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Degree Programme in International Business

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THE CHALLENGES OF WOMEN EXPATRIATES REGARDING  
INTERNATIONAL ASSIGNMENT

Bachelor's Thesis 2013

## ABSTRACT

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With the ever-increasing amount of global business conducted in today's world, the need for expatriate assignments on behalf of the workplace is increasing also. There is a deficit in the amount of female managers currently on international assignment.

The primary objective of this thesis was to identify the challenges facing women, which would have prevented more women from embracing international assignments, and to more thoroughly explore stated challenges in order to pinpoint possible small-scale solutions.

The thesis was based on IHRM. The main research method was a collective case study, which consisted mainly of dual perspective qualitative research.

The primary conclusions of this thesis are that with additional local support, the support of the corporation and better repatriation strategies, more women would be likely to enter into the field of international assignment. Further research is needed in industry specific aspects of these fields, as well as return on investment.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

When considering what typifies an expatriate, some very valid questions come to mind, especially when considering women on international assignment. This thesis will delve into the assumptions made by corporations during the recruiting process for international assignments, as well as explores some of the reasons why expatriates choose to go on international assignment in the first place. Through thorough research, it is hoped to delve into what the move truly entails and to examine both sides of the scale used to measure the worthiness of said move for both the company and the female expatriate. The question of perceived career advancement opportunities arriving from international assignments will be addressed, and perhaps most importantly, this thesis' ultimate aim is to discover options to gain more women expatriates in upper management positions for the future. In their research article, Jenkins and Mockaitis (2010, 2694) quote the GMAC 2008 relocation services worldwide survey statistics, citing an increase in the use of expatriates in 67% of 154 international corporations. There are not many women in the international field, only 13.9% of US expatriates and 9% of the European expatriates according to Fischlmayr (2002, 774). Linehan and Walsh (1999, A1) cite that a mere 3% of all expatriate managers are women when looking at Europe. Although steadily increasing, these numbers are not in keeping with the amount of women that are in the workforce.

My interest in this topic is partly self-gratification. This relates to me because I wish to spend a great deal of time on international assignment in my chosen profession. Therefore, this topic serves as guide for my own future in addition to shedding light onto issues regarding the employer and expatriate perspectives.

The reason for the focus on women as expatriates is because it has been shown statistically, that most senior executives, especially those in the position of CEO, have spent time on international assignment during their careers prior to moving into their current position. This is prevalent in the countries of USA, Europe, Asia, etc. (Hamori & Koyuncu 2011) The European Commission (2012) states that in the European Union, women only make up 15% of non-executive board member positions, and 8.9% of executive board member positions. This time as an expatriate gives not only

invaluable cross-cultural experience, linguistic and job training, and long-lasting networking capability but also lends itself to a lifelong awareness that can never be achieved otherwise. This awareness is a recognised trait of leadership. In this globalised day in age, it is imperative that anyone in a leadership role or management position, have these skills, or a skill set that is comparable in order to successfully lead and be an active part of, multi-cultural teams. This lack of opportunity in expatriate assignments can be viewed as a setback for women who have goals to attain more senior executive positions within a company.

This should not be seen as an effort to break into a boys club. This thesis stands on the premise that female executives who have fought hard and earned their way should be able to put their talents and skill set to use as efficient and capable upper level executives in an international setting and can be given all the tools necessary to do so not only for the success of the expatriate, but for the success of the corporation.

### **1.1. Research and Development Problem**

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the challenges facing women on international assignment and to identify solutions to overcoming these challenges. Through identifying possible solutions and the integration of said solutions, it is hoped to enable more women to embrace entering into international assignments.

There are many companies in this global business environment that must send either teams or a singular human resource manager abroad in order to start up a new business venture or project. Although expatriate assignments are larger than this specific area of focus, as in many instances IT professionals are sent abroad to assist when foreign affiliates are lacking the necessary and required technical skills, research is needed and skilled labour and managerial forces are needed. It happens all the time. However, in most cases, for one reason or another, the ratio of women managers or women at all really, is very low. Women have proven to be efficient and energetic managers. This problem ties in with the question of why there are so few women on Boards of Directors, or that are CEO's, due to the fact that a high ratio of those in these positions have had previous experience in international assignments (*Human capital theory*). Thus, this research problem presents a metaphorical missing rung on the ladder, which must be replaced if one wishes to continue the climb.

Although this thesis is focused on the advancement of female expatriates to the position of chairwoman or CEO, it is not to say that this is all there is. There is a large academic focus in the areas of research, industrial and technical advancement.

## **1.2. Research and Development Objective**

The objective of this work is to identify in detail the current and most common challenges that exist as obstacles to women going on international assignment. In this piece of work, through dual perspective qualitative research, plausible solutions will be identified and explored for later use and research. The benefit that is hoped to be achieved by this is to have added another piece of empirical evidence to the pie for whomever might need it in order to make a change in the current system. A change not made by enforcing quotas, but instead is able to present a more stable system of pre-training, and support both at home and abroad for both the expatriate employee and their families.

This topic is of interest to Charlotte Regional Partnership because it has been shown that most high-level executives have had expatriate experience. This draws a distinct connection to another question that many have on their minds: ‘Why are there so few women CEO’s?’ Although not the main topic of research, this question is addressed. This connection being made between international assignment and career advancement is a good solid step in the ability for females to realise their opportunity to become board members or CEO’s.

This topic is of interest to the particular commissioner at the partnership, because she herself is a female in a highly sought after Vice President position. Female career advancement is of particular interest, especially in the field of economic development, due to the fact that she has noticed that there are very few women on the board of directors or CEO chairs.

Charlotte Regional Partnership is a non-profit regional economic development firm consisting of fifteen full-time personnel. At this time 75% of the current personnel are female and 50% of those in upper management positions at the partnership are women. This relates to the research objective in that in discovering the challenges



facing women and sharing the respondents' ideas to meeting these challenges, one hopes to establish a research chain wherein eventually more women will be able to enter into the international field, and thus use the knowledge and expertise gained during international assignment to further advance their careers to a board member or CEO posting.

As an economic development firm, Charlotte Regional Partnership conducts a large amount of business dealings overseas. Due to the small number of personnel, there is not currently an expatriate programme in place, but instead a team fly-in.-fly-out programme, or individual travel for longer visits. For delegations or longer dealings, an expatriate from another country can be sent to the USA as a representative to help establish companies within the region.

### **1.3. Research and Development Question**

The research and development question is: How can companies improve their processes in order to gain more women into international assignments?

The sub question leading into the main research and development question is: What is preventing women from entering into international assignments?

The glass ceiling is one noted barrier at the home organisations, which is still very much in place in some countries. Literature refers to this dilemma, but mainly as a vague concept with regards to the fact that female managers must first overcome this barrier in order to gain the upper management positions necessary to achieve expatriate status (Linehan & Walsh 1999) within the global company. The glass ceiling as a barrier also applies to the realization of academic recognition for females as regards technical skills in the fields of industrial research and development.

Gender-related stereotypes, even though well hidden are also a large obstacle for women in the workplace to overcome. These gender-related stereotypes are especially difficult to overcome when it comes to responsibility for large teams and the possibility for big financial losses.

## 2. EXPATRIATION CHALLENGES

### 2.1 Reasons for Expatriation

When it comes to the question of sending expatriates in the first place, it was said best when they wrote the following: ‘International transfers enable a company to avoid problems caused by over-centralization, such as the lack of understanding of foreign clients’ needs.’ (Tanure, Barcellos & Fleury, 2009, 1043) This theory does help to explain the long-term strategic thinking of why global corporations risk the high expense of sending expatriates on international assignments in the first place, as opposed to merely focusing their efforts on centralising a locally trained workforce with a lower overall investment.

When it comes to why an expatriate chooses to go on international assignment, the answers are broad ranging. However, Howe-Walsh and Schyns (2010, 264) were able to find a way of categorising these expatriates’ answers; they found academics that created four metaphoric categories for the reasons that self-initiated expatriates choose to go. These four categories are as such: ‘The Refugee’ – those expatriates who just wants to get out of their current country. These expatriates want to escape the socio-political or economic situation of their current country, the weather, or just go somewhere new etc. ‘The Mercenary’ – who is merely interested in monetary gain. These expatriates realise the opportunity for financial benefit (perceived or actual) from the acceptance of international assignment. ‘The Explorer’ – similar to the refugee but the decision is a bit more culturally, adventure or transitionally based. These expatriates want to travel, or enjoy the prestige of an international assignment. ‘The Architect’ – the career builder, the expatriate who is repatriated and enjoys career advancement. The career architect expatriate type is the main focus type of this thesis.

### 2.2 Selection

In the interviews, the topic, which seemed to have the most varying responses, was that of the selection process. In the literature, the same varying responses are

recorded. Several comments were found that suited this thesis' purposes: Culpan and Wright (2002) suggest that not only are out-of-date stereotypical assumptions made as regards the willingness of women to go on international assignment, but that married women are liabilities versus the good old fashioned stability of a married man, and that workplaces can still be functioning on these kinds of modern day mythologies. In Western countries, gender stereotyping displayed as a stated lack of faith in female expatriates' success and the fear of expense and failure are also cited by Selmer and Leung (2003). This stereotyping could also explain the statistics that 89% of female expatriates and only 27% of male expatriates are single (Fischlmayr & Kollinger 2010, 459).

Fischlmayr (2002, 775) states that selection decisions are often made by personnel managers based on stereotypical assumptions. This is later reiterated in the results of Fischlmayr's interview research (2007, 782) when she discusses how the respondents felt that older women elicited different reactions from personnel managers than the younger women. These reactions, or the mere perception of them can create an invisible barrier to the female expatriate.

In their research literature there is some debate as to whether it is preferable to select expatriates for international assignment based on technical expertise or on cultural awareness and willingness to and ability to go on assignment. (Tanure, Barcellos & Fleury, 2009, 1045-1406)

One selection option is to send more women into the field in order to utilize their capability to establish longstanding friendships. This could be of particular benefit in Asian countries where personal networks are the driving forces behind business success or failure. In these circumstances, these relationships could give root to a global corporation whereas it would otherwise wither and die. As it relates to KyAMK – the word is 'Quan He' in Vietnam – the networking of giving priority to acquaintances', which is similar to the Chinese 'Guan xi'. (Pers. comm. Nguyen, P 2013) This theory is put forth by Selmer and Leung's research (2003, 1125), which indicated that women are more skilful at interaction as well as nurturing. They suggest also that for these reasons, women may be suitable in the Asia region.

## 2.3 Preparation

Most of the literature (Caligiuri & Lazarova 2002, Jenkins & Mockaitis 2010, Tanure, Barcellos & Fleury 2009) on expatriate success mentions the need for cross-cultural adjustment and adaptation in order for the assignments to start out well and continue on a well-shorn path to completion. Tanure, Barcellos and Fleury (2009) briefly discuss the three aspects of international adjustment, which they consider to be to the workplace, social interaction and the foreign environment. As discussed in the following section, when these three aspects are covered via training by the home organisation, it in effect, protects its investment in the expatriate by ensuring a positive return as opposed to sending a maladjusted expatriate into the field, which has been shown to result in early return from the assignment.

Contrary to much of the stated literature (Caligiuri & Lazarova 2002, Tanure, Barcellos & Fleury 2009) and their own hypothesis, the results of Jenkins and Mockaitis (2010, 2710) research also indicates that pre-departure training can actually contribute to an adverse effect of a greater probability of difficulties with expatriate adaptation. They later argue this finding, stating that the training provided in certain circumstances may have been inadequate thus plausibly contributing to a diluted sample. (ibid, 2712)

## 2.4 Adaptation as Part of Company Success

Expatriate adaptation and adjustment is extremely important as regards the ultimate success or failure of said business venture abroad. Adjustment is defined here as ‘the degree of a person’s psychological comfort with various aspects of a new setting.’ (Jenkins & Mockaitis 2010, 2696) Caligiuri and Lazarova (2002, 763) place the support needed by expatriates into 3 fundamental categories: Emotional (friendship, support, expatriate groups, etc), Informational (such as cultural, behaviour and expectations) and Instrumental (resource assistance such as helping to find babysitters, language lessons, visa and drivers licence obtainment assistance or referrals).

Howe-Walsh and Schyns (2010) state that Organizational expatriates – those who are leaving the country due to an international assignment arranged by the workplace, usually have some form of pre-departure training arranged for them by the company

that they are working for. This training in most cases will include language, culture, and business training- as well as a tailor-made compensation package that will take into account the children's' education, housing allowance, transportation, replacement objects for daily usage, etc.

Caligiuri and Lazarova (2002) impress the importance of even the mundane daily chores, such as finding the local market, library or gas station, and how to find the freshest seasonal fruits and vegetables as a reason for social interaction with host-nationals, and how these interactions can be of cultural adjustment importance to female expatriates. This local support not only fills a need, but also aids in adaptation and friendship.

The literature does not fail to mention the necessity of the expatriates active participation in creating and keeping a full awareness with both the parent company and the subsidiary, with what the expatriate deems necessary for their own adaptation requirements.(Kreng & Huang 2009, 1491) This in itself creates a demand – supply for international human resource activities which need to be conducted abroad in order to better support the acting expatriates.

## **2.5 Feelings of alienation and the resulting difficulties**

Unfortunately, there are quite a few ways that an expatriate can feel alienated by the home company, or that the international assignment can be brought to an early end. Some of these include the unhappiness of the family brought on by a lack of adaptation or a trailing spouse whom does not feel properly placed or cared for, as well as an expatriate who feels forgotten by the parent company.

### **2.5.1. The Trailing Spouse**

Much is mentioned about the stress of bringing a family along on international assignment and the additional stressor that it can be, if it is not properly cared for. The support of the trailing spouse for the expatriate can be considered either a necessary mechanism for the expatriate's ability to perform well on during the international assignment, or a distraction from the assignment, resulting in the early dissolvent of the assignment.

Research literature mentions a familial-support-based-relationship, in some cases, between the willingness of the expatriate to go on international assignment and the willingness of the trailing spouse to uproot in the first place. (Kreng & Huang 2009, 1497)

Some of the ways an organization can assist in reducing the stress of the trailing spouse is to help with spousal job placement (as discussed in the expatriate interviews) and by providing childcare, childcare assistance, or referrals for childcare. Fischlmayr and Kollinger (2010, 469) continue this theory further by stating that the male trailing spouse who has had to leave his career with the children who have had to leave their schools, may as a group feel so socially alienated, that an additional lack of support may so strain and stress the marriage that it could ultimately end in divorce.

It is also written that male trailing spouses will, in many circumstances, have more difficulties being accepted as the ‘secondary breadwinner’ or even as being currently unemployed. Even in social circles, unless a men’s club – so to speak- is created, it could be quite awkward for these gentlemen to be in a spouses’ social circle made up of mostly women. (Fischlmayr & Kollinger 2010) Thus these female dominated social circles serve the purpose of only further emasculating the husband who has left his job to follow his wife, and greatly contributing to the stress of the marriage.

Maintaining the happiness of the trailing spouse is of the utmost importance in many cases, as spousal dissatisfaction is cited as the top reason for premature returns by expatriates, followed by failure to adapt in a close second (Jenkins & Mockaitis, 2010) which results in huge monetary losses by corporations.

### **2.5.2. Breach of Psychological contract**

Parzefall (2008, 1703) defines psychological contract as ‘an individual’s beliefs regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between the focal person and another party.’ This norm of reciprocity theory – which is the basis of a systematic obligatory response (i.e; you have done something beneficial for me – I now owe you) is also being used in the business context in the form of perceived obligations.

When taken in business context, psychological contracts can either be breached or fulfilled. One important variable to keep in mind when determining the importance placed on the psychological contract is the perception of it. This can be determined by cultural variables. (Parzefall 2008)

When viewed in conjunction with an expatriate scenario, this can further be adapted to include a situation which many expatriates unfortunately face when returning to their home offices; That of returning to either the exact same position which they left years ago, a lower position within the company or no position at all. Literature states that up to 20% of expatriates facing these similar experiences have left their positions within the first six months of repatriation. (Kreng & Huang 2009, 1492) The ratio stated by Chew and Debowski (2008) is slightly higher at 25%. This is a large amount of repatriates that are leaving their home corporations. This signals that something is amiss and action must be taken in order to rectify the situation. There are also a fortunate minority who are advanced within the company they have been working for, however this has been proven to be an exception to the rule as opposed to the rule itself.

The perceived obligation of the company following an international assignment, would be for the company to take advantage of the employees' knowledge and skills gained whilst working abroad, and to advance said employee into a position which could further utilize said employees' newly acquired skill set. When a company does not do this, and instead allows the employee to stagnate or at best – encourages lateral movement, this is considered a breach of the psychological contract. Parzefall (2008, 1707) indicates that the normative relational outcome of a breach of psychological contract in the business sense is for the employee to leave the organisation. Ironically, Hamori and Koyuncu (2011, 858) state that most repatriation reports show that most repatriates change employers close to their return from international assignments or at least intend to do as much, and then draw the conclusion that this is due to the fact that expatriate assignments are rewarded more by other companies who bring the repatriated expatriate on as a new hire, than the one that actually sent the employee on the assignment in the first place.

## 2.6. International Assignment and Job Advancement

According to Hamori and Koyuncu (2011, 843) half of American CEO's in the top 100 corporations have overseas work experience and 80% of the top CEO's had expatriate experience in the UK. Their research findings, with 32% having had expatriate assignments also indicate that international experience is starting to become a must-have for CEO's. (As it is explained that the increase from 1993 to 2003 was 7% - 44% of CEO appointments)

Of these CEO positions, it is stated that they are mostly outsider CEO positions- meaning that these CEO's were not promoted from within the same company for which they initially conducted their international assignments. (Hamori & Koyuncu 2011)

The driving theory in this Approach is the Human Capital theory – which Hamori and Koyuncu (2011, 848) have explained best as “the investments that individuals make in their education, training and work experience are rewarded with a higher salary and/or promotion by their employers and also in the labour market.”

According to Fischlmayr and Kollinger (2010, 464) this in basic form means that people have a limited pool of resources (time, resources, energy, effort, etc) from which they can prioritize what is important to them and utilize those to spend those resources in order to make their own success.

Kreng and Huang (2009) cite a positive correlation in their research between Upper Management or CEO postings and international assignments, due to the acquired experiences, interactions, resources and necessary strategies necessary to respond to the occasionally unpredictable, ever changing and unfamiliar markets abroad.

## 2.7. Challenges Facing Women on International Assignment

The culmination of theories in this thesis lead to one distinct conclusion; that although vastly improving, there are still many obstacles which female executives must overcome in order to ultimately reach a position which would enable her to go on international assignment.



The longest lasting theory of why there are so few women on international assignment is a duality of the actual work-family conflict, and the imaginary future work-family conflict. This can be seen in the interview and selection process itself for the international assignment. Although gender bias in the workplace is against the law in every *Westernised* country in the world, it still occurs under a different guise. Although much debated and often denied, gender stereotypes and fears erupt over the expense and time that would have to be allotted for the 'what ifs' of sending a female overseas in an upper management position. What if she is not tough enough, What if...she gets pregnant, What if the destination country's culture does not find women in the workplace socially acceptable, What if her children get sick, and what if her husband will not go. Time is money and losing money is not an option.

Once an expatriate assignment is offered or accepted, a plethora of obstacles then falls on the female executive, and her family (if she has one) and her newest balancing act begins. This is when the female expatriate must work hard to avoid the true work-family conflict, as well as financially balancing the household (had they formerly been dependant on dual incomes). Having a trailing spouse, female or male, would be no easy task. In such a gender stereotypical world as ours can sometimes be, having a male trailing spouse, especially a stay-at-home father, could prove to be difficult in many cultures. Local support for stay at home males in many countries, may be next to non-existent, adding to the male trailing spouse's ultimate frustration with the international assignment, and he may ultimately wish for things to be the way they used to be.

If pre-departure training in the destination country's language, culture and/or business ethics is offered, this could be a well worthwhile investment into the expatriate herself and her family. Said training could theoretically lead to a faster and better-adapted expatriate and family, which results in a smaller lag-time due to culture shock and thus resulting in higher productivity.

Local support in the destination country would provide not only a much-needed source of direction and assistance from a trustworthy source, but a base friendship for the expatriate as well. This could also shorten the adjustment time, as well as help to reduce the inherent stress lingering on the female expatriate and her family.

A good repatriation plan on the part of the corporation is essential in maintaining the good relations with the expatriate upon her return home. This repatriation plan does

not begin when the expatriate begins her return to her country of disembarkation, but instead the process should begin when the female expatriate begins her international assignment. This should be done in order to prevent the 'out of sight out of mind' syndrome, and to continually update the expatriates newly acquired skills in the home database system so she is not allowed to stagnate upon her return to the home office. Close contact is advised in order to prevent the common loss of repatriated expatriates who no longer feel appreciated.

Due to the amount of globalised business today, it seems feasible that there would be a clear association between international assignment and job advancement; especially to the posts of CEO and board member. This association between career advancement and international assignment is due in no small part to the invaluable cultural experience and knowledge gained by travelling, studying and working abroad.

### 3. PROPOSITIONS

Based on the previous literature and the theories set forth within, the following propositions are the research basis for this thesis. The research basis for the propositions is split. Propositions 1A and 1B are based on off the record discussions that occurred while researching the thesis topic. Propositions 2, 3 and 4 are based on the prevalent literature.

*PROPOSITION 1A:* Being accepted for a management position on international assignment is difficult when the matter of family comes into question. These difficulties usually show themselves in the form of the interview or recruiting process. Proposition 1A is based on shared occurrences and talks based on the work that occurred before the work has started.

*PROPOSITION 1B:* Taking family along on an international assignment is difficult. This is in regards to spousal job placement and children's educational issues. Proposition 1B is also based on shared experiences and talks that occurred based on the work before the work was started.

*PROPOSITION 2:* When the company/community invests resources into the well-adapted expatriate, that investment has a good return. This proposition is based on the literature.

*PROPOSITION 3:* Breach of Psychological contract, hitting the glass-ceiling, or 'out-of-sight-out-of-mind' syndrome (being forgotten by Headquarters'), or finding out that you no longer have a place when you return from International assignment, can all lead to ultimate feelings of alienation. These feelings can ultimately result in job resignation from the company. This proposition is based on the literature.

*PROPOSITION 4:* Those women who have been on international assignment will advance to senior executive positions faster and more often than those who have not. This proposition is based on the literature.

## 4. METHODOLOGY

### 4.1. Data Acquisition

The choice of data collection consists of qualitative research as regards the interviewing, selection and relocation processes for international assignment. This consists of pilot interviews with three willing participants who worked in the HR, Research and Global Relocation departments in global corporations. All have had experience in expatriate assignments. Primary qualitative research as regards women who have been on international assignment selected because they can give an educated opinion on the possible reasons behind the facts – education, lack of support, spousal placements, etc.

These reasons will vary in different countries and cultures due to varying laws and approaches for both the human resources and the expatriates. The processes and packages vary according to varying industries. Some, like scientific research or oil and gas seem to be more generous in their packages, but are also much more male dominated fields. There is not a suggested correlation between the two.

Interviews were conducted and open-ended questions were sent out electronically to the participating female expatriates that could be found via extensive networking and who were willing to participate within the time allotted. This networking included contacting business acquaintances within familiar networks (such as economic development and oil and gas) to request any female executive contacts with international assignment experience that might be willing to assist in said research. Initially, this result was not what one had hoped for. However, given time, this network began to create solutions. One woman that could not assist, introduced another woman who could. One gentleman forwarded the message to ten women, of whom several responded and sent on even further introductions to cohorts. Two local female expatriates were contacted, neither of which found it suitable to respond, due to respectfully acknowledging that they did not fit exactly the criteria. A search for more local female expatriates within the network continues, but does not fit within the allotted time frame. Official requests through linkedin female expatriate groups and pages were given, resulting in only one additional respondent. There were thirteen respondents in the female expatriate category and three respondents for the HR pilot interviews.

A total of thirteen respondents agreed to participate in the data collection for the female expatriate interview questions. Individual respondents have been coded as E1 – E13, according to the corresponding interview or narrative. As per the female expatriates, six of the respondents were interviewed. Two via Skype, two via mobile phone, and two agreed to face-to-face interviews in the United States. All interviews have been recorded, and all recordings have been fully transcribed. The interviews, being that the respondents were able to speak freely, lasted on average anywhere between 30 minutes and one hour. This resulted in transcribed data that ranged in length from 7 – 15 pages. The transcribed data is what was used for the analysis. Due to the geographic nature and scheduling conflicts of upper management (work, civic and family), six of these respondents (50%) were unable to be interviewed but were able to respond to the questions themselves electronically, thus changing said interview data into narrative data. The narrative data ranged in length from 2-5 pages. One of the respondents requested her preference to write her answers as opposed to being interviewed, as she felt that she was able to communicate more effectively through writing. The narratives were sent out and retrieved this summer, the interviews were conducted throughout from late May until early August.

The expatriate interviews and narratives consisted of 4 sections: the selection and interview process, differences and family, training and support, repatriation and advancement. These sections represent the four major challenges in a chronological basis that a female expatriate will have to overcome as per the stated propositions as it regards international assignment. These were divided into 10+ open-ended questions, which began by obtaining demographic details of the assignment(s) – length, countries and professional field, and were then brought to a conclusion by determining the differences in the interaction of the home office, asking about the perceived connection to international assignment and career advancement opportunities, and a request for an “anything goes” form of process improvement. These questions concern the *additional why's* – educational institutions, spousal job placement, cross-cultural training, psychological contract (or lack thereof), support abroad, language training, etc.- as well as ideas on how to improve the process

The interview questions for the expatriate interviews were presented in an open-ended fashion where possible. Once these were answered, then the more specific questions were asked if they qualified – given the circumstance.

1. Tell me about the selection process

This question was posed in order to determine if there were any outright differences in the selection processes that stood out in the expatriates' memory.

a. How long was/is the period of international assignment?

This question was initially designed for demographic data purposes only. However, when respondents began talking, a pattern of how some corporations treated their expatriates by suddenly changing their assignment times also began to emerge.

b. What is the country of assignment?

This question was asked for demographic purposes, as well as to display the psychic distance in relation to pre-departure training.

c. What was your reason for wanting to go on international assignment?

This question shows the expatriates motivation behind the assignment

2. Please explain any outstanding memories or features of the interview process.

This is another way of asking the introductory question, in case it was misunderstood.

3. Was your relationship/family status inquired about during the interview process?

This is a direct question, and this action is illegal in most countries in the world. The respondents are not from only these countries, and it is interesting to illustrate the cultural difference and challenges faced here.

a. If you are married, what kind of assistance was offered to your spouse, if any?

This question is asked in order to gain insight into the availability of spousal job placement, or spousal assistance of any kind within the country of assignment.

4. Did you feel any kind of limitations to your request for international assignment?

This question was posed to determine if any obstacles were inherently felt during the process, and if so, which ones.

5. How were you prepared for the international assignment?

a. What kind of orientation programmes were arranged prior to departure?

b. Did you receive pre-departure cross-cultural training?

This grouping of questions; The first being open-ended, and the following two being more specific in the event that they were not covered in the answering of the original question, are presented here in order to determine what the corporations are doing to prepare their expatriates, and protect their investments.

6. What support were you offered while you were abroad?

This question is here to determine the level of local support offered by the corporation. This is in keeping with the determination of preparing the well-adapted expatriate.

- a. If you have school aged children whose education needed to be considered when abroad, please answer the following:
  - i. What kind of educational considerations (if any) were given?
  - ii. Was additional language training provided?
  - iii. Childcare?

This grouping of questions is posed in order to determine the level of support or referrals/considerations given by corporations to the female expatriate with children. This is in hopes of showing whether the corporation truly takes the family needs into consideration. It also serves as a platform to allow the expatriate to discuss the family issues in tandem with the international assignment.

- b. Was/Is there an expatriate neighbourhood in which you resided?

This question was posed for demographic purposes.

- c. Was/is there local support offered while abroad?

This is a rephrase of the same question earlier, in case it was misunderstood.

7. How did the home office make you feel?

- a. Did the Home office keep in close contact while you were abroad?

These questions are asked in order to associate a direct response to whether or not the respondent feels that they were forgotten or appreciated while they were on international assignment.

- b. Did you feel comfortable upon your return to the home office?

This question regards the repatriation strategy, and serves as a tool to get the expatriate discussing their return to the home office.

8. Do you now feel it easier to advance, after having done an international assignment?

This question poses the connection to career advancement and international assignment in the expatriates opinion and experience.

9. How would you improve this process?

This final question was asked in a way that anything was possible. This is important because it gives valuable insight into the biggest problems that the expatriate themselves see, with a creative solution.



One of the pilot interviews was conducted via telephone interview. The other two pilot interviews were conducted via Skype. These interviews have been recorded and fully transcribed. The data analysis is based on the transcribed pilot interviews and is included where specifically marked. The pilot interviews are coded as P1 – P3 in cases in which it is necessary to code to the corresponding interviews. The pilot interviews were conducted in May and August, due to respondents' schedules.

These questions varied slightly from the expatriate interview questions due to the fact, that there is a stated point of view difference and the recruiting processes and expat experiences were known to vary vastly between these three corporations. These questions, as regards the Human Resources and Global relocation personnel which are interviewing and processing those wishing to go on expat assignments were created in order to determine any existing biases (glass ceiling) or selection criteria – marital status, age (will she get pregnant & the project put on hold?), or legitimate concerns which corporations hold when recruiting women for international assignment.

1. How long have you worked in Human Resources, processing candidates for international assignment?

This question gives insight into the background of the respondent.

2. What have you done to shortlist candidates?
3. What were the top qualifying characteristics that set expatriate candidates apart?

These questions were added because when inquiring into the selection process, shortlisting for international assignment is an important part of the process. Having this information regarding qualification for assignment will aid in future understanding.

4. What about women – Any difference in the process?

This question was posed for the purpose of discovering if there were any differences in the recruiting processes as it regards women, for any reason whatsoever that would be freely and openly discussed.

5. Have there been concerns about sending women on international assignment?

If yes, please answer the following:

- a. Were these safety, political, or cultural related concerns?
- b. Were these concerns related to the duration of the assignment?
- c. Were these concerns related to family or perceived issues?

This set of questions were posed in the hopes of discovering why women might not be sent into a particular country, field of industry, or abroad at a certain time, for a certain amount of time or at a certain age.

6. What about selecting women – are there problems in any particular areas there?

This question is posed as a more direct way of inquiring into the selection process and biases.

7. Are there additional expenses for expatriates with accompanying families?

a. What are they?

b. Are these expenses a justifiable reason for choosing another candidate?

This grouping of questions was posed as a way of trying to gain some insight as to the financial justification and limitations of the expatriate assignment, and what might be considered excessive versus justifiable. This question is written in such a way as to make the respondent feel more comfortable with the interview, and not as if they should be on the defense.

8. What types of expat support at home and abroad have been offered from your firm, which you know of?

This question was posed as a way of determining the investment into the well adapted expatriate by the home corporation and to get these representatives speaking about their opinions on the matter.

9. How would you recommend more women be able to be recruited for international assignment, in upper level management positions?

This question was asked in order to gain insight into the main thesis topic. It has the potential for a multi-faceted response based both in the pragmatic and creative solution to gaining more women into international assignment.

10. Do you see a connection between CEO posts and international assignments?

This question was posed to gain the clear perspective of human resource due to the career advancement proposition and to be able to compare it to the expatriates perspective.

11. How would you improve this process?

This question, much like when it was posed for the expatriates interview, was posed in a way that anything could be done, in order to gain a clear and concise insight into what was seen as the largest difficulty to overcome and achieve pragmatic and creative solutions to overcoming these obstacles.

Thank you for your time!

Some of the research and data acquisition limitations are as follows:

Thirteen respondents worldwide are not deemed as enough to gain a solid perspective on female expatriatism in upper management and the benefits or obstacles as a whole. Due to privacy concerns, and in many cases, an inability to speak about corporate practices, many of those contacted refused to respond or never replied despite the fact that corporate anonymity was guaranteed.

Gathering accurate statistical data in the time allotted with the resources at hand proved extremely difficult. Calls to the United States Bureau of Labor reinforced said limitations. The International Labor Comparisons office does not have statistical information on female expatriates and thesis author was eventually referred to an article author as regards production and offshoring, in order to request stated statistical data on female expatriates entering and exiting the United States of America as a last resort due to the fact that even the International Labor Comparisons office is being formally disbanded and the data set is apparently such a small group, the data is unavailable. Said author was never available to be contacted, despite many messages that were left.

The qualitative data acquired is in some cases, though reliable can be different. Meaning that it can be changed by cultural perception. There can be three respondents with identical positions within the same company, sent to the same country, given identical experiences and the perceived outcome will be entirely different.

#### **4.2. Data Analysis Model**

The combined data acquired from the two groups has resulted in 124 pages of transcribed interview and narrative data, which was then categorised thematically and analysed accordingly.

According to Stakes methodology (1995), this is a collective case study consisting of multiple forms of information inflow such as; expatriate interviews, expatriate narratives, Human Resource pilot interviews and a search of the relevant literature.

The case study will then be cross case analysed in order to conduct a thorough thematic pattern search.

The analysis of this data was expected to result in a *thick description* (Quinlan 2011, p.420) of the problem described by those closest to it – in a way in which clear solutions would be found.

Each respondent interview was transcribed exactly, given a corresponding respondent number (E1-E13 or P1-P3) and dual copies were printed. If a narrative was provided, it was coded with a corresponding respondent number and double copies were printed. One of each of these copies was then placed into a file in case a hard copy was needed for authentication or verification purposes at a later date. The respondents were also separated according to type (expatriate or pilot) as the questions varied.

The second printed copy of both interviews and narratives of both types were then scanned for pertinent information. The length of these varied from 2 pages to 26 pages. Responses to questions, frustrations remarked on as well as ideas for further improvement on the process were then marked, highlighted or colour coded accordingly.

Thesis author used flip chart paper to write out thematic interview questions, and was able to then copy the pertinent answers onto the flip chart under the question per each respondent code number. Photographs of this process were also taken in case of a need for verification or authentication purposes at a later date as well.

Respondent answers were then logged into a yes or no category in some cases, or charted by experience, or in some case a quote was included in the thesis to add the appropriate emphasis that could not otherwise be shown statistically. Please take note that in the graphs, the total is 99%.

The Qualitative data will contribute to the entire theoretical framework as a whole, and will be the sole approach to answering propositions 1A & 1B.

All notes and analysis have been carefully marked, photographed (where necessary- the flip-board paper on which the thematic codifying was initially written out has been photographed for posterity and for backup, as well as the noted digital photographs kept on hand if they are requested) and all interviews have been recorded via either a battery operated handheld device or iPhone . Any and all electronic

confirmations have also been documented. Noted electronic confirmations consist of typed agreements from each respondent to be either interviewed or to answer the questions in narrative form. Electronic communications have been saved for documentation and verification purposes in the necessity of request.

## 5. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The following propositions were set out as the fundamental building blocks to the initial case study research of this thesis.

Demographic Table 2		
Country of Assignment		
Bahrain	1	8%
Brazil	1	8%
France	1	8%
Germany	1	8%
Hong Kong	1	8%
Japan	1	8%
Korea	1	8%
Singapore	1	8%
UK	1	8%
USA	3	23%
Zurich, Switzerland	1	8%
Country of disembarkation		
Brazil	1	8%
France	1	8%
India	1	8%
Iran	1	8%
Mexico	1	8%
USA	8	61%

Professional Areas		
Management	4	31%
Science	3	23%
Technical	3	23%
Finance	2	13%
Real Estate	1	8%

*Table 1. Expatriate Countries and Professions*

Table 1 (above) demonstrates the locations where the expatriates used in this thesis research were sent abroad on assignment and from which countries they originated as well. Their areas of expertise are listed at the bottom. These are deemed as important to give insight into the cultural basis of the research as well as any perceptual differences that may have occurred from similar experiences, due to varying backgrounds.

Hardship Differential		
Bahrain		10%
Brazil		10%
Finland		0%
France		0%
Germany		0%
India	Kolkata	25%
India	Mumbai	20%
India	New Dehli	20%
India	other	25%
Japan		0%
Korea		5%

Mexico	Guadalajara	10%
Mexico	Mexico City	15%
Mexico	Other	0%
Mexico	Tijuana	5%
Mexico	Veracruz	0%
Singapore		0%
UK		0%
USA		0%
Zurich, Switzerland		0%

*Table 2. Hardship Differential*

(US Department of State 2013)

These Hardship countries, seen in table 2, are calculated according to an assessment made regarding each countries health, security, climate, housing, isolation, educational proficiency and local conditions. (International Civil Service Commission, 1997, pg.4) This 1997 explanation is the original publication of the hardship scheme, however due to the age of the reference, a 2012 UN revision of the publication was found which backs up the facts stated. This definition now includes the availability of basic amenities. (UN 2012) These are then transferred into a percentage rating that ranges from 0% - 30%, on the scale 0% being the least of the hardship countries (i.e; Switzerland and Finland) and 30% being the highest. These percentages then correlate on an every 5% basis to an alpha-coding which then indicates the degree of additional payment made for international postings in these areas. The percentage rates seen above came into effect on the 11th of August 2013 as per the US department of State (2013). The United States is not seen on this chart due to the fact that the data issued from the US department of State. This chart is shown, not only as a visual aid from respondent P3's statement that the hardship differential is used in conjunction when creating expatriate packages, but also to examine the broad ranging psychic distances of the expatriate respondents and their Countries of disembarkation and Countries of assignment.

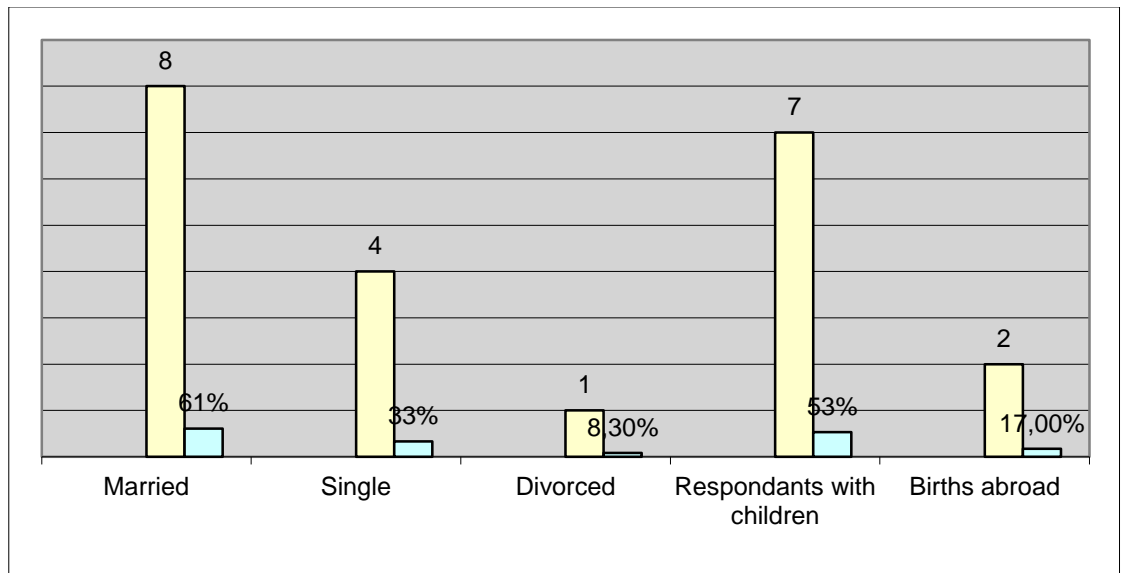


When it comes to the respondents reasons for wanting to go on international assignment; two, 16% with agreed to apply for assignment with their spouses; three, 23% went on assignment for career experience; one, 8% decided to apply for international assignment for excitement abroad; and two, 16% thought there would be better resources abroad; leaving five, 38% of the female expatriate respondents that embarked on international assignment because they were chosen and ready to travel.

### 5.1. Proposition 1A

Proposition 1A suggests that being accepted for a management position on international assignment is difficult when the matter of family comes into question. These difficulties usually show themselves in the form of the interview or recruiting process.

The qualitative questions concerning the selection process, the interview process, bringing the matter of family into question and perceived limitations are taken into consideration in the research of this proposition. All respondents' demographic data is displayed.



*Figure 1. Respondents Marital Status*

As can be seen in figure 1, four (33%) of the female respondents have stated their marital status as single. Eight (61%) were married, one couple (8.3%) had an older

child when they moved to the country of assignment, seven respondents (53%) had children, five of these couples (38%) had small children when the assignment started and two of the women (17%) had children in the country of assignment.

One (8.3%) of the respondents was single, but had two small children when the international assignment began. This was an interesting case, as the time of assignment began as only the three-month duration of the children's summer vacation, but was then extended to several years.

Although 66.4% of the respondents were either already married or had children, or both when going into the selection process for international assignment, none of them clearly stated that it seemed to be any kind of obstacle for either the company or themselves. To the contrary in some cases, take for example, where the MNC readily flew the expatriate or the children in for visits.

The pilot interviews also showed that although trailing spouses and families do incur additional time and expense, it is not a common justification for choosing another candidate. Therefore, this proposition has been disproven as it relates to this thesis.

## 5.2. Proposition 1B

Proposition 1B suggests that taking family along on international assignment is difficult. This is in regards to spousal job placement and children's educational issues.

Two of the pilot interviews, 2/3 state that spousal job placement does not occur and one, 1/3 state that they do everything possible to do so. This is clearly a case of the industry in which the expatriate is employed in. In this case, research is the industry, which works hard to achieve spousal job placement.

Respondents E6 and E2 both have interesting and varying tales of bringing their spouses and small children along and needing placement. Only these two respondents, 17% were able to achieve spousal job placement. One of these expatriate husbands was granted international assignment in the same country of assignment as his wife, within a separate corporation (they applied simultaneously). Five of these male-

trailing spouses had to find gainful employment on their own as they did not have work visas, and one male trailing spouse had taken early retirement.

Respondent E6 had an 18-month-old baby and a dual career family situation to deal with when the workplace told her that her husband could take a leave of absence. In her interview, she states that “ At first they told me there was no job for my husband and he could take a leave of absence, I stood firm on we both work, or they don’t get me. I knew I was the right one for the job, and so did they, so I definitely negotiated with leverage!” Needless to say, spousal placement was accomplished before the position was accepted, in this situation.

Respondent E2, a career expatriate, has a spouse that was hired at the same institution simultaneously. However in this case, E2 has more experience in her field, but her spouse was offered a higher salary. This is what she had to say about it; “ My spouse was offered a similar job to mine. In our case it was a double hire opportunity since he does similar science as me. He was a couple of years behind me in the (country of disembarkation). In (country of assignment) he was offered the same position and salary as me. They insisted that it was ok for women to make less than their husbands. At the end after proving that I had a couple of years of more experience and 2 tenure positions offers (in the country of disembarkation) I was offered a tiny bit more.”

Respondent P2 states that they go to great lengths to make the spouse feel wanted, and to help place the spouse in a suitable job. ‘...if you recruit a woman there’s the husband to think about, so. And we have to do it in a way that it wasn’t obvious to the spouse that they were, we didn’t want to make them feel like they were second class citizens. That we were only interested in the woman and the husband was kind of baggage. We didn’t want to give that impression whatsoever, so we basically treated the spouse the exact same way as the woman that we were interviewing.’

In response to the question why these expatriates chose to go on assignment in the first place, respondent E6 sums it up beautifully when she says, “It is the checklist they never tell you about.”

### 5.3.Proposition 2

Proposition 2 states that when the company/community invests resources into the well-adapted expatriate, that investment has a good return. This return on investment for the global corporation is extremely important. As Respondent P3 states that an expatriate costs on average, three times their annual salary, while on international assignment. With that heavy of an investment, it would seem beneficial to give that employee every tool for a successful venture that they could possibly need.

5	38%	Cultural Training
8	61%	No Cultural Training
4	31%	Language Training
9	68%	No Language Training
3	23%	Local Support
10	76%	No Local Support
3	23%	Work Process Training
10	76%	No Work Process Training

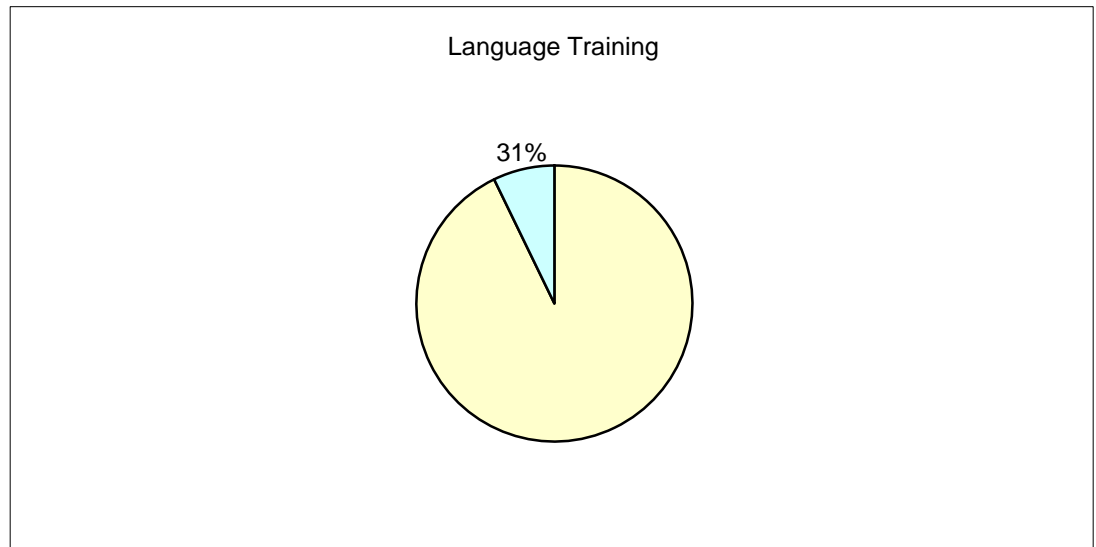
*Table 3. Expatriate Training and Support*

#### 5.3.1 Training

Training - lingual, cross-cultural or even so much as how to navigate the neighbourhood and transit systems, local support and community programmes can help to eliminate some of the stress of culture-shock and lead to a happier, more

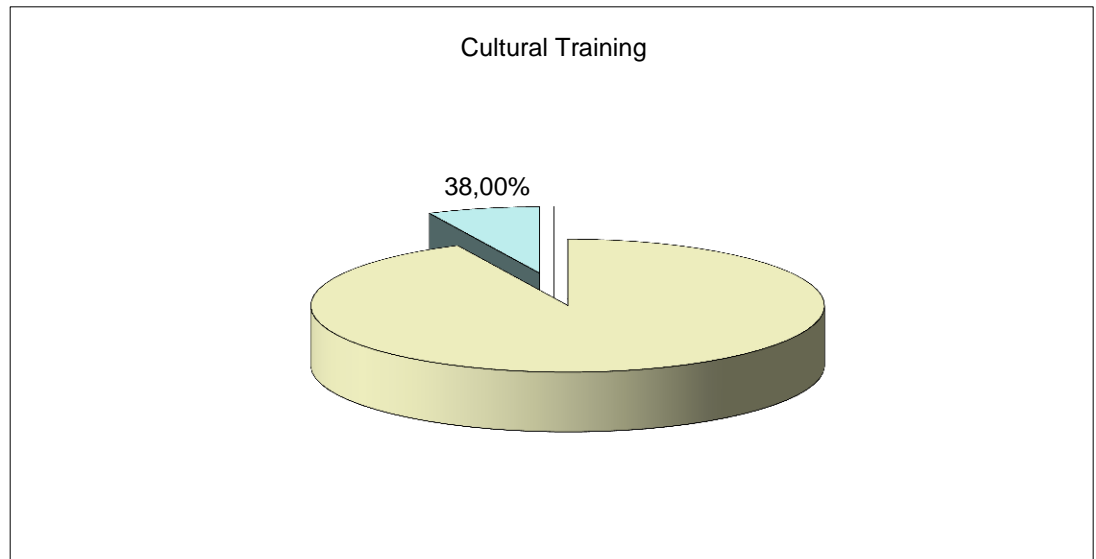
productive management. It has been mentioned by the interviewees as well that many of the companies HR policies was to incorporate cross-cultural training with the language training pre-departure, as well as formal training in the cultural aspects of meeting and business etiquette in the country of assignment. Table 3 shows a comparison of the expatriate respondents pre-departure training and local support.

One of the pilot interviews, 33% was a huge proponent of all training, both pre-departure and during the assignment.



*Figure 2. Pre-departure Linguistics training*

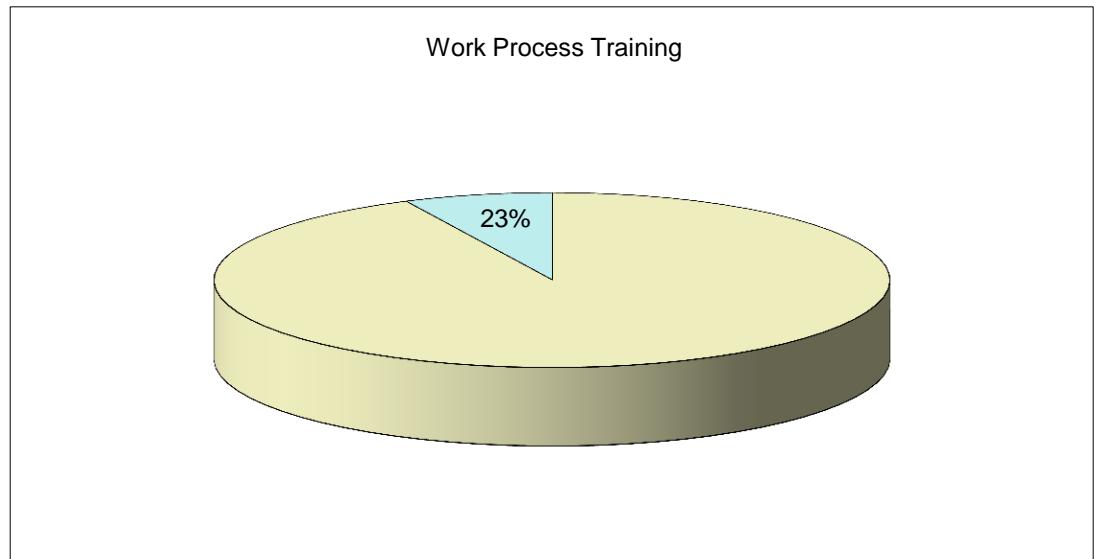
As seen in figure 2 (above), four respondents, 31% received linguistics training prior to international assignment. Nine respondents, 68% did not receive any pre-departure language training. This can be attributed to previous linguistic knowledge, as was the case with E10 or those who studied English and then transferred to an English speaking country, as was the case with E4 and E8. Several respondents received no training at all, due to corporations lacking the essential experience in international relocations.



*Figure 3. Pre-departure Cultural Training*

Five respondents, 38% stated that they received adequate cultural training prior to embarking on international assignment. Eight respondents, 61% did not have pre-departure training. This can be seen in figure 3. This differential is of particular importance when sending expatriates to an assignment in a country that bears a large psychic distance from their own.

One explanation for this low ratio in both the linguistic and cultural training is that several of the respondents had previous knowledge of either the language, or had travelled extensively enough to have a perceived awareness of the destination country's culture. Therefore, the corporation deemed the expatriate fit to fly without further expense. This was not always the case, as at least two of the corporations the respondents worked for, offered no such training.



*Figure 4. Work Process Training*

Figure 4 shows that only three of the respondents, 23% out of thirteen cite pre-departure workplace training. Said training includes business ethics, management and meeting practices and etiquette, specialisation training, and economic-socio-political environment. Ten respondents, 77% had not received any additional workplace training prior to international assignment.

Four, 38 % of the respondents stated that they had been given inadequate or non-existent pre-departure preparation for the international assignment. Two, 15% of the respondents said that they had previous language or cultural training, which they were able to apply to their assignments, and the remaining seven respondents, 53%, stated that they were completely satisfied with the language, cultural, ethical and business training offered. Berlitz language schools are the most common training centre mentioned.

Respondent E3 was very pleased with the plethora of training options offered by the global corporation that sent her on international assignment, stating: "...they prepared you to be in a position to learn in that country... In every way; in customs, in business, in every category that you would need to function as a businessperson in that country.... They wanted you to be able to do a good job and they gave you all the tools you could possibly need to get there."

### 5.3.2 Taxation

These company-invested resources also extend into taxation in some circumstances. Several respondents mentioned their American company's willingness to incorporate assistance with the expatriates' tax-filings while they were abroad, and upon their return, until their tax status returned back to normal. One third of the pilot interviews had similar concerns with expatriate payments and taxation while the expatriates were on international assignment.

Upon further investigation into this phenomenon, it was discovered that the American Internal Revenue Service has a few outspoken things to say about expatriate taxation. First and foremost, the Internal Revenue Service, as per the operator number 0198734 with which the phone conversation was conducted on 26 June 2013, explained that the term *expatriate* as the Internal Revenue Service sees it, is a person, who goes to work or live abroad, which surrenders (or gives up) their American citizenship while doing so. This definition of expatriate is not the definition that this thesis, or those respondents who have contributed to this thesis, follow. As regards this thesis, the term expatriate is used as someone who is sent abroad to live or work in a country not of his or her birth for a period of longer than three months.

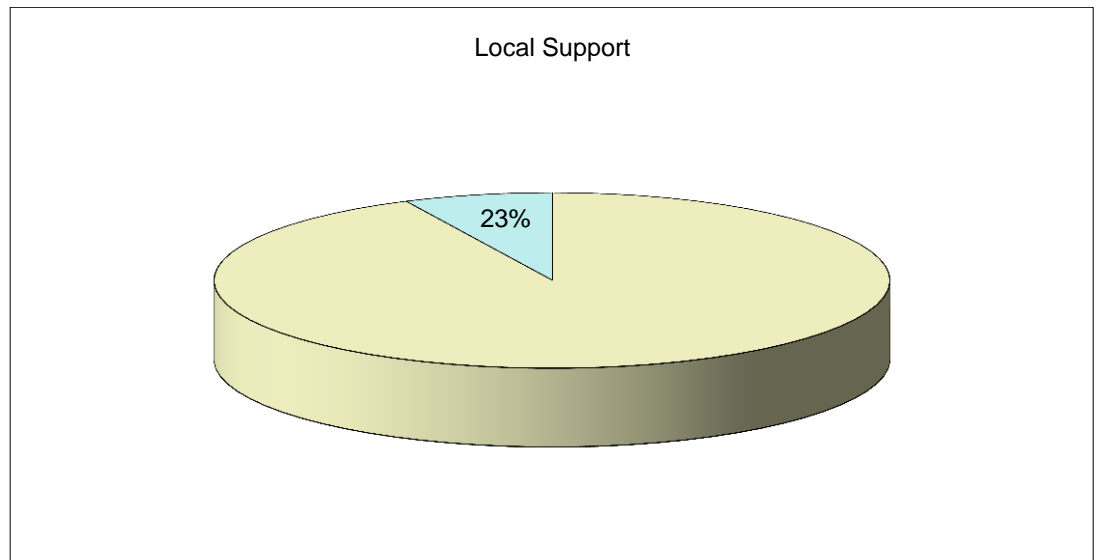
As per the taxation year 2013, the American taxation policy for Americans working abroad is simplified as follows: All foreign income must be reported on the U.S. tax forms. (Most commonly, 10-40) There is a foreign income exception of \$95,000 per annum. If said annual foreign income for the year falls under this \$95,000 (this changes annually, the limit can be found from the taxation forms on the government website.) Subtract (reverse) the total amount of foreign income in US dollars from the \$95,000 on the tax form and it is your deduction total. This is only if said employee has been abroad for the entire year. If it has been less than a year, then there is a foreign tax credit form, which must be filled out and applied for. (Pers. Comm. IRS respondent 0198734, 2013)

### 5.3.3 Expatriate Communities

There are already many expatriate communities that exist. These are not necessarily formal communities, however expatriates have a tendency to gravitate toward each



other, regardless of the country or cultural environment with which they find themselves. These communities create excellent resource pools of local support for newly arriving expatriates and their families. As stated in some of the respondents interviews, these expatriate groups created welcome baskets or something of the like, containing pertinent brochures and literature about local shops, libraries, auto repair, food fairs, maps, doctors and cultural happenings.



*Figure 5. Local Support Abroad*

The above figure 5 illustrates that three respondents, 23% out of thirteen stated that they had received some kind of local support that assisted in their adaptation and adjustment process. The local support in question includes formal and informal expatriate communities, local community services, welcome services, employed and referred migration services, workplace mentors and the like. The other 77%, ten respondents, did not feel that they received any local support aside from (or including in some cases) relocation services that carried over into the destination country.

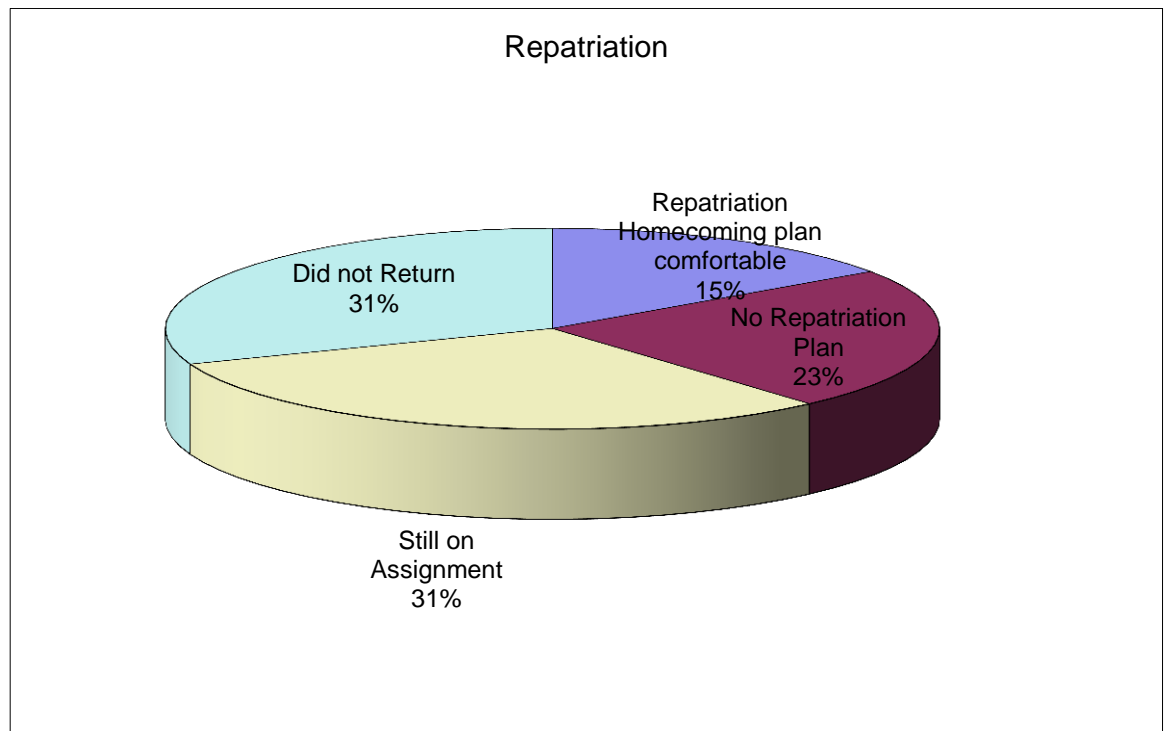
In more formal circumstance, an expatriate community not only serves as a community of people, but also entire neighbourhoods. Where the expatriate and their families not only reside but commune, indulge in free-time activities such as swimming or Western sports, shop and worship in some cases. This type of full-blown expatriate communities are mostly known in the Eastern countries, such as Asian and very often in United Arab Emirates, where Western expatriates serve as a large ratio of populace.

### 5.4. Proposition 3

Proposition 3, Breach of Psychological contract; Hitting the glass-ceiling, or ‘out-of-sight-out-of-mind’ syndrome (being forgotten by Headquarters’), or finding out that you no longer have a place when you return from international assignment, can all lead to ultimate feelings of alienation. These feelings can ultimately result in job resignation from the company.

The glass ceiling, although still a very real and intricately complex web for women in the workplace to navigate, by the time a female executive arrives at the position within a global corporation where she is able to perform an international assignment, she has presumably, broken through the glass ceiling.

33.2% of the female expatriate respondents mentioned some form of breach of psychological contract when discussing repatriation and return to their former job or home office. This is a positive correlation between the results of not only the expatriate data, but also the pilot interviews. A staggering 23% of the expatriates interviewed stated that there was no repatriation plan by the corporation.



### *Figure 6. Repatriation*

The possibility of a connection between the length of said international assignment and ‘out –of-sight-out-of-mind’ syndrome or being forgotten by headquarters does arise. The respondents stated initial assignment terms ranging anywhere from three months to six years. The repatriation pie chart shown above in figure 6, illustrates the variances of the expatriates, which are showing themselves more drastically at this stage in the process. Three of the respondents’ international assignments, 25% are considered on-going, with no time limit, and one is a permanent transfer. Chew and Debowski state a loss of visibility, as a common fear among those on international assignment, or even employees that work away from the Headquarters. (2008, 10) It is also stated, quite clearly that this loss of visibility will also result in a total absence from the screenings for available jobs in the human resource databases. Utilising an advocate of some sort to make sure that the expatriate, or the expatriates communications themselves, may be able to rectify that situation and make sure that said expatriate maintains visibility in the jobs screenings databases. (Chew & Debowski 2008, 12) Respondent P3 that although the repatriation strategy may not be its best, the corporation does attempt to keep in contact with the expatriate while on assignment by offering an ‘annual home leave’ package so that the expatriate can return to the locale of home office and stay connected with cohorts, take meetings, network, have a party, etc. This home leave is voluntary for the expatriate, so it is stated that more often than not, what happens is, the expatriate takes a vacation instead of staying connected.

### **5.5.Proposition 4**

Proposition 4 states that those women who have been on international assignment will advance to senior executive positions faster and more often than those who have not.

The results of this question are clear; Twelve out of thirteen, 91% of the expatriate respondents, and 100% of the pilot interviewees saw a positive connection to career advancement and international assignments; Albeit, many of these connections were stated to be in companies outside of the company that the international assignment was initialised with. Either lateral movement or slow movement within the company,

rare advancement initialised by the international assignment, or new companies that are hunting for the expatriates newly acquired skill sets which offer the opportunity for career advancement in a new company, field or even industry. This is a proven positive association for international assignment and career advancement for this proposition as it relates to the qualitative data pertaining to this thesis.

Table 4 (below) shows the ratio of the career advancement connection as it pertains to the female expatriate respondents with regards to the repatriation strategy.

<b>Job Advancement &amp; International Assignment Correlation</b>		
Job Advancement within the Company	10	76%
Job Advancement in another Company	2	15%
No Job Advancement	1	8%

*Table 4. Job Advancement and Assignment*

## 5.6. Pilot Interviews

As regards the first question: How long have you worked in Human Resources, processing candidates for international assignment? One respondent had more than twenty years of experience to offer; one respondent had been in the field for just over six years and another respondent did not answer this question. It is also interesting to note that 100% of the pilot respondents had been on international assignments themselves before embarking on their career paths processing international candidates.

When it came to shortlisting candidates, the common answer among respondents was the skill set that was required for the assignment. The qualifying characteristics setting candidates apart, according to respondents, depends more upon the actual industry. Leadership skills in business and finance are seen as qualifying characteristics, while skills self-initiative and even 'lone-wolves' are identified as qualifying characteristics in scientific research.

Two of the respondents, 2/3rds admitted to differences in the process when it came to female expatriates. One of these respondents, states that the global corporation they worked for actively recruited women when it was discovered that there was a deficit in the scientific research department and that there were more women coming into that specific field with the necessary Ph.D.'s. The other respondent holds the perspective that there are so few women in upper management positions in the financial industry, that female expatriates are a rarity and that is the difference in the process.

No general concerns were stated by any of the pilot interview respondents as regards sending women in international assignment. Respondent P1 raises safety concerns over sending women abroad to countries that might be considered dangerous to women in positions of authority.

All of the pilot interview respondents, 100% agree that there is no problem in selecting women. Interestingly, one respondent further replied that engaging women to continue to apply and maintain visibility might be a difficulty they are having because they have been unsuccessful at advertising availability in a easily visible and regularly accessible database for their employees.

When taking the additional expense for expatriates with accompanying families into consideration, there is 100% agreement that yes, of course there is a drastic increase in the expense of an accompanying family to the global corporation, but no, it is not a justifiable reason for choosing another candidate. Not only is this considered bias, and it is illegal, but it is also the case that both male and female expatriates have accompanying families and this is an expense that corporations are accustomed to taking on in order to gain the expertise of the employee that they need to fulfill that particular purpose. The exact breakdown of these additional expenses remains unexplored.

The types of support offered from the home company and abroad, as far as the pilot interview respondents were concerned, were by far the broadest ranging responses. These range from University language training and local support in the form of arranging a buddy system in the new working environment between people with a perceived similar cultural background, in order to better facilitate an explanation –

understanding of local fare and possibly appealing happenings, to full-on pre-departure linguistic, cultural, ethic, and criminal behavior and safety training. All respondents, 100% agree that this training and support is necessary in one form or another.

When asked their recommendation on how to gain more women for international assignment, the responses varied as much as the respondents themselves. P1 suggests a personal development plan. P2 suggests learning all the parts of the international company with which the person is employed and to apply for assignments in the different areas. P3 recommends that women be a bit more aggressive in seeking the position and more confident in their ability to carry out the assignment when applying.

## 5.7. Improving the Process

The final question to be answered by the expatriates interviews are; How to improve the expatriation process. These responses provide valuable insight into the weaknesses of the expatriation and repatriation process themselves, and how by perhaps only minimal efforts on the part of the corporation, the process itself could become much more effective for both expatriate and supporting MNC. Some of the ideas were to implement childcare, improve the local support programmes, lengthen the time of assignment in order to better facilitate the learning curve, implement a mentoring programme and work with the companies in order to make repatriation more comfortable and career advancement more forthcoming.

### 5.7.1 Childcare

The implementation of free and trustworthy childcare is a universal concept with who's power of simplicity and efficiency many countries and corporations already know is in their grasp. The concept is simple; provide childcare for the children of the expatriate families in order to minimise the work-family conflict of said expatriate and gain more productivity from the investment placed into expatriate. Many local Universities, colleges, professional schools and the like are training health care professionals and childcare workers who need experience in the field. In the early

stages of a childcare programme, these educational resources can easily be utilised in order to create a win-win for both the corporation and the expatriate or educational institution and the student. The addition of either free or affordable childcare will enable working mothers to better care for their children close to the workplace, while focusing their attention on the task at hand. This is also a greater benefit to the corporation when it involves longer working hours and flexi-time, or linguistic and cultural challenges.

### 5.7.2 Lengthening of Assignments

Proposed lengthening is that of six months, if assignments are overlapping, to one year, if assignments are singular in nature. The lengthening of the assignment will facilitate time for the initial adaptation and training as well as a settling in period.

Interview respondent E3 stated that in some cases orientation was one to three days in total. It was a common consensus that in almost all cases as regards long term assignments, that it took approximately one year for the respondent to stop second guessing themselves, when it came to the host country culture or language, and for them to begin to feel comfortable and that they were finally starting to adapt. Due to this common length of time to adaptation, it seems reasonable that the expatriates could use an additional 6 months to a year for the longer term assignments in order to maintain higher productivity, especially in light of the fact that in most cases it took at least that long for them to learn their way around the system to begin with. Take for example, when an expatriate must learn for himself or herself how to work within or around the system to achieve an accomplishment for the workplace. Dependant upon the culture of the country and the psychic distance, this could potentially take a good amount of time. Respondent E3 had this to say:

“...this six months, you’re still accomplishing work, but not as much. So I think, well I know for a fact, my second and third years were my highest productivity years. Because I, I had figured it out. And you can get all the prior training in the world, but until you’re in the middle of it, it’s not going to run smoothly. You’re still going to do it – but you’re going to do it better a year from now. Because you’ve already done it a couple of times, then you get better. So, I think that the first year should be part of your training, and that,

then if you want three years out of somebody and that job you can do that. I also think you could rotate; you could have a progressive rotation. Where the existing person works with the incoming person for the last year, and that would speed it up even more. So then maybe you'd go to a three and a half year assignment."

This case in point can be further backed up by the literature, as Jenkins and Mockaitis (2010, 2696) briefly discuss the approximate six-month duration of culture shock when expatriates arrive in a new country. When discussing the results of their research, a correlation of ( $p < 0.05$ ) was found for this hypothesis, reiterating that the longer an expatriate was on assignment, the easier and more likely adaption would occur. (Jenkins & Mockaitis 2010, 2705)

Said lengthening of assignments can be further development by the addition of the following mentoring programme.

### **5.7.3 Mentoring Programme**

The mentoring programme has been suggested by 3 (or 25%) of the respondents. Two (16.6%) of the respondents are female expatriates, and one of the pilot interviews. Chew and Debowski (2008) suggest mentoring from the home corporation, via frequent contact with the expatriate and acting as more of an advocate in the expatriate's absence. In affect, reverse mentoring, comparatively speaking, to what is presented here; although, this approach works well as a repatriation strategy back into the home corporation when used in conjunction with career development.

### **5.7.4 Repatriation and the Corporation**

As stated previously, the literature cites a turnover of repatriates in the range of 20-25%. Depending on the position within the company, and type of business conducted, it has been stated that the cost of losing a repatriated employee could be a maximum of \$1.5 Million. (Chew & Debowski 2008, 4) When speaking about this issue to a the former risk manager for the Kenai peninsula borough school district in Alaska, it was



mentioned as well to not only take the blatant costs of a lost repatriated employee, but to always maintain the addition of the hidden costs of employee vacancies. Upon further enquiry, these hidden costs include that of lower productivity due to a lack of employee morality that can be attributed to longer than necessary vacancies that are resulting in additional duties for the other employees in order to keep productivity high until the position is filled. (House, J 2013)

As per the perceived psychological contract upon the expatriates' return to their home country and home office, many of the respondents found it preferable for the home office to implement a home coming opportunity package programme. Career development has been mentioned as a viable option for improvement throughout this qualitative case study and the applicable literature. Kreng and Huang incorporate a career development mechanism into their research which includes this precise step during the repatriation process of an expatriate, back into their home organisation. The last two steps in their process are to utilise the experiences and knowledge obtained abroad and to arrange a position as regards this new skill set (2009, 1498).

Respondents P1 and P2 both place tantamount emphasis on the need for a career development package for the repatriated expatriate. This could be begun, in theory months before the expatriate returns, and when they return, the employee could return to a mentor, where they learn a management position and have a placement waiting for them when a position that they are qualified for opens. In this way, the employee realises their value to the corporation, and does not take their newly acquired skill set elsewhere for fear of stagnating.

Although pragmatic about the realities of repatriation into a company, that the expatriate would no longer simply fit back into the formerly held position, respondent E10 was so satisfied with the way her repatriation was performed when she returned to her home office of the global corporation with which she worked, that this will be a suggestion for additional companies. Said global corporation realised that the expatriates had attained differing knowledge bases and skill subsets, and were readily willing to utilise these. Respondent E10 states that this particular corporation invested the time to discover the expatriates new skills and knowledge, and to place them into a position, which might be better suited to those needs upon their return.

Kreng and Huang define Repatriate Adaptation as 'the adaptive issue that arose for the expatriate personnel after their repatriation'.(2009, 1491) Global companies must take

a good long look at their repatriation processes in the workplace. Research and literature suggests this to be a large area of contention. It is suggested that when a global company takes the time and effort to put into place a proper system of repatriation, one that encourages career advancement within the company upon repatriation, or shortly thereafter. A system which can utilise the newly acquired talents from abroad, this will be seen as positive reinforcement for the advantages of, and the value seen on the expatriation for the company's benefit. (Chew & Debowski 2008)

## 5.8 Key Aspects of Female Expatriation and the Corporation

Perceptions as well as personal experiences vary. Add to this cultural differences and expectations, and an identical expatriate experience can be viewed as either a wonderful, career making life learning experience, or an unworthy stress-filled career setback that made the entire family unhappy.

Proposition 1A concerned difficulties that show themselves in the selection or interviewing process as regards the female expatriate candidate when the matter of family comes into question. The data from respondent interviews and narratives have disproven this proposition as false. This does not sync with the literature, which also states that gender stereotypes are still in affect (Culpan & Wright 2002, Selmer & Leung 2003, Fischlmayr & Kollinger 2010) and can be the basis for stated selection decisions. (Fischlmayr 2002)

Proposition 1B, concerning the difficulty of taking family along on international assignment, has been proven. As regards spousal job placement, both the respondent interviews and the literature (Kreng & Huang 2009, Fischlmayr & Kollinger 2010, Jenkins & Mockaitis, 2010) was in agreement that it is a difficulty.

Proposition 2, regarding company invested resources into a well adapted expatriate yielding a good return, through the respondent interviews, has been neither proven nor disproven. This could be due to an ineffectiveness of the open-ended questions for the pilot interviews or that only one respondent, P3, knew what the expatriate investment ratio was, and therefore what the expected Return on Investment (ROI) needed to exceed. The main literature on which this proposition was initially based

put the theory put forth that due to the fact maladjusted expatriates had been shown to return early from assignment, it made sense that a corporation could protect its investment into that expatriate by first offering pre-departure training. The better prepared the expatriate for the assignment, the better the chance of the assignment not terminating early and therefore the corporation could have a higher return on its initial investment. (Tanure, Barcellos & Fleury 2009) This theory is argued by other research in literature that says pre-departure training can actually have an adverse affect. This was later debated in their own research paper. This was later contributed to a diluted sample do to inadequate training in certain circumstances. (Jenkins & Mockaitis 2010) This argument against their own research due to is also backed-up by respondent E11's response as it pertains to dealing with a business who 'are looking out for me even though the company systematically isn't very mature when it comes to international relocations'.

The expatriate interview questions were aimed at the adaptation aspect. A correlation between training, local support and adaptation was shown through the repetitive mentioning of these topics in conjunction with the ability to get along easily, or the need for a mentoring programme, or the inability to understand anything even in a similar language, and the correlation between time of expatriate adaptivity and culture shock. The literature reviewed has no shortage of mention of the correlation between training and expatriate adaptation. (Caligiuri & Lazarova 2002, Howe-Walsh & Schyns 2010, Selmer & Leung 2003, Kreng & Huang 2009)

In both the qualitative data and the literature, one of the ways mentioned to improve a female expatriate's ability to perform on the job is to offer some sort of assistance in the home. Interview respondent E1 from India stated that this was a huge obstacle for her to overcome while on international assignment in the United States – that in India, assistance was offered in the home, to clean the home and help with cooking, child care, whatever was needed, and as a working woman she needs these things, although they are not offered in the States. The literature also mentions this in relation to female business expatriates in Korea, that they have access to inexpensive domestic help, which will lighten the workload of the business expatriate in order for them to better perform their work duties. (Selmer & Leung 2003, 1124)

Proposition 3, which discusses how a breach of psychological contract and feelings of alienation from the home company, can ultimately result in job resignation, has been

proven. 33.2% of the respondents mentioned some form of a breach of psychological contract from their own international assignments and 23% of the expatriates mentioned that there was no repatriation strategy at all. One of the respondents, 8% never made it that far, as they left their position with the company due to disillusionment while they on international assignment.

Hitting the glass ceiling is a topic that was not highly mentioned with the respondents. The consensus being that the reason the glass ceiling was rarely discussed is that these women are in the top areas of their chosen fields, and have therefore already worked hard and proven themselves, effectively breaking through the glass ceiling in order to have been in the position to have been chosen to go on international assignment in the first place.

As regards repatriation in the company, if it is not handled with a proper amount of care, as previously stated, the expatriate can rightfully feel as though they have been put aside and forgotten about completely. This stated lack of skill utilisation not only directly affects the expatriate herself, but can also have a longer reaching psychological effect on future expatriates in the form of prevention of application for or involvement in the international assignment process. Some of the reviewed literature mentions the possibility of the affect of poor repatriation on the expatriates' employment, stating that they will leave within 6 months of returning (Kreng & Huang 2009, Hamori and Koyuncu 2011, Parzefall 2008) and this in turn will affect future applicants, or lack thereof. (Chew & Debowski 2008)

With a 91% agreement ratio among expatriate respondents, and a 100% agreement ratio among pilot interviews proposition 4, that those women who have been on international assignment will advance to senior executive positions faster and more often than those who have not, has been proven via positive respondent response. This is by far the most substantially positive response to any of the presented propositions.

According to these respondents and the international human resource literature, there is a stated connection between international assignment and career advancement, although in most cases said career advancement is usually not 'home-grown' or within the same corporation that the international assignment was initially performed.

If global corporations, or MNC's are in fact, not taking advantage of the expatriates that they are themselves sending into the international field, then the question still

remains: why are these MNC's not getting the most out of their investment? These employees are valuable. Other corporations, the competition in some cases, surely see the value in these women and men and are recruiting them based on their skill set and the knowledge gained by their overseas assignments. So would it not then, be of even more benefit to the home company to create acceptable employee repatriation packages to enable a better, brighter future for both the expatriate and the corporation? Poor repatriation strategies are shown to not only lose good talent that has just returned from international assignment, but also serves as a strong deterrent from new applications for future assignments as well. (When one employee sees that a valuable employee has been long forgotten when not highly visible, that visible employee will surely remain highly visible).

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

### 6.1. Summary of Main Findings

The research question was: How can companies improve their processes in order to gain more women into international assignments?

The solutions to these challenges range from the simple to the overtly complex. Spousal job placement, or the ability to find a safe environment where these male trailing spouses feel needed and happy is of the utmost importance. Affordable, dependable, childcare within close proximity to the jobsite is an absolute must-have. Security in hardship countries, and pre-departure training will substantially increase the odds of a successful assignment. Due diligence when it comes to a repatriation strategy will keep a loyal employee working hard for the corporation that took such good care of her and her family.

Ideas for improvement range from an easily remediable childcare, to the one-stop bug free worldwide payment and taxation systems that have yet to be fully and readily available, to the more pragmatic mentoring and overlapping of assignment times to allow for adaptation and integration. The overlapping of assignment times to allow for mentoring programmes while abroad, as well as the implementation of a solid repatriation strategy in conjunction with a career development plan when the expatriate is returning to the home company is an effective corporate quadrilateral improvement plan.

The sub-research question was: What are the challenges that are currently preventing women from entering into international assignment?

According to the data collected, surprising though it may be, the initial selection process is not so much affected by the age or marital status of a female, but perhaps more by her hesitancy to apply. It seems that women have finally begun to overcome the biases that have for so long, stood strong against them in the workplace.

So what is preventing women from getting international assignments, and is this really contributing to a stated lack of females on boards of directors or in CEO posts? Finances are one deterrent. Currently, households run on a dual income, and in many cases, losing one income could mean disaster to a family. Maintaining the level of children's education could be another deterrent, as well as a much-appreciated job or extended family.

The challenges that female expatriates are facing when it comes to international assignment are gender stereotypes, male trailing spouses and spousal placement difficulties, childcare, dependency upon dual incomes, and a pre-existing glass ceiling further down the career ladder. Throughout the research conducted, the common thread is that the ratio of women in upper management or executive positions, is such that the low ratio of women on international assignment seems to mirror that disposition. Add to this, the dual income family and a lack of spousal job placement in many international assignments, and that creates an enormous barrier for any household that is dependent upon two incomes as opposed to one. Gender stereotypes, be them prevalent in the workplace or not, are still prevalent in society and at home. Male trailing spouses do not; in many cases feel comfortable playing the role of stay-at-home-father. This creates yet another enormous obstacle for the female expatriate who either overcomes, or overcompensates.

Although the very real possibility of incurring additional expense due to a trailing spouse and family, this is not a justification for selecting another candidate. The expatriate and pilot data shows that proposition 1A has been disproven.

Taking family along on International assignment is difficult. As it regards spousal job placement and children's educational issues, it is a common consensus that spousal job placement is difficult, if at all possible. Proposition 1B has been proven.

When the company/community invests resources into the well-adapted expatriate, that investment has a good return. The return on an expatriate's international assignment must exceed the investment by more than a margin. When one considers that the average investment into an expatriate assignment is on average, three times that person's annual income, said investment lays a heavy return expectation. Proposition 2 has been neither proven nor disproven.

Breach of Psychological contract; Hitting the glass-ceiling, or ‘out-of-sight-out-of-mind’ syndrome (being forgotten by Headquarters’), or finding out that you no longer have a place when you return from International assignment, can all lead to ultimate feelings of alienation. These feelings can ultimately result in job resignation from the company. Not only will the corporation bear the expense and loss of a valuable asset to the company, but it has been shown that career advancement occurs, usually when going to another position in another corporation. Proposition 3 has been proven.

The proposition stating the possibility that women who have been on international assignment will advance to senior executive positions faster and more often than those who have not, had an overwhelming positive response. Only one respondent, 8% disagreed. 100% of the pilot respondents agreed. Proposition 4 has been proven.

Expatriate communities can create an encouraging and supporting community, which may not otherwise exist, but at the same time can in itself be a barrier to cultural awareness and understanding. In the given example of the expatriate communities in their entirety, the expatriate can, in affect face the small, but nonetheless effectual basis of daily culture shock by transitioning back and forth between the two extremes. Expatriates who find themselves so at home in their own communities, may often find that they do not take the time to make friends outside or their normal social circles, or expend the effort to learn the language and the culture, where they would otherwise be forced via immersion to do so. These small differences can lead to a world of understanding and limitless possibilities. Although, in many cases, expatriate communities are a necessity in order to facilitate safety in the face of extremism, not diversity.

## **6.2. Implications for the Commissioner**

Showing such a strong correlation between international assignment to board member and CEO postings could be a reason why there are but a few female executives on economic development boards. The hours kept at work as the nature of the beast, so to speak, and the work-family conflict could be two key explanations as to why this often occurs. It is advisable that although the current status of Charlotte Regional Partnerships international work is done on a fly-in-fly-out basis, the skill set acquired is comparable and therefore advantageous for the female executive.



Several respondents mentioned a present day crackdown on immigration, especially as regards the European Union. It would seem that the hope is for more localisation to occur, when in fact this is expected to result in a more common short-term international assignment, such as the fly-in-fly-out method that Charlotte Regional Partnership is currently practicing, or the use of local contractors.

Although it seems reasonable to assume that gender stereotypes are still quite common in the workplace, and the stated research literature has backed up this assumption to a degree, the research conducted as per this thesis does not comply. These results in conjunction with the European Unions' proposed 2012 Women on Boards objective quota of 40% (European Commission 2012) and the Charlotte Regional Partnership's current female employment ratio of %75 give a new hope to opening doors for women on executive boards in the coming future.

As females in the workplace continue to climb the executive ladder, it is imperative that the proper preparations be made in order to handle the specialised demands that are placed on female executives and their families. Some of these being the 'boys club' at work which the female executive is usually quite mentally prepared for at this point, and the 'girls club' during expatriate assignment, which the male trailing spouse is generally taken quite by surprise by the extent of, while overseas. If a balance could possibly be found to somewhat balance out these extremes, both parties have a substantial chance of fulfilling their duties to the corporation, as well as each other...and the assignment might fulfil its full life expectancy without a less than satisfactory return on investment.

### **6.3. Suggestions for Further Research and Development**

Further research regarding this topic is needed, but specifically focused on women in a particular region or field such as economic development, in upper management positions is recommended to further develop this particular area of interest.

Current repatriation research is needed and highly recommended, mainly in global or transnational corporations. It has become apparent that in many global corporations, although immaculate records are kept, it is all so departmentalised that personnel and expatriates are ushered from one department to another, and the data is only kept in

that department, as it specifically regards that departments needs and provisions. If it could be possible, to do an extended research in this field to cover all the 'data dots' for a select group of repatriated expatriate personnel from start to finish throughout the corporation, it could set a defining example on how to follow the needs and acquired skills throughout a career for the following members of the same category. This could in turn save large investments by corporations, simply by being aware of the gaps that their highly invested employees are falling through, at their expense, due to their own negligence.

Further research is needed in finding the actual and expected Return on Investment (ROI) for expatriates that have received training or local support, versus the actual and expected Return on Investment (ROI) for expatriates that have not received training or local support. This is a difficult theory to measure in practice, and would need to be narrowed down to a particular field or industry because the differences are so broad ranging. This would be of benefit to all global corporations as tangible calculations that can be included when performing the initial risk assessment for international assignment.

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## APPENDIX

### A. Author Provenance

Marjo-Riitta Parzefall is currently a professor at the EBS Business School. She was a former lecturer at Hanken. Her research articles have been published in Finnish journals, as well as the International Journal of Human Resource Management (cited here) and others. (EBS)

Liza Howe-Walsh is Senior lecturer for Post-graduate studies at the University of Portsmouth in the United Kingdom, she has overseas experience and her research is mainly in Human Resource policy and expatriation (specialising in Self- initiated expats). She has been published in two peer reviewed journals (one of which is cited here) and six books. (University of Portsmouth 2012)

Monika Hamori is a professor with the Instituto de Empresa in Spain. She has six academic journal publications and three book chapters to her name. (IE)

Burak Koyuncu is an assistant professor at Rouen Business School in France and has been cited in three papers. (Academia 2013)

Birgit Schyns is a professor of Organisational behaviour at Durham University in the United Kingdom. She received two Emerald Literati awards in the past five years, and has published two books and countless academic journals as well as has been published in the sections of ten books. (Durham University)

Paula Caligiuri PhD is a professor at Rutgers University for post graduate studies in global resources and career management; she has published several books and is considered an expert in her field. She also hosts a CNN show – ‘Reclaim your career’. (Rutgers 2013)

Mila Lazarova is a PhD associate professor at the Beedie School of Business in Canada. She specialises in HR and expatriate management research, and just last year received the Canada Research Chair in Global Workforce Management. (SFU 2013)

Oya Culpan is a professor at Pennsylvania State University in Harrisburg, USA.

Gillian H. Wright has been published 51 times and has 340 citations in the field of Business Admin and economics. (Microsoft Academic 2013)



Jan Selmer is a professor at the Aarhus University – Department of Business Administration. His research specialties are expatriates, Cross-Cultural & intercultural training & management. He has 82 publications currently listed on the University page. (Aarhus 2013)

Alicia S.M. Leung is currently an associate professor at the Hong Kong Baptist University School of Business. Her research includes Human Resource policy, and she has been published five times recently. (Hong Kong Baptist University 2013)

Iris C. Fischlmayr was employed at the department of International Management at Johannes Kepler University in Linz Austria at the time of the cited articles publication. (Fischlmayr & Kollinger 2010)

Iris Kollinger was employed at the Department of Human Resource Management in the Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration in Vienna Austria at the time of this publication. (Fischlmayr & Kollinger 2010)

Victor B. Kreng is stated as having 24 publications and 95 citations. He is a professor at the National Cheng Kung University in Taiwan, with three specialisation fields including that of business. (Microsoft academic 2013)

Dr. Janet Chew is an Associate professor of Business at Charles Sturt University and currently has eleven journal publications listed under her name. (Zoom 2013) At the time of the cited publication used in this thesis, she was the Head of school at the Australian Catholic University.

Professor Shelda Debowski is the Deputy Vice Chancellor and Campus Head at the University of Notre Dame, in Australia. She has been granted several awards for her achievements, including recognition for her work in the field of Human Resources, and she received the Tesltra Business Womens awards, twice. (University of Notre Dame 2013)

## **B. Expatriate Interviews**

### **B.1. Interview Questions**

The interview questions for the expatriate interviews were presented in an open-ended fashion where possible. Once these were answered, then the more specific questions were asked if they qualified – given the circumstance.

10. Tell me about the selection process
  - a. How long was/is the period of international assignment?
  - b. What is the country of assignment?
  - c. What was your reason for wanting to go on international assignment?
11. Please explain any outstanding memories or features of the interview process.
12. Was your relationship/family status inquired about during the interview process?
13. If you are married, what kind of assistance was offered to your spouse, if any?
14. Did you feel any kind of limitations to your request for international assignment?
15. How were you prepared for the international assignment?
  - a. What kind of orientation programmes were arranged prior to departure?
  - b. Did you receive pre-departure cross-cultural training?
16. What support were you offered while you were abroad?
  - a. If you have school aged children whose education needed to be considered when abroad, please answer the following:
    - i. What kind of educational considerations (if any) were given?
    - ii. Was additional language training provided?
    - iii. Childcare?
  - b. Was/Is there an expatriate neighbourhood in which you resided?
  - c. Was/is there local support offered while abroad?
17. How did the home office make you feel?
  - a. Did the Home office keep in close contact while you were abroad?
  - b. Did you feel comfortable upon your return to the home office?
18. Do you now feel it easier to advance, after having done an international assignment?
19. How would you improve this process?

## **B.2. Model of transcribed interview**

This model is a culmination of some of the transcribed data from the female expatriate interviews, placed in order to give an accurate example of the research data.

- How long was the period of your first assignment?
- Oh, it was from uh, actually a 3 month assignment turned into a six month (laugh) then it turned into a year and a half and ending up being four years and a month.

- Uh, how were you, how were you prepared for the inter- for the assignment overseas? Did they have any kind of training programmes or, or?
- Yea, they do have training programs. They have training programs for the- I don't, I don't remember, but they have ethics and, ya know , assignment programs. They do all kinds of training there so, you, depending on your project & depending on the country for which – like they are a major client, they are here in US & they have a lot of people travelling here to US so they do training programs to explain the processes, how it works in US – and we all are very familiar with the language, so we don't have language barrier there ...
- ummhmmm
 

...but we do go through proper ethics training and what's – little bit about politics, little bit about how the client wants things to be worked upon, management skills, delivery skills, umm, meeting skills – so all kinds of training we do at there.
- Awesome. What about advancement? Do you feel it easier to advance after having done an international assignment?
- Well, a lot of people think that. I have probably achieved where I was and my level was extremely hard to get past uh, because everybody at that level is already so capable you have to start eliminating based on I don't know what - where you went to school or whoever knows, I didn't even ask. But um, I did achieve a level within a level while I was over there, But um not after I got back. So I think it was more the accomplishments, the things I was accomplishing while I was there that got me the promotion, than it was just because I was international. So...
- And last, but definitely not least- as a woman, being on a great time of international assignment; How would you improve on this process?
- O-K- Uh, so, I think mainly the, uh, the problem which we face here is the problem of our visa issues, uh because we have very strict visa reforms here, uh, & its getting stricter day by day. The main problem this country especially is that they do not allow people, you know, the family, to work on the visa. Most of the women in India have to leave their job to travel here with their husbands, so that is the main problem here that I have seen, I think that I might, if given an opportunity, I would try to improve that. But it's not in my hand- definitely. Uh, the country, it depends on country. Like in Canada, actually, I think they do allow your spouse to work – even if you are on a dependent visa, which is not allowed here, so most of my colleagues here, their wives have to leave their job & travel here. So, that is kind of saddening for them because

they do have proper degrees & they were working somewhere. Some were HR managers in India & they had to leave their job to travel here. So, some people just choose to, you know, travel here without their spouse because of this problem. So they struggle, you know? They will struggle for couple of years maybe. They have to leave their kids and everything, yea, because of these issues. Things like that, definitely, because of being a woman, & you know- mostly because of the way we have the culture in India, it's mostly the lady who compromises. The women have to leave their job & stuff instead of their husbands leaving their job, so that is 1 major thing which I think most of us struggle with here. But, yea, the way it is- its just the country I guess.

## C. Expatriate Narratives

### C.1. Narrative Questions

The Narrative Questions for the expatriates are exactly those asked on the interview questions, only in the interview the information given was much more in-depth and informative because the respondent was speaking.

1. Tell me about the selection process
  - a. How long was/is the period of international assignment?
  - b. What is the country of assignment?
  - c. What was your reason for wanting to go on international assignment?
  - d. Please explain any outstanding memories or features of the interview process.
  - e. Was your relationship/family status inquired about during the interview process?
  - f. If you are married, what kind of assistance was offered to your spouse, if any?
  - g. Did you feel any kind of limitations to your request for international assignment?
2. How were you prepared for the international assignment?
  - a. What kind of orientation programmes were arranged prior to departure?
  - b. Did you receive pre-departure cross-cultural training?
3. What support were you offered while you were abroad?

a.If you have school aged children whose education needed to be considered when abroad, please answer the following:

- i. What kind of educational considerations (if any) were given?
- ii. Was additional language training provided?
- iii. Childcare?

b.Was/Is there an expatriate neighbourhood in which you resided?

c. Was/is there local support offered while abroad?

4. How did the home office make you feel?

a. Did the Home office keep in close contact while you were abroad?

b. Did you feel comfortable upon your return to the home office?

5. Do you now feel it easier to advance, after having done an international assignment?

6. How would you improve this process?

Thank you!!

## C.2. Model of Narrative

This model is a culmination of narratives received, so as to display the type and format of answers.

1. Tell me about the selection process

a. How long was/is the period of international assignment?

I was given no period of assignment simply because I had no reason to have one. When I took the position, it was a traveling role within Asia, I understood that, and I wanted to take at least a few years outside of the US to travel in the far east.

2. What was your reason for wanting to go on international assignment?

I knew it was the one thing on my resume I didn't have and that it would eventually hold me back potentially, or could always be their reason for not giving me the next promotion. It is the checklist they never tell you about.

3. Was your relationship/family status inquired about during the interview process?

Not at all because it is common here to meet people that haven't seen their families for years! I've found that expats and even locals, most don't see their families for 2 maybe sometimes 5 years at a time. I make an effort and negotiated my contract to make 2 trips back a year. Vacation is more lengthy here than in the States depending on where your company is headquartered.

4. Did you feel any kind of limitations to your request for international assignment?

There were no limitations, just an enormous amount of pressure to fix, streamline, and properly staff! The Business Unit didn't want an expat on the job, so I knew I was going to have a lot of eyes on me to get it done, fast and efficiently.

5. Childcare?

Typically every family hires a maid and every house has a quarters in the back for them to reside. They are typically \$600.00 a month and cook, clean, take care of your child, or really anything that is requested. They become a part of your family in a sense.

6. Did you feel comfortable upon your return to the home office?

It took me longer than I would think to get comfortable after I was back. My superiors were not quite ready for the new ideas I brought. They did not have a plan ready for my return.

7. Do you now feel it easier to advance, after having done an international assignment?

I do and my experience out here has been amazing thus far. I would recommend working overseas to anyone that has the opportunity. More than anything, it

helps you understand how important it is to have an open mind and how large and different the world really is. It teaches you a lot about yourself and provides you with an opportunity that is so unfamiliar; it really helps you grow as a person and honestly has helped me in business and in my personal life. I travel back to America now for meetings and my ability to converse with others and share my experiences has helped develop relationships in my life that I would have never had.

#### **D. Pilot Interviews**

Three Pilot interviews were conducted with past members of HR and global relocation departments. The following questions are a broad outline of the open-ended questions that were asked. Detailed responses were given, resulting in approximately hour-long interviews. All interviews were tape recorded and later fully transcribed. The model is a short example of the transcribed interview.

##### **D.1. Interview Questions**

These questions varied slightly from the expatriate interview questions due to the fact, that there is a stated point of view difference and the recruiting processes and expat experiences were known to vary vastly between these three corporations.

1. How long have you worked in Human Resources, processing candidates for international assignment?
2. What have you done to shortlist candidates?
3. What were the top qualifying characteristics that set expatriate candidates apart?
4. What about women – Any difference in the process?
5. Have there been concerns about sending women on international assignment?

If yes, please answer the following:

- a. Were these safety, political, or cultural related concerns?

- b. Were these concerns related to the duration of the assignment?
- c. Were these concerns related to family or perceived issues?
6. What about selecting women – are there problems in any particular areas there?
7. Are there additional expenses for expatriates with accompanying families?
  - a. What are they?
  - b. Are these expenses a justifiable reason for choosing another candidate?
8. What types of expat support at home and abroad have been offered from your firm, which you know of?
9. How would you recommend more women be able to be recruited for international assignment, in upper level management positions?
10. Do you see a connection between CEO posts and international assignments?
11. How would you improve this process?

Thank you for your time!

## **D.2. Model of Transcribed Interview**

- I would just like to ask you, uh for the first thing, how long did you work in Human resources?
  - I worked in human resources in the latter part of my career. uh, I probably worked in it for 6 years. . I spent the last 20 years of my career in management positions, worked closely with human resources in the hiring of research chemists and in the advancements of their careers through assignments, including international assignments.
- Wow! So you know a lot about this then.
  - Yea, I've had quite a bit of experience, yea.
- Now did you have...excuse me, I have an echo. Did you have a process for shortlisting? You already mentioned some of it...uh did you have uh like a set process for shortlisting candidates, other than what you've already mentioned in the process, uh for your scientists?
  - No, we. Well we had uh we knew where the vacancies were. We knew where we needed to recruit. We know, we knew which areas we needed to recruit, in



terms of which sciences – like synthetic chemistry or physical or physical organic.

- That makes sense. Did you have, uh – what were the top qualifying characteristics that set the uh expat candidates apart? You mentioned the CV – is,...
- The other thing is um, there's always a place for lone wolves, if you like, in research.
- (Giggle)
- People that uh tend to want to work alone, that that, these people tend to be um quite brilliant & few & far between. Um we tended to look for people that we thought would work well in a team.
  
- Now do you see um, aside from the fact that there are so few women in these positions, do you see any other obstacles that are preventing women from going on these assignments?
- Um, No. I mean I think from, I would say that we don't do a great job of advertising. Uh we don't do a great job of advertising even the availability of these (inaudible) opportunities. I know a lot of single working women in their early 30's, mid 30's, they are perfect candidates to take an assignment um & I think, I think its. Well a couple things going on. I don't think we do a great job of advertising, but Id also say that, I'd also that in the economy of the world today, what we found um and probably most prevalent in um Europe, so London, but also sort of moving into Eastern Europe.
- Uh-hm
- What we were starting to see is a lot of crackdown in immigration in Europe.
- Well what about uh training & as far as like cultural & linguistic training before the assignment starts...
- I am a huge proponent (?) & it doesn't matter, in my opinion, if you're going to uh an English speaking, primarily English speaking, English is the international business language. Um So uh no matter you're going, again speaking from(the company), um yea, it wouldn't matter where you go, English is the uh, is the uh business language.

- Uh, what types of support, at home and abroad uh have you been offered, have you offered, that you know of? I think that's a major thing about expat support.
- Well, uh, uhhh, the worst thing, the worst thing an expat can do, male or female, is um, go on an expat assignment um find out about other expats in the area, and hook up with them and completely ignore the environment they are living in.
- Good advice. Thank you. Uh How do you think...How would you recommend that more women be able to be recruited for International Assignment as far as upper level management positions go?
- Uum, see I come from, I come from um a background where expat assignments tended to be male. Uh and um and females with critical skills were less available or less considered for expat assignments. Umm Nowadays that's not true. There's no reason why um uh a male has any preference over a female and in terms of working in an expat assignment and as I mentioned the uh the things to look for is the right skill set that can bring value to the expat assignment that that the female is going to work in. uh um and uh in my personal opinion, sending a female on expat assignment just for her own personal development, uh, which may not offer much value to the environment that she's going into, doesn't make much sense to me. Uh um, there's a lot to be gained from a female going on expat assignment from uh who has a skill set which is gonna bring value to the position she's entering into in the expat assignment. That will bring success. Just sending someone on expat assignment, just for personal development without much consideration to the value that she can bring is not, to me is not a good idea. And it's certainly not gonna help the female in that expat assignment.