a narrow focus on career impacts. The level of congruence between broader pre-repatriation expectations and experiences is not explored.

The second study focused on Australian SIEs (Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010). The 546 professional participants were surveyed in relation to their repatriation intentions, and surveyed again one year later to explore job search activity and whether they had repatriated. The authors theorised that host country ‘pushes’ (related to dissatisfaction) and home country ‘pulls’ (attraction) would influence an individual’s decision to

repatriate. They argued that the host country can also pull an individual to stay, which relates to his or her level of embeddedness in that host country. The final factor investigated was the influence of shocks to individuals' systems, which can force a sudden exit from the host country (e.g. significant family events in the home country). They found that career and community embeddedness were indeed host country pulls. In addition, family encouragement and national identity were home country pulls. Shocks were host country pushes. Of note was that host country satisfaction did not mediate the relationship of career and community embeddedness and shocks with intentions to repatriate. Limitations of the study included the strong cultural similarity between participants' host countries and Australia, which limits the extent of SIE adjustment (Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010). As the authors noted, the influence of home-host country cultural distance on SIR intentions is still unknown, as is the influence of SIE adjustment.

This is the sole Australasian study reported in the literature in the area of SIR. Its focus on motivations represents findings to which a New Zealand specific study can be related. This paper also has limitations in relation to this review, in that it does not address its participants' expectations, or their career or personal outcomes. However, it does reinforce SIR as an emerging focus, especially in light of the preceding calls for more SIR-specific work (e.g. Begley et al., 2008; Jokinen, Brewster, & Suutari, 2008). Furthermore, its scales could be utilised in future studies.

Like Begley et al., the authors of the third study utilised qualitative methods to explore the reception of repatriates by employment markets in France, Germany and Denmark, as viewed through the eyes of the SIRs themselves (Andresen & Walther, 2013). In this

study, semi-structured interviews preceded content analysis. As discussed in Chapter Three, qualitative methods are often preferred early in the development of a topic because they enable flexible exploration less possible when utilising closed or limited option questions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Edmondson & McManus, 2007). The authors found that Danish SIRs experienced significant employment reintegration issues, due primarily to the lack of value placed on their international experience by employers. This represents a parallel with the findings of Begley et al. (2008), discussed above.

Conversely, German SIRs' international experience was viewed as generally positive by employers, while French participants' experiences were split between positive and negative. Differences in reception by French employers tended to depend on host country (for example, experience gained in host countries in Africa were viewed negatively) as well as industry sector (for example, non-governmental organisation experience abroad was viewed negatively). The authors confirmed Begley et al.'s claim that SIRs generally offer enhanced value to employers on return, despite not always being perceived as such. While this study was the first to report partial positive effects of international experience on post-SIR career outcomes, the differences in findings across home countries suggests further research is required to understand SIR outcomes in the remainder of countries unaddressed by SIR research, as well as potential reasons for these differences.

The fourth and most recent study again used qualitative methodology, to explore career related outcomes of 20 SIRs to China from the USA, Canada, Australia, and Europe (Guo et al., 2013). It found that several factors affected these outcomes, including

individual agency, and contextual factors. Individual agency and motivation were often restricted by Chinese business ideology and practice, including group orientation and centralised decision-making. The study also explored motives for SIR, and, like the Tharenou and Caulfield study, reported a combination of push and pull factors impacting on the decision to repatriate. These included the fulfilment of professional goals as well as family and societal expectations.

As a body of work, these studies have made important contributions to SIR, comprising findings from Australia, Denmark, Germany, France, Ireland and China. However, an issue with the latter two studies in relation to SIR topic development is their inclusion of former IA expatriates in the research samples. Although the participants returned to their home countries of their own volition, many had expatriated as IAs. The IA experience can differ substantially to the SIE experience, and since it is not yet known how these differences can affect repatriation (expectations as well as experiences), it would be pragmatic to report results split on the basis of expatriation type. Additionally, it would aid both study comparability as well as the development of the topic in general, if researchers were to establish an agreed definition of an SIR.

Moreover, this body of work does not specifically and systematically address foundational, exploratory questions relating to scoping SIR as a new topic area of research interest. For example, what is an SIR and why should one be defined as such? What do intending SIRs expect in terms of career and personal repatriation outcomes, and how do these expectations relate to their experiences of repatriation? To what extent and on what bases do findings across various home countries relate to the reentry theory which preceded them? Subsequent sections in this literature review specifically

address potentially relevant theories, as well as empirical findings in distinct yet related areas of prior research investigation.

2.3 Theories of Reentry Adjustment

Relevant theory is now addressed, as it lays a foundation for much of the empirical research covered in subsequent sections. The term ‘reentry’ is used in this section to align with its use in the repatriation theory literature, and it refers to any resettlement return from having moved abroad to live (Szkudlarek, 2010). The theories discussed here include those relating to reacculturation and reverse culture shock processes, theories of reentry expectations, and cultural identity theories, and they draw on research fields such as psychology and sociology. It should be emphasised that none of this theory was specifically developed for SIR – it was developed primarily in IA contexts - so although it has potential relevance to SIR, it cannot automatically be applied to this context. In addition, despite the growing number of articles on reentry and repatriation, the theories underpinning it have not advanced significantly since Martin’s (1984) conceptualisation (Szkudlarek, 2010).

2.3.1 Reacculturation and Reverse Culture Shock

This early work claimed that a reacculturation process takes place, whereby the repatriate readjusts to home life. Martin’s work is in fact an extension of the cultural adjustment U-Curve attributed to Lysgaard (1955), in which expatriation adjustment follows phases of excitement, or ‘honeymoon’, and then ‘culture shock’. This middle phase is characterised by primarily negative emotions including surprise, frustration, strain, a sense of loss, confusion, anxiety and hopelessness. The final phase signifies acceptance and understanding; the end of the process of change and adaptation (Martin,

1984). The process can graphically take the shape of a 'U', where time is on the x axis and emotional adjustment on the y axis (see Figure 2.1 below).

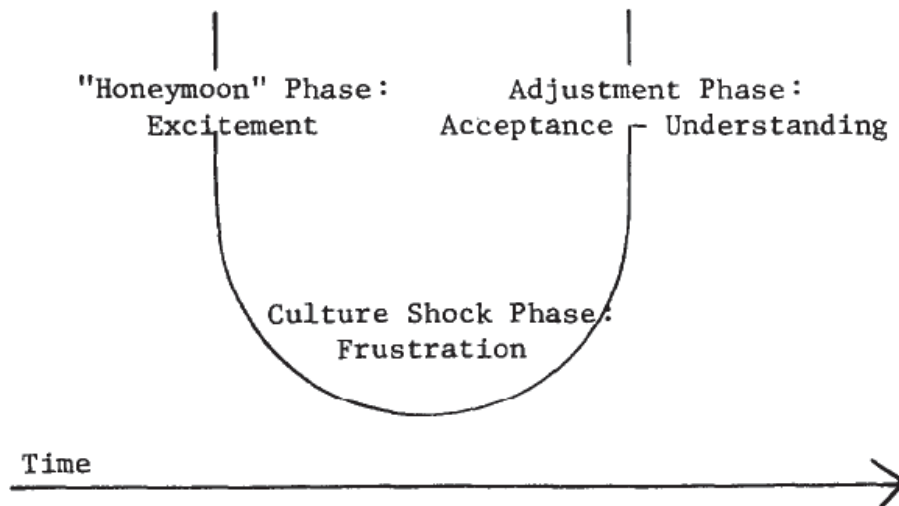


Figure 2.1. U-Curve of Cultural Adjustment (Martin, 1984, p. 118)

Martin (1984) then differentiates between the expatriate's and returner's adjustment processes in terms of expectations, arguing that while the expatriate expects to have difficulty adjusting, the repatriate does not. This results in *reverse culture shock*, which is characterised by feelings comparable to those encountered during expatriation adjustment processes (Martin, 1984). Martin references Gullahorn and Gullahorn's (1963) extension of the u-shaped graph to depict this, resulting in a graphical 'W'. This is the most influential work in relation to reacclturation theory (Szkudlarek, 2010). The W represents the double emotional spike involved in two cultural adjustments (away and home) (see Figure 2.2 below). Martin also introduces several variables that might influence reentry, including age, gender, duration of sojourn, and degree of interaction with host culture. She notes that these are not built into the model, findings

as to their influence on readjustment have conflicted, and further work is needed to explore the effects of these and other variables.

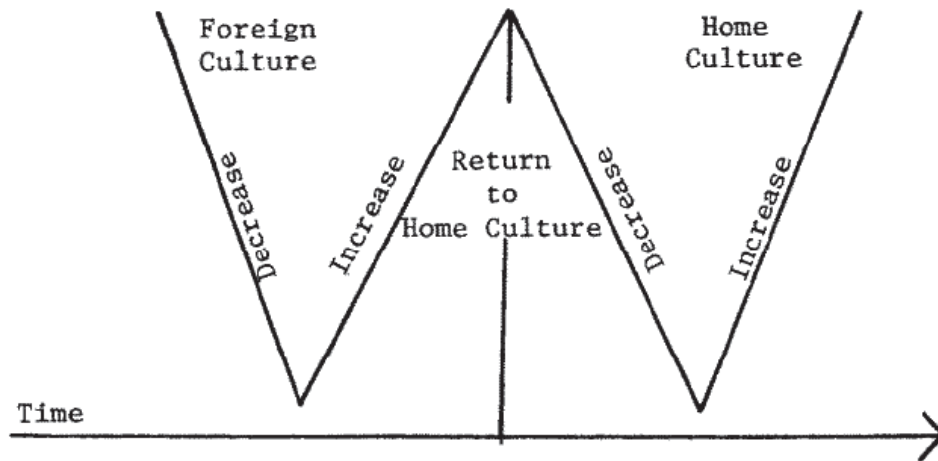


Figure 2.2. W-Curve of Cultural Adjustment (Martin, 1984, p. 119)

These largely hypothesis-based theories have received little empirical support, as well as significant criticism (Szkudlarek, 2010). Critics argue that they ignore multiple movers whose transitions are not simply host country to home country, and that returning is not similar enough to expatriation to ‘double’ the U into a W (Onwumehili, Nwosu, Jackson Ii, & James-Hughes, 2003). The shape of the W-curve has also been questioned (e.g. Adler, 1981), suggesting that the emotional spikes involved in returning are not uniform (Szkudlarek, 2010). A fundamental, if unforeseen limitation given the current Internet, social media and instant news age is the apparent assumption that returners will be unaware of how life ‘back home’ has changed (or not) since they expatriated. This final limitation calls into question the entire suitability of applying the W-curve to SIEs returning home in 2014.

One paper in the New Zealand context has addressed some of these concerns. This qualitative research of migrants returning from the United Kingdom (n=22) and other European Union countries (n=20) identified ten phases through the move-return cycle (see Figure 2.3 below); initial anxiety (marked 1 in the figure), initial elation (2), initial culture shock (3), superficial adjustment (4), mental isolation (5), integration (6), return anxiety (7), reentry elation (8), reentry shock (9) and reintegration (10) (Chaban, Williams, Holland, Boyce, & Warner, 2009). The related points on the graph were plotted by the researchers' analysis and interpretation of the interviews they conducted with the participants.

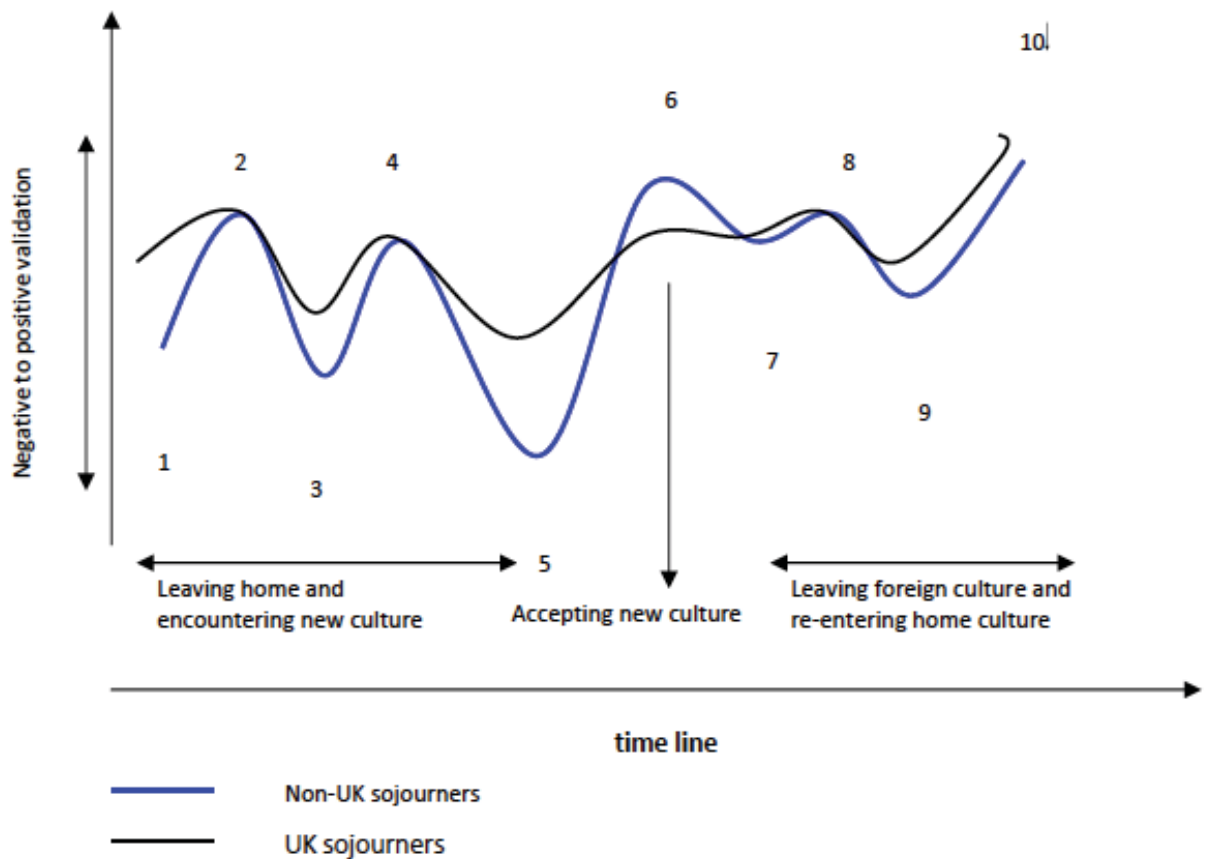


Figure 2.3. Revisiting the Curves in a New Zealand Migrant / OE Returner Context (Chaban et al., 2009, p. 68)

The majority of the sample in this study - although termed ‘migrants’ by the authors - was actually of returning OE sojourners. This may explain the relatively flat curve after reentry, given their relatively short time away (one to two years). This restricts its application to SIRs, not all of whom are away such a short time. The flatter curve immediately after repatriation may also be partially explained by the limited cultural distance between home and some of the participants’ host countries also characteristic of the later Tharenou and Caulfield (2010) SIR study discussed above. There is a research gap in exploring the readjustment of SIRs abroad for a range of durations as well as culturally distant host countries. A further limitation of this work is one it shares with the earlier theory; no study quantifies the time axis. This means it cannot be used as an indicator of readjustment timeframes, and it also complicates the process of relating subsequent research involving readjustment stages or phases, to this theory.

2.3.2 Expectations Theories

Although the W-curve theory acknowledges that reentry difficulties are unexpected, this is the extent of its focus on expectations. In contrast, expectations theories place repatriates’ expectations at the centre of focus. They posit that the level of success of readjustment is dependent on the fulfilment of expectations. As put by Szkudlarek (2010, p. 3):

The challenge of returning home is related to issues such as the unexpectedness of the difficulties encountered, a lack of preparation for reentry, and grief for the loss of expat life.

Expectations theories responded to a need to develop as high a level of knowledge about reentry adjustment as had developed about expatriation adjustment (Szkudlarek, 2010), since reentry equally involves cognitive, affective and behavioural adjustment processes (Martin & Harrell, 2004). Focusing on the cognitive aspects of reentry, *expectancy value theory* posits that fulfilled expectations result in strong adjustment, while unfulfilled expectations negatively impact adjustment (Furnham, 1988). Additionally, *expectancy violation theory*, developed by Burgoon and Walther (1990) in relation to non-verbal behaviour, claims that negative adjustment results if things turn out worse than expected. However, expectancy violation theory differs from expectancy value theory in acknowledging that unmet expectations do not always lead to negative outcomes (Martin & Harrell, 2004). This is because expectations can be either negatively or positively violated. Negative violations (experiences evaluated as worse than expected) do lead to negative outcomes, but positive violations (experiences evaluated as better than expected) lead to positive outcomes (Burgoon & Walther, 1990).

These theories have had some empirical application. Section 2.4 of this review discusses research findings in relation to IA reentry. Although these theories have still not been sufficiently tested, they provide a useful if tentative theoretical background for research involving SIRs.

2.3.3 Cultural Identity Theories

Cultural identity theories relate to the identity changes that occur during expatriation and reentry (Szkudlarek, 2010). This is a key factor affecting readjustment, other than the level of fulfilment of expectations as discussed above. One of the most discussed theories in the literature is *cultural identity theory*, which relates to the level of identification repatriates have with their home country, and how any identity change during expatriation affects reentry adjustment (Martin & Harrell, 2004). This posits that during expatriation, the individuals who take on new behaviours and ways of communicating – new cultural identities – are often unaware that on return they are now communicating cross-culturally.

In addition, *culture learning theory* holds that people's behavioural norms and perceptive lenses change as they spend time abroad and begin to forget the home country behavioural norms into which they were originally socialised (Martin & Harrell, 2004). These subconscious changes can contribute to reentry shock, and are a logical relative of cultural identity theory. The implication from these theories is that individuals who have acquired competencies and behaviours abroad that differ from those practiced in the home country will have the most difficulty readjusting. However, these theories have not been sufficiently tested in any context, constraining the ability to draw conclusions about their validity (Szkudlarek, 2010).

A development in cultural identity theories claims that distress is higher when repatriates identify less with their home country, and this has received some empirical support (Cox, 2004; Sussman, 2000, 2002). Sussman's (2000) *cultural identity model*

theorises that of four patterns of cultural identity, ‘affirmative’ repatriates (who identify with their home culture) and ‘intercultural’ repatriates (who identify with both home and host cultures) repatriate more easily than ‘subtractive’ (who are less comfortable with home culture) and ‘additive’ (who feel closer to the host culture) repatriates. This categorisation depends on the sojourner’s level of acceptance of, and immersion in, the host culture. For people in the latter two categories, a renewed consciousness of cultural identity and identity change occurs on return, which leads to higher levels of repatriation distress (Sussman, 2000).

Finally, a *systems theory of intercultural reentry*, developed by Martin and Harrell (2004), integrates the cognitive, behavioural and affective aspects of reentry, and identifies sets of factors influencing re-adaptation outcomes. These are individual characteristics (demographic attributes, personality attributes, and preparedness), host environment characteristics (cultural distance, amount of contact with home) and home environment characteristics (social and other support provided during and after reentry). The authors suggest that training at pre-departure (for expatriation) stage, during expatriation, pre-reentry and after reentry should result in better repatriation outcomes. In particular, training that aligns expectations with experiences is prescribed, since this may lead to fewer problems and higher levels of satisfaction.

The reentry adjustment theories discussed above may provide a tentative foundation for SIR research, since SIR involves reentry. In particular, reacclimatisation and reverse culture shock difficulties may affect SIRs since SIRs are by definition returning from living in a foreign country. Likewise, expectations theories, which posit that readjustment success is dependent on realistic pre-reentry expectations, could also apply

to SIRs. Finally, cultural identity work which theorises about which factors lead to better repatriation outcomes, provide useful background since SIRs might also experience identity change while living abroad. However, these theories were neither developed nor tested in an SIR context, so any application to SIRs must be considered speculative. There have been empirical findings relating to IA repatriation, which are considered next.

2.4 IA Repatriation

The self-initiated element of SIR distinguishes it from those returning from an IA, where the decision to repatriate is made by the employer, and repatriation support is provided. However, it is important to understand empirical research findings in the IA repatriation domain because there have been insufficient findings in SIR to date, and moreover, because IA repatriation is the closest association to the SIR context. This is because both SIRs and IAs experience a different host culture – both in work and non-work terms – than that of their host countries. Therefore, IA findings provide valuable context for the present study. This section addresses in turn IA repatriation findings relating to expectations, consequences, and effective management by organisations as well as repatriating individuals. In IA repatriation, an expatriate is returned to his or her home country by an employer (a corporate repatriate, or international assignee (IA) repatriate), as opposed to the unaided return of someone who has lived and worked abroad by his or her own volition (a self-initiating repatriate) (Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010). The tone of research findings in this area is summarised by Altman and Baruch (2012, p. 244): “repatriation is notoriously a troublesome time for expatriates”.

2.4.1 Expectations

There is broad agreement in the literature that many of these troubles are caused by the unexpected nature of reverse culture shock, though the concept was so unexpected that the literature almost entirely neglected it until recent years (Dickmann & Baruch, 2011).

This ‘unexpectedness’ is explained here by Sussman (2001, p. 110):

[The] cause of repatriation distress or at least a critical mediating variable in intensifying the repatriation distress is its unexpectedness. It is counterintuitive to expect difficulties when returning to one’s home country... [The] unexpectedness of repatriation distress may account for a greater portion of the variance in predicting repatriation outcomes as it does not seem immediately obvious to sojourners that returning to one’s home country should be accompanied by cognitive or behavioural discomfort.

Literature both before and since Sussman’s comments confirms significant gaps between the expectations of IA repatriates and home life, primarily due to a misalignment between employees’ and organisations’ expectations but also due to changes (for example to organisational structure or role content) that have occurred in their absence (Forster, 1994; L. Stroh et al., 1998). Given the propensity of repatriates to resign (for example Paik et al., 2002; Stevens et al., 2006), as well as the positive performance impact of successful readjustment (Black, 1992), it is critical that these gaps are acknowledged and managed by individuals as well as organisations.

Black's (1992) early study found better adjustment when repatriates' work and non-work expectations were met. A subsequent study linked met expectations with organisational commitment (L. Stroh, Gregersen, & Black, 2000). Met expectations have also been linked to satisfaction for employees (MacDonald & Arthur, 2003) and their spouses (Hammer, Hart, & Rogan, 1998). It is suspected that these expectations are formed through individuals' motives (for initial expatriation), information (provided to the employee and how it is communicated) and earlier experiences (Hyder & Loevblad, 2007). Expectations can be successfully managed through pre-departure training, and accurate expectations positively influence expatriate adjustment (Caligiuri, Phillips, Lazarova, Tarique, & Burgi, 2001).

Studies have also explored the content of IA repatriates' expectations, from work (e.g. job level, opportunities to use skills, compensation) to non-work (personal) related (e.g. housing conditions, national economy, relationships) (L. Stroh et al., 1998). Work-related expectations were classified as job demand, job constraint and job discretion. Their findings indicated discrepancies between all three and experiences, including a lack of opportunity to utilise new skills. Later research by Paik, et al. (2002) supported this, and argued that motives and expectations need to be aligned between organisations and employees. Despite these findings in the IA repatriation domain, there have been no studies specifically targeting the expectations of SIRs.

2.4.2 Outcomes and Contingencies

IA repatriation has mixed outcomes for individuals and organisations. Negative outcomes are considered first. Paik, et al. (2002) note that job resignation is common, citing a misalignment between expectations and motivation of organisations and employee. While expatriates emphasise the value of home country readjustment support, employers tend to focus more on work culture readjustment. Paik, et al. go on to highlight a failure to help repatriates through reverse culture shock due to this misalignment in focus. A longitudinal study of Finnish expatriates supported the finding of employees resigning soon after repatriation, however this was explained by a positive labour market and recruiter activity rather than expectations-experiences misalignment (Suutari & Brewster, 2003). This latter finding suggests that post-repatriation resignation should not automatically be attributed to dissatisfaction, or negative surprises.

An early study of United Kingdom repatriates reported career difficulties, as well as lower levels of psychological well-being and job satisfaction compared to non-mobile employees (Forster, 1994), and concluded it is just as likely that repatriates will experience these negative outcomes as positive outcomes. They argued that effective repatriation planning, realistic expectations and retaining an individual sense of control over the move would improve outcomes. In this study, the predictors of difficulties included the length of time abroad. Subsequent studies added repatriate unpreparedness (Sussman, 2001), organisational support (Kraimer, Shaffer, & Bolino, 2009), and a high level of cultural identity change (Kohonen, 2008; Kraimer, Shaffer, Harrison, & Ren,

2012; Sussman, 2001) as predictors. Gender might also affect remuneration outcomes after repatriation, with women earning less than men (Tharenou, 2010).

Suutari and Brewster (2003) compared the career expectations and experiences of Finnish IA repatriates, finding satisfaction with career impacts despite the high resignation incidence. They attribute this satisfaction to personal attributes and the strength of the external employment market rather than the efforts of repatriating organisations. They also note that most studies report a negative career impact after repatriation. However, as discussed in Section 2.5.2, this is not the case in relation to recent findings on the career capital impacts of IAs (Jokinen et al., 2008).

In addition to the negative consequences of repatriation, some positive consequences have been reported. First, the impact on repatriating organisations is considered. One study found that job satisfaction and job attachment were high among IA repatriate employees, when human resources practices supported this and when employee self-adjustment was also high (Stevens et al., 2006). Self-adjustment included work, interaction and general adjustment. The authors argue that organisational policy should enable strong job-fit situations to maximise repatriation benefits.

It has also been argued that the transfer of knowledge acquired through an IA is dependent on organisational policy and practice (Furuya, Stevens, Bird, Oddou, & Mendenhall, 2009; Furuya, Stevens, Oddou, Bird, & Mendenhall, 2007). Moreover, Furuya et al. (2007) found there is more benefit from this transfer of knowledge than from employee self-adjustment. However, since their sample was of male repatriates, results cannot be generalised beyond men.

Positive effects on performance, satisfaction and intention to stay may also be related to the amount of time since repatriation (Sanchez Vidal, Sanz Valle, Barba Aragon, & Brewster, 2007). However, participants in this study had all remained in their organisations, which may have resulted in bias. Finally, although some repatriates perceive, and indeed receive, greater career outcomes than non-mobile employees (e.g. Biemann & Braakmann, 2013), this is not necessarily the case, in part because they have not been sufficiently visible to home country contacts (Benson & Pattie, 2008). The balance of advantage and disadvantage in the return experience therefore remains an open question. However, the fact that IA repatriation is company supported - and therefore logically smoother than SIR - might suggest SIR outcomes and contingencies deserve significantly more research focus than currently afforded.

2.4.3 Managing Repatriation Adjustment

Since individuals can find repatriation even more difficult than expatriation (Adler, 1981; Sussman, 1986), it is logical that there has been a sub-stream of literature focusing on improving repatriation adjustment. Surprisingly, however, organisations tend to neglect the management of repatriation, which may result in knowledge being lost (Lazarova & Tarique, 2005). The ideal approach to repatriation depends on the type of organisation, its objectives and people strategies (Baruch & Altman, 2002).

One extensive list for managing repatriation includes managing expectations, and offering career planning, mentoring and reorientation programs (Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2001). The importance of creating realistic expectations through conversations both before and after repatriation has recently been emphasised (Dickmann & Baruch, 2011).

However, it is again unclear how this advice would relate to SIRs, who do not receive organisational support through repatriation.

Related literature has identified predictors of readjustment which influence employee satisfaction and turnover intentions (Stevens et al., 2006). One paper proposed six criteria to measure readjustment; performance, job attitudes, opportunities to use skills, career path comparable to others, lack of turnover, and manageable stress levels (Feldman, 1991). In addition, several factors influencing repatriate adjustment were hypothesised, relating to the nature of the return job, the work environment, individual differences (e.g. age, career stage, number of overseas assignments), coping strategies, and the existence of a career planning system. Black, Gregersen and Mendenhall (1992) presented a similar model incorporating individual, job, organisational and network variables (including cultural distance) at ‘anticipatory’ and ‘in-country’ stages. A proactive personality and protean behaviours have also been proposed as predictors of successful repatriate adjustment (O’Sullivan, 2002). All of these researchers challenged others to test their hypotheses.

Several studies have been conducted in these areas. First, IA repatriates whose work and general expectations are met, have reported better adjustment (Black, 1992), seemingly supporting expectancy value theory and implying that organisations should focus on aligning expectations and experiences. In addition, age, housing conditions, and time overseas (in respect of general adjustment, but not work adjustment), were found to positively relate to adjustment (Black & Gregersen, 1991).

While some of the early findings received subsequent support, others conflicted. In the Finnish context, time spent on the most recent IA negatively predicted repatriate adjustment, supporting earlier findings (Gregersen & Stroh, 1997). In addition, the cultural distance between home and host countries was negatively related to adjustment. However, Finnish findings in relation to age conflicted with earlier findings, as older Finnish repatriates had greater difficulty adjusting than their younger counterparts. Findings on the effect of gender on repatriation adjustment have also varied (Szkudlarek, 2010).

One theoretical paper makes the case for a focus on individuals' motives and experiences of repatriation rather than adjustment outcomes (Hyder & Loevblad, 2007). This paper argues it is necessary to understand the employee's expectations to align organisational practices to them. It also argues that individuals' expectations, and whether these are met, as well as prior experiences of repatriation, will affect repatriation and retention. To date, few researchers seem to have taken note of Hyder and Loevblad's plea for a broader focus on repatriates' expectations and experiences.

Thus far, research in the areas of repatriation theory, consequences and practice has been explored. It has been established that there are significant gaps between the expectations and experiences of IA repatriates, contributing to negative outcomes including resignation. The management of expectations has been identified as a mechanism for organisations to improve repatriation adjustment and retention.

In summary, the IA repatriation literature now stresses the importance of aligning repatriates' expectations and organisational practices. There is some disagreement

around the factors that contribute to successful IA repatriation. However, it can be surmised from various reentry theories that during expatriation, many IAs assume some of the cultural elements of their host countries (for example, through cultural identity change), and that a reacculturation process takes place on reentry, which is comparable to culture shock. Several options are available to organisations managing repatriation.

However, what remains unclear is how this body of research relates to self-initiating expatriates who repatriate, i.e. SIRs (Begley et al., 2008; Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010). The vast majority of studies continue to relate to IAs despite the fact that there are probably more SIEs than IAs (Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010). This means there may also be more SIRs than repatriating IAs. Therefore, there is a need for theoretical and empirical contributions focusing on SIRs.

2.5 Expatriation

There are sufficient differences between repatriation and expatriation to justify separate streams of research (Black, Gregersen, & Mendenhall, 1992). Therefore, to provide further context to the repatriation literature, this review now turns from repatriation to expatriation. Indeed, expatriation can be considered the parent literature stream of repatriation. Here an expatriate – or ‘international assignee’ (IA) - is temporarily posted abroad by an employer. These terms are distinct from a self-initiating expatriate (SIE), who decides to live and work abroad independently of an employing organisation (Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010). SIEs and IAs are compared in detail in Section 2.5.2.

In terms of expectations, recent literature reviews of expatriation (Bonache, Brewster, Suutari, & De Saá, 2010) and global talent management (Tarique & Schuler, 2010) tend

to neglect the importance of organisations understanding assignees' expectations in the success of IA programs. However, with increasingly diverse forms of mobility (Demel & Mayrhofer, 2010; Teagarden, 2010), there is some acceptance of the need to manage mobile employees more effectively. The current review argues that understanding the expectations of these employees, and identifying the extent to which they are met, are critical elements of this management process.

2.5.1 International Assignments (IAs)

IA expatriation research has suffered from a lack of overall cohesion and systematic direction (Dabic, Gonzalez-Loureiro, & Harvey, 2013), hindering the comparability of results. Concurrently, there has been increased complexity in international assignments, especially in recent years, compounding the comparability issue. One source of this complexity is the incorporation of emerging markets into international strategies (including cross-company, cross-border strategic alliances), and the associated challenges for IAs who need to meet conflicting expectations of home and host country offices (Collings, Scullion, & Morley, 2007). In response, there is an increasing focus – albeit a fragmented one (Dabic et al., 2013) - in the literature on managing IAs effectively.

Despite this increased focus on effective IA management, many IAs may well be dissatisfied. One study, which looked at Australian IAs in Singapore and Singaporean IAs in Australia, found that only a slight majority were satisfied with human resources practices in their firms (Woods, 2003). Since the manager-employee relationship directly affects performance (Kraimer, Wayne, & Jaworski, 2001), there should be a focus on effectively managing the proportion that may be dissatisfied.

Assignments have consequences for both organisation and employee, with the experience and effects subject to several variables. For example, IA job satisfaction is higher when leader and follower have high cultural similarity, and when IAs do not report to host-country nationals (Froese & Peltokorpi, 2011). In addition, careful management is required when dual-career couples expatriate (Harvey, 1995), and this could also be the case for repatriates. Also important is a consideration of consequences for careers where partnerships formed abroad repatriate, since one member of the partnership becomes an expatriate through this process.

A recent focus of the literature on the implications of an IA is career capital, which is defined as:

the value created through ongoing improvement in career position and recognition in the competitive external... [and] internal labour market[s]. (Lamb & Sutherland, 2010, p. 295)

It comprises three ‘ways of knowing’; knowing-how (relevant skills and knowledge), knowing-whom (relationships and network) and knowing why (values and purpose that guide career development) (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1996). There is some consensus in this literature that assignments have a generally positive developmental effects on career capital (e.g. Dickmann, Doherty, Mills, & Brewster, 2008; Dickmann & Harris, 2005), in turn benefiting both individual and organisation (Dickmann & Doherty, 2010). It is also suspected that this is the case for individuals experiencing two IAs (Jokinen, 2010). Individuals are aware of the potential impacts of IAs on their careers, so they actively

seek to build career capital through these experiences (Dickmann & Doherty, 2010). Career capital considerations have also been found to influence individuals' choices of IA location (Dickmann & Doherty, 2010).

There has been some acknowledgment that understanding expectations held by IAs is an important future research direction (Doherty & Dickmann, 2009). In addition, one call encourages refocusing attention away from return on investment measures and towards understanding the intellectual capital benefits of IAs (Welch, Steen, & Tahvanainen, 2009), strengthening the relevance of investigating expatriates' experiences. In summary, while the literature on the outcomes of IAs is now maturing, there is a knowledge gap relating specifically to a comparison of the expectations and experiences of IAs. The following section explores whether this is also the case for self-initiating expatriates.

2.5.2 Self-Initiated Expatriation

The literature now recognises the need to distinguish international assignments/assignees (IAs) from self-initiated expatriation/expatriates (SIEs), perhaps because there are now more self-mobile individuals than company assignees (Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010). Indeed, the two groups are quite different. This section explores the SIE literature relating to expectations, motivation and consequences. Self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) are:

professionals who choose to expatriate and who are not transferred by their employer. Instead, they relocate to a country of their choice to seek a job or to

try an entrepreneurial venture, often with no definite time frame in mind.

(Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010, p. 1009)

Therefore, SIEs need to become masters of their own destinies, since they do not have the corporate support of an IA (Makela & Suutari, 2013a).

SIE Motives

The reasons people self-initiate expatriation have been a focus within the SIE literature. Studies of New Zealand SIEs found culture, travel and career were main motives (Thorn, 2009, 2010). These findings support earlier work in relation to career as motivation (Richardson & Mallon, 2005; Richardson & McKenna, 2002). Other motives include family (Richardson, 2006), adventure (e.g. Richardson & McKenna, 2002), economic factors (e.g. Froese, 2012), life change (Richardson & Mallon, 2005), and travel (Richardson & McKenna, 2003).

Demographic factors have also been investigated as potential influences, with women less likely than men to become SIEs, mainly due to family reasons (Tharenou, 2008). However, women are more likely to be SIEs than they are IAs (Andresen, Biemann, & Pattie, 2012), and indeed they might become SIEs to offset their underrepresentation in IAs (Tharenou, 2010), or more generally to improve their careers (Andresen et al., 2012). Both age and gender influence SIE motivation for adventure/travel, career, financial incentives and life change (Selmer & Luring, 2010).

Comparing IAs and SIEs

There is now an IA-SIE distinction evident in relation to motives, with target location more important for SIEs than IAs (Doherty, Dickmann, & Mills, 2011). Conversely, IAs tend to be more focused on career motives than SIEs (Doherty et al., 2011). In addition, SIEs rate security and stability as more important than IAs (Cerdin & Pargneux, 2010), and their career aspirations may remain more stable with age than that of IAs (Biemann & Andresen, 2010). However, motivation is just one of many dimensions in which IAs and SIEs contrast, justifying a distinction in academic research (Andresen et al., 2012) in a similar way as SIEs should be considered separate from migrants and OEs.

Indeed, IAs and SIEs are so different that the IA literature may not transfer to SIEs. For example, Suutari and Brewster's (2000) early Finnish study identified differences between IAs and SIEs in terms of individual and background variables, and employer and task related variables. SIEs were found to be heterogeneous, with six subgroups identified: young opportunists, job seekers, officials, localised professionals, international professionals and dual career couples. Froese and Peltokorpi's recent (2012) research confirmed the existence of a range of IA-SIE differences including host country adjustment (higher for SIEs) and job satisfaction (lower for SIEs when supervised by host country nationals) and, though both SIEs and IAs can develop career capital, networking career capital ('knowing-whom') is higher for IAs than for SIEs (Jokinen et al., 2008). In addition, IAs and SIEs may not have equal opportunities and outcomes, as indicated by a study of SIEs in Japan in which they experience fewer career-related opportunities and inferior work conditions than IAs despite adjusting to

Japanese culture more easily (Peltokorpi & Froese, 2009). The general view, however, is that SIEs' skills are underutilised (Haslberger & Vaiman, 2013), and they adjust more easily than IAs (Doherty, 2010).

Notwithstanding the distinction between the two forms of internationally mobile employment, an SIE-IA hybrid known as a 'corporate SIE' (Altman & Baruch, 2012, 2013) or 'intraorganisational SIE' (Andresen, Bergdolt, & Margenfeld, 2013) has recently emerged in the literature. This involves employees initiating their own international moves but within their existing organisations, thereby combining the individual agency of SIE with the company support afforded to IAs (Doherty, Richardson, & Thorn, 2013), although this support can be significantly less than for traditional IAs (Richardson, McKenna, Dickie, & de Gama, 2013). However, this new term requires further clarity in definition from a procedural standpoint, as in practice it can be difficult to pinpoint whether the employee or the employer has actually initiated an assignment. There are multiple ambiguities. For example, when employees are asked whether they are prepared to be internationally mobile as part of the annual performance management and talent mapping and planning processes, if they respond yes, does this mean they have attempted to initiate an assignment? Alternatively, do they need to apply for a vacancy abroad or proactively indicate their mobility intentions, to be considered self-initiating? Does the term apply if an employee's manager flags an international opportunity to an employee who subsequently chooses to apply? Even then, the fact the organisation has posted a vacancy abroad to which the employee has responded potentially confuses the issue of which party initiated any resulting assignment. Perhaps more important than this procedural confusion, however, is that

the literature is yet to convey a resounding argument for treating corporate SIEs as an empirically distinct grouping rather than a sub-form of the conventional IA.

SIE Consequences

SIEs appear to have mixed experiences, noteworthy because they potentially contribute to an individual's intention to repatriate. Other consequences of SIE may not become evident until after repatriation actually occurs. Many reported SIE consequences relate to career development, and the career capital impacts of SIE have been discussed in relation to differences between SIEs and IAs. In academia, SIE consequences have been presented as metaphors; explorers, outsiders, tightrope walkers and students (Richardson & McKenna, 2002), indicating both positive and negative experiences and outcomes. Recent research in Qatar supports these findings of mixed career consequences, citing contextual factors including an absence of effective HRM of SIEs contributing to stagnant career development (Rodriguez & Scurry, 2014). Other SIEs have reported frustration at the leadership differences found between home and host countries (Ellis, 2012), but it is unknown whether this later influences repatriation intentions.

There have been conflicting findings on the influence of gender on SIE outcomes. Men may receive higher remuneration increases after repatriation than women, although repatriates generally have higher pay than non-mobile individuals (Tharenou, 2010). Another study reported women's careers benefit more than men's because women seek out less risky host country environments, resulting in greater stability of employment (Myers & Pringle, 2005).

There has been a recent call for a greater focus on the adjustment of SIEs, which can directly influence SIE performance (Howe-Walsh & Schyns, 2010). The authors challenge organisations to consider whether practices hinder SIE adjustment and performance. This represents an additional implicit call to consider SIEs' expectations, and the potential gaps between these and experiences. Richardson and McKenna's (2006) revised model of SIEs' allegiances to home and host countries also provides scope for research in an SIR context. This posits dynamic interactions between states of home country versus host country allegiance. 'Free agents' (weak relationships with both home and host countries) can become 'hearts at home' (weak relationship with host country, strong relationship with home country), 'dual citizens' (strong relationships with both countries) or 'gone natives' (strong relationship with host country, weak relationship with home country). This model received some qualitative empirical support, and they argue for more qualitative SIE-related research.

In summary, many SIEs initiate expatriation with visions of career development. They perceive benefits from their experience including opportunities for promotion on repatriation, and a wider world view (Richardson & Mallon, 2005). However, the literature has identified mixed consequences for SIEs. Despite recognition that harnessing SIEs' potential is important, research is only beginning to explore how the motives and experiences of SIEs affect repatriation decisions and experiences.

2.6 The Wider Mobility Literature

As noted by Doherty, Richardson and Thorn (2013, p. 104), the various forms of international mobility “are similar in some dimensions and yet different in others”. Their table, an adapted version of which is in Table 2.1, scopes the dimensions of global mobility on a spectrum from corporate focus to individual focus. They plot various mobility types across those dimensions. This shows the dimensions’ similarities and differences as found in the literature, as interpreted by the authors. However, their original table omits any mention of repatriation and is perhaps better considered a spectrum of expatriation than of mobility. Therefore, it has been adapted here to add the SIR column, due to the focus of the current study, however for completeness would also incorporate columns for returners from the other expatriation types identified. By the definition provided earlier, SIRs initiate and fund their own repatriation. However, there are gaps in knowledge, as shown in the current adaptation of the table, in relation to motivation (labelled ‘focus’), career impetus, intended duration, employment type and occupational category. The current study responds to this identified gap in research and understanding.

Table 2.1.

A Spectrum of Global Mobility, and Gap in SIR Knowledge

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Corporate focus</i>					<i>Individual focus</i>		
	Short-term/ flexpatriates	Expatriates	Organisational SIE/ Secondment	Self-initiated expatriates	Self- initiated repatriates	OE	International students	Migrants
Initiation	Company directed	Company directed	Self, but with company sponsorship	Self	Self	Self	Family / self migration plan	Family / self
Goals	Company projects	Company projects	Company projects	Individual	Individual	Individual	Family	Family / individual
Funding	Company salary and expenses	Company salary and expenses	Some relocation assistance	Private	Private	Private	Private	Private
Focus	Career	Career	Career	Career / adventure	?	Career / adventure	Migration	Migration
Career impetus	Structured / traditional	Structured / traditional	Structured / traditional	Planned	?	Opportunistic	Developing	Developing
Intended duration	Short, non-residential	Non-permanent	Non-permanent	Non-permanent	?	Non-permanent	Leading to permanent	Permanent
Employment	Regular	Regular	Regular	Regular	?	Casual, if any	Casual, if any	Any
Occupational category	Usually professional	Usually professional	Usually professional	Any	?	Any	None	Any

Source: Adapted from Doherty et al. (2013), p.105

It is also useful here to distinguish in greater detail SIM from two other streams of work, which on the surface might appear similar; migrants, and overseas experience sojourners. These both appear at the ‘individual focus’ end of the Doherty et al. (2013) spectrum. Each is now addressed in turn.

(Return) Migration

There have been recent calls led by Al Ariss to connect migrants and SIEs in international mobility research (Al Ariss, 2013; Al Ariss & Crowley-Henry, 2013). Al Ariss and Crowley-Henry (2013) argue that SIE research has focused on privileged, highly educated expatriates, and they imply that in order for the stream to become more inclusive, migrants and less privileged groups should be included as points of focus. There are also other assertions that demarcation lines between the two are blurred (Andresen, Bergdolt, et al., 2013), and, more directly, that all SIEs are also migrants (Andresen, Bergdolt, Margenfeld, & Dickmann, 2014).

However, migrants and SIEs are sufficiently different to not only warrant but actually necessitate separate research streams. The reason for this is that migrants’ and SIEs’ motives for expatriation and the differing times each group intends to be away (permanent versus temporary (Szkudlarek, 2010)) affect expatriation to such an extent that the two groups should not be combined. However, Doherty et al. (2013) point out that length of stay alone is sufficient to distinguish SIEs from migrants, since levels of adjustment and identity change are likely to differ.

Given the generally permanent nature or intention of migrant mobility, the migrant literature tends to neglect the issues around returning migrants. However, one recent

New Zealand study has adopted such a return migration focus (Lee, 2012) reporting substantial difficulties in the readjustment processes of the eight participants she interviewed who had returned from the United Kingdom, USA and Asia. The difficulties faced included both work readjustment (including securing employment) and cultural readjustment. Lee concluded that despite these difficulties, participants experienced a “net positive outcome” (p.122) of returning, due to the positive aspects of the New Zealand lifestyle. However, in addition to the small sample, these participants had all repatriated more than two years prior to their interviews, and therefore had to rely on memories of not only their experiences but also their expectations, which had been formed years prior to the study. There is clearly an opportunity to conduct research in the area of New Zealander SIR experiences that focuses on other samples than OE and migrant returners.

Overseas Experience Sojourners

SIEs should also be distinguished from overseas experience sojourners (OEs), or ‘self-initiated travellers’ (Andresen et al., 2014). An OE is an extended working holiday, during which young people travel abroad and explore (Inkson & Myers, 2003). Career is not a driver for OEs, at least not to the extent that it is for SIEs (Doherty et al., 2013). In fact, work is opportunistic and tends to be casual for OEs, whereas it is usually planned and regular for SIEs (Doherty et al., 2013). Consequently, the motives of SIEs and OEs are sufficiently different to warrant separate research foci.

That said, much of the work on returners in New Zealand has been in an OE context, and it is useful to identify related findings pertaining to New Zealanders. One small sample of OE New Zealander repatriates reported primarily family-related motives

(Inkson & Myers, 2003), supporting a 1991 quantitative study of return migrants (reported in Lidgard, 2001). It also found that a high proportion of these OE repatriates do not experience career advancement on return (Inkson & Myers, 2003). In addition, two qualitative studies found a degree of reverse culture shock in the personal and work lives of two separate returning New Zealander OE samples of 24 people (Pocock & McIntosh, 2011; Walter, 2006).

In summary, studies of migrants and OEs are of potential interest to SIEs and SIRs, especially given the scarcity of research on the latter. New Zealand specific OE work is of particular interest since it may provide a valuable point of comparison to New Zealand SIR research. However, it is also important to acknowledge that migrants and OEs are sufficiently distinct from other self-initiated mobile workers to exclude them from the core focus of the review and study.

2.7 Conclusion and Research Questions

This literature review has addressed the limited research in SIR, as well as contextual work in the related areas of reentry theory, IA repatriation, expatriation and the wider international mobility literature. In the SIR literature, it found confusion in definition as well as some differing findings in terms of outcomes for research participants of the six countries included to date. Moreover, it identified that this body of work has neglected some of the foundational, exploratory questions required of this relatively new topic area, including those relating to the expectations and experiences of SIRs.

The reentry theory literature discussed contributed a tentative theoretical basis for SIR. Reacculturation and reverse culture shock were addressed as they may relate to SIRs, in

addition to expectations theories and cultural identity theories. However, since these concepts and theories were developed outside SIR, they cannot be transferred to this context without empirical investigation. The review then turned to the expatriation and IA repatriation literature to explore potential connections between findings in those areas, and SIR. It found that the reacculturation process that typically takes place on repatriates' reentry ignites culture shock, especially when expectations are unmet. However, here too, findings have varied, with earlier studies reporting negative impacts for IAs, while recent research suggests positive career capital effects for both IAs and SIEs. Additionally, the review distinguished the SIR topic from literature in return migration and overseas experience (OE) sojourners, but deemed OE-specific work a potentially worthy point of comparison to research involving SIR New Zealanders.

Taken as a whole, the literature explored here can be viewed as informing the SIR topic, contributing valuable context to an underexplored area. While there is a growing body of literature on IA repatriation, including work highlighting the importance of aligning the expectations and experiences of IA repatriates, the expectations of SIRs of any national culture have not been directly explored. In addition, the relevance of reentry theory today is unknown, since it was developed before the current information age. What also remains unclear is the level of congruence between SIRs' pre-move expectations and their post-move experiences, as well as the impact of this level of congruence on post-move outcomes.

Given the absence of SIR research in the New Zealand context and the scarce research internationally, some broad, exploratory research is needed. The objective of the

current research is to utilise empirical findings to develop theory relating to the repatriation expectations and experiences of SIRs. The research questions are:

1. How do SIR New Zealanders experience repatriation?
2. How does the experience of repatriation compare with pre-repatriation expectations?

Research that addresses these questions has the potential to make valuable research contributions. Empirically, such a study can contribute knowledge on the formation of the repatriation decision as well as pre-repatriation expectations, and the extent to which these relate to actual experiences. From this empirical data, a theoretical SIR contribution can be derived, which is relevant to the contemporary information age.

This topic has high relevance to New Zealand. A high proportion of New Zealanders are abroad of their own volition, with expectations of broad cross-cultural exposure and enriched careers. Since the global financial crisis, which began in 2008, many are now returning home (Statistics New Zealand, 2014), or intending to return (Kea New Zealand, 2013). In addition, there is a professional talent shortage in New Zealand (Watson, 2011, April/May), yet repatriates are generally harder to retain than other employees (e.g. Paik et al., 2002; Suutari & Brewster, 2003), and their careers may not benefit from the overseas experience to the extent anticipated (e.g. Benson & Pattie, 2008; Forster, 1994). Therefore, this exploratory research provides an original, relevant and timely contribution to the academic literature that is also relevant to organisational and individual needs.

Chapter Three

Research Design and Methodology

*If we want to find out how [people] interpret the world and themselves,
we will have to attend to the stories they tell. (Lawler, 2002, p. 18).*

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, relevant literature was critically analysed, and research questions were identified from the gaps in knowledge that emerged. In this chapter, the research method designed to address those research questions is considered. The chapter begins with an overview and justification of the broad approach used in this study. The sampling process is then detailed, and the sample discussed. The chapter subsequently identifies the semi-structured interview as the data collection tool deployed to elicit ‘narrative fragments’ (see Section 3.4.1) from the participants, and describes the development process and content of the interview schedule. Finally, a description of the data analysis approach and process followed precedes critical and ethical issue evaluations.

3.2 Research Philosophy and Approach

Ontologies concern theories of reality, and are thus the starting point of philosophical enquiry. The first aspect of ontology, objectivism, holds that social entities are objective; that they exist independently to the social actors concerned with their existence (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2007). However, this study adopted the subjectivist view, which assumes that social phenomena are created through the experiences and perceptions of social actors (Saunders et al., 2007). This study’s

subjectivist approach – that reality is constructed by the people experiencing that reality - was a foundation of the research design decisions detailed in this section.

While ontologies concern theories of reality, epistemology is more concerned with operationalising the research enquiry itself. Epistemology relates to “the nature of knowledge and what constitutes acceptable knowledge in a field of study” (Saunders et al., 2007, p. 597). It is often discussed in terms of two poles. The first of these, ‘natural science’, is concerned with the objective collection and analysis of ‘facts’; ‘positivism’. The second is phenomenology. Phenomenology focuses on meaning and reflexivity; the simultaneous and unfolding nature of individual experience as socially constructed (Saunders et al., 2007), interpretation and perception informing practice and vice versa. Interpretivism, a branch of phenomenology, is concerned with the subjective understanding of people’s differences as social actors. While quantitative (quantity/numeric driven) research is more closely associated with positivist approaches, qualitative (quality rather than quantity driven) research is more closely associated with interpretivist approaches (Maylor & Blackmon, 2005), which glean knowledge from interpretation and insight (D’Cruz & Jones, 2004).

This study adopted a qualitative, inductive approach to building knowledge, through interpretivism. Deductivism – or theory testing – was rejected on the basis that no SIR-specific theory has yet been developed to test. Inductive approaches consider theory-building an output of empirical data (Locke, 2007), while qualitative approaches offer richness and depth (Alvesson, 1996; Cappellen & Janssens, 2010; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008), and enable flexible exploration (Morgan & Smircich, 1980), all of which are required due to a near-absence of SIR knowledge. Additionally, there has potentially

been an overuse of quantitative methods in the expatriate management literature. An advantage of utilising qualitative methodology is articulated here:

Adopting a qualitative methodology repositions the individual as the central focus and contributes a more emic perspective than much of the current expatriate management literature allows. (Richardson & McKenna, 2006, p. 17)

This represents a call for a greater use of qualitative methods in expatriate management research, and to empower expatriates to set future research agendas through consideration of the issues important to them.

Moreover, this section takes the position of Edmondson and McManus (2007) that an appropriate research approach and design is a function of *methodological fit*. Methodological fit refers to the match between the research context and research design. The primary input into methodological fit, Edmondson and McManus argue, is the level of prior work in a field. The level of prior work indicates the level of knowledge in a particular area. When knowledge is mature, quantitative research is usually more appropriate (Edmondson & McManus, 2007). This is because open-ended, exploratory research has contributed to the building of knowledge, and research that tests hypotheses can provide confirmation and help answer remaining questions.

Conversely, when there is little or no existing knowledge, qualitative approaches help scope a topic area and identify elements for further exploration or explanation. It could also be argued that where knowledge is nascent, a quantitative survey and statistical modelling might be appropriate research tools to provide scope for subsequent

qualitative investigations. However, this is dependent on asking the right questions in such a survey, and this thesis takes the position that when knowledge is nascent, it is seldom possible to know which questions to ask. This results in:

...fishing expeditions. Any statistically significant relationships among variables that emerge by chance are likely to be over-interpreted as evidence to support an emergent theory. (Edmondson & McManus, 2007, p. 1171)

Indeed, for questions relating to natural science, a positivist, quantitative approach is often appropriate (Edmondson & McManus, 2007) because this enables the testing of hypotheses, and supports confirmation of causality. However for initial questions relating to human resource management (HRM), it is often appropriate to adopt an interpretivist approach. This is because researchers are often seeking to explore and understand complex human views and behaviour, rather than merely explaining them in terms of ‘testable’ facts. This complexity of human behaviour in HRM is compounded by multiple inputs relating to organisational context as well as individual personality and experience. There is a risk that a sole reliance on quantitative approaches oversimplifies this complexity, ignoring important contextual factors.

Therefore, mixing methods was another approach considered for use in this study. This involves the collection, analysis and comparison of both qualitative and quantitative data in consecutive phases of the same study (e.g. Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006), and is aimed at improving confidence in the findings as well as the research methods used (Jick, 1979). However, the ‘fishing expedition’ issue described above, identified by Edmondson and McManus (2007) in relation to the premature deployment of

quantitative approaches in theory development, also applies to mixing methods before sufficient knowledge has been developed in a topic area. This is also an issue when the qualitative and quantitative components of the study occur in stages, since the exploratory qualitative phase is unlikely to produce a sufficient quantity of variables for subsequent testing in the same study. For this reason, mixing methods is more appropriate when research has already identified some of the constructs and measures needed (Edmondson & McManus, 2007), and hence it was not considered appropriate here.

A quantitative survey was also considered as part of the research design. There were several reasons this was rejected. First, as elaborated above, qualitative methods have superior exploratory power in – and are therefore a better fit with - undeveloped and unscoped areas (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Eisenhardt, 1989). The Australasian SIR study to date used quantitative methods (Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010) perhaps prematurely given that priority that should be given to the significant, broad gap in knowledge relating to SIR expectations and experiences. Survey questionnaires tend to elicit fixed answer responses (M. Stroh, 2000), and, as argued, this is simply inappropriate early in the development of a topic area, when open-ended exploratory tools are required.

3.3 Sample Criteria and Construction

The sample for this project is drawn from the population of SIR New Zealanders. At the first interview in mid to late 2012 (expectations phase), participants had to still be abroad, and have made the decision to repatriate to New Zealanders within six months. Then, the second interview in late 2012 and the first half of 2013 (experiences phase)

took place between three and eight months after repatriation, when participants had started work again and felt settled enough in their roles to reflect on, and speak about, their experiences and adjustment. The majority of second phase interviews (n=20) occurred between four and six months after repatriation. Four occurred within one month, an additional eight within four months, seven within five months, five within six months, two within seven months, and one within eight months. The differing time-points for the second interview had potential disadvantage around comparability, but also the advantage of participant comfort with the timing, so that each could speak freely and openly about his or her experiences.

The criteria for inclusion were as follows. Participants must have self-initiated both their expatriation (in keeping with Begley et al., 2008; Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010) and repatriation, and have been due to repatriate without the aid of an employer. They must also have spent at least one year living and working abroad (Begley et al., 2008) in order to provide data on participants' expatriate adjustment experiences, which potentially relate to repatriation intentions and wishes. In line with an increasing focus on highly-educated and professional workers, participants must either have graduated with a university level qualification lasting at least two years (Thorn, 2008), or have extensive professional experience (Andresen & Walther, 2013). Effective management of highly-educated workers is a matter of economic importance as international talent flows intensify, and countries risk a skilled talent outflow and subsequent shortage (Thorn, 2008). The highly-educated qualifier was not an issue, since over 80% of respondents to a recent expatriate New Zealander survey reported having a tertiary degree (Kea New Zealand, 2013).

In addition, participants must have expatriated after graduation, to exclude gap year students (Begley et al., 2008), and must have worked in New Zealand after graduation before expatriating, to aid in excluding OE sojourners. In response to limitations of strong cultural similarity between home and host countries in other empirical work on SIRs (Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010), it was intended that as many participants as possible were in host countries outside the Anglo cluster. Efforts to this end are reflected in the range of host countries represented in the databases (reach) of the organisations assisting with participant recruitment (the organisations are listed in Appendix C). However, not as many responded from non-Anglo cluster countries as wished, perhaps due to the difficulties New Zealanders face in self-initiating unaided expatriation to non-Anglo cluster countries. Since the majority of SIE New Zealanders tend to go to Australia, the United Kingdom and USA (Thorn, 2008), this is not viewed as a significant issue.

Initial participants were recruited using online mechanisms as well as personal networks, in April 2012. Kea New Zealand is a networking organisation for New Zealanders living abroad, with a mailing list of over 35,000 expatriates, and an objective of supporting the return of highly skilled migrants (Kea New Zealand, 2011). An advertisement was placed in the front page of KEA's emailed newsletter, with respondents provided with an information sheet about the study (see Appendix B). 'Snowball' sampling (Kuzel, 1992) was attempted but was not successful due to the selection criteria; most participants were not aware of others who had also made a firm decision to repatriate but not yet done so. Advertisements were therefore also placed in communications to database members of more than a dozen online networks and organisations (see Appendix A).

Maximum variation samples of 12-20 are recommended in qualitative research (Kuzel, 1992) to enhance the likelihood of variance in views and experiences, and to mitigate the transferability issues of narrow sampling. However, in this project, a sample of more than 30 participants was sought to enhance robustness in these areas, in line with recent management research utilising narrative fragment techniques (Cappellen & Janssens, 2010). In addition, participants were also sought who had lived in more than one host country, in acknowledgement of the fact that self-initiated mobility does not always follow a simple home-host-home framework (Thorn, 2010). Sampling ceased when ‘saturation’ (Kuzel, 1992) – i.e. a sense of no new information – occurred, although it must be acknowledged that saturation can never be guaranteed due to the individual nature of expatriation-related experiences and the unknown element of issues that any additional, unrecruited participant might have raised.

3.3.1 Sample Characteristics

There were 32 phase-one participants of this study. Twenty-three of these were living in the United Kingdom, while others lived in Mainland Europe, the USA, Asia, and Australia. There were 12 men and 20 women, aged between 26 and 65, who had been living abroad on average 7.5 years. For 17 participants, this was their first period of time living abroad. They mostly worked in a range of professional functions, including accounting, human resources, marketing, information technology and education. Due to the potential for participants to be identified by their demographic information, a full participant table has not been included. However, Table 3.1 provides a summary of the sample’s characteristics.

Table 3.1.

Sample Characteristics

<i>Demographic</i>	<i>Participants N</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Participants		
Total number	32	100
Number at phase one	32	100
Number at phase two	27	84
Age		
Average	36	
Range	26 - 65	
Gender		
Male	12	38
Female	20	62
Relationship status at phase one interview		
Single (includes divorced)	7	22
Partnered but unmarried	12	38
Married	13	40
Relationship status at phase two interview		
Single (includes divorced)	6	22
Partnered but unmarried	9	33
Married	12	44
Host country at phase one interview		
England	22	69
Belgium	3	9
Australia	2	6
Canada	1	3
Hong Kong	1	3
Ireland	1	3
Japan	1	3
USA	1	3
Time in current host country		
Mean	7.5 years	
Range	1 - 29	
First period living as expatriate		
Yes	17	53
No	15	47
Trips to New Zealand during current sojourn		
Average annual number	0.85	
Average duration	3.5 weeks	
New Zealand home at phase two interview		
Auckland	11	41
Wellington	6	22
Christchurch	4	15
Invercargill	1	4
Hamilton	1	4
Napier	1	4
Palmerston North	1	4
Tauranga	1	4
Whangarei	1	4

Table 3.1 continued.

Sample Characteristics

<i>Demographic</i>	<i>Participants N</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Highest qualification		
PhD	2	6
Master's degree	5	16
Bachelor's degree (incl. Hons)	18	56
Diploma	7	22
Job function		
Accounting	4	13
Banking	2	6
Education and research	3	9
Engineering	1	3
General management	2	6
IT	1	3
HR and recruitment	4	13
Legal	1	3
Marketing	3	9
Project management	5	16
Sales	2	6
Not reported	4	13
Job status at phase two interview		
Still looking for work	3	11
Not looking for work	24	89
Working	22	81

At phase two, the number of participants reduced to 27. The reasons for this were one participant's partner being unsure about the move and reversing the decision to move, one participant's partner's job keeping them in the host country, one participant being legally challenged by her children's father to keep the children in the host country, and one with whom the researcher lost contact but who according to information publicly shared by that participant on LinkedIn, also did not repatriate. In addition, one participant stayed in New Zealand for two weeks and then moved to Australia, where her partner found work.

3.4 Semi-Structured Interviews

The research questions in this project call for exploration of participants' pre-repatriation expectations, as well as their post-repatriation experiences. It was therefore necessary for data collection to occur in two separate phases. This enabled an element of just-in-time recall absent from much of the expatriation and repatriation research that has relied on participants' memories, and is therefore potentially subject to data corruption or incompleteness bias.

The semi-structured interview was the chosen data collection tool for each phase, due to the exploratory nature of the research questions. In semi-structured interviewing, the researcher has a thematic framework in place, but is also open to respondent guidance in terms of the topics discussed and their sequence (Saunders et al., 2007). Having some structure to an interview ensures adequate coverage, yet acknowledges that unforeseen themes may arise (King, 2004). An interview guide was developed which covered general topic areas derived from the literature (see Appendix D); it is often more effective to identify topics than specific questions because this enables flexibility (Mason, 2002) and encourages active listening and engagement on the part of the researcher (M. Stroh, 2000). Participants were encouraged to use specific examples and stories in order to supply the narrative later analysed.

Interviews are powerful exploratory tools, however they are time-consuming to conduct and analyse because of the amount of data they generate and the resulting potential for overload (King, 2004). The utilisation of the NVivo software (discussed in Section 3.5.1) aided in mitigating the overload risk, since it supported the management and

analysis of the large quantities of data. Accurate participant representation and analysis can also be problematic (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002), and the approaches taken to these issues are discussed in Section 3.6. The potential challenges associated with the interview are significantly outweighed by its close fit with the exploratory needs of this research context.

3.4.1 Narratives and Narrative Fragments

Fitting within an interpretivist paradigm, and matching well with the semi-structured interview tool, is the use of narratives. Essentially, narratives involve the telling of stories, where critical events are enhanced by experience and emotion, particularly those which involve life transitions (Riessman, 2002) or other transformations (Lawler, 2002). They help people make sense of the world through combining facts and interpretation. In narratives,

“a teller in a conversation takes a listener into a past time or “world” and recapitulates what happened to them to make a point.” (Riessman, 2002, p. 4)

A distinct advantage of utilising narratives is that people tend to tell stories easily, because they have typically done so their whole lives (Riessman, 2002). The depth associated with narrative approaches also enables personal experience and emotion to be brought to the fore to contribute to the development of knowledge (Riessman, 2002; Sturdy, 2003). The technique gives events, thoughts and feelings the opportunity of expression (Squire, Andrews, & Tamboukou, 2008). In addition, they are open:

Narratives... delimit what can be said, what stories can be told, what will count as meaningful, and what will seem to be nonsensical. (Lawler, 2002, p. 3)

They also thus help researchers to theorise, by exploring underrepresented lives through experiences (Squire, 2008).

The narrative data collection technique should be distinguished from the narrative fragment, which was the tool utilised in this study. In the former, participants tend to provide sequenced, complete accounts of entire experiences that convey meaning (Saunders et al., 2007). These accounts have a structure with a beginning, middle and an end, and they provide thorough coverage of events' consequences and significance. This can be considered narrative in its purest form. Conversely, narrative fragments are pieces of narrative; parts of stories. Narrative fragments possess the story-related nature of narratives, but they are incomplete, and often unsequenced.

The main advantage of narrative fragmentation over narratives is the potential for exploring multiple topics (Lawler, 2002). Rather than asking participants to recall entire stories, they may alternatively be asked to recall examples of situations they have experienced which illustrate the opinions they are expressing or conclusions they have drawn. Additionally, narrative fragmentation enables the researcher to explore linkages and themes within data (Lawler, 2002) as well as making cross-case comparisons of themes across a large qualitative sample. The narrative fragment can be considered a subset of the broader narrative approach.

Indeed, this project used narrative fragment story-telling techniques, but accepting an absence of logical sequence often characteristic of pure narrative approaches, in order to ensure coverage of the topic areas and enable comparison across participant cases

during the analytical phase described in Section 3.5. One possible disadvantage of the narrative fragment over pure narrative is the potential for reduced richness of data. When participants are asked to tell part of a story – or are focused to tell a story that supports their views – it is theoretically possible that this focus might suppress themes that might have emerged had participants been asked to tell their entire repatriation stories from beginning to end. However, this was mitigated through maximising the use of open questions, and frequently asking participants if they had anything else to raise or other stories to tell. It must also be noted that had this study utilised pure narrative techniques across its large qualitative sample, this would likely have produced quantities of data so vast that analysis would have been rendered unmanageable.

The approach followed to using narrative fragments in this project was broadly based on that described by Cappellen and Janssens (2010). The researcher met with the paper's second author to discuss the approach and technique, and receive guidance on its deployment in this study. The use of narrative techniques combined with the semi-structured interview data collection tool also appears in recent research in the self-initiated mobility sphere, where the authors asked 31 participants to provide narrative accounts of several expatriation-related experiences (Altman & Baruch, 2012) enabling the multiple topic coverage and cross-case comparison also characteristic of the current study's similar sample size.

3.4.2 Interview Content and Sequence

In the first phase, the data collected related to participants' expectations for repatriation, including career outcomes and personal life expectations. It was necessary to cover non-work topics because work and personal life satisfaction crossover has been found in some of the SIR work to date (Begley et al., 2008). In addition, some data on the experiences of participants' overseas employment was collected, because this could potentially influence work-related expectations after repatriation. In the second phase, the objective was to collect data relating to the actual repatriation experiences of the same participants.

The interviews began with factual or descriptive questions, to help participants feel at ease. This was particularly important because, due to geographic remoteness, the interviews were conducted over Skype, and it was not always possible for the researcher and participant to see each other. While interviewing participants remotely (via telephone or Skype) may reduce the researcher's visibility of the participant's visual non-verbal behaviour, the remote mode also has cost advantages, does not necessarily influence the depth of response and data, and is now a widely utilised and accepted qualitative data collection tool (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004) in social sciences research. Indeed, remote interviewing was the only viable option for use in this study.

An overview of the research project and the interview itself was then provided, and an opportunity given for questions. The open questions then began, followed by probes to further explore the ideas raised and to elicit more detail. The researcher used subtle refocusing to respond to over-communication or highly irrelevant material, and aimed

to maintain rapport with the participant as well as neutrality with his or her content (as recommended by Patton, 2002). The researcher has conducted in excess of five thousand interviews, including more than one thousand conducted via telephone, and most in job selection contexts where rapport, open questioning and refocusing techniques are critical and have been extensively utilised, in line with his formal interviewing training. He has also applied his interviewing skills and experience to prior field research he designed and conducted (Ellis, 2012). The interview topics are provided in Appendix D.

An effective qualitative interview should feel more like a conversation than a question-answer interrogation (M. Stroh, 2000). Accordingly, ‘free association’ (Mason, 2002) was allowed, whereby participants could freely discuss elements across topic areas, out of sequence. This also had the advantage of allowing participants to raise issues important to them, rather than merely covering issues assumed important by the researcher. The rapport building described earlier is a foundation of the free association and refocusing techniques described. The priorities were ensuring adequate coverage of the topic was gained, while retaining the conversational and narrative elements of the interview.

The interview approach and content were pilot tested (Hollway & Jefferson, 1997) utilising two pilot participants, to check for sufficient understanding of topic areas, information generation, and interview timings. Sample sizes for narrative interview pilots need not be large, or even greater than one, but should increase in instances where issues are experienced, to test any subsequent resolutions implemented (Bates, 2004). The pilot participants were identified and recruited through personal networks, and

selected to fit the sampling qualifiers. Feedback was gained from the participants on interview style, content and duration. No significant changes were made to the interview topic areas or interviewing approach as a result of the pilot. Interviews in the main study ranged in length from 40 to 90 minutes, and the duration was not dependent on interview phase (expectations/experiences), time to, or since the repatriation move, or any demographic or other identifiable variable.

3.5 Data Analysis

This section describes the analytical process undertaken for each phase of the research project. Interviews were digitally recorded, with participants' permission. Immediately following each interview, the researcher made notes that reflected his initial impressions as well as possibilities for data codes (Burnard, 1991). The recordings enabled verbatim transcription, which was viewed as a precursor to thorough, robust analysis. The researcher chose to transcribe the interviews himself, despite the quantity of data and the potential for outsourcing, because this process encouraged deeper immersion in the data and therefore close reflection. The transcription process was supported by InqScribe; software that enabled the recordings to be played at slow speed, and paused and rewind. After each transcript was made, short summaries were written that reflected initial themes seen to emerge (Conger, 1998), for later reflection and as a sense check of the analysis. At this stage, the transcripts were imported into the qualitative analysis software, NVivo. The reasons for and benefits of this decision are explored in Section 3.5.1.

The subsequent content analysis was based on the approach of Cappellen and Janssens (2010). First, the narrative fragments - or sections of stories - within the transcripts

were broken down into ‘thought units’ (Gioia & Sims Jr, 1986) reflecting distinct thoughts, which tend to correspond loosely to sentences. This was performed utilising the coding function within NVivo, in which the researcher highlights chunks of text before labelling them. In the second stage, termed the ‘categorising’ phase (Cappellen & Janssens, 2010), the thought units were read several times and then labelled with codes. The codes were compared with those created immediately after the interviews, as a form of verification. Codes predetermined by insights from the literature were not used because since SIR is under-researched, doing so had the potential to suppress new theories or models, therefore predetermining outcomes.

The codes were then sorted into categories (n=47) and sub-categories (Conger, 1998) (n=144). Each category was assigned a label that reflects its shared message (Cappellen & Janssens, 2010). At this stage, the transcripts were re-read with the categories and labels to determine appropriateness (Burnard, 1991). In the third, ‘classifying phase’ (Cappellen & Janssens, 2010), the labels were grouped into themes (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004) to enable the development of new models and theories (Usinger & Smith, 2010). This step also enabled the creation of flowcharts of themes (e.g. Richardson, 2006), for example, in Figures 7.1 and 7.2., as well as comparison with prior research.

Crucially, this also enabled the comparison of key findings between the two phases of the study. The research questions had called for information on pre-repatriation expectations as well as post-repatriation experiences, and this necessitated separate, distinct analytical phases for the two corresponding sets of interview data. However, the research questions also called for a comparison of expectations with experiences,

and this meant that the transcript of each participant’s experiences-phase interview had to be compared with that of their expectations-phase interview. At the theory building stage, common themes from this individual-level analysis were examined at phase level. Outputs of analyses from the phases appear in this thesis in Chapters Four (expectations) and Five (experiences), as well as Chapter Six (comparison between expectations and experiences).

In the experiences-phase interviews, participants tended to provide a self-assessment comparison of their experiences with their pre-move expectations. Clearly, they had to draw on their memories of their expectations to do this, and consequently their memories of their expectations did not always correspond with the content of their own first-phase interview data. Where discrepancies arose, priority was given to the phase one transcripts over the memories of expectations reflected in the phase two transcripts. This is an advantage of the two interview phase methodology as a more robust approach than the conventional singularly reflective design, which is more likely to accept at face value the participants’ own recollections of their pre-repatriation expectations from before their return move.

3.5.1 NVivo CAQDAS Software

As mentioned above, NVivo was used to support the data analysis. NVivo 10 is a computer aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) program. Although “computers cannot replace the contextual processes required of the researcher” (Fossey et al., 2002, p. 729), the use of software supports the adaptive process of developing codes (Hudson & Inkson, 2006) and facilitates the exploration of connections with existing theory (Richardson, 2006). It can also help determine the relative importance

of themes through quantitative assessment of their frequency. The reason NVivo was selected for this project is that it offered the closest match between the requirements of the project and the capability of the software. These requirements included supporting the systematic categorising and classifying stages of analysis, quantifying the codes, and exporting demographic and coding data into Excel for further analysis. The researcher attended a two-day classroom style course run by the software's manufacturer, QSR International, which included significant one-on-one time with an experienced NVivo tutor to discuss leveraging the features of the software in this study.

The manual and computer-aided approaches to coding and categorising of the data were complementary. The NVivo software proved useful in managing and analysing the interview transcripts, especially considering the volume of data; sixty interviews across two interview phases. Attempting to manage this data without the support of NVivo would likely have resulted in less methodical analysis. Moreover, NVivo enabled a more sophisticated interrogation of the data in relation to exploring connections between themes, than would have otherwise been possible. The queries functions within NVivo were particularly useful. For example, a 'word frequency query', used to find words or meanings participants are commonly discussing, helped reveal the 'luck' theme discussed in Section 6.4.1. In addition, other queries were used to explore whether demographic variables explained variance in participants' views and experiences. Finally, the code-organising functionality within NVivo effectively supported the iterative process of adding, removing and merging codes (developing coding hierarchies), as well as exploring higher-level themes emerging from the codes.

However, the researcher did not depend solely on NVivo to execute the analysis. As mentioned above, computer assisted analysis does not negate the need for a researcher's own analytical ability and reflection. For this reason, the NVivo-supported analytical stages of this project took place in addition to the manual reflective and confirmatory processes described in Section 3.5. NVivo supported the analysis rather than driving it. Additionally, the researcher actively sought potentially conflicting data and explanations for emerging themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994), as part of these processes. This was executed primarily through running of queries within NVivo, and included, for example, searching for evidence of connections between categories and sub-categories which appeared unlikely, and counter to themes that were emerging.

3.6 Critical Evaluation

Credibility, dependability and transferability have been identified as determinants of excellence in qualitative studies (Graneheim and Lundman, 2004). These are defined and addressed here in turn. *Credibility* is defined as the level to which the data and analysis address the intended research focus (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). In this study, this was operationalised primarily through selecting an appropriate data collection tool (discussed in Section 3.4) and ensuring an adequate sample size. In addition, representative verbatim sections of participants' comments have been reported in the findings chapters of the thesis, to support analytical assertions. Furthermore, during the second interview participants were asked about how predictions they had made during their first interviews had transpired. This provided a form of verification of the inferences taken from the phase one interview transcripts. This tactic also serves to enhance interpretive rigor (Fossey et al., 2002), and reduce interviewer bias (Burnard, 1991).

Interpretive rigor also relates to accurate representation of participants' data, also discussed by Graneheim and Lundman (2004) in relation to credibility. It is important to note here that language cannot accurately reflect any form of objective reality (Alvesson, 2003). Indeed, "objective reality can never be captured. We know a thing only through its representations" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 7). In interpretive, qualitative research, the concern is not with reaching a point of objective truth or reality, it is about people's truths as they experience and convey them. In relation to the use of narrative techniques, Lawler (2002) concedes that "the 'truths' people produce through... stories are not truths as conventionally understood in positivity social science: nevertheless, they do speak certain truths" (p.18). Representation of participants' voice was enhanced through following Alvesson's (2003) recommendations around using probing during the interviews, defining any difficult words, and asking participants to explain any jargon that they used.

Gabriel (2000) identifies a further potential issue here; the selective use of narratives to amplify or reinforce the researcher's preconceived ideas or assumptions. His suggestion that researchers constantly look for counter-evidence or unwelcome or unexpected findings was taken, supported by NVivo, to help mitigate this issue. In addition, reflexive (Alvesson, 1996) techniques were utilised. Throughout the course of this project, long periods were spent analysing, developing theory, and writing. Then, periods of days during which the researcher did not refer to the analysis or transcripts, provided thinking time as well as triggering a sense of critical 'fresh eyes' when the material was later revisited.

Additionally, there was an intention to enhance credibility through selecting participants with varied experiences and views (maximum variation sampling), although this was not always possible due to the limited number of volunteers. This selective approach took two forms. First, participants were asked to identify other potential participants in their networks, who would likely have experiences and views which differed to their own. Second, a range of advertising avenues was used across a variety of geographic locations, to encourage participation from people returning from a range of host countries.

The *dependability* (consistency) issue of data being collected over time is the second (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004) quality criteria. This refers to the potential for inconsistency due to changes in focus that might occur as themes begin to emerge during data collection. This was a potential issue, as there was always the possibility for the interview schedule to evolve as themes for further exploration emerged. In addition, as indicated in Section 3.3, not every phase two interview occurred at the same time point after repatriation, since participants' availability differed and people had returned to work at different points. However, coverage of the key topic areas was achieved. The researcher remained cognisant of the need to balance comparability with the study's objective of theory emergence and generation. Cross-case comparability was a necessary element in this study because it was deemed important to understand how and on what potential bases participants' experiences differed, and concurrently, it was important that additional, as-yet unmentioned themes were not ignored or suppressed as some of the later interviews were completed and analysed. As indicated above, utilising two analytical tools was useful - NVivo helped with systematic analysis

which encouraged consistency, as did the researcher's reference back to notes and summaries that had been written during the transcribing and coding processes.

Transferability - the ability to transfer findings to other contexts (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004) - was enhanced by clearly describing the sampling, data collection and analysis processes when reporting the findings. In addition, a description of how the interview topics were formulated (Morrow, 2005) has been provided. Findings are described transparently, enabling the reader to identify alternative explanations (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). This is enhanced through the provision of significant quantities of raw narrative data in the findings chapters. However, the inherently contextual nature of qualitative research means that transferring findings should always be undertaken with significant caution.

Finally, the researcher's position should also be addressed, as this reflects a critical awareness of its potential impact on the study (Van Laer & Janssens, 2011). The researcher is an expatriate, and a New Zealander, qualities he shares with every phase one participant of this study. While this could be seen to impede objectivity, it can also enhance understanding of participants' views, as well as facilitate the rapport-building process. The resulting connection meant that participants tended to open up readily and easily, which in turn led to significant portions of narrative within the data.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

This research is covered by the Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants. Its primary focus is to identify and minimise harm to participants.¹ As part of the research process for this project, a full ethics application was submitted to the university, and approved (the approval letter can be read in Appendix E). The advantage of completing a full application despite the low-risk nature of this project was that it encouraged the thorough identification and analysis of potential ethical issues, as well as providing participants with reassurance that the project had been reviewed by one of the university's human ethics committees.

The ethics code also outlines principles for informed and voluntary participant consent. The informed consent requirement was fulfilled by distributing an information sheet (reproduced in Appendix B). No pressure was applied to any person to participate, and no adverse potential social or political consequences or possible conflicts of interest were deemed to be present. The data management approach was also outlined in the information sheet. Data will be destroyed in June 2018, after which time they will no longer be needed. As discussed in Section 3.3.1, full demographic information is not included in the public version of this thesis, as inclusion could breach participants' right to anonymity.

¹ The full text of the code is available online at <http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/fms/Human%20Ethics/Documents/MUHEC%20Code%202013.pdf>.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter described the design and methodological techniques utilised in this study. The approach was driven by the exploratory nature of the research questions given, as identified in the preceding chapter, that SIR is significantly under-researched. These considerations led to an inductive, qualitative approach being deployed.

Semi-structured interviews were the chosen data collection tool, with narrative fragments elicited from participants. Data collection occurred in two phases, driven by the two-phase element within the research questions, and which also aimed to reduce the memory bias of asking participants to recall expectations formed months beforehand. Free association techniques were used to improve interview flow and encourage participants to openly tell stories. The 32 participants were recruited via a range of online and other mechanisms, and all had decided to repatriate at the first interview, and repatriated several months after the second interview.

Data analysis commenced with the creation of transcripts, followed by narrative fragment analysis involving coding thought units, categorising and classifying, to aid the development of theory. Outputs were findings at each phase level as well as comparison of phase one expectations with phase two experiences, at individual and sample level. These processes were supported by qualitative analysis software, NVivo, which offered significant advantages in terms of managing the data as well as supporting improved methodological rigor. In addition, no significant adverse ethical issues were identified during an analysis which adhered to the university's human ethics framework.

Chapter Four

Expectations of SIR New Zealanders

4.1 Introduction

The two-phase approach of this study aids in addressing the second research question, namely, how the experience of repatriation compares with pre-repatriation expectations. In this chapter, findings from the first ‘pre-move expectations’ phase are presented. In addition, recurrent themes that emerged are also outlined. Participants were asked a range of questions about their original expatriation motives and experiences, through to motives for repatriation and the factors and processes contributing to the repatriation decision. Although the focus of this study - and the findings reported here - is repatriation, participants’ expatriation motives and experiences are also included, in recognition of the relationship between the facets of international mobility discussed in Chapter Two.

The data analysis techniques were described in detail in Section 3.5. However, it is useful to highlight the analytical stages and outputs as they relate to the findings reported in this chapter as well as in Chapter Five. The subheadings within both chapters relate to the topics explored in the interviews, and resulting themes. These themes are presented using a combination of tables, descriptive and analytical commentary, and illustrative, verbatim participant comments. The participant comments are labelled as follows: “(participant number, gender, current host country and time in that country)”. Some of the participant number identifiers are higher than the total number of participants in the study because the identifiers were assigned during

sampling, and not all of the people who joined the sample actually later participated in the study.

The categories found within the tables are labels for the thematic codes identified during the NVivo-supported analytical processes described in Section 3.5. It should be reemphasised that the codes and their labels were derived from the data (interview transcripts), and they were therefore neither pre-determined nor suggested to participants as narrow-response options. In addition, because of the interrelated nature of many of the themes reported, it is unavoidable that there is some (albeit limited) repetition in the content across the chapter subsections, however the systematic presentation is designed to enable access to any specific area of interest. Finally, rather than explicitly speculating on the potential contingency effects of demographic and other variables within the small sample of this study here, these are instead discussed in Section 5.4.5, and further analysed in Section 6.4.

4.2 Original Expatriation

4.2.1 Expatriation Motives

First, participants were asked why they moved away from New Zealand on the SIE sojourn from which they were now returning. While this may initially appear a departure from the research questions, it was suspected that original expatriation intentions could potentially contribute to repatriation intentions, for example when the objectives for the time spent abroad had been realised, or indeed not realised after a significant period of time. This was therefore considered not only relevant, but also important. In addition, including this topic was in keeping with the broad, exploratory nature of this study.

Career, travel and adventure all emerged as major motives for leaving New Zealand to live and work abroad, as shown in Table 4.1. In terms of career, an enticement was often in the form of development. Participants tended to want to either explore the opportunities in the host country, or realise the opportunities they perceived existed there. In addition, participants' partners' career advancement also represented a motivating factor for moving abroad, in a minority of cases.

Table 4.1.

Expatriation Motives

<i>Motive</i>	<i>Participants N</i>
Career – self and partner	21
Travel	20
Adventure	14
Drawn to something abroad ('pull')	15
Family	4
Wanted to get away from New Zealand ('push')	10

A subsequent question asked participants whether the objectives they had set for their time abroad had been achieved. A majority of participants who offered an opinion on this (n=20) reported these objectives had been fulfilled, while an additional three participants reported a partial fulfilment. Here, participants tended to emphasise the travel and adventure elements of their original expatriation motivation. They frequently commented on the proximity of their host countries to attractive travel destinations, and reported that they frequently took advantage of this.

Host country pulls outweighed home country pushes. Host country pulls related mostly to perceived career opportunities, but in a handful of cases participants had family in the host country, which also contributed to the decision to move there. Around one third of participants also had a push element in their decision to leave New Zealand. Comments included having nothing to stay for in New Zealand, or feeling stagnant. Career also featured in relation to home country pushes, with the dominant theme relating to an unfulfilling current job and an absence of the potential to change jobs.

4.2.2 Expatriation Adjustment

Intuitively, the magnitude of host country adjustment was considered to contribute to repatriation intentions. Therefore, participants were asked about their work and personal adjustment experiences. Only a minority of the participants (n=8) commented on personal adjustment, with an even split in terms of the level of adjustment experienced. Participants who felt adjusted to the host country culture felt they identified with it, and that their behaviour may have become more aligned with the host country's culture as part of that process.

I'm really anglophiled I think, in respect of a lot of things. Even my Mum notices it when she comes to stay. Like in the evening when you have guests over, and they will say, do you want help with anything? You say no, and you do everything yourself. Whereas in New Zealand the guests normally say, do you want a hand? And then you go and have a chat while you make a salad. Mum very much notices I do it the English way rather than the New Zealand way. (17, female, UK 14 years)

Several participants also reported that living in the host country now felt normal. Participants who did not report strong adjustment believed they did not integrate with the host country culture. Insufficient data in this area precluded the emergence of stronger themes. However, much more data was available in relation to host country work experiences and adjustment to the foreign work culture. Participants overwhelmingly and repeatedly emphasised the elements of difference between the host country work culture and that experienced in New Zealand (n=24). Typical examples included work ethic, communication style (New Zealanders perceived as more direct) and leadership style.

I remember so many things were strange or off-putting, or I just didn't understand the way they worked over here. But now of course I'm completely adjusted to them to the point that I don't even know what those things even were. (19, female, UK 16 years)

It took some time to sort of get my head around the local culture I suppose. It's just the way they tended to do things. I turned my desk around in my office, because I like an open space kind of thing instead of talking across the desk. And a lot of people didn't come near my office for about two weeks. They just couldn't quite cope with being able to walk in the office and not have to sit there across a desk from me. (21, male, Ireland 5 years)

Well people said before we came over, you'll be able to earn lots of money and no one will be working very hard. But actually if we had gone to the pub at lunch time we would have been sacked. (22, male, UK 6 years)

I've had someone come in and go, hi, I've worked my 7.6 hours for today, would you like me to stay on, on overtime? And that was such a weird thing for me to get my head around. I look at my watch and go, holy crap it's seven, how did that happen? Because I'm engaged in what I'm doing. If you managed to actually calculate 7.6 hours and understand exactly what that meant, I mean I am just amazed that you're counting. (35, female, Canada 3 years, previously Australia 6 years)

The multicultural nature of working in the United Kingdom was highlighted by several participants.

The environment is extremely multicultural in the UK, and you have to be very culturally sensitive. You work with Jewish people, you work with Muslim people, you work with Hindu people, and you have to demonstrate a higher degree of cultural awareness than perhaps you needed to in New Zealand. (20, female, UK 5 years)

It is a much more diverse environment than in New Zealand, and much more open to employing people from all over the world and all levels of English competency. So I worked in London with a team of Indians and Pakistanis and Nepalese and French and Germans. So that means that Friday beer at the pub isn't really appealing to the Muslims in the team. These kinds of things don't really come into your mind when you're in a small software firm in Wellington. (30, male, Hong Kong 9 months and UK 3.5 years)

Differences in communication style between New Zealand and the participants' host countries were also identified as a necessary part of work culture adjustment.

I found that my mumbling and Kiwi accent wasn't very easily interpreted. So I worked on communication skills, and I found that in New Zealand in a lot of software consultancies and professional services firms, there is a culture of sounding sophisticated and intelligent, and using multiple syllable words at every possible opportunity. There is kudos around being seen to be intellectual in those high tier professional services firms, but in Europe you can't really get away with that when speaking to a bunch of people who speak English as a second language. You've just got to learn to say it as it is, and communicate in simple terms. (30, male, Hong Kong 9 months and UK 3.5 years)

Power distance between manager and employee was also raised as an important cultural difference encountered:

It's probably a bit like New Zealand 12 to 15 years ago, where the employees tend to be a bit more subservient to the bosses. So back in New Zealand you have a culture of working alongside everybody, and while there is still a boss, you know a lot of them don't refer to them in that manner. Whereas over here, it tends to be a lot more autocratic, and you call him 'boss', and there's a definite division of a manager and an employee. (20, female, UK 5 years)

Despite these differences, 13 participants reported a relatively fast or easy adjustment, primarily due to overall perceptions of similarity between the host country culture and that of New Zealand, or because they were working with a range of nationalities in the host country, including other New Zealanders. Interestingly, three participants also felt that industry-level work culture was so strong across countries that this rendered country-level work culture adjustment unnecessary.

There is very much an international camaraderie of engineers. Particularly when I was in Denmark, I travelled over most of the world visiting branch offices and visiting clients and things like that, and to a pretty great extent also when I was working in Belgium. We're pretty boring people but we are the same all over the world and we can get along with each other anywhere.

(Did you experience any cultural adjustment difficulties?)

Very much reduced, because of the profession, whereas people in maybe more sales and human resources might be offended by foreigners being foreign. (15, male, Belgium 29 years)

Sometimes I would have to engage with very senior business leaders on their training programs. And you know they had no patience, and thought very highly of themselves, they would be incredibly rude, but I think that's more the nature of investment banking rather than the nature of the British working culture. (29, female, UK 5 years)

It was very much a badge of honour to stay there until 11, 12, 1 in the morning. I think that's common across investment banking I think in the world, but definitely in the UK. But you know it was complete nonsense and a lot of it was completely ineffective and not that useful in delivering anything. (22, male, UK 6 years)

Participant 22 also raised the issue of whether the differences in leadership and work culture that he encountered in the United Kingdom could be attributed to national cultural differences, industry level differences or elements specific to working in London itself.

When you look for leadership skill level over here in the UK, nothing. It's quite depressing actually. They really don't value their people in the banking industry at all. You're just a number. Maybe it's the banking industry, maybe it's London, I've only worked in banks so that's all I can draw on, but they don't seem to give as much responsibility here, and it's very hierarchical. And you don't have influence. I was astounded at the amount of time I had to spend doing PowerPoint slides, and making things pretty, rather than delivering real change. (22, male, UK 6 years)

4.3 Repatriation Motivation

Findings now move from expatriation, to repatriation, which is the core focus of this study. First, participants were asked why they were moving back to New Zealand, and specifically why they had decided to do so at this stage in their careers and lives. These questions were asked because it was suspected that the reasons people were moving

back to New Zealand might be linked to their expectations for post-return experiences and outcomes. Similar to the findings in relation to motives for expatriation, pulls to New Zealand significantly outnumbered pushes from abroad; people were generally drawn back to New Zealand as opposed to feeling as though they should leave their host countries. Findings are shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2.

Repatriation Motives

<i>Motive</i>	<i>Participants N</i>
Pull	29
NZ lifestyle	26
Family in NZ	22
Raise children in NZ	14
Climate	9
Parents are aging	7
Someone in NZ is unwell	2
Push	18
I have met my objectives	12
It feels like time to go	10
I am less happy here now	8
Visas expiring	2

4.3.1 Pulls

First, the pulls are addressed. These tended to relate to wanting to raise children in New Zealand, or to be closer to aging parents or other family in New Zealand. The other key pull was the New Zealand lifestyle. The perception of a superior climate in New Zealand emerged as a further motivating factor. Participant 22's pull-related reasons in relation to family echo those of many other participants.

Well I think, we've been thinking about it for some time. I like London, and I love living over here, but the pull of family and different lifestyle is probably the key thing now that has changed in life. If we didn't have kids on the scene I think we'd probably stay here. And my parents are getting old, they were just over here and that was clear to me. They won't live forever. (22, male, UK 6 years)

Participants 17 and 36 both combined the desire to raise children in New Zealand with a lifestyle and Kiwi culture attraction.

I imagine that that relaxed Kiwi atmosphere is still there. England has its benefits, but it can be a bit faceless at times. I think New Zealand has that Kiwiness, which is kind of hard to put into terms. That's the thing we want our kids to grow up in. (17, female, UK 14 years)

I appreciate that whilst it's not going to be all hokey pokey and jandals 100 per cent of the time, I have a definite gravitation towards outdoor activities myself, and that's one of the things that's been missing out of my life in the UK. I'm hoping that this move back will allow me to show my girls and my wife a little bit about where I grew up. (36, male, UK 13 years)

Participant 30 offered an Asian host country perspective on increased space in New Zealand.

In Hong Kong, we live in a studio apartment, and we are surrounded by hundreds of thousands of people in a pretty small area, so it will be neat to get back to New Zealand, and have a free-standing house where you don't share walls with someone else, and you know a bit of greenery and fresh air and so on. You kind of miss that when you're in the hustle and bustle of downtown Hong Kong. (30, male, Hong Kong 9 months and UK 3.5 years)

Participant 35 expressed a desire to contribute to New Zealand's economy and business success through skills and experience she gained abroad:

The longer I've been overseas, the more passionate a Kiwi I've become, and the more I've realised we bat above our weight. And my real motivation in coming home is I think there is so much innovation and ingenuity coming out of New Zealand and with a variety of international market experience, I want to be able to assist, through business, tourism, or promotion of what we've got going on in New Zealand internationally. (35, female, Canada 3 years, previously Australia 6 years)

4.3.2 Pushes

As shown in Table 4.2 above, the number of participants reporting pulls to New Zealand outweighed those reporting pushes from the host country. Although not shown in the table, there were 117 'pull' references by these 29 participants. However, the number of participants expressing a host country push element to their motivation to repatriate was also significant (n=18), as was the number of 'push' references by those participants, at 28. Host country pushes ranged from simply having had enough of life

there, to having realised the objectives set for the time abroad. Other push motives were visas expiring and not wanting to renew them, or a sense that it was “just time to go”. Participant 11’s comments represent the combination of push and pull factors many participants articulated.

I think because of my job, that’s a big factor. I’m not really getting any job satisfaction out of it. And your job, I find for me, my job is a big part of my life because it’s Monday to Friday, so there’s that aspect. And a lot of my friends have gone home, and it sounds really silly but I don’t have many English friends. I tend to hang out with Kiwis or Aussies. And I get a bit jaded with the opportunity to travel. It’s almost just ticking off the places. It’s another church, another museum, another place I can tick off the list in Europe, and I think I’d just rather go home. (11, female, UK 2.5 years)

At times, host country push factors triggered a consideration of countries other than New Zealand, as expressed by Participant 34:

We considered Melbourne pretty closely. But one big factor was, we don’t want to move again in five years’ time. In five years time you’re five years older, and you have even more roots laid down and it’s going to be even harder to leave. But going to Wellington now, we have an open mind that it may not work for us. It is such a big jump. There are so many unknowns. (34, female, UK 6 years)

4.3.3 Formation of Decision and Expectations

The formation of the decision to repatriate and the associated expectations emerged as an area of interest, due to the seemingly negative nature of the work-related expectations, which will be discussed in Section 4.4. Expectations tended to be formed in two key ways. First, participants took proactive steps to research life in New Zealand, and work in New Zealand. Second, they tended to remain connected to New Zealand. This connection emerged mainly in participants' personal rather than their professional lives.

Research

Participants researched specific aspects of life back in New Zealand prior to making their decision to repatriate. Some specific elements emerged as targets of this, and in forming their expectations. The first of these was the cost of living, and in particular, groceries. The Internet was the most common method in which research was conducted. A typical mechanism was described by Participant 17:

Well we've done some price comparisons. We did a fake online shop with Countdown to compare food prices. (17, female, UK 14 years)

The cost and availability of housing was another aspect investigated:

I've already started looking a little bit. And it turns out that just when I was back last time, one of my buddies from university was moving up there [Whangarei], someone else is moving, my roommate from university is moving

up, other friends are planning on moving there, so it seems to be a reasonable option. And prices are not insane. (15, male, Belgium 29 years)

I've started doing some rudimentary kind of searching. And I think from what I've looked at so far, there seems to be a fair bit of stuff available. (35, female, Canada 3 years)

This participant took her utilisation of the Internet a step further, posting to a returners' group on LinkedIn to ask for advice about her professional return to New Zealand. The response surprised her, and through this she developed a motivation to help other returners:

A simple post like that has opened so many conversations, and the willingness of people to actually help and the comments I've got from so many different people, and I've spoken to a few people now on the phone and I've had invites to some different things. And their comments have been, we've returned, and here are all the things we found hard. So it's in our interests to make this a positive experience as people come home. Only in New Zealand would you get that kind of response.

Moreover, her LinkedIn post led to job offers:

I've got more job offers and contracts from the posting here than I thought was possible. So <company> has offered me a desk, and I've essentially got another contract starting immediately if I want to do that. (35, female, Canada 3 years)

Connectivity

As mentioned, in addition to proactive research participants conducted into life and work in New Zealand, it emerged that people tended to retain a sense of connection with New Zealand throughout their time living abroad. Again the Internet, and especially social media, played an important role. From a social perspective, people kept connections active through Facebook and other networking sites. They also kept in touch with news in New Zealand, including house prices and costs of living, through news feeds or by visiting New Zealand based news sites. Specific detail around the frequency of access of each site by each participant is not available, since this was a theme that emerged during the study; that is, it was not conceived during the research design phase as a central focus to be specifically investigated. Unsurprisingly, family was also a key connection that had been retained:

My parents have been really good at keeping me in touch with things going on in New Zealand, whether it's little social media things, or bigger issues like elections, budgets and stuff. (26, female, UK 8 years)

In addition to remote connections maintained through the Internet, participants tended to visit New Zealand with reasonable frequency. The average across all participants was one visit to New Zealand every 15 months. The outcome of this tended to be a sense of remaining informed about life in New Zealand throughout the time abroad.

Because I've got quite a few friends and family there and I go back regularly, I realise that Auckland is now an incredibly expensive place to live. A daughter

of a friend has got a little house that's worth half a million dollars, that's just insane. The house cost ten thousand to build, and the land is theoretically worth the rest. I expect I'll have to buy a more reasonably priced place which is more comparable with prices in a small town in Belgium. (15, male, Belgium 29 years)

It does still shock me when I go into the supermarket and come out with a handful of things and it costs fifty dollars. I say to my Mum, how can people afford this? How can people afford to live here? And she says you just have to, you have to pay it, you have to eat, you have to live. And so I really do feel like that is one of the areas that I know costs so much more in New Zealand. (27, female, UK 6.5 years)

The maintenance of professional connections did not emerge as a theme to the extent of the personal connections. Moreover, participants tended to reignite professional networks near the end of their time abroad, using LinkedIn and direct contact methods including email. This may well represent an area where many expatriate New Zealanders could take action to maintain professional networks throughout their time abroad, in order to ease the professional aspect of their return. Where participants had formed perceptions of work life in New Zealand, these tended to be through word of mouth with social contacts rather than former managers or colleagues. This quote from Participant 21 is a case in point:

I've heard from friends of people going back to New Zealand that companies wouldn't hire them because they couldn't get hold of anyone who was on their

referee list, so they didn't trust what you said. So I think it's a real challenge, because you've spent years offshore, 'how do we know she did that?' When you move here you experience that, and when you move back you also experience that. (20, female, UK 5 years)

4.3.4 Decision Complexity, Difficulty and Frailty

Despite the research that participants conducted into life and work situations in New Zealand, and the New Zealand connections they maintained while abroad, the decision to repatriate tended to be characterised by complexity, difficulty and frailty. People struggled to weigh and reconcile positive and negative host and home country factors, and many spoke of difficulties and conflict in their relationships, most typically when one wanted to move more than the other.

We should have done this before, because <wife> has been really frustrated with me because she has been ready to go for some time, and I've been saying yeah I'm ready, but in the back of my mind, I really haven't been. And it's all come to a head recently, and being honest, it is a big jump moving back. I absolutely love London, but I also love my family and I want to give them that opportunity and I want to enjoy the time with them as well. (22, male, UK 6 years)

This quote from his wife, another participant, elaborated on the sequence of events and why they refrained from repatriating sooner:

I think a few years ago when I wanted to go back and <Husband> didn't, I wanted to settle down and buy a house rather than renting, and I was in a really

good job and enjoyed it, but I was thinking, is this what I want to do forever? And we always thought we would just buy in New Zealand, and therefore I felt I wanted to go to New Zealand, because now's the time to buy. And then we decided to buy over here, and that's when we settled down for a bit longer. We had put that piece to bed. And then we had our son and it started all over again. (34, female, UK 6 years)

At times, participants spoke of push and pull motives in isolation, but at other times the complexity of the decision to repatriate was more explicit. Through this the combination of factors and difficulty faced by many participants in deciding whether to repatriate emerged. The decision frailty is highlighted in this quote from Participant 20:

It has been a very difficult decision to be honest, and it's one that I feel that any point in time I could reverse. It's been a lot more difficult to make this decision than I could imagine, and maybe that's just about getting old, David. You make decisions a lot quicker and easier when you're young. But all jokes aside, you could do this if you were just moving jobs within New Zealand, but I do think that giving up what I would consider a prestigious role in a prestigious firm on very good packages is a very difficult decision to make. So balancing that lack of security and the potential drop in income has to be offset by the benefits of being in a country closer to friends and family, and where I hope to find the lifestyle more rewarding. (20, female, UK 5 years)

The current positive career situation felt by many participants required reconciling with the positive perception of life in New Zealand, as expressed by Participant 17:

I've got a very good career path where I am now. If we were to stay here for another five years I'd be very comfortable thank you very much and exactly where I'd want to be, but that's not important enough to stop the move back to New Zealand. (17, female, UK 14 years)

4.4 Work and Career

Participants' expectations for their return to New Zealand related to both work and non-work elements. In this section, work and career are considered. Participants were asked how easy they thought it would be to find work, and in particular the kind of work that they felt matched the skills and experience gained throughout their career, including the time spent abroad. They were then asked more detailed questions about how they thought their skills and experience from abroad would be recognised, both by recruiters and potential employers, as well as on the job after starting work. Other key areas covered included expectations for remuneration, work life balance, and the expected level of ease or difficulty in readjusting to perceptions of the New Zealand work culture.

4.4.1 Ease of finding Work

First, the ease of finding work is considered. The message here was overwhelmingly pessimistic. Specifically, the vast majority of participants (n=25) felt that work and career opportunities available in New Zealand were inferior to those found in their host countries. Understandably, the level of concern was higher for participants moving to areas outside main New Zealand centres. However, no industry variable emerged. Despite the perception that career stage appropriate roles would be difficult to find, the idea that work would eventually be found was evident.

Two additional areas of concern emerged. The first was a sense that participants had become too specialised through their time working in larger companies in larger markets abroad. Many participants felt that they had been forced to work in narrow functions in large companies, with an associated small span of influence. They expressed concern about finding work in more generalised functions in New Zealand.

The IT industry in the UK is massive. And it's a huge hub. You've got all the international global firms based here, whether they be US owned, Japanese owned, Korean owned and the like. There's a huge amount of business going on in the UK, especially in the IT industry. And it is pretty specialised. (28, male, UK 4 years)

The second main area of concern was a lack of current New Zealand experience. Around one quarter of participants expected to be faced with feedback that they would need to re-enter the job market at a lower level in order to gain current New Zealand specific knowledge in their fields. There were two key sources of this perception; the first being people participants knew who had already returned, and the second was messages posted on LinkedIn groups.

For me to secure a job, it's not going to be that difficult, but it's whether or not it's going to be at the right level I guess. So, do I need to take a step backwards to get into the market back home? I think that's the biggest thing on my mind. (07, male, Japan 5 years)

I find that very fascinating because it's the flipside of what I've been seeing right through my career. You know, you can be as qualified and experienced as you like, but if your experience isn't UK-based you're going to have to start up the ladder again. And it's going to be the same as that in New Zealand. (17, female, UK 14 years)

There was also some concern about how the New Zealand job market would view experience with unsuccessful companies abroad:

A company I worked for in the dotcom era blew up spectacularly and the whole company shut down. And it was, well that was an interesting experience, what can we take out of that. No one disparaged anyone, made disparaging comments about my involvement in that company, whereas in New Zealand, when I went back to visit relatives and I saw people I had worked with, and the undertone of the comments were, you are a bit of a loser because you worked for these companies that blew up. But I got phenomenal experience at those companies. I could have spent that time in a stable company just plodding on and not a 50th of the experience that I got there. (02, male, USA 6 years and Europe 14 years)

However, expectations were not exclusively negative. A minority of participants expressed some optimism about finding work relatively quickly, although this tended to relate to finding any job rather than one that matched their CVs. Optimism tended to be greater the younger participants were. Three participants also contemplated starting their own businesses after returning. In general, participants had already given

significant thought to work and career expectations, and how and where to start looking for appropriate work, as alluded to in this comment from Participant 35:

I know enough about myself, my working style, and the company cultures that I fit into. So for example there's a great job, a marketing manager for Coca-Cola in New Zealand. It's a great job but I'm sitting here thinking you know what, I wouldn't fit that. And I don't want to do anyone a disservice by putting myself there. I've got to really look at the values that I have, the employment expectations that I have, and try and marry myself with the right opportunity.

(35, female, Canada 3 years)

Several participants expressed concern about their diminished professional network since leaving New Zealand, and the negative effect that would have on the job search. With this came a desire to carefully plan reconnecting with people in the process of the job search:

I think it's going to be hard. I think because of the power of the network in New Zealand, and the types of role that I'm planning on seeking out. I have to manage my return to New Zealand quite carefully. Because you know when you're 25, and you go off backpacking for a few years, you go home and have a gay old time. But when you're a senior executive and you're moving back for professional and personal reasons, you have to treat your network with a huge amount of respect, and be very careful to maximise contact and think about how you want to spend time with those people. (20, female, UK 5 years)

Some participants had even begun having interviews before leaving their host countries:

I've been on holiday for the last six weeks, taking the kids around Europe. And I had to video myself doing this presentation, send it to them and then do a Skype interview, all when I was in France and Italy. So yeah, there was a lot of work involved in trying to do that. (36, male, UK 13 years)

4.4.2 Recognition of Skills and Experience

A related expectation was the predicted level of recognition of the skills and experience gained abroad. Interestingly, the key messages here were more optimistic than those expressed in relation to the ease of finding work. However, of note was that optimistic participants tended to focus more on their assessment of their own skills and experience rather than how they might be perceived in New Zealand, while pessimism was attributed more to factors external to the individual. This quote from Participant 18 highlights the value participants placed on their own skills and experience.

Well I'm hoping to be able to move into quite a senior position. I guess my expectation is, having worked over in the UK and getting a lot of international exposure, that that would give me good opportunities for senior management roles in New Zealand. I bring a whole a lot of value that I wouldn't necessarily have brought if I hadn't been working over here internationally. (18, female, UK 7 years)

Participant 20 also spoke about the value of experience gained abroad:

I know people who have got to quite senior positions in New Zealand companies who have never worked offshore, and I think they would struggle to take a role offshore as a senior person. When you're senior in the US or London, you don't know anybody, and you're constantly put in front of people that you have no reference point on. And some guy could just jet in from Paris or fly in from Dubai, and you have to be able to do business with them. There are companies in New Zealand that export that will understand what I'm talking about. But I think if you've only ever worked in Fisher and Paykel or Telecom and you've never worked offshore, it would be hard to come here and be successful once you got to a certain level. (20, female, UK 5 years)

She had also considered the need to have to prove that value to New Zealand companies:

I think I have to prove that my experience here is valuable, and not in a way that's better or worse, just different. And that's good for you to have as a company, because you probably don't have those skills if you haven't employed people who have had 10 years' experience as I have in offshore companies. I need to work hard to convince them that that is a valuable leadership quality that they'd want to hire, versus people locally who they know and who have good reputations in New Zealand companies. (20, female, UK 5 years)

Others echoed anticipated negative expectations relating to New Zealand perceptions of experience gained abroad:

I think there's just a general cynicism about the value of offshore experience actually. I think it comes back to that sense of defensiveness that New Zealand companies and executives have about international companies. I've had conversations with my friends from New Zealand here about this. I think there's defensiveness in New Zealand that, you know, we're as good as any other worldwide company, so therefore just because you've worked in a big organisation offshore, that doesn't mean your experience is worth any more. To a degree I can understand that, but I do think you can learn things from working offshore that you can't learn from only working in New Zealand. (20, female, UK 5 years)

There was also a perception that either the newly acquired skills and experience from abroad would be ignored, or the fact that it was gained abroad would be ignored. Moreover, there were several negative comments made about recruiting firms, who act as the gatekeepers for many roles because they select and screen applicants before presenting them to hiring organisations. These comments tended to point to a perceived lack of appreciation, or even a lack of understanding of skills and experience gained abroad:

I was having a job interview with a recruiter for a senior marketing role in New Zealand. I didn't get it. And the recruiter was saying to me, give me a bit more experience on this, and I started querying her, could she explain this a bit more

to me. And I was trying to explain to her about what I'd done and how I'd been working in different brand marketing principles to help foreign markets and so forth, and she didn't get that experience. And it was something I thought that if you were querying somebody for a role like this, you'd really need to understand that. And I was just, like, what do you mean? My experience at dealing with some of the recruiters, especially some of the senior headhunters in New Zealand is that they just don't get it sometimes, in the sense that they don't really get some of that experience from overseas. (36, male, UK 13 years)

A further theme was that recruiters and hiring managers who themselves had worked abroad would understand and appreciate overseas experience more than those who had not:

What I quickly realised is the types of places I'm going to fit are things that other former expats are involved in so there is a mutual experience, and an understanding of what it's like to work overseas. (35, female, Canada 3 years)

4.4.3 Remuneration

Participants tended to factor several elements into their assessment of how much they would earn in New Zealand, including market conditions, relative size of New Zealand companies, and their own skills and experience. In addition to receiving a lower level (n=18; see Table 4.3) in gross terms, a further concern was remuneration levels relative to the cost of living in New Zealand. The majority of participants believed that costs in New Zealand were higher relative to remuneration than in their host countries.

Table 4.3.

Remuneration Expectations

<i>Remuneration level</i>	<i>Participants N</i>
Less	18
Same	9
More	5

A parallel emerged between participants' attribution of remuneration expectations and their attribution of predictions about job market recognition of skills and experience. That is, those expecting to earn less tended to attribute this to external (e.g. market) factors, while those expecting to earn more or the same tended to value their own skills and experience highly.

This quote from Participant 20 demonstrates the multi-faceted nature of remuneration expectations:

I'm expecting to earn less. (*Why?*) Two things. One is that my observation is that the New Zealand economy and employment market hasn't really had any growth in base rates of pay. Secondly to that, to be a large company in New Zealand you're making over 500 million per year. To be a large company in the UK you're making billions, so they just can't afford to pay the sorts of salaries I've been able to attract here. (20, female, UK 5 years)

4.4.4 Work Culture Readjustment

Participants were asked whether they believed there would be a period of adjustment to the New Zealand work culture, and if so, the nature of adjustment required and the ease or difficulty of doing so. There was an approximately even split of positive, negative and neutral expectations. Table 4.4 summarises these findings.

Table 4.4.

Work Culture Readjustment

<i>Work culture readjustment</i>	<i>Participants N</i>
Difficult, different	11
Easy, similar	11
Completely unnecessary	6
Noticeable but manageable	10

Participants believing the New Zealand work culture would be similar tended to believe that work cultures in Western countries are generally similar. This was true for positive elements as well as negative, as expressed in this comment about teamwork and getting along with colleagues:

When I think about it and when I really discuss it with people, in my mind I have this idea that everybody works really well together, which is actually a load of rubbish. Anywhere you go in the world there will always be problems with your colleagues. It doesn't matter where it is or who they are. (14, female, Belgium 5 years)

When differences were expressed, these mainly related to concerns that participants had become lazy during their time abroad. Most of these participants were in the United Kingdom. For example, Participant 20 felt that she would have to get used to being busy again:

I'm worried that I'm getting too used to not having a busy to-do list, and that when I go back I'll be working how I've been working over here. I hope that's not the case, and I hope that because I'm thinking about that consciously that I'll be checking myself to make sure that I'm not doing that. (20, female, UK 16 years)

Similarly, Participant 25 reflected on the slower pace of work she experienced abroad, and how an adjustment would be required on return:

In New Zealand your working hours were 8 until 5. And you had to be there from 8 until 5. But over here, it's common, with the tube and stuff, you can turn up at 9 and leave at 5. Some people don't go in until 10 or 10.30, and people will walk out at 4 if they want to. No one really polices it. So I've got into a routine when I just turn up whenever. So when I go home it will be different, it will be very different. (25, female, UK 4 years)

4.4.5 Work-Life Balance

A related area was expectations for work-life balance. Twice as many participants expected an improvement in this area than expected deterioration. In addition, the improvement emerged as a motive to return for many. This quote from Participant 26 expresses this, as well as a desire for improved workplace flexibility:

One of the reasons we're moving to New Zealand is to help improve our work-life balance. At the moment it takes an hour to get to my office, so in this country that's not too bad. But it's working to try and improve that. And yeah hopefully employers will be at least accepting, willing to consider family-friendly working arrangements. (26, female, UK 8 years)

As seen in this quote, commuting time was seen as a key opportunity for work-life balance improvement in New Zealand. This was also expressed by Participant 28:

We're certainly looking forward to the work-life balance being a bit more in favour of the life... In terms of the commute time, <Partner> spends an hour and a quarter getting both to and from work each day, so she's really looking forward to just being able to jump in a car and being at work in 15 to 20 minutes. (28, male, UK 4 years)

4.5 Non-Work

Non-work expectations were a subsidiary focus of this study. This is due to the relationship between work-related and non-work related experiences found in the mobility literature including early work in SIR (Begley et al., 2008). Spillover effects were said to occur, meaning that, for example, when work did not go well, this also negatively affected non-work experiences and general sense of wellbeing, and vice versa. In this study, participants were asked about their expectations for the New Zealand lifestyle, cost of living, and any cultural readjustment anticipated. They were also asked about how they planned to reintegrate with social networks. A range of themes emerged, which detail both positive and negative expectations across these areas.

4.5.1 Lifestyle

First, lifestyle is addressed. A very strong theme was of perceptions of a dramatically improved lifestyle over that experienced in the host countries (n=26). Related to this was a common perception that New Zealand was a better place to raise and educate children, as articulated by Participant 17:

You might remember that in the 80s they showed Grange Hill, that English school program on New Zealand television. Do you remember watching it? The school playground was all concrete, and it was always raining. And I remember looking at it and going, I don't understand this program. I can't associate with it, because that's not what a school looks like. And now I think, do I want to send my kids to Grange Hill, or send them to more of a typical New Zealand school with lots of plants? (17, female, UK 14 years)

The general friendliness and openness of New Zealanders was also anticipated by many:

I still remember a couple of years ago when we were visiting New Zealand, and everybody that got off the bus said thanks to the bus driver. That reminded us of where we were. That would just never happen in London. Just that element I think, that friendliness and openness. (27, female, UK 6.5 years)

Many participants looked forward to a slower pace of life, especially when thinking in terms of having reached a point in their lives where they could put a partying lifestyle behind them. This was particularly evident in participants who had been living in London:

We're definitely not up for having all-nighters in clubs. We've done most of what London has to offer. So I don't really think I'll miss that side of it. I do have friends that are like, there's no way I can move back to New Zealand, because I couldn't deal with it, it's too small, for me I don't have that problem because I'm kind of done with the staying out all night London side of life. (29, female, UK 5 years)

For others, a New Zealand lifestyle was seen as positive for more logistical reasons:

So like traffic. I was stuck on the highway for 2.5 hours yesterday. You can't do errands in less than three hours in Toronto. I really, really want to be able to go to the dairy and pick up some milk in 15 minutes. (35, Canada 3 years)

However, the expected slower pace of life in New Zealand as well as its isolation were not always viewed in a positive light:

To us at the moment it seems a brilliant place to live. I guess the toughest part will be, it will feel like we're standing on the bottom of the world. Having lived in London, centrally, for such a long time, moving to New Zealand is going to feel well away from where things are happening, the pace of life will be much slower, and it's going to be, life is going to change. (28, male, UK 4 years)

4.5.2 Cost of Living

A majority of participants (n=28) perceived a high cost of living in New Zealand. This tended to be fuelled by costs for basic items such as milk, cheese, bread and vegetables. A common idea here, especially for participants living in the United Kingdom, was that New Zealand's isolation and lower level of competition in the grocery industry contributed to higher prices. In keeping with the theme of being informed about life in New Zealand (Section 4.3.3), the majority of participants said they already knew how high costs were. The cost of living topic was discussed with more passion than any other topic in the interviews.

New Zealand is just so unbelievably expensive. So expensive. I do realise that. I mean at Christmas time I went with my sister to do the grocery shopping, and oh my God, how can people live? How can they afford it? You go and get two small bags of groceries and it's \$80 and you're like, what? And petrol and

general going out, clothes and things are so expensive. (19, female, UK 16 years)

New Zealand is number one in dairy but it costs so much just to get your basics; your milk, your cheese, when over here we go to a supermarket and everything is just so cheap. A lot of people say that London is just so expensive, but I don't think so. On a scale of looking around the world New Zealand is hugely expensive. And I worry about salaries not keeping up with the cost of living, which is rising faster than salaries are, so everything is becoming progressively more expensive. (25, female, UK 4 years)

Participant 28 echoed the theme of costs being high relative to salaries:

If you compare dollar for pound, it seems attractive, but I know that wages are less than over here, so to me the cost of living in comparison to salary, it's more expensive to live in New Zealand than it is to live in the UK. So that's something we'll also take into account. I mean, we'll quite happily go out for dinner once or twice a week in the UK. We could never afford to do that in New Zealand. (28, male, UK 4 years)

In addition to the cost of groceries and utilities, housing was viewed as expensive, particularly in Auckland, but also in the South Island:

My sister lives down in the South Island in a very nice rural area, but just because of this thing about various Hollywood people buying up vast estates and

things, and tourists, this Lord of the Rings crap, the prices down there are insane too. It's just farmland. (15, male, Belgium 29 years)

Participant 10 had put thought into how he could reduce his costs in New Zealand:

I have relatives with home gardens, so as regards being able to be fed, I'll be able to grow my own food. My mother has a relatively developed garden, as has my brother and uncle. So I'll be able to work out something with them. (10, male, USA 19 years (previously also Europe 15 years))

4.5.3 Cultural Readjustment

There were mixed views on the expected extent and ease of readjusting to New Zealand culturally, as summarised in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5.

Expected Cultural Readjustment

<i>Cultural readjustment</i>	<i>Participants</i> <i>N</i>
Difficult	11
Noticeable but manageable	11
Easy	8
Not necessary	3

The slower pace of life and loss of the hustle and bustle of large overseas centres was viewed as a key area where readjustment would be needed:

Sometimes I'm a bit sceptical that it will feel as fun as London does, and that it will feel as international, and I guess over here everything is world class in terms of the scale, and what you can do, and New Zealand doesn't really offer that. You know, I guess that's why I didn't want to go back to Auckland for so long. So I think that will be a challenge, readjusting to Auckland and generally being in a smaller place with a slightly different outlook on the world. (18, female, UK 7 years)

This theme was extended by Participant 25, in terms of pace of life:

The pace of life in New Zealand is a lot slower, that's what I expect, and I think that will be a big readjustment. You know in London everything is just so fast paced, and there's always something to do and always something happening. You have no end of entertainment. I think back in New Zealand, it's much, much slower. (25, female, UK 4 years)

A further theme involving anticipation of differences or difficulties was a perception that New Zealanders have a narrower outlook than people in the host country. This was articulated most by people living in the United Kingdom:

I think the whole small town mentality, I mean, I do it now, I go onto Stuff to read the news at work, and a friend there says to me, he laughs, the thing that we're worried about in New Zealand, it's things like a dog is stuck up a tree. That's not a real example, but you know what I mean. It's like, my God, is that really the news today? (22, male, UK 6 years)

Participant 34 also perceived an absence of an international outlook in the New Zealand media:

They don't seem to have news of the world, it's news of New Zealand. (34, female, UK 6 years)

However, at times, perceived cultural elements in New Zealand formed part of the attraction for returning:

People are friendly, and people acknowledge you when you're in their space, that sort of thing. In New Zealand they still do that. You say good morning to someone if you see them. So just little things like that, which is a nice touch, to get back into that more friendly environment. (33, female, UK 14 years)

Kiwi identity was an interesting subject that emerged in some of the interviews. Some participants felt they had retained their identity as New Zealanders while living abroad, while others felt they had at least partially taken on their host country identity.

I've become quite European. I'm not completely European, that's for sure, but compared to when I left New Zealand, I'm really European. So I think there will be a bit of readjustment. (14, female, Belgian 5 years)

When you're living overseas, being a New Zealander is a large part of your identity. People know about the All Blacks and rugby and all those kind of things. (19, female, UK 16 years)

4.5.4 Social Reintegration

The next topic explored with participants was how well they thought they would fit in socially on return. Three times as many participants (n=23) thought they would rebuild old social networks or new networks easily, as expected difficulties. Many felt they would meet new friends through work or their children's activities. Twenty participants said that they had maintained connections with friends in New Zealand, most commonly through Facebook. Conversely, those who expected difficulties typically said friends in New Zealand were at a different stage in life to them now, for example because they had had children. Participant 35 felt ready to meet the challenge head on:

No different than my move here. I had to actually make an effort. And I remember when I was working for those first three months I was here, I was accepting every invitation that I got. So I think I'll have to do the same in New Zealand. (35, female, Canada 3 years)

Participant 32 felt that his time living abroad had triggered reflection on New Zealand friendships, and a resolve to make more of an effort on his return:

We've actually been talking about this quite a bit. In the first three to six months while you're here, you start to appreciate the friends that you never really spent a lot of time with, and you're thinking why didn't we? Things like

having a BBQ once a month that just never happened, you just never got around to doing it. And now we're going to go back and let's get everyone together.

(32, male, UK 1 year)

Another theme was of having more in common, and therefore more to talk about with other repatriates, as discussed by 25:

We have a lot of friends that have gone home, and they say, anyone that hasn't travelled, you can't really talk to them about travelling because they aren't interested. And people have said to us, you find that you click a lot more with people who have travelled because you have something in common. (25, female, UK 4 years)

This idea was supported by Participant 27:

Part of me is a bit worried about finding myself in social circles or social settings not having anything in common with people because I've gone and lived overseas for six years, which is not that common in New Zealand, and I just won't find anyone that I will be able to connect with. (27, female, UK 6.5 years)

4.5.5 Negatives

Participants were asked about the most difficult part expected of the return, and about the elements of living abroad they would miss the most. Their views are summarised in Table 4.6:

Table 4.6.

Negatives or Greatest Challenges

<i>Negatives or greatest challenges</i>	<i>Participants N</i>
NZ isolation - geographical, cultural	18
Work - self or partner	10
Financial	6
Unsure but will be surprised	3

As noted in the table, geographic isolation was the greatest concern, followed by finding appropriate work, and financial or cost of living challenges. Three people felt there was an element of unknown about the greatest challenges of post-move New Zealand, but that they did not expect everything to run smoothly or to feel immediately happy.

Participant 28 took a pragmatic view, but emphasised the decreased travel opportunities in New Zealand compared to the United Kingdom:

There is so much about New Zealand which is brilliant, and we're really, really looking forward to that, and of course there's a lot of stuff that we're going to miss as well. Things like the international travel, which has been so brilliant, you know in New Zealand, well we've got Fiji on our doorstep, we've got

Australia, but aside from that, you know, a couple of hours on a plane and you can't get very far. (28, male, UK 4 years)

Participant 35 appeared focused on approaching the transition with a positive attitude:

If I look out my window right now, I'm in the heart of Toronto. It's hustle and bustle. You would find a new restaurant every day for ten years. So there will be those size things that I would be silly to think won't feel different. But the way I'm mentally preparing myself is, don't try and compare that with that. (35, female, Canada 3 years)

4.5.6 Safety Net

Related to the theme that the decision to return was often fragile was the idea of a 'safety net'. This emerged in just over one third of the interviews (n=11). These participants typically wanted to leave options open to either return to the current host country, or move to another host country should experiences not match expectations in New Zealand. This theme manifested most frequently in keeping links in the host country, as expressed here:

I'm keeping links here, I'm keeping my house that we own and things like that, so there will still be the link here. (33, female, UK 14 years)

My wife is not wildly enthusiastic about going back to New Zealand, so if for whatever reason it doesn't work, then it's come back here to the States. (02, male, USA 6 years)

This theme was also clear in the interview with Participant 35, who had observed the expectations and experiences of friends who had returned in forming her approach:

I've got a lot of friends who have returned with this 'grass is greener' and, 'once I get back to New Zealand everything will be amazing'. So I've actually kept my apartment here, and I have a friend who I've left some of my furniture with, so just as a backstop, if it ends up not actually being the environment I want.
(35, female, Canada 3 years)

It is noteworthy that participants were not specifically asked whether they intended to stay in New Zealand permanently, so the emergence of this theme is significant. It could also be the case that more participants had a physical and/or mental safety net than the number who spoke of one, since this theme was not addressed with those who did not raise it themselves.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter reported findings from the first phase of the study; the pre-move expectations of SIR New Zealanders. Overall, there was a strong sense that participants had 'done their homework' about what to expect on their return to New Zealand. They made repatriation decisions based on information they gathered in two main ways. The first was research. Participants spoke to friends who had returned and recruiters in their fields, as well as gathering information through online sources. The online component ranged from joining LinkedIn groups and contributing to discussions, to conducting trial grocery shops.

The second way their decision was informed was through an unbroken connection with New Zealand throughout their time abroad. Participants had visited New Zealand with reasonable frequency as expatriates. They also maintained friendships through Facebook and other methods. And finally they kept up to date with news and events in New Zealand through visiting New Zealand news sites, or again via updates from friends and family.

Data were gathered across both work and non-work related topics. Work-related expectations were often pessimistic. Participants in general expected difficulty finding suitable work in New Zealand, despite many believing they had gained valuable skills and experience abroad. Concerns included excessive professional specialisation unsuited to roles in New Zealand, or being told they lacked current New Zealand work experience. Non-work expectations had positive as well as negative aspects. Positive anticipated elements were for many a key reason they were returning; the New Zealand lifestyle, and family related reasons. Negatives included the cost of living and housing in New Zealand, and perceived geographic and cultural isolation.

Finally, the decision to return to New Zealand was difficult and frail for many. It was a complex process of reconciling the positive and negative factors outlined above. It caused relationship conflict at times, and frequent mind-changing before making a final decision to repatriate. Even after the decision was made, it remained uncertain for many.

The next chapter outlines findings from the second phase of the study; the post-repatriation interviews conducted with the same participants.

Chapter Five

Experiences of SIR New Zealanders

5.1 Introduction

Findings from the first ‘pre-move expectations’ phase were presented in the previous chapter, and recurrent themes that emerged were outlined. Participants articulated generally informed expectations about work and life back in New Zealand. Often these expectations were somewhat pessimistic, especially in relation to work. People had proactively gathered information from several personal and publicly available sources in the process of forming their expectations.

This chapter presents findings from the second, ‘post-move experiences’ phase. Questions in the second interview broadly mirrored the topics covered in the first interview. First, immediate experiences and outcomes are explored as they relate to movers (participants who did return to New Zealand) and non-movers (participants who did not return to New Zealand despite intending to do so). Movers’ experiences relating to logistics are also outlined. Then, work and non-work experiences are detailed, and finally, initial explanations and contingencies for the early outcomes participants experienced are also explored.

5.2 Immediate Outcomes

5.2.1 Movers and Non-Movers

Of the 32 phase-one participants, 27 repatriated to New Zealand as planned, and were still living in New Zealand at the time of the second interview. Table 5.1 details their destinations within New Zealand. Of the remaining five participants, one reversed her earlier decision to move and stayed in her host country, one did repatriate to New Zealand but had since moved to live in Australia, one still planned to move to New Zealand but was delayed, and the final two were now unsure whether they would move.

Table 5.1.

Repatriates' Home Locations at Experiences-Phase Interview

<i>Location</i>	<i>Participants</i> <i>N</i>
Auckland	11
Wellington	6
Christchurch	4
Hamilton	1
Invercargill	1
Napier	1
Palmerston North	1
Tauranga	1
Whangarei	1
Total	27

Contact was made with the five participants who were not living in New Zealand at the time of the second interview, and they were asked for information on the reasons for this outcome. Where possible, interviews were conducted with these participants to explore their decisions more thoroughly. For the participant who had reversed her earlier decision to repatriate, a combination of her partner not finding work in New

Zealand prior to departure, his reluctance to move, and her ease of visa renewal and subsequent newfound employment all contributed to eventually staying in Belgium:

In about September or October, I was still going back and <Partner> was coming with me. But you know also my visa was also running out here, and I wanted to go back before that. In the end it was just easier to go and get the whole visa thing sorted out through <Partner>, so I'm now here because of his nationality. After that I decided, well, we'll just see what happens and wait until a job opportunity for him comes up, and when it does, we'll go. (14, female, Belgium 5 years)

(Do you think he ever wanted to go?)

I don't know. No, you know, I really don't think he did.

In fact, a partner's work situation was the main recurring theme relating to why participants were not living in New Zealand at the time of the second interview. A participant who repatriated but then moved to Australia two weeks later did so because her fiancé was offered a job in Perth:

I said, ok that's fine, I can find a job anywhere. So we said let's go over to Perth for a year and see how we go. And I found work here within five days. (25, female, UK 4 years)

One participant was delayed for a family related reason, but still intended to move to New Zealand. This was a custody issue with her ex-husband. Of the final two participants not living in New Zealand at the time of the second interview, one was reassessing her move when we subsequently lost contact, and the other cited partner and cost-of-living factors in his decision to reassess repatriating:

My wife is at best ambivalent. House prices in New Zealand spiralling up doesn't help either. It would require us to take a reduction in living standard.
(02, male, USA 6 years)

Of further note is that none of the participants who were not living in New Zealand at the time of the second interview ruled out returning to New Zealand at some stage in the future.

5.2.2 Repatriation Logistics

Twenty-two participants responded to requests to comment on the ease of logistically preparing to move and then moving to New Zealand, as shown in Table 5.2. This included any family visa requirements as well as the packing up and transporting of household and personal effects, and clearing these at the New Zealand end of the journey.

Table 5.2.

Repatriation Logistics

<i>Repatriation logistics</i>	<i>Participants</i> <i>N</i>
Easy	10
Difficult	7
Mixed	5

Those who found logistics easiest tended to have used moving companies:

Really simple. I got a plane ticket and I came home, and then boxes arrived about six to eight weeks later. I used a moving company. It's not cheap, but it's a pretty smooth operation. (30, male, Hong Kong 9 months and UK 3 years)

Piece of cake. Easy. The removals company that I used in the UK were brilliant. Everything ran really smoothly. (33, female, UK 14 years)

Logistical difficulties participants experienced tended to relate to family members' visas, and stress caused by unfavourable exchange rates:

Moving back with family has been a lot harder than I anticipated, especially with getting visas for my wife, and the logistics and budgeting for it all. Whereas if you are being shipped out by a company then it's definitely a very, very different kettle of fish. You have to be very determined. (36, male, UK 13 years)

You can't keep money forever in Euros, and who knows what's going to happen to the Euro. So you leave it for a while in case something good happens and then shut your eyes, transfer the money over and just go oh well I've taken a big loss on that but yeah it is only money. (11, female, UK 2 years)

5.3 Work and Career

This section is structured differently than the corresponding section of the expectations phase, due to the themes that emerged during analysis of the experiences-phase data. In relation to ease of finding work, only one participant (the oldest, at age 65) was still looking for work at the time of the second interview. However, whether the jobs found by the remaining participants are career-stage appropriate is addressed across the next two sections, dealing with recognition of skills and experience, and job search and recruitment agents. Following this, and mirroring the corresponding sections in the expectations phase, are sections on remuneration and work culture readjustment.

5.3.1 Recognition of Skills and Experience

There were generally pessimistic messages about the ease of finding work in the expectations phase. The fact that only one participant was still looking for work at the time of the second interview suggests that work was easy to find - at least work of some kind that participants were willing to accept. This section addresses participants' perceptions of the recognition of skills and experience they gained abroad primarily in relation to the on-the-job context. Experiences relating to the pre-employment job search are addressed in the proceeding section.

Key findings are summarised in Table 5.3. Of note is that positive perceptions significantly outnumber negative perceptions. Also interesting is that only two participants perceived their role in New Zealand as being a step down from their last roles abroad. For these participants, the notion of compromise came through quite strongly, as expressed by 17:

Salary-wise I'm doing better than I was in Britain, but the compromise is that it's not anything really like the job I wanted. I've had to compromise [in terms of job selection] in order to come home. (17, female, UK 14 years)

Table 5.3.

Recognition of Skills and Experience

<i>Perceived recognition</i>	<i>Participants</i> <i>N</i>
Positive	17
It is valued	12
It is recognised	5
Negative	6
It is ignored	5
I have had downward progression	2
It is viewed negatively	0
Unsure	4

Participant 16 had expressed concern about the recognition of skills and experience due to the country-specific nature of her specialist knowledge gained abroad. Therefore, she was asked how she managed to find a career-appropriate role so quickly:

I guess it wasn't an issue... Maybe it's that the exposure to areas other than employment law were more important to them than being able to recite the

employment legislation in New Zealand. So I guess I over-thought how much emphasis they would place on the employment law aspect. (16, female, UK 18 months)

In general, perceived recognition of skills and experience on the job appeared context specific. A key influence was seen as whether others in the employing organisation had also worked abroad:

[The level of recognition is] quite high actually, relatively high. So it's not a negative thing by any means. I walk into my organisation and there are probably 10 people who have got big international experience and done similar kind of things to me. So my overseas experience is seen as an added value layer. (36, male, UK 13 years)

Several participants commented on the large number of managers and colleagues in New Zealand workplaces who had lived and worked abroad during their careers. This is further explored in Section 5.4.5. Conversely, where colleagues had not worked abroad, this encouraged perceptions of a lack of recognition of the skills and experience participants had gained abroad, as well as broader feelings of a lack of recognition:

People don't understand if they haven't experienced it for themselves. And they're quite dismissive. And in work, the fact you've been over there and done it can be respected, and you can use it in conversation to put things in perspective, but I guess in a small work environment, it's kind of hard to bring

up really. I haven't been recognised or used to their advantage really. (32, male, UK 1 year)

Like Participant 32, Participant 20 believed that while there was an absence of explicit recognition of her overseas skills and experience, it enabled her to perform better in her role:

There's not much interest in it. There's not much curiosity. They ask you about it when you start your role. But they're not conscious of it, and I don't think there's the recognition of, I've worked for one of the biggest companies in the world. It feels like it's invisible; it didn't happen. (20, female, UK 5 years)

A few participants spoke of having been coached by personal contacts into hiding their time abroad:

I got warned with a number of people not to keep referring to my time in the UK, which I thought was crazy. That's where I've come from, that's what I've been doing, so it's what I'm going to be talking about. But so many people just constantly said, don't keep referring to it. (33, female, UK 14 years)

This could be more of an issue where participants did not have colleagues with international experience:

That's really funny. Not at all. No one cares less. I'd talk to <Partner>, I'd come home in the evenings and say, in a way it almost counts against you,

because it's almost that New Zealand small-town thing. Oh yeah you've been in London, oh yeah, ok, ok. (22, male, UK 6 years)

5.3.2 Job Search and Recruitment Agents

While perceptions of on-the-job recognition of skills and experience were more frequently positive than negative, this was not true of the perceived recognition of skills and experience during the job search process itself. This was most evident in the case of recruitment agents, who are typically paid by employers to recruit and select a shortlist for employers' specific vacancies, but who also maintain databases of available candidates. This was an unexpected theme, which came through very strongly. The perceived absence of recognition of participants' time working abroad was coupled with intense negativity towards the recruitment agents themselves:

They were all talk, no action. They were all very excited, and I met tons of them and all sorts of people came in to meet with me. But then you never hear anything from them again. They were totally useless. They didn't actually do anything. They kept going, we're very excited and your CV looks great, but nothing came out of it. It's all talk, no action. (18, female, UK 7 years)

The sentiment of recruitment agent inaction came through repeatedly, as did frustration about the length of agent-managed recruitment processes:

I had some reasonably top agents telling me that I had the right skills and telling me that my salary expectation levels were right, but then they didn't actually come up with any roles. And just the length of the process that it takes to go

through, from the time you actually submit your CV to when they look at it and then come back to you. (21, male, Ireland 5 years)

I've had a negative experience. With recruitment agents, if you apply for a role and they don't want to take it any further, they just never tell you. They just never reply. So you spend quite a lot of time waiting and wondering whether anything's going to come of it, and eventually you just have to give up and let it go. If they just tell you you're not suitable, then you can just move on. (29, female, UK 5 years)

Another strong theme was a perceived lack of recruitment agent understanding of participants' skills and experience from abroad:

They just didn't understand the market, or my background or potential employers I would be interested in. They sent me roles that weren't appropriate. They just didn't appreciate the side of the industry that I worked in.

(How was that evident to you?)

It was evident in the fact that they were proposing roles and jobs that were way off my radar. And that was frustrating, so I kind of just gave up on them. I just concentrated on building my own relationships with companies I targeted. So I'm kind of sceptical about recruitment agencies now. (30, male, Hong Kong 9 months and UK 3 years)

Some participants also perceived recruitment agents as gatekeepers. These participants tended to feel that the agents should focus more on alignment of their raw skills with job requirements, rather than the surface-level approach they experienced:

They don't really want to put you forward unless it's very obvious that you have done exactly the same role before. In England I found people would be, oh you've done this so you could move into this area. They tend to be more creative and willing to present you to their clients in different ways.

(Are you saying recruiters are short-sighted?)

Yeah. And that has happened a couple of times. I would say, well what about these types of roles? And they would be, oh no I don't think that you would be considered because you have not done whatever. And it's like, well I have really but it's just in a different guise, and it's quite disheartening actually. (29, female, UK 5 years)

This was echoed by Participant 22:

They always ask about your last New Zealand role rather than, oh you've been working in the UK. Not that I expected to come back and go, look at me, I've worked in London, God I'm wonderful. But it was like, I would have thought they would look at it and think, oh yeah he's worked in pretty large companies, he's got that experience. But it wasn't like that at all. In fact it was almost the reverse. (22, male, UK 6 years)

However, not all participants viewed all recruitment agents negatively. Those perceived as effective tended to think creatively:

I did meet with one agent who was very good at seeing the potential, not just within the types of roles but the industries as well. She was able to say, right well you've worked in insurance and you were a sales rep and then you trained sales, so you could fit really well in retail. (29, female, UK 5 years)

These recruiters tended to be rare, and they also had experience working abroad.

I can count realistically probably two or three recruiters I think are worth their salt, in doing what I do in New Zealand. And one of them is an expat from the UK, so he understands the market. (36, male, UK 13 years)

In addition, some participants highlighted the need for individuals to take a creative approach to finding a suitable role.

A recruiter talked to me about a role in internal comms [which is not my field]. But rather than going oh no, it's internal comms, I said, put my CV forward to them. They're hiring for a whole lot of roles, so they might create a role for me. That's the way I approach it, because I know in New Zealand there's only ever one or two roles going at any given time for me, so you've kind of got to make your own role. You've got to network your way in. (36, male, UK 13 years)

This section has so far focused on recruitment agents. However, hiring organisations themselves were also criticised, albeit to a lesser extent. Key areas of criticism were first, the time taken to conduct a recruitment process and second, a lack of contact during that process, as expressed by Participant 27:

New Zealand companies are not particularly well set up to make these processes work quickly. And it felt like most of the time, that was detrimental to them. I really don't want to blow my own trumpet or blow my partner's trumpet, but I think companies were missing out on us because they didn't move fast enough.

There was one particular organisation that my partner applied to work for on the 20th of December, so before Christmas. And it wasn't until late February, when he was already involved in three or four other processes, that that company called him back and said they wanted to interview him. So he said, alright I'll interview with you, but I need you to know that I'm already in the process of interviewing with other organisations. And then when he got a second interview with them, he had to turn it down because he'd already had two job offers. They seemed really disappointed. And I was thinking, it's your own fault. (27, female, UK 6 years)

In Participant 29's case, the length and complexity of the recruitment process led her to reconsider whether she wanted to work for the organisation:

By the time I finally was told what was going on, I didn't want to work for them anymore, because, well if it takes you this long to make a straightforward hire,

then how much tape do you have to go through in your day to day job? And then the people don't even have the courtesy to explain to you what's going on. You think, I don't know if you're the kind of people I want to be working with.

And they should have the decency to keep promises. If they say they'll get back to you in 10 days, then get back to people in 10 days. And just tell people, sorry you're not successful. (29, female, UK 5 years)

5.3.3 Remuneration

As shown in Table 5.4, of the participants commenting on remuneration (n=21), a majority (n=12) secured salaries at the level expected. Meanwhile, eight participants received more than expected, while only one received less than expected. A theme that arose from the corresponding expectations topic was concern around remuneration in relation to cost of living; that this would be much lower in New Zealand than in the host countries. This did not come through as a theme in the experiences phase, however findings here should be considered alongside those relating to cost of living, in Section 5.4.2.

Table 5.4.

Remuneration

<i>Remuneration</i>	<i>Participants</i> <i>N</i>
Same as I thought	12
More than I thought	8
Less than I thought	1

5.3.4 Work Culture Readjustment

Participants were asked how they were readjusting to the working culture in New Zealand. Responses approximated those from the expectations phase, with the exception that fewer participants experienced difficulties than had anticipated them. Findings are summarised in Table 5.5 below.

Table 5.5.

Work Culture Readjustment

<i>Work culture readjustment</i>	<i>Participants N</i>
Easy, similar or quick	12
Noticeable but manageable	12
Different or difficult	6

An interesting theme related to communication style in New Zealand workplaces. Many found the direct style welcome, as expressed by Participant 11 and Participant 35:

It's a lot more direct in New Zealand rather than dilly-dallying around. I can cut to the chase a lot more rather than when I used to do that in the UK I was seen as a bit abrupt and too forward. (11, female, UK 2 years)

I say three times a day, man I love working with Kiwis, particularly after coming back from Canada where there was almost a bit of a dance. So you didn't say anything quite as bluntly upfront, because that would be offensive.

And coming back to New Zealand, what you say is what you mean. (35, female, Canada 3 years)

One perception that differed between participants was whether New Zealand has a harder working culture than the United Kingdom. Here typical differing views are expressed by Participants 11, 23 and 27:

Everybody in New Zealand starts work earlier. In the UK, it was quite normal to cruise in at 9.30 or 10 o'clock, whereas I get to work at 8 here. And the office is already half full. (11, female, UK 2 years)

A good example was a girl that started doing training notes for when new staff arrived. She didn't get asked to do it, she just decided to do it off her own bat, because she thought it might be useful. Whereas in London, people would play on the internet or muck around. (23, male, UK 5 years)

It was my parents' perception when they lived in England 30 years ago, that English people didn't work that hard. And I still think there is a little bit of that going on in the UK, you know, Kiwis and Aussies are appreciated for their work ethic in the UK still. But that wasn't my experience. People I've worked with worked long hours in the UK, and they worked hard. (27, female, UK 6 years)

Several participants commented on adjusting to a more relaxed work environment in New Zealand:

When I met the team, they were in t-shirts and shorts and jandals, and it was 4pm and everyone's pretty relaxed and the windows and doors are open, the sun is streaming into the office, there's music playing. That's a pretty different office environment from a conservative Chinese culture in Hong Kong.

(How have you found adjusting to that?)

It's easy to be honest. It's not the culture that feels alien to me. It's my culture. Having a beer at 4pm on a Friday is certainly something I can adapt to. (30, male, Hong Kong 9 months and UK 3 years)

Difficulties adjusting related to colleagues appearing 'stuck in their ways' and a slower pace of work:

I've never worked in the public service before. My God, there are still guys in my team coming in in walk shorts and sandals and socks on. I'm not joking. That's where you're at. So there's a mentality with some of these guys that work is like it was in 1976 as well.

(How do you fit in then?)

I don't put on socks and sandals. It is hard. It's almost fun in a way. Oh my God I can't believe there are still people that, are they stuck in that time? They are stuck in it, because they're stuck in their ways to a certain extent as well. You just get used to it I guess. (22, male, UK 6 years)

It's a huge change from what I'm used to. I'm used to working in a big organisation, at a really fast pace, and being really busy all the time. And I'm not any more. But I don't know if that's specific to New Zealand or it's just the place that I'm working, and I've found that quite a difficult adjustment. (19, female, UK 16 years)

5.3.5 Work-Life Balance

As noted in the corresponding expectations phase section, work-life balance was a motive to return to New Zealand for many, and twice as many participants expected an improvement in this area than a deterioration. Seventeen participants spoke of experiences in this area, with the majority reporting an improvement, as shown in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6.

Work-Life Balance

<i>Work-life balance</i>	<i>Participants</i> <i>N</i>
Better	12
Same	3
Worse	2

The key advantage expressed in relation to an improved work-life balance was more time to spend with family, as expressed by Participants 22 and 26:

I've got a family, and people are out the door by five o'clock on the dot most nights of the week. I don't normally work past 6 at all. And if I do, I'd be just about the only one on the floor by then. (22, male, UK 6 years)

I have half an hour commute each way which is great, but here I'm working eight hour days, and in the UK the contractual day was seven. So there's a little bit of difference there. I did negotiate with my employer [in New Zealand] to work nine-day fortnights. That's to spend [more] time with my daughter. My husband works really close by, so he got a job and it's just six minutes' walk up the road. So that's really good, and we walk to our daughter's nursery to collect her. So in terms of getting a bit of exercise in, and time to have a chat on the way home, that's really good. So probably better, but just a little bit different. (26, female, UK 8 years)

5.4 Non-Work

Non-work experiences are now considered. As noted in the corresponding pre-move expectations section, non-work elements were included in this study due to the potential for spillover effects between work-related and non-work related experiences, as noted in early work in SIR (Begley et al., 2008) and recent work in SIE (Makela & Suutari, 2013b).

5.4.1 Lifestyle

The first of these relates to lifestyle. This is a key area due to the large number of participants who had expected lifestyle improvements in the preceding phase. Moreover, many had counterbalanced negative work-related expectations with positive lifestyle expectations in making their decision to repatriate. It was therefore critical that these participants had positive perceptions in this area, especially if these were formed before perceptions of work-related elements; negative lifestyle perceptions could potentially lead to a reassessment of the value of the entire repatriation decision.

Findings in relation to lifestyle are shown in Table 5.7. As noted, a significant majority of participants perceived their New Zealand lifestyle as positive. Key positive comments are addressed first. Many participants spoke of the first moment after repatriation that they became conscious of their perception of a superior New Zealand lifestyle, which in turn appeared to validate their decision to return, prior to and independent of any work-related experiences. One such comment was from Participant 17:

It was the first day we got back to my parents' house, about midday on that first day, and the sun was shining. And my little one was just over two at that stage, and we were outside in the grass, and I took his shoes and socks off and stood him up on the grass, and he did this really weird curling up his toes thing with his feet. And I realised he had never stood on grass in his bare feet before. And I thought, we've definitely made the right decision. (17, female, UK 14 years)

Table 5.7.

Perceptions of New Zealand Lifestyle

<i>Post-move perceptions of NZ lifestyle</i>	<i>Participants N</i>
Positive	16
Mixed	7
Negative	4

Participant 33 also used a comparison with her British lifestyle to emphasise positive perceptions of her New Zealand lifestyle:

We've just had the best summer in 50 years. Look, after work, I'm training for a triathlon at the moment, and I could never have done that in London, because a) the commute would take so long, and b) it would be dark by the time I get home. Whereas this summer, I've been on the beach by 5.30, out swimming, and then there's still time to go for a run and stuff. (33, female, UK 14 years)

For some, the New Zealand lifestyle appeared to give them a new lease on life:

I've come back with a whole new outlook. I slow down now just to enjoy the countryside. There are so many things, little things you can do off the highway here, it's just amazing. I wouldn't trade it for the world. (32, male, UK 1 year)

In addition, activities unique to New Zealand appeared to have replaced those which were not as easily accessible in New Zealand, or those predicted to be missed, as expressed by Participant 29:

The things we had in London, going out, going to museums and all that type of thing have been replaced with, we travel around New Zealand quite a bit, and we've got friends in different parts that we go and stay with, so it hasn't been boring at all. (29, female, UK 5 years)

However, Participant 29 is also a good example of the minority for whom the New Zealand lifestyle was not quite as expected. These comments tended to relate to the cost of achieving the lifestyle intending repatriates hope for:

It's just I guess not the cruisey lifestyle we thought it would be. It is a bit harder, and we might be forced to have this massive mortgage which means, that's the other consideration is that we both want to have children next year, so if we have a big mortgage I'm going to have to go back to work pretty quickly. So the lifestyle we thought we would have here is nowhere near as attainable as we thought it would be. (29, female, UK 5 years)

Participant 30 – who had mixed perceptions of the New Zealand lifestyle after his return – noted the pressures associated with living in Auckland, balancing this with positive perceptions of diversity. The level of diversity was something he had not anticipated, and having returned from Hong Kong, this helped him settle in to life in New Zealand.

Lots of people have got themselves into pretty high pressure situations and taken on a large loan from a bank to buy a little piece of land with a 100 year old house on it, and do it up so they can buy the next place and do it all again. It seems like a bit of a rat race.

But from a diversity standpoint, it isn't quite what I imagined. Auckland is a very diverse city. It feels very global. There are Russians, Swedes, Chinese and Japanese, British, people from all over, which is pretty cool. We are living in Newmarket, which has a high Chinese population, particularly Hong Kong Chinese. So that's a good transition into New Zealand life. (30, male, Hong Kong 9 months and UK 3 years)

5.4.2 Cost of Living

Participants were asked about their experiences of the cost of living in New Zealand. Of note is that they were not specifically asked whether it was cheaper or more expensive than the cost of living in their host countries. However, most participants chose to express their perceptions of cost in comparison with their host countries. Findings are summarized in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8.

Cost of Living

<i>NZ cost of living</i>	<i>Participants N</i>
Expensive	19
Cheaper than I expected	8
I knew it would be high	9

Nine participants chose to emphasise that they knew the magnitude of the cost of living in New Zealand prior to repatriation. However, the fact that almost all participants had perceived a high cost of living in the pre-move expectations interview may indicate that many more than nine knew to expect this. In many cases, comments also seemed to

suggest that although participants expected a high cost of living, the magnitude of this was greater than expected. In addition, many emphasised the high cost of living in relation to income.

It's just eye-wateringly expensive. I just can't get over how expensive it is here. I earn a good salary, and I genuinely don't know how people cope with how expensive it is. It is just astronomical. Food is unbelievably expensive. And sometimes things cost the same as the UK, but then people don't earn twice as much as they do in the UK. (19, female, UK 16 years)

We were a bit wasteful in the UK, but we didn't really have to watch our pennies. But we definitely have to do that here. (22, male, UK 6 years)

Participant 15 expressed frustration about the cost of items produced in New Zealand:

The things for which New Zealand is known outside, you know, things that it exports in quantity like food, wine, cheese you might say, things like that which should be cheap, are a rip off. You don't go to France and pay twice the price for things they export. New Zealand is a free market, with free market ideology. If you can screw the customers, you screw the customers. (15, male, Belgium 29 years)

Some participants also reported that the potential shock of high costs of living in New Zealand were somewhat reduced because of their connection to New Zealand during

their time abroad. In these cases, it tended to appear that any shock had been experienced before repatriation:

It hasn't been as big a shock as I thought it would be, but I think possibly because I came home last year, and it was a massive shock when I came home last year. I had only been away for two years. But being back a year later I was expecting it to be really expensive, so maybe because I was expecting it to be expensive, it wasn't too bad. (11, female, UK 2 years)

Although the vast majority of participants expected a high cost of living in New Zealand, a few participants were surprised. Again the trade off between a high cost of living and a superior New Zealand lifestyle was evident in these comments:

The cost of living was a real shock. Just the cost of petrol and groceries and everything else. It's London prices, but the rent and the houses are just extremely expensive. We really wonder how people survive here and maintain a quality of life. (20, female, UK 5 years)

Participant 20's reference to housing costs was echoed by 12 others. In addition, some participants (n=5) found suitable housing difficult to find. In Participant 29's case, housing costs triggered a re-evaluation of what had otherwise been perceived as a positive New Zealand lifestyle:

The Auckland housing market is as bad as you hear. I don't know what the hell we're going to afford, or where we're going to live. And it does concern me a

lot, because one of the big reasons we wanted to come home was lifestyle. And now if we buy a home we're only going to be able to really afford to live in suburbs that are quite far from the centre of Auckland, which is where we both will end up working. (29, female, UK 5 years)

Participant 26 reiterated the challenge involved in returning to a high-cost housing environment, while Participant 35 compared the cost of housing in Auckland with a major world city:

The overheated housing market has been the most challenging thing. And I thought we'd brought back quite a few pounds to turn into dollars. The exchange rate isn't great, but I thought we'd be fine. And just knowing that while you need over a million to get any kind of decent larger home with a garden, that's quite central, I am quite picky, but that's been challenging. (26, female, UK 8 years)

Here, I'm living in a nice 2 bedroom 2 bathroom apartment, but it's actually 50 bucks more expensive than living in downtown Toronto on the 35th floor of a building. So certainly pricing wise, you're going holy crap, how can it be that expensive? (35, female, Canada 3 years)

5.4.3 Readjustment

In the first phase, participants had somewhat mixed views on the anticipated ease and magnitude of readjustment that would be necessary after repatriation. This section considers readjustment experiences not only for the participants, but also their partners.

Participants

First, the participants themselves are considered. Findings are summarised in Table 5.9. The number of participants reporting easy or quick readjustment is approximately double that reporting difficulties. Many participants (n=8) reported an adjustment period but emphasised that this was manageable.

Table 5.9.

Cultural Readjustment Experiences

<i>Cultural and general readjustment</i>	<i>Participants</i> <i>N</i>
Difficult	6
Noticeable but manageable	8
Easy	13

Some participants reporting an easy readjustment also commented that it was even easier than they expected, as expressed by Participants 17 and 27:

Do you know, it was so easy to settle in, and it was shockingly easy to settle in. It's helped by the fact that we've had such a cracking summer, and who can argue with the fact you can go to the beach every day and that sort of thing, which has just been amazing. (17, female, England 14 years)

I think that the move back here for us has been smoother than I expected it to be, and not just from a logistical point of view, but I mean also from an emotional point of view. (27, female, UK 6.5 years)

Participants were asked whether living in New Zealand felt normal yet, or whether they were still conscious of readjusting on a daily basis. Participant 11 expressed a typical point of view:

I feel very comfortable here. It's very easy to get around, very easy to know your way around. I know this time that this is for the long term. I'm letting myself make it feel like home. (11, female, UK 2 years)

Conversely, Participant 28 commented on what did not yet feel normal for him:

Yeah, definitely it's still not normal. It's quite odd sometimes, especially when some people are speaking. You pick up on the full-on Kiwi accent. It's quite a crack up sometimes. (28, male, UK 4 years)

In addition, participants did not always welcome all elements of the New Zealand culture and way of life. Here, Participant 11 discusses readjusting to her perception of friendlier more open shop assistants than those she was used to encountering in Europe:

You go to a petrol station and the guy goes, how's your day going? And I think, I don't even know you. And I know it does take a couple of months to get back into it. You go into a shop and people want to engage in conversation, and no I don't want to. I've come to look at a t-shirt. I don't need to talk to you. And I did quite like that in Europe. I do quite like the being anonymous. (11, female, UK 2 years)

Partners

When asked about readjustment, many participants related their answers to their partners. This tended to happen regardless of whether the partner was also a repatriate New Zealander. Concerns in relation to partners tended to centre around difficulties finding or adjusting to work. In Participant 20's case, for example, the difficulties experienced by her English partner impacted their assessment of the quality of the decision to move to New Zealand:

He's actually finding it very hard. Much harder than he ever thought, which is hard on me. He's finding it quite a shock, you know, not all bad, but commercially quite a shock. He's quite shocked at how difficult it is to engage with people and make connections. He has found the recruitment very, very difficult, very unprofessional and unhelpful. And he's also quite surprised at just the scale and the lack of jobs, and salaries, and level of professionalism generally.

(Does your partner's situation impact on whether you've made the right decision?)

Yeah, I think so. Him not working has been very difficult. You do worry about your partner and his level of happiness. (20, female, UK 5 years)

The connection between participants' partners' happiness and overall adjustment is also evident in the positive comments from Participants 17 and 29, whose partners are also both English:

Oh look, it has been really, really easy. And for <Husband> more so, he enjoys going to work now whereas he hasn't for years. Lifestyle is brilliant, and yeah, overall I think we've both been surprised at how easy it has been to come back, and just kind of get settled in so fast. (17, female, UK 14 years)

Our biggest fear with moving to New Zealand was what would happen with <Fiancé>. Because of the industry that he works in, and you know with all the added complications for him being an immigrant and leaving family, it really was our biggest worry that it would be the reverse, that I would be employed and he would be the one struggling to find a job. But that hasn't happened, so that is fantastic. And he is so happy here. And I am happy here as well. (29, female, UK 5 years)

The partner adjustment issue did not end well for Participant 33, whose long-term English partner returned to England soon after they moved to New Zealand:

(How did the job search go?)

It didn't. My partner went back to the UK two weeks ago. Yeah, just didn't adjust. It was a combination of things. I think work was one of the factors. And the realisation that it is a long way from home.

(Did you break up?)

Yep. There were a number of factors. So at the end of the day there was no looking for work or anything like that, it was just seeing how we adjusted to the new environment, that sort of thing. And you know, we had a big family in the UK, and I think it was just that, well lots of different factors. (33, female, UK 14 years)

Indeed, participants and their partners sometimes readjusted at a different pace, as discussed here by Participant 28:

<Partner> took about six months to adjust to the UK once we arrived, so that was a real big change for her. So now I think it's quicker this time, but it's still a bit more of a culture shock for her than what I'm feeling. But yeah, she is still managing it and doesn't want to run back off to the UK or anything. (28, male, UK 4 years)

Participant 36 had expressed some concern in the first interview about his English wife's adjustment in New Zealand. However, by the second interview, this had significantly reduced:

I guess she's had some ups and downs about moving away from her family, like everybody will. And to be fair from England to New Zealand is not dramatically different. (36, male, UK 13 years)

5.4.4 Social Reintegration

The time of the second interview was too soon for some participants to comment on outcomes or even progress in relation to social reintegration. However, for those who did comment (n=15), findings are summarised in Table 5.10.

Table 5.10.

Social Reintegration

<i>Social reintegration</i>	<i>Participants N</i>
Easy	12
Difficult	3

Participants finding social reintegration easy tended to reconnect with old friends, or expanded social contacts through initial time spent with family. Indeed, many had retained social connections throughout their time abroad, for example through Facebook. Participant 30 commented on the ease of rebuilding a social network:

It's better than I thought. <Partner> has some family here, so we started to hit the ground running. So we've met a few people that way; friends of friends. In Hong Kong, we didn't have many friends. People there had pretty high disposable income and no hesitation to spend it on expensive meals and nights out and travel. Whereas in New Zealand, everyone is paying off a million dollar mortgage and thinking about starting a family, so you go and have a BBQ at someone's house and talk about the property market rather than go out to breakfast at a five star hotel. (30, male, Hong Kong 9 months and UK 3 years)

Participant 33 echoed the thoughts of the many participants who had reconnected with old friends:

It's predominantly been old connections. It has been very busy socially. This week I haven't had a night when I haven't had something on. But I am lovely David, so of course!

(It's tough being popular)

Yes. And there is lots on. And obviously being summer too, it is different because everyone is out and about doing things. I'm sure it will be a little bit different in winter. (33, female, UK 14 years)

Difficulties reconnecting with old social contacts tended to take the form of 'less in common than we used to'. Typically this was because old friends had started families, and many participants had not (yet), as expressed by Participant 19:

It is quite hard because the people I do know are all married with children. And that's fine, but they have different priorities. (19, female, UK 16 years)

5.4.5 Explaining Initial Repatriation Outcomes

Given the comments the majority of participants made about their ease of repatriation, from finding work through to readjustment to New Zealand life, participants were asked to reflect on the reasons for this. Key themes here related to becoming informed about life and work in New Zealand, and staying connected to contacts in New Zealand while

abroad, which contributed to realistic expectations for repatriation. In addition, having support networks of family and friends was viewed as important. Some of these themes are expressed here by Participant 7:

I think it's just a dose of realism. I was quite realistic around how I thought things would go, and I think it has gone more or less like that. But the other thing that helped was having family around. (07, male, Japan 5 years)

Participants 17 and 18 echoed the themes of information leading to realistic expectations:

We already knew how much rent was going to cost. We already knew it was going to be tough to find rental accommodation and tough to buy a house, and all that sort of stuff. If you just jump on the boat or jump on the plane and say, let's just see what it's like, you could just so easily turn around and go back again, because there are things that if you're not prepared for them, you think, my goodness. (17, female, England 14 years)

You've just got to be prepared. I think you just have to have different expectations, because Auckland is never going to be London and never going to even be mini-London. (18, female, UK 7 years)

Participant 28 stressed the need to remain connected to personal and professional contacts in New Zealand during expatriation:

My old colleagues, it would have been quite easy just to phase them out and never talk to them again. But by keeping in touch with them, I mean it was only once a year, they always said to me, get in touch with us when you come back, there might be a job for you. But you always take that with a grain of salt. Anything could happen. But I managed to keep in touch with them, and they remembered me. (28, male, UK 4 years)

The similarity of the New Zealand culture and the host culture was also identified by several participants as a potential factor, as discussed here by Participant 23. He also introduces the idea that visiting New Zealand regularly as an expatriate may help ease readjustment:

The UK culture is quite similar to the Kiwi culture. I'm saying that more so than say my sister, who lives in Japan, because when she came back this Christmas and hadn't been back for over two years, and she kept commenting on things that were quite different. But in the UK we're used to being around people who are speaking English. (23, male, UK 5 years)

In relation to professional readjustment, Participant 16 was one of many who had a more positive experience than typically anticipated:

It has just been really easy, and I feel like it would be easy just to slot back into life here like I haven't even been away for 11 years, it has worked so well.

(You're not the only one who has said that.)

So I guess maybe we're underestimating how open New Zealand employers are here, or how keen they are to get international experience into their workplaces.

(16, female, UK 18 months)

For the few participants who accepted jobs that did not completely utilise their skills and experience, reasons for this included accepting a role too quickly, or taking a smaller role in the target industry in order to simply gain initial employment. These are discussed here by Participant 11:

(What made you think you had to take a step back?)

The job came quickly and it was almost handed to me on a silver platter. That meant I didn't have to think for the first six months of being back in New Zealand, and it gave me a chance to work in the health industry, which is where I want to be. It might be backwards or sideways or whatever, although it's in the right direction for my career, it's just kind of a holding job. (11, female, UK 2 years)

In conclusion, Participant 28, who returned from London, stressed the importance of having realistic expectations as well as focusing on what New Zealand has that might not be found in the host country:

We went to a concert the other day down at the Vector Arena, and we got there to this sold out concert, oh brilliant, and we walked in and there would have

been about 3 or 4000 people there. At that point we both sat down and went, wow, where are all the people? We're used to the O2 which holds 50,000 or something. And New Zealand has also got different things as well. So I mean you could never go fishing or surfing or to lie on the beach in the UK. (28, male, UK 4 years)

Contingencies

In addition to reflecting on the relative ease of readjustment to New Zealand, some specific contingencies emerged in relation to the ease of finding career-stage appropriate work, and positive recognition of the skills and experience gained abroad. By far the most recurrent theme was the idea that this recognition was stronger – by recruiters, hiring managers and colleagues – in cases where they too had worked abroad. Several examples follow:

[One of the recruiters] had been overseas working in a law firm, so a similar sort of career progression to me. So I guess we aligned quite well that way. The HR director who was obviously the final decision maker, she has worked overseas as well. So they do I guess value the experience that you do get overseas and what you can bring to the role. (16, female, UK 18 months)

Participant 26's manager and two of her immediate team had also worked abroad. She was asked whether she thought this affected their appreciation of the experience she gained abroad:

Yeah, definitely. I think there is that appreciation of the different perspective and them having been there and done that and seen the different issues and different approaches, I think that definitely helps form their opinion. (26, female, UK 8 years)

Participants 28 and 27 also commented on managers who had worked abroad, and the link between this and valuing their experience:

She had been overseas for about five years, so she really understood the value of working overseas as well as working in-house for large companies as well. So they really got it. I think all the partners in that firm had worked overseas for different firms, so they really understood it. (28, male, UK 4 years)

My boss is actually from the UK. And I wonder if that had something to do with it. She has worked in this organisation for four years. It has been her first and only role that she's had since she has lived in New Zealand. But I do wonder if maybe she valued my experience in the UK quite a lot more than some other organisations that looked at my CV did. (27, female, UK 6 years)

In addition, several participants, including Participant 23, thought that industry and career stage or experience level might be factors in professional readjustment success:

(Are you saying the job side isn't as bad as we might think?)

Yeah, it's probably the industry as well perhaps. But I think it's definitely a lot to do with the experience, because they're finding a lot of younger candidates are in the market, sort of 23, straight of university but with no experience, and a lot of places are wanting five years plus sort of experience. So yeah, friends have come back, two came back last year in accounting jobs, both of them found roles quickly as well. And then another two already had work lined up. (23, male, UK 5 years)

As well as career stage, the job market itself was identified as a possible factor in professional repatriation outcomes, as discussed by Participant 7:

(This is your second repatriation – how would you compare the two experiences?)

Yeah, but obviously a very different career stage. It's a really good question. When I came back eight years ago now, at that stage the job market was really good. So, I went into something I'd never done before. There was a big adjustment around that, you know. This time it's far from that, I've established that career and sort of picking up where I left off. (07, male, Japan 5 years)

In addition, the amount of time away was thought to be a factor:

I think the amount of time you've been in the UK would be a big factor in the differences in how it is coming back. I feel like the longer you're there the more difficult it is. (18, female, UK 7 years)

Participant 28 felt that returning as a couple might have helped him:

A friend of ours who moved back at the same time as us is really struggling with the transition back. So he was there for about five years, and before that he was in Japan for a year, and he is really struggling to find a job. I think he's done a couple of interviews over in Melbourne. He's really, really struggling. He has put on a load of weight, and he's just mooching around depressed and bored. He thinks New Zealand sucks and he should have stayed in the UK. Somehow for us, it has been much easier. Maybe coming back as a couple helps. (28, male, UK 4 years)

Participant 35 explained that treating repatriation like the original expatriation helped her:

Just as you are when you move internationally and relocate, you believe you're in a new place, and you think about how you want to build your networks, how you have to feel out how to integrate appropriately, move home, and treat it the same way. You're different. New Zealand is different. And rather than expect

everything to fall into place, just pretend you're moving to a new country, and I think it will be easier.

She also specifically targeted potential employers who valued the skills and experience she gained abroad. In fact, this was a prerequisite for her accepting a job offer.

They're not challenged by what I'm bringing back from an international space. They actually embrace it. I've been given a pretty long rope, and told, hey you have the skills, it would be stupid of us to put you in a box. So just run, and if you run too far, we'll tell you. But we would be dumb not to utilise what you've learned in different parts of the world. (35, female, Canada 3 years)

5.5 Elements of Expatriate Life Missed

It was important to give negative experiences and themes the opportunity to emerge. Therefore, participants were asked what they missed about life abroad, and if they had any regrets about repatriating. None of the participants said they regretted repatriating. However, most said there were things they missed about their host countries. Key elements raised were friends and family, as expressed by 17 and 27:

One of our best friends just had a baby. And that was the first time I thought, God I'm actually missing something. And you know, you spend a long time building those relationships up, but you have to accept the fact that if you live on the other side of the world you miss everything. (17, female, UK 14 years)

We are getting married later this year. And we have a number of close friends who live in London who won't make it to the wedding. I guess I probably should have expected that. That might be something that will feel a bit more difficult as we get closer to the time. (27, female, UK 6 years)

Meanwhile, after repatriating to New Zealand, Participant 19 missed London, almost to the point of reassessing her decision. However, these feelings only lasted a few months:

Some days I thought, oh my God what have I done? This is just a big mistake. And then actually, after the first two or three or four months, I realised I'm consciously or subconsciously not thinking about London. I just don't think about it. (19, female, UK 16 years)

Participant 29 almost reassessed her decision too. This was due to perceptions of poor treatment during her job search, and reflections on the positive state of her career before she left her host country:

No, I don't have any regrets about the move. If I had spoken to you early last week, I might have felt differently, because I had just had that situation with the [potential employer], and I was feeling pretty pissed off, and quite negative. And it became very frustrating, and I was in a very strong position in my last job. I was up for promotion. And to leave that and then be faced with situations where people aren't really paying you the respect to provide you with feedback, I was thinking, what have I done? (29, female, UK 5 years)

The difficulty in making the decision to repatriate flowed through to this section. Here, Participant 12 reflects on her time in Belgium and discusses her feelings of being torn between there and New Zealand:

I was very wary of the children and if they're going to move [to New Zealand] it's better to do it sooner rather than later, because they get so much more entrenched into the education and social side of things. The older they are it's always going to be harder to change. But I don't regret it. At the end of the day it had to happen, so you sort of get on and do it and make the most of it. (12, female, Belgium 3 years)

Likewise, Participant 22 expressed an affinity for his former host country:

I miss all of the things about the UK now that I'm here. I didn't think I would miss it so much, I mean I knew I would miss things. It was hard to get me to leave in the first place, but I got myself into a position where, yeah I was ready to go. But yeah I definitely feel an affinity for the UK still. (22, male, UK 6 years)

Participant 32 raised the issue of a trade-off between New Zealand lifestyle and career ambition that had also been raised in the expectations phase:

Would I give up the New Zealand lifestyle and a comfortable progression with my career, would I give it up to try and excel my career over there again? Probably not. It's just, now that I've seen it, and done it, it's just no matter how

much you make, you could make triple or hundreds of thousands of pounds, to really be happy over there.

(So you don't miss business hub of the UK that you spoke about last time?)

No, not really, because I'm back home now. This is life. This will be my life for the next x amount of years. Let's build it from here. You just don't need to worry about it unless you want to really make it big in whatever field you're in. If you've got that sort of drive, then sure go over, but you have to offset the family and all the rest of it while you're doing that. (32, male, UK 1 year)

Several participants commented on the size and population of New Zealand in relation to their larger host countries, for example Participant 23:

I loved being able to go to the supermarket and being completely anonymous. No one knew who you were. That's probably the one biggest thing I miss. Invercargill being small, you go to the supermarket here and you probably know ten people. When you go after work, you don't really want that. (23, male, UK 5 years)

Participant 28 put his feelings of being back in smaller New Zealand into some perspective:

It's never going to have the entertainment factor, or the events, or just the sheer crush of people that London has. But it's a completely different place. You

walk down the main street on a Friday night at six o'clock and you'll see five people. That does take adjustment, but it is what it is, and you just get on with it. We always knew it would be different, and we weren't thinking we were going to go back to this amazing full on place or anything. I knew what we were getting ourselves in for. (28, male, UK 4 years)

Despite his knowledge of what to expect in New Zealand, Participant 28 also said he felt strange because he returned to the same job and the bedroom he was in before he left New Zealand:

It was a bit weird when I went to work on the first day, because I was back in the same room in my Mum's house that we were in when we left, the same bedspread, the same bedroom. It was all a bit weird. So you jump in the car and then you go to work and it's the same building, the same people. It was like, where has the last five years gone? (28, male, UK 4 years)

5.5.1 Safety Net

The theme of a safety net emerged during the expectations phase. Many participants expressed their willingness to return to the host country or to another country should things not work out as expected in New Zealand. Since the theme had emerged, this was also explored in the experiences phase. It was useful to understand whether participants were now committed to living in New Zealand in the long term, or whether they were seriously contemplating a move elsewhere at some stage. Participants generally did not rule out moving from New Zealand in the future, although most were not actively planning such a move at by the time of the second interview. Participant 20

expressed this commonly held view, fuelling the theme that the safety net that emerged in the expectations phase was still present:

We're committed to staying for a number of years, but at this point, six months in, we would never say we would never leave here. We're committed to being here now and we want to make it work, but it's a lot harder than we imagined. We feel like our disposable income and our lifestyle have definitely been impacted, but we'll definitely stay for a couple of years. But I've still got my house in London and we could go back, so it's never forever, is it? Well, not for us anyway. (20, female, UK 5 years)

In the cases where participants did not fit the 'safety net' theme, this tended to be due to restrictions on visas or their children's mobility:

If it was just me it would be a totally different story, but it's not, so yeah, no chance of returning to live in Europe. Visa-wise I can't do it anyway. So that's just not an option, which I think is kind of sad, and I think it's the end of a chapter, and it was a big part of my life. You make the most of what you've got. I have a house with an amazing view, and you look outside and you say it's good, and that's why I'm here, and that's best for everybody at the end of the day. (11, female, UK 2 years)

In addition, people tended to feel that they had invested a lot in returning to New Zealand, and wanted to make a go of it before deciding what to do. The decision to move abroad again could be just as difficult as that taken to repatriate to New Zealand.

Indeed, Participant 19 felt she should live elsewhere in New Zealand before taking any plunge to move abroad again:

There were days when I thought, oh my God I'm going back, this is terrible. But I haven't given it a huge amount of thought yet, because I wanted to really settle in here first. But I would try somewhere else in New Zealand first, because the main reason I came back was to be closer to my family. So rather than go, it's just a binary decision: I have to go back to London if I don't like it here, I could try and go to Wellington. But also, I just don't know about going back. I think going back to London now just wouldn't be the same. (19, female, UK 16 years)

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings of the second phase of this research; the expectations of SIR New Zealanders. First, information on movers and non-movers was discussed. Twenty-seven of the 32 participants repatriated as planned, while the remainder were not living in New Zealand at the time of the second interview. In four cases they had not yet moved to New Zealand, while in the final case the participant had repatriated and then left for Australia.

Findings relating to work as well as non-work experiences were also presented in this chapter. In terms of work, participants generally reported relative speed and ease of finding appropriate employment in New Zealand. The number of participants who perceived a negative reception to their skills and experience from abroad was outnumbered by those reporting experiencing positive reception three to one. However,

the job search was a commonly cited cause of frustration for participants, especially in relation to treatment by recruitment agents.

In terms of remuneration, all but one working participant was now earning the same or more than expected. Work culture readjustment processes caused difficulties for six participants; the remainder found settling in easy or manageable. In addition, only two participants reported deterioration in work-life balance compared with the host country.

Findings relating to non-work experiences covered lifestyle, cost of living, general readjustment and social reintegration. The majority of participants perceived a positive New Zealand lifestyle after repatriation. However, the cost of living was seen as high by most, especially when considered in relation to income. Many emphasised they knew this before repatriating.

Non-work readjustment was viewed as easy by most, with the difficulties reported relating mostly to the smaller scale of life in New Zealand compared with life abroad. In addition, issues with partners' adjustment or finding work tended to affect participants' assessment of repatriation success. In terms of social lives, most participants who commented on this found it relatively easy to reconnect with friends and expand social networks. Conversely, many participants were already missing friends abroad.

Finally, participants were asked to reflect on the factors enabling a successful – or indeed difficult – repatriation experience. Findings here also related to work and non-work elements. Realistic, informed expectations were generally viewed as easing

repatriation, while employers and colleagues who had also worked abroad tended to be perceived as valuing international experience more highly than those who had not. Participants were generally committed to staying in New Zealand in the short term, but did not rule out moving abroad again in the future.

In the next chapter, the findings from the two phases of the study are drawn together, to explore the level of congruence between participants' pre-move expectations and their post-move experiences. In doing so, the similarities and then the differences between the two phases are summarised. These are the foundations of much of the theory development presented in Chapter Seven. The potential enablers of successful repatriation as well as factors that may contribute to difficulties are also discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Six

Expectations – Experiences Congruence

Expectations in themselves possess no predictive power for either psychological or socio-cultural outcomes; however, their relevance is increased when assessed in conjunction with experiences. (Rogers & Ward, 1993, p. 192)

6.1 Introduction

Findings in each of the two phases of this study have been presented in the preceding two chapters. In Chapter Four, it was concluded that participants generally had pre-move expectations that had been informed by an unbroken connection with New Zealand during expatriation. In addition, participants had taken proactive steps to gather information while still abroad. They had generally reconciled pessimistic work-related expectations with positive lifestyle expectations during the process of making the complex - and yet still frail - decision to return.

In Chapter Five, findings from the second phase, the post-move experiences, were presented. Participants generally found work quickly and with relative ease, despite significant frustrations with recruitment agents as well as potential employers during the job search. Meanwhile, they had generally positive experiences of the New Zealand lifestyle despite perceptions of a high cost of living and missing some elements of their expatriate lives.

This chapter connects the findings of both phases, thereby extending the analysis presented earlier. It also bridges the findings and discussion chapters, by exploring the

specific similarities and differences found between the expectations and experiences phases. These degrees of similarity and difference are termed ‘congruence’ here. This chapter is viewed as a prerequisite to theory development, which will be presented in Chapter Seven.

The chapter begins with sections detailing the similarities and then the differences between participants’ expectations and their experiences. Then, potential reasons for the magnitude of congruence identified, which have emerged from the data, are considered. In addition, participants’ attributions of their repatriation successes and challenges are discussed, and their advice to others considering or undertaking SIR is presented. Finally, the conclusion is prefaced with reflections on the individual nature of the repatriation experience.

6.2 Summary of Similarities

First, the elements of expectations and experiences that were generally congruent are presented. Table 6.1 identifies each congruent element, expands on its nature, and identifies its impact on participants’ repatriation experiences.

Table 6.1.

Elements in which Expectations and Experiences were Generally Congruent

<i>Element</i>	<i>Nature</i>	<i>Impact on experience</i>
Recognition of skills and experience during job search	Poor recognition through recruiters misunderstanding experience.	Negative
Job search process	Participants experienced lengthy recruitment and selection processes characterised by absence of communication.	Negative
Work culture readjustment	The ease of readjusting to New Zealand work culture was generally congruent with expectations.	Positive
<i>New Zealand lifestyle*</i>	<i>A majority of participants perceived this as superior, as expected.</i>	<i>Positive</i>
Cost of living (but see also 'costs relative to income' in 6.3)	Participants found New Zealand an expensive place to live, as expected.	Negative
Social reintegration	Relatively easy, as expected.	Positive
Missing the host country	Generally as expected: NZ geographical and cultural isolation; family	Negative

**Critical due to it being a pull motive.*

Each row of the table is now discussed in turn. First, participants had expected difficulty finding work that reflected the skills and experience acquired abroad. Here, this is considered 'recognition of skills and experience during the job search'. There is a necessary distinction between recognition during the job search itself and on-the-job recognition (as identified in the next section). Participants expressed concern that many recruiters and hiring managers did not value their newfound skills and experience. Conversely, they tended to experience higher recognition of their skills and experience from recruiters and hiring managers who had also worked abroad.

The issue of the job search process itself is addressed in the next element in the table. Participants expected finding career stage appropriate work difficult, and this was reflected in their frustrations during the job search. These were centred around poor communication during recruitment and selection processes, including complete non-responses to job applications, and selection process steps perceived as excessively complex.

While the first two elements had a negative overall impact on participants' post-repatriation experiences, the next two had a positive impact. In relation to work culture readjustment, slightly more participants found this easier than had expected to, however it was generally congruent. The relative ease with which they readjusted, despite being able to identify differences between the New Zealand work culture and that of their host country, contributed positively to their overall experience.

Participants' positive experiences of the New Zealand lifestyle played an important role in their assessment of the repatriation experience, and indeed of their decisions to repatriate. Fortunately, most perceived this as positive. This is viewed as a critical element because it connects the experiences findings with the original motivation to repatriate, which participants discussed in the phase one interviews. In many cases, perceptions of a superior New Zealand lifestyle had tipped the decision to move scales in favour of repatriation, since so many of the work-related expectations had been negative.

Even though participants had overwhelmingly identified the cost of living in New Zealand as high, and experienced it as such, this was still viewed as having a negative

impact on their repatriation experiences. As a known factor prior to moving, it was not a surprise in itself. However, in many cases the magnitude of the cost of living was underestimated, especially when considered in relation to its impact on disposable income (as discussed in Section 6.3).

Social reintegration experiences were generally easy as expected, with few concerns expressed. Where participants had difficulty reconnecting with former social contacts this tended to be due to perceptions of having less in common, due to either the friends not having lived abroad or one party having had children.

Finally, when asked in the phase one interviews to identify negative expectations about life in New Zealand, participants tended to believe New Zealand was relatively geographically and culturally isolated. Indeed, participants noticed this after repatriating. Although this potentially has a negative initial impact on their overall experience, it is likely that this will diminish over time, as life in New Zealand becomes normalised and they become less frequently conscious of differences between home and host countries.

6.3 Summary of Differences and Surprises

While there were many repatriation experiences that were congruent with expectations, some were not, and were therefore sources of surprise for participants. Some of these surprises were negative, and some were positive. These differences and surprises are addressed next, and outlined in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2.

Elements in which Expectations and Experiences were Not Congruent

<i>Element</i>	<i>Nature</i>	<i>Impact on experience</i>
Recognition of skills and experience on the job	Higher recognition than expected.	Positive
Ease of finding work	Easier than expected.	Positive
Remuneration	More participants earned more than expected, than earned less than expected.	Positive
Work-life balance	Better than expected.	Positive
Cost of living relative to income	The magnitude of the cost of living increase was greater than expected. This resulted in a lower disposable income than anticipated.	Negative
Housing prices	The cost of housing was greater than expected.	Negative
Participants' cultural readjustment	Easier than expected.	Positive
<i>Partners' (re)adjustment*</i>	<i>Unanticipated by participants</i>	<i>Negative and positive</i>

**Viewed as critical due to suspected cause of re-evaluation of repatriation decision.*

6.3.1 Better than Expected

First, participants' positive surprises are considered. Although the recognition of skills and experience acquired abroad had generally been negative during the job search itself, this tended to change once participants started work. This was reflected in both remuneration and day-to-day reference to participants by their new colleagues. Colleagues and managers who had also worked abroad were perceived as placing more value on participants' overseas experience.

Finding work was generally easier than expected, despite participants' perceptions that their skills and experience were misunderstood by people involved in the selection

process. Career stage appropriate work tended to be more available than participants had expected. Participants applying direct to organisations tended to find jobs – and be offered interviews and subsequent employment - slightly more easily than those applying through recruitment agents.

Work-life balance was also a positive surprise for many. This had also emerged as one motive to return, so like the lifestyle element discussed in Section 6.2, it was important that it at least lived up to expectations. Finally, cultural readjustment was generally easier than anticipated, with many participants believing that after an initial period of being conscious of differences in everyday life and culture, that this quickly dissipated.

6.3.2 Worse than Expected

Next, negative surprises are considered. Two of the three negative surprises related in some way to finances. The first was cost of living relative to income. Although participants had expected a high cost of living in New Zealand, the magnitude of this was underestimated. This resulted in a lower disposable income for many participants. This is significant because many were also starting families on return, and attempting to live on one income while they did so. Some participants also connected higher than expected housing costs with the lifestyle element; it was a source of disappointment for them that they could not experience as much of the New Zealand lifestyle because they were paying even more for housing than expected, again contributing to lower disposable income.

The third and final negative surprise that emerged related to participants' partners. Of the 32 participants at the time of the phase one interview, 25 had partners; 13 who were

also from New Zealand, and 12 of other nationalities, while seven were single. Most partnered participants had also expatriated with those partners, while only a few had met their partners in the current host country.

The partner adjustment element was interesting for two reasons. First, participants often responded to questions about their own readjustment by talking about how their partners were adjusting (readjusting, if also New Zealanders). Second, when participants felt partners were adjusting well and finding work, this contributed significantly to participants' assessment of their repatriation experience and in extreme cases, the decision to repatriate itself. This was not openly predicted at the expectations phase. This has either a negative or positive impact depending on each participant's assessment of his or her partner's experiences.

6.4 Explaining Similarities and Differences

It is useful to consider the reasons for the level of congruence between participants' expectations and their experiences. In Section 5.4.5, some of the reasons participants gave for the relative ease of repatriation and the initial outcomes experienced, were outlined. In addition to summarising these self-report reflections, additional analysis is provided here.

6.4.1 Attribution

Most participants provided thoughts on the reasons for initial repatriation outcomes. Participants spoke of having realistic expectations, fuelled by knowledge of work and non-work elements of life in New Zealand. This knowledge was in turn fuelled by an unbroken connection with New Zealand during expatriation (through keeping in touch

with people and news), through relatively frequent visits to New Zealand, and through proactive investigations participants conducted when deciding to repatriate.

They also spoke of contingencies that appeared to affect initial repatriation outcomes, including first, accessing recruiters, employers and colleagues who had also worked abroad (which affected recognition of skills and experience acquired abroad). Second, being at a career stage that matched current job market demands was thought by some to affect the ease of finding work. Some also thought that more time living abroad led to greater difficulties adjusting, that returning as a couple led to fewer difficulties, and that viewing repatriation adjustment through a similar lens to expatriation adjustment eased adjustment.

Some of their other thoughts on successful repatriation were as follows:

- Having a ‘flexible’ personality that suits both host and home country environments
- A similarity between host and home country work environments
- Being well organised from a logistical perspective
- Feeling ready to move.

While the researcher’s own analysis supports the need for expectations-experiences congruence that had also been identified by participants, the additional analysis performed did not support all of the contingencies they viewed as important for successful repatriation. Several queries were initiated through NVivo in an attempt to look for suggestions of demographic or other variables that appeared to affect initial repatriation outcomes. Although it was clear that well-informed expectations led to low

levels of surprise, no link was found between time away and ease of readjustment. In addition, the data did not seem to support a connection between host country and New Zealand cultural similarity, and ease of repatriation.

However, the analysis provided evidence to support the following:

- Age: The three oldest participants took the longest to find work or were still looking at the time of the second interview.
- Career stage: Early to mid career participants tended to find work more quickly than mid to late career participants.
- Professional connections: Participants who either remained connected to professional networks while abroad or actively built these on return tended to find work more easily.
- Partnered participants: either had very positive or very negative initial repatriation outcomes, which appeared highly dependent on the level of the partners' adjustment. When partners adjusted easily and found work, this positively affected participants' assessment of repatriation outcomes. When partners struggled, this had a negative impact. A similar relationship may also exist between perceptions of children's adjustment and assessment of own repatriation outcomes.

It was also clear from the data that the level of surprise in the SIR New Zealander context was relatively low. The data suggest that retaining a connection with New Zealand eases personal and professional reintegration, however since the vast majority of participants spoke of having been prepared and informed, the impact of a lack of

connectedness could not thoroughly be explored. This will be addressed further in the discussion chapter.

Where participants experienced negative surprises, this tended to be due to the magnitude of financial challenges. Most other negative elements had been anticipated in advance, while positive surprises could possibly have stemmed from low or negative expectations fuelled by media or by contacts who had returned in a different time or to different circumstances.

In addition, a sense was gained that there was a strong emotional commitment to repatriating. People wanted to succeed in New Zealand, even though many expressed a willingness to leave again if things did not work out. This commitment could be related to the complexity of the decision identified in the phase one interviews; because the decision was difficult to make and the move was a physical and emotional upheaval, people wanted to make it work.

Experience Abroad versus Anywhere

In Section 4.4.2, the value participants tended to place on the skills and experience they had gained abroad was discussed. They generally felt that expatriation had enriched their careers. Indeed, the relative speed and ease with which most found jobs in New Zealand could be seen to support this idea. In addition, their skills and experience were often valued by the New Zealand job market. However, some questioned whether it was the overseas nature of their work experience that enriched their careers, or whether they had experienced natural career progression that could equally have taken place had they stayed in New Zealand.

Participant 29 is an example of the participants who questioned this:

I think it's the fact that I have the experience. It doesn't seem to impress them in any way that it happened outside of New Zealand. They deem it as being very relevant, but no more so than if it had happened in New Zealand. I do get the impression that if I had had the exact same job in New Zealand, then it would have meant the exact same as being in London. I don't get the impression that it's that I got that experience in another country. (29, female, UK 5 years)

Participant 23 questioned whether work culture readjustment would have been just as necessary had he changed employers in New Zealand, rather than having come from a job in another country:

The most difficult part would probably be that work piece, just the readjustment for that. But whether that's, well that's probably just changing jobs. (23, male, UK 5 years)

This idea was supported by Participant 27:

I think that some of the difficulties I'm coming up against in my job so far are really just difficulties you could experience the world over; office politics, who makes the decision, decisions being made at the water cooler, you know, those kind of things, which can happen really in any organisation. Building

relationships with people who will be important to you... is what I'm really focusing on at the moment. But I think I'd be doing that in the UK if I was still there. (27, female, UK 6.5 years)

In addition, Participant 16 attributed the absence of a need for work culture readjustment to her industry:

To be fair, I'm working in the same industry. Law firms are probably quite similar wherever you are in the world. (16, female, UK 18 months and Australia 8 years)

These comments demonstrate the need to exercise caution when drawing analytical conclusions from this study. It is simply not possible to confidently or accurately attribute post-repatriation outcomes to expatriation experiences. This is clearly the case for recognition of skills and experience, but as identified here, could also be true of the need for work culture adjustment.

Luck

A further aspect of attribution that emerged was the notion of luck. Participants attributed a range of outcomes to luck, from career to housing and lifestyle. When this began to emerge during the analysis phase, a text search query was run in NVivo. In total, 17 participants mentioned the word 'luck' or 'lucky' in their second interview. Figure 6.1, below, is a 'word tree' output from NVivo which provides contextual words around each mention.

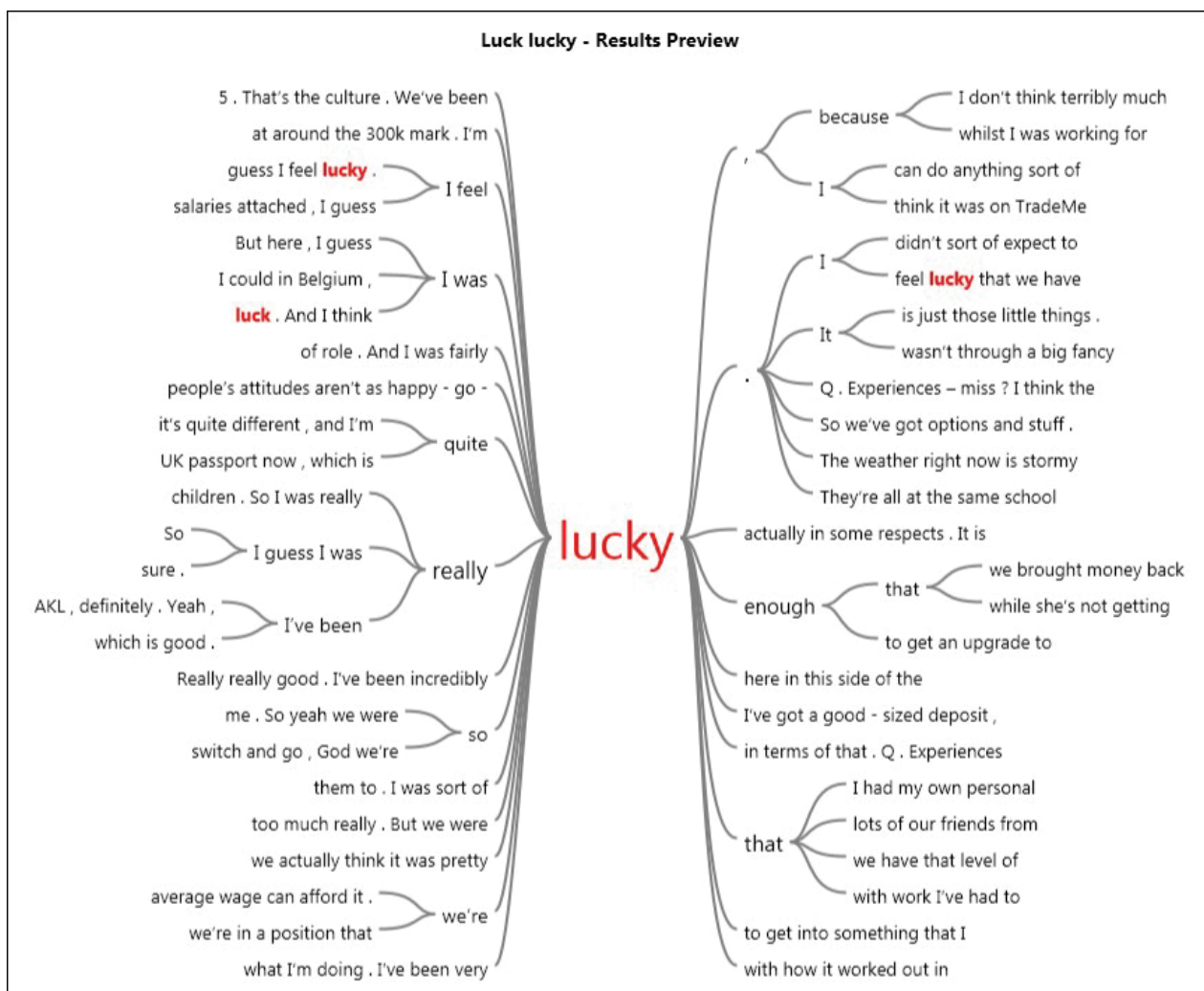


Figure 6.1. 'Luck' and 'Lucky' Word Tree

Participant 16 is one example of the participants who attributed post-repatriation work outcomes to luck:

I guess I was really lucky with how it worked out in terms of a job. It was really through word of mouth I guess. So when I got back to New Zealand I had about five days to get back into life, and then I had to start this new job. So I was really lucky.

As I said before, there's quite an element of luck in terms of how well our transition has been back to Auckland, so probably not a great example for your study. (16, female, UK 18 months and Australia 8 years)

Participant 36 perceived luck in his ability to save enough money abroad to bring back in order to buy a house in the Auckland market:

It's quite frankly bloody expensive, and I don't know how people who are living in New Zealand on an average wage can afford it. We're lucky enough that we brought money back from the UK, so because of that we're in a position where we can buy somewhere. (36, male, UK 13 years)

Participant 12 saw luck in being able to find a home quickly:

We came to see this one, and I said it's fine I'll take it, and the guy said fine, when would you like to move in? And I'm like, tomorrow! And he was like, great! And so we didn't overstay our welcome [in staying with family first], you know with the children. So I was really, really lucky in terms of that. (12, female, Belgium 3 years)

These examples illustrate a theme that ran through many of the phase two interviews. Many participants had such low or negative expectations of their return that they considered their positive post-return outcomes as exceptions to a negative, unsuccessful trend. In these cases, the expectations formed through negative stories appeared to persevere even through participants' own positive personal experiences.

6.4.2 Advice

Some participants chose to provide specific advice to others considering or intending to repatriate. Not all of these were specifically targeted at increasing congruence between expectations and experiences. Much of the advice provided has been implicitly covered in the findings chapters, however this section summarises these, and provides additional advice.

A summary of themes relating to advice is as follows:

- Remain connected to New Zealand throughout expatriation (through keeping up to date with news, and maintaining friendships) because this eases repatriation
- Maintain professional networks in New Zealand throughout expatriation
- For people undecided on whether to repatriate, do it even if it seems like it will be difficult, because the lifestyle rewards warrant it
- Start looking for work in New Zealand while still in the host country. If recruiters or potential employers will not interview you until you return, put effort into building networks instead
- View repatriation as a personal growth phase, in the same way that expatriation was a growth phase
- From a logistical perspective, take the time to plan your return properly; sell furniture rather than paying to ship it
- Have sufficient money saved not to need to work immediately on return, in order to take time to find the right job

In addition to advice to repatriates, some participants offered solutions that involved parties other than the repatriates themselves. For example, Participant 20 believed a repatriate network would be helpful:

One thing we hadn't thought about was whether there were any networks for people who had returned. But I do think there are people with common experiences. I think it's a bit like when you move from New Zealand to a big city offshore, it's always good to meet Kiwis. I definitely think there is some merit in that. (20, female, UK 5 years)

Finally, Participant 35 provided advice to expatriates still building their confidence abroad. This is relevant to repatriation because that confidence could also help during the repatriation phase:

The number of times I've heard, oh yeah we're just from New Zealand. And I'm going, we're just from New Zealand what? I mean, the only reason you're intimidated by the Yanks or the Aussies is that when they walk into a room they just bolshily think they have the right answer. And if you've been in a few of those meetings, you realise they have not done their due diligence. They're just bravado. So Kiwis just wake up, step up and have a little bit of gumption. (35, female, Canada 3 years and Australia 6 years)

6.4.3 Individual Nature of Experiences

Although some strong themes emerged throughout the data analysis phase of this research, it must be emphasised that repatriation is an individual experience. Indeed individuality in turn validates the use of a qualitative approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). The voice of the minority who had significant difficulties should not be lost, and it would be shortsighted to assume that all repatriates conform to the major themes identified here. On the contrary, the existence of low or even negative expectations suggests there is evidence – and certainly stories - of people who experience repatriation quite differently to the majority of participants in this study. Struggles can vary from finding work through to readjustment difficulties.

Indeed, a few participants highlighted the need for government support for repatriates to help with these challenges and better configure the business environment they face in New Zealand:

How do we create viable businesses that either bring them home or promote the businesses for people who do want to come home and have these ideas? Some countries have a ministry, I think it might be India or Ireland who have a ministry to deal with their expats.

Kiwis have these high-powered jobs overseas and then they come home, but how do you have your cake and eat it too? How do you come home to New Zealand and still have your global high-powered career but also be able to have

that great lifestyle that comes with living in New Zealand? (01, male, UK 3 years)

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter provided a connection between the expectations and experience phases of this study, by considering the level of congruence between those phases. In conclusion, there was a relatively high level of congruence between expectations and experiences. First, specific similarities were presented. These included poor recognition of skills and experience, challenging job searches, relatively easy work culture readjustment and positive social and lifestyle experiences. In addition, participants missed elements of life in their host countries.

In terms of differences, although a high cost of living and housing had been predicted, the magnitude of this was still a surprise to many, and it had a higher impact on disposable income than anticipated. In addition, partners' adjustment difficulties had not been considered at the expectations phase to the extent experienced. However, some significant positive surprises emerged, including higher recognition of skills and experience on the job, ease of finding work, improved remuneration, and better work-life balance.

Participants' attribution of their positive and negative experiences was also discussed. This included aspects specific to the participants as well as those specific to external elements such as work environments. Luck emerged as an explanation for positive outcomes, while many participants questioned whether the fact that experience was

gained abroad is relevant to their initial successes. The researcher's own analysis of the interview and demographic data did not always support participants' assertions.

Finally, consideration was given to the advice participants offered to others considering or intending to repatriate, and the individual nature of the repatriation experience was highlighted. Indeed, repatriation cannot be simply described as easy. However, there was a relatively low level of surprise experienced by participants in this study. This chapter was a precursor to the discussion and theory development elements of this study, which are presented in the following chapter.

Chapter Seven

Discussion

7.1 Introduction

While Chapters Four and Five presented findings from the post-move expectations and repatriation experiences of the participants, Chapter Six connected the findings from both phases by exploring the level of congruence between them. In this discussion chapter, findings from these three preceding chapters are related to the research literature in which the study was positioned. Main sections of this chapter loosely correspond to the structure used in key sections of the literature review chapter; mobility motivation, reentry theory, expectations theory, IA expectations and experiences literature, SIR studies and related New Zealand work. In addition, throughout its sections, this chapter presents theoretical contributions of the current study.

First, diagrams of themes are presented as Figure 7.1 (expectations), and Figure 7.2 (experiences), below. Here, the main findings of the study, and connections between findings can be seen. Therefore, as summaries of key themes, their contents are used throughout this chapter. Their structure is based on Miles and Huberman's (1994, p. 133) tree diagram and Richardson et al.'s (2013, p. 65) graphical display of themes. This is a useful device to apply here, since it enables visualisation of the breadth of topics explored.

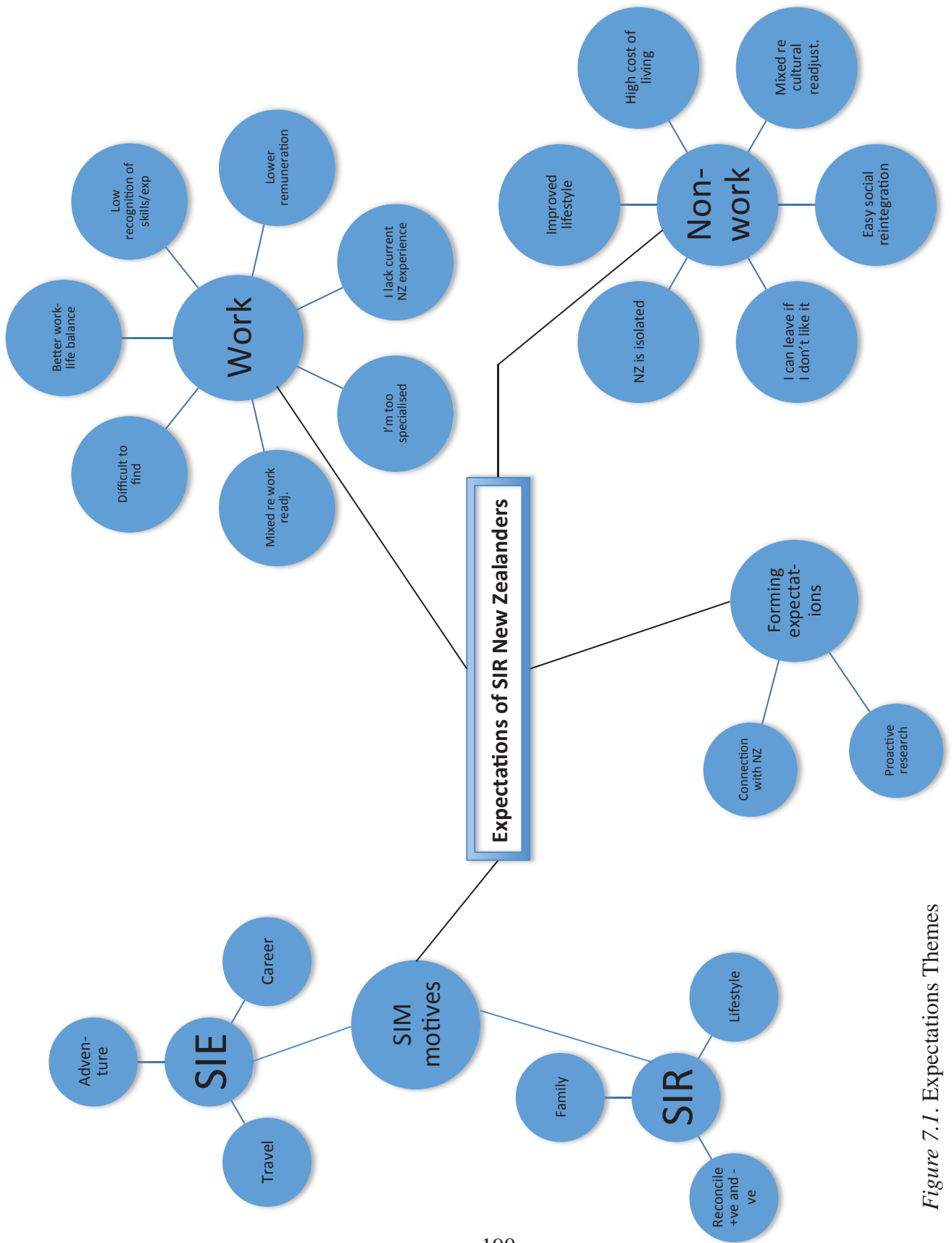


Figure 7.1. Expectations Themes

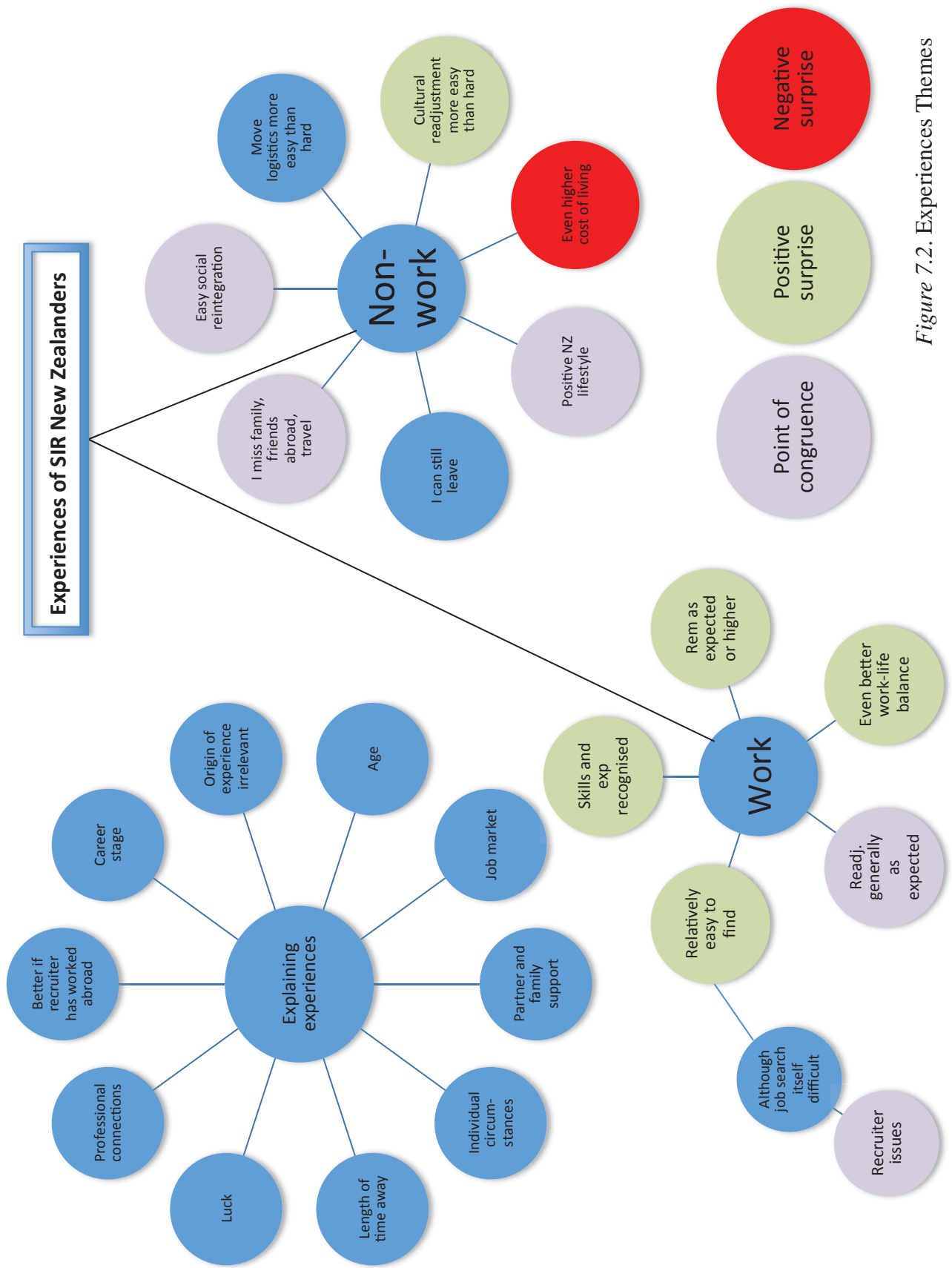


Figure 7.2. Experiences Themes

7.2 Mobility Motivation

The first area of findings to relate to prior research is participants' motives for self-initiating both their original expatriation and their current repatriation. Motivation for expatriation is addressed first. In the current study, career and travel were the most significant motives, followed by adventure. Therefore, it offers partial support to Thorn's (2008, 2009) work on SIE motivation, which also reported career and travel motives. Thorn's work also found an 'economics' motive for SIE, associated with the financial aspects of living and working abroad, which was not a key motive in the original expatriation of the current study's participants.

Thorn's work also found that a range of home and host country factors represented an equation calculated by each mover, which resulted in a decision to expatriate. As a qualitative exploratory study, the present study did not investigate these factors to the quantitative extent or detail of previous work. However, it did emerge that around one third of the participants had a 'push' element in their decision to leave New Zealand, for example, they felt their career had 'hit a wall' or that life in New Zealand had become boring. None of the participants left New Zealand with the intention of staying away permanently, and yet, they had no fixed duration in mind when they left.

It is noteworthy that such an equation did strongly emerge in relation to participants' motives for repatriating. Repatriation is the second area of findings in relation to participant's mobility motives. Here, home country pull factors outweighed host country pushes. People were drawn to New Zealand for family reasons, to raise children in New Zealand, and for the New Zealand lifestyle. The host country push

factors included having had enough of life abroad, or having visas expire and not wanting to renew them. An additional push factor took the form of ‘completion of objectives’. That is, most participants felt that they had achieved what they had set out to achieve abroad, and it therefore followed logically that it was now time to repatriate. This represents an emergent connection between SIE motivation and SIR motivation. The significance of this connection is that motives for SIE and SIR should perhaps not be considered isolated; the achievement of original SIE objectives, in other words, the fulfilment of motivation, can represent a motive for SIR in its own right. This has not previously been reported in the SIR literature.

Meanwhile, distinguishing SIE motivation from SIR motivation in this study is that the original decision to expatriate appeared a lot simpler than the one taken to return. Indeed, the complexity and difficulty reflected in the return decision-making process came through in the anguish many participants conveyed in speaking about the decision. This process appeared more prolonged and involved than the expatriation decision, perhaps because participants now had experience of life in New Zealand and abroad, and they had to balance the pros and cons of life in each country. Despite this, the decision itself was well-informed, through proactive research and through a connection with New Zealand that had not been broken during participants’ time abroad. This appears to connect the factors influencing the decision with the specific expectations formed; people tended to expect the things they had learned about in the pre-return decision phase.

Motivation has been specifically investigated in only two prior SIR studies. Guo et al.’s (2013) paper does not report the level of difficulty the current study’s participants

experienced with the repatriation decision, instead citing career and family as primary drivers to return to China. Tharenou and Caulfield's (2010) paper did report that the decision is driven by multiple factors, but their model of host country pulls and pushes and home country pulls does not directly identify or address the difficulty of resolving competing ones.

One final influence on the decision to return was participants' partners. Partnered participants spoke of conflict within their relationships due to one partner wanting to move more than the other, and through the differing weightings each placed on the various go-stay factors. Again, this finding has not emerged in any prior SIR-specific work. Thorn (2008) found that partners' wishes and careers influence - and can complicate - decisions to SIE, and the present findings suggest that this thinking can be extended to SIRs. The repatriation decision-making process, then, can be viewed as an exercise in weighing up home country pushes and pulls, host country pushes and pulls, and partner considerations. Each of these components involves work and family considerations.

Table 7.1.

A Spectrum of Global Mobility Including SIRs

Dimension	Corporate focus				Individual focus			
	Short-term/ flexpatriates	Expatriates	Organisational SIE/ Secondment	Self- initiated expatriates	Self-initiated repatriates	OE	International students	Migrants
Initiation	Company directed	Company directed	Self, but with company sponsorship	Self	Self	Self	Family / self migration plan	Family / self
Goals	Company projects	Company projects	Company projects	Individual	Individual	Individual	Family	Family / individual
Funding	Company salary and expenses	Company salary and expenses	Some relocation assistance	Private	Private (some assistance)*	Private	Private	Private
Focus	Career	Career	Career	Career / adventure	Lifestyle and family (career)*	Career / adventure	Migration	Migration
Career impetus	Structured / traditional	Structured / traditional	Structured / traditional	Planned	Structured / traditional	Opportunistic	Developing	Developing
Intended duration	Short, non-residential	Non-permanent	Non-permanent	Non-permanent	Permanent and non-permanent	Non-permanent	Leading to permanent	Permanent
Employment	Regular	Regular	Regular	Regular	Casual	Casual, if any	Casual, if any	Any
Occupational category	Usually professional	Usually professional	Usually professional	Any	Usually prof own business	Any	None	Any

*Comments in brackets denote differences in findings across the SIR literature; Section 2.2.

Adapted from Doherty et al. (2013), p.105

The original ‘spectrum of global mobility’ (Doherty et al., 2013), which was reproduced in an amended form in Table 2.1 in Section 2.6, omitted SIRs. This study contributes additional SIR-specific information to add to the extant SIR literature to develop this spectrum (Table 7.1, highlighted column). The first three dimensions, initiation, goals and funding, are derived from the definition of SIR itself. The differences in SIRs’ funding noted in the table reflect the differences identified in the prior work reviewed in Section 2.2 – that some studies included former IAs in their samples. Findings in the present study in relation to the focus dimension suggest that lifestyle and family are points of focus of SIR New Zealanders, while career has also been identified in prior SIR work (Section 2.2). This is not to suggest that career is now unimportant to SIRs, rather that there was a shift in focus from the travel and adventure motives for expatriation, towards spending time with family, raising children in New Zealand, or returning to a lifestyle perceived as superior than that experienced abroad.

Doherty et al. (2013) do not offer definitions for the differing categories within their ‘career impetus’ dimension, however the current study’s findings suggest that SIRs generally return to a structured, traditional type of job. While career is not a core driver for SIE, it is an important element of SIE because it helps individuals realise their objectives (Doherty, et al., 2013). Similarly, participants of the current study did not identify career as a driver for returning, but nor did they indicate their careers were unimportant. Career, then, can be considered an enabler of the lifestyle to which participants wish to return.

While SIEs do not intend to be away permanently (Doherty et al., 2013), one participant in three within the present study indicated they were prepared to leave New Zealand

again should their experiences not live up to their expectations. The remainder of the participants either did not comment on the intended duration of their return or indicated it was a long-term move. This can be seen to relate to the ‘focus’ dimension; if participants are returning to raise children in New Zealand, it follows that they would not intend to leave New Zealand again until those children had been raised.

In terms of employment and occupational category, the final dimensions in the table, most of the current study’s participants were returning with the intention of taking up regular employment. This tended to represent a continuation of the career path followed abroad. However, in a minority of cases, participants were starting their own businesses in New Zealand. These participants had typically seen an opportunity and had the confidence and networks to support the realisation of that opportunity. A few participants also continued working for companies they had worked for abroad, as contractors working from home. This tended to occur until they found regular employment. As this study’s sample was of highly skilled SIRs, a focus of the SIM literature, it follows that the ‘occupational category’ dimension is contributed as usually professional.

7.3 Reentry Theory

The second key area of literature to which this study contributes is reentry theory. Within this, findings can be separated between reacculturation, and reverse culture shock. This section posits theoretical contributions derived from the study’s findings, and relates these to the theory which preceded it. The theory here is derived from the empirical data analysed and presented in Chapters Four, Five and Six. A main

contribution here is the development of a new curve to replace the W-curve of cultural adjustment, which this study deems inapplicable in an SIR New Zealander context.

7.3.1 Reacculturation Phases

First, reacculturation phases are considered. Literature discussed in Section 2.3.1 considered the various readjustment steps that returners theoretically undergo, both during expatriation and after repatriation. In its different forms, this readjustment process involves excitement, anxiety, frustration, elation, shock, and later, reintegration and acceptance.

The present study offers two main findings in relation to reacculturation. The first is that analysis of the interview transcripts revealed no such distinct phases. Although participants expressed pockets of emotional discomfort and elation, these did not appear to persist and were neither sustained to the extent where they could be seen to constitute actual ‘phases’, nor sufficiently common across participants to warrant use of this terminology. The relatively low level of surprise as well as relative ease of work and non-work readjustment specifically expressed by participants supports this assertion.

The effect of this in relation to the W-curve graph (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963) is that it cannot be applied to these SIR New Zealander participants. The flatter shape of the New Zealand returner specific graph contributed by Chaban, et al. (2009) (reproduced in Section 2.3.1), especially the flatter ‘UK sojourners’ line, is more appropriate in the SIR New Zealander context. However, its use of distinct phases also calls into question its application here. In addition, the line itself is probably flatter still in the context of the present study, due to the current data indicating a generally less

turbulent repatriation experience than that described in the earlier study. It should also be noted that since the majority of the sample were living in the United Kingdom, the limited cultural distance between home and host countries leads to less cultural dislocation than characteristic of other contexts (as discussed in Section 8.6).

The second main finding in relation to reacculturation is that when surprises or shocks did occur, many of these occurred before repatriation. The absence of a severance of connection with New Zealand contributed to this, including continued ‘touch points’ with New Zealand, for example trips to New Zealand during expatriation, and frequent conversations with family and other contacts during participants’ time abroad. The maintenance of these connections was enabled by technologies not yet available during the development of reentry theory, including Skype, social media and handheld mobile devices. This tended to mean that when surprises did occur, they occurred before repatriation, consequently ‘softening the blow’ upon the move itself.

This renders the mid point of the W-curve inaccurate in relation to the present study. The point of return to the home culture was not the point at which reacculturation began for the current participants. Indeed, the findings suggest information-gathering and readjustment processes begin much earlier than repatriation itself.

Conversely, the mid-point of the Chaban, et al. (2009) graph is ‘accepting new culture’. This focal point, host culture acceptance, seems to imply that expatriates and repatriates can only align with either the host or the home country culture at any one time. It also ignores the emotional connection maintained with the very culture to which it subsequently graphs the emotional readjustment. This appears counter to the cultural

identity work of Sussman (2000) (discussed in Section 2.3.3) which suggests that expatriates can identify with both home and host cultures concurrently. The present study supports Sussman's approach in that participants tended to retain their New Zealander identity and connection despite many also feeling that they had assumed some of the identity and behaviours associated with their host cultures.

A new graph is now proposed, which retains the 'return to home culture' mid point of the W-curve on the x (time) axis, but which graphically acknowledges the effects of reacculturation processes beginning before repatriation itself. The resulting flattened curve, particularly obvious after repatriation, is presented in Figure 7.3 below. This graph was generated by analysing the transcripts, in which participants had provided detailed information about their expectations and preparation for their return to New Zealand, as well as their post-repatriation experiences.

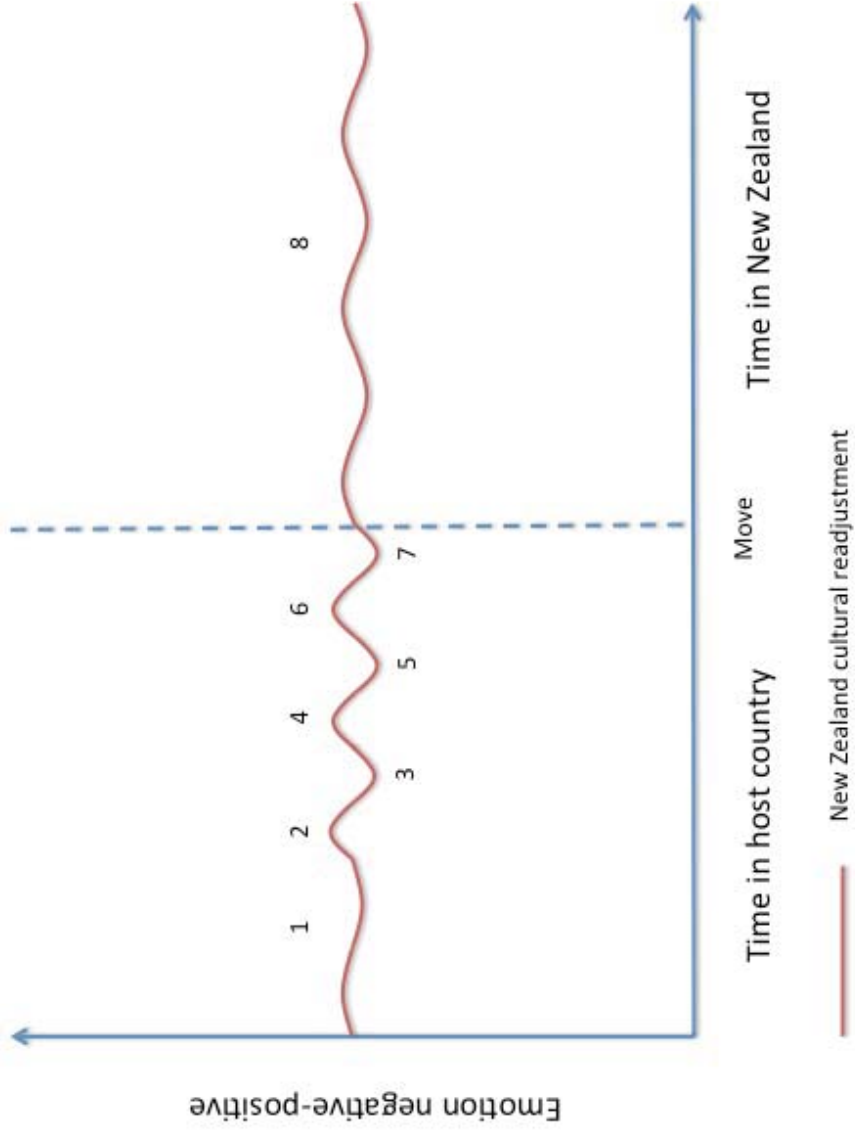


Figure 7.3 Revisiting the W-Curve in an SIR New Zealander Context

Point 1 in Figure 7.3 indicates the time abroad during which initial contact is maintained with New Zealand. During this time, participants continued their social, and to a lesser extent, professional contact with New Zealand, and kept abreast of news and events in New Zealand through news web sites and social media feeds. Already, participants were learning about how life in New Zealand was changing. This represents an unbroken connection with New Zealand during participants' time abroad.

At points 2 and 3 in the figure, participants travelled home to New Zealand temporarily. As noted in Section 3.3.1, participants in the present sample visited New Zealand with reasonable frequency, on average 0.85 times per year and for an average of 3.5 weeks per visit. It is during these visits that some of the surprises and emotions traditionally associated with post-repatriation readjustment occurred, including realisation that the cost of living has increased, the employment market is sluggish, salaries are lower, but the lifestyle may be better than that encountered abroad. These visits also contribute to an unbroken connection with New Zealand.

These realisations continued throughout points 4 and 5, which also represent positive and negative emotions about life back in New Zealand. At these points, participants proactively gathered further information about work and life in New Zealand, including their investigations into jobs, salaries, and costs of living including housing. They factored these into their decisions to return, which were made around this point in the figure. The proactive investigations continued through points 6 and 7, during preparations for repatriation, when the majority of the remaining surprises and their associated emotions occurred.

The time after repatriation, noted in the figure by point 8, was associated with lower emotional spikes than traditionally ascribed to reentry. This is because of the unbroken connection participants maintained with New Zealand during their time abroad, the relatively frequent visits they made to New Zealand, as well as the proactive investigations they conducted before repatriating. However, the line at point 8 is not flat. This represents the fact that participants did report some surprises and emotional impacts after repatriation.

As with any research output that draws together findings across individual participants, it is important to note here that the experience was not the same for every participant. For example, older participants tended to take longer to find appropriate work or were still looking for work at the time of the second interview. Related to this is career stage; more senior or mid to late career tended to have more difficulty finding work and this impacted their perception of the experience. On a positive note, participants who had maintained professional connections while abroad appeared to benefit from these on return, both emotionally and in terms of finding work. These differences highlight the need to approach with caution any graph purporting to represent a ‘typical’ pattern of readjustment and its associated emotional spikes.

The current study builds on work by Sussman (2001), in which repatriation preparedness was presented as a variable impacting readjustment. The extent to which participants in this study tended to be prepared, both emotionally and logistically in terms of becoming informed about life and work in New Zealand prior to repatriating, can be seen to demonstrate the importance of preparedness. Ease of access to information has changed in recent years, through the rise of handheld devices, social

media and professional sites (e.g. LinkedIn) and this is also likely to contribute to a flatter readjustment curve in the SIR context. Indeed, social media has now finally been raised as a theoretical source of empowerment for IA repatriates (O'Sullivan, 2013), and the present study highlights a relevant application of this notion to SIRs.

7.3.2 Reverse Culture Shock

Reverse culture shock, as discussed in Section 2.3.1, relates to the surprise, shock, frustration, confusion, anxiety and hopelessness repatriates experience after return. It is considered one of the phases of cultural readjustment (Dickmann & Baruch, 2011; Martin, 1984). This section addresses reverse culture shock in the light of the current study's findings.

It is apparent that the current study contradicts research findings that stress the importance of considering reverse culture shock in managing repatriation. Although it is an exaggeration to claim that participants in the current study did not experience any surprise or shock, the levels of these expressed by participants were low. In addition, of the surprises that did occur, many of these were positive (discussed in Section 6.3.1). These 'positive violations' (Martin & Harrell, 2004) in turn meant that many of the other emotions ascribed to reverse culture shock, for example frustration, anxiety and hopelessness, did not occur in relation to these surprises.

Why was reverse culture shock so low in the current study? The participants did not have any pre-repatriation training or post-repatriation support often prescribed to IA repatriates. However, it could well be that because they had to do everything themselves, this led them to take action to become informed about work and life back in

New Zealand, which in turn led to forming expectations more congruent with the reality of experiences.

To consider reverse culture shock in more detail, it is useful to turn to Baruch's (2004) model of factors influencing the magnitude of reverse culture shock (figure 7.4). These factors were developed in relation to IA repatriates, which immediately limits their application, however there has been no work in this area on SIR. Their IA-specific factors include success on assignment, and organisational (including policies, mentoring contacts while on assignment). However, their general factors include individual-level (e.g. age, gender, marital status), profession or role, former repatriation experience and host-home country cultural gap.

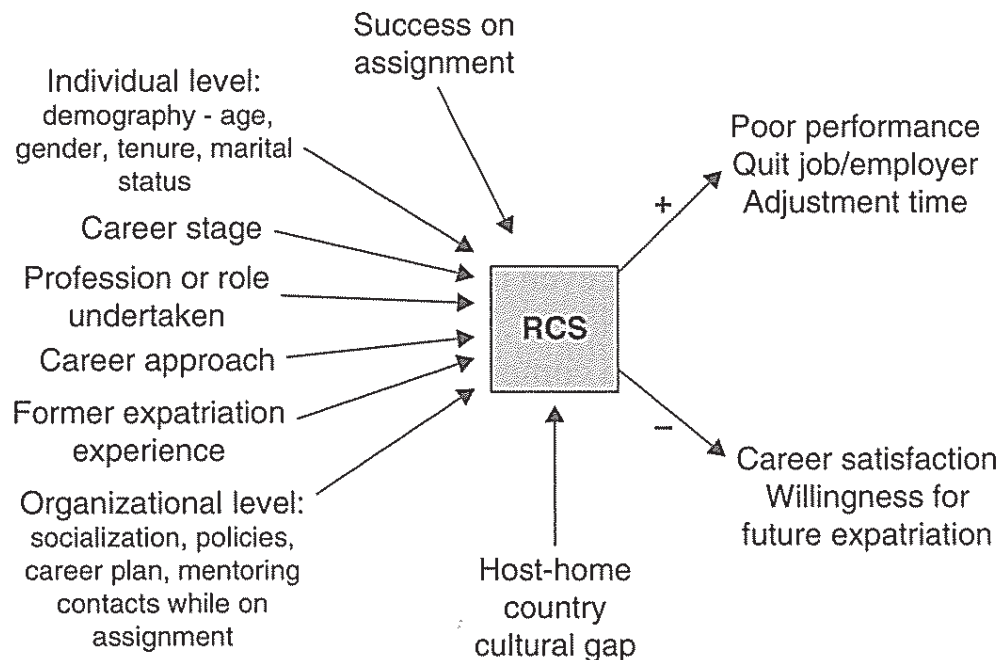


Figure 7.4. Factors Affecting Reverse Culture Shock (Dickmann & Baruch, 2011, p. 211)

Some of the individual level factors were discussed in Section 7.3.1 (age, career stage). Partnered participants tended to have very positive or very negative initial repatriation outcomes, depending on the level of partners' adjustment. Baruch's 'profession or role' was expressed in the current study as 'industry'. Participants did tend to attribute part of their work readjustment ease – and by extension therefore absence of reverse culture shock – to the industries they worked in. However, the sample is insufficiently large to draw firm conclusions in relation to this.

The two remaining general factors are former expatriation experience, and host-home cultural gap. Former expatriation – and repatriation - experience did not emerge as having a significant impact on reverse culture shock in the current study. Regarding host-home cultural gap, it must be emphasised here that since the cultural gap between New Zealand and the United Kingdom is relatively small, this could well have contributed to reduced levels of reverse culture shock. However, there was an insufficient number of participants from host countries outside the United Kingdom to explore this further.

Since reverse culture shock cannot by definition occur if surprises are positive, this indicates that the term cannot be applied to the participants in the current study. For many, the experiences – or many elements of them – were better than expected, leading to positive emotions. These better than expected elements are referred to as positive violations in Section 7.4. Indeed, some participants even explicitly expressed 'shock' at the ease of readjustment. This does not mean to imply that participants did not experience any negative emotions or negative surprises, rather that the negative incidences were markedly reduced when compared with much of the repatriation

literature. Whether this can be attributed to the fact they are SIRs, or that they tended to have culturally similar host countries, or access to more information, will be further explored in Section 7.4.

Additionally, it could be argued that a focus on culture shock within the reentry literature is limiting in the context of this research. New Zealand and the United Kingdom (the host country of a majority of the current participants) have close cultural proximity in many ways, but they are dissimilar in other ways not incorporated into culture shock theory. For example, climate, urbanisation, infrastructure, labour market, and geographic proximity to other countries are all areas of potential difference. Future research could investigate whether these elements of difference in otherwise culturally similar home and host countries lead to post-repatriation dissatisfaction, at time points that extend beyond those covered by the current study.

7.4 Expectations Theory

Reverse culture shock is linked with reentry expectations theories by readjustment. Reverse culture shock is theoretically one of the phases of readjustment, while the extent to which expectations are met theoretically affects the extent of shock repatriates experience. In this section, findings of the present study are considered, as they relate to expectations theories. In addition, explanations are considered for the present study's high level of congruence between expectations and experiences.

As discussed in Section 2.3.2, expectancy value theory states that cross-cultural adjustment is eased by the fulfilment of expectations (Martin & Harrell, 2004). The present study contributes empirical evidence to support this theory in a new context,

since expectations were largely fulfilled. Shock was reduced, and readjustment eased, due to a low incidence of surprises. This suggests that this theory, originally applied to expatriates rather than repatriates, may also be relevant to SIR New Zealanders.

As also discussed in Section 2.3.2, expectancy violation theory extends expectancy value theory by acknowledging that expectations can be either positively or negatively violated (Burgoon & Walther, 1990). In a similar way, the present study's findings suggest that expectancy violation theory may also provide a relevant revision of the concept of reverse culture shock as it applies to SIR New Zealanders. This is because the participants reported some positive as well as some negative surprises. In addition, the flattening of the W-curve presented in Section 7.3.1 (Figure 7.3) can be explained by the lower incidence of surprises when compared with reverse culture shock theory, as well as the majority of historical findings in relation to IAs.

The potential impact of positive and negative expectations and subsequent positive and negative surprises is shown in Figure 7.5 below. The participants in the present study typically followed one of pathways 1, 2 or 3 (labelled in the figure). In the first and second pathways, experiences either congruent with, or better than positive expectations, had a positive impact on repatriation experiences and outcomes. In the third pathway, a similarly positive impact resulted from experiences not turning out as bad as expected. It should be noted that while there was insufficient evidence of participants in this study following any of the other pathways, these are the pathways typically found in theoretical and empirical contributions in relation to readjustment and reverse culture shock.

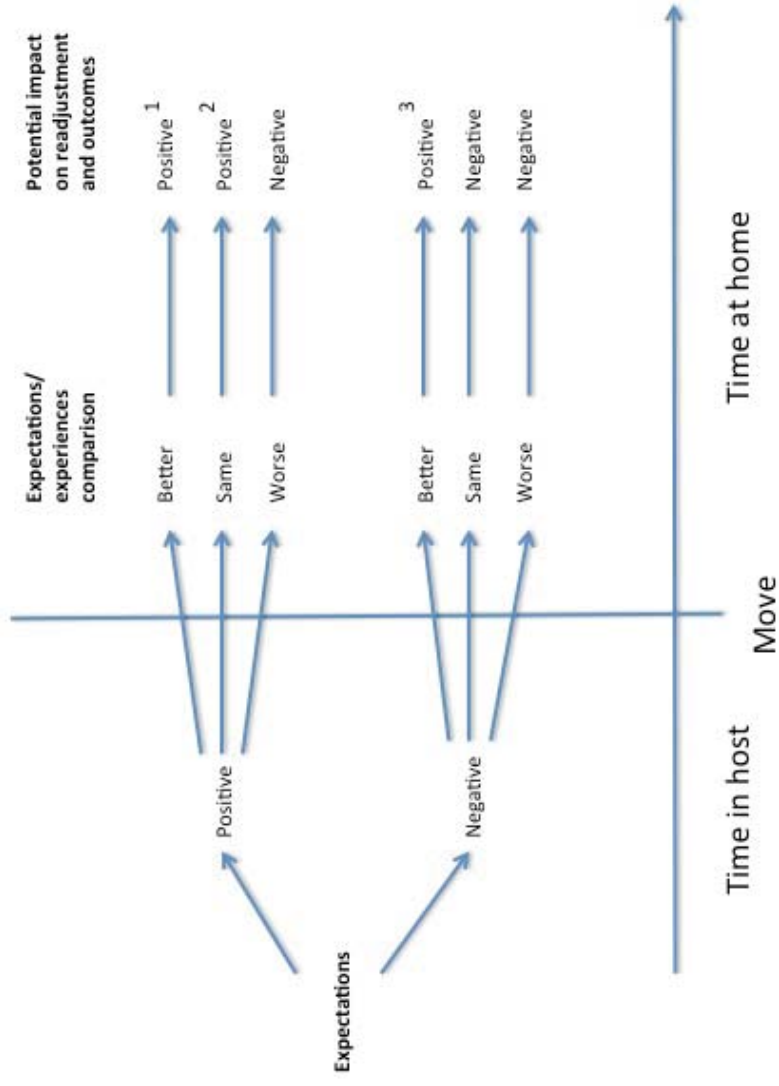


Figure 7.5. Tentative Expectations – Experiences – Impact Pathways for SIR New Zealanders

As discussed in Section 7.2 in relation to motives, the decision to repatriate was usually the result of weighing up push and pull factors, and positive and negative expectations across the various elements of the work and personal aspects of returning. So while career-related expectations may have been negative for many participants, lifestyle and family expectations were often positive, and these positive expectations were dominant in the final stay/go decision. Therefore, it is possible for participants to hold both positive and negative expectations of aspects of repatriation concurrently, and the pathways in Figure 7.5 may hold true for each one of those expectations. While there can be multiple concurrent expectations either met or positively or negatively violated after repatriation, each one feeds into an overall assessment of the repatriation experience.

7.4.1 Other Attributions

So far in this section, positive readjustment and positive outcomes have been attributed to either a high level of congruence between expectations and experiences, or a positive violation of expectations. What remains unaddressed in this section, are potential explanations for participants' positive experiences, as well as potential explanations also for positive violations of their expectations. Findings in these areas were presented in Section 6.4, and here key issues are discussed with reference to relevant literature.

The first set of these is work related, and calls into question the influence of the expatriation experience on post-repatriation outcomes. One recurring theme was whether the fact that any experience the repatriates gained abroad has any value to employers, both during recruitment processes and subsequently on the job. This challenge is supported by several participants' comments that they were not asked about

the overseas nature of their experience during recruitment processes, or after they started in their new roles in New Zealand.

It is important here to distinguish this issue from that of experience gained abroad not being valued by employers, or being ignored; this current theme did not emerge in a negative light. Indeed, in a majority of cases the experience was perceived as highly valued. And, while most of the participants also believed the experience they gained abroad was valuable - it helped them both gain their new roles and perform in them - it must be stated that it appeared largely irrelevant to most that this experience was gained abroad.

The related question concerns the influence of the fact participants have repatriated, on their ease (or difficulty) of finding and readjusting to work. On the question of the relative ease of finding work, it is quite likely that factors external to expatriation/repatriation influence this. For example, the state of the job market in the relevant employment sector could influence this. In addition, while the older participants tended to experience more difficulty finding work than their younger, earlier career-stage counterparts, it must also be acknowledged that anecdotal evidence suggests these may also be issues relevant to people searching for work who are not repatriates.

On the issue of work readjustment, again several participants questioned whether the readjustment processes they could feel taking place were New Zealand work culture readjustment issues, or change of employer issues in general. Of course, this is likely to be at least partly due to the high level of cultural similarity between the majority of

participants' host country (United Kingdom) and New Zealand. While the cross-cultural HRM literature widely acknowledges that home-host country cultural proximity eases adjustment, this is the first time this question has specifically been raised in relation to SIR. In addition, where people have reported significant difficulty readjusting in the literature, they have tended to attribute this more to external, situational factors than to internal factors (e.g. Sussman, 2001). However, there was insufficient evidence of significant readjustment difficulties in the present study for this latter issue to have the opportunity to emerge.

An additional finding from the present study has not previously emerged in the SIR literature; participant attribution of post-repatriation outcomes to luck, as presented in Section 6.4.1. In essence, this meant people tended to consider positive outcomes to be rare, or to have occurred purely by chance, as a result of external circumstances. This is counter to 'self-serving bias' theory in psychology, in which people attribute successes to themselves and failures to elements external to themselves (Shepperd, Malone, & Sweeny, 2008). Conversely, it is potentially in keeping with 'confirmation bias', in which people favour evidence supporting their earlier decisions (Nickerson, 1998). However, confirmation bias appears counter to reverse culture shock theory, since the former involves selection of positive evidence, and the latter focuses on the negative emotions experienced due to negative surprises. It was outside the scope of the present study to analyse findings in relation to psychological attribution theories, however future research could do so.

Moreover, perceptions of the negative outcomes typically associated with repatriation appeared to persevere throughout participants' own positive experiences. People seem

to believe that even though repatriation was positive for them, it is not normally so for others. This could also mean successful SIRs are presenting their experiences as exceptions to a negative trend, to others still abroad.

Begley, et al. (2008) also attribute the positive fortunes of one of their Irish SIR participants to luck. This is in the context of their theme of returning to lower level positions than held during expatriation. The ‘lucky’ participant, too, returned to a lower position but was quickly promoted in recognition of his experience from abroad. Their attribution is perhaps understandable given the poor immediate career outcomes experienced by the majority of their study’s participants. However, framing the fortunes of participants in this way serves to add to the generally negative tone of the repatriation literature.

Indeed, with such a negative chorus in the reentry literature in relation to outcomes, it could well be the case that there have been insufficient positive overall findings for luck to have emerged as a potential explanation for those with positive outcomes. However, the fact that this has emerged in the present study suggests that a refocus on the positive as well as negative outcomes of repatriation may now be due. This in turn could affect future potential repatriates’ expectations as well as their willingness to consider returning, especially given many expatriate New Zealanders’ continued connection with New Zealand while abroad.

7.5 Cultural Identity Theories

This connection is also evident when exploring the present study's findings in relation to the cultural identity literature. Cultural identity theories relate to the level of identification mobile people have with their home, and host, countries. This study's participants' connectedness with New Zealand can be seen to represent a retained New Zealander identity.

However, some participants did detect a number of changes in their own behavioural norms and perceptive lenses, although this was a minority view. Culture learning theory holds that the more expatriates' behavioural norms change while abroad, the greater the opportunity for reentry adjustment difficulties (Martin & Harrell, 2004). Hence, cultural learning theory is demonstrated in this new SIR context, considering the low incidence of both behavioural change while abroad and readjustment difficulties after repatriation.

Of the four patterns of cultural identity within Sussman's (2000) model (introduced in Section 2.3.3), the majority of participants of the present study could be classified as 'affirmative', meaning that they identify with their home culture, or 'intercultural', meaning that they identify with both home and host cultures. Since these two patterns tend to readjust more easily than those less comfortable with home culture, this study contributes applicability of Sussman's model in relation to SIR New Zealanders.

Martin and Harrell's (2004) work integrates cultural identity with host environment characteristics, home environment characteristics and sojourner characteristics (e.g. age,

gender, personality, preparedness for change); these can predict repatriation outcomes. The application of this model to the current study is limited. This is because the variables were not specifically targeted and measured. In addition, analysis of variables that were captured did not seem to offer any predictive value when considering their contribution to repatriation outcomes.

For example, there were 11 males and 16 females interviewed in phase two, and although gender was not a focus of this study, potential existed for differences in repatriation experiences between the two groups. A separate analysis was therefore undertaken to determine if this was the case, but the same themes emerged for both. Details about children or other household members were not collected, as the emphasis was on the individual, but again, no obvious differentiating factors were identified. The impact of mobility on the family has recently been raised as a gap in the literature (Suutari, Tornikoski, & Mäkelä, 2012), and this study also highlights the need for more research on the broader relationship between the mobile individual and his or her family. Additionally, utilising a larger sample in future research could enable targeted investigation of the influence of these variables.

However, Martin and Harrell do emphasise the role of realistic expectations (albeit through training) and this notion sits at the core of the present study. Expectations were formed through an unbroken connectedness with New Zealand (through frequent trips home and following New Zealand news) and through proactive research undertaken by prospective repatriates. It could be the case, then, that the need for formal repatriation training often prescribed to assigned repatriates is replaced in the self-initiating sphere by this connectedness and proactivity. SIRs are not offered any formal training, so they

cannot afford to be passive in their preparations for returning. Therefore, they have to undertake these preparations – and expectations/reality alignment - themselves. It could also be the case that the highly educated are in some ways better equipped to self-initiate these preparations than the less educated returners, although this was not measured in the present study.

In summary, there is some value in applying cultural identity theories to the present study's findings. However, the relatively high incidence of visiting New Zealand throughout participants' expatriation may reduce the applicability of culture identity theories. In addition, since cultural distance was low, this further limits applicability, because opportunities to detect changes in identity also tend to be low. Furthermore, identity itself was not a specific focus of this study, although there is a potential relationship with this study's theme of connectedness.

7.6 IA Repatriation Literature

This section explores opportunities to compare the findings of the present study with empirical findings in relation to repatriating international assignees ('IA repatriates'). As discussed in Section 2.5.2, much of the recent research attention on SIEs has focused on distinguishing them from IAs. Therefore, the contribution here has the potential to either draw parallels – and demonstrate the relevance - of the IA repatriation literature to SIR, or to distinguish the IA repatriation literature from findings in SIR. One outcome of this exploration of the similarities and differences between the SIR and IA repatriation literature is to offer avenues of focus for future SIR research.

The consensus of the IA repatriation literature is that returning is a troublesome time (Altman & Baruch, 2012), which is characterised by unexpected experiences, adjustment difficulties, and negative work and non-work related outcomes. Central to this is the misalignment of repatriates' expectations with the reality of repatriation experiences (e.g. Black, 1992), despite some disagreement on the effect of this (Szkudlarek, 2010). On this point, the current study serves to distinguish SIR New Zealanders from the IA work. This is due to the relatively strong level of congruence between participants' expectations and experiences, and the relative ease of readjustment along with other positive work and non-work related outcomes not uniformly seen in relation to IA repatriation.

However, despite some conflicting findings (Szkudlarek, 2010), the IA repatriation literature does appear to acknowledge that certain contingencies improve repatriation experiences and outcomes. These include, most commonly, aligning pre-repatriation expectations with post repatriation experiences; primarily achieved through pre-departure training as well as supporting employees through readjustment difficulties. As discussed in Section 6.4, the present study's participants did take steps to align their expectations with future repatriation experiences. This finding extends the IA repatriation literature that emphasises the importance of expectations/experiences congruence (e.g. Hyder & Loevblad, 2007) into the SIR realm.

The post-repatriation readjustment support, which, as mentioned above, is frequently prescribed to IA repatriates, was not provided to any participant in this study. This means its potential effect could not be explored. One possible rationale for the low incidence of negative experiences and outcomes despite the absence of readjustment

support is that support was unnecessary due to the strong expectations/experience congruence. This could mean that in relation to SIR New Zealanders, if expectations and experiences are congruent, post-repatriation support is unnecessary.

However, some of the participants of the present study did comment that the international nature of their experience was not sought out within their employing organisations. This could indicate an element of under utilisation of the skills and experience acquired abroad. If so, this represents a similarity with previous findings in relation to IA repatriation, and indicates that HRM could seek to implement programs that ensure SIR employees' skills are more effectively utilised. Just because an employer does not initiate or support repatriation, this does not necessarily mean SIRs' needs should be ignored.

In addition, some findings discussed in Section 2.4.3 suggest that age may affect some IA repatriation outcomes, which was also tentatively suggested in the present study's findings. Another area of potential IA repatriation and SIR similarity relates to the experiences of partners. Spouse (i.e. partner) adjustment has been considered in relation to IA expatriation (e.g. Gupta, Banerjee, & Gaur, 2012) and IA repatriation (e.g. Maybarduk, 2008), with spouses' difficulties also affecting expatriate and repatriate adjustment. In the present study, SIR New Zealanders' partners' adjustment to work and life in New Zealand, either as SIRs themselves or as newly trailing foreign national spouses who had become SIEs in New Zealand, either eased adjustment for the SIR participants or hindered it, depending on the spouses' experiences. Future research could further explore the impact of spousal adjustment on the experiences of SIRs.

Therefore, while these few research findings in relation to IA repatriation bear some similarity to the present study, the key conflicting finding relates to the level of expectations/experience congruence achieved without organisational intervention. Meanwhile, both pockets of the IA repatriation literature and the present study acknowledge the importance of this congruence. In conclusion, SIR New Zealanders' high expectations/experiences congruence, ease of adjustment and positive work and non-work related outcomes are sufficiently distinct from the general findings running through the IA repatriation literature to necessitate separate treatment in future research. This supports the emergence of studies focusing solely on SIR, which are considered next.

7.7 SIR Literature

It is useful to consider this study's contribution to the small yet emerging body of SIR literature. This work has looked at career related and other outcomes for SIRs to six home countries: Australia, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland and China. This is the first study to offer findings from New Zealand, and the first to specifically explore pre-repatriation expectations as well as post-repatriation experiences.

The present study offers contrasting findings to those in the earliest SIR contribution in the literature. Begley, et al.'s (2008) work emphasised the difficulties Irish SIRs faced finding employment, and readjusting, and the resulting stress. Findings that differ to the present study include significantly more widespread negative perceptions of the value of international experience amongst employers, and of an under utilisation of skills by employers. In addition, participants reported the perceived high value of any initial Irish experience they managed to secure, during subsequent job searches. Interestingly,

this latter finding (initial home country experience) was also expected by participants of the present study, but did not transpire as important.

Any reasons for the differences in findings between the Irish and current studies can have little more than a speculative basis. This is due to the likelihood of multiple variables differing between the two studies, and the fact that both studies are exploratory in nature rather than setting out to test hypotheses. For example, the state of the Irish and New Zealand employment markets will differ, as will other economic factors, the industries, ages and career stages of the participants, the international experience of the recruiters and hiring managers, and the level of connection maintained by participants during their time abroad. These and other variables all have the potential to impact post-repatriation outcomes.

The second study had focused on SIR motives (Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010) rather than expectations and experiences. However, it too, is an interesting point of comparison for the present study, which also explored SIRs' motives. Like the present study, it had two time points, but in contrast, participants at the point of first data collection were simply SIEs; they had not necessarily decided to repatriate. The purpose of the second data collection point was to explore job-seeking behaviour in Australia and see whether the SIEs had repatriated. This work is the only SIR study to date that has utilised quantitative methods.

The key similarity here is the existence of push-pull factors in determining whether people repatriate. In the present study, a complex combination of factors determined whether people would return, while in the Australian study, the ease of returning

appeared as a key contributing factor. While this did not appear as a motive in the present work, a desire to re-join the home culture did; a theme common to both studies. One limitation shared by both studies is the cultural similarity between home and the host countries of a large proportion of the participants, the United Kingdom.

Also related to SIR motivation is some recent work in the SIE domain. This study (Cao, Hirschi, & Deller, 2014) suggests that perceived organisational support (for example, assistance with questions about host country life, and career development support) of SIEs might increase their intention to stay in the host country. This may result in a reluctance to leave the host country in order to repatriate, through a push-pull equation of motivation. This was not explored in the present study, in which all participants had already decided to repatriate, however it does represent a welcome new angle on SIE/SIR work that incorporates an organisational variable traditionally incorporated within the IA literature.

The third SIR study, Andresen and Walther (2013), returned to the career outcome focus of Begley, et al. (2008) and contributed data from SIRs to Denmark, Germany and France. While the Danish participants experienced employment readjustment issues even more severe than the Irish SIRs, the German participants reported positive reception and high value placed on their international experience, while the experiences of the French participants were mixed. The authors attribute these differences to country-level factors rather than individual SIR level factors. The New Zealander SIRs in the present study did not tend to report a negative reception by the New Zealand employment market. The impact of these collective findings is that the relative ease of

readjustment - as well as initial employment-related outcomes - may not be only home country specific, but also to an extent, outside the control of the repatriating individual.

Supporting this further is the recent work exploring SIRs to the only developing country addressed in this literature to date, China (Guo et al., 2013). Here, the authors emphasised the role of contextual factors in post-repatriation work-related experiences, but they also assert that individual agency plays a part. This represents a similarity with the present study, in that the New Zealander SIRs' experiences can be attributed to both individual agency (e.g. proactive research of work and life in New Zealand) and contextual factors (e.g. the state of the employment market in New Zealand). However, the Chinese work reports career among participants' motives to return, which was all but absent from the present study's sample.

The following model could help explain the relative impact of individual agency related factors with factors outside the control of the repatriating individual. This is presented in Figure 7.6 below. The model explains outcomes as results of the level of connectivity maintained with the home country during expatriation, as well as information gathering activity undertaken prior to repatriation (individual agency-related factors); alongside other external factors not within the control or influence of the SIR. The role of information in forming expectations has been explored in the return migration literature (Sabates-Wheeler, Taylor, & Natali, 2009), but remains unaddressed in relation to SIRs.

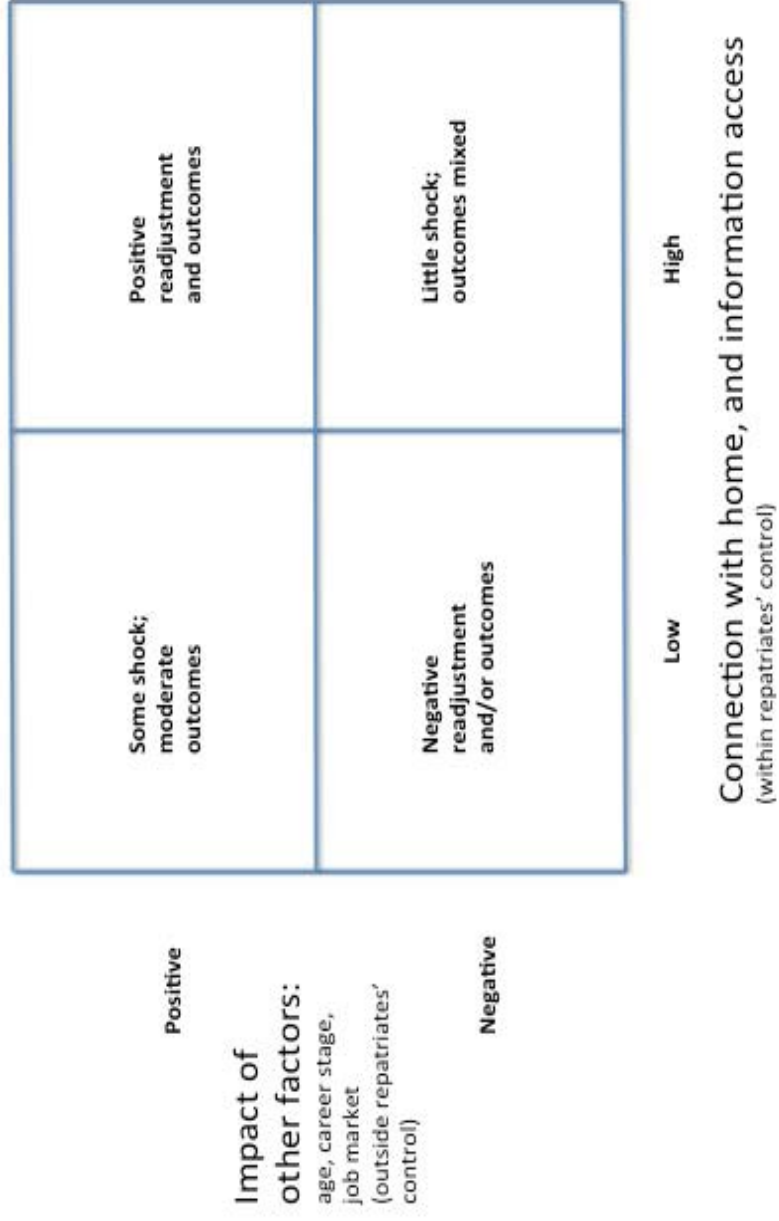


Figure 7.6. The Potential Influence of Connectedness and Personal Factors on SIR Readjustment and Outcomes

In this model, connection with home and information access has prominence, due to its potential influence on outcomes both suggested by the present study and supported by reverse culture shock and expectations-experiences literature outside the SIR domain. This is a key contribution, since it provides a contemporary revision to the reentry literature. The information age, development of and increased use of handheld mobile devices, and the rise of social media have not only enabled but actually encouraged people to keep in touch with others across the other side of the world. This is a development which could necessitate a revision of reentry theory. At a minimum, connection with home and information access should be investigated as additional points to include in Baruch's (2004) factors affecting reverse culture shock, discussed in Section 7.3.2. It would also be useful to ascertain which Internet sites or applications (apps) have the greatest influence on the level of connectivity, as well as the level of frequency of access.

However, despite the significant potential influence of connectedness, much of the SIR work discussed above suggests that if external factors are not in the SIRs' favour, this can negatively affect outcomes. This could be the case for the Irish and Danish data, which might relate to the bottom left quadrant, for example because participants in the corresponding studies might not have maintained strong connections with their host countries, even though they had the means to do so, as well as access to information should they have decided to use it. Meanwhile, the New Zealand data from the present study suggest many of these participants fall within the top right quadrant. It must be emphasised that this model has yet to be tested, however it serves to highlight the potential impact of the unbroken connection many of the current participants maintained

with New Zealand while abroad, as well as the proactive action they took to understand New Zealand before returning.

In conclusion, common to the body of prior SIR work is that the expectations of its participants were unknown, as was the level of congruence between expectations and these experiences, and its effect on readjustment. This study advances the SIR literature through contributing data in these areas, and suggesting theory linking an unbroken connection with a repatriate's home country, enabled by the information age, with readjustment processes and outcomes. However, there remains a clear opportunity for future research to explore this outside the SIR New Zealander context. This could help isolate potential reasons for the differences in experiences and outcomes, while concurrently contributing knowledge to the SIE literature that should be asking what SIEs – and potentially home-based organisations – can do while the expatriates are abroad to ease any later transition home.

7.8 Related New Zealand Work

This section highlights the contribution of this study to the body of knowledge on New Zealander returners. While it is important to distinguish the present study from the OE and migrant literature, it is equally important to recognise these streams as potential points of reference, especially considering the differing ways of categorising sojourners discussed in Section 2.6. This is due in part to the need to identify parallels and differences between SIR work and work on OEs and migrants. However, perhaps more important is the need to recognise that work undertaken in the New Zealand context has considered these groups, and the present SIR study therefore contributes to a New Zealand-level body of work. As discussed earlier, this work recognises that

international mobility is a significant part of New Zealand life for many; a point also recognised in the mainstream attention the topic also attracts.

7.8.1 Academic Research

First, New Zealand academic research is considered. The work by Chaban, et al. (2009) was addressed in Section 7.3.1, but here, an important similarity is noted. This work stated that “the majority of respondents reported that they did not have problems securing jobs at home and that their new skills let them propel their career in New Zealand” (p.70). While it cannot yet be seen whether participants of the present study experienced propelled careers, it is the case that most did not experience significant difficulties securing jobs in New Zealand.

This differentiates both the present study and the Chaban, et al. paper from several theses on extended sojourn returners (Pocock, 2011; Walter, 2006) and returning migrants (Lee, 2012) all completed within the last eight years, and all of which emphasised the readjustment difficulties experienced by their participants. However, many of the participants of these studies had returned years prior to data collection, which potentially leads to distorted memories. Moreover, their expectations for the return were formed even longer ago than data collection, indicating that their findings may not be appropriate to the people returning later in the information age, where forming repatriation expectations can occur more easily and accurately.

Turning now to returners’ motivation, Inkson, et al., (2004) highlighted that expatriates’ level of attraction to New Zealand as a return destination was multi-factored. The present study confirms this in an SIR context, and further, it emphasises not only the

number of factors, but also the almost unsolvable equation these present; the difficulties potential SIRs face in deciding whether to return. Conversely, while the participants of an earlier OE study were generally optimistic about their career prospects after returning (Inkson & Myers, 2003), the current participants tended to be surprised to see that many of their more pessimistic career related expectations were unfounded. Although recruiters tended to misunderstand the skills and experience acquired abroad, employers provided a higher level of recognition of new skills than many participants expected.

7.8.2 Mainstream Research

While the present study generated some media attention around its half-way point (Ellis, 2013a, 2013b), much of the mainstream work in this area has been conducted by either the BNZ Economist Tony Alexander, or the Kiwi Expatriate Association (KEA). This work has appeared to fuel much of the public interest in this issue, especially in 2012-13. It is valuable to discuss the findings of the present study in the light of this mainstream work, as this helps highlight the study's relevance.

Tony Alexander provided commentary on his web site of a KEA LinkedIn group which discussed repatriation to New Zealand. His (unstructured) analysis of this LinkedIn thread painted a negative picture of post-repatriation outcomes, including a widespread employer reluctance to consider hiring repatriates and a broad under utilisation of repatriates' new skills and experience. As the findings of this study have shown, the picture is not this negative for everyone. In fact, since this 'data' was collected in an unsystematic way, it may have been the case that people who have had negative experiences are more likely to have contributed to this discussion thread. In addition, Tony Alexander's focus on the negative posts within the discussion thread could serve

to drown out some of the more positive stories, further perpetuating the notion that repatriation to New Zealand has a negative career impact.

Tony Alexander also promoted the Global Career Link organisation's (2012) survey, which reported rejection of repatriate candidates from job vacancies on the basis of a lack of current New Zealand experience. It prescribed improved employer understanding and appreciation of the skills and experience repatriates have acquired abroad, including higher remuneration in order to entice prospective repatriates home. Again this data was neither collected nor analysed and reported systematically. However, it is interesting that many of the participants of the current study did mirror many of the negative expectations found in this report during the expectations phase of the research. Speculatively, it could be the case that these types of predominantly negative sources contribute to forming the expectations reported by many of the current study's participants. This possibility is worthy of future research investigation.

Why are the present study's findings so different to the tone of mainstream contributions? Setting aside the possible political motives for publishing overwhelmingly negative information, the key potential point of difference lies in the characteristics of the various samples that contributed to these discussions and surveys. Although sample descriptions were not available from either the Global Career Link survey or the KEA LinkedIn discussion thread, KEA's most recent "Every Kiwi Counts" survey (Kea New Zealand, 2013) published extensive demographic information for its participants, and can be used as a point of comparison to the sample of the present study. This is because these demographics can provide an indication of

how similar the sample from the current study is to a much wider, more general sample of expatriate New Zealanders.

In comparison with the KEA sample, the current study had a larger proportion of participants aged below 31 (13% KEA vs. 28% current), a larger proportion of participants aged between 31 and 45 (45% KEA vs. 59% current) and a smaller proportion of participants aged above 46 (41% KEA vs. 12% current). In addition, both samples were similarly highly educated and they travelled to New Zealand relatively often (75% of the KEA sample had been to New Zealand in the last two years). Finally, like the KEA sample, the current participants' main motivation for moving abroad was career, and while around half of the KEA sample intended to repatriate to New Zealand, most within five years, a qualifier for participation in the current study was a firm intention to repatriate.

In terms of findings, the KEA survey found an attraction to the New Zealand lifestyle but concerns around the cost of living in New Zealand. It also found people keep in touch with people and events in New Zealand via online mechanisms such as social media and New Zealand news web sites. Indeed, these findings are common to both the KEA survey and the present study. The key differences in the samples relate to age (the present study has a younger sample) and range of host countries (KEA's is wider). It is impossible to determine whether a younger sample from a more narrow range of countries would explain more positive repatriation outcomes than frequently publicised in the media, but it is an interesting potential avenue for future research to explore.

In summary, the topic of repatriation to New Zealand has attracted mainstream attention within recent years. This reinforces the relevance of the present study. However, the findings presented here are not as negative as much of the mainstream coverage. While in some cases this could be due to the absence of a structured, systematic approach to data collection and analysis in mainstream work, it may also be the case that differences between the current sample and the wider expatriate New Zealander population could explain the current participants' more positive repatriation experiences and outcomes.

7.9 Conclusion

This chapter connected the findings of the present study with relevant theoretical and empirical work that had been identified in the literature review chapter. Several findings contributed new empirical data, thereby providing extensions to earlier research, while others exposed a need to develop and refine generic or IA-specific theories for application in the SIR New Zealander context. In addition, the present study added a highly relevant New Zealand perspective to the emerging international body of empirical SIR work.

In terms of motivation, while the multi-faceted nature of the decision to return had been identified in prior SIR work, the difficulties of applying weightings to specific considerations, e.g. partners, and resolving competing factors, had not. Key elements drawing participants back to New Zealand were lifestyle and family. The proactive steps participants had taken to inform themselves about work and life in New Zealand can also be viewed as steps taken to gather decision-making information.

Considering theory, both the W-curve of cultural adjustment and its New Zealand

migrant/OE specific revision were deemed inappropriate when considering the findings of the present study. This is due to the absence of distinct identifiable reacculturation phases, as well as evidence that reacculturation surprises tend to occur during the repatriation preparation processes discussed: before repatriation. A new, flattened, graph was proposed which reflects repatriation expectations and experiences of participants repatriating in the digital information age. In addition, reverse culture shock was discussed in detail, including a consideration of the specific elements which led to its evaluation as relatively low within the current sample. Of note is that when surprises did occur, they were positive as well as negative; the impact on theory of experiences that were better and worse than expectations was considered.

A key expectation explored in the first phase of the current study related to the value placed on international experience by employers. In terms of experiences, many participants found the value of their new skills and experience was high but that the fact these were gained abroad was irrelevant to employers. Additional attribution-related findings were discussed, including the fact that factors external to the SIR can influence job search success. An interesting new contribution is the participant attribution of post-repatriation outcomes to luck.

Turning to prior empirical findings, those of the present SIR study were deemed sufficiently distinct from IA work to necessitate continued separate treatment in future research. In terms of prior SIR work, the present findings offer a New Zealander specific contribution, which suggests that a continued connection with home, and information access throughout expatriation, may be just as important as external factors in predicting readjustment and repatriation outcomes. However, this can be considered

more a starting point for future work than a concrete finding in its own right.

Finally, the chapter considered the present findings in relation to New Zealand specific OE and migrant research, as well as mainstream/business related work. Key here was that the present findings were much more positive than the majority of the mainstream work which preceded them. In the following chapter, key parts of the thesis are drawn together, and overarching conclusions are identified. These conclusions are then considered in terms of potential theoretical and managerial implications. Limitations are discussed, followed by suggestions for future research.

Chapter Eight

Conclusions

8.1 Introduction

This final chapter ties the thesis together. It emphasises how the study fulfilled the objectives and research questions identified earlier in the thesis. First, an overview of the study is presented. Then, key findings are highlighted as they relate to the two research questions of the study. The main theoretical contributions and managerial implications are subsequently discussed, followed by the identification of limitations of the research, and suggestions for future research directions.

8.2 Overview of the Study

This study explores the expectations and experiences of self-initiated repatriate New Zealanders, and builds theory based on interview data from distinct ‘before’ and ‘after’ repatriation phases. Theory in relation to repatriation, or ‘reentry’, had been limited to contributions developed outside the SIR context, and before the current social information age. These theories emphasise the difficulties repatriates face through the various phases of reacculturation and reverse culture shock, exacerbated by the unexpected nature of returning home. Empirical contributions relating to international assignments have further highlighted these difficulties and their consequent negative outcomes.

This study responds to a gap in knowledge relating to self-initiated repatriation. It utilises a qualitative, interpretivist approach characterised by semi-structured interviews, narrative fragments and content analysis to explore participants’ pre-move

expectations, post-move experiences, and the level of congruence between them. It reports relatively realistic expectations formed through an unbroken connection with New Zealand and proactive action taken to inform participants prior to repatriation. The information age and social media enablers of these activities, and consequent low level of surprise experienced, render existing theory inapplicable to the self-initiated repatriation context. The study contributes new theory applicable to self-initiated repatriation in the present age.

8.3 Addressing Research Question One

The first research question was “how do SIR New Zealanders experience repatriation?” Empirical data are presented in Chapter Five, as they relate to the work and non-work (personal) elements of repatriation-related experiences. Work-related findings suggest relatively positive post-repatriation outcomes, including speed and ease of finding a job and generally positive employer reactions to the skills and experience acquired abroad, especially when hiring managers had also worked abroad. In addition, reports of work culture readjustment indicate far more positive than negative experiences. Work-related difficulties were most commonly experienced in relation to participants’ treatment by recruitment agents during the job search, however these cannot be attributed to participants’ recent return. Remuneration was a cause of concern for many participants, particularly in relation to the high cost of living experienced in New Zealand.

A key non-work related finding related to lifestyle, since this had been a major factor in the decision to repatriate for a majority of participants. Lifestyle was perceived as generally positive. In addition, participants tended to perceive non-work readjustment as relatively easy, with difficulties generally relating to the comparative geographic

isolation of New Zealand versus participants' host countries. Social reintegration was also generally reported as easy. The experiences of participants' partners were significant in the overall assessments of repatriation ease and success. A further common determinant of repatriation success was the formation of realistic expectations of the experience before departure.

8.4 Addressing Research Question Two

The second research question was "how does the experience of repatriation compare with pre-repatriation expectations?" This question calls for a comparison of expectations and experiences, and it drove the two-phase research design. Expectations are reported in Chapter Four, while inter-phase congruence is explored in Chapter Six. Chapter Four finds that participants generally make repatriation decisions based on an unbroken connection with New Zealand during expatriation, including maintenance of social ties as well as remaining current in news events. This connection was enabled by frequent trips to New Zealand, social media, and news feeds. In addition, participants took proactive steps to further inform themselves about work and life in New Zealand before repatriating. Chapter Four also has findings relating to repatriation motivation, and reports a difficult and frail decision to repatriate by many, characterised by frustration, relationship conflict, and reconciling positive and negative expectations.

Chapter Six reports a relatively high level of congruence between participants' expectations and their experiences. Specific similarities and differences between expectations and experiences are identified. Where misalignment did occur, some represented positive surprises while some represented negative surprises. In addition,

participants offered perceived reasons for the relative ease of their repatriation experiences, including attributing it to luck.

8.5 Implications of the Study

8.5.1 Theoretical Implications

The empirical findings reported above constitute a key contribution of this study. Prior to the present study, data only existed from the six countries identified in Section 2.2. Therefore, this study contributes New Zealand specific findings to the small yet emerging international body of SIR work.

Moreover, the present study makes several important theoretical contributions. First, traditional reentry theory is out-dated, and inapplicable to the SIR New Zealander context. A key factor in this is that the widespread use of social media sites and news feeds, for example on portable handheld devices, now enables both decided and potential SIRs to remain connected with their home countries, as well as facilitating the proactive collection of additional information about life and work in the home country. The effect of this is that many theory-positing ‘unexpected’ elements of home country life are no longer unexpected in the contemporary context.

This thesis therefore provides a necessary revision to reentry and reacculturation theory, which takes account of this social information age, and identifies that surprises and shocks occur much earlier in the repatriation process, often before the move home itself. This suggests a consequent reduction in reverse culture shock, and flattens the emotional spikes formerly attributed to post-repatriation adjustment. Further, it is likely

the case that the continued rise of the information age is such a significant development that it also now necessitates a complete revision of IA-specific mobility theory.

Also worthy of note here is this study's findings around the negativity associated with returning to New Zealand. This is evident not only in related empirical contributions (e.g. Section 7.8.1) and mainstream media (e.g. Section 7.8.2), but also in the stories shared by participants about how they formed their expectations for post-repatriation life. This had two effects, first, it contributed to the development of low expectations, which were in many cases later positively violated, and second, it led participants to perceive themselves as "lucky" exceptions to an ever-growing pool of unsuccessful New Zealander repatriates.

An additional contribution is this study's findings in relation to repatriation motivation. The multi-faceted nature of the decision and motivation to return had been identified in prior work, but the difficulties involved in resolving multiple, competing push and pull factors had not. The study therefore extends prior work on SIE and SIR motivation. This thesis also contends that an expatriate's experience abroad is not the only mobility phase worthy of academic focus, and further, that the term 'self-initiated mobility' or 'SIM' more accurately and inclusively frames the broader topic for researchers in this contemporary field. The findings thus represent an extension of the spectrum of global mobility (Section 7.2), to now incorporate SIRs.

8.5.2 Implications for Management

It is important to consider the many managerial implications of these findings. These implications range from those specific to organisations and HR managers, through to recruiters, and indeed self-initiating repatriates themselves.

Organisations and HR Managers

Implications for organisations centre around understanding the characteristics of SIRs, and responding appropriately. Understanding the drivers behind their move home, and their objectives for their careers and jobs is key. While lifestyle was a major factor in the decision to return for many of this study's participants, there was no evidence that any participant intended to rest on his or her laurels after returning.

On the contrary, while participants were prepared to earn less than they did abroad, they did wish to maintain their careers, have their skills and experience from abroad recognised, and contribute to organisations in meaningful ways. It is also prudent to recognise that repatriation was not necessarily a permanent move for many participants; should their experiences not live up to expectations, they are prepared to move – jobs, and even countries. To this end, leveraging their experience and institutionalising their knowledge before they move on are important steps. Taking appropriate action to leverage their experience could also help them feel their experience and contribution are valued.

Specific organisational support has previously been prescribed for SIEs (Doherty & Dickmann, 2013; Howe-Walsh & Schyns, 2010; McDonnell & Scullion, 2013) as well

as SIRs (Begley et al., 2008). This study suggests that organisations employing SIRs should consider providing some of the partner support provided to partners of international assignees, for example, job search support. This is because partner (re)adjustment was a major factor in participants' assessment of repatriation success. In addition, for SIR employees who experience readjustment difficulties, training and coaching could be provided, just as cultural adjustment training often is for international assignee in-pats.

Recruiters

Participants' experiences with recruiters in New Zealand were the single most negative element of the entire repatriation process. Recruitment agents were often perceived as obstructive gatekeepers, who had little appreciation for, and understanding of, participants' newly acquired skills and how these could transfer into the New Zealand employment market. In addition, participants tended to find that selection processes were excessively complex and lengthy, and characterised by an absence of not only feedback, but even the courtesy of contact when unsuccessful in a job application.

Implications here are valuable for agency recruiters, but can also be applied to organisational in-house recruiters as well as hiring managers. In particular, recruiters should provide timely information on recruitment processes and outcomes, as well as thorough developmental feedback to SIR candidates. Key appears to be that communication timeframes set should be adhered to. In addition, recruitment companies would do well to incorporate recruiters with international experience into SIR candidate-facing functions, since participants in this study tended to perceive

former expatriate recruiters as having a better understanding of their skills and experience than those without international experience.

Recruiters have a key role in improving repatriation experiences for SIRs. This study has shown that candidates who are not treated well by recruiters inform their friends and wider networks. This has the effect of building negativity around repatriation, and is a possible factor in potential returners' decisions to repatriate. One potential flow-on effect of this is a reduced candidate pool for the recruitment agencies themselves.

Repatriates

The main implication of this study for SIRs and intending SIRs is that repatriation is not always a negative experience. It is important that this message reaches people who are considering returning. An important advisory message for returners is something participants in this study tended to do anyway. That is, stay abreast of news and events in New Zealand. In addition, maintain professional connections and networks while abroad. Finally, take the time to conduct proactive research into work and broader life in New Zealand, before returning. These specific actions seem to improve repatriation experiences for SIR New Zealanders, when compared with historical repatriation findings.

Once home, repatriates could ease back into the New Zealand employment market by contracting. This has the advantage of enabling different company cultures to be trialled. In addition, seek out employers where experience is valued; this appears to be ones where managers and peers also have international experience.

Finally, while a continued connection with New Zealand and information access while abroad were important factors in repatriation success in this study, factors outside repatriates' control also contributed. Repatriates could do well to remember that if things do not work out as planned, this could be due to, for example, the state of the employment market in their professional field, and not to the fact that they have just repatriated. This further supports the need to research the state of the market before repatriating.

8.6 Limitations of the Study

The sample used in this study is of relatively homogenous highly-skilled SIRs. The impact here is that returners who are not in the highly skilled category may have different experiences. For example, work may be harder to find in New Zealand, and continuous access to information while abroad may not be possible in all host locations. Similarly, the sample in this study is primarily hosted in the United Kingdom. This has two impacts; first, home-host cultural similarity can reduce otherwise present readjustment difficulties (Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010), and second, insufficient data from hosts other than the United Kingdom has constrained the ability to draw broader conclusions. However, the high volume of New Zealander expatriates in the United Kingdom, enabled by the relative ease of visas, justifies a focus on this context.

The second noteworthy limitation relates to the timing of the second data collection phase. The post-repatriation interviews took place relatively soon after participants' return. It cannot be conclusively claimed that readjustment difficulties would not have arisen after three to eight months after repatriation. This limitation compounds the cultural similarity issue noted above; an alternative explanation for this study's findings

is that cultural proximity eased the early part of the repatriation transition, and subsequent outcomes remain unknown. Additionally, the seminal U and W-curve graphs revised by the current study in an SIR context, did not include specific time points on their x axes. There is therefore an opportunity to conduct research which builds more data collection phases into its design, as elaborated in Section 8.7.

Finally, it must be conceded that this entire study, from conception through to analysis and reporting findings, was managed and conducted by a single researcher. It is important to acknowledge the potential bias this brings to the study. The researcher has attempted to mitigate some of this impact through reporting significant portions of raw data, enabling readers to interpret it differently. In addition, the systematic approach to data analysis, supported by NVivo, has likely resulted in increased consistency of analysis across interviews. The researcher also actively sought alternative explanations for the results reported, through interrogating the data with additional queries during the analysis phase.

8.7 Suggestions for Future Research

As a broad, exploratory study with findings that conflict with much of the historical work on returners, this study offers several avenues for future research. First, there is a clear opportunity to quantitatively test the themes and theory contributed here, utilising similar demographic and host country variables, as well as a wider range of demographic and host country variables. As mentioned above, there is also an opportunity to build a third, later data collection point into future research to extend the present study's W-curve revision. This would also enable investigation of whether close cultural proximity between home and host countries has the effect of easing the

initial transition, and whether subsequent frustrations emerge, which eventually lead to home country dissatisfaction. Some of the potential points of focus relevant to New Zealand may relate to, for example, a smaller employment market, poor public transport, or isolation from elements of the former host country lifestyle. It would also be relevant to see how participants balance these potential later sources of dissatisfaction with the perceived benefits of life and work in their home countries.

This is the first study to call for a complete revision of international mobility theory due to its findings relating to the impact of the social information age on self-initiated repatriation. This thesis asserts that the onset of this age is such a significant development that historical models can no longer be applied in this renewed context. While this call may initially appear excessive, further research could scope the need for contemporary studies before focusing on the specific areas it identifies. Additionally, future longitudinal research could investigate whether this age also enables repatriates to later expatriate again, due to its potential to keep people connected with contacts, opportunities and events in their former host countries.

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Appendix A - Example of Call for Participants

Call for Repatriating Kiwis

David Ellis, a New Zealand Citizen and resident of Switzerland, is calling for interview participants for his PhD research, undertaken through Massey University in Auckland, New Zealand.

This research will explore the expectations and experiences of 'self-initiated repatriate' New Zealanders – that is, New Zealanders who moved abroad to live and work without the help of an employer, and are now moving back to New Zealand, also without the help of an employer.

If you are moved away from, and are soon intending to move back to New Zealand without the help of an employer, David is keen to hear from you. For more information, or to volunteer to participate, please contact David at D.R.Ellis@Massey.ac.nz.

Appendix B – Participant Information Sheet

(original printed on one page)



MASSEY UNIVERSITY

School of Management, Albany
Private Bag 102904, Auckland 0745, New Zealand

PhD study: Returning New Zealanders

INFORMATION SHEET

The researcher

My name is David Ellis, and I am a New Zealand Citizen and resident of Switzerland, studying towards a PhD degree through Massey University in Auckland, New Zealand. I am interested in the experiences of people who choose to live and work abroad, as well as those who subsequently return.

The project

This project involves interviews with New Zealanders who have chosen to move overseas without the help of an employer, and are now returning to New Zealand, also without the help of an employer.

Each participant is invited to take part in two one-to-one interviews; the first lasting 30 to 40 minutes, and the second lasting up to one hour. The first interview will take place via Skype or phone within a few months of your return to New Zealand. In the first interview, you will be asked about your expectations for work and life back in New Zealand. Then, you will be invited to take part in a second interview between two and four months after returning home, to report on how work and life have been since your return.

Data management

I will record the interviews (with your permission). You may ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time. I will transcribe the interviews, and assign each participant's name a code, which I will keep separately from the recordings and transcripts to preserve anonymity. I will keep all data in a secure place only accessible to me. I will make every effort to preserve confidentiality, with participant anonymity preserved by ensuring that no individual can be identified in the thesis.

Participants' rights

You are under no obligation to participate. If you do decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study at any time prior to - or at any time during - the interview;
- ask questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission;
- ask for the recorder (if used) to be turned off at any time during the interview
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when the project is concluded.

Project contacts

If you would like to participate in this study, please contact David Ellis at the email address below.

Please do not hesitate to contact the researcher or either supervisor if you have any questions.

The researcher:	Supervisor	Supervisor	
David Ellis	Prof James Arrowsmith	Dr Kaye Thorn	
School of Management	School of Management	School	of
Management			

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Ethics approval

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application MUHECN 12/001. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Ralph Bathurst, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, telephone +64 9 414 0800 x 9570, email humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix C - List of Organisations Assisting with Participant Recruitment

- KEA's LinkedIn groups (Global, Sydney, Shanghai, London, New York)
- Robert Walters (recruitment company) – promoted the research at a pre-repatriation event held in London
- Global Career Link – targeted email to members inviting them to contact the researcher
- New Zealand Society UK
- New Zealand Business Women's Network (UK)
- New Zealand News UK
- Kiwi Club NYC
- Kiwis in Oz
- New Zealanders in Belgium
- New Zealanders in Switzerland
- New Zealand Club Switzerland
- LinkedIn Kiwis Returning Home – employers pipeline group
- LinkedIn Massey Alumni and Friends group
- Facebook – Massey Alumni and Friends group
- New Zealand Studies Network UK

Appendix D – Interview Topics

Topic

Phase One: Expectations

Demographic elements: Age, gender, ethnicity, relationship status, home country, qualifications, profession, host countries in sequence, time spent in each host country (and intentions of time in each)

Expected time to move home

Motivation for moving home

Motivation for expatriation

To what extent have objectives of expatriation been realised

Experience of overseas employment

Expectations after return – non-work

- Friends/family/relationships
- Economy, housing conditions
- Cultural re-adjustment/transition

Expectations after return – work-related

- Position nature/seniority, compensation
- Comparison with role immediately before SIE
- Other work-related expectations (workload, teamwork, colleagues, flexibility)

Other expectations for repatriation

Phase Two: Experiences

Assessment of life since return

Readjustment experiences

Work

Non-work

Comparison with expectations prior to repatriation – non-work

- Friends/family/relationships
- Economy, housing conditions
- Cultural re-adjustment/transition

Assessment of work impacts since return

- Position nature/seniority, compensation
- Elements of career capital
- Comparison with role immediately before expatriation
- Other work-related impacts (workload, teamwork, colleagues, flexibility)

Assessment of opportunities to apply new skills and experience at work

Other experiences / impacts since repatriation

- Comparisons with expectations

Appendix E - Ethics Approval Letter



MASSEY UNIVERSITY
ALBANY

8 March 2012

David Ellis
c/- Professor J Arrowsmith
College of Business
Massey University
Albany

Dear David

HUMAN ETHICS APPROVAL APPLICATION – MUHECN 12/001
Expectations and Experiences of Self-Initiating Repatriate New Zealanders

Thank you for your application. It has been fully considered, and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern.

Approval is for three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, a reapproval must be requested.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise the Secretary of the Committee.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'R Bathurst'.

Dr Ralph Bathurst
Chair
Human Ethics Committee: Northern

cc: Professor J Arrowsmith, Dr K Thorn
College of Business

Te Kunenga
ki Pūrehuroa

Research Ethics Office
Private Bag 102 904, Auckland, 0745, New Zealand Telephone +64 9 414 0800 ex 9539 humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz