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Welcome Home?: New Zealanders' Experiences of Return Migration

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Abstract

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

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Table of Contents

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

3.3	New Zealand's Return Migration Literature	23
3.3.1	New Zealand's Return Migrant Profiles	23
3.3.2	Re-Entry Experiences of New Zealand's Return Migrants	25
3.3.3	Limitations of Existing Return Migration Research	28
3.3.4	Potential Return Migrants: Expatriates and Return Intent	30
3.5	Conclusion	36

Chapter Four: Methodology **38**

4.1	Introduction	38
4.2	A Multi-Phased, Multi-Methodology Approach	38
4.3	Research Parameters and Sampling	41
4.4	Profile of Participants	44
4.5	Conclusion	46

Findings

Chapter Five: 'Coming home': The Decision To Return **47**

5.1	Introduction	47
5.2	Return Migration: The Original Intention	48
5.3	The Call of Home: 'You'd Better Be Home Soon'	51
5.3.1	The Push: 'This Isn't Working Anymore'	52
5.3.2	The Pull: The Lure of Home	54
5.3.3	Timing: Triggers and Windows of Opportunity	58
5.3.4	Not Without Reservations	61
5.4	Hopes and Dreams for the Return	63
5.5	Advance Preparations: A Blind Leap of Faith	65
5.6	Conclusion and Comparison: The Return from Extended OR versus OE	67

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

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

List of Tables

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

List of Figures

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

Chapter One:

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Over the past decade, the ‘flight of the Kiwi’ and the ‘brain drain’ have received attention in the popular media. Headlines such as ‘Quarter of New Zealand’s brightest are gone’ (Collins, 2005), ‘Many expatriate Kiwis unlikely to return’ (Gregory, 2006), ‘Flight of the kiwi shows unhappiness over New Zealand’s prospects’ (Kerr, 2008), ‘New Zealand brain-drain worst in world’ (O’Hare, 2010), ‘Top students turning backs on NZ’ (Top students, 2012), ‘Kiwi exit rate hits 11-year record’ (Fallow, 2012), highlight the concerns and interest. What was once accepted as a rite of passage and coming of age, the ‘big Overseas Experience’ (OE), has been reframed as the big overseas exodus.

The exodus has focused attention on the number and characteristics of those departing from New Zealand which in turn has raised some questions: why are New Zealanders leaving?; why are they staying away?; will they come back?; and, what might draw them home? In 2005, the Department of Labour (McGregor, 2005) issued a call to expatriates to ‘come home’, hoping to lure those residing in the United Kingdom back to New Zealand, by ‘remembering what it is like to be home’. Yet, in 2011, the *Every Kiwi Counts* survey (Kea New Zealand [Kea], 2011a) found that fewer than one-quarter of expatriates in their study intended to permanently return to New Zealand. If the country is to successfully ‘lure’ New Zealanders back, it would seem critical that we have a clear understanding of the journey and experiences of those who do find their way home.

Beyond remembrance, what are expatriate New Zealanders actually returning to and what happens after they get here? These are the questions that informed this thesis.

Lidgard (2001:10) suggested that: 'In the debate about young New Zealanders flocking overseas in large numbers in the year 2000, there was little comment about those returning.' Approximately 24,000 New Zealanders return home each year (Statistics New Zealand, 2012e) as Permanent and Long Term (PLT) arrivals, defined as those who have spent 12 months or more overseas (Statistics New Zealand, 2012a). Despite these arrival numbers, there remains limited commentary, or recent and robust evidence, on the experiences of New Zealand's PLT return migrants. Knowledge that does exist is dated (Lidgard, 1994, 2001), tends to focus on the initial arrival period and/or on the experiences of New Zealand's PLT OE (Chaban, Williams, Holland, Boyce & Warner, 2009b; Myers & Inkson, 2003; Walter, 2006a), that is, sojourners coming home from an OE of typically fewer than three years overseas. One is left to wonder if the trends identified in Lidgard's 2000 profile of return migrants still hold true today, as well as what becomes of return migrants beyond their initial arrival and whether the experiences of those returning from an OE reflect the experiences of PLT return migrants who are coming home from extended Overseas Residence (OR) of five or more years away. New Zealand has become increasingly attuned to the need to understand the integration and settlement of New Zealand's diverse immigrant groups, culminating in the New Zealand Settlement Strategy (Department of Labour, 2004) and the Integration of Immigrants Programme (2008). By contrast, New Zealand's return migrants remain, as Lidgard and Bedford (1992:427) suggested twenty years ago, 'an ignored dimension of international migration'.

There are reasons to suggest that the experiences of New Zealand's return migrants coming home from extended OR might not mirror those returning from an OE.

The background chapter (Chapter Two) discusses the history and nature of the OE, whereby we observe younger New Zealanders setting off overseas to travel and 'experience life'. By contrast, New Zealanders returning from extended OR, by virtue of spending longer periods overseas, are more likely to be older and in the family formation phase of their lives, to be more professionally experienced, to have invested in their overseas employment and career development and to have other investments (such as property, friendships and networks).

As a recent return migrant who came home after twelve years of residence in the United States and China, I was astonished by the dearth of knowledge about return migration experiences and outcomes of return migrants like myself. I was curious as to what had become of those returnees who had gone before me and what could be learned from their experiences. This study represents an effort to address the lacunae resulting from a short-term perspective on long-term migration, for the benefit of the return migrants who may follow and the country that would like to see more New Zealanders come home.

1.2 Research Objectives

The aim of the study was to gain insight into the migration experiences and outcomes of one of the least considered migrant groups, New Zealand PLT migrants returning home after extended overseas residence (OR) of five or more years.

Specific research objectives guiding the research into this migrant group, were:

- To understand the decision to return to New Zealand;
- To understand the re-entry and reintegration experience;
- To gain a perspective on how those experiences of return migrants, back from extended OR, are similar or different to those return migrants coming home from an OE (of typically fewer than three years spent residing overseas);

- To examine the return migration outcomes, both positive and negative;
- To gain insight into what collective wisdom and guidance these return migrants could offer to those considering the return to New Zealand;
- To explore what, if anything, might be done to assist those New Zealand migrants returning from extended OR.

The intention was to funnel findings back to policy makers, at the national and local government level, and to would-be return migrants themselves so that they might be better informed, better prepared and more poised for successful return migration.

1.3 Thesis Outline

The story of the return PLT migrant, coming home after extended OR, is revealed in the eight chapters of this thesis. Chapter One, the introduction, situates this thesis and identifies the research objectives this research aims to serve. The following background chapter, Chapter Two, provides further context as to why this topic is important. Chapter Three presents a critical review the existing literature, both international and local, which in turn informs the design and content of the current study, outlined in the methodology chapter, Chapter Four.

Chapters Five through Seven provide the findings of this exploration into the return migration journey. The chapters correspond to the three broad phases of the return: the decision to 'come home' (Chapter Five); the arrival, and the re-entry and reintegration experiences that follow (Chapter Six); and, finally, the return migration outcomes (Chapter Seven). Chapter Seven also examines what wisdom might be passed on to would-be return migrants, considers what New Zealand might do to help ensure positive return migration experiences for those New Zealanders returning from extended OR, and provides evidence to support why the country ought to consider doing so.

Chapter Eight concludes this thesis, where I summarise the key findings while acknowledging the limitations of the study and the opportunities for further research. I close by providing three key recommendations and calls to action.

Chapter Two:

Background

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a context for and backdrop to this study. In the first instance, I reflect on my personal journey and why this study is important to me. In doing so, the personal bias I bring to the study is acknowledged. In the second, I examine why New Zealand's departed have, perhaps understandably, monopolised the country's attention but why it is critically important to direct our gaze to New Zealand's returning migrants.

2.2 My Personal Journey

Big city lights were in my sights when I set off for New York in 1998, with youthful ambition, tenacity and enthusiasm. A month later, I had secured a fantastic job and came back to New Zealand to 'pack up my life'. 'We'll just go for a few years - it will be a brilliant adventure', I had assured my partner, as we marched to the registry office to begin our new life together. Those few years became a decade in New York and segued into two years in Shanghai, having transferred with my then US employer. We had agreed to commit to China for two years and if, for whatever reason, it didn't work out for either one of us, we would return to New Zealand. It was an exhilarating but exhausting experiment, one that tested our relationship and forced us to consider the future we wanted for ourselves. Almost two years to the day, we bought a house in Titirangi, Auckland, New Zealand, and set our course to return home.

A Strategic Planner or Brand Strategist by profession, I was accustomed to arming myself with information for business and had a tendency to do the same in my personal life. To navigate our move to China, I had relied on Moon publishers *Living Abroad in China* (Strother, 2008), *The Complete Residents Guide to Shanghai* (Explorer Publishing, 2007) and an online expatriate forum (www.expatforum.com/_expats/china-expatriate-forum-expats-living-china). I had used a similar guide when we relocated to New York, though I no longer recall which. While I am now aware that a Moon guide for immigrants to New Zealand exists (Waitzman, 2008), there was no such guide for return migrants and nor did I think to seek one, because, after all, I was coming home.

What became readily apparent to me, as I negotiated being home, was that I might have benefited from guidance on how to navigate through those first years in New Zealand. As I struggled to feel 'at home', I wondered if it was 'just me', if I was going about coming home fundamentally wrongly and if there was 'a better way'. Given the absence of in-depth knowledge of the experience of return migrants like myself, returning after extended overseas residence, there was no way to know. Here I declare my personal bias in undertaking this study. It has been suggested that that 'sociological analysis is always from someone's point of view and is therefore partisan' (Hammersley & Gomm, 1997). Gitlin, Siegel and Boru (1989:245) note, 'the question is not whether the data are biased; the question is whose interests are served by the bias'. It is my fervent hope that the interests of New Zealand and other return migrants like myself are served by my personal interest in this topic.

2.3 New Zealand's Tradition of 'the Big Overseas Experience' (OE)

Despite the flightless nature of our namesake, New Zealand culture has historically embraced the pursuit of travel. What began as the pilgrimage to the 'mother country' evolved over time into the 'working holiday', typically starting in London (via the working holiday visa scheme), before becoming what is known today as the 'Overseas

Experience' (OE) or, more grandly, 'the Big OE'. The OE sees young New Zealanders heading overseas to 'see the world' (Myers & Inkson, 2003:5). Typically in their twenties and educated, New Zealanders on their OE travel and work overseas for typically fewer than three years (Chaban, Holland, Williams, 2009a), where working is generally a means to subsidize travel (Inkson & Myers, 2003). The OE has been declared 'a rite of passage, a symbol of adulthood, a social norm, a source of pride' (McCarter as cited in Inkson & Myers, 2003:171). Wilson, Fisher and Moore (2006:2) pronounced that, 'The OE is so established within New Zealand society that it has become a cultural icon'.

There is evidence that the nature of the OE has been changing and is no longer simply a short-term pursuit. What begins as tourism often becomes more professionally focused (Inkson, 2000; Walter, 2006a). While most intended to be away for less than two years when they embarked on their OE, New Zealanders are staying up to eight years (Inkson, 2000) and even longer. In Kea's (2001) *Every Kiwi Counts* study, almost a quarter of the New Zealand expatriates surveyed had resided in their current country of residence for five to nine years, while another quarter had resided for 10 to 19 years. These trends begin to explain the changing tenor of the discussion surrounding the OE and the shift from celebration to concern - that New Zealanders are not coming home.

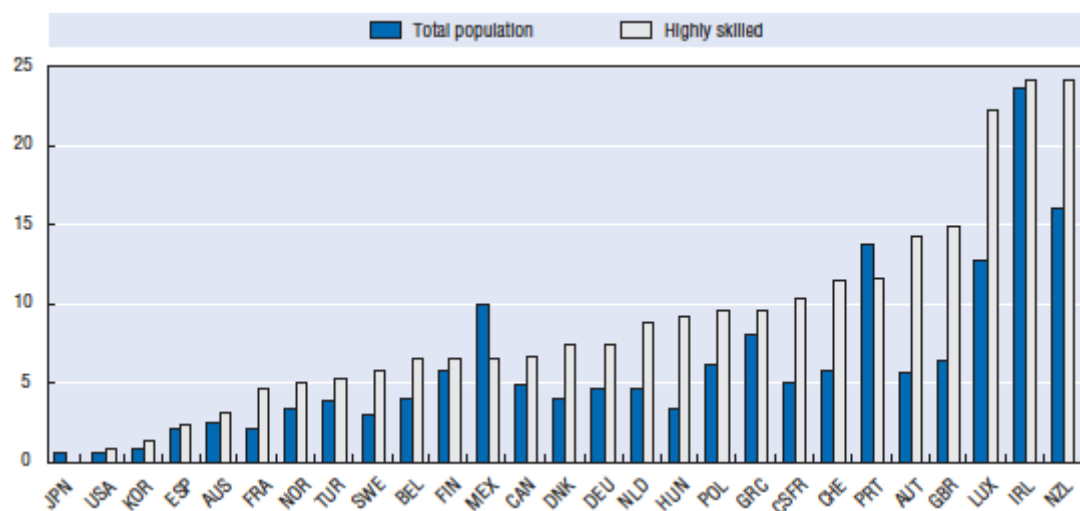
2.4 New Zealand's Diaspora: Evidence of a Big Overseas Exodus?

That New Zealand's departed should have captured the country's attention over the past decades is understandable, given the statistics and discussions that have swirled around New Zealand's diaspora, a perceived 'brain drain' and departure statistics.

New Zealand's diaspora is defined simply by Treasury as 'people born in New Zealand but resident overseas' (Bryant & Law, 2004:9), although it is also seen as New Zealand

citizens and their children¹. New Zealand has one of the highest percentages of expatriates – or largest diasporas - among OECD nations, second only to Ireland (see Figure 2.1). New Zealand also has the highest proportion of highly-skilled expatriates. One in four New Zealand born adults with tertiary education live overseas (Collins, 2005), a fact that has fuelled popular concern that New Zealand is experiencing a ‘brain drain’; that is, the emigration of our ‘trained and talented’ individuals to other countries that results in a depletion of skills (IOM, 2004), which I shall come back to shortly. Estimates of the total number of New Zealanders overseas range from 700,000 to one million (Gamlen, 2007; Kea, 2011a; Statistics New Zealand, 2012c), or approximately one-fifth of the population.

Figure 2.1 Expatriates as a Percentage of all Native-Born, OECD Countries



Source: Dumont and Lamaitre (2005:124)

Almost half a million New Zealanders reside in Australia, although it should be noted that sharing a common labour market means this population involves a significant number of semi-skilled and unskilled migrants, which is distinct from the skill profile of expatriates outside of Australia (Labour & Immigration Research Centre, 2012).

¹ See Gamlen (2010:105) for a discussion on more sophisticated definitions for diaspora, where the characteristics of dispersion, homeland orientation and ‘boundary maintenance’ are central.

Beyond Australia, the greatest concentrations of New Zealanders are to be found in the United Kingdom, followed by the United States (Bryant & Law, 2004²; see Appendix A for details). Given the scale of New Zealand's diaspora there is certainly evidence of significant movement of New Zealanders following established migratory paths, but does this represent an exodus?

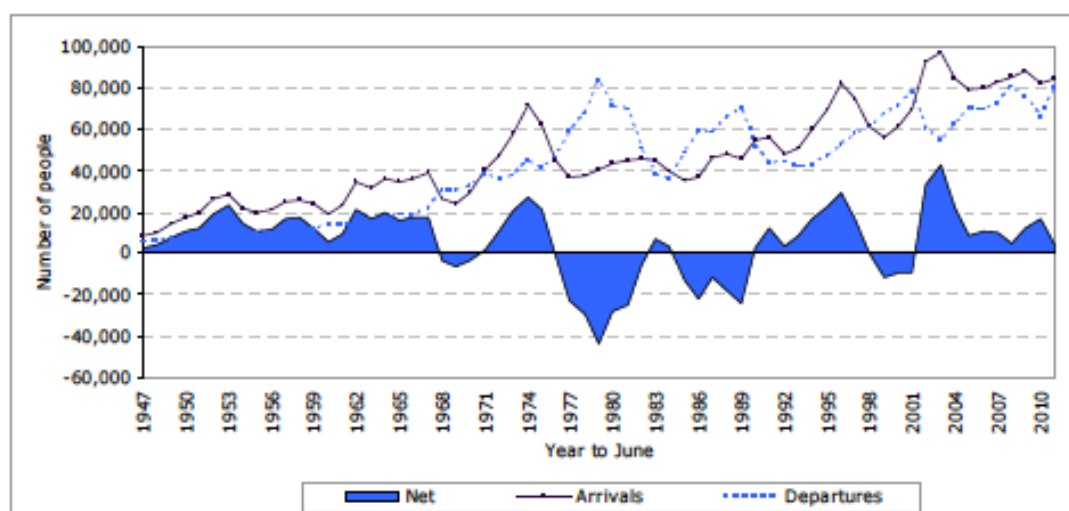
Popular opinion would argue, yes, there is an 'evacuation in progress'. A popular and pessimistic concern over a 'brain drain' has been present in New Zealand since the 1980s and gained momentum in the 1990s (Gamlen, 2005; Inkson et al., 2004b). Over the past decade, the periodic release of Permanent and Long Term (PLT) migration statistics have done little to allay the public's fears, with an average of almost 50,000 New Zealanders taking flight every year since 2002 and a net loss of 24,000 New Zealanders annually (Statistics New Zealand, 2012b). The public's emotions have been stirred, along with patriotism and fears for the future of the country (Inkson, 2000). There is no denying this is also a politically charged debate, with fingers being pointed over the failure of successive governments to 'stem the tide' (Bennett 2011; Chapman, 2011; Kerr, 2008; Malpass, 2012). Most recently, attention has been focused on the 'remorseless rise' of the Trans-Tasman exodus (Bennett, 2011; Editorial, 2008; Weir, 2011), with 53,800 New Zealanders permanently departing for Australia in the twelve months prior to June 2012 (Statistics New Zealand, 2012b). Popular hysteria and politics aside, should these statistics alarm us?

The government, demographers and economists would not have us panic. Historical PLT data reveals that the number of New Zealanders departing each year has ebbed and flowed in cyclical patterns over the past 60 years, as has the net migration flow (see Figure 2.2). The Labour and Immigration Research Centre (2012) suggests that

² Note: There is no official New Zealand data on how many New Zealanders live overseas or where they reside. The data in Appendix A represents the most recent collated and published data on the topic.

when growth of the population is considered, one would expect the number of annual departures to increase annually, and even the recent Trans-Tasman departures, relative to population size, are deemed to be lower than 1970s levels. It has also been suggested that the level of movement New Zealand experiences is not unexpected of a small island nation (Bedford as cited in Collins, 2001). The notion of a 'brain drain' - the flow of expertise in a heavily outbound direction (Salt, 1997) - has been dismissed by the government as a myth (Statistics New Zealand, 2012d). Poot (2009:ii) suggests that the outflow of half a million New Zealanders over the previous three decades has been 'compensated' by the three-quarters of a million immigrants who have flowed into the country. It has been argued that the inflows of highly skilled mean that we experience a 'brain exchange' rather than 'brain drain' (Choy & Glass, 2001) and – given the 'temporary and reciprocal' nature of mobility of the highly skilled (Bedford, Bedford, Ho & Lidgard, 2002:86) - 'brain circulation' or 'shuttle migration' is also a more appropriate description (Bushnell & Choy 2001; Choy & Glass, 2001; Lidgard & Gilson, 2002). More recently, the fluid movement of skilled labour has been described in terms of a 'talent flow' (Carr, Inkson & Thorn, 2005; Inkson et al. 2004b; Jackson et al. 2005) and a global phenomenon.

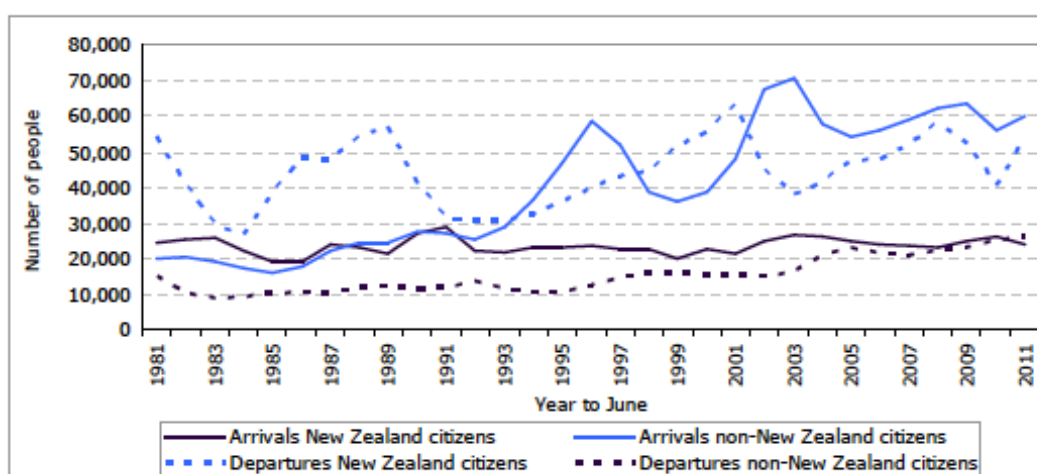
Figure 2.2: Annual Permanent and Long-Term Migration Flows, 1947-2011



Source: Labour and Immigration Research Centre (2012:2)

There are two issues that are sidelined by the optimistic exchange, circulation and flow explanations of the migration of labour. The first is that the brain exchange is not one of ‘apples for apples’; we are largely talking about the offsetting or substitution of New Zealand citizen departures with skilled non-New Zealand immigrants. While returning New Zealanders constituted half of the PLT arrivals at the beginning of the 1980s (Statistics New Zealand as cited in Bedford et al., 2002:76), they constitute less than a third in 2012 (Statistics New Zealand, 2012b). Which brings me to the second issue: in terms of the return migration of New Zealanders, circulation appears to be languishing. Since 1990, the number of New Zealanders who return has averaged, with little variation, approximately 24,000 return migrants per year (Statistics New Zealand, 2012e, and see Figure 2.3). These return statistics have remained consistent, irrespective of the increased level of departures - 62,102 for the twelve months ending June 2012 (Statistics New Zealand, 2012b). This suggests that the circulation is far from free flowing back in New Zealand’s direction and critically highlights the need for greater consideration of return migration.

Figure 2.3: Permanent and Long-Term Migration, by Citizenship 1981-2011



Source: Statistics New Zealand in Labour and Immigration Research Centre (2012:5)

Return migration has not featured as a core concern in the discussion of New Zealand's diaspora strategies or policies. Davenport (2004: 628) points out that there is an implicit assumption here that the global flow of skilled people is 'inevitable and should be viewed as a resource rather than a loss to be stemmed'. Diaspora strategies have thus largely focused on 'harnessing the diaspora' (Gamlen, 2005), cultivating and mining expatriate connections as an engagement strategy, accepting that New Zealand has a transnational society and ought to more aggressively 'work' the benefits of transnationalism in the interests of the country (Bedford, Ho & Lidgard, 2000:30). As such, New Zealand's diaspora is seen as a strategic national asset (Kea, 2011c) and not as a solution to a skills shortage (Escutia, 2007). One outcome of these assumptions and this approach is that return migration has received somewhat limited attention in the research and policy literature.

2.5 Conclusion

I followed a long tradition of New Zealanders setting off on a big OE and, like some, staying overseas much longer than I anticipated. My eventual return was the catalyst for this study, in an effort to understand the experiences of other return migrants – a story that has remained largely untold. The departure of New Zealanders, on the other hand, has captured the popular and political imagination. A pessimistic concern over the exodus or brain drain of New Zealanders has been countered by a more optimistic perspective of brain exchange and the tendency to see New Zealand as part of the global circulation of talent. Nonetheless, that circulation has stalled with respect to the return migration of New Zealanders. It is critically important that we direct our gaze beyond those New Zealanders who are departing, to those New Zealanders who have come home. It is only in understanding those who have 'found their way back' that we can begin to understand how we might then facilitate and encourage more New Zealanders to do so. In the following chapter, I shall review existing literature on return migration, and specifically, New Zealand return migration.

Chapter Three:

Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

Having contextualised the interest in New Zealanders who have left these shores, I shall now turn to examine the existing knowledge of those who find their way home. The International Organization of Immigration (IOM, 2004:56) defines return migration as ‘the movement of a person returning to his/her country of origin or habitual residence, usually after spending at least one year in another country’. More broadly, ‘return’ is understood as the ‘act or process of going back’ (IOM, 2004: 56). While that sounds linear, discrete and finite, within the context of the ‘talent flow’ and ‘circular migration’ discussions referred to in chapter one, where skilled labour moves back and forth, it is important to stress this is often far from the case. The emergence of concepts such as ‘transmigration’ and ‘transnational migration’ or ‘transnationalism’, where immigrants are embedded in more than one nation and/or with their country of origin (Glick Schiller, Basch & Szanton Blanc, 1995; Vertovec, 2002), further emphasise the complex nature of migration. Nonetheless, much of the migration research has historically focused on the event as a discrete phenomenon, as I shall here also. In this chapter, I shall firstly highlight key themes from the international literature on return migration. I shall then specifically examine the existing research on return migration to New Zealand, identifying the gaps this research will aim to address.

3.2 International Literature on Return Migration

Return migration has been deemed ‘the great unwritten chapter in the history of migration’, having not received or been seen to require the same monitoring and attention as resettlement and integration (IOM, 2012). That said, there is a range of

research on the subject, or more precisely, subjects. Return migration encompasses a myriad of movements, be they a return from a visit overseas, from temporary or permanent residence, whether they are self or employer initiated, or forced. Inquiry into return migration spans returnee groups as diverse as veterans (Morin, 2011), students (Butcher, 2002; Gaw, 2000; Werkman, 1979), sojourners (Sussman, 2000, 2002), Peace Corps volunteers (Bieber, 1999; Bosustow, 2006), corporate repatriates (Black, 1992; Sussman, 1986, 2001), refugees (Ghosh, 2001; Koser & Black, 1999; Markowitz & Stefansson, 2004), the highly-skilled (Gmelch 1980, 1987; Vertovec, 2002) and specific geographies, such as Ireland (Barrett, 2001, 2010, 2012, 2012a, 2012b) and the Caribbean (Conway, Potter & Phillips, 2005). Over the past decade, return migration has been 're-discovered' as a significant dimension in the global labour movement (King as cited in Conway & Potter, 2009:7). We also see that renewed interest has extended to second-generation returnees (King & Christou, 2010), returnees to their parents' homeland, often times independently, while ancestral or ethnic return migration has emerged as a distinctive population movement in and of itself (Fox; Kim; Remennick; Takenaka; in Tsuda, 2009). Within the scope of this review and pertaining to the research to follow, I shall focus on first generation return migration: those quite literally returning from another country to their homeland.

There have also been a multitude of disciplines with an interest in the area, from psychology, anthropology, sociology and human geography to politics, law, economics and human resource management (Krivisto, 2001) in addition to the fields such as intercultural studies, tourism and social policy. Despite, or perhaps because of, the diversity of the groups above, the literature has been very fragmented and there is a dearth of comprehensive theories or systematic empirical investigations on return migration (Szkudlarek, 2010). In the following paragraphs, I shall outline some of the key themes that emerge with respect to the return migrant experience.

3.2.1 Return Migrants: Who Comes Home and Why?

First generation return migrants (beyond those returning from temporary study or assignment) have historically been characterised and disparaged as unsuccessful migrants or pensioners, come home to live out their days (Conway & Potter, 2009; Maron & Connell, 2008). This might be the reason for the lack of academic and policy interest in the return migrant experience. It has been argued that return migrants should be looked upon in a 'much more favourable light' (Conway et al., 2005:12). Conway, Potter and St Bernard (2009) refreshingly considered more youthful return migrants, in their 30s to 40s, to Trinidad and Tobago (which have a similar scale diaspora to New Zealand, involving 20 percent of their population). Conway et al. (2009:139) referred to this group as 'prolonged sojourners', having left in their early twenties for education or an overseas experience but stayed on, although they always intended to return home at some point. In their small, qualitative study, reasons for coming home included the desire to 'make a difference' and 'give something back' (Conway et al., 2009:181), as well as the more common return reasons, the desire to bring up their children at home and to be closer to family and friends which have long been cited as frequent reasons for return (Conway & Potter, 2009; Glazer, 1978; Gmelch, 1980). Hugo (2009), in considering youthful returnees to Australia, highlights that there is considerable potential for positive impacts from return migrants given that they are often skilled, have accrued more skills overseas and most return with considerable working life ahead of them. Cerase (as cited in Cassarino, 2004:258) referred to a group of return migrants who saw themselves as 'carriers of change' and innovators, looking to use their new skills to achieve their goals in their home country. Return migrants, these studies would suggest, are not simply 'unsuccessful migrants' or pensioners. Having considered the return migrant profile and common reasons for returning, I shall now consider the literature on the return experience.

3.2.2 Re-Entry: The Shock of Return Migration

The term 're-entry' conjures up space travel and crashing through the atmosphere, which is perhaps appropriate. 'Coming home' sounds much smoother and literature on the topic suggests it can be anything but, as indicated by titles such as *Why home is not so sweet* (Sussman, 2000) and *Return migration: Journey of hope or despair?* (Ghosh, 2001). Returnees can experience feelings of shock, isolation and alienation upon re-entry, sometimes even greater than evoked by entering a new culture (Adler, 1981; La Brack as cited in Sussman, 1986). High levels of distress have been consistently reported upon returning home (Sussman, 2000).

Transitional theories of reverse culture shock or intercultural adjustment have emerged to explain the high degree of psychological and emotional distress that many returnees experience, championed by intercultural studies, psychology and business management. Reverse culture shock is 'the process of readjusting, reacculturating and reassimilating into one's home culture after living in a different culture for a significant period of time' (Gaw, 2000:83-84). This process is captured in Gullahorn and Gullahorn's (1963) reverse culture shock or intercultural adjustment model, also known as W-curve theory (which is an extension of Lysgaard's 1955 U-curve theory of culture shock, supported by Oberg, 1960). Under the W-curve, the return transition begins with a 'honeymoon' period, followed by re-entry shock (a crisis brought about by facing surprising and negative experiences at home) and a period of recovery and adjustment. See Figure 3.1.

Despite the intuitive appeal of the W-curve and its iterations, there is very modest empirical substantiation (Szkudlarek, 2010) and it remains largely descriptive (Sussman, 2000). The W-curve has primarily been applied to the

experience of students and business expatriates, though more recently to those of sojourners (as we shall see later in Chaban et al., 2009b and Walter, 2006a).

Figure 3.1: W-Curve Theory



Source: Based on Oberg (1960) and Gallahorn and Gallahorn (1963)
in Berkeley International (2012)

The curvature of the W-curve has been questioned (Adler, 1981; Sussman, 2001) and specifically the notion of a fluid, linear adaptive process, which is counter to the transformation that occurs through a series of erratic events or crises (Pederson, 1995). It is also stressed that migration and re-migration is itself not a linear process and a multiple-re-acculturation model might better explain international transitions (Onwumechili, Nwosu, Jackson & James-Hughes, 2003). Although the shape of the process is under fire, the concept of re-entry is nonetheless helpful in acknowledging that the return journey does not end at the airport 'Arrivals Hall' and in recognising that there are phases of transition that follow return migration.

3.2.3 Key Factors That Intensify Re-Entry Shock

The challenge of re-entry is exacerbated by the very unexpectedness of, and ill-preparedness for, re-entry challenges. Gmelch (1980) emphasised that many return migrants are ill-prepared for the return experience, underestimating the changes that have taken place in themselves and their home country (including changes to family

and friends) since their departure. Sussman (1986) notes that returnees rarely anticipate re-entry problems (with the exception, it would seem, of Japanese business repatriates), it being 'counter-intuitive to expect difficulties when returning to one's home' (Sussman, 2001:110). Sussman's (2001) study of American managers, who had been on assignment for a period of six months to four years, confirmed that the lack of 'mental preparedness' for re-entry difficulty is a predictive indicator for a negative experience of return. Sussman (1986:245) encouraged training so that return migrants might be made aware of what to expect and that their difficulties are not 'an individual aberration'. While training is often recommended for students and business expatriates, the literature is generally limited to theory about the possible design of such sessions (Szudlarek, 2010). Several popular literature titles in North America have seized upon the need to prepare returning business expatriates and their families. Available on Amazon are *The Art of Coming Home* and *The Art of Crossing Cultures* (Storti, 1990 and 2003, respectively) and *Homeward Bound* (Pascoe, 2000), which includes such instructional chapters as *Re-Entry Rage and Resentment (Getting Over It!)*. These 'instruction manuals' can, however, only be of use if return migrants are aware of the need for them which, often, they are not.

Great expectations can also intensify re-entry shock. Gmelch (1980:145) identified a common theme of 'unrealistic expectations' on the part of return migrants, as to what home might offer them when they return, be it with respect to financial, environmental or social conditions. Gmelch (1980) suggested that these unrealistic expectations could be fostered by nostalgic memories, by idyllic vacations back home, by exaggerations from relatives eager to have the expatriates home and/or by the lack of information. When great expectations are not met upon arrival, the return can constitute 'the end of the myth' (Ghanem, 2003:39). Sabates-Wheeler, Taylor and Natali (2009), in analysing return migration to Ghana, found expectations, and the ability to adjust, to be closely related to the level of information before leaving and,

therefore, emphasised the importance of reliable information and information flows in forming return expectations. Sabates-Wheeler et al. (2009:768) concluded that 'those who have the most positive experiences are those who adapt and who have realistic expectations in the first place'. Return migrants with unrealistic expectations and who cannot adapt may become disillusioned and, potentially, re-emigrate. Moreover, unrealistic expectations can hamper their performance if they stay: in a study of American business repatriates, Black (1992) found accurate expectations to be a predictor of both high adjustment levels and of their job performance.

The unexpectedness of, and ill-preparedness for, the challenges of re-entry, coupled with unrealistic expectations for return migration, would appear to set return migrants up for a difficult re-entry experience. A key question for this study concerns whether New Zealand's return migrants are aware of, and prepared for, what awaits them? Are they informed and returning with realistic expectations? Are they poised for smooth landings or a crash? I shall table these questions and now consider the international literature on return migration outcomes.

3.2.4 Beyond Re-Entry: Return Migration Outcomes

In this section, I shall review the existing knowledge of return migration outcomes, making specific reference to Ireland.

Gmelch (1980:142) noted that returnees' readaptation 'success' can be approached in terms of the returnees' economic and social conditions, or in terms of 'the migrant's own perceptions of his or her adjustment and the extent to which he feels that the homeland has filled his self-defined needs and given him a sense of well-being' and 'measured in terms of the degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction expressed by the migrants'. Dissatisfaction can also be seen in plans to re-emigrate (Paine as cited in Gmelch, 1980). Gmelch (1980) observes that the period over which the process of

adjustment takes place can take one to two years, which suggests that it is imprudent to evaluate the outcomes of return migration in a period of less than two years from the point of their return.

A particularly relevant case study for us to consider is that of Ireland. As noted in the previous chapter, Ireland is the only country with a diaspora greater (in proportion to their population) than New Zealand's and with a comparable percentage of highly-skilled expatriates. By age 50 years or over, a quarter of Ireland's population have lived overseas for more than one year and almost half of this group had lived overseas for more than a decade (Barrett, 2012). With respect to economic outcomes, Barrett and O'Connell's (2001) study looked to answer the question of whether there was a wage premium for Irish return migrants and whether they were rewarded for their accumulated skills upon their return home. The study drew data on over 800 Irish college graduates from the class of 1992 and compared 'returners' (who had lived overseas for six months or more) with 'stayers'. The results were not as significant as one might imagine, with returning males earning +10 percent compared to their cohort who stayed put, while no difference was found for women, which they attributed to human capital gains for men and to greater family-tied migration for women. That said, almost one-third of those who returned did so because they preferred the lifestyle in Ireland while another third returned to a job, suggesting economics are not the key driver for a significant number of return migrants. This finding is consistent with other global studies (e.g. Conway et al., 2009; Glaser, 1978; Gmelch, 1987; Hugo, 2009). Based on just a 10 percent income premium for the returning male, it is perhaps just as well that economics are not a key motivation for coming home. In 2006, Barrett & Goggin (2010) redid the survey and found just a seven percent premium for the Irish returners.

Grimmer still are Barrett and Mosca's (2012a, 2012b) recent findings on the social and 'psychic cost' of migration for Irish return migrants. Using data from a nationally representative Irish Longitudinal Study (n=8000) of people aged 50+, Barrett and Mosca found a higher incidence of alcohol problems - as an indicator of the negative impact on mental health - for male 'returners' versus 'stayers' and for women who had been away for ten years or less. For men, that higher incidence is not a marginal difference but rather twice the incidence level. Social isolation (as measured by friends, family and community proximity and by social participation) was also found to be higher for returned migrants than stayers and was stronger for those who spent longer away and who returned more recently. Interestingly the return migrants did not feel lonelier – a fact Barrett and Mosca suggested might reflect them being more self-sufficient, having developed coping mechanisms through the adaption process.

There is evidence that 'it gets better' over time. Gmelch (1980), studying 606 Irish who had been abroad for at least two years and who had returned to small country communities in the West, found that the percentage of return migrants who expressed dissatisfaction with their return lives decreased from 51 percent for new return migrants (back one year or less) to 21 percent for those who had been back for two or more years, and down to 17 percent after five years back home. Gmelch (1985) also found that the most strongly related variable to readjustment was the return migrants' satisfaction with their social lives.

The review of international literature suggests that return migration can be an unexpectedly challenging journey, for which return migrants can be ill-prepared and which may or may not yield positive outcomes for the return migrant. I shall now look to review more specifically what is known of New Zealand's return migration.

3.3 New Zealand's Return Migration Literature

Before the early nineties, very little was known about New Zealand's return migration, leading Lidgard (1993:94) to declare New Zealand's return migrants our 'neglected international migrants'. At that time, the need for research was seen to be pressing, with the largest homecoming of New Zealanders since the return of troops from WWII (Lowe as cited in Lidgard, 1994). Yet despite this, and the increased concern over the departure of New Zealanders, there remain relatively few studies on return migration to New Zealand, from the geographers (Lidgard, 1994, 2001; Lidgard & Bedford 1992), tourism (Pocock & McIntosh, 2010; Walter, 2006a), a cross- and inter-cultural perspective (Chaban et al., 2009b), business management (Inkson & Myers, 2003; Inkson et al., 2004a; Jackson et al., 2005; Thorn 2008) and the expatriate network (Kea, 2006, 2011a). Key findings from this body of literature are reviewed below.

3.3.1 New Zealand's Return Migrant Profiles

Lidgard's (1994, 2001) profiles of the New Zealand Returnees of 1990 and 2000 present the first substantive research on the return migrant population. The studies were based on national surveys of recent PLT arrivals (n=740 and n=471 respectively), contacted through the Immigration Service of the Department of Labour. Lidgard's 1990 profile identified two predominant streams, to which 80 percent of returnees belong. The first stream: a continuous, free flowing 'proximate' trans-Tasman stream, more akin to internal migration or domestic movement and more representative of New Zealand's general population. The second stream: a dominant 'colonial stream' of distinctively young (20 to 29 years), single, educated and skilled New Zealanders, returning from the UK, predominantly within two years of having departed – characteristic of the traditional Overseas Experience (OE). A third, minority stream of 'other countries' was less cohesive, and included mobility for career and travel. In both profiles men were outnumbered by women among return migrants (76:100 and 71:100 respectively). Two notable differences in the 2000 profile were a higher proportion of

those aged 30 years and over (with one-third aged 30 to 39 years, the same proportion as those in their late twenties) and those from 'other countries', representing a third of returnees in the 2000 profile, an increase Lidgard attributed to an aging and increasingly diverse New Zealand population (new New Zealand citizens re-visiting Asia and the Pacific) but may also be related to the changing face of the OE.

Lidgard's profiles reveal that almost one-third of the return migrants in the study spent more than the traditional two years overseas on their OE, residing overseas for three or more years. This phenomenon is also evident in Myers and Inkson's (2003) management study of the OE, where almost half of their participants spent more than four years overseas and for half of the participants a continuation of a career and career development played a significant part in their OE. A 2010 return migrant profile would have been helpful in understanding how this trend to longer overseas residence has developed and what percentage of return migrants are returning from extended residence overseas. Already evident from the data in Lidgard's 1990 and 2000 profiles and Myer's and Inkson's (2003) study, however, is that a significant proportion of return migrants are coming home from longer terms of residence than three years overseas. Nonetheless, Lidgard (2001:14) suggested the majority of returnees would be better categorized as 'travellers' or 'international circulators' than long-term migrants, with the majority of return migrants planning to spend less than three years overseas and they did indeed return within that timeframe. These findings start to draw a picture of who comes home. Next, I shall review what Lidgard's profiles reveal in terms of the reasons for and experience of return migration.

Why do New Zealanders come home? Lidgard's profiles suggest that the key reasons for return migration were strong attachments to people and place, which pulled them home. Those attachments were to family, first and foremost, then to friends and New Zealand's physical environment. The majority of the return migrants in the profiles felt

strongly about their children growing up in New Zealand (Lidgard & Gilson, 2002). Even though economics played a minor role in the decision to return, returnees did have every expectation they would find suitable employment and two-thirds of those seeking work had found it within four months of return (Lidgard, 2001). Finding satisfactory employment was cited as making resettlement easier, while not doing so made resettlement more difficult (Lidgard, 1994), further emphasising the role of employment in return migration, despite not being a 'pull' home.

Lidgard's profiles offer a significant contribution by way of starting to paint a picture of the movements, motivations and demographics of a national sample of return migrants. When it comes to the return experience and outcomes, however, the brush strokes are very broad. I will now examine several studies that focus specifically on the return migration experience.

3.3.2 Re-Entry Experiences of New Zealand's Return Migrants

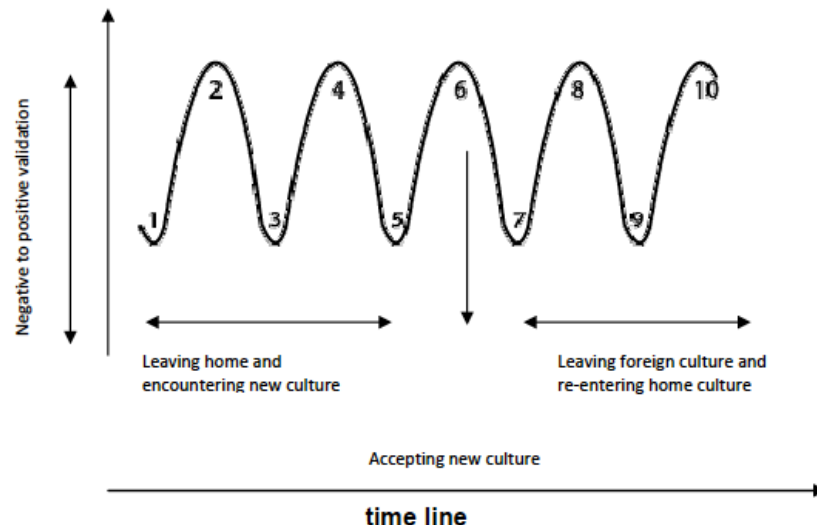
Walter (2006b)³, and Chaban, Williams, Holland, Boyce and Warner (2009b) provide some further details on the return migration experience. Both of these studies utilised in-depth interviews (n=24 and n=42, respectively), with return sojourners from the United Kingdom and Europe (with the exception of three participants in Walter's study), and applied W-curve models of intercultural adjustment to the New Zealand experience. Walter drew on the previously outlined Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) W-curve while Chaban et al. (2009b) used a W-curve model Rhinesmith developed in 1985 (Figures 3.1 and 3.2).

³ Note that Walter's (2006) study is further analysed and re-presented in Pocock and McIntosh (2010), also referenced in this thesis, where the co-author is Pocock (nee Walter), that is: one in the same.

Walter (2006b) found, among her participants' experiences, some evidence to suggest that the 'waves' the W-curve theory describe do reflect the general experience of the return from an OE. Her participants experienced a period of transition upon arrival, followed by thoughts of 'what next?', a period of adjustment and eventually a changing of priorities and settling. Walter (2006b:9) noted a diversity in the intensity of their transition or culture shock, 'from severe depression, to annoyance and frustration with home, to complete and immediate acceptance', based on subjective and individualistic circumstances such as participants' readiness to return, expectations, level of support and opportunities upon arrival and personality. As such, Walter (2006b) recommended individual strategies for return migrants, including recognising the challenges of adjustment ahead of the return and understanding the phases of transition, with potential for repatriation programmes geared toward OE travellers in order to ease repatriation.

Chaban et al. (2009b:13) found Rhinesmith's Ten Stages of Adjustment model to provide a more useful and comprehensive framework for the 'rollercoaster ride' of the return sojourner experience. This model represents multiple waves of adjustment and cultural shocks, beginning with the initial anxiety of encountering a new culture and through to reintegration back home (see Figure 3.2). The majority of the participants in the study fitted, in their words, 'the typical OE model' (Chaban et al., 2009b:19): participants were well educated, had left in their twenties for life experience and returned within one or two years of travel. Chaban et al. found the return sojourners experienced similar emotional re-adjustment peaks and dips upon their return to those described by the Rhinesmith model (see Figure 3.3). Specific to the return phases: all of the return migrants experienced some return anxiety (Stage 7), but this was not 'deep' and the positive 'pull home' outweighed it (Chaban et al., 2009b:70).

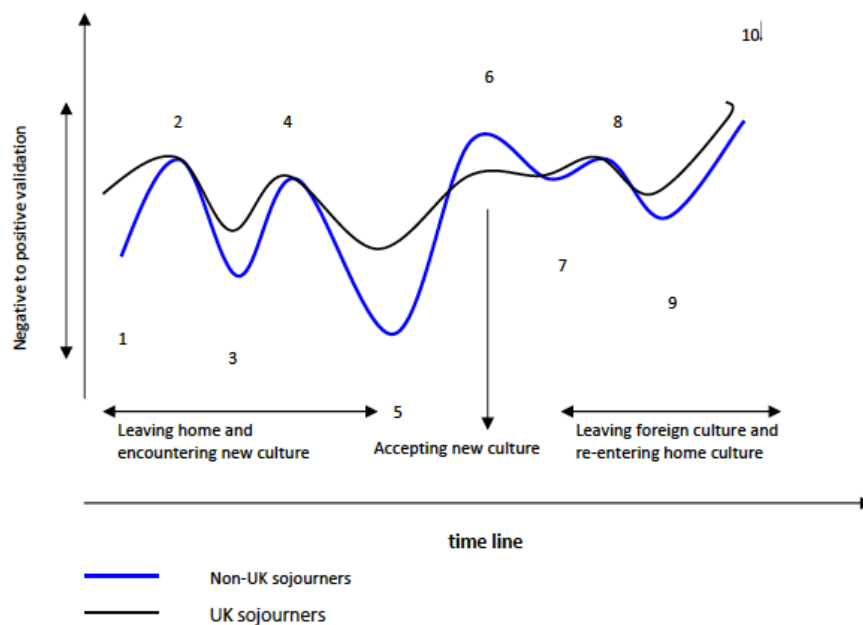
Figure 3.2: Rhinesmith's Ten Stages of Adjustment



Source: Adapted from: Fulbright/Amideast Programme, 'Culture Shock' by Chaban, Williams, Holland, Boyce and Warner (2009b:14)

Key for Stages: (1) initial anxiety; (2) initial elation/fascination; (3) initial culture shock; (4) superficial adjustment; (5) mental isolation/depression/frustration; (6) integration/acceptance of host culture; (7) return anxiety; (8) return elation; (9) re-entry shock and (10) reintegration.

Figure 3.3: The New Zealand Return Sojourner Experience



Source: Chaban, Williams, Holland, Boyce and Warner (2009b:68)

Re-entry elation (Stage 8) was fleeting and quickly gave way to unexpected re-entry shock (Stage 9), which was greater for return sojourners from Europe when compared to those returning from the United Kingdom. Return sojourners from the United Kingdom found the transition easier, both in adjusting to the new culture and their home culture. Geographic isolation and the scale of New Zealand were the biggest factors contributing to re-entry shock, rather than jobs or interpersonal interactions, which were not strong issues for the participants in this study.

Reintegration (Stage 10) happened when the shock subsided and many of the return migrants reportedly 'slipped back into' the New Zealand lifestyle (Chaban et al. 2009b:57). Upon reflection, proximity to family and to friends was the most positive aspect of having returned to New Zealand, along with the environment and getting good jobs, while on the downside were lower wages and quieter lives. For all participants, the overseas experience was a life-changing event that had enriched their lives but was largely seen as a 'discrete chapter in their lives' now closed, as they entered new stages of their lives (careers, settling down, starting families), with no plans to re-migrate (Chaban et al., 2009b:74). The researchers did note the need for an understanding of return migration that looks beyond the United Kingdom and the differences observed between the experiences of return migrants from Europe versus those from the United Kingdom reinforce this point.

3.3.3 Limitations of Existing Return Migration Research

A narrow, 'colonial' geographic focus is not the only challenge to a comprehensive understanding of New Zealand's return migration. Two key issues with the New Zealand return migration studies referenced in the previous sections relate to the time frames they are working with.

The first issue is with regard to when return migration research takes place. In the international literature, it was noted that the period of adjustment can take one to two years (Gmelch, 1980), and yet Lidgard's (1994, 2001) profiles are within five months of return; Myers and Inkson's (2003) analysis is confined to the first few months of return; three-quarters of Walter's (2006b) respondents returned within two years; and Chaban et al.'s (2009b:12) returnees are 'biased towards more recent migrants'. This focus on recent migration suggests that a meaningful understanding of the return adjustment process might be precluded and/or confined to the initial re-entry stages and that any conclusions drawn about return migration outcomes might be pre-emptive. Ideally, like Barrett (2012), we would use a longitudinal study to generate a more complete picture, something that Chaban, Holland and Williams (2009a) and Myers and Inkson (2003) have also recommended.

Secondly, studies of New Zealand's return migration experiences tend to focus on, or better represent, the experience of those returning from a traditional OE, which has been described as 'too long to be tourism and too short for migration' (Wilson as cited in Jemmett, 2005:24). For example, in the case of Walter's (2006a) study, Walter recruited for returnees who spent three months to five years away, and in Chaban et al. (2009b), the researchers' findings drew on a sample where the majority of participants spent more than one year away and typically fewer than three. Even Pocock (2011), in a tourism study exploring the concept of 'home' for returned long-term travellers, defined 'long-term travellers' as those having spent nine months to five years overseas. These periods overlook the longer periods of time New Zealanders are spending overseas and either exclude or preclude an understanding of the experiences of New Zealanders returning from extended Overseas Residence (OR).

Our understanding of the return experience tends to favour using a short-term lens and focus on shorter-term overseas experiences, typically in the United Kingdom and

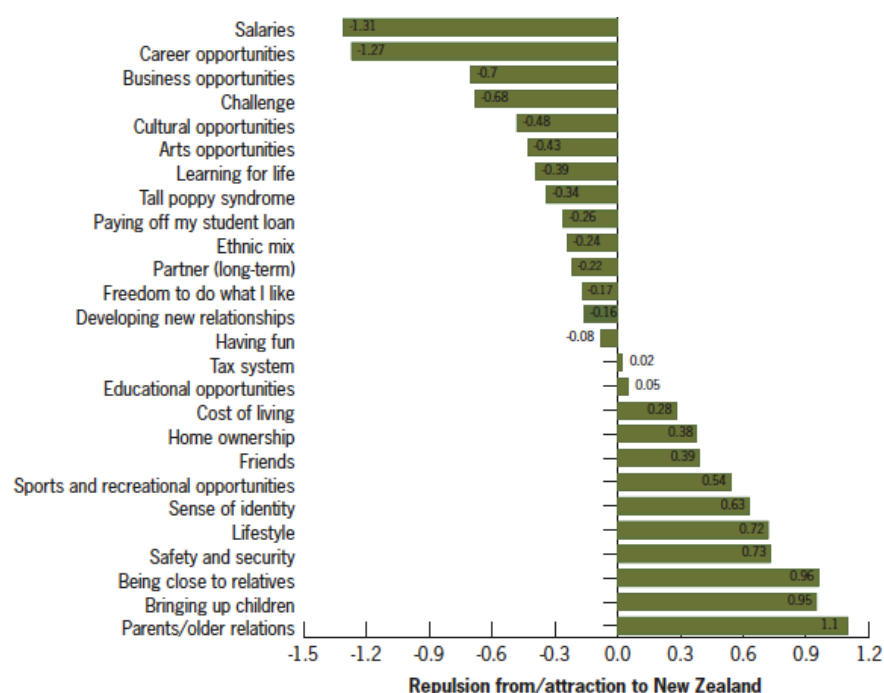
Europe. Until we look beyond those parameters, the picture we have of return migration will remain incomplete. This study aims to redress these lacunae and explore the experiences of a particular group of New Zealand's return migrants: those coming home from extended OR of five or more years.

3.3.4 Potential Return Migrants: Expatriates and Return Intent

What we do have by way of a fuller picture of return migration are three substantial quantitative studies on New Zealand's expatriate population: Inkson et al.'s (2004a, 2004b) *Talent Flow Programme* and Kea's (2006, 2011a) expatriate 'censuses', *Every One Counts*, followed up five years on with *Every Kiwi Counts*. These studies provide insight into, and draw some provocative conclusions about, who is likely to come home and why.

Inkson et al.'s (2004a:3) *Talent Flow Programme* sought to provide 'an etiology of migration', that is: the psychology, circumstances and motivations of the migration of skilled New Zealanders. Inkson et al. (2004a, 2004b) surveyed 2,201 expatriates in 72 countries. While the majority resided in the United Kingdom and Australia (67 percent), 13 percent of the participants in the study resided in the US and nine percent resided in Asia. Almost half of the respondents had spent six years or more overseas on their current OE, and many had also undertaken a prior OE. Inkson et al. (2004a:9) suggested that those expatriates who had spent more than ten years overseas 'might reasonably be regarded as settlers in another country rather than travellers as such'. That being said, almost half of the expatriates in the study indicated that they were certain or likely to return to New Zealand, with family factors, such as aging relatives, bringing up children and being close to relatives, drawing them to New Zealand and salaries, career and business opportunities pushing them away. See Figure 3.4.

Figure 3.4: Factors Causing Attraction Away from/Attraction to New Zealand
(In Increasing Order of Attraction to New Zealand)



Source: Inkson, Carr, Edwards, Hooks, Jackson, Thorn and Allfree (2004b:36)

Also examined by Inkson et al. (2004b:37) were the differences in the attraction values of the 'stay overseas' group versus the 'come home' group. See Figure 3.5.

Table 3.5: Factors Causing Attraction Away From/Attraction To New Zealand

Motive	NZ returners	Overseas stayers	Significance of difference
Family	5.17	5.05	P<.05
Lifestyle	4.19	4.09	n.s.
Friendship	4.10	3.67	P<.001
Achievement	3.15	3.48	P<.001
Money	2.98	3.10	n.s.
Influence	1.41	1.62	P<.001

Source: Inkson et al. (2004b:37)

Based on the differences observed (above), Inkson et al. (2004a:15) suggested that 'a worrying feature of the results' was that those who intended to stay overseas had higher motivations for achievement and influence, while those planning to come home put a higher value on family and friendships. They went on to hypothesise:

Given the overall high rates of movement of migrants out of and into New Zealand, this could be one reason for New Zealand's persistent failure in recent decades to achieve its potential in terms of economic growth. Those who return may be precisely those who will enjoy New Zealand's pleasant and sociable lifestyle but due to relatively low economically-oriented motivation may be less inclined, overall, to provide the entrepreneurship, innovation, work energy and business leadership to sustain growth. (Inkson et al., 2004b:37)

Raising a concern over the fact that New Zealand may be 'deprived of the high achievers who can grow our economy' (Hooks, Carr, Edwards, Inkson, Thorn, Allfree, 2005:15) is valid, but I would argue that suggesting that those New Zealanders who do return are 'less inclined' to contribute to the growth of the country an overreach. Chaban et al. (2009a:10) point out, in relation to the possibility that return migrants are negatively selected, that 'much of this debate is conjectural because of a lack of research on who returns versus who stays'. The need for a more comprehensive and long-term study is once again highlighted and very much needed to allow us to move beyond conjecture.

Kea New Zealand's 'censuses' of New Zealanders overseas, *Every One Counts* (2006) and *Every Kiwi Counts* (2011a) do not resolve this issue, obviously, but do represent the largest collection of data on New Zealand expatriates and their views. Kea New Zealand (Kea) is a not-for-profit organization, founded in 2001, to connect New Zealand's Global Network. The surveys (of n=18,002 and n= 15,297) were designed to coincide with New Zealand's census and, as such, go some way to complete the

picture of New Zealand's overseas population⁴. Both Fursman (2010) and Gamlen (2010) acknowledge that the self-selected expatriate sample cannot be generalised to all New Zealand expatriates but, nonetheless, constitute an important, rich and valid measure of New Zealand's diaspora. The studies reveal a highly skilled, connected, experienced and highly paid expatriate population who strongly identified themselves as New Zealanders. One-third of the expatriates in the study lived outside of Australia and the United Kingdom, with almost twenty percent of respondents living in the United States in 2011. The main reason for expatriates living away from New Zealand was 'general job/economic/income prospects' (roughly on par with 'different lifestyle/culture/excitement' for under 30 year olds but the single most important reason for 31 to 50 year olds). The profile of how long they have lived in their current country of residence had dramatically shifted to longer residence across the surveys (39 percent of respondents had lived in their current host country for five or more years in 2006 versus 64.3 percent in 2011). While the extended length of time may reflect Kea's continued relationships with expatriates from the earlier census, it may also reflect that a significant number of expatriates are staying away for longer periods, where economic and career factors play a much larger role and one-third of them are doing so outside of Australia and the United Kingdom. These findings, though not generalisable to the expatriate population, do indicate that some New Zealanders are engaging in overseas experiences that are more substantive than the traditional OE of fewer than three years. I would expect these factors to influence the profile and experiences of return migration.

A critical aspect that the Kea (2011a:20) study highlights is the question mark hanging over return migration for many of New Zealand's expatriates. Only twenty-two percent of Kea's participants reported that they will - or were likely to - return permanently to New Zealand in the future, almost equal to the number of participants who planned to -

⁴ The full studies are downloadable at www.Keanewzealand.com/global/every-kiwi-counts

or were likely to - stay overseas permanently. One-quarter were likely to return but were also likely to live somewhere else in the future, and another quarter were undecided about the prospect of return.

As also observed in Inkson et al.'s (2004b) research, Kea's (2011a) study reveals that value-based reasons provide greater attractions to return to New Zealand than economics. Family proximity, lifestyle and the desire to be home were the main reasons for considering return migration while a minority planned to move back for general economic reasons (six percent) or to establish a business (five percent). In disproportionate numbers to where they originally migrated from, expatriates looked to Auckland to settle if they were to return migrate (39 percent) but the majority of the total sample would also consider settling in Australia (56 percent). Not that the expatriates in the study were planning on migrating in the immediate future: almost half of those planning to return to New Zealand were considering do so one to two years hence; one-quarter of them were considering doing so more than five years on; and almost twenty percent did not know when they might return.

Kea appears not to be discouraged by the lack of commitment or urgency to return home that their studies reveal. On the contrary, Kea is excited about the opportunity for greater connectivity and engagement with expatriate New Zealanders, to enable them to play an active role in New Zealand's growth and success from afar. Ross McConnell (as cited in Gregory, 2006), then Kea chief executive asserted: 'They don't have to be here to contribute ... They can open doors and opportunities in markets where we need to do business in future'. Current CEO Dr Sue Watson (in Kea, 2011c) similarly highlights that expatriates can play an important role in New Zealand's productive economy from off-shore, emphasising their role as contributors to and brand ambassadors of New Zealand (TVNZ, 2012). Nonetheless, over this period Kea made efforts to connect expatriate talent with opportunities in New Zealand, such as The

Global Talent Centre, launched in 2006, and Kea Job Community, launched in 2011, albeit with mixed results⁵.

Fursman (2010) provides a useful analysis of variables that influence intentions to return to New Zealand. Fursman used Kea's (2006) data but excluded expatriates living in Australia, on the grounds that they tend to more reflect the general New Zealand population (reducing the sample to n=13,123). Her data showed: expatriates with higher qualifications were less likely to intend to return to New Zealand (echoing Hooks et al. 2005, achievement deprivation theory); intentions to return decreased with age and tenure; men were less likely to intend to return than women; those with a non-New Zealand partner were less likely to return than if they had a New Zealand partner; and those expatriates with children were less likely to intend to return than those without children. Fursman's (2010) findings, then, suggest that attracting New Zealanders home becomes more difficult as expatriates establish lives and families overseas. Fursman (2010:34) declared lifestyle to be one of the major drivers for return migration and an important 'comparative advantage' for New Zealand in attracting skilled expatriates, although Fursman (2010:32) also highlighted: 'what exactly lifestyle is, and how we measure it, is less clear'. Given the importance of non-economic factors in considering return to New Zealand, a more sophisticated understanding of 'lifestyle' is vital. In her paper, Fursman (2010:39-43) argues the case for the creation of a 'family lifestyle' index, given that a large number of expatriates who consider a return to New Zealand fall into 'family-formation age groups' (25 to 45 years old and either thinking about having children or with small children, thinking about 'settling down'). Such an index would include both lifestyle and family-work variables, such as working hours, paid leave for families and access to

⁵ The Global Talent Centre did not take hold and appears to have influenced movement in both directions, according to Moore and van der Scheer's (2009) evaluation. As at 20 July, 2012, seven jobs were advertised for Auckland through the Kea Job Community, fifteen nationally.

quality childhood care. Such a 'family lifestyle' index could potentially be very relevant and compelling.

A word of caution should be noted in dealing with declared intentions and motivations in relation to these expatriate studies. Gamlen (2005:15) would have us pause before jumping to conclusions based on migrant intentions: 'Brain circulation supporters have frequently confused migrant intentions with migrant behaviour, implying that rates of 'intention' or 'commitment' to return are an indication of actual return rates'. Fursman (2010:3) herself emphasises the fact that: 'It is impossible to predict how many of those who leave New Zealand will return, how long they will be away for, and who might return with them'. What is clear, and Fursman (2010) stresses this point, is that knowledge of those who stay overseas and those who return is essential for any initiatives aimed at both retaining and regaining New Zealand's skilled labour force.

3.5 Conclusion

'Return migration remains the great unwritten chapter in the history of migration', proclaimed the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2012). Although various researchers have an interest in the topic of return migration, a review of the international literature reveals an absence of comprehensive theories or systematic empirical investigations. Nevertheless, common themes emerge, suggesting that return migration can be difficult, that return migrants do not expect and can be ill-prepared for the challenges of re-entry, and that return migration may or may not yield positive outcomes for the return migrant themselves.

If return migration is 'the great unwritten chapter', then an understanding of New Zealand's return migration certainly fits the bill. The current body of knowledge does not provide a complete or up-to-date picture of New Zealand's return migration. Although Lidgard (1994; 2001) provided useful profiles of return migrants for 1990 and

2000, what that profile looks like a decade later is not known, nor whether the trends observed in the 2000 profiles – the slightly older profile, the lengthened overseas tenure and increased representation of ‘other countries’ – have continued. Nor do Lidgard’s profiles allow a meaningful examination of return outcomes, having confined the data collection to within five months after return. Studies examining the return experience (Walter, 2006a; Chaban et al., 2009b) have also been biased towards the short-term: to recent return migrants, but also to those returning from a traditional, short-term OE, and typically to those returning from the United Kingdom or Europe. Until we look beyond these parameters of time, tenure and geography, a more complete understanding of return migration will elude us and any discussion on New Zealand’s return migration will continue to be hampered by incomplete information.

This study aims to redress the gaps in knowledge resulting from a limited view of New Zealand’s return migration. Chapter Four will outline the methodology by which I intend to shed light on the experiences of those return migrants whose story has been omitted in the chapter of New Zealand’s return migration: New Zealanders coming home from extended Overseas Residence (OR).

Chapter Four:

Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The broad aim of this study was to understand experiences of the New Zealanders returning home after extended Overseas Residence (OR), defined as five or more years living overseas. Specific research objectives were to understand the decision to return to New Zealand, their re-entry and reintegration experiences, return migration outcomes and wisdom. The research also aimed to consider what might be done to assist these return migrants. This chapter outlines the research methodology employed to deliver against these objectives and provides justification for data collection and sampling decisions made in doing so.

4.2 A Multi-Phased, Multi-Methodology Approach

The study utilised multiple methods, over three phases. This somewhat elaborate methodology was chosen based on the absence of knowledge about the experiences of return migrants coming home after an extended OR, and the desire for depth of insight into those experiences. The elected methodology is distinct from existing research, which has either relied on quantitative surveys (for example, Lidgard's profiles, 1994, 2001), or in-depth interviews (for example, Chaban et al., 2009b; Walter, 2006a). The former methodology limits the breadth of understanding into the return migration experience, while the latter relies on spontaneous reflection on the experience, which may or may not be realistic given the return may have taken place some years prior. Eight participants were considered to provide a rich data set to meet the requirements of the objectives of the study, while still being manageable using the mixed methodology outlined in the following paragraphs.

Phase one involved two self-administered exercises, designed to allow participants to spend time on their own, reflecting upon their return migration experience in advance of an in-depth interview which, in turn, encouraged richer and more fruitful interview experiences. The first exercise was a brief, closed questionnaire (see Appendix D), examining the participants' decision to return, preparations for the return, and outcomes having returned. Closed questions meant that participants had to choose, for example, the 'main' factor in their decision to return and make some value judgements about their perception of return outcomes, where they might otherwise be more likely to speak generally about such variables in an interview format. Participants' responses were probed and discussed in the in-depth interviews. The second exercise invited participants to share five practical, personal or professional 'tips' or pieces of advice that they wish someone had shared with them to make the journey or reintegration smoother, or had been advised and would like to pass on (see Appendix E). Participants' responses from both exercises were analysed and provided stimulus for discussion during the interview.

Phase two consisted of in-depth, face-to-face interviews, lasting between 60 and 90 minutes. This methodology is consistent with the studies of the experience of returning from an Overseas Experience (OE) (for example, Walter, 2006a; Chaban et al., 2009b) and with the Integration of Immigrants Programme studies (for example: Meares et al, 2011; Watson et al., 2011), which provide a useful guide for examining migration outcomes in New Zealand. A semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix F) guided a series of open-ended questions exploring the return migration experience: from the decision to return, through to their re-entry experiences and the outcomes of their return migration. Questions included inviting participants to share their hopes and dreams for coming home, their biggest surprises or challenges upon re-entry and strategies to overcome them, what they considered to be the trade-offs

and triumphs of return migration, and what might be done to make the journey smoother. The interviews were conducted in a place of comfort, selected by participants, which was generally at their homes. Interviews were recorded for transcription and analysis.

In **Phase three**, participants were asked to make a short video to 'pass on some thoughts' to New Zealand expatriates considering the return move (see Appendix G). The content was entirely up to the participants. By way of example, it was suggested they could choose to create an 'advertisement' as to why other expats should return, a word of advice on how to make their return successful, or a word of caution to inform potential return migrants what they might contend with upon their return. The film exercise allowed participants to turn their lens onto the most powerful and resonant images and messages that communicated what 'coming home' meant to them.

The data from the multiple stages were collectively analysed using thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006:77-101). This involves generating initial codes after reviewing the data, searching for themes or patterns in the data, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and analysing themes. Findings have been organised under common themes identified for the three phases of return migration: 1) the decision to return and journey home; 2) re-entry and reintegration and, 3) return migration outcomes, which includes wisdom and opportunities to help facilitate return migration.

One of the aims of the study was to share the findings and to make the experience of these return migrants known so it was critically important that care be taken to inform participants of the intended usage and their right to confidentiality up front (see

Appendix B and C, Information Sheet and Consent Form). All of the participants were made aware that, subject to their consent, all materials and data collected would be used for both academic purposes (thesis, journal articles, conference presentations) and for policy and information dissemination purposes (policy presentations, a possible return migrant website, guide, book and/or documentary). At the beginning of the study, participants were made aware that they would have a range of confidentiality options available to them: they could elect to be known for all of their data; or to be known for some of their data and opt for confidentiality for other inputs; or to opt for complete confidentiality and use a nom de plume for all of their data. Participants were informed that they did not have to discuss anything in their interview that they did not wish to and were encouraged not to divulge any information they would be uncomfortable being disseminated (they also has a final opportunity to review and delete any quotes from their interview transcripts before releasing their data). Participants were also advised to not to show their own or their family's faces in their video exercise should they wish their identity to remain confidential. At the close of the study, participants gave written consent indicating how they would like their identity treated with respect to the various data inputs (see Appendix H). In this way a participant could retain authorship of their 'tips' but elect confidentiality for their interview quotes, for example, the choice being completely up to them.

4.3 Research Parameters and Sampling

Participants in this study were recruited using the following criteria: New Zealand-born citizens who currently reside in Auckland; have spent five or more years residing overseas, specifically in the United Kingdom, United States or Asia; who returned to New Zealand two or more years ago; from skilled/professional backgrounds; who had returned to New Zealand within ten years and on, or before, the age of 45 years; and were not intending to permanently depart from New Zealand in the next 12 months. The rationale for the selection of these criteria is outlined in the following paragraphs.

With respect to the geographic parameters, New Zealand born citizens were specified in an effort to exclude the variable of return migrants for whom New Zealand was not their original country of origin. Auckland was focused on for both practical reasons and because it attracts a disproportionate number of return migrants (40 percent of expatriates in Kea's 2011a study were likely to return to Auckland while 14 percent of all migrants to Auckland between 2001-2006 were return New Zealanders according to Statistics New Zealand, 2007:6). Furthermore, population projections indicate Auckland will continue to be New Zealand's fastest-growing region and account for 60 percent of the country's population growth over the next 20 years (Guy, 2012). The study focused on New Zealanders who returned from the two countries with the largest known expatriate New Zealander populations beyond Australia: the United Kingdom and the United States of America (Bryant & Law, 2004:3). Asia was also included because of the growing importance of the region to the New Zealand and, with it, increased migration flows (Asia represented a higher percentage of New Zealand's PLT departures in the year to June 2012 than the United Kingdom, Statistics New Zealand, 2012b). I have excluded Australia from this study, as the patterns and profile for migration to and from Australia are unique, based on being a common labour market (Hugo, 2004; Labour & Immigration Research Centre, 2012; Poot, 2009).

Time frames used in this study were informed by existing research and definitions. For the purpose of this study, extended Overseas Residence (OR) was defined as participants spending five or more (consecutive) years residing overseas. Five years was selected to ensure the return migrant group was distinct from that of sojourners returning from a traditional OE, which is considered to be greater than three months and typically fewer than three years away. To ensure that the participants had been in the country a sufficient period to evaluate return outcomes, the criterion was for them to have returned at least two years previously, which was reduced to at least one year when the final participant proved difficult to find. Consequently, one participant returned

18 months prior to the study. Participants were to have returned no more than ten years earlier, consistent with Sabetes-Wheeler, Taylor and Natali (2009) and the MIREM project (RDP 2011) which defined the returnee as 'any person returning to his/her country of origin, in the course of the last ten years'. A proviso that participants were not intending to exodus from the country in the next 12 months ensured potential participants would remain return migrants for the duration of the study.

A final consideration in recruiting was that the return migrants in the study be migrants that the Department of Labour and Department of Immigration seek to attract from overseas, that is, skilled migrants. Therefore, participants were employed overseas in professional roles and, with the exception of one participant, with higher education qualifications. Participants were also to return at or before 45 years of age, with many professional years still ahead of them.

Participants were identified through snowball sampling. Details of the recruiting criteria for participation in the study were shared via my extensive personal and professional network, both in New Zealand and overseas, which was in turn shared with their networks. The process was aided by the pervasiveness of email, professional and social networking among skilled professionals. Beyond the recruiting parameters outlined above, an effort was made to sample a diverse set of participants, for example: a mix of female and male, a mix of occupations, of return migrants who returned with or without partners (New Zealand or otherwise) and with or without children.

4.4 Profile of Participants

Demographically, the participants are quite similar: all of New Zealand European ethnicity⁶; they had returned to New Zealand accompanied by a significant other (with six of the eight participants married at the time of their return); and all but one participant returned with a child or children in their care (three of whom had dual citizenship, three of whom only had citizenship for their overseas birth country, and one of whom was a New Zealand citizen). Although not intended, the fact that the participants were all in the family formation phase of their lives is not surprising, given participants' age at the time of their return, which ranged from 33 to 43 years old, with a mean age of 38 years old. Efforts were made to recruit single return migrants and those without children. Such efforts were without success, however, given that they tended to yield individuals who had returned from shorter, temporary residence akin to the traditional OE. Of the interview participants, five were male and three were female.

With respect to residency geography and time frames, those interviewed were characterised by the following experiences: the recruited sample consisted of three participants who had returned from extended residence in the United Kingdom; three from the United States; and two from Asia, specifically from China and Japan. Participants returned from residencies of six to 12 years, or a mean tenure of nine years, from their main overseas country of extended residence. Participants' total overseas tenure, however, ranged from seven to 14 years, with a mean tenure of 12 years. At the time of being screened for the study, the participants had resided in New Zealand for a period of 18 months to 10 years, with a mean of five years since their return to New Zealand, amply allowing for a longer-term perspective on their return outcomes. In the case of two participants, return migration consisted of two return attempts, within two to three years of each other, and the telling of their return

⁶ Note: New Zealand Europeans constituted 83 percent of Lidgard's (2001:14) return migrant profile and 89.7 percent of KEA's (2011:7).

migration story invariably encompasses both. I have indicated those participants' ages at their initial return in brackets in column two of Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Key Characteristics of Return Migrant Participants

Gender:	Age : Upon Return/ Current Age	Host Country/ Countries:	Length of Overseas Residence: Total (by Country)	Number of Years Since Return Migration:	Relationship Status Upon Return (Partner's Citizenship Upon Return)	Number of Children Upon Return and Citizenship of Child:	Occupation: Upon Return/ Current, if Different
M	43/45	UK	12 years (10/2)	1.5 years	Married (NZ)	1 NZ/DUAL CITIZEN + PREGNANT	Senior Manager, Information, Communications & Technology (ICT)
F	35/41	UK/SPAIN	11 year (10/1)	6 years	Married (NZ)	2 NZ/DUAL CITIZENS	Business Analyst/ ICT Professional
F	36/42	UK	10 years	6 years	Married (NZ)	2 NON-NZ CITIZENS	Marketing Professional
M	33/43	USA/UK	8 years (7/1)	10 years	Married (NZ)	1 NON-NZ CITIZEN	Art Director/ Head of Art, Creative Professional
M	40/46	USA/CHINA (+18 months travelling)	9 years (6/1/1.5)	6 years	Partner (NZ)	1 NON-NZ CITIZEN	Investment, Financial Services Professional
F	(38) 40/44	USA	11 years (8/3)	4 years (6 years since initial return)	Partner (NZ)	0	Physiotherapist, Healthcare Professional
M	(33) 36/41	JAPAN/ UK	14 years (11/3)	5 years (8 years since initial return)	Married (NON-NZ)	1 NZ/DUAL CITIZEN	HR Professional/ Entrepreneur
M	38/40	CHINA/USA/UK	12 years (6/4/2)	2 years	Married (NZ)	1 NZ CITIZEN + PREGNANT	Architect, Technical Professional

Participants came from a range of professions, including healthcare, marketing, architecture, creative, financial services and information, communications and technology (ICT), per Table 4.1. The sample was well-educated, with half of the participants holding a post-graduate diploma or Master's degree and three of the eight participants holding a Bachelor's degree. One participant did not have a higher education qualification but held a highly-skilled professional role, qualifying him for inclusion in the study.

4.5 Conclusion

The objectives of this study required a rich, layered methodology in order to give depth and insight into the experiences of New Zealand's return migrants coming home after extended Overseas Residence (OR) of five or more years. The subsequent research design has a multi-staged, multi-methodology approach, which included a pre-interview questionnaire and exercise, an in-depth, semi-structured interview and a post-interview video exercise. Careful consideration was given to the recruiting criteria of eight participants, whose experiences are set out in the following findings chapters. The data from the multiple stages were collectively analysed using thematic analysis. Findings have been organised under common themes that emerged under the three phases of return migration: 1) the decision to return and journey home, 2) re-entry and reintegration, and, 3) return migration outcomes, which includes wisdom and opportunities to help facilitate return migration.

Chapter Five:

‘Coming Home’: The Decision To Return

5.1 Introduction

The findings of the study are presented in Chapters Five, Six and Seven. These chapters combine the key findings from all three phases of data collection and various data inputs: the pre-interview questionnaire and exercise, the in-depth interviews, and the post-interview video exercise. Each chapter corresponds to a phase of return: Chapter Five to the decision to return; Chapter Six to the experiences upon re-entry; and, Chapter Seven to the return migration outcomes.

The journey home begins well before touching down on home ground. In this first findings chapter, I examine the journey preceding the journey. How did the participants come to the decision to return? What hopes and dreams did they have for the return move? What preparations, if any, did they undertake? Insights that emerged from the data are presented grouped around common themes. Understanding this phase is particularly critical given the importance of factors such as realistic expectations and mental preparedness for successful return migration, as we saw highlighted in the literature review. I close this chapter by considering the differences and similarities between the experiences of return migrants in this study, coming home from extended Overseas Residence (OR), when compared to what we know of those sojourners returning from a shorter-term Overseas Experience (OE).

5.2 Return Migration: The Original Intent

It is worth noting that, with the exception of one participant who left with the intention of staying away ‘forever and never coming back’, all of the participants in this study left New Zealand with every intention of returning to the country. This can largely be attributed to the fact that five of the eight participants had left on what was very much consistent with the profile of the traditional OE: they were young people, in their twenties, heading overseas with the primary reason being to experience different cultures and lifestyles, working to subsidise travel, and intending to be gone ‘for a couple years’ (Myers & Inkson, 2003). We see these intentions spoken of here:

I was twenty-three. I bought a round-the-world ticket and the first stop was South America ... I knew I'd be away for a few years at least. Pippa (UK) stayed overseas 11 years.

Yes, absolutely, it wasn't a career thing, it was a travel thing. [I was] twenty-six. [I had] worked for three years post-graduating and it was always the plan to go overseas. I thought I'd go for two years which was probably about as far into the future as I could see at that stage and thought I'd travel then do bar jobs and things in London and earn enough money to travel again and do several of those sorts of trips. Kate (UK) stayed overseas 10 years.

The remaining two participants cited work/economic/income prospects as their main reason for moving overseas, one taking advantage of using a grandparent's entry visa in the United Kingdom and the other a job transfer to the United States. This was still very much an OE for them, albeit more career motivated. The desire to experience another culture and lifestyle was noted as the other key consideration for their move and they too only anticipated staying a limited number of years.

The majority of the return migrants in the study claimed that they had not planned to stay as long as they did and the length of time they ‘overstayed’ beyond their original intention was significant. Participants stayed overseas five to ten years, with a mean of

seven and a half years, beyond their original intent. This can be compared to Inkson and Myers and Inkson's (2003) OE study, where only a third of their returnees stayed 10 percent or more longer than they anticipated, or Lidgard and Gilson's (2002) work, where three-quarters of those returning from the United Kingdom did so within two years, largely as planned. Reasons for this extended stay frequently echoed previous researchers' observations about how the OE can change over time, with what begins as tourism often becoming more professionally focused (Inkson 2007; Walter 2006a), prompting a change in original timelines and plans. Participants in this study became conscious of professional opportunities in their host countries that they did not believe New Zealand could offer them, and developed specialisations as their careers progressed, making it less pressing – and more difficult - for them to consider a return. For instance:

In the process of going over there I realised that what I was doing was not what I really wanted to do and when the opportunity of digital agencies started popping up, I realised I could get back into creative businesses and London was the place, outside of California, where it was really starting to happen, really starting to cook. So there was an immediate opportunity right there in London which probably didn't exist back in New Zealand and I just got caught up in it and time just disappeared. William (UK) stayed overseas 12 years.

You just then get into a cycle of realising that your careers are going places, also [my partner's] job became more and more specialised and so the type of work he was doing doesn't exist in New Zealand and once again, we were late twenties and then early thirties and the lifestyle we were living was fantastic. So in a big city, living a big city lifestyle, travelling the world and having good money to do it so it was a very seductive lifestyle, very hard to give up. Kate (UK) stayed overseas 10 years.

That the participants' OE sojourn became something more long term was not simply a function of their stay becoming 'more professionally focused', however, as Kate's quote (above) indicates. The participants in this study did not just become more cognisant of,

or embedded in, their career paths, they made friends and became seduced by and settled into life in their host countries, which became their adoptive homes.

It kind of blossomed into a little fun and making the most of being there, really. There wasn't the pull to come back, it just didn't seem right at the time, didn't feel right, it felt comfortable being there. Toby (USA) stayed overseas seven years.

The work – opportunities, they kept on expanding. And just the living in New York which was – you've lived in New York, it's pretty addictive. What kept me? The excitement of the place. The work was good, that kept me there of course ... The ability to travel and just excitement, every day is different and the diversity of it. Brad (USA) stayed overseas nine years.

I started getting quite interesting jobs and obviously got together with my husband and we just loved it. We had a great lifestyle and every year we'd go oh, we want to go here and we want to do this and we want to do that and we were just so entrenched in London and the lifestyle and our friends. It was just home. I mean, I lived longer in London, as an adult, than anywhere in the world. I just didn't want to come home. Pippa (UK) stayed overseas 11 years.

Although they resided in other parts of the world, the participants were by no means absentees from New Zealand. All eight participants returned to New Zealand to visit periodically: two travelled back at least every twelve months; five travelling back every couple of years; and one participant brought his partner and children back every two to five years. For all participants, this was no small feat considering the number of hours of travel involved. Maori have a concept 'ahikā', whereby you repeatedly return to your birthplace, that your rights to the land are maintained so as to 'keep the fires burning'. These return visits most certainly played an important role in keeping the fires burning and in drawing these participants back to New Zealand, as we will see in the following section.

To say that return migration was their original intent is not to suggest that their return was a certainty. Some of the participants reflected 'it could have gone either way' and

that they might have stayed on. Having stayed longer than they originally intended and become settled in their adoptive countries provokes the question, what then prompted the participants to finally return to New Zealand?

5.3 The Call of Home: 'You'd Better Be Home Soon'

Somewhere deep inside

Something's got a hold on you

- *Better Be Home Soon* by Neil Finn (1988)⁷

After having resided overseas for an extended period, the decision to return to New Zealand was seldom a sudden one. This was a notion, and for some a dream, that took hold over a period of time. Five of the participants considered the return to New Zealand over a year or more, and two thought about it over several years. Several factors came into play to foster the conditions that brought on their return. Some of these were push factors from life in their host country and others were pull factors of home. However, for most participants, the decision to return was hastened by a trigger event and/or a window of opportunity. It is important to consider all of these factors, for it is often a combination and culmination of these that created the impetus to return migrate for the participants in this study. Fursman (2010:27) pointed out that asking respondents to select a single reason for returning might represent 'an overly simplistic view of a complex decision' and was problematic. Walter (2006a:70) also emphasises the fact that 'the reasons for return are not mutually exclusive as they are interconnected, and isolating or categorizing them tends to ignore the holistic perspective of the return home'. My findings very much support the assertions of both

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writers. However, for the purposes of clarity and logic, I treat these as separate contributing factors.

5.3.1 The Push: ‘This Isn’t Working Anymore ‘

Participants reported that what was once an exciting lifestyle began to ‘lose its shine’ and ‘take its toll’ over time. Having left New Zealand in their youth, they were starting to have families or contemplating doing so and entering the family formation stage of life. As they embarked on this new stage of their lives, participants began to question the kind of life they were living and contemplate the nature of their lives, in cities, far from home, their families and nature. They started to ask themselves, ‘what am I doing here?’ For example:

I was living in New York and really not living in the city as I used to. I was really sitting in my apartment a lot, spending a lot of time there and I was like why would I sit in my apartment and be looking at this concrete wall when I can go home and look at the greenery? ... I also felt living in New York was a compromise to the standard of how I was living. I was in an apartment, I had a flat-mate ... I was in my late thirties. I felt like it was time to not be living that way...and I didn’t want to be that Mum on the subway struggling. Mandy (USA)

It was really after we got pregnant with our second child ... Economically we were just treading water, we weren’t saving anything particularly ... we were renting. We thought well, we don’t have any family here, [my wife] wanted support, the family. It was becoming a pain in the ass, to be honest. We’d been overseas for twelve or thirteen years ... I just think we were probably maybe getting a little bit over moving a lot. It felt like settling a little bit, maybe having our own place, our own space. I guess the excitement of being in New York wasn’t a great draw card anymore. Not just New York, being overseas. Johnny (CH/USA)

[I was] just getting worn down by the pace of New York I think. I guess the other big thing was having my son. As a baby, it was okay but I knew it was only going to be a finite amount of time, I thought, before we had to make a decision about moving to a more family orientated area than China Town. Toby (USA)

These participants were often working intensely and for long hours in their jobs. Having children exacerbated tensions that were already present, making life as they knew it even more demanding, as articulated here:

[Having kids] just starts to make life really, really difficult. In my husband's line of work, he used to leave home at six o'clock in the morning and not get home until midnight quite often so it meant I was trying to keep my career going but was having to be sole caregiver of the kids as well. And so it just became a much tougher lifestyle. Kate (UK)

When seen through this 'parent lens', their adoptive cities also became a less savoury proposition for the participants. While it might have once appeared 'edgy', it now became not only less appealing but less safe in their eyes, as voiced here:

It was when she was still a baby ... coming up to two. So that sort of hit ... London at that time, with a young child, it's not a great place to raise a really young child because despite the fact we were in a good neighbourhood it was still tough, there were a lot of council estates still around. You'd be pushing the baby along and these kids would, attack dogs would be coming around the corner. William (UK)

When you're in a big city there's a lot of mitigating stress and pressures and restrictions and there's a lot of madness in Japan too. There was an on-going series of crazy killings and stuff, like some guy just turned up with a big knife and stabbed twenty kids and ten of them are dead. It would be like wow, why did that happen? Jason (JP)

Participants also became more aware, over time, of a mounting sense of unease at being a foreigner in a foreign place. This was particularly so for participants residing in countries outside of the United Kingdom, who verbalised:

Yes, stuff is very complex and for me as a foreigner in Japan, you're always a foreigner and stuff bugs you after a while that might not at first ... in Japan you're a hundred per cent Japanese or you're not and it's clear. So there was those sort of things that start to wear a little bit and it matters more because you've lost that honeymoon phase maybe. I think maybe if you're in England or the States it might be different. You could feel more at home but you're never going to feel like you're a Japanese person. Jason (JP)

I also always felt a little bit ungrounded being away from home and I think that that was a problem emotionally for me. I never really had a grounding and I felt that I needed to come home and put my feet down ... I definitely tried to make New York my home but I actually never was able to and then the family issue of being away from my family for that long was on my mind. Mandy (USA)

I always felt, I don't know, just a little tense. In New Zealand I feel absolutely relaxed, grounded, no problem, I don't have any – I don't know. Other countries I always feel relaxed but there's a little, underlying sort of uncertainty or something. Especially in Asia I found. If you go tripping in China, you just feel a very small layer of tenseness there. You know it's not your home. It's a bit strange. Johnny (CH/USA)

These mounting tensions, or push factors, created a fertile ground for the idea of returning home. Let us turn to the pull factors that worked in tandem to entice the participants home to New Zealand.

5.3.2 The Pull: The Lure of Home

The main reasons for return to New Zealand, selected by participants in their pre-interview questionnaire, are listed in descending order in Table 5.1, below.

Table 5.1: Main Reasons for Return

In descending order of main reason	Main Reason	Other Factors	Total Factors
Opportunities for spouse or children	3	2	5
New Zealand is my home	2	4	6
To be closer to family	1	5	6
Lifestyle	1	4	5
Work/economic/income prospects	1	1	2
Children's education		3	3
To establish or relocate a business in New Zealand		2	2
Safety		1	1

Note: Reasons for return that were left unchecked by participants were 'family obligations in New Zealand', 'new start', and 'immigration issues'.

These reasons are broadly consistent with the main reasons for return that emerged in the review of New Zealand return migration literature in Chapter Three. It is difficult to

make a direct comparison of the factors, given that the various studies phrase the reasons for return in a different manner. The key factors that are consistently cited, however, are family ties (Inkson & Myers, 2003; Lidgard, 2001), a desire to bring up children in New Zealand (Lidgard 2001; Lidgard & Gilson, 2002), an emotional attachment to place and the pull of home (Lidgard & Bedford, 1992; Chaban et al., 2009b), and 'lifestyle' (Kea, 2006; 2011a). All of these factors are in evidence in the top four reasons for the return for the migrants in this study.

'Opportunities for spouse or children' was the most popular main reason for the participants in this study and adapted from the wording in Kea's (2011a) 'census': 'opportunities for family members other than myself (e.g. spouse, children)'. This was found to be a low rated reason in the Kea (2011a) study of expatriates for whom the desire to be closer to family was much stronger. This low rating is perhaps understandable, given that the expatriates were looking at New Zealand through the eyes of absence and therefore in relation to what, or whom, they were missing. Also contributing to the low rating of 'opportunities for spouse or children' in the KEA study will be the fact that almost a third of the respondents in the expatriate studies did not have a partner and over half of them did not have children, so that they did not bear any responsibility for a family unit. By contrast, the participants in this study were looking to the possibilities of the future in New Zealand, doing so with a partner and, with the exception of one participant, at least one child, and therefore likely with a heightened sense of opportunities for the family unit. Also a contributing factor is that two of the participants partners were coming back to set up their own businesses. 'Opportunities for spouse or children', then, encompasses opportunities for spouses' careers and children's schooling as well as proximity to family and lifestyle factors.

'New Zealand is my home' was a strong pull for most of these long-time expatriates, although it was not always easy for them to put their finger on exactly what that meant:

For me it's like ease of access to being in a natural environment, being at one with nature, being able to go to a beach or go to the bush and easily get there ... It's where my family are from. It's where I was born. It's a difficult thing to quantify. William (UK)

Some of the participants were more definitive, such as Pippa's declaration:

New Zealand is my home. I am quite a patriotic New Zealander. I wanted my children to have an upbringing in New Zealand and not in the UK or anywhere else. Pippa (UK)

The idea of 'being home' was almost something fundamental and primal. For many participants, it represented being in their natural surroundings, being 'where you come from', or something akin to the Maori concept of 'papa kāinga' – the original home or home base. 'Being home' also represented the feeling of being in a simpler, more relaxed place that they were a part of, in contrast to the tensions of being a foreigner 'elsewhere,' as revealed in the comments in the previous section. For example:

It was really I think to just be home. I think I finally felt happy and calm and grounded. Mandy (USA)

'To be closer to family' was also a strong reason to return and much simpler to deconstruct. For participants, this was very much about having the support of family, when they had small children, and proximity to family, as children grew up and parents age. These factors were evident in the tensions of being away and the triggers that drew them home.

'Lifestyle' was a common reason given for the return. Fursman (2010:32-34) suggests lifestyle is a 'comparative advantage' for New Zealand in attracting skilled expatriates to New Zealand but also emphasised that it was a broad term that encompasses a wide range of factors. This is very evident in this study: for these participants, lifestyle included factors such as being close to family, to nature, and the ease of being home in New Zealand, as this quote from Johnny illustrates:

Lifestyle would be – say weather for example, is much less inclement so all year round it's easy, there's no winters that are freezing so three or four months a year you're snowed into your apartment. Easier – I suppose family support. Ability to easily ... go to beaches ... go to islands ... to drive north two hours and go somewhere pretty remote ... Intimate knowledge of the surrounds so you're comfortable, so you know what's around you as opposed to when you live in New York everyone says you can get the train for three hours and be out of New York but you never seem to do that, or you very rarely seem to do that so you're often stuck in the city but here, I know how to get out of the city ... So generally I feel more comfortable, more relaxed. Johnny (CH/USA)

Although it is easy to think of lifestyle as an emotional and romantic attribute, often it is also very pragmatic, as Kate's quote suggests:

It comes down to quite practical things. For me, my commute to and from work – because I went back to work after having our first child and I'd have a forty minute commute each way in the car and so then you start trying to work out your childcare arrangements and do you put your kid in day care or childcare near home or near work and what happens when you get stuck in traffic which can be a two hour traffic jam. It just starts to make life really, really difficult. We knew the lifestyle would be a lot easier in New Zealand. You could eradicate the commute, you could just make things much easier for yourself. Have a house with a car park so you could unload your car without walking for blocks at a time carrying groceries and children. Kate (UK)

Such practical, often family-related, considerations add support to Fursman's (2010) case for a 'family lifestyle' index, which would incorporate both traditional lifestyle and work-family variables (including such practical factors as paid parental leave, working hours and flexible work). A family lifestyle index seems very relevant here, given the life stage and concerns expressed by the return migrants.

Economic considerations have been largely dismissed as having a 'minor role' in the decision to return in previous studies (including Kea, 2011a; Lidgard, 2001). By contrast, it is worth noting that half of the participants in this study cited work-related factors (either returning to a job or looking to start their own company), which increase the number to six of the eight participants (if the two spouses returning to start their

own businesses were factored in). Such a finding suggests that to focus exclusively on lifestyle and family factors, while dismissing career-related factors, is to overlook a key aspect for the participants in this study.

While the reasons for return are broad, there are some very specific triggers that influence and prompt the decision to return. I turn to these in the following section.

5.3.3 Timing: Triggers and Windows of Opportunity

Previous studies have noted that the expiry of visas was the main reason for the majority of return migrants (Chaban et al., 2009b:48; Walter, 2006a:70), or likely a strong driver (Fursman, 2010:27). This is understandable when considering young people travelling on the Working Holiday Visa (now Youth Mobility Scheme) and on temporary sojourns. However, having worked and resided in their adoptive countries for many years, all of the participants in this study had working visas or residency that allowed them to remain there. None of the participants had immigration or residency issues that forced them to return to New Zealand and thus the choice to do so was purely a voluntary one. Nevertheless, the triggers they experienced were often every bit as real and pressing as a visa expiry. These triggers, which included having a child, return visits, practical and economic factors (such as selling a business or house), all worked to create a sense of immediacy and/or a 'now or never' moment. These I outline below.

Having a child, or anticipating having one, was one of the most powerful triggers for considering the return home. This is unsurprising, in light of the tensions revealed by participants in the above section, such as the challenge of bringing up children in cities, with demanding jobs, far from 'home'. The desire to bring children up in New Zealand, closer to their extended families, in the New Zealand school system and way of life, was very strong. Participants articulated the onset of this desire:

We were three or four months pregnant, the fact that winter was coming, we just thought well, what are we doing here? We're not going to live in America forever, we didn't think. What's the point in staying away, losing the support of grandparents ... [People] always think the childhood they had was the best childhood they could have so their kids should experience the same thing. I don't know, maybe it's a biological thing or something. Johnny (CH/USA)

Part of what happened, I think, when we had kids, was a much greater feeling of need to reconnect with our families ... which then necessitated a need for us to fly home every year with little kids and that was really hard work. So I think the decision to come home was mainly family driven and wanting the kids to grow up in an extended family environment. Kate (UK)

So when we had the kids we wanted to educate them, we wanted to bring them up in New Zealand ... My wife was very adamant she didn't want the daughter to go through Japanese schooling and we didn't want her to go to the International school...The schools are desolate and education is rote and it's very austere and very, very strict so there's very little expression and we could see that our kids had New Zealand in them. They would happily run around in bare foot, which was a crime against humanity in Japan. Jason (JP)

It is the upbringing that we had as kids, I think you want to give that to your children. And the space. It is a beautiful country. Pippa (UK)

That desire to provide a more natural, safer place was accentuated against the backdrop of events like 9/11 in New York, as these comments indicate:

And also, at that time [after 9/11], not living in a place that was targeted by terrorists. Toby (USA)

Not having to worry about kidnapping and bombs and stuff. There was a helicopter just pivoting across our house yesterday and I instantly go that memory of New York helicopters and something going wrong. Mandy (USA).

Return visits to 'sunny New Zealand' played an important and alluring trigger role for all of the return migrants. This may have possibly created a false sense of reality,

participants later revealed, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Johnny and Toby reflect on the 'seductive' power of those return visits:

Yeah, we came back for a lot of holidays and the frequency of the holidays were increasing ... We got married back here in 2006 and then we went back to NY and actually, it's funny – going back to NY was a real downer, after coming back from summertime here. And whenever we came back it was summer time and then you go [back] to winter, and it was like, oh God. Johnny (CH/NY)

Probably holidays in New Zealand which were maybe misrepresenting what it would be like to come back and live but they were nostalgic and a lot of fun ... Yeah, you can't help but be seduced eh, three weeks or four weeks or whatever in summertime, not working, cruising around, lots of money, catching up with lots of friends. Toby (USA)

There were also often other practical or economic factors that either exerted pressure or presented the opportunity to 'act now'. For example:

Someone else brought up [a work opportunity]. Otherwise – I'm sure I would have found something but I don't know what the hell that would have been, but it was instigated by somebody else. That sort of got us to start thinking about shall we do it? Brad (USA)

Business was very hard. The global financial crisis hit London much harder than it did – Australia and New Zealand, South-East Asia...and I saw that people in New Zealand suddenly had a better, more comfortable, less pressured standard of living than, perceivably from over there, than what we had. It felt like things were very tough and so that was a driver. Also, I sold my business and so that's definitely another trigger, that sort of pushed it up ... it was like okay, now we don't have a reason to stay, we may as well strike while the iron's hot, before our daughter starts school and get out of the country. William (UK)

We had to sell our apartment ... I wanted to live in a place that had more than one bedroom, obviously, with a baby, so we made the decision to sell it. So the money from the flat was just sitting in the bank and my husband, as a dentist, was getting sick of working for someone else. So probably the biggest pull to come home was it was time for us, for him especially, to make a decision. He wanted his own practice and we had to make a decision. If we we're going to [start the practice] in England we'll stay here for another ten years and I wasn't prepared to do that so we just said, we need to go home.

So that was probably – him wanting to set up his own practice was probably the biggest reason for leaving and me not wanting to stay another ten years away from parents getting older. Pippa (UK)

Here we see how particular events or life changes triggered a sense of ‘now or never’ urgency - or ‘it is time’ - for participants. When a window of opportunity presented itself, and particularly when it was paired with economic means (with the sale of businesses or property or job proposal), these expatriates were prompted to make the decision to return.

5.3.4 Not Without Reservations

Although they had strong motivations to return, the participants were not without reservations or, in Rhinesmith’s (1985) model, return anxieties. Several participants articulated concern over work opportunities, or the lack of opportunities, given the specialisations they had developed overseas, such as:

I was nervous about working here. My career, I’ve done a lot of quite interesting [architecture] ... a lot of large projects in the middle East, a lot of towers and worked in Korea and China. My fear for coming back was working on bathroom renovations for people and luckily that hasn’t panned out. Johnny (CH/USA)

It had been a long time since I had last been an employee, eighteen years or something. So that was a bit freaky, the prospect of working for somebody ... [A friend] did highlight the risk and the smallness of New Zealand and he said, which particularly freaked me out, he said oh yeah, look, it is incredibly freaky because you realise that there are only three jobs like mine in the entire country. William (UK)

My husband was a lot more reluctant to come back because he knew his career was going to be really hard to pick up here. He was an investment banker by this stage and knew that there just weren’t many investment banking roles in New Zealand and so I think his key reservation was he was opting out on top of his game in his career at the peak of his earning potential and knowing that reinventing and working out what to do when he got back was going to be difficult and he didn’t know what that looked like. So that was the biggest hurdle. Kate (UK)

Despite New Zealand's lifestyle being a powerful draw, some participants also raised lifestyle-related concerns. They feared the end of the lifestyles they had grown accustomed to, the end of international travel, and worried they might be 'grounded' in New Zealand. For example, when asked if they had any concerns or hesitations, participants responded:

Definitely. Lots. That I'd be missing out on what a lot of my friends at the time and still my very close friends were doing over there, back in another place. Brad (USA)

[I was concerned] that we'd be trapped in New Zealand and we'd never be able to go back to Europe ... It was more about not being able to travel and missing the things that I just loved so much. Pippa (UK)

In many cases, amongst couples, one partner would be more eager or more reluctant than the other, which prompted the need for negotiation and convincing, as acknowledged here:

Yeah, there was definitely a campaign on my part to get us back here. Toby (USA)

I think three years prior to coming home I'd been thinking about it and had talked myself into it being the right thing to do and so it just became okay, not if but when, whereas it was him that required a bit more convincing. Kate (UK)

I think my partner wanted to come back to New Zealand more than I did ... Unfortunately I didn't have the same drive. William (UK)

I would have probably stayed over there forever but you know, you compromise. Brad (USA)

I think that was kind of me pressuring him, parents getting older ... He didn't really care about coming back. It was me that was pushing it. Pippa (UK)

This may have contributed to the lengthy period of time over which participants considered the return. It is clear that once the decision to return was made, however,

they set those concerns to the side and committed to the idea. Pippa suggested:

I think once you start to think about going home, you start to want to go. Pippa (UK)

Participants then allowed themselves to dream of what going home might mean for them. I shall outline these in the following section.

5.4 Hopes and Dreams for the Return

Participants were hopeful and optimistic about the life they might carve out for themselves and their families in New Zealand. These were not necessarily grand hopes and dreams, although half of the participants did want to build their own homes or own businesses. More often, participants expressed their overarching hope for building simpler, healthy, happy, family lives. Participants reflected:

I think it was to do with kind of realising dreams is the way I'd put it broadly, because we'd bought some land up North and I thought that building a house on that – and we had the money to do that – was, could be an amazing realisation of a dream that we shared at the time. So that was that. Obviously my son and as I said, that pull to find an environment for him that was a good one ... Just having that kind of idyllic family orientated lifestyle back in New Zealand having had a great experience overseas and just kind of settle into being in a healthy environment that was beautiful, I guess. Toby (USA)

I was just searching for relaxed and easy life so trying to get a little bit more simplicity. We were just looking – our dreams and hopes were to find a happy place and I think that simplicity is the key word there because New Zealand is very simple ... I think that's something my wife always enjoyed about being here, is it's just so easy. Jason (JP)

Building a place and doing our own thing and just things that in retrospect would have been slightly ridiculous for us ... I guess I imagined things would be more relaxed. I imagined I'd be working less ... Yeah, I don't really like fishing but I imagined I'd have lots of spare time ... I can't think of any tangible dreams that I had. I guessed we'd come back and buy our own place to live in I suppose, that was something we wanted

to do and did. Buy a car. I'd never owned a car before in my life ... So that's my hopes and dreams I guess. Nothing super aspirational. Johnny (CH/USA)

A recurring theme, as indicated in these quotes, was the desire for change. As participants moved into the next stage of their adult lives, with family, they wanted different things and their priorities changed, as illustrated by Kate's comment:

It's funny because I think we loved our shooshi lifestyle in the UK pre-kids but then having kids, it was actually looking for a much simpler life and a much more grounded family centred life where you've got time to do things together as a family and so it wasn't all earning money related and driven by our careers which it had been prior to that. Which was a means to an end and enabled us to live this great lifestyle, which was a good, young person lifestyle. But I think we came back wanting much more simplicity and wanting to be able to do things like go camping and go on our little ski weekends and go for walks and kids to grow up in an outdoor environment and know how to swim in the sea and all those Kiwi upbringing sorts of things ... We had this big dream about the lifestyle and had decided we were going to semi-retire and go and live the kiwi dream and outdoor lifestyle. Kate (UK)

The desire for change was not confined to lives with their family; it also extended to participants' working lives. Participants voiced their hopes for new challenges and the opportunity to stretch themselves:

At that stage I'd probably got a little bit towards the end of where I wanted to be with what I was doing. I'd got a bit tired of the industry ... I was ready for a change. Brad (USA)

The next thing was to get into this new job and really kick ass and introduce locally some of the things I had learnt while I had been overseas and I saw that as a big opportunity. William (UK)

Personal ambition appeared to be secondary for participants; family and lifestyle came first in the hopes and dreams for the New Zealand return (see also Table 5.1).

5.5 Advance Preparations: A Blind Leap of Faith?

It is perhaps not surprising, given the emotional tenor of the decision to come home, that advance preparations were often minimal. Only half of the participants came to New Zealand for an informal 'reccy', or reconnaissance trip, to survey the situation. Even then, this was generally a case of a 'purposeful holiday' where they made one last holiday before formally deciding to return. Only one participant formally met with a recruiter on one of these trips. Pippa (UK) was certainly the exception – meeting the recruiter eighteen months before she returned and, consequently, shifting her career in a certain direction to better prepare herself for the local market.

Half of the participants sought no advice whatsoever with regard to returning to New Zealand. For those participants who did, family and other friends who had made the return from overseas were the two key sources from whom advice was sought while, interestingly, other expatriate friends also provided support. For example:

Some of them were like oh, it's just amazing, you'll just love it. Most people, when you ask them what it's like being back, they'll probably tell you things that you want to hear rather than what's actually true. Pippa (UK)

There was one person I did speak with who had been in NY and came back a couple of years before me and he sort of said, 'just make sure you're ready to come back'. Brad (USA)

Other expatriates in New York that we knew, they were all quite excited that we were coming back. They all talk about coming back but I don't think they ever will. I'll be surprised when they do but everyone always talks about how great it would be but they're not ready for it yet. Johnny (CH/USA)

Participants were also fairly confident that they knew what they were getting into and needed little advice. Kate articulated this sentiment:

I thought we were fairly realistic about what we were coming back to and I don't think in our decision to come back that we thought we would experience any form of culture shock because I think we still felt very much like Kiwis and that we were coming home. I think probably the reality of coming back was more of a shock than the thought about coming back. We didn't feel we needed any advice. Kate (UK)

Employment was not something the majority of the return migrants made provision for, with only two participants having pre-arranged employment. This trend was found to be commonplace in Lidgard's (1993) profile of return migrants to New Zealand (in contrast to immigrant preparations, with fifty-five percent of migrants from the United Kingdom having arranged jobs pre-migration; Watson et al., 2011:6).

The majority of the participants had finances organised and significant assets in New Zealand, either from prior to leaving the country or accumulated while overseas. For example, all eight participants had bank accounts in the country, seven participants had significant savings from their time overseas, and half of the participants owned a house or property in New Zealand prior to their return. These arrangements and assets in part explain how participants were in a position to postpone arranging employment until their arrival.

The advance preparation strategy was, for the most part, a case of 'we'll work it out when we get there,' in much the same way that participants had approached their original emigration from New Zealand. Participants were confident in their familiarity with New Zealand and marketability, so that as they went about winding down and packing up their lives overseas, they were generally happy to leave the 'arrival preparations' until they physically arrived. On this return bound journey, they could afford to do so, as Johnny indicated:

Yeah, I came back and we had some savings and we were pretty fine. We didn't have to worry too much so I had a place to take my gear off and just do nothing. Johnny (CH/USA)

5.6 Conclusion and Comparison: Return from Extended OR versus OE

When you're a naïve, young idealist and you're setting out to carve your way in the world and you're nineteen or eighteen or whatever it was, you're in a wholly different scenario than when you're married and you have a house and you've got a kid.
Jason (JP)

Return migration in one's early thirties to mid forties, after extended Overseas Residence (OR) of five or more years away, with a partner, child and established career is a wholly different scenario from returning in one's twenties, having spent fewer than three years overseas on an OE. The return migrants, coming home after extended OR, were not returning by necessity prompted by visa expiry or returning from a youthful adventure; it being time to 'get a real job' (Walter, 2006a). All of the participants left established lives and careers overseas in the quest for simpler, happier lives for themselves and their families, and with a desire to be closer to their extended family, to nature, and the place they still called 'home'. The decision to return to New Zealand developed momentum as participants had children or contemplated doing so, and was hastened by triggers such as selling businesses or houses, or they had a window of opportunity to leave, or they faced the decision to settle in 'for the long haul'. Participants made only rudimentary advance preparations, confident that they were familiar with New Zealand, they could 'figure it out' when they got back and were well able to afford to do so, with significant savings from their time overseas. Whether this confidence was ill-placed and whether participants' hopes for the return were born out in reality are revealed in the following two chapters.

Chapter Six:

‘Touching Down’: Arrival and Re-Entry

6.1 Introduction

The re-entry proper begins once the return migrant has passed through the Arrivals Hall at the International Airport. This chapter examines the re-entry experiences of the participants in this study having arrived in New Zealand after extended Overseas Residence (OR): from the honeymoon of their arrival to the re-entry shock and the personal, practical and professional challenges they faced and the factors that helped them through. As highlighted earlier, much of the existing New Zealand knowledge of this phase is confined to what occurs within the first six months of return (Lidgard, 1994, 2001; Myers & Inkson, 2003) and focused on recent migrants (Chaban et al., 2009b; Walter, 2006a). While this gives a strong sense of the immediate re-entry outcomes, the experiences of return migrants suggest that the first twelve to twenty-four months in New Zealand might more appropriately represent ‘re-entry’ and to confine the focus to a shorter period is to provide an incomplete picture of the re-entry experience. I would suggest that there is great value in examining participants’ reflections on the re-entry period having gone through the full arc of the return - and little lost - as the intensity of the experience remains with participants years after the event.

6.2 The Return Arrival 'Extended Honeymoon'

For return migrants, the initial period, post-arrival, has been referred to as a 'honeymoon' period (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963). Unlike the fleeting euphoria experienced by the return sojourners in Chaban et al.'s (2009b) study, the participants in this study commonly experienced an 'extended honeymoon' period upon return. Participants had spent considerable time thinking about why they were returning to New Zealand and imagining what their lives might be like once they had returned. The return migrants' most recent experiences of New Zealand had been holidays, characterised by reconnecting with family, relaxation and nature. In many ways their early return phase began as an extended version of those holidays. As Pippa voiced:

So euphoric – it's amazing, wow, wow, wow, there's all these places I want to visit – obviously I'd never lived in Auckland so I've got the whole of the North Island to explore and my husband's Dad's got a bach in Northland so all these beautiful places that I've never been to, so that's all fabulous ... It really was just quite a novelty for about a good year ... Pippa (UK)

The extended holiday feeling can be largely attributed to the fact that five of the eight participants took the opportunity to do just that, taking six months and up to a year off upon arrival. Participants variously stayed with or near family, took a five-month road trip around the South Island, spent a year doing something completely different, or simply took 'time out'. For example:

When we first arrived [in August] we went straight down [South] skiing for a month, six weeks. We stayed at my parents' house and then we came back to Auckland and we had the summer ... so that was just a matter of easing back into things and my work didn't start until March or April. Six months off, just really not doing a hell of a lot. Brad (USA)

We came back and went to Wanaka for a year. We had this big dream about the lifestyle and had decided we were going to semi-retire and go and live the Kiwi dream and the outdoor lifestyle ... My husband wanted to leave the corporate world behind

him ... he wanted to do something physical and tangible ... and I was having a dedicated year of being a stay at home mum. Kate (UK)

It was actually a full year before I got employment. So we lived off some of that [saved] money and took our sweet time. Toby (USA)

The honeymoon was not 'all roses', however. For most participants a sense of uneasiness started to creep in and, for two participants, quite swiftly, as they wondered if they had 'done the right thing':

An acute moment I remember is going to Botany Downs, which scarred me and I won't go back there. But wandering around there midweek ... just getting a really uneasy feeling ... that what have we done? Toby (USA)

It would come in waves. I would feel fine and then depressed about it and then fine and depressed about it. It wasn't like it was a sort of three-month cycle of being down about it. But there were absolutely times when I wasn't sure we'd done the right thing. Johnny (CH/USA)

These feelings of unease set the stage for an examination of the re-entry shock that followed the honeymoon.

6.3 The Honeymoon is Over: Re-Entry Shocks

Widely recognised in the international literature are the high levels of distress or re-entry shock that return migration can prompt (Adler, 1981; Gaw, 2000; Ghosh, 2001; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Oberg, 1960; Sussman, 1986, 2000). This was most certainly the case for all of the participants in this study. Walter (2006b:9) noted a diversity in the intensity of the transition, ranging 'from severe depression, to annoyance and frustration with home, to complete and immediate acceptance'. None of the return migrants in this study, however, could be said to enjoy 'complete and immediate acceptance'. All of the participants faced re-entry challenges of a personal, practical or professional nature - and often all of these.

'Re-entry shock' was not, as the name might suggest, a brief or single experience for these return migrants. The participants' re-entry shock was deep and sustained, often coming in repeated waves or events. This may be in part be attributed to the duration of participants' residences in their host countries, acknowledged as influencing the intensity and length of each stage of intercultural adjustment (Ting-Toomey, 1999). The distress arising from re-entry shock was exacerbated by the fact that they were not expecting to encounter such a reaction; as noted in the return migration literature (Gmelch,1980; Sussman,1986). Participants indicated:

... I don't think in our decision to come back that we thought we would experience any form of culture shock because I think we still felt very much like Kiwis and that we were coming home. I think the reality of coming back was more of a shock than the thought about coming back. Kate (UK).

It was a surprise when that honeymoon period ended and it kind of sullied the honeymoon. Toby (USA)

Despite participants' confidence that they 'knew what we were returning to', it is evident from their interviews that they held a somewhat idealised perception of coming home, especially in terms of the ease of transition and the life they perceived awaited them. Gmelch (1980:145) warned that expectations of return migrants were often 'greater than the reality of life in the homeland could satisfy', while Sabates-Wheeler et al (2009:768) highlighted the fact that having 'realistic expectations' contributed to positive return experiences (where 'unrealistic expectations' contribute to disillusionment and negative return experiences). The return migrants in this study reflected upon their possibly inaccurate or heightened expectations of home and the gap between their pre-arrival perception and return reality:

There was a nirvana imagined and the reality of it was quite different ... it was that disappointment that the dream of coming home wasn't all roses ... I think you really

build it up before you get back, in your mind, that it's going to be this perfect thing.
Toby (USA)

Things haven't exactly panned out ... I might have overly romanticized the lifestyle aspect a little bit. Johnny (CH/USA)

The dream wasn't the reality, I think. Kate (UK)

Participants experienced what might best be described as 'return dissonance' as they were faced with the incongruence between their return perception and return reality. Gmelch (1980) suggested heightened expectations were often fostered by exaggerations by relatives, eager to have their family members home, and by the lack of information. Participants' comments suggest they themselves played an active role in nurturing the idea that they were returning to nirvana. What is clear is that none of the return migrants in the study fully anticipated or were prepared for 're-entry reality' and the re-entry shocks that accompanied it. I now examine the nature of the re-entry shocks.

6.3.1 Personal Challenges: The Loneliness of Re-Entry

Having dreamt of the reconnection with people and place with the return to New Zealand, participants commonly found themselves 'out of step' with both. After the initial excitement of 'you're back', they found that family and friends had 'moved on' and participants were subsequently left feeling isolated and adrift. In some cases, being 'out of step' in personal relationships extended to the partners they had returned with, with two relationships imploding upon re-entry.

For the majority of return migrants being closer to family was a key factor in the decision to come home but proximity did not necessarily result in more 'quality time' with their family upon their return. Several of the participants spoke of their dismay at the lack of time and interest they received from family upon their return, such as:

I had higher expectations for our family but my parents succinctly said, 'well gee, you've been away for fifteen years so life hasn't stopped for you, we've gone off and done stuff and it can't just stop now you're back'. I'm like well, gee folks, I'm not asking you to stop but I'm sort of thinking you might maybe want to see the kids more than once a month? Jason (JP)

I got to see my parents probably twice a year so really, maybe once more than I would have seen them if I lived in the UK and I was quite resentful about that. Pippa (UK)

It was common, and commonly unexpected, for participants to find themselves feeling estranged from old New Zealand friends upon their return. For return Overseas Experience (OE) sojourners, this phenomenon was often a response to finding themselves at different life stage from their old friends, such as: 'Everyone is buying houses and I'm not really interested in that' or 'oh my God, all my friends are married with kids ...' (Pocock & McIntosh, 2010:639). The participants in this study, however, were very much in the same life stage as their peers but found their old friends, life, or they (themselves) had 'moved on', commenting:

It's not that they abandoned us but just there was no big hurry to see us again 'cos we were here. Toby (USA)

Another big surprise I guess was friendships. Maybe just that I'd moved on a bit and friendships move on. Mandy (USA)

Reconnected with quite a few [old friends] and then have disconnected with them again because everyone's lives had moved on. So I had a whole set of friends that I threw myself back into and now I never really see ... So yeah, life had moved on ... So you're thinking right, we're coming back, we're reconnecting, we want to kick start old friendships ... we're just in a different place now. Kate (UK)

As with the idealised nirvana of home, friends were not always as participants remembered them. As William articulated:

I was very surprised that the friends that I had left behind that I thought were quite liberal, were less liberal than I thought. They were more conservative, less politically

aware, less socially considerate, way less environmentally aware ... some people were actually quite vocal about 'what? Organic! That's a bit retarded isn't it!' William (UK)

Nor were their friends, or anybody for that matter, necessarily interested in hearing about the return migrants' life overseas. This often resulted in participants' learning to keep their experiences to themselves, as referred to here:

I was aware from having travelled before ... that New Zealanders don't particularly like people swanning in from overseas and big-noting and expecting to get good jobs or expecting people to listen to their stories ... Been through that before and noticed that people don't ask you, actually, hardly anything. Cautiously. They might want to know but they didn't really want to be made to feel like they were lesser or something ... I'm always careful telling stories, unwanted stories of overseas experiences. Toby (USA)

You very quickly don't talk about it because actually they're not interested and so you just move on ... stories from abroad don't work here. I don't think they do because it's a life they weren't a part of, they don't relate to ... I do consciously remember deciding not to talk about it with various people. You can see [their eyes] glazing over. Kate (UK)

Some of them are like, shut the conversation down or they're just not interested ... Which is a bit of a disappointment. It feels like they're not actually interested in the world. William (UK)

People weren't kind. There was just this sort of abruptness. New Yorkers are abrupt but ... I remember being quite upset by people's reactions. It was a bit hurtful so that made me withdraw even more ... I learned to shut up actually, that was my big surprise. Mandy (USA)

Mooradian (2004:40) noted the 'expectancy violation' experienced when sojourners return to find that many are not interested in their time abroad. This might be a function of the demands on time, short attention span or, as Stori (2001) suggests, due to individuals experiencing jealousy or feeling threatened by the sojourner. Mooradian (2004:44) suggests this lack of interest can leave returnees 'feeling sad, lost and lonely'. Such a response was evident among the return migrants interviewed here.

Participants often found themselves left to themselves and on the periphery. Pippa remarked:

It took a while to move into the social circles in Auckland. So you were sitting on the periphery ... So for a while we just wouldn't get invited to much so we just kind of did stuff ourselves ... I reckon it took a good year of settling in because we'd often have nothing to do on the weekend. It was kind of weird. Pippa (UK)

One of the most painful personal challenges for participants was having a different re-entry experience from their partner or spouse. Six of the eight participants spoke of disparate re-entry experiences from that of their partners, with two relationships ending, partly as a result. This was often related to the fact that one partner had wanted to return more than the other, which caused tensions and distress in participants' relationships as they individually tried to navigate being home. Participants reflected:

She was pushing harder to come back ... So being back, I think she was probably more glad to get back than I was and I don't think she went through any curve like I did. Sort of about being quite depressed to be back and then learning to like it for what it was and relax about it. So I think we had slightly different paths. Johnny (CH/USA)

Coming home to me was totally the right thing but what I found out later is that, really, I'm not sure that she was ready at all. She was really in love with being there and it was really different for her. I could go to work and I was getting accolades and was enjoying working with people and she was stuck in a house in a really quiet street in a suburb of Auckland ... Coming back, it kind of must of felt somewhat like a prison sentence for my wife. Toby (USA)

As is painfully evident here, couples often face additional pressures, something that neither Walter (2006a), Chaban et al. (2009b) nor Inkson and Myers (2003) note or address in their studies of the return experience. Indeed, marriage or de-facto relationships tend to be overlooked altogether, with the focus being on single individuals. This focus is evident in the lack of acknowledgement of marital status in

Lidgard's (2001) profile of the characteristics of return migrants to New Zealand. How is New Zealand to welcome home expatriate couples if their experience is not even recognised in the research that exists?

The return to nature and a more relaxed pace had been a pull-factor in the decision for these participants, and their partners, to return. The change in pace, the quiet and scale of New Zealand required a big adjustment for participants, however, as can be seen in their comments here:

I missed the vitality, the diversity and the people ... the big city energy ... it's just incredibly different ... we don't have that here ... It's a hell of a lot different to what we're used to. Brad (USA)

I think in hindsight it took me a long time to slow down ... There's a change in tempo that takes quite a while ... And it's the sense of isolation, that lack of population and isolation that you can't shake here ... The isolation I think was pretty acute ... And you forget about it when you live away for a while and you don't see it when you come back on holiday, but when you live here again, after a while it's quite oppressive and it's quite scary. Toby (USA)

Chaban et al. (2009b:70) found the greatest contributor to re-entry shock to be adjustment to the 'everyday environment', such as the size and the isolation of New Zealand and the perceived lack of adventure. Although for the majority of Chaban et al.'s (2009b:56) participants, re-entry discomfort was often short-lived and participants 'slipped easily back into the New Zealand lifestyle', the participants in this study did not 'slip back into' the environment so readily or easily.

It was not always the 'big things' that caused distress and isolation in participants' re-entry. A commonly relayed culture shock was that of the New Zealand media. As Kate verbalised:

I used to sit down and watch the news and I would just cringe and be ashamed to be a New Zealander for the sloppy quality of reporting and how Kiwis spoke in an environment like news reporting. It was just like oh my God, this is just so peasantry basic and the fact that there was no news and I'd just been desperate for international news and it just wasn't report and it was so banal, what was being talked about...I probably noticed it for the first year and then it becomes normal. But it's those things that you don't expect and then they hit you and so it was just a real shock to think we're in a country that nothing happens and we're up in arms about the most trivial, pathetic things. I think that was the cultural adjustment that took a bit of getting used to.
Kate (UK)

Critiques of the media were not simply a matter of 'cultural cringe' but also had an isolating effect, as William noted:

One of my big bugbears is that news media is so p*** poor here and it's amazingly parochial. There can be significant world affairs or significant things happening beyond these shores and they never get reported on ... I think that whilst the news media is so poor, it makes people coming back feel very isolated. Very, very isolated. William (UK)

Some participants worried - was this the end of the lives they had known?

I felt quite depressed for a while, to be honest. I had this nagging sense that when you move back to New Zealand – that you're stuck here forever somehow when you move back, that's it. Your world experience is over and I was actually quite depressed about it for a while. Johnny (CH/USA)

Just being depressed about being back and thinking I'll never get back to Italy and do all those things. Pippa (UK)

The comments about fears of the end of one's world experience are not dissimilar to feelings expressed by those returning from an OE (Walter, 2006a). What is evident, however, is that for these return migrants coming home from extended OR, this was not a case of 'post holiday blues' at the end of a tour. For the participants, coming home represented a profound change and a seismic shift in their lives. As Pippa emphasised: 'I'd lived longer in London, as an adult, than anywhere in the world.' Butcher (2002:128) referred to re-entry as a 'grieving process': 'Returnees are grieving

the loss of friends, experiences, and, to a certain extent, a way of life'. In the personal challenges that the return migrants shared that sense loss was an integral part of their re-entry shock.

6.3.2 Practical Challenges: The Cost of Paradise

Common practical shocks expressed by the return migrants were the unexpected difficulties of finding accommodation in Auckland, the general cost of living and access to pre-school childcare.

Three of the participants found that finding a permanent housing situation a serious challenge upon arrival to Auckland, not least of all because they wanted to be in popular central areas. For example:

So I think the first challenge of returning home was finding somewhere to live. We wanted to live in Ponsonby and Herne Bay and there was just a complete and utter shortage of decent quality rental accommodation. I flew up and did a recce and tried to find us somewhere to live and couldn't so then we drove up and got a two bedroomed, furnished apartment and put our gear into storage. Thought we'd live in it for two or three weeks while we found a rental property. Could not find a rental property and then found that we were turning up to open homes for rental properties and it would be full of young students and there'd be forty people at a house and you're just sitting there going oh my God! Here I am at the age of thirty something and I'm competing for housing! ... It's actually one of the biggest difficulties of physically getting yourself located, especially with kids. Kate (UK)

It was just chaos trying to find a place to live in central Auckland, we wanted to live in Grey Lynn. You felt like whatever you saw you just had to sign up. So these houses we were looking at for five, six hundred bucks a week – it was like being back in Dunedin at varsity. There was nothing in them. No heating, no whiteware. We were like where's the fridge? Where's the washing machine. Oh no, no, no you have to bring that with you. Pippa (UK)

The cost of living was universally experienced as 'sticker shock' by the participants. This was also observed in Chaban et al.'s (2009b:54) study, where the cost of living

was found to be higher 'than expected or remembered' by return migrants, particularly for those who had been overseas for long periods. Despite the participants in this study having returned regularly while overseas, they were taken aback as they became fully aware of the local cost of living, as commented on here:

I realised the expense of everything when we were packing everything up and I had to go and insure everything we had [for New Zealand replacement cost] ... I was super shocked. And then when I got here I realized, actually, everything is buoyed up as well. The price for a cup of coffee, it's more expensive than you pay in New York, I bet you. So I was pretty shocked by that and I was pretty shocked that New Zealanders just accept it. William (UK)

It is very expensive and that's just day to day stuff ... you go to the supermarket, that's an extraordinary cost for families. Brad (USA)

Cost of living was probably number one [biggest surprise] ... Everything. Food, electricity, telephones. In the UK you get rid of your phone every year and just get a free one. Here it was like you'd pay a thousand dollars for a decent phone. Just cost of living ... That's probably the main thing that I was really astounded by. Pippa (UK)

The difficulties of access to - and affordability of - pre-school child-care was lamented by all of the women in the study as they returned to work. They had erroneously assumed that this would not be an issue in New Zealand, as Mandy indicated:

Childcare is really tricky and I'm still working part time because it is tricky, and not only tricky it is really expensive. My kid's a day and a half at day care ... and then there's a nanny in another day and then there's a nanny for another two hours ... So your childcare becomes quite a big chunk of your earnings and you're only working part time. But anyway, getting someone into childcare was just surprising to me. I never expected there to be waiting lists. Never. And I waited until he was one, when I needed to get him in, right then. And I couldn't get him in which is why I had to employ a nanny, which I didn't want to have to do. I thought for sure that there wouldn't be that issue here [as compared to the States], but there it is. Mandy (USA)

Many of these practical shocks might be attributed to the absence of rigorous pre-return diligence or preparations. Indeed, these unwelcome surprises might also be

seen as a by-product of the strategy to 'figure it out when we get there'. Participants often assumed such practical matters would be easier in New Zealand and were shocked to find this was not the case. Pippa acknowledged that:

Before I came home, I had no idea what a good salary was ... It's all those things that you need to understand ... This is how much rent costs, this is how much food costs here. Pippa (UK)

Brabanta, Palmera and Gramling (as cited in Pocock & McIntosh, 2010:634) noted that return visits during longer-term sojourns could ease repatriation distress by allowing expectations to be set but this was clearly not the case for these participants, all of whom had made regular return visits during their residence overseas.

6.3.3 Professional Challenges: Re-Entry to the New Zealand Workforce

Sooner or later return migrants had to navigate finding employment in New Zealand. It was later for the majority of the participants, with five of the participants returning to work six to twelve months after their arrival in the country, and only three returning to work soon after arrival. This finding is in stark contrast to Lidgard's (2001) returnee profiles, where two-thirds of returnees were employed within four months of their return, and to Inkson and Myers' (2003:177) study, where 96 percent of those returning from OE 'became quickly involved in work or education'. This period of non-employment was facilitated by the participants' significant savings from overseas.

For some, the return to work was an economic pressure, with it having becoming evident that 'one of us was going to have to go back to work'. For others, it was a matter of 'itchy feet' and, as 'life returns to a kind of equilibrium and you think you should be working again'. For Kate, having taken a year off to be a stay-at-home mother, 'I wanted to return to work because it's fulfilling and I enjoy it'. Two participants, as mentioned earlier, already had jobs to enter.

Strategies for finding employment upon arrival were organic, rather than through formal recruitment channels. Return migrants would 'put the word out' through other expatriates, friends or old colleagues that they were back and looking for work, as participants described here:

I think I'm lucky because of my profession ... I didn't have to look for a job opening. I just came in and said I'm here. Mandy (USA)

I researched which recruitment agencies did the kind of work that I did. So I approached them but the job that I got was through word of mouth. Kate (UK)

I went right, I've got to make a portfolio, I've got to get a job. So I did that only at that point and I had old friends in the industry that I called on and that's how I got my job ... They pointed me in the right direction in terms of which [companies] would be good to work for then I found out who was working there ... there was somebody there I knew so I went to see them and showed them my portfolio and kind of quickly picked up contract work and then that turned into full time. Toby (USA)

One participant even found a job by way of a New York colleague, who put him in touch with a friend at a company in Auckland.

Although participants had extensive experience in their chosen careers (unlike return OE sojourners, who did not necessarily have career experience from their travels), finding satisfactory employment was found to be not necessarily assured, with the small scale of the market being perceived as the biggest contributing factor. You will recall William being cautioned: 'there are only three jobs like mine in the entire country'. Johnny similarly commented there were only 'two or three firms that I was interested in working for'. Even Mandy, who avoided such scarcity concerns by starting her own company, observed of her returned friends, 'It seems like a lot of the jobs in New Zealand, the industries are saturated, they're full.' Nevertheless, all of the participants were fortunate enough to find or create work opportunities when they sought to do so.

Several did, however, find themselves taking a transitional job before finding a better fit, either by design or unintentionally, as they touch on here:

It was an opportunity that was lined up and it wasn't a full-time opportunity so I could do a lot of stuff on my own. So it allowed me to make that transition I guess and provided some sort of security, financial security, that allowed me to come back [and go out on my own]. Brad (USA)

I think I wanted to work no more than four days a week so I went into a job that was a lower level role than what I was used to and I just hated working back at that level, very quickly wanted to take over, take control and so I kind of knew that if I was going to go back to work I wanted to go back to work properly and do a challenging role. So what happened during that time was I then got headhunted for the job that I'm in now ... For me it was yeah, I wanted to progress my career and feel like I was continuing to achieve and move on. Kate (UK)

We had probably been back a couple years and I was working for a [company] and I realized how little I was getting paid for how much I could get paid in the UK and it made me really depressed ... I thought why am I working in this industry and doing something boring? ... So I quit my job and took up a job with a friend's start up company and that was also a great change because it was doing something different in New Zealand. Okay, I earned crappier money then ... but I was doing something I couldn't be doing in England and that made a massive difference. Pippa (UK)

Having secured employment, participants did find that their international expertise to be valued, as Kate's comment illustrates:

In a work sense, yes, very, very useful and brought back lots of thoughts and it was definitely seen as a positive in the job market, that you'd had this international experience ... The skills that I developed in the UK translated immediately and easily. Kate (UK)

Again, this is in contrast to OE returnees who came back having not necessarily amassed direct career experience while travelling and finding employers undervalued their skills (Pocock & McIntosh, 2010). That being said, two of the participants did

express some dismay at the reaction to their international professional experience, suggesting:

[In the States] I was always around people who were interested and they wanted to know [about holistic health] and they wanted to get the information. But here, they weren't interested. Dogmatic, that's the word I think I felt about New Zealanders when I got back. Mandy (USA)

When I first arrived the guys were really good at welcoming me on board and all of that but in terms of actually going out of their way to tap in to what I had learnt overseas and different practices, probably not so much ... a bit of a not invented here kind of attitude. William (UK)

International experience did not necessarily help participants when it came to local business networks. Kate indicated that she needed to re-build her network to do her job:

If you've built your career up in one place, those networks naturally develop and so I'd worked at a very junior level in New Zealand and I'd been away ten years and then come back to a head of department and I had absolutely no contacts in any business whatsoever and it impacted my ability to get the job done. I had to do such a lot of work to find out the lay of the land and who was good and who wasn't ... So now I have quite a good contact network, but it's taken me five years to get it. Kate (UK)

As such, return migrants who have spent a significant period of their adult working lives outside of their home country may find themselves in the same position that skilled new immigrants find themselves, that is: 'starting over'.

Other common professional shocks were the number of projects participants touched in their roles, the budgets involved and the turnaround time. For instance:

I worked for maybe six years on six major projects ... so it averages like one a year ... Here I've worked now for two years and I've probably touched over thirty projects and I think you have to navigate, sort of move with much more agility because it's a small

market and you've only got short periods to do things and so it is actually much more demanding. You have to move much faster. I was actually warned about it by my boss that that would be the case and I didn't quite know what he meant, but I absolutely do now. Johnny (CH/USA)

It is important to note that this did not always prove to be a negative, as revealed here:

There was a total contrast in New York where you had a year and a half to do a [project] and I don't know how much money, lots, hundreds of thousands of dollars. Here you had the complete opposite. You had two weeks and five thousand dollars but there was something really great about it because it meant that you were making a lot of stuff and churning out ideas and things were alive the whole time and you had to be quick on your feet. I felt good about that because I felt I'd learnt my craft and so I'd kind of implement that in a way that seemed to work to my advantage here. Toby (USA)

I think because businesses are smaller they have an expectation that you're more hands on ... I spent most of my time in the UK actually managing people, relationships ... whereas here the expectation is that you roll your sleeves up and you're actually there in the trenches as well. Which actually I've really enjoyed ... your scope of responsibility is you end up touching everything in the business rather than gliding along the top. William (UK).

Three of the participants looked to create their own businesses upon re-entry. Those participants found that although these businesses were easy to start, they generally took time to build in New Zealand, stating:

It's a thousand million times easier to start something here and people are very supportive ... We did set up a company in Japan and it was very, very difficult and fraught with peril whereas here, you just go tick, tick, tick on the computer and thirty seconds later you have a company. Jason (JP)

I'd say it is capital constrained, so it is hard to do things and it's hard to get a business off the ground, in my business [investment]. So it's been slow for things to happen, definitely slow, a lot slower than I thought and I think because of the nature of the competitive environment people are not quite as eager to share ideas ... and the nature of the size of the market. Brad (USA)

It took my husband ages to build up his practice. Actually that was really stressful financially – we'd have good months and bad months, good times and bad times.
Pippa (UK)

Overall, while re-entering the workforce or starting up a company in New Zealand was not without challenges, the return migrants in this study were in a much stronger position than returning OE sojourners. Although it was not always the case, the participants often had existing connections which enabled them to organically find positions in companies that recognised their international experience or, alternatively, the means to start their own company.

6.4 If at First You Don't Succeed: 'Re-Re-Entry'

'Arriving' was not necessarily a single event for several of the return migrants in the study. This was a second return effort for one participant who had returned to New Zealand six years earlier for two years. As Mandy explains it: 'I think I was stepping back into a past life that I didn't really like and it seemed like nothing had changed ... I took off again' and 'I hadn't gotten New York out of my system'. Two of the participants had first return migrated to other parts of the country, with every intention of remaining there, but aborted their plans after the first year to eighteen months and relocated to Auckland. As they explained:

I think what you do when you live in a big city is you dream that your ideal lifestyle is completely the opposite of what you're doing and so we were like we want to tune out of the rat race, we want to slow down the pace, we loved the outdoors ... And so then we went to a small town with rose tinted glasses. I grew up in a small town but I'd forgotten – at the stage of growing up in a small town that is your perspective but then having been and lived in a really big city, your eyes are opened to a completely different way of life and going back to a small town is actually really hard ... What we thought we wanted was far too extreme for what we really wanted. Kate (UK)

Well, it worked out different to what we thought ... We hadn't realised the goals of finding that sort of happy, simple, easy life ... so we were still pursuing that ideal really and hoping to have a better shot at it. Like, why did we suffer for eighteen months in

this shitty little bloody seaside town to be near the family when we never saw them?
Jason (JP)

These quotes highlight the return dissonance many participants encountered, with the return reality being quite different from their pre-arrival expectations of their return. They also highlight the need for taking a longer, less linear view of the re-entry experience. As three of the participants' experiences indicate, it can take more than one 'landing attempt' to permanently return to New Zealand, and where participants initially land is not necessarily indicative of where they will reside beyond the first six to twenty-four months.

6.5 Finding Their Feet: What Helped Participants through Re-Entry

Common factors that eased re-entry distress were the support of friends who had been through the experience, returning to work, the welcome surprises of Auckland, the readiness of return and time.

The companionship of friends who had been through both the experience of living overseas and the return was a comfort to the return migrants, easing their re-entry shock and - although it might seem counter-intuitive - aiding their reintegration into life in New Zealand. Participants reflected:

That was our main group of friends, people we were interacting with mostly were all people who had been in London long term with us, so they'd all been there for nearly as long as we had and had all moved back. They'd all moved back before us but no more than two years before us or some only a year before us. They'd all had a similar experience and gone through the same adjustment and we were all laughing at the same things and we were all settling into a very similar life pattern. Kate (UK)

I think it was just nice to hang out with [the group that we hung out with in New York]. And you wouldn't necessarily meet and bitch about New Zealand or anything, you'd just meet and step back into those feelings, that companionship you knew from that place. Mandy (USA)

I find that I tend to only hang out mostly with people who have been overseas, who have actually spent time overseas ... I feel more liberated and the result of that is a much more enjoyable encounter. It's not that I don't enjoy hanging out with my old friends, it just feels that I've got to work a whole lot harder. William (UK)

Returning to work often marked a return to routine, to confidence and integration. Although it had been a welcome break, taking extended time-off upon their return had the unintended effect of exacerbating some participants' re-entry distress, as acknowledged here:

I felt valued at work so that was good for me. That was nice. I slotted into a good place with some good people and started working on some good things which was good for my sense of self. Toby (USA)

I think not doing anything and just having a romantic, twelve month holiday, while it seems great, you're kind of at a bit of a loss. You know, you've been working like hell and you've done what you've done, you suddenly move back and it's like going back to your parent's house. You don't know quite what you're doing. So I think getting back into the swing of things, getting set up helped a lot, getting a house, getting a job was kind of a key thing in getting back into a routine. So I think those are the key things. I honestly think if anyone was to move here, once you're happy in your house and your job and your family, I think other things around you are not as important as those couple of key ingredients ... It was only shortly after that that I was sort of settled in. In fact I was just too busy to kind of worry about it. Johnny (CH/USA)

The migration to Auckland provided some welcome surprises, including the discovery of diversity and 'niceness' that some of the participants had not expected, as the following quotes indicate:

I think actually Auckland's more multi-cultural than when I left it and I quite like that ... I like the fact it's a big Polynesian city, I like the fact it's an Asian city, I really like that. It feels as though it's connected to the real world and I feel it's the only city in New Zealand that's doing that, that has that to offer. So I was really pleasantly surprised to find that...it feels a bit like San Francisco or ... Portland or Vancouver ... like the north-west coast of the US. It's actually really nice. Johnny (CH/USA)

I was very pleased and still am and always profuse about the fact that Aucklanders love everybody and everybody else hates Aucklanders. It's like you grow up in Wellington hating Aucklanders because that's just bred into you; Aucklanders are wankers and you get here and Aucklanders are great and they're really nice and Aucklanders are like everybody else ... A big thing for us about Auckland, one of the key reasons to come here, was the diversity of culture. Jason (JP)

'Readiness' has been identified as a factor in successful return, with Walter (2006a:108) finding 'those repatriates who reported they had been keen to return appeared to find it easier to settle quickly at home'. In Chapter Seven, participants highlight the importance of being ready to come home in their return wisdom and Mandy's quote illustrates the point:

I was still going back to New York and back to the States every six weeks for a work trip and every time I went back there I didn't enjoy it as much ... and I think that's what allowed me to come home ... I wasn't coming home cold turkey ... I just remember looking out of my windows and seeing the greenery and absolutely loving it and this time loving that it was quiet and loving that I could get everywhere on time. Whereas that first time, that was a problem. So that made me realise I was ready for it. Mandy (USA)

Time can ease the trauma of re-entry, as Gmelch (1980) and Barrett (2012a) have highlighted. It took participants quite some time before the patterns of life returned to normal. This period of adjustment was greater than a year, often two or three, and at the extreme, one of the participants claimed they were still learning to adjust five years after returning to New Zealand.

6.6 Conclusion and Comparison: The Return from Extended OR versus OE

It's hard to let go
Of all that we know
As I walk away from you
- *I Walk Away* by Neil Finn (1984)⁸

Eleven years is a long time. That was a decade.
It was almost all of my twenties, half my thirties. Pippa (UK)

Having spent a significant part of one's adult and working life overseas, return migration represented a profound life change. Coming home from extended Overseas Residence (OR), participants first experienced an extended honeymoon period, in contrast to the fleeting re-entry euphoria that the return from an OE often elicits. During this period, participants embraced the life change, explored the country and contemplated or experimented with possibilities for life and work in New Zealand. The extended honeymoon eventually, however, gave way to the unexpected shock of return reality, intensified by participants' unpreparedness for it and the idealised perceptions they had of coming home, both in terms of the ease of transition and the life awaiting them. Far from being a fleeting shock, as experienced by OE sojourners, re-entry shock for the extended OR returnee was often deep and followed by repeated after-shocks. None of the participants could be described as having 'slipped back' into or 'settled back into life in New Zealand relatively quickly' as OE sojourners have often done (Chaban et al. 2009b:57). All of the return migrants in this study faced personal, practical and professional challenges, dealing with the loneliness of re-entry, the 'cost of paradise' and the change of work environment, which sometimes took years to come to terms with. The support of other return migrants, finding satisfying work and such

⁸ Neil Finn © Copyright Kobalt Music Publishing Australia Pty Ltd. All rights for Australia and New Zealand administered by Sasha Music Publishing, a division of All Music Publishing & Distribution Pty Ltd ACN 147 390 814 www.ampd.com.au Used by permission. All rights reserved. Unauthorised reproduction is illegal.

welcome surprises as finding Auckland a more diverse city than when they had departed helped them through their re-entry.

It has been acknowledged that the length of residence in the host country can intensify and lengthen the stages of reintegration (Ting-Toomey, 1999) and this is most certainly illustrated by the experience of these migrants, returning from extended OR. What can be observed here is not the end of a trip or adventure and the 'post-holiday blues' that accompany it, but a seismic shift in the lives of these return migrants, their partners and families, in coming home.

Chapter Seven:

‘Settling’: Return Migration Outcomes and Wisdom

7.1 Introduction

Having examined the decision by return migrants to come home to New Zealand after extended Overseas Residence (Chapter Five) and their re-entry experiences (Chapter Six), in this chapter I examine participants’ return migration outcomes. Specifically, I consider their labour market outcomes, economic and general well-being having returned and the extent to which participants consider these outcomes to be positive. I will also examine participants’ return migrant wisdom and reflect on what might be done to make for smoother landings for returning New Zealanders.

A strength of this material is that it allows the benefit of a longer-term perspective on return migration outcomes. Participants in this study had returned to New Zealand between eighteen months to ten years earlier and, on average, six years prior to the research. This is consistent with the *Migration de REtour au Maghreb* (MIREM) project (RDP 2011), which defined the returnee as ‘any person returning to his/her country of origin, in the course of the last ten years’ and suggested that this time frame ‘allows the impact of the experience of migration on the interviewee’s pattern of reintegration to be assessed’.

7.2 Return Migration Outcomes

Gmelch (1980:142) noted that returnees' re-adaptation success can be understood in terms of the 'economic and social conditions of returnees' or in terms of 'the migrant's own perceptions of his or her adjustment and the extent to which he feels the homeland has filled his self-defined needs and given him a sense of well-being' and 'measured in terms of the degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction expressed by the migrants'. While all of these dimensions are considered within the evaluation of the change in circumstances for these return migrants, a more nuanced understanding is sought than a binary success or failure, satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Return migration outcomes invariably embody a myriad of, by degrees, positive and negative outcomes which return migrants often trade-off against each other in evaluating the on balance outcome.

7.2.1 Labour Market Outcomes

This study does not purport to provide an economic analysis of labour market outcomes, vis-à-vis any wage differential return migrants experienced, although incomes are considered in the following section. In this section I refer instead to the employment and occupational status of those participants who had returned to New Zealand.

All of the participants found gainful employment or started their own businesses within one year of arrival, with two participants having arranged employment pre-arrival. The three participants who launched their own companies had intended to do so as part of their return plan. As previously highlighted, the majority of participants intentionally took at least six to twelve months off before they did so. In this regard, my participants were different from New Zealand return migrants in other studies where the majority quickly returned to employment or education (Lidgard, 2001; Inkson & Myers, 2003). This early period constituted a voluntary time out rather than unemployment and

highlights the potentially premature nature of any conclusions drawn about labour market outcomes for return migrants within one to two years of arrival.

None of the participants expressed difficulty in obtaining 'the right job' or taking 'unsatisfactory roles out of desperation', as reported in Pocock and McIntosh (2010:641). Two female participants found their initial jobs to be unsatisfactory, but acknowledged that this was due to having taken roles of lesser responsibility (voluntary under-employment) in order to secure more flexible and shorter working weeks. They had since found more satisfactory roles, better matched to their level of experience, but resulting in their return to full-time employment. All of the participants were currently in jobs that matched their skills and were at least comparable to those they held in their host country. Half of the participants had experienced upward occupational mobility, primarily in relation to higher responsibility roles and/or having started their own businesses. There was no observed brain waste among these return migrants, that is, where skilled participants were forced to take less skilled or experienced positions upon their return. Two of the participants had applied their skills to different sectors, however.

Despite several participants voicing concern about finding work that would challenge them, given the scale of the labour market in New Zealand (see Section 5.3.4), many participants claimed to be pleasantly surprised by the work satisfaction and new challenges they found in New Zealand. For example:

We completely overhauled the company and did a big business transformation [for sale] ... being exposed to some really exciting things that had I stayed in the UK I would never have got. Even if the company had sold, I wouldn't have been exposed at that level because the companies are so huge that they'd have a whole team of people that would do those sorts of things. That's been a really interesting general management experience for me ... and so for me that has been the sort of progression that I've been looking for to broaden my skill set. Kate (UK)

I was nervous about coming back because I was happy with our large projects which obviously don't exist in this country but in fact I've done a lot of - I haven't done any hundred storey buildings but I've done a lot more diverse things. I've got eighteen bridges at the moment which are out there. I've got a university campus with the subway underneath it which was an interesting process ... I've got a lot more diverse range of things I do now which is actually more challenging in some ways.
Johnny (CH/USA)

Those participants who started businesses all found success, although it did take time to build their businesses in this market (refer to 6.3.3 Professional Challenges). In summary, while not immediate, participants' return migration did yield positive labour market outcomes in terms of employment and occupational status.

7.2.2 Economic Well-being

For the participants in this study, return migration commonly can be seen to have yielded slightly negative economic outcomes. Despite all successfully finding employment or new business opportunities, six of the eight participants in the study perceived themselves to be 'a little worse off' after their return to New Zealand than they had been overseas. The two remaining participants felt that their economic well-being was 'about the same'. When compared to British employee immigrants in Auckland, which one might anticipate would provide a useful benchmark, for the United Kingdom participants at least, there is a marked contrast with fifty percent of British immigrants seeing themselves as better off in terms of economic well-being (Watson, et al., 2011:39). There is no comparable data available from studies on New Zealand's return migrants.

The cost of living was cited by all of the participants as being the key factor in their feeling less well off, as suggested here:

I think it's down to cost of living. I earn good money, very good money, but then I just compare that to the money I was earning in New York and how much I was able to save. Purely that. Toby (USA)

We both earn good money and we find it quite expensive. I don't know how people on a lower income survive. Pippa (UK).

I think we genuinely thought we would come back to New Zealand and be really wealthy, because we'd saved lots of money ... So we visualised cruising back in, buying a really nice, big house, great big backyard and a pool and we came back and we were like, oh my God! Everything is really, really expensive in Auckland ... The cost of living on basics like utilities, groceries ... then the cost of housing relative to income in New Zealand meant that we felt a lot better off in the UK than we felt here. And so that was a shock and we didn't anticipate that. Kate (UK).

Lower incomes were also mentioned by five of the eight participants but, unlike the cost of living, this was somewhat expected and anticipated. William indicated, for example:

My headhunter was really good at leveling my expectations in terms of what the market over here will pay compared to everywhere else. So he was really good, and I already knew in terms of salary what was going on. William (UK)

Lower incomes were not always anticipated, however, as Mandy notes:

In the industry I'm in where I'm teaching seminars, we have held one every month in New York, sometimes two in a month, and I used to earn a lot from doing that teaching. Here it's one every six months, so I've had to look at another source of income which is treating patients and you don't earn the same amount and it's hard to get people in. So I've dropped my rates and just don't earn as much ultimately. Mandy (USA)

The two participants who thought their economic well-being was 'about the same' did also state that they had made adjustments:

You adjust. Perhaps you're not going out for dinner as much as we used to ... I have no desire to go out every night here, it's not such an attraction anymore. Brad (USA)

Some of the return migrants were philosophical about the change in economic well-being, as Pippa's comment illustrates:

Money is not the be all, end all. You've still got to be happy in what you're doing.
Pippa (UK)

Other participants simply 'got used to it'. As Jason articulated:

Now we're sort of numb to it. Then you stop noticing that it's expensive and you just go, oh well, that's how much it costs. There's a phrase in Japanese which means 'people get used to things'. You stop noticing it and it makes it easier because you're not freaking out about stuff so much. Jason (JP)

It has often been emphasised in the international literature that economics is not a key driver for a significant number of return migrants (Conway et al., 2009; Glaser, 1978; Gmelch, 1987; Hugo, 2009), and those expatriates who have returned, or would consider returning to New Zealand for economic reasons, are the minority (Kea, 2011a; Lidgard, 2001; Lidgard & Gilson, 2002). That being said, half of the return migrants in this study cited work-related factors in their decision to return to New Zealand. Although they often anticipated an adjustment in terms of incomes, the cost of living was an unexpected shock to participants that continued to irk them for some time although they eventually became 'numb to it' or accepted it as a necessary trade-off.

7.2.3 General Well-Being

The return to New Zealand commonly yielded decidedly positive outcomes in terms of general well-being, according to the majority of my participants. Six of the eight participants felt they were 'better off' when considering their general well-being post their return to New Zealand, with half of those participants perceiving they were 'much better off'.

Central factors in participants' perception of positive well-being were opportunities for their children and lifestyle factors (see Section 5.3.2). Participants commonly cited quality local schooling for their children, access to nature and outdoors activities, and simple pleasures such as neighborhood playmates for them. For instance:

Our daughter has made fantastic friends and school is incredible ... I have been completely blown away with [their school] and the attitude towards education and the quality of education, the commitment to the kids and commitment to building a sense of community ... In [the UK] it just feels like they're a little more factory like ... here it feels like there's a sense of craft to the way they educate kids. William (UK)

I think we've got a really good primary school education system and then the fact that [my kids] can learn to swim and they can do anything they want to really. Any activity, as much outdoor life as they want. We can be at any number of beaches within ten minutes drive from here and we do it frequently, whereas you couldn't go to the beach in the UK and I don't think I ever, in ten years, went ... So it's just a different lifestyle. They can go and have play dates with friends, because everyone lives locally ... so it's just a better, easier, more natural lifestyle for a kid I think. And for us to parent in that environment. Kate (UK)

My son's best friend, they walk to school and home every day and so they play every weekend and after school and he comes to our place and ours go to theirs ... it is a dream ... The local school, it's been everything that I've wanted which is great because it's been community and it's been friends and it's sleepovers and play dates and hanging out and that's what I wanted for my young children. Jason (JP)

Many of the participants' post-interview videos, which were created to 'send word' back to New Zealand's expatriates, were filled with images of their children at neighbourhood beaches, in their spacious and green back yards, and on excursions in the great outdoors (see DVD accompanying this study, Appendix I).



Figure 7.1: Still Images from Participants' Post-Interview Video Exercises
(Clockwise from top right: Pippa, UK; Pippa, UK; Kate, UK; Johnny, CH/USA)

The positive shift in general well-being was also extended to the participants themselves, with life being easier in general, shorter commutes and more living space referred to, and the return to New Zealand delivering on the more relaxed, healthier lives participants had said they wanted to come home for. Participants commented:

Life is a lot easier than it was. Even as dumb as it sounds, like having a car and being able to drive somewhere. Johnny (CH/USA)

It takes me fifteen minutes to commute! Kate (UK)

Quality of accommodation – better, much better! I love the house, absolutely love it. Love coming home to this place. Not to say that I didn't love coming home to a place in the UK but everything was so much smaller, so much more squashed in. William (UK)

Cleaner and more natural food, safer environment for kids, less affected people – maybe more earthy people. Just less pressure. Toby (USA)

I do have much better health here, I think, and better quality food ... Our kids' lifestyle here is fantastic, they can run barefoot around the streets. You don't do that in any city and here they're free. You don't have that obsessing nature about them. Mandy (USA)

Two participants did feel that their general well-being was 'about the same'. By way of explanation, one participant offered that this was in part a function of the fact they were no longer without children and able to 'do what you want, when you want'. The other participant was eighteen months into their return journey and still missing the energy, pace and stimulus of a larger city, a factor common to the re-entry challenge.

7.2.4 On Balance, a Positive Outcome

Upon reflecting on their lives in New Zealand versus their overseas lives, the majority of participants felt that their move back was generally positive, personally, for their children, for their work-life balance and even professionally. The return migrants appeared to have made peace with the perceived trade-offs and, on balance, felt the return move was positive. For example:

I'm really content with the lifestyle we live here. I think the annoyances and the surprises all came in the first year or two and then you get over those because life moves on and it all becomes normal again. Kate (UK)

Apart from the cost of living, I think there's a lot of great things that New Zealand has to offer. Okay, we don't get to go to Europe or whatever. We'll go there again. We're both forging our own careers and there are lots of things to do in New Zealand that are fabulous ... I think you get to a stage where you go, you know what, this is my life and I'm just going to be a bit more realistic about what I can do with my life and get excited about a four day weekend in Melbourne, you know? ... Or camping at Whananaki ... We've got this crazy beach right next door to us where the kids disappear all day. All those kinds of things. I think we went camping once in the UK and the water was amazingly freezing. You forget that there's just natural beauty around and camping is so much fun. Pippa (UK)

I'm really glad that my son has grown up here. I think he's a really happy, balanced kid and I think that's probably the best achievement. I've done well with [my career]. I think for myself, I feel good about what I've done. I feel like I've been authentic and expanded myself a bit and been valuable. Toby (USA)

Business is very different for me because it's my own business, I still work hard, but I can be flexible with my work hours ... I would say I'd be working slightly less than what I

was doing but I'm probably more productive ... and I get to spend quite a lot of hours with the children which I never would have been able to do there. Brad (USA)

My company is to some extent a triumph. It's still a work in progress ... I think we have some small wins and happy moments ... I think coming back to New Zealand is a triumph. Jason (JP)

I would speculate that some of these reasons might constitute a form of post-rationalisation which could be a possible factor in the positive evaluations by participants, having moved their lives and families across the oceans to return to New Zealand, though this is not to suggest that their appraisals are any less sincere.

For the two participants who were less emphatic in their positive evaluation of their return migration, the trade-off in terms of career success or stimulation, however, remained too great. For instance:

Would I come back all over again? In hindsight, probably not, no. That could be symptomatic of my current [work] situation, that it feels a bit negative at the moment. It's such a bummer, because I wish that with the lifestyle and nature – that I could have had that and then a stimulating, exciting, energetic, entrepreneurial working life that's positively creative. William (UK)

While satisfying employment is generally not a primary reason for the return to New Zealand, it is an important factor in ensuring return migrants, on balance, feel that the return move has been a positive move.

7.2.5 A Philosophical Perspective: Change Was Inevitable and Came at the Right Time

The return to New Zealand often coincided with factors associated with children: preparing to have a child; following having had a child or children; or as children reached school age. Participants recognised and often reflected upon the fact that

even had they stayed overseas their lives would have likely changed with children, as indicated here:

To be honest, I don't know that we would have travelled as much anyway if we'd stayed living in London, for the same reason [travelling with young kids]. Kate (USA)

Very different because – children. That's a life change in itself, but it's a totally different life. Whereas over there it was about lifestyle, over here it's family. So that's a big difference. Brad (USA)

We lived a really nice lifestyle in England. We both had good jobs, it was a great lifestyle and so when you come back to New Zealand and you don't have that same lifestyle, the party's over a little bit and then you have kids. Kids cost money and they take time. Your whole life changes ... You've got to do all these things and you expect things to just tick along the same but even if we'd stayed in the UK and we'd bought a house and our kids had gone to school, things would have changed for us anyway. They wouldn't have been the same. The difference was that earned money in the UK would have gone to pay for private education in England because there wasn't decent education that was free. So it would have changed anyway. Pippa (UK)

It is worth remembering that such a life change was precisely what many of the participants had been looking for in returning to New Zealand.

The majority of return migrants in the study also considered that this change and their return to New Zealand came 'at the right time'. Two participants thought, in hindsight, that they 'probably should have stayed a few more years' and 'stashed some more cash', while one participant wished he and his partner had made the move sooner. But for the majority, the time had been right for the return move.

7.2.6 Return Longevity: Settled and 'Here for Good'?

Settlement is defined as 'securing a permanent footing in a new country' (Holton & Sloan, 1994 in Benson-Rea & Rawlinson, 2003:62), or in the participants' words:

I think I would equate settled with comfort. So when you feel settled, you feel comfortable, would be one way to describe it. You're comfortable with your surroundings, your environment, with your life, and once you're comfortable, and you're not obviously experiencing culture shock or price shock and stuff like that, it's not shocking anymore and you feel integrated. Maybe it took two or three years, but we feel pretty settled now. Jason (JP)

I think it's just that we don't have that feeling of oh, we'd rather be back there or back overseas or in another place. I think that sort of means you've settled back. That took me six years, basically, really to the end of last year to do that. Brad (USA)

All of the return migrants indicated that they indeed saw themselves as being settled in New Zealand. That being said, only half of the participants saw themselves remaining in New Zealand indefinitely or 'for good', declaring:

Yeah, I feel incredibly settled now. This feels like home and I can't imagine leaving New Zealand again to work. There've been opportunities and we could do that ... but I do see myself, as a Kiwi, back living here with no intention of leaving. Except for overseas holidays. Kate (UK)

I'm very happy to be home. I don't want to go back. I'm happy to go back and visit but I don't really want to go back and live there. I don't want to go back to that gotta be there first, gotta rush, rush, rush. Gotta be the best, gotta be push, push, push, career, career, career. I don't want to go back to that. Mandy (USA)

Four participants indicated that they would consider living overseas again, although they suggested that this would not be an easy move and two of those participants indicated this would not be considered until the children 'were grown':

We have not settled and are still thinking about other options to potentially move overseas although that would be very, very difficult. It would be very difficult to uproot the kids. William (UK)

Right now the focus is about the children, it's about schooling and making sure that they're happy, making sure that grandparents, three of which are still all around – that's a pretty important stage for us to be back here ... it could be another six or ten years but I think we probably see ourselves begin over there again. But then who knows?

Then you might not have that drag to be back over there again and your children might keep you here. Brad (USA)

Children, therefore, play an important role in anchoring these return migrants in New Zealand.

It is possible that the idea of living overseas again, at some point, is a way for return migrants to reassure themselves that they still have choices and are not 'at the end of their journey'. Johnny captures that fear here:

I guess that was a fear that coming back that would be it, I'd come back and shut the door and from that point onwards I'd just become middle aged and die here. I think you can still travel for fun but you can also leave again. I think it's important to know that if it doesn't work out or if you don't like it or other things come up, it's just like you moved around the world three or four times, there's no reason why you can't come back and then leave again. Johnny (CH/USA)

Two of the return migrants, however, were serious in their consideration of re-emigrating in order to take advantage of opportunities overseas, and specifically career opportunities, despite having appraised their return migration as having had largely positive outcomes. These participants could effectively be considered part of the fluid movement of skilled labour or 'talent flow' (Inkson et al. 2004b; Carr et al., 2005; Jackson et al. 2005), and are a reminder that return migration is not necessarily finite and might be a repeated experience for such circular migrants.

7.3 Return Migrant Wisdom: 'Tips I Wish Someone Had Told Me'

With the benefit of having gone through the process of return migration, the participants in this study were asked to share their wisdom with other New Zealanders who were considering returning. Specifically, what five tips would they share with other expatriates, be they practical, personal or professional advice that they wish someone had told them to make the return journey smoother? These are examined here.

7.3.1 Personal Return Wisdom

Wisdom of a personal nature was most commonly passed on by participants and constituted over half of the return migrant tips. Toby emphasised ‘This is the stuff that is way more acute’ and consequently devoted all of his advice to personal tips, where other participants generally offered a variety of tips. Half of the tips given by participants might be described as purely helpful advice (i.e. things to do or a state of mind to facilitate successful return migration) and half might be characterised as cautionary advice to return migrants (i.e. negative things to watch out for or to expect). They are not always mutually exclusive.

Pre-arrival cautions and advice included being sure you were ready to return, being sure of the reasons for return and post-arrival, focusing on ‘embracing what New Zealand offers and not what it lacks’. Participants pointed out:

Tip: Make sure you’re ready to go back.

If you’re not ready to move, then it’s going to be pretty tough. And that being from my own personal experience and that is even though we thought we were sort of ready to come back, it’s been a big change, and if you weren’t ready to come back, it would be tough. Brad (USA).

Tip: Have a very clear reason for returning, then make the most of it.

Be realistic about what you’re coming home to. You’ll be leaving some stuff behind but if you’re coming for something good, then make sure you’re focused on what that good reason is and make the most of it. If it is lifestyle, make sure you make the most of it once you are back. There are lots of things that will annoy you when you return, so make sure you remember the things that are much better in New Zealand. Kate (UK)

Tip: Remember why you are coming home.

You need to be sure of your reasons for coming home to New Zealand. There are so many great reasons for being here but before you pack your bags really understand why you’re coming home. New Zealand is a great place for raising children and that’s probably one of the key reasons we came home. Pippa (UK)



Figure 7.2: 'It's a great place to bring up kids in the great outdoors.'
(See Pippa's video.)

Pre-arrival tips also included not overly romanticising New Zealand before you come back, 'imagining you will be returning to some peaceful, carefree shire' (Johnny, CH/USA). Participants highlighted the need for return migrants to keep their expectations grounded.

Upon arrival, potential return migrants were encouraged by participants to take 'time out', whether for a holiday to relax before settling in, to decompress, or for reflection. After all, as Jason (JP) noted, 'you don't get many opportunities in life to pause and think about how you would like to reshape your life and how you'd like to live'. Returnees were also encouraged to 'join in' – to join a club or group or team in their local communities and get themselves new friends. Making an effort to join in might be something new migrants might be attuned to but is something that return migrants do not necessarily anticipate.

Arrival cautions focused on alerting and preparing return migrants to navigate around some of the challenges of re-entry. For instance:

Tip: Be Patient, Hang In There, Give Yourself Some Time.

After the rush of the homecoming and the warm embrace of family has faded, there are some lonely, disconcerting moments of not feeling at home, at home. Be Patient and be ready for a little un-ease during your re-entry. Toby (USA)

Tip: Watch out for good old New Zealand isolation.

It's quiet down here, and it takes a while to get used to the change in tempo.

Toby (USA)



Figure 7.3: 'It's quiet down here.' (See Toby's video.)

Tip: Don't irritate your friends by comparing the world.

Nothing is more annoying than someone comparing everything to some other nirvana.

Just because Hulu⁹ isn't in New Zealand doesn't mean New Zealand is a backwater.

Johnny (CH/USA)

Tip: Watch out for natives who aren't impressed by your fancy stories.

Find other people who have had similar experiences. Toby (USA)



Figure 7.4: 'Watch out for natives ...' (See Toby's video.)¹⁰

Tip: Take care of your relationship.

If you have a partner/lover etc. take extra care after your return. Maybe plan to take time to ensure issues are resolved quickly. Toby (USA)

⁹ Hulu is an American website that allows free streaming of TV shows and videos online.

¹⁰ Image copyright David Gaylor, 2012. Used under license from Shutterstock.com.



Figure 7.5: 'All these pressures and challenges can split you apart, if you let them.' (See Toby's video)¹¹

Participants advised return migrants that they didn't have to see New Zealand as the end of their journey or themselves as having failed if they did in fact re-emigrate. For example:

Tip: Don't think of returning to New Zealand as the last time you will experience the world.

New Zealand might be a long way from anywhere but it doesn't mean you can't keep travelling. Johnny (CH/USA)

Tip: It's not a prison sentence.

A few don't make it last and that's all right. Some go back, some move on, it's not forever or a failure. Toby (USA)

Acutely aware of the unexpectedness of the personal re-entry challenges they had faced, participants were able to extend first hand wisdom to help would-be return migrants anticipate and negotiate these challenges. Toby, whose marriage had ended after returning to New Zealand, was particularly mindful of the personal toll a difficult re-entry could take on return migrants and their relationships.

¹¹ Image left to right: Copyright Eky Studio; Hraska, 2012. Used under license from Shutterstock.com.

7.3.2 Practical Return Wisdom

The predominant practical caution highlighted by return migrants to those considering the move was to be prepared for the shock of the cost of living in New Zealand. Consequently, a common piece of advice was to 'save more' in preparation for their return:

Tip: Cost of Living: Be prepared for price shock.

New Zealand is expensive, though resident Kiwis are numb to the high prices paid for almost everything, and you, too, will get used to it in a couple of years. Resident New Zealanders lacking a global/objective perspective, believe everything to be 'world class' and set prices accordingly. Johnny (CH/USA)

Tip: Save some cash before coming home.

If you're looking to settle down in New Zealand – and want to buy a house, you'll need a hefty deposit (if you want to live in Auckland anyway). So save some cash beforehand. Also it may take a while to find a job so you've got some back up. It costs more than you think to set yourself up in New Zealand so be prepared. Pippa (UK)

Tip: Lots of things are very expensive relative to income in New Zealand.

Save hard if you have the dream of the big house with a pool in a nice suburb if you are returning to Auckland. Kate (UK)

Coming back wasn't entirely
what we thought it would
be

.... Firstly everything is
---king expensive!



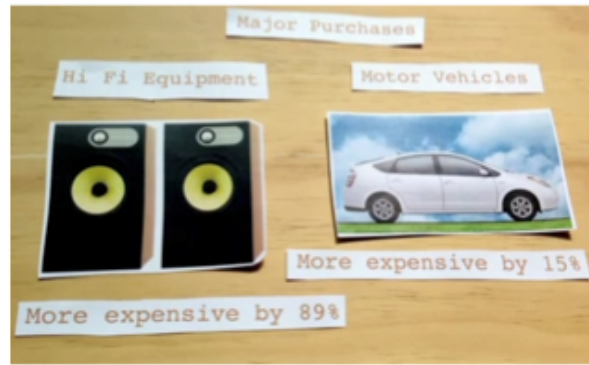


Figure 7.6: 'It's expensive!' (See William's video.)

Given the cost of living and the distance of New Zealand to the countries they were leaving, the advice to travel while they could was also a popular practical tip offered by return migrants. Pippa suggested:

Tip: Travel to those exotic places before coming back.

New Zealand is an expensive country to live in! The wages are low, house prices are high and travel out of the country becomes very costly. There are lots of beautiful things to do in New Zealand so before you come home, visit those exotic places first.
Pippa (UK)

Participants did variously take the opportunity to air their personal gripes and alert potential return migrants to 'the worst media in the world', poor weather, the lack of public transport, the difficulty of finding childcare, the fact that New Zealand was not '100 percent Pure' and even the lack of anonymity in a smaller city. These concerns were very much secondary to the cost of living and the need to save, which was the consistent practical caution and advice from return migrants to would-be return migrants.

7.3.3 Professional Return Wisdom

Professional wisdom was the least frequently given by return migrants. Given the path to employment of the participants (i.e. after an extended hiatus or period of experimentation upon re-entry), it is perhaps not surprising that professional advice is

not top of mind when passing on return wisdom to those at the beginning of their return journey. Professional tips offered included cautioning return migrants about the small size of the market, New Zealand being 'restricted somewhat on what it can offer' because of the small population, and practical advice on professional preparedness. Participants recommended:

Tip: Job Market.

Look into the job market before you come home so you understand what is out there. It's also great to know what skills New Zealand requires. You can come home with some bankable skills. Talk to the recruitment agencies before hand and start getting your name into the market place close to coming home so you have appointments set up. Pippa (UK)

Tip: Get some professional intel and advice.

My headhunter was really good at levelling my expectations in terms of what the market over here will pay compared to everywhere else. So he was really good, and I already knew in terms of salary what was going on. William (UK)

Tip: If you have been in a professional role, be prepared to become more of a 'generalist' than a specialist.

I have had to become more 'hands on' than I was used to ... the good news about this was my role is hugely varied and much more interesting in New Zealand, and decision making processes are much faster and often intuitive and less political. This can be great if you get frustrated by red tape. Kate (UK)

In the course of the interviews, participants did share some further tips about professional strategies or opportunities that return migrants might consider. These tips included the usefulness of transitional jobs, considering changing a career path, and seeing the positive side of the scale of the New Zealand market. Participants offered:

Tip: Transitional jobs aren't a bad idea.

It provided income – it effectively put me into the position I'm doing now so it allowed me to work out what I wanted to do and how to make it work ... I wouldn't have known what the hell I wanted to do basically if I didn't come back and do that. Things happen for a reason and if I had come back and not had that ... then I probably would have

ended up going back to what I did before. So I think in that sense, it was quite useful.
Brad (USA)

Tip: An opportunity for professional change.

If you're going to come back to New Zealand, do something different! I've changed direction in my career, which I probably never would have done if I'd stayed in England, I would have stayed working in that [role] forever so coming back to New Zealand, sure, I don't earn as much money as I used to but I'm doing something that I really enjoy and is interesting. It was an opportunity. I think that's when I started to get much happier about being here. Pippa (UK)

Tip: The upside of a small market.

I think quite possibly what is underplayed or you're not really aware of is that you can become a much bigger fish in a small pond. There are career opportunities here if you're prepared to embrace them and look at them. Kate (UK)

Although not as prevalent in the return migrant wisdom, the professional advice given by participants highlights some useful and interesting insights in how to approach returning to employment in New Zealand.

7.3.4 Return Migrant Wisdom Summary

The return migrant tips, gathered here and learned through participants' own return experiences, are concerned with managing return migrants' expectations, with mental preparedness, with seeking to mitigate unexpected and unwelcome surprises for return migrants and navigating returnees smoothly through the return experience. As such, the return migrant wisdom offered by the participants effectively deals with the same factors cited as influencing successful or unsuccessful settlement that are commonly raised in the repatriation literature (Gaw, 2000; Gmelch, 1983; Sussman, 1986, 2000, 2001; Szudlarek, 2010). It has been highlighted that returnees rarely anticipate re-entry problems (Sussman, 1986), that the challenge of re-entry is exacerbated by the very unexpectedness of it (Gmelch, 1980), that the lack of mental preparedness for re-entry is a predictive indicator of a negative experience (Sussman, 2001) and that

accurate expectations of the return is a predictor of high adjustment levels (Black, 1992). Given that we are aware of the influence of these factors, it would seem prudent to share this return migrant wisdom with would-be return migrants in order to better prepare and help facilitate their smooth and successful return migration.

7.4 Welcoming Return Migrants and Easing Their Transition

Revealed in the study are some of the reasons for considering initiatives that help facilitate smooth return migration and indications of what might be done, and by whom, to support those returning to New Zealand from long-term residence overseas.

7.4.1 Why The Country Should Care (More)

Return migrants in this study are productive, contributing members of New Zealand's professional and community landscape who have a role as 'return scouts' for other New Zealand expatriates and yet do not see their presence or return migration as necessarily acknowledged or welcomed by New Zealand on the whole.

The participants in this study were very committed to sharing the professional skills and knowledge they had accrued overseas, a sentiment which is captured in Mandy's statement: 'I wanted to spread the knowledge, there is so much knowledge to share'. All of the return migrants belonged to professional groups and all but one of the participants had spoken at conferences, judged professional and higher education awards, lectured at educational institutions, and mentored or coached other professionals. Over half of the participants also belonged to social and community groups, such as book clubs or school boards. Lidgard (2001:16) suggested that 'the return of citizens to their home country has a significance that is overlooked' and that these migrants contribute to both the country's economic and social development. Certainly, these indicators suggest return migrants contribute significant social and intellectual capital to New Zealand.

Overlooked also is the role of return migrants as return scouts for other expatriates. Three-quarters of the return migrants in this study had been contacted for advice on return migration, including whether they would recommend considering it. This was not an isolated request - those participants who had had their opinion or advice sought had up to half a dozen people contact them. Expatriates who sought their advice were not always close friends; they included friends of friends, old New Zealand work colleagues and, in some instances, international colleagues. Participants gave mixed reviews – although they were generally positive, they also alerted expatriates to the challenges of returning, in some instances even encouraging postponing return migration. Participants shared:

Well, my general MO is come on board because we need you, we need good people back here. So while I don't misrepresent it, I'm generally positive. If you're thinking about it then yeah, do it but it's not without its pain. Toby (USA)

I tell them it's actually kind of great, I am enjoying it. I have told them it's strange to come back and there was a period of time when I was unsure about it, but I think in all honesty I've told them that once you settle down and you get used to things, it's no different really than most other cities and it's really enjoyable and we have actually quite liked it. Johnny (CH/USA)

Small, expensive, lacking in culture, and if you don't like rugby, hell, you've really got a big problem on your hands ... but great access to the outdoors. William (UK).

Don't come back until you're ready, that's what we always say to them. Don't come back until you're ready. If you don't really want to, if you've got nothing that's pulling you here then don't come back until your kids need to go to school. Pippa (UK)

Return migrants play an important role in influencing or informing the return migration decision-making of expatriates. In fact, in Chapter Five, it was noted that all of the participants in this study who sought advice about their return migration turned to New Zealand friends who had also returned from overseas. I would argue that easing the re-entry process and increasing the positive outcomes for return migrants will have a

positive impact on attracting other return migrants. Good return experiences are the basis for positive word of mouth reviews.

Lastly, return migrants do not necessarily feel that their return is altogether welcomed.

Participants indicated:

No. I know we used to get the 'when are you coming home' when we were away, but then it's funny coming home – you have to make a real effort. Whether it's a feeling that kiwis come home so often that it's nothing special. Or tall poppy syndrome. Kate (UK)

Generally, no. It seemed to be overridden by people's suspicion that I thought I was more superior than I was. Toby (USA)

No. You always receive a lot of knowing nods about coming home for kids and schooling. Approving nods. But there's never any 'It's great you came back and brought your knowledge back'. There's always that element of jealousy that you went away in the first place. Jason (JP)

The international experience is prized, but then there's the contradiction that 'we're not really interested in your fancy foreign ways'. There is this thing that New Zealand has that kills it really, which is, yeah, that's great, but not nearly as good as here. Not being allowed to talk about your overseas [professional] experience, it gets shut down, and it shuts down your willingness to have those conversations and your willingness to share or impart your experience is shut down. William (UK)

Whether real or imagined, that such perceptions are common among return migrants is hardly desirable. Given the social and professional capital return migrants bring, and their role as return scouts to other expatriates, it is important to better understand how to facilitate making the reintegration process smoother and more positive. What then might we do to help?

7.4.2 What New Zealand Might Do to Help

Return migrants do not have an expectation that the country is responsible for accommodating them but did note several areas where the country – be it the government, Auckland Council and other local authorities, corporate New Zealand or the general populous – could play a role to make return migration smoother and more successful. These ranged from the personal, practical and professional.

On the personal front, simply acknowledging the challenges of re-entry is the single most helpful thing that could be done, that and provide some guidance on services to seek if returnees are experiencing problems. Participants suggested:

It being acknowledged in the first place that it's not all going to be roses and there are some common problems – because I've got another friend from Britain with a husband and a series of explosions that happened in their lives and they've been torn apart ... We'd talked that wouldn't it be great if there was something there. It being acknowledged and a list of watch-outs and some services [counseling for couples, for example] to help you with some of that stuff would be great. As I say, even if they weren't free ... A book or a DVD that had a bit of humour to it that took you thought some of the things you might experience and don't feel like the only one, because it happens to a lot of people ... Or if something was coming from the Auckland Council and said 'hey, understood you're just coming back from overseas and great to have you here ... here's some things to watch out for and here's a list of services you might need'. Toby (USA)

It helps people to know that it might actually take a couple years and if they do settle sooner that's good but if they're not settled, that's not strange. People nowadays need to feel like what they're experiencing is normal, otherwise it adds to the stress or pressure or worry because you're like, oh, it's not happening quick enough or it's abnormal. So it's good to know. Jason (JP)

Practical assistance would be welcomed by return migrants in terms of local information (such as property prices, salaries, cost of living, etc.) in advance of arrival. For instance:

There was a good immigration website – I can't find it now, but very similar to www.enz.org. It was just an immigration consultant who actually had a whole bunch of rich information about things to do and tips and what to look out for and all of that. Even down to shippers and all that. I'm sure they were getting a kick-back, but it seemed a little odd that there wasn't a government website that actually provided that sort of information. Or local government, that could work absolutely. William (UK)

Before I came home, I had no idea what a good salary was ... It's all those things you need to understand ... This is how much rent costs, this is how much food costs here, that would help. I think [a guide] would something good for local government to do because they have their finger on the pulse for each area and they should be promoting their own city. Pippa (UK)

It would be great if you could point out what was great about Auckland ... because when you've been away for so long you don't really know anything any more. Things change. Toby (USA)

Should we be concerned that being made aware of the personal challenges and local information might, in fact, deter potential return migrants? Return migrants emphasised the positive impact, on balance, of being made aware of the challenges and local information, as stated here:

I think in hindsight it would have been great if I'd been told just hang in there when it feels really shit and you're not sure you made the right decision, because there'll just be those times ... Just it being acknowledged at all would be great, that you might have some issues, you might have some decompression you might need to go through ... Would knowing about it have deterred me? No, I would have been very thankful for them. Toby (USA).

I think it would be hugely helpful. Really, really helpful [to have information about the cost of living and salaries, etc]. It could turn me off, yep, but it's probably better to be turned off when you're up there rather than be turned off when you actually arrive and enormously unhappy ... I've always thought transparency is the best thing. Glossing over the facts is a bad move. William (UK)

I think we probably would have come regardless. I think it would have been helpful in terms of managing expectations. Kate (UK)

Sabetes-Wheeler et al. (2009:754) found that return migrant expectations and the ability to adjust upon return to be closely related to the level of information before leaving, and emphasised the importance of reliable information and information flows in forming these expectations. There is an opportunity, in sharing this knowledge, to help positively facilitate re-entry and the reintegration of returning New Zealanders.

In terms of professional initiatives, being linked into professional networks was particularly welcomed, including for the purposes of being recruited while still overseas, as touched on here:

Shortcutting into some formal professional or expatriate networking group would be a really good way of doing it ... It would get you in touch with the right people ... it's taken me five years to build a good contact network on my own. Kate (UK).

I think it would be quite good if there was, for architecture, for example, a recruitment website that people who are looking for experienced people with certain kinds of skills could put out to the international expatriate market of New Zealand. That would actually be quite a good thing for New Zealand companies themselves. Johnny (CH/USA)

I was stunned at how many Kiwis I came across in big, hard-hitting jobs and so if you know them or can access them, target them and lure them back 'cos there are a lot of people like we were – they're on the cusp of going 'do I, don't I want to come home?' and if you can make it easy for them by giving them something to come back to and removing that uncertainty and fear, then I'm sure there's probably a lot of people that would be quite easy to tip that way. We would have been if someone got us at the right time, I think. Kate (UK)

Pippa (UK) also noted the need to offer other incentives in the absence of salary parity, to attract expatriates:

I think that if they can't offer [skilled workers] decent salaries, they need to offer them other benefits, such as more holidays. England has five weeks holiday a year. People want to come back and have a lifestyle and spend more time with their children yet they

only get four weeks holiday a year. And decent benefits like life insurance and medical insurance. Pippa (UK)

These comments suggest that return migrants would welcome and appreciate some acknowledgment - at the very least - and ideally some guidance and assistance to approach their return journey.

7.5 Conclusion

Anchor me, anchor me

In the middle of your deep blue sea

- *Anchor Me* by Don McGlashan (1993)¹²

Return migration is not without trade-offs, particularly in terms of economic well-being, but, on balance, the majority of the participants in this study are pleased with their return migration and the lives they have carved out for themselves in New Zealand. Positive outcomes for participants include feeling that they are living healthier, more relaxed, more balanced lives, seeing their children flourish at local schools, growing up with access to nature and 'the great outdoors', and finding new work challenges for themselves. The return migrants are somewhat philosophical that their lives would have likely changed even had they remained overseas, with having had children and moving into a new life stage, and believe they came back to New Zealand 'at the right time'.

¹² Don McGlashan © Native Tongue Music Publishing Ltd. All rights for Australia and New Zealand administered by Sasha Music Publishing, a division of All Music Publishing & Distribution Pty Ltd ACN 147 390 814 www.ampd.com.au Used by permission. All rights reserved. Unauthorised reproduction is illegal.

All of the participants felt themselves to now be settled in New Zealand (although half were open to living overseas again at some point), but this was not without a long period of re-entry and reintegration challenges. In this sense, return migrants coming home from extended Overseas Residence (OR) are more akin to new migrant groups than returning Overseas Experience (OE) sojourners. With the benefit of hindsight, these return migrants were able to pass on a wealth of personal, practical and professional wisdom, wisdom that they wish they had prior to their return migration. With approximately 24,000 return migrants arriving in New Zealand every year, there is no need for each of them to face many of the same unexpected challenges and have to learn the hard way how to navigate their way through them. There is an opportunity for the government, Auckland Council and other local authorities, corporate New Zealand and the country in general to play a role and to facilitate smoother and more successful return migration. Simply acknowledging return migrants and the challenges they face and extending a welcome would be an important step forward to anchor our return migrants to the country they call home. That return migrants often act as return scouts for other New Zealand expatriates means fostering positive experiences among new arrivals has the potential to create a ripple effect of positive information being sent back across the oceans to those that follow, which begs the question: why wouldn't we?

Chapter Eight:

Conclusion and Recommendations

8.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to gain insight into the migration experiences and outcomes of one of our least considered migrant groups, New Zealanders returning home after extended Overseas Residence (OR) of five or more years. The study sought to answer the following questions: what brought these return migrants home?; how does their experience differ from those migrants returning from a shorter-term Overseas Experience (OE)?; what are the outcomes for the return migrant?; what wisdom and guidance can return migrants offer those who would follow in their footsteps?; and finally, what might be done to assist return migrants? This chapter provides a summary of the key findings of this study. This final chapter closes by offering three key recommendations to facilitate and encourage the return migration of this distinctive migrant group.

8.2 Summary of Findings

Previous New Zealand studies of return migration have provided a perspective on one aspect of such migration – and not another. They have predominantly focused on the initial arrival period and the return of OE sojourners, the majority of whom spent three years or less overseas. In contrast, this study aimed to provide some insights into the experience of return migrants coming home from extended OR of five or more years and to examine their return migration outcomes two or more years after their arrival.

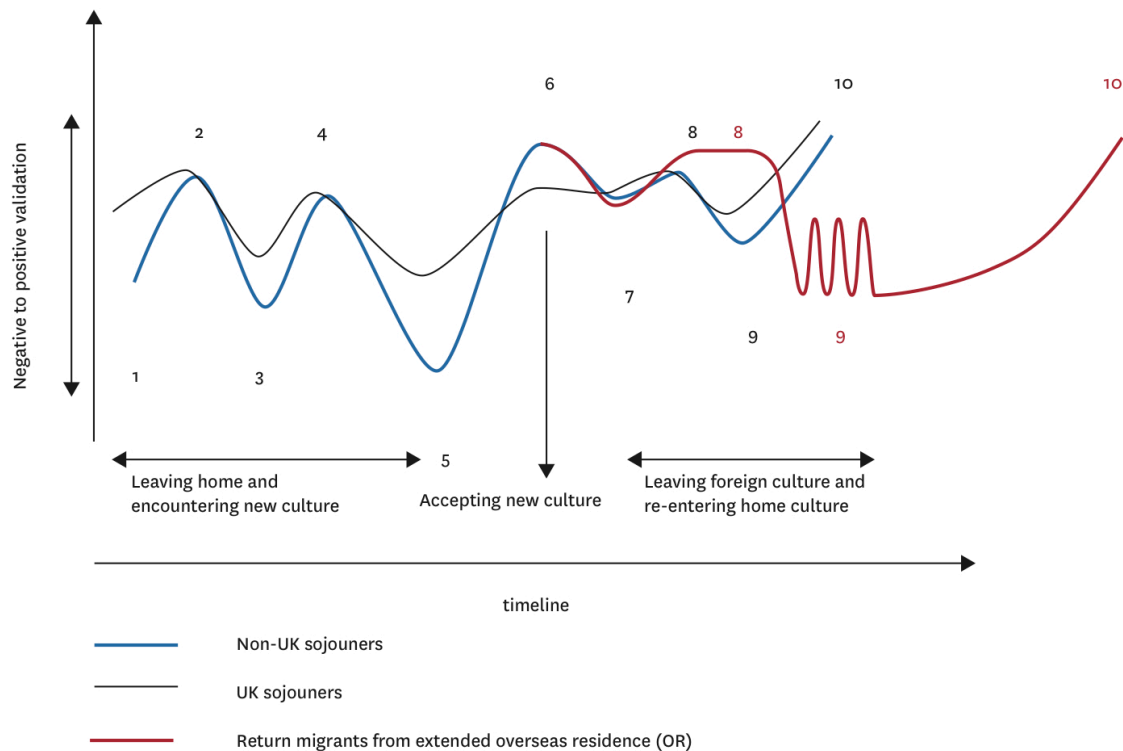
A multi-phased, multiple methodology research design was employed to do so, which included a pre-interview questionnaire and exercise, an in-depth interview and post-interview video exercise.

This study found that the experience of New Zealand's return migrants coming home from extended OR is distinct from the experience of New Zealand's return OE sojourners. Rather than returning because of visa expiry at the end of youthful adventures (Chaban et al., 2009b; Walter, 2006a), the return migrants in this study left established careers, often motivated by opportunities for their spouse and children, and triggered by child-related events (e.g. pregnancy, birth, children reaching school age). As such, these return migrants are at a different career and family formation life stage from their more youthful counterparts.

The return adjustment paths for those New Zealand migrants returning after extended OR is equally distinctive. The re-entry 'curve' in Figure 8.1 illustrates these return migrants' slightly heightened return anxiety (Stage 7), the extended honeymoon or euphoria they experienced upon their return (Stage 8), the depth and recurring nature of their re-entry shocks (Stage 9), and their very gradual path to reintegration when compared to the re-entry experience of the return sojourner (refer in particular to the black, UK sojourner line of Figure 8.1¹³). The return of the extended OR expatriate represents a profound life change that takes years, rather than months, to adjust to, suggesting any analysis of their return migration at less than a year is likely to be premature and preclude a full understanding of the return experience and outcomes.

¹⁰ Note: Chaban et al.'s (2009b:19) study did not recruit for New Zealand migrants specifically returning from an OE, but 'for most returnees from the UK their sojourn to the UK fitted the classical Big OE model', which they defined as 'being away from New Zealand for the first and only time for 1-2 years'. Over half of the Non-UK (EU) Sojourners fit this same definition.

Figure 8.1: The Return Migrant Experience of New Zealanders Coming Home From Extended OR, compared to Sojourners



Adapted from Chaban et al. (2009b:68)

Key Stages: (1) initial anxiety; (2) initial elation/fascination; (3) initial culture shock; (4) superficial adjustment; (5) mental isolation/depression/frustration; (6) integration/acceptance of host culture; (7) return anxiety; (8) return elation; (9) re-entry shock and (10) reintegration.

On balance, the study found return migrants perceived their return migration to New Zealand to have yielded a net positive outcome, often trading off negative hard costs (cost of living, income) against more intangible positive outcomes (a more balanced, relaxed, outdoor life New Zealand for them and their families). The path to settlement, however, was long and often fraught with challenges. The findings of this study support existing knowledge that found 1) the length of residence in the host country lengthens the stages of reintegration upon return (Ting-Toomey, 1999) and 2) that the unexpectedness of - and ill-preparedness for - re-entry challenges intensify the negative impact of those challenges upon adjustment (Sussman 1986, 2001). While the length of overseas tenure is possibly immutable, the

personal, practical and professional wisdom offered by the return migrants in this study point to a wealth of insights that, if disseminated, could potentially mitigate the unexpectedness and ill-preparedness of re-entry for future return migrants to New Zealand.

The study reveals opportunities for the government, Auckland Council and other local authorities, corporate New Zealand and the country in general to ease re-entry for return migrants coming home from extended OR by both acknowledging them and helping to provide practical guidance. The findings suggest that there are strong grounds to do so: return migrants are actively engaged and eager to share the skills and knowledge they have brought back from overseas and to play a critical role as return scouts for other expatriates. Despite this, the return migrants in the study did not necessarily feel that their return was entirely acknowledged or welcomed by the country they call home.

8.3 Limitations

The sample size in this study is both appropriate and desirable for the purpose of gaining rich, contextual insights into the personal experiences of return migrants coming home from extended OR. Nonetheless, the size of the sample is small and may not be representative of the total (skilled) return migrant population. It would be useful to augment the sample and apply the methodology, for example, to solo return migrants and return migrants without children, as the majority of return migrants in this study returned with a significant other and a child or children.

Given that all of the participants in this study are still residing in New Zealand, with no plans to leave in the next twelve months, there may also be a bias in the study towards positive outcomes. Those return migrants who have experienced negative outcomes

may well have re-emigrated, but we do not have the benefit of their experience and wisdom within the sample and scope of this study.

8.4 Future Research

I offer four recommendations for future research. Firstly, as noted above, it is recommended that the methodology of this study be extended to a larger and broader sample. Secondly, quantitative research following on from this study will provide confidence as to whether the findings are representative of, and generalisable to, the total (skilled) return migrant population. Thirdly, with respect to understanding the reintegration and outcomes of return migrants, I would encourage extending, adapting or creating programmes akin to those employed to monitor new migrants, such as the Immigration Survey Monitoring Programme (ISMP) and the Longitudinal Immigration Survey (LisNZ). A longitudinal study is ideal, given the length of the period of reintegration highlighted in this study. Fourth, given the complex nature of migration (e.g. circular migration and talent flow), a longitudinal study of the movement of skilled New Zealanders, though ambitious, would be the ultimate goal for future research.

8.5 Recommendations

Opportunities for New Zealand to play a role in facilitating return migration were identified in Chapter Seven. Rather than simply provide a list of initiatives here, I offer three fundamental, interrelated recommendations based upon the findings in this study.

8.5.1 Recognise and Welcome Return Migrants as a Key Migrant Group

Immigrants are a vital aspect of New Zealand's future. Their successful integration into our economy and society is of critical importance both to their personal experience of settlement and to the wellbeing of New Zealand as a whole.

- Integration of Immigrants Programme (2008)

Let us recognise, acknowledge and consider return migrants just as we do other migrant groups to New Zealand and make understanding and facilitating their positive re-entry, reintegration and outcomes a New Zealand policy priority. This recommendation does not simply suggest additional research and the extension or provision of settlement services, however: a mind-set shift is required. Return migrants chose New Zealand – let the country let those returnees know we are proud to welcome them back, to help create a bright future and growth for the country, and be aware of the challenges they will likely face as they do so. Imagine the good will created simply from the gesture of a letter from the Prime Minister or Mayor of Auckland welcoming the return migrant home.



Figure 8.2: Welcome¹⁴

8.5.2 Foster Return Preparedness

The most important provision return migrants could be assisted with is mental return preparedness. Whether in advance of or upon arrival in New Zealand, establishing a level of awareness of the challenges that return migrants might encounter, and providing guidance and possible strategies to navigate through them, will have a positive effect on the intensity and duration of re-entry shocks and, ultimately, upon return migrants' successful reintegration and settlement. Return preparedness might be fostered via a website, a coming home guide, a documentary or DVD sharing return journeys and wisdom.

¹⁴ Images left to right: Copyright Ronald Sumners; Mojito Mak; Robert Kneschke, 2012. Images used under license from Shutterstock.com.

The delivery of settlement information and support services for return migrants needs to be thoughtfully considered. New Kiwis (www.newkiwis.co.nz) and Settlement Support New Zealand (www.arms-mrc.org.nz) both note return migrants as an audience but their content and services are largely catered towards new immigrants. Although Kea's (New Zealand's global network) charter does include 'promoting the attraction/return of highly skilled migrants and help match their skills with appropriate opportunities', because their emphasis is on growing and leveraging the global network of expatriates their focus on return migrants is understandably limited¹⁵. A more tailored and concerted effort is required to effectively reach - and meet the needs of - this migrant group.



Figure 8.3: Wisdom¹⁶

8.5.3 Encourage Return Migration

In this increasingly competitive world we need to redouble our efforts to attract the skills and investment New Zealand needs by targeting the right people, and by working with employers to identify, attract and retain migrants with the skills we need.
- New Zealand Immigration Minister, Hon Nathan Guy (2012)

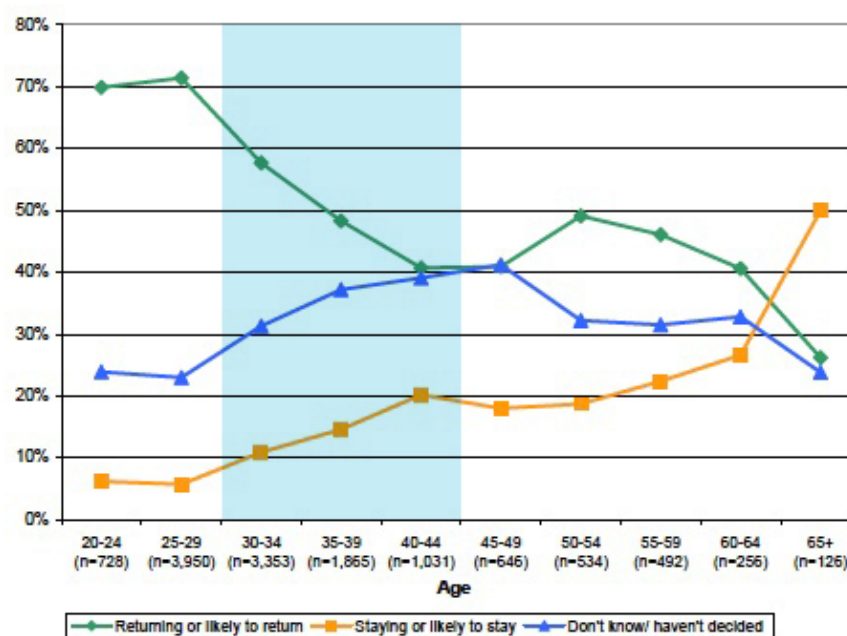
There are no clear reasons that might entice more New Zealanders to return.
- Statistics New Zealand (2012e)

¹⁵ Kea disbanded their Auckland chapter this year and their job-listing site, www.keajobs.com, listed five positions in Auckland as of 20 November, 2012.

¹⁶ Images left to right: Copyright Holger Graebner; Andresr; Andy Dean Photography, 2012. Images used under license from Shutterstock.com

The better we understand return migration, the better we will be poised to encourage it. This study offers insight into the motivations, hopes, dreams and triumphs of coming home for migrants returning from extended OR, insights which suggest there is an opportunity to entice more New Zealanders home. Child-related factors were found to be important triggers for considering return migration but so too is the desire to start one's own business. The study sheds light on some of the professional advantages of coming home, such as the lack of red tape in starting businesses, flatter hierarchies, the diversity of work and speed to market. There is an intriguing insight with regards to the opportunity to reshape one's life with the return to New Zealand. From Fursman's (2010:16) analysis of expatriates' intent to return by age (excluding expatriates residing in Australia), it would appear that there is a critical window of opportunity to reach expatriates, between the ages of 30-44 years (see Figure 8.2).

Figure 8.4: Expatriates Plans to Return to New Zealand, by Age



Source: Adapted from Fursman (2010:16)

Strategies for encouraging return migration could include targeted messages to expatriates during this window, based on the life and work stage insights offered by

this study. For instance, messages via professional networks and business media to expatriate professionals could communicate professional and new business opportunities in New Zealand, particularly given the fact that New Zealand recently topped the Forbes list of best countries for business (Badenhausen, 2012). Equally, those expatriates who are expecting or who are new parents could be targeted with messages about the quality of New Zealand schools, free healthcare and education for children and the access to outdoor activities. Here Fursman's Family Lifestyle index may be useful. A family guide could profile school neighbourhoods and communities. There is an opportunity to target expatriates with relevant and enticing messages that encourage considering the return to New Zealand, based on the insights revealed in this study.

8.6 The Contribution of this Study

This study has made a contribution to the understanding of one of New Zealand's least-considered migrant groups, return migrants who come home after extended OR of five or more years, and also considers a longer perspective on return migration outcomes. In doing so, the study has addressed gaps in the existing body of New Zealand's return migration research. The research design yielded rich participant inputs, providing a number of insights. Furthermore, beyond offering these insights, the research offers practical implications and recommendations to assist in, encourage and facilitate New Zealanders coming home.

8.7 Conclusion

Home is a place where one feels accepted and understood. Home is familiar and predictable in regards to people and places. At home one feels secure, trust, care, safety and belonging.

- Mooradian (2004:44)

New Zealand researchers and policy makers appear to have overlooked a key migrant group. In focusing on those New Zealanders who are departing and immigrants who arrive, the return migrant has been overlooked and none more so than those returning from extended Overseas Residence (OR), rather than the traditional Overseas Experience (OE). This study paints a picture of a migrant group that is often ill-prepared for some of the challenges of re-entry, resulting in what can represent years of re-adjustment and of not feeling at home having returned. One of the greatest challenges for the return migrant is the feeling that their return is not necessarily acknowledged or welcomed by the country. Given that these return migrants represent a group actively engaged in passing on their international skills and that act as return scouts for potential return migrants, it would pay New Zealand to pay more attention to this migrant group. Just as New Zealand has made an effort to understand and ensure positive outcomes for new migrants, it is time that the return migrant experiences are fully understood and a retention strategy considered. Only then can New Zealand hope to continue to attract and retain expatriates, amidst the backdrop of a global competition for skilled labour. It is time for New Zealand to concern itself not only with luring New Zealand expatriates back but with the pressing need to welcome them home and to utilise their human capital and experiences.

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Appendices

Appendix A: International Diaspora, New Zealand and Eight Selected Countries, 2001

Country of residence	Country of birth								
	Australia	Canada	Korea	Ireland	Italy	Netherlands	New Zealand	United Kingdom	United States
Argentina ^a	—	—	—	—	328,113	—	—	—	—
Australia	13,629,685	27,289	38,900	50,235	218,718	83,324	355,765	1,036,245	53,694
Austria	659	1,658	1,446	546	26,099	5,248	156	6,786	7,371
Canada	18,910	23,991,910	82,745	26,210	318,095	118,460	9,475	614,610	258,420
Denmark	886	1,786	483	1,129	3,110	4,955	382	11,670	6,219
Finland	673	1,261	152	244	1,057	832	88	3,067	3,050
France ^b	2,868	8,790	9,781	3,858	523,080	20,813	890	59,356	26,320
Germany ^c	8,322	12,646	22,634	15,594	616,282	112,362	1,643	115,167	113,528
Ireland	5,947	3,926	—	3,354,025	3,634	3,428	2,195	242,155	20,977
Italy ^c	2,881	2,683	3,793	2,204	56,573,464	7,312	234	24,592	18,941
Japan ^{c,e}	4,759	5,824	560,414	—	1,017	—	1,814	8,789	38,954
Korea ^c	—	—	48,021,543	—	—	—	—	—	—
Netherlands	12,805	12,199	2,764	7,248	35,193	13,140,336	4,260	74,869	29,093
New Zealand	56,142	7,770	17,934	6,726	1,440	22,239	2,890,889	210,978	13,344
Norway	—	—	6,086	—	—	4,140	—	14,177	14,666
Spain	1,012	1,489	1,780	3,677	21,833	16,383	275	88,107	12,323
Sweden	2,387	2,324	9,320	1,200	6,538	4,777	687	15,458	14,711
Thailand ^{d,e}	1,400	1,400	1,800	—	600	900	300	2,300	5,200
United Kingdom	107,871	72,518	—	533,852	107,244	40,438	58,286	53,892,620	158,434
United States ^d	60,965	820,771	864,125	156,474	473,338	94,570	22,872	677,751	250,314,017
Total	13,918,172	24,976,244	49,645,700	4,163,222	59,258,855	13,680,517	3,350,191	57,098,697	251,109,262
Total outside country of birth	288,487	984,334	1,624,157	809,197	2,685,391	540,181	459,322	3,206,077	795,245

Source: Bryant and Law (2004:3)¹⁷

¹⁷ Note: There is no official New Zealand data on how many New Zealanders live overseas or where they reside. The data in Appendix A represents the most recent collated and published data on the topic.

Appendix B: Information Sheet

Welcome Home?: New Zealanders' Experiences of Return Migration

It was great to connect with you on the phone, and thank you so much for meeting with me today. This is to give you some more detail about the project and what is involved. As you know, I have recently returned after a decade living offshore myself and am completing a Masters in sociology with Massey University, Albany. My thesis aims to learn more about the experience of return migrants (i.e. New Zealanders who have returned to the country after residing overseas). It appears that very little is known of our experience upon return, despite efforts to lure expats home. So I would love to hear your story.

The intention, in addition to gaining knowledge about the return migrant experience, is to feed these findings back to both policy makers and to potential return migrants to New Zealand, that they might be better prepared and more poised for successful return migration. If you would be interested and generous enough to share your perspective and story, I would very much like to invite you to take part in this research.

Who I'm talking to

In this research I'll be talking to eight return migrants like yourself. You have been contacted through a network of personal contacts in New Zealand and abroad who suggested you might fit the criteria: New Zealanders in Auckland who have spent 5+ years residing overseas, specifically in the UK, US or Asia; who have been back in New Zealand for at least 2 years; from skilled/professional backgrounds; who returned to New Zealand on or before the age of 45 years; and are not planning on exodus in the next 12 months.

If this is indeed you, read on.

What does the research involve and what would you have to do?

Should you choose to participate, I will ask you to complete all of the following activities over the course of a month or so:

1. Complete two short pre-interview exercises by email (which will take no more than 30 minutes). A brief questionnaire reflecting on your experience and an exercise where you highlight five things you wish someone had shared with you, or given you advice about on making the return journey.

2. Share your return migration story with me in a face-to-face interview (approximately 60-90 minutes). We'll talk about what brought you home; some of the challenges you encountered and strategies you used to overcome them; what life is like back in New Zealand, and your reflections on having returned. The interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed.

3. Create a short video: your chance to be director ☺

Sending word to expat New Zealanders in the overseas country you last resided in about your experience. By all means, get creative, but you it can be as short as 1-2minutes in length, and you are encouraged to spend no more than 20 minutes on creating this. I'll provide a video recorder for you and I am readily able to assist you in filming if you would like help.

We'll meet again briefly upon conclusion of the process, for about 15 minutes, just to wrap things up and to go over options regarding the confidentiality of your data.

The information collected will be treated with care and stored securely. The information will be analysed and the findings will be used for academic purposes (thesis, journal articles, conference presentations) and for policy and information dissemination purposes (i.e. policy presentations, return migrant website, guide, book and/or documentary).

This raises an important point for you to think about in terms of how you would like your involvement in the project recognized. It was my original intention that your input would not be anonymous, that the study would put a human face to the experience of return migrants, and that you might retain credit as the author of your own story. However, *the choice is entirely yours*. You can decide at the completion of the research activities whether you would like to:

- 1) Use your name and identifying features for all of your data;
- 2) Use your name and identifying features for some of your data and a nom de plume for others;
or
- 3) Opt for confidentiality and use of a nom de plume for all of your data.

We will spend some time talking through these options again at the close of the research, where you will select and consent to the option of your choice.

If you agree to participate, please be assured you do not have to discuss anything with me that you do not want to. During the interviews, you can cease the interview at any time, and after we have completed the interview I will check to see if you feel you have disclosed anything during interviews that you would rather not be included, we can delete from the record at this point. You will have a final opportunity to review your transcript and withdraw any comments at our closing meeting.

I think you will find the experience rewarding and you will gain satisfaction in the knowledge that your story may help other Return migrants and stimulate consideration at a national level, potentially resulting in practical provisions being implemented for smooth reintegration of Return migrants. I would also like to offer you a \$40 Unity Books voucher as koha.

Your rights

With the above in mind, I would like to remind you that you are under no obligation to accept this invitation to participate in the research. Should you decide to take part, you have the right to:

- Ask any questions about the research at any time;
- Withdraw from the research at any time during the research activities, and discuss the inclusion in the project of data already collected;
- Decline to talk about any issue or answer any question during the interview;
- Request that the audio-recorder be turned off at any time during the interview;
- Provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher.
- Know that your information will be treated with care and respect and stored safely;
- Receive a copy of all your materials and a summary of the research findings upon completion; and
- Be updated on publication and dissemination of the research findings.

Many thanks for your taking the time to read this information sheet. *So what do you say?*
Your story is important and instructive. I hope you will seriously consider taking part .

Project Contact:

Tracey Lee

m: 027 417 4212

e: msleeinthewood@gmail.com

My academic supervisors, Associate Professor Ann Dupuis and Professor Paul Spoonley, are also available to answer any questions you may have at 09 414 0800 extn. 9054 and 9171 respectively, email: a.dupuis@massey.ac.nz / p.spoonley@massey.ac.nz

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application 12/020. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Ralph Bathurst, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, telephone 09 414 0800 x 9570, email humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix C: Consent Form: Research Participation and Information Usage

Welcome Home?: New Zealanders' Experiences of Return Migration

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. I've talked through the various aspects of the research with the researcher and all of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I also understand that I may ask further questions at any time during the research activities.

I consent to taking part in all of the research activities (pre-interview exercises, interview, post-interview exercise), and to having my interview audio-recorded for transcription purposes.

I understand and consent to the data from these activities being used for academic purposes (thesis, journal articles, conference presentations) and for policy and information dissemination purposes (i.e. policy presentations, return migrant website, guide, book and/or documentary).

I understand I will have the opportunity to choose whether I would like my identity known, with respect to my data, or kept confidential, and that I can consent to my choice at the completion of the project, at our closing meeting.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: **Date:**

Full name (printed):

Appendix D: Pre-Interview Questionnaire

Welcome Home?: New Zealanders' Experiences of Return Migration

I'd like to find out a little more about you and your experiences before we sit down to our interview. Just check next to the box that you wish to select. Please note, you have the right to decline to answer any particular question.

1. What was the main reason you moved overseas?

	Main reason? Select one:	Other factors? Select all that apply:
Work/economic/income prospects	... <input type="checkbox"/>	... <input type="checkbox"/>
Different culture/lifestyle experience	... <input type="checkbox"/>	... <input type="checkbox"/>
Family or marital connections overseas	... <input type="checkbox"/>	... <input type="checkbox"/>
Study	... <input type="checkbox"/>	... <input type="checkbox"/>
Other	... <input type="checkbox"/>	... <input type="checkbox"/>
If Other, please specify:		
2. Did you intend to stay overseas the length of time you did? Select one:

Yes, I planned to be overseas for that length of time	... <input type="checkbox"/>
No, I hadn't originally planned to stay as long as I did	... <input type="checkbox"/>
No, I originally planned to stay longer	... <input type="checkbox"/>
3. Did you ever travel back to New Zealand while living overseas? Select one:

No, never	... <input type="checkbox"/>
Yes, but seldom	... <input type="checkbox"/>
Yes, occasionally (every two to five years)	... <input type="checkbox"/>
Yes, I'd visit every couple of years	... <input type="checkbox"/>
Yes, at least every twelve months	... <input type="checkbox"/>
Yes, more than once a year	... <input type="checkbox"/>
4. What was the main reason you returned to NZ?

	Main reason? Select one:	Other factors? Select all that apply:
Work/economic/income prospects	... <input type="checkbox"/>	... <input type="checkbox"/>
To establish or relocate a business in NZ	... <input type="checkbox"/>	... <input type="checkbox"/>
Lifestyle	... <input type="checkbox"/>	... <input type="checkbox"/>
To be closer to family	... <input type="checkbox"/>	... <input type="checkbox"/>
Family obligations in NZ	... <input type="checkbox"/>	... <input type="checkbox"/>
Safer environment	... <input type="checkbox"/>	... <input type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities for spouse or children	... <input type="checkbox"/>	... <input type="checkbox"/>
Children's education	... <input type="checkbox"/>	... <input type="checkbox"/>
New Start	... <input type="checkbox"/>	... <input type="checkbox"/>
New Zealand is my home	... <input type="checkbox"/>	... <input type="checkbox"/>
Immigration issues	... <input type="checkbox"/>	... <input type="checkbox"/>
Other	... <input type="checkbox"/>	... <input type="checkbox"/>
If Other, please specify:		
5. Over what period of time did you consider the return move?

	Select one:
One day I knew it was just time to go home	... <input type="checkbox"/>
It was something I thought about for a few months	... <input type="checkbox"/>
It was something I considered over a year or more	... <input type="checkbox"/>
It was something that I thought about over several years	... <input type="checkbox"/>

6. From whom did you seek advice on the return move? Main source: All that apply:
- | | | |
|--|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Family | ... <input type="checkbox"/> | ... <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Friends in New Zealand (general) | ... <input type="checkbox"/> | ... <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Specifically, friends in NZ who had returned from overseas | ... <input type="checkbox"/> | ... <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other expatriate New Zealand friends | ... <input type="checkbox"/> | ... <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Business colleagues | ... <input type="checkbox"/> | ... <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Head hunters / recruitment agencies | ... <input type="checkbox"/> | ... <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Banking or financial organizations | ... <input type="checkbox"/> | ... <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Real estate companies | ... <input type="checkbox"/> | ... <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Government organizations (eg: NZTE, Dept of Labour) | ... <input type="checkbox"/> | ... <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Please specify: | | |
| News sources (eg: NZ Herald) | ... <input type="checkbox"/> | ... <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Please specify: | | |
| None / no-one | ... <input type="checkbox"/> | ... <input type="checkbox"/> |
7. Did you come to New Zealand for a 'reccy' in advance of moving? That is, a reconnaissance trip to survey the situation, which may have included investigating housing or employment, for example.
- | | |
|-----|------------------------------|
| Yes | ... <input type="checkbox"/> |
| No | ... <input type="checkbox"/> |
8. What, if any, of the following did you already have at the time of your return move? Select as many as appropriate:
- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| Owned or bought a house to live in in New Zealand | ... <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Had pre-arranged rental accomodation in New Zealand | ... <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Employment already set up in New Zealand | ... <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Significant savings from my time overseas | ... <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Bank accounts set up in New Zealand | ... <input type="checkbox"/> |
| None of the above | ... <input type="checkbox"/> |
9. Considering your economic well-being post your return to New Zealand (e.g. income and cost of living, etc), compared to your overseas situation, would you say you were:
- | | |
|---------------------|------------------------------|
| Much better off | ... <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A little better off | ... <input type="checkbox"/> |
| About the same | ... <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A little worse off | ... <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Much worse off | ... <input type="checkbox"/> |
10. Overall, would you say, in terms of your general well-being post your return to New Zealand you are:
- | | |
|---------------------|------------------------------|
| Much better off | ... <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A little better off | ... <input type="checkbox"/> |
| About the same | ... <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A little worse off | ... <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Much worse off | ... <input type="checkbox"/> |
11. Do you consider that you came back at the 'right time'?
- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| Yes, it was the right time to come back | ... <input type="checkbox"/> |
| No, I think I should have stayed overseas longer | ... <input type="checkbox"/> |
| No, I wish I had come back earlier | ... <input type="checkbox"/> |

12. Do you consider yourself 'settled' in New Zealand now?
- Yes, I'm back for good ... ☐
- Yes, but I would consider living overseas again ... ☐
- No, I am planning to move overseas again in the future ... ☐
13. Have you encouraged or recommended your expat friends or colleagues overseas to consider returning to New Zealand?
- Yes ... ☐
- No ... ☐
- Not applicable, I don't know any ... ☐
14. Have expat New Zealanders sought your advice on returning to New Zealand?
- Yes ... ☐
- No ... ☐
- Not applicable, I don't know any ... ☐

*Thank you so much for taking a moment to reflect on your experiences and fill this out.
I look forward to talking some more when we sit down together in person.*

Appendix E: Pre-Interview Exercise

Welcome Home?: New Zealanders' Experiences of Return Migration

Sharing Your Wisdom Worksheet

I'd like you to take a moment to reflect on your return migration experience ahead of the interview.

Consider that you are writing for an audience of New Zealanders living overseas who are thinking about making the move also. What are five things you would tell them? They might be practical, personal or professional 'tips' or advice. It might be something you wish someone had told you that might have made the journey or reintegration smoother. It might be something you were advised, and would like to pass on.

Think of it as if you were writing a heading, with a short explanatory paragraph. You don't need to labour it, it is not intended that you spend more than 15 minutes or so on the exercise.

So you're thinking of returning?

heading 1 :

explanation:

heading 2

explanation:

heading 3 :

explanation:

heading 4 :

explanation:

heading 5 :

explanation:

Thank you so much for taking a moment to reflect on your experiences and share your thoughts. I look forward to talking some more when we sit down together in person.

Appendix F: Interview Schedule

Welcome Home?: New Zealanders' Experiences of Return Migration

[Prior to interview, reminder that they should not divulge any information that they feel may be hurtful or damaging to others]

Interviews will be conversationally structured around the return migrant experience, with questions structured around the three phases of the return.

Refer to participants Pre-Interview Questionnaire and Exercise inputs where relevant.

1) (PRE) Making the leap – the decision and process to return migrate

Can you tell me about your decision to return to New Zealand?

What was the main impetus for returning? (explore push/pull factors)

How long / over what period did you consider making the return?

What were your hopes and dreams for the return?

Did you have any concerns or hesitations about returning?

Did you seek information or advice from anyone? If so, from whom or from where?

Did you make any provision for the return ahead of the journey? E.g. Seek employment, housing, make banking arrangements, contacts etc

2) (DURING) The landing

Can you tell me about your experience when you returned?

What were the biggest surprises? Either positive or negative

What were the greatest challenges you faced? Personal, professional or practical.

What strategies did you use to overcome them?

Who did you seek, rely on or find most helpful for assistance?

How long did it take to feel like you had 'settled' – and indeed, have you?

3) (POST) Migration outcomes

How different is your life now that you are back? Did it live up to your hopes?

What are the trade-offs you have made? What have been the greatest triumphs?

What wisdom can you share with those considering making the move back to NZ?

What do you think the city / country / employers could do to make the journey smoother?

Appendix G: Post-Interview Video Exercise Instructions

Welcome Home?: New Zealanders' Experiences of Return Migration

Now that we've been discussing your return journey, I'd like you to do a creative exercise for me.

Just as with your pre-interview exercise, I'd like you to pass on some thoughts to an audience of New Zealanders living overseas who are thinking about making the move also.

I'd like you to think about what you might say to them in short video. It can be as brief as 1-2 minutes, and you don't need to spend more than 20 minutes working on your video.

The content is really up to you, based on your own experience.

Some examples, but you might have other ideas:

You might choose to create an **'advertisement' as to why they should return.**

This might include highlighting a benefit of returning that isn't as well known, or something you hoped and dreamed in coming home that was realized.

You might send **a word of caution** for potential return migrants. You might want to inform them of something they might have to contend with that they might not be aware of, or that took you by surprise and would be helpful to know.

You might want to send **a word of advice.**

Passing on some wisdom to the next wave of migrants.

Alternatively, you might be interested in speaking directly to policy makers.

What would you like the country to know or think about when it comes to return migration and return migrants?

Do consider whether you would like to be in front of the camera in the video (whereby your identity will be known) or whether you would like to stay off-screen.

You will be loaned a simple video camera and instructed on how to use it, or I can absolutely help you record this if you would be more comfortable and/or would prefer.

Again, this isn't intended to be laborious – I just want your candid thoughts and wisdom.

Go for it.

Appendix H: Confidentiality Consent Form

Welcome Home?: New Zealanders' Experiences of Return Migration

Electing Identity Confidentiality Options

With respect to my identity, i.e. being known by my name in relation to my data as the findings are disseminated, I consent to the following (please tick your elected choice):

- 1) To be known by my name and identifying features for all of my data. ☐
- 2) To keep my identity confidential and use a nom de plume for all of my data. ☐
- 3) To be known by my name and identifying features for some of my data. ☐
Specifically for:
- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| List of Participants,
i.e. acknowledged you took part in the study | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Background Profile
i.e. demographics, questionnaire input | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 'Tips' Exercise | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Interview quotes | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Video component | <input type="checkbox"/> |

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and withdraw any quotes in the transcript of the interview conducted with me. ☐

I would be interested in being contacted or involved at a later date should a documentary project be developed as a larger, separate initiative.

☐ Yes ☐ No

Signature: **Date:**

Full name (printed):

Appendix I: Participant Post-Interview Videos

See DVD sleeve back cover for the following participant videos:

Jason (JP)

Johnny (CH/USA)

Kate (UK)

Mandy (USA)

Toby (USA)

William (UK)

Note: Brad (USA) was unable to complete his video due to work commitments but suggested had he been able to do so he would have filmed his children playing on the beach at Mission Bay for his video exercise.

Included on the DVD are both .mov format for MAC and .wmv format for PC.