

**THE SHOCK OF COMING HOME:  
REPATRIATION, RE-ENTRY AND RE-ADJUSTMENT  
TO NEW ZEALAND AFTER SOJOURNING**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of

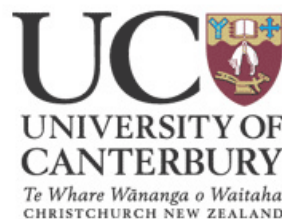
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**The shock of coming home:  
Repatriation, re-entry and re-adjustment to New Zealand after sojourning**

**Abstract**

The aim of this thesis is to provide an in-depth understanding of the repatriation process in the New Zealand context, analysing various internal and external factors that have the potential to influence the re-adjustment process of returning sojourners. Most New Zealanders who sojourn in a different country eventually return to their home country. These people are then faced with a period of re-adjustment to the home country, which can cause unexpected, yet serious distress. The academic literature has offered relatively little insight into individual factors that may contribute to re-entry distress but has instead focused on cultural identity, culture shock, W-Curve or other generalised, conceptual models, which all have the inherent limitation that personal differences and individual internal and external influencing factors remain neglected in understanding the repatriation process. Numerous internal and external facets influencing an individual have been researched and shown to impact the re-entry into one's home country after sojourning, yet existing research has made little attempt to provide an integrated approach of these facets and existing conceptual re-entry models. This dissertation provides insight into the most dominant challenges that New Zealand repatriates face after living overseas for an extended period of time taking into account individual differences.

A qualitative exploratory research design based on phenomenological interviews has been implemented to gather rich, in-depth data. Participants were invited for an interview, which commenced with a self-administered questionnaire and were then encouraged to thoroughly describe their experiences of returning to New Zealand. Participants were recruited via public notices and personal networking. The participant pool of the current study consists of 11 returned New Zealand sojourners, who had been abroad for at least 12 months and returned no longer than 12 months ago. The participant pool included eight females and three males, who all sojourned independently of each other.

The findings of this study have implications for understanding the problems sojourners face when returning to New Zealand and potential measures to assist their re-integration to their

home country. The current study found that all sojourning participants experienced re-adjustment difficulties to various degrees upon returning to their home country. The differences in experienced repatriation challenges were found to be related to individual internal and external factors, which were found to serve as a valid predictor for potential re-entry distress. This research emphasises the importance of taking an integrated approach, combining the analysis of individual internal and external factors with existing repatriation theories such as the Cultural Identity theory, Culture Shock or Curve Adjustment Models. Additionally, this research proposes that further individual factors such as sojourners 'reasons to return' shall be incorporated into repatriation studies as they were found to be a valid predictor for potential repatriation challenges. This research offers a unique, holistic approach to analysing and understanding repatriation challenges of self-initiated sojourners in the context of New Zealand. This study further highlights the New Zealand specific re-entry challenges, which most notably include participants' struggle with social re-adjustment due to cultural aspects such as the 'tall poppy syndrome'. Considered together and holistically, these enduring issues of repatriation challenges have implications for the New Zealand government, education providers, employers and society at large.

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## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>8</b>
1.1 Purpose of Study.....	9
1.2 Contribution to the Literature .....	10
<b>2. Literature Review .....</b>	<b>14</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	14
2.2 Business Repatriates .....	15
2.2.1 Work Adjustment .....	16
2.2.2 Socio-cultural Adjustment .....	18
2.2.3 Psychological Adjustment.....	19
2.3 Student Repatriates.....	26
2.4 Self-Initiated Expatriation and Return .....	30
2.5 Culture Shock.....	33
2.6 Curve Adjustment Models .....	37
2.7 Cultural Identity .....	39
2.8 Individual Re-Adjustment Factors, Internal and External .....	40
2.8.1 Internal Variables .....	40
2.8.1.1 Age .....	40
2.8.1.2 Relationship Status .....	41
2.8.1.3 Gender .....	42
2.8.1.4 Prior Intercultural Experience .....	43
2.8.2 External Variables .....	43
2.8.2.1 Length of Sojourn and Time since Return .....	43
2.8.2.2 Cultural Distance .....	44
2.8.2.3 Contact with Home-Country Individuals .....	45
2.8.2.4 Contact with Host Country Individuals .....	46
2.9 The Concept of Home .....	46
2.10 Applying Repatriation to the New Zealand Context .....	48

2.10.1	New Zealand Repatriate Characteristics .....	49
2.10.2	Brain Drain & Brain Exchange .....	51
2.11	Chapter Summary .....	52
<b>3</b>	<b>Methodology .....</b>	<b>54</b>
3.1	Introduction .....	54
3.2	Research Design .....	54
3.3	Interpretive Framework .....	56
3.4	Participant Selection .....	56
3.5	Data Collection .....	56
3.6	Data Analysis.....	58
3.7	Researcher Role and Bias .....	59
3.8	Participant Profiles .....	60
3.9	Ethical Considerations.....	61
3.10	Chapter Summary .....	62
<b>4</b>	<b>Findings and Discussion .....</b>	<b>63</b>
4.1	Introduction.....	63
4.2	Sojourner Age, Gender and Relationship status .....	64
4.3	Prior Intercultural Experience .....	68
4.4	Time Overseas .....	71
4.5	Overseas Destination, Cultural Distance & Identification .....	73
4.6	Contact with Host Culture and Lifestyle Overseas .....	78
4.7	Contact with Home Culture.....	83
4.8	Reasons for Coming Home and Expectations .....	88
4.9	Trip Home .....	95
4.10	Arrival Home.....	97
4.11	Time since Return.....	98
4.12	Re-adjustment to New Zealand .....	102
4.13	Social Re-Adjustment.....	109

4.14	Benefits of Sojourn.....	116
4.15	Sojourn’s Value .....	121
4.16	New Zealand Culture.....	124
4.17	Intentions to Sojourn Again.....	127
4.18	Chapter Summary .....	129
<b>5</b>	<b>Conclusion and Recommendations .....</b>	<b>132</b>
5.1	Introduction.....	132
5.2	Summary of the Research Purpose .....	132
5.3	Limitations.....	137
5.4	Future Research .....	138
5.5	The Contribution of this Study .....	138
	<b>References .....</b>	<b>140</b>
	<b>Appendix.....</b>	<b>159</b>
	Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer .....	159
	Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet .....	160
	Appendix C: Consent Form.....	162
	Appendix D: Pre-Interview Questionnaire.....	163
	Appendix E: Interview Question Guideline .....	167
	Appendix F: Participant Profile Summaries.....	169

## 1. Introduction

This thesis investigates the repatriation process of sojourners in the context of New Zealand, introducing a holistic approach to understanding re-adjustment challenges via considering individual internal and external influencing factors in addition to incorporating them into broader theories outlined in existing literature to assist returnees with the process of re-integrating to the home country. Globalisation has redefined the world we live in, including reducing barriers of entry, facilitating travel and migration but also creating new expectations in regards to cultural adeptness and career requirements (Harvey, 1995; Gibson, 2005). This motivates many people to sojourn either in a business or self-initiated context, and while they expect challenges when immersing themselves into a new culture, many don't anticipate the shock upon returning home (Furnham, 2012; Sussman, 2002; Hammer, Hart & Rogan, 1998; Suutari & Brewster, 2005). For the purpose of this study the common definition of sojourning in an international context is adopted, stipulating it as a temporary stay or residence and between-society contact, living and immersing oneself in a country different to ones origin before returning to the home country (Hottola, 2004; Sussman, 2002). It is a topic many people can relate to, either by having experienced the challenges of returning home from migrating themselves or on a smaller scale in form of 'post-holiday blues' (Bell, 2002).

International mobility has therefore become an increasing phenomenon in everyday life affecting individuals, organisations, countries and global society at large. The continuing increase in cross-national mobility over the past decades has been particularly evident in business, leisure, education, as well as in political settings (Bonache & Brewster, 2001). This creates an increasing need to understand the multifaceted challenges associated with transitions into a new cultural context but also of transitioning back to the home culture; the challenges are often divided into psychological, social and practical parameters within the academic literature. The increasing need for cross-cultural adaptation in business or leisure sojourning has generated a large amount of research offering conceptual and empirical frameworks on integration and adaptation to cultural settings dissimilar to ones origin. However, the process of returning from an extended sojourn overseas and the re-adjustment to one's home culture remains an under-researched area within the academic literature, yet research has identified it as one of the most challenging steps of the expatriate experience (Schuler *et al.*, 2002; Linehan & Scullion, 2002; Suutari & Brewster, 2003, Guo *et al.*, 2013).



The literature on repatriation is largely fragmented, being addressed in the International Human Resource Management, Tourism, Migration, Education, Mobilities, Second Homes and Multiple-Dwelling, Cross-Cultural Psychology and Intercultural communications literatures (Black *et al.*, 1992; Hottola, 2004; Jonkers & Tijssen, 2008; Brabant, Palmer & Gramling, 1990; Long, 2011; Zhang, 2013). The research in these different academic areas has however not been integrated and the general understanding of repatriation has not changed much since Martin's research in 1984, conducted from an intercultural relations background. She stated in her research that the difficulties upon repatriation mainly stem from the fact that they are unexpected. Black *et al.*'s (1992) research was conducted in the field of international management and was the first to approach the matter of repatriation adjustment with a broader grasp, offering a model for a more plenary view of the process rather than mentioning it as a neglected anecdotal state as most previous research had done. Therefore, this research has valuable implications for gaining an in-depth understanding of the problems sojourners returning New Zealand face in the contemporary environment, considering a broad range of influencing factors and models rather than focusing on one or two, as has been a limitation for many studies to date (Szkudlarek, 2009). Consequently, insight will be drawn and comparisons made from the diverse participant pool and their personal re-entry experiences influenced by unique internal and external factors (Jassawalla, Connolly & Slojkowski, 2004; Suutari & Valimaa, 2002; Gregersen & Stroh, 1997).

## 1.1 Purpose of Study

The rationale for this dissertation is to investigate the problems and challenges returning sojourners face when re-entering and re-adjusting to their home country New Zealand after having lived abroad for a minimum of 12 months continuously. While New Zealand is a mobile nation and the concept of sojourning and overseas experience (OE) is commonly recognized in daily life (Bell, 2002), it is surprising that very limited research has been conducted to address the problematic re-entry process, as outlined in the international academic literature, in a national context. Phenomenological interviews were implemented as a method to entice in-depth descriptions of sojourners experiences in returning to Aotearoa after sojourning. The goal is to gain insight into the main challenges of re-entry as perceived by returnees, the effect the sojourn had on the individual's development and the various internal and external factors influencing these problems faced upon re-entry. Participants were recruited via posters (Appendix A) displayed in public areas of the University of

Canterbury, city libraries and a supermarket blackboard as well as personal networking. The purpose of the study is concerned with following research questions:

*Research Question 1:* What factors influence the repatriation process for a sojourner and do they overlap to predict repatriation difficulties based on individual internal and external differences?

*Research Question 2:* How is the repatriation process experienced in a New Zealand context and what role does the New Zealand culture play?

*Research Question 3:* Do sojourning and re-adjustment generally tend to elicit benefits and positive change or can re-adjustment challenges be so severe that the sojourn is perceived as an overall negative experience?

*Research Question 4:* Are the behaviour, attitudes and skills acquired abroad of future use or discarded upon re-entry to the home country?

## **1.2 Contribution to the Literature**

There have been numerous scholarly studies conducted concerning the entry and adaption to a foreign or host culture (e.g. Zhang, 2013; Pedersen *et al.*, 2011; Selmer & Suutari, 2011; Hilltrop & Janssen, 1990; Adelman, 1988), however few studies have been completed on the re-entry of sojourners and despite research efforts knowledge has not progressed significantly, resulting in a lack of applicable, practical advice (Jack & Stage, 2005). While repatriation remains an under-researched area within the literature, research has recognized it as one of the most challenging steps of the sojourning or expatriate experience (Schuler *et al.*, 2002; Linehan & Scullion, 2002; Suutari & Brewster, 2003). Repatriation can be arduous for a number of reasons, which will be explored in this dissertation as well as possible suggestions to manage these challenges and facilitate the re-adjustment process.

The academic literature offers limited theories and frameworks concerning repatriation and even less has been tested in a systematic, empirical manner. As an example, the adjustment W-curve and cultural identity model have both been established on conceptual frameworks, supported with only very modest empirical research (Adler, 1981, Sussman, 2001;

Onwumechili *et al.*, 2003). This suggests an indeterminate relevance of these models and their applicability to re-entry transitions. Additionally the lack of empirical research on the effectiveness and efficiency of facilitating repatriation strategies questions their practical relevance for managing the re-entry process for sojourners (Szkudlarek, 2009).

In close relation to the above-mentioned limitations is the evident lack of cross-cultural investigations within the repatriation research. The majority of research concerning the re-entry process and demographic characteristics is based almost exclusively on American sojourners and exchange students. As very few studies have been conducted in a different demographical context it cannot be inferred that the results would hold true across different populations. There has been a very limited amount of New Zealand studies in regards to the re-entry process in a national context, and these primarily concern high-school students (Chamove & Soeterik, 2006; Rogers & Ward, 1993) or are concerned with only the cultural identity concept of so called 'secular pilgrims', people who complete their OE or working holiday (Bell, 2002; Wilson, Fisher & Moore, 2009). However, there is an evident need for a phenomenological study assessing the challenges most commonly perceived upon re-entry and their relation to various individual internal and external factors in the national context of New Zealand.

Szkudlarek (2009) among others support the concern that most intercultural research is conducted in the Western world, and thus intercultural theories which are Western-originated are applied unadapted and therefore only assumed to be valid for cultural phenomena across the world. Only a limited number of studies within the field of repatriation acknowledge the limitations stemming from the generalisation of results from studies conducted predominantly in the U.S. (Gregersen & Black, 1996).

The limited amount of cross-national research and constricted global relevance of re-entry studies originated in America are the most dominant consequences and gaps in the literature. Furthermore, a large proportion of the research conducted to date concerns the re-adjustment of corporate expatriates, with a significant gap in the literature in regards to the re-entry of other sojourning groups.

This Masters thesis contributes to bridging the gap in the existing literature by providing empirical research insight into the shock of repatriation and its influencing factors in a New

Zealand context. This phenomenological research will explore which challenges are most commonly perceived by sojourners returning to New Zealand after a prolonged period of migration and what internal and external factors may serve as indicators for the perceived degree of difficulty. It is essential for the academic literature as well as practitioners to gain a more in-depth understanding of the challenges perceived as being the most difficult by returnees in the national context of Aotearoa in order to make evidence based suggestions on effective re-entry assistance. This empirical research will provide insight into the re-entry experiences and challenges of New Zealand sojourners who have lived overseas for a minimum of 12 months, either as part of an organisation sponsored overseas assignment or via self-initiated overseas experience. Part of the phenomenological enquiry will address whether the career aspirations of individuals have changed by the time sojourners re-enter their New Zealand home culture as that may further impact re-adjustment challenges. Parallels will be drawn with the re-entry of corporate expatriates and beneficial re-adjustment tools and programs, which are argued to be applicable to sojourners returning from self-initiated overseas experience, such as: students, OE travellers, missionaries and voluntary workers.

Globalisation processes, such as changes in transport and communications technology, are making the world increasingly more accessible, contributing to greater cross-border mobility and circular migration (Williams & Hall, 2002), which emphasises the importance to research and understand the integration processes of sojourners into new countries and cultures in order to facilitate it but this is equally as important for their return to their home country. While the adjustment to a host culture has been researched and discussed thoroughly in the existing literature, re-adjustment challenges to the home country remain an underresearched area lacking to account for individual factors influencing the repatriation process beyond the general, conceptual models and researching the phenomenon in a context beyond the United States. Thus, this study has great relevance in making a contribution to the knowledge of what factors influence repatriation challenges and how re-adjustment could be facilitated, in the national context of New Zealand, which further extends the existing repatriation literature beyond the research context of the United States of America, where the majority of the existing literature has been conducted. A number of existing findings in the literature were assessed for their applicability and validity in the New Zealand context and were generally found to be valid, however the New Zealand context does offer a number of unique aspects

influencing the repatriation process that are not mentioned in existing literature conducted in a different country.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces and discusses the existing literature relevant to understanding the repatriation process of individuals who sojourned for various reasons and the potential re-adjustment challenges they are likely to encounter upon returning to their home country. The literature review introduces the three groups of repatriates most researched in the existing literature and highlights similarities and differences between the findings concerning individuals groups, aiming to offer a comprehensive overview of research findings to date rather than concentrating on one group, which would neglect important findings that may apply across groups. Furthermore, conceptual models addressing repatriation challenges will be conferred before discussing the existing research on internal and external variables influencing the repatriation process and introducing the sparse repatriation research findings conducted in the context of New Zealand.

Globalisation has facilitated travel for the population at large but also created new expectations in regards to cultural adeptness and career requirements (Almor & Yeheskel, 2013). Over the past decades there has been a continuous rise in people travelling as it becomes easier and more affordable (Bell, 2002). The reasons for extended travel and migration vary, from an expatriate on an overseas business assignment to a backpacker wanting to experience adventures on a work and holiday travel (Suutari & Brewster, 2000). As results of changes in relations to work requirements, migrants as well as individuals engaging in short and long-term mobility can take up residence in different countries for work, family or political reasons where permitted (Harvey, 1995; Gibson, 2005, Szkudlarek, 2008; Howe-Walsh & Schyns, 2010). In addition, a broad variety of individuals are drawn to spend significant time overseas, including students, military and consular staff, non-governmental volunteers and missionaries who are all sojourning for different reasons, yet are faced with the similar challenges to one degree or the other upon returning to the home country (Berry, 1990; Vance, 2005).

Spending time overseas for a prolonged period of time can potentially create a global worldview and is often regarded as a valuable personal development tool (Bachner, Zeuschel & Shannon, 1993; Nielsen, 2014; Kim, 2016). Many sojourners describe their

experiences as profoundly meaningful, sparking a transformation in one's self and a different outlook on the surrounding environment (Kohonen, 2008). Other studies have shown that living in a host country for an extended period of time can bring about attitude changes in the sojourner (Masgoret, 2006) as well as a raised awareness and understanding of oneself (Kauffmann *et al.*, 1992).

## 2.2 Business Repatriates

The repatriation literature provides most insight into the repatriation of individuals from the corporate environment, which makes business repatriates the most studied group in the re-entry and re-adjustment field. This can partly be attributed to the fact that work-related problems are one of the most occurring when discussing re-entry problems, additionally the high-cost of an expatriate to the company combined with the high turn-over rates among business repatriates make it a topic of interest for many global companies who at times see the benefit in funding such research (Vidal, Valle, Aragón & Brester, 2007; Furuya, Stevens, Oddou, Bird & Mendenhall, 2007; Linehan & Scullion, 2002; Ward *et al.*, 2001; Black *et al.*, 1992).

The work environment is becoming increasingly global, which is driving more companies to incorporate expatriate assignment as part of their human resource strategy and increase their market knowledge and competitiveness. Additionally employees progressively recognize overseas assignments as an essential component to their career development (Jokinen, Brewster & Suutari, 2008). Expatriate assignments typically involve a great amount of organisation by the company in designing, organising and preparing employees for their overseas assignment as well as a significant financial cost and potential risk of losing repatriate talent during or shortly after the expatriate assignment, yet they are becoming continually more popular and widely used by organisations (Inkson & Meyers, 2003). Re-occurring problematic points within the business repatriate literature, besides post-return turnover, include re-adjustment to the workplace, commitment and productivity issues as well as the transfer of knowledge acquired overseas to the parent company (Nery-Kjerfve & McLean, 2012; Lazarova & Cerdin, 2007; Hiltrop & Janssens, 1990).

These various challenges that can influence the outcomes of corporate repatriation adjustment in regards to knowledge sharing, change in commitment to the organisation, turnover or turnover intentions vary across individuals due to differing internal and external factors influencing the repatriates situation and re-entry process (Jassawalla, Connolly & Slojkowski, 2004). Re-entry challenges for corporate repatriates typically become evident in three main adjustment dimensions within the literature: 1) work adjustment 2) socio-cultural adjustment and 3) psychological adjustment (Jassawalla, Connolly & Slojkowski, 2004; Suutari & Valimaa, 2002; Gregersen & Stroh, 1997). Expatriate expectations of re-adjusting into these dimensions vary and thus expectations have to be managed and communicated in advance to avoid negative consequences when repatriates see the reality upon returning (Hammer, Hart & Rogan, 1998).

### **2.2.1 Work Adjustment**

There are various commonly reported difficulties corporate expatriates can face upon re-integrating into their parent organisation after successfully completing their overseas assignment. Such can include changes in work responsibility, which is often decreased compared to the level of responsibility and authority the expatriate held at the subsidiary (Suutari & Brewster, 2003). Abueva (2000) found that repatriates struggle with the loss of status often associated with their overseas position and the loss of autonomy within the parent organisation upon repatriation. Frequently the policies and procedures around repatriation are unclear to the expatriate, as the organisation may not have any in place or communicate poorly (Hiltrop & Janssens, 1990). Additionally, poor work force planning by the organisation often results in no adequate position being available for the repatriate upon returning home at the end of the assignment (Bossard & Petterson, 2005). The literature also reports that the strategic planning of international assignments often neglects the individual's career path and progression, which can result in disappointment for the repatriate and make expatriation a risky option for rapid internal progression (Naumann, 1992). Conversely, according to Suutari and Brewster (2003) one of the main motivational factors for a candidate to accept an overseas assignment is the expectation of increased career opportunities within the organisation. They expect that their organisation will see them as more valuable and provide them with a position that aligns with their expertise gained overseas. Yet, difficulties in the management of the readjustment process and failure to



structure appropriate career planning often lead to the underutilization and high attrition of repatriates which is frustrating and difficult to accept for the repatriate (Oddou *et al.*, 2013). If the expatriate's expectations are not managed in advance and consequently often not met upon repatriation, the disappointment experienced by the repatriate may lead him or her to seek a position elsewhere, where their expertise will be more valued (Lövblad, 2007).

Changes in the organisational structure can be difficult to adapt to for the repatriate as they return unprepared and thus unaware as to how things may have changed while they were overseas (Hiltrop & Janssens, 1990). Role conflict can also arise from alterations in the organisational executive team or company culture which may make it more difficult for the repatriate to re-integrate into the parent organisation (Andreason & Kinneer, 2005). Furthermore, changes in the executive team could potentially pose a hurdle to promotions as the new executives may not personally know the returning employee, and are thus unlikely to consider him / her for arising promotions and having had no personal interaction with the expatriate the 'out of sight, out of mind' syndrome is likely to occur (Stahl & Cerdin, 2004). Thus, as expatriates build networks and integrate into their host culture environment they may compromise or neglect their contacts in the home country (Gregersen & Stroh, 1997). While the considerable physical distance makes networking in the home country more difficult, organisations should make an effort to keep expatriates engaged and updated on proceedings in the parent company to avoid disappointment, uncertainty and confusion upon repatriation (Joniken, Brewster & Suutari, 2008; Lazarova & Caligiuri, 2001).

A further challenge for repatriates could be perceived unfairness if national co-workers have seemingly advanced their career further than the position offered to the expatriate upon returning to the parent company. Vermond (2001) affirms that the implication of loss of professional opportunities during the time of absenteeism should be avoided as it results in dissatisfaction for the repatriate. It can also be upsetting for the repatriate to realize that while they were 'out of sight' they were also 'out of mind' for their colleagues. Namely, the repatriate realized that nobody within the organisation was affected by his or her absence. Similarly, co-workers may be impatient listening to the repatriate's overseas experiences rather than idolizing the repatriate for the overseas achievements, as may be the expectation (Suutari & Brewster, 2003).

### 2.2.2 Socio-cultural Adjustment

The challenges of repatriation go beyond the work environment and extend into the private life of the expatriate. This contributes to the overall repatriate experience, which will be attributed as the company's responsibility and difficulties to adjust into the home-country society can still impact repatriate turnover, or turnover intentions (Suutari & Valima, 2002). The longer the expatriate has been away from his or her home country, the more can change which would increase uncertainty (Harvey, 1989). After living abroad for an extended period of time repatriates may find it difficult to readjust to the lifestyle in the home county (Suutari & Valimaa, 2002). Repatriates tend to experience an initial phase of enthusiasm upon freshly returning home in which they tend to act more as a spectator of surroundings and interaction between nationals (Heyward, 2002). However, after this short-lived phase the repatriate is likely to face the challenging task to adapt to living in the 'new' culture on an everyday basis. This phase can often be as much of a culture shock as going overseas and repatriates are likely to feel negative attitudes towards their home country because nothing has changed but they personally have developed significantly and feel they have 'outgrown' their old surroundings (Liu, 2005). They may also experience depression and confusion if some things have changed significantly (Black, Gregersen & Mendenhall, 1991). Eventually repatriates accept their home culture and become re-integrated into the environment and an understanding of their role within it (Martin, 1984). Organisations as well as individuals should remain patient and flexible, accepting repatriation as the process it is (Liu, 2005; MacDonald & Arthur, 2003). As social re-adjustment influences work motivation and general satisfaction it can be inferred that it is beneficial for organisations to give the repatriate sufficient time and be understanding for him or her to successfully readjust to personal life in the home country.

The satisfaction of the expatriate with the repatriation process is directly influenced by his/her families' ability to re-adjust; if they are facing this challenge without any support and have difficulty re-integrating it can cause the repatriate to leave the organisation in order to seek a fresh start for the whole family (Andreason & Kineer, 2005). Osman-Gani and Hyder (2008) support this notion, suggesting that organisations should support and provide advise not exclusively to the repatriate but his family as a whole (Lazarova & Cerdin, 2007; Vidal *et al.*, 2007), as studies have found that the spouse's re-adjustment directly influences the repatriate's re-adjustment (Gregersen & Stroh, 1997; Ali & Ismail, 2010). Cole (2011) found

that re-adjustment for career orientated spouses can be specifically critical if they experience a severe disruption or cessation of their employment and the expatriate's organisation benefits from providing direct assistance to the spouse as well as the expatriate to facilitate the repatriation process as a whole. Expatriates who sojourn without their spouse may leave them subject to an increased inclination to feel lonely and depressed as well as more stressed due to an increased workload and responsibility with their husband overseas (Gillani, 2014). Children in particular may struggle to adjust to life in the home country they often develop significantly during their time overseas, becoming more sophisticated and worldly compared to children their age who have not lived overseas (Arnaez *et al.*, 2014). They may also struggle not knowing the latest music and television stars, which way to dress or the latest slang.

Additionally, it may also be difficult for repatriates to adapt to their social status and financial situation back home. Generally, expatriates experience a higher social status while overseas compared to what they were used to at home and cost of living is often lower (Dowling *et al.*, 1990). However, upon returning to the home country, the social status is likely to decrease to the previous level again which can lead to disillusionment and disappointment for the repatriate as it feels they are taking a step backwards rather than the expected advancements associated with the benefits of their expatriate assignment (Black *et al.*, 1999; Hurn, 1999). The general lifestyle may also be significantly different between home country and the subsidiary country, as well as the social activities and relationship (Lazarova & Cerdin, 2007).

### **2.2.3 Psychological Adjustment**

Psychological adjustment is another key area, which that can be challenging for returning expatriates. This includes experienced stress, expectations and perception of loss in regards to the previously held conditions. The problems and challenges encountered upon repatriation largely stem from unmet expectations and therewith the perceived gap between reality and expectation (Suutari & Brewster, 2005).

To facilitate the repatriation process it is essential to establish a 'motivation fit' between the organisation and the individual as part of the selection or training procedures, meaning there

should be joint aspirations and motives for completing the assignment. It relates to the shared awareness of the organisations' expectations from expatriates in regards to job achievements and knowledge transfer but also the expatriate's expectations of the organisation in regards to meeting the initial job description and ability to use acquired knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) (Lazarova & Tarique, 2005). Equally, Paik *et al.* (2002) found that an accordance of motivation and expectation between expatriate and company lead to a more successful repatriation process. While it can generally be expected that there will be discrepancies in regards to communication - and trust expectations as well as expectations for the reintegration into the corporate environment, these should be minimized as much as possible.

Stroh *et al.* (1998, 2000) found that if expectations in regards to interpersonal relations upon repatriation were met it led to an increase in organisational commitment of the returning expatriate. Similarly, Jassawall *et al.* (2004) found that meeting expectations in other areas such as feeling of belongingness, opportunity to use acquired KSAs and expected levels of responsibility and autonomy were met, commitment to the organisation also increased, decreasing turnover intentions. This re-affirms the notion that expectations need to be clearly communicated throughout the overseas assignment to facilitate the repatriation process (Hiltrop & Janssens, 1990). To avoid repatriates feeling underutilized within the parent organisation, they should be used as a trainer, be assigned an 'expert' on the problem their expatriate assignment focused on, be offered personal and career counselling and be encouraged to contribute to training future expatriates (Andreason & Kineer, 2005; Morgan *et al.*, 2004).

Reducing challenges in the corporate repatriation process starts with carefully selecting the right candidates for expatriate assignment. It is crucial that the person possesses not only the right skills for the job at the overseas subsidiary but also the personality and motivation that will enable a successful completion of the assignment (Feitosa *et al.*, 2014). While a candidate should be open to new experiences and reasonably extraverted to adjust to the host country quickly, other personal characteristics such as marital status, gender, education level and self-efficacy have found to influence the repatriation processes. Andreason and Kinneer (2004) found that candidates with higher levels of self-efficacy are more successful in the adjustment process. Studies found that single people and especially women as well as highly educated expatriates tend to experience more distress (Cox, 2004; Gregersen & Stroh, 1997), however more research will have to be completed in this field as findings are contradictory at

times. Black *et al.* (1992) suggested that it is beneficial to include frequent home visits to maintain one's cultural identity and relationships in the country of origin to minimize anxiety and stress-levels concerning the repatriation process. Cox (2004) also found in his study that less home visits were correlated with higher distress and anxiety levels of repatriates. These findings can be said to be applicable beyond corporate returnees, incorporating student and other self-initiated repatriates.

Although the academic literature has recognized and addressed the concerning high failure rate often associated with expatriate assignments, failure rates do continue to be significant despite research efforts providing practical advice (Jack & Stage, 2005). The challenges of expatriation and the possible reasons for failure have been attempted to be pinpointed by numerous studies and while each stresses different factors the main themes are: 1) the selection process, 2) the pre- and post-departure training, 3) inadequate knowledge of the country's culture 4) poor repatriation efforts (Yeaton & Hall, 2008). Baruch *et al.* (2002) reported in their study with a British multinational corporation (MNC) around 50% of repatriates left their company within two to five years after returning. Similarly Vermond (2001) found that 49% of returning expatriates left the company within two years of the repatriation process. Additionally, Suutari and Brewster (2003) found that 60% of repatriates who did stay in their organisation seriously considered leaving. This highlights the need for companies to gain better insight into repatriation challenges and their possible management. Considering the return on investment for a company in light of the high failure rates of expatriate assignments, especially after the assignment overseas has been completed, expatriate assignments can be a frustrating and costly process for organisations. Thus a sizable amount of the repatriate literature has been dedicated to reducing turnover after completing a corporate sojourn.

Black *et al.* (1992) noted that a clearly structured repatriation process facilitates re-adjustment to work in the home country. Additionally Osman-Gani and Hyder (2008) found in their empirical research that repatriates want a clear idea of what awaits them at home, at the parent company, upon returning alongside a career development plan, which they have been counselled on by their direct supervisor at least a couple of weeks prior to departing the host country. While expatriates are faced with many significant challenges as part of the repatriation process a number of studies suggest that the outcome of repatriation is not the sole responsibility of the organisation (Inkson *et al.*, 1997; Tung, 1998). Inkson *et al.* (1997)

argue that a lot of the academic literature wrongly portrays expatriates powerless in influencing the success or failure of the expatriate assignment and repatriation process. They point out that one of the main reasons individuals accept overseas assignments is personal development including social, cross-cultural and language skills rather than motivation to achieve company project goals or displaying good corporate citizenship. Their research suggests that repatriate turnover is a natural phenomenon in an increasingly global world with inter-company mobility, project work and outsourcing, directly contributing to the industrial development of a nation at large driven by well-developed individual skills, implemented in a context that utilizes them to the full potential. Building on this notion, Tung (1998) suggested that expatriate experiences should be viewed from a perspective of boundaryless careers. His study reports that assignees view their expatriate assignment as a crucial step for their career development, especially younger expatriates tend to evaluate their assignment positively even if they left the company after returning, as they believe it assists their future career development. This highlights that the value and perception of overseas assignments in relation to individual careers is changing. Supporting this, Lazarova and Cerdin (2007) recognized an emerging perspective towards overseas assignments in which expatriates take a more proactive approach. They suggest that turnover upon re-integration may not be a consequence of lacking organisational support but can in fact be attributed to the changing nature of employment relationships, vaster and more suitable job opportunity outside of the organisation and a developing need for people to manage their own careers .

While studies have shown that top-down approaches to repatriation assistance can be useful to reduce turnover (Lazarova & Caligiuri, 2001; Andreason & Kinneer, 2005; Jassawalla *et al.*, 2004), companies have not been very accommodating or committed to implementing assistance methods, as turnover rates have not seen a significant decrease. O'Sullivan (2002) noted that proactive strategies have been more useful in coping with change, transition and adjustment compared to reactive strategies, which are symptom focused. Morrison (1993) supports this notion as it was found that proactive and flexible coping patterns such as information seeking were more successful in reducing turnover intention compared to reactive, top-down methods. In an attempt to reduce repatriate turnover more effectively, it is suggested that organisations encourage a more proactive approach to the transitioning period from their repatriates. Organisations can prepare expatriates to be more proactive by making use of social media, encouraging questions and providing incentive to seek information autonomously. However, O'Sullivan (2002) suggests that personality characteristics, such as

responsiveness and locus of control, influence the extent to which a person is likely to engage in a more proactive, or protean approach to repatriation. Similarly, Forret and Dougherty (1997) found that self-esteem and extraversion significantly influenced ones likelihood to engage in networking activities, which would increase a protean approach and facilitate repatriation. Which is further supported by findings that the Big Five personality traits of extraversion, emotional stability, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness have been found to predict expatriate success due to being open and receptive to learning new cultural norms and proactively make contact with host country nationals (Mol *et al.*, 2005; Shaffer *et al.*, 2006).

While high satisfaction of the repatriation process can be linked to lower turnover intentions, the 'satisfaction' of the process may depend on different factors in varying countries and cultures (Vidal *et al.*, 2007; Hofstede, 2000). Thus, it can be argued that there are also cultural differences in regards to what mechanisms facilitate repatriation in certain countries depending on cultural and social context and customs. Vidal *et al.* (2007) found in their study with Spanish repatriates that clarity of the organisational repatriation policies and practices increased the overall satisfaction with the repatriation process. Whereas research from Finland and the United States (Black & Gregersen, 1991; Gregersen & Stroh, 1997) does not support the notion that clarity facilitates the repatriation process. However, Black (1994) found that for Japanese repatriates clarity in the process facilitates the general adjustment. It can therefore be suggested that organisations and practitioners have to take a context specific approach towards developing efficient repatriation facilitators depending on the individual needs of the repatriate and the cultural context. However, further research is needed to test these findings, which are based on a limited number of studies and may be out-dated in today's increasingly diverse work environment.

Individuals and organisations alike often find repatriation a difficult process, however as it is frequently underestimated they are not prepared for the challenges they are faced with (Bossard & Petterson, 2005). The repatriation process generally takes between 12-18 months depending on the individual (Liu, 2005). It is supported by research that adequate repatriation support within this time period can significantly reduce turnover and turnover intentions of returning expatriates (Lazarova & Caligiuri, 2001), however many companies fail to implement adequate support systems and leave repatriates to face the challenges of repatriation themselves (Pattie, White & Tansky, 2010), which are often seen as more

traumatic than expatriation (Andreason & Kinneer, 2005). This literature review aims at pointing out a number of main challenges in the repatriation process and what mechanisms could contribute to increasing re-integration success. This would assist organisations in retaining their human resource investments rather than losing the person and their knowledge to a competitor and thereby damaging the company's global talent pipeline due to poor management (Oddou *et al.*, 2013).

With globalisation and Generation Y becoming the main force in the labour market (Kong, Wang & Fu, 2015), an increased emphasis on higher career expectations and employee emphasis on career development can be observed as well as the popularity of boundaryless careers. Kong *et al.* (2015) found that with Generation Y becoming the increasing majority in the workplace, it is important for organisations to realise that extrinsic and intrinsic value factors contribute equally or more greatly to job satisfaction than prestige and stability factors. Therefore, it is crucial that an organisation provides a stable working environment and cares for their employee's intrinsic values via providing well-structured opportunities for expatriate assignments to enhance job satisfaction. This aligns with Walmsley's findings (2007) that Generation Y expects an organisation to provide motivational factors, such as career growth opportunities and a challenging job rewarded with a high compensation package, in order to foster a long-term commitment to the organisation. It can therefore be inferred that with Generation Y becoming the main employee force, it is more important than ever before for organisations to implement adequate repatriation practises in order to meet the high expectations of this generation. The fast-paced Generation Y also does not have the same organisational loyalty as the Baby Boomer generation, which makes it even more important for organisations to increase satisfaction in repatriation process as well as overall job satisfaction to reduce turnover (Vargas, 2013). By providing tailor-made repatriation processes and career development options, organisations can enhance the job satisfaction of younger employees, which then can lead to mutually beneficial repatriation outcomes for the employee and organisation (Ahad, Osman-Gani & Hyder, 2008).

While the corporate group within repatriates is specific due to the added challenges of fitting back into the parent organisation, it still recognizes the benefits of sojourning as mentioned earlier that are applicable across repatriates at large, such as personal development, different world view and raised awareness on global matters. These aspects are welcome and sought after by organisations when screening job applicants and having previous overseas



experience may give job applicants the competitive edge to distinguish themselves from other applicants. Sojourning has thus become a recognized element to career development, whether it is self-directed or a planned business expatriate assignment. Globalisation has brought about the notion of the so-called 'boundaryless' career (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996), which provides individuals with more professional opportunities compared to the traditional view of a career where upward progression was only possible through long-standing service within an organisation (Schein, 1996; Suutari & Brewster, 2000). Carr, Inkson and Thorn (2005) point out that the boundaryless career can be more than mere mobility, but a proactive career choice of the individual to break the traditional, national career boundaries and seek the best opportunities for personal, family or career reasons, sustained by international networks, outside of the home country. The theory of a boundaryless career is based on the notion that globalisation has assisted society to develop from a structured industrial state to a more flexible 'new economy' with less pronounced boundaries, including between organisations or international work assignments as well as travel (Thomas, Lazarova & Inkson, 2005). The literature on boundaryless careers and international management recognizes the value of business professionals who are highly qualified and mobile, building their career competencies and labour market value through international work assignments or self-initiated sojourning as diversity and cross-cultural interaction is predicted to continue to increase in light of globalisation and further technological advancements (Arthur, 2005). The international management literature encourages people to take a more boundaryless approach and gain sojourning experience where possible, which allows for developing relevant and portable competencies that will benefit individuals long-term (Stahl, Miller & Tung, 2002).

The findings of Inkson *et al.* (1997) support that one of the main reasons for business professionals to accept overseas assignments is personal development, including social, cross-cultural and language skills that can be associated with the concept of a boundaryless career. The motivation to complete an expatriate assignment in order to build a boundaryless career contributes to explaining the paradox in the corporate expatriate literature: While individuals often perceive an overseas assignment as less beneficial for their external career progression (their current workplace), they value engaging in corporate expatriate assignment due to the perceived beneficial impact on their internal career, meaning for their personal and professional development (Stahl, Miller & Tung, 2002). This strongly aligns with Tung's (1998) suggestion that overseas experience is viewed as a crucial step for future career development. Tharenou (2008) supports the notion that professionals tend to expect

beneficial outcomes for their career from sojourning. She also noted that if these expectations hold true upon repatriation and the returnee finds he has better career opportunities and financial options, the repatriate is more likely to perceive the re-adjustment process to the home country as easy. It is thus not surprising that an increasing amount of people venture overseas during their studies, as part of their personal development to gain a competitive edge when graduating and applying for jobs (Salim & Uh, 2014).

### 2.3 Student Repatriates

Given the impacts of globalisation on how young adults are being educated with respect to being globally and culturally aware, it is therefore not surprising that students make up the second most researched group in regards to repatriating from a sojourn (Chamove & Soeterik, 2006; Thompson & Christofi, 2006; Yoshida *et al.*, 2003; Butcher, 2002; Gaw, 2000; Kidder, 1992; Brabant *et al.*, 1990). Since 2000 overseas study, such as school exchanges, University semesters abroad or similar cross-cultural activities have become increasingly popular among adolescents, often encouraged by society or parents in an attempt to keep up with globalisations' increasing demands on individuals to be converse in multicultural environments and global communication (Kurt *et al.*, 2013). Students who are choosing to participate in these programs expose themselves to new cultures and often a new language, while integrating an academic focus into their overseas stay to enhance the learning experience and provide the opportunity to immerse themselves deeply into the daily life in the host country.

Chow and Villarreal (2011) found that 270,000 U.S. undergraduates participated in abroad study in the academic year of 2009/2010, which converts to an increase of 88% in students choosing to study outside the United States compared to 10 years ago. However, these dramatic increases are by no means confined to the United States. Europe and other countries such as Australia have seen a similar surge in national students going abroad but also receiving more international students at the retrospective national education providers (Potts, 2015). Thus the overall increase of student movements across borders globally, generates a demand for investigating the repatriation process specific to students returning from abroad study. The ability to be proficient in at least one second language; an awareness of differences in cultures and social structures as well as economic systems are becoming requirements to be successful in today's demanding environment. Study abroad programs

can significantly contribute to achieving these goals by providing the opportunity for individuals to immerse themselves into a different culture and a relatively young age (Potts, 2015). Langran *et al.* (2009) support the argument of positive outcomes of study abroad programs by arguing that participation in an academic sojourn can provide the unique opportunity to help individuals become global citizens.

The large variety of cross-cultural sojourns and activities has contributed to its' popularity and increased part-takers, as they can choose a sojourning timeframe from short-term of a few weeks at a different school to long-term of completing a University degree abroad (Weber, 2009). The literature has defined a short-term sojourn as anything between two to 12 weeks (Friesen, 2004). Circular and shuttle migration have to be taken into account specifically for long-term student sojourners who may travel home during their holidays, being more dependent on their families than business expatriates and often having longer holidays available to them (Lidgard & Gilson, 2002). It shall also be considered those students who finish their degrees overseas may continue the natural evolution of finding a job after university. Hazen and Albert (2006) have completed a study with international students studying in the United States investigating the various factors international students consider in deciding whether to stay or go back home after completing their intended studies. The participant pool included international students from a variety of home countries and various academic disciplines but generally the majority of students reported that they had the strong intent to return home once their studies were completed. However, Hazen and Albert (2006) found that on a structural level, economic opportunities, political systems and general professional opportunities served as strong incentive to prolong the stay within the United States after completing their degrees. Whereas personal and societal factors, such as a person's family connections and general personal circumstances, can prompt the desire to return home. However there is a significant variance between individuals and the degree to which they are experiencing the pull home, based on personal factors, and that could also be attributed to different personalities (Hazen & Albert, 2006).

To facilitate the global student movement, many universities across the world have adopted similar standards to facilitate their degrees to be internationally recognized. Additionally many education providers intentionally offer cross-cultural exchange options to prepare students to work, live and contribute to an increasingly diverse world (DeFleur, 2008). New Zealand public universities have a target of 12%-20% of their total enrolment to be

international students, as they not only recognize the valuable contribution they make to their revenue streams but also the internationalisation of their university and the need for managing the influx of international student demand effectively (Smith & Rae, 2006). There is limited data available in regards to the proportion of New Zealand students that go abroad but studies have found that despite the large, and continuously increasing, number of international students in New Zealand the amount of outbound abroad students could be as low as 1% (Daly & Barker, 2005; Daly, 2007). This forms an evident contrast to the more than 5% of European undergraduate students who participate in exchange programs (Teichler & Jahr, 2001). The researchers stipulated that the low number could stem from the fact that the majority of exchange programs offered is for a time period of less than three months (Daly & Barker, 2005), which is too short to significantly benefit from the sojourn with personal development or enhancing international skills (Ward, 2003). The New Zealand Vice Chancellors committee further pointed out that low participation numbers in outbound exchanges could be due to financial and language difficulties. Additionally, it was found that the low interaction between national students and international students at New Zealand universities might indirectly discourage involvement in exchanges. However, Daly and Baker (2005) reported that New Zealand as well as Australian universities, which have equally low outbound exchange numbers, recognise the need for universities to assist students in enabling their global capabilities by fostering and encouraging exchanges, Australian universities have the goal to bring outbound student exchanges number up to 10% of total enrolment.

As Cox (2004) found, younger people often integrate into the host culture environment faster and more deeply compared to adult sojourners, which generates the hypothesis that abroad students generally immerse themselves more deeply into the host culture environment and therefore tend to experience greater culture shock and repatriation difficulties upon returning to their home country and place of education. Sorimachi (1994) supports the notion that younger repatriates may have more difficulties when returning to their home country compared to more mature sojourners as in his study all students returning from abroad study faced re-entry shock when re-adjusting to their home country Japan, regardless of the length of their sojourn. Noticable, external changes, such as to the personal presentation and style of clothing of individuals who returned from studying abroad as well as communication challenges have been found to occur among college students re-adjusting to their home country (Kidder, 1992). Psychological problems such as speech anxiety and depression as

well as feelings of alienation, insecurity and loneliness have been reported by Gaw (2000) in his study with returning American students. The extent of those feelings was found to be dependent on the degree of reverse culture shock (Gaw, 2000). The participants of that study acknowledged that personal changes may be responsible for their re-adjustment problems to the home environment, yet they reported a conscious desire to hold onto their newly acquired characteristics and identities.

Butcher (2002) also recognized the likely psychological challenges and negative feelings upon re-entry and attributed them to the lack of expectation to encounter difficulties and the consequent lack of acceptance of experiencing re-entry grief. In his qualitative study with 50 New Zealand University graduates, who were originally from Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia or Hong Kong, he highlighted the challenges faced by graduates during the re-adjustment process to their home country. Butcher (2002) proposed that re-entry shall be viewed as a grieving process, which cannot be openly acknowledged or mourned. Thus, individuals tend to deal with this grief without any support that in turn may intensify the feelings of sadness, loneliness, anger or numbness, all psychological feelings associated with grief in general. The main areas pointed out as challenging by the participants in his study were, 1) returning to family ties 2) their change in worldview and its acceptance 3) expectations for their return home. Participants reported to struggle with having to move back in with family, which often was reported to cause tension, and against their expectation were finding it difficult to find work after their overseas study, which made them even more dependent on their parents. Mooradian (2004) supports Butcher's (2002) findings that international students can face a variety of difficulties upon repatriating to their home country and emphasizes that the gravity of the problems is often worsened by returning students expecting home to be exactly like it was when they left. He argues that this is a distinct difference between culture shock and reverse culture shock, where the problems are often completely unexpected. The majority of participants in Mooradian's (2004) study reported that they felt people and consequent relationships had changed while they were abroad, which they were not prepared for. The study suggests that a perceived lack of support from their changed social network at home and the insecurity as to where the returnee fits into the social network can contribute to the repatriate feeling lonely, lost or sad upon coming home.

As becomes apparent, many studies point out the increased independence student sojourners gain overseas (Butcher, 2002; DeFleur, 2008; Potts 2015). Thus, it can be said that a study

abroad program often poses the first significant step to independence for many young adults, which may lead them to experience more significant self-development and upon re-entry a perceived loss of significantly improved conditions. This is directly related to Cox's (2004) study, indicating that younger individuals may undergo more profound identity changes while they are overseas by immersing themselves more deeply into the host culture and having a less established self-identity compared to adults. Consequently numerous researches propose home-country education providers should take a more pro-active role in providing re-entry assistance to returning students to facilitate the often challenging re-integration into the home environment and appreciate and utilize the benefits acquired from the sojourn (Westwood & Leung, 1986; Shata & Shata, 2015).

However, empirical research findings in the field of student's repatriation and re-adjustment are inconsistent as Brabant *et al.* (1990), in their study with U.S. students, did not find that younger student sojourners had more significant re-entry problems or, as found by Sorimachi (1994), even consistently experienced re-entry shock to some degree or the other. In fact surveying the 96 U.S. returnee students in their study, Brabant *et al.* (1990) found that only few reported re-entry challenges. Very little research provides insight as to how returnee students are treated by their peers and other individuals in the home-country and how they react to the repatriate re-adjusting, however it is generally suggested that peers display some degree of dislike or prejudice against the returnee, often fostered by the fact that they have not experienced anything similar (Adler, 1981). As the reactions of peers to the repatriate play an empirical role in the re-adjustment process at large more research is needed in this area to understand the various contributing factors to the repatriation process of students returning from abroad in more detail.

## **2.4 Self-Initiated Expatriation and Return**

Beyond the two most studied groups of business and student returnees the literature offers insight into other self-initiated sojourns such as volunteers, missionaries, extended travellers but also returning migrants (Storti, 1997; Schlossberg, 1988; Stringham, 1993; Bell, 2002; Hugo *et al.*, 2003; Cassario, 2004; Gill, 2005; Nerdrum & Sarpebakken, 2006; Howe-Walsh & Schyns, 2010 King & Christou, 2010).

There have been a number of studies dedicated to self-initiated volunteering sojourns and while there are strong similarities in regards to the re-entry concerns of this group compared to other repatriates Stein (1966) found some re-entry aspects to be unique to returning volunteers. A distinction in areas of concern upon re-entry is especially evident between corporate repatriates, whose main concerns centre around work adjustment and career progression, whereas returning volunteers find it most challenging to adapt to and re-develop an understanding for the materialism, fast pace of living, waste of products and ignorance of people in their home country (U.S. Peace Corps & Graul, 1996, Bosustow, 2006). However, despite the experienced re-entry difficulties in different re-adjustment areas, the interpersonal changes volunteers experience such as acquiring a more open-minded and liberal attitude as well as developing better understanding for others, seem to be consistent with repatriates at large (Haan, 1974; Howe-Walsh & Schyns, 2010). Schlossberg (1988) found that a distinction should be made between voluntary and non-voluntary returns of volunteering repatriates. An unplanned early termination of the volunteering sojourn for emergency evacuation reasons or similar has the tendency to increase re-entry stress and contribute to negative psychological feelings that may result in depression, anxiety or disorientation because the individual had limited opportunity to physically and mentally prepare for leaving (Schlossberg, 1988).

The literature on missionary sojourners emphasizes the importance of family dynamics and considering the entire family unit rather than the main individuals when it comes to understanding the re-entry processes among this group (Stringham, 1993). Additionally, there is a specifically strong emphasis on belief and spiritual re-adjustment upon returning home for missionaries, which can be one of the main causes for re-entry distress if previously established rituals or spiritual practises are difficult to continue at home (Moore *et al.*, 1987).

Returning migrants are sparsely researched in the academic literature and generally this research focuses on individuals who sojourned with the intent of it being a temporary move rather than intending to move permanently and then unexpectedly changing the mind and moving back to the home country (Cassario, 2004; Lidgard & Gilson, 2002). Existing literature suggests that return migration is a much more complex issue than returning from sojourning as a transnationally rooted sense of belonging has to be negotiated by migrants (de Bree, Davids & de Haas, 2010), re-emphasising the argument that the longer people live abroad the more their cultural identity and sense of belonging changes, which makes re-

adapting to the home country difficult (Sussman, 2002; Forster, 1994). Constant and Zimmerman (2011) conducted a study on circular and repeat migrants to Germany and found that more than 60% of the migrants in their sample were in fact repeat or circular migrants coming to Germany to work and returning to their home country intermittently. They found that males and migrants with a German passport exited Germany more frequently, those who have family in the home country remained out for longer and those with higher education tend to exit less. Influencing factors for migrants to make the decision to move back home after intending to stay in the host country permanently can include socio-political factors (Ammassari, 2004), economical factors (Rhoades, 1977) as well as technological factors (Zweig *et al.*, 2006), which strongly align with the re-adjustment areas identified above.

While the majority of repatriation literature focuses on the corporate environment, it becomes obvious that numerous groups of people sojourn for different reasons yet face similar re-entry challenges. Onwumechili *et al.* (2003) suggest that international movements and transitions shall be recognized as dynamic processes rather than a static outcome due to the increasingly high mobility of a small but significant number of individuals. Self-initiated sojourns can result in circular migration, which is recognized in the existing literature as an age-old pattern of mobility, either in the rural-urban context or, applicable to this research, cross-boarder context (Chapman, 1979; Lidgard & Gilson, 2002; Constant & Zimmerman, 2011). The majority of circular migration has addressed the unregulated circulation patterns, which result from migrants taking initiative and organising their cross-boarder moves themselves between home-country and places of work, as opposed to the regulated sojourning or migration systems organised for employees by their organisation (Duany, 2002; Constant & Zimmerman, 2004). As mentioned above, a considerable proportion of migrants are not moving abroad for the first time but have engaged in multiple trips between their home country and abroad workplace already, which studies have recognized increases 'migration-specific capital' as with every move migrants increase their knowledge about migration, jobs and housing as well as social connections and experiences that facilitate the migrating process and therewith indirectly encourage circular migration (Vertovec, 2007).

The concept of the boundaryless career, introduced earlier, may therefore be also directly relevant to a large number of non-business sojourners, who relocate and travel for extended periods of time voluntarily and take a proactive approach to migrating (Thomas, Lazarova & Inkson, 2005). While their motivations to sojourn may not be directly career related, it can be



inferred that it will make them more employable, aligning with Schein's (1996) findings that globalisation is making the business environment more international and careers more global due to increased global competition. This, in turn, creates the need for organisations to employ people with international experience and capitalize on their knowledge gained from overseas experiences. While research remains limited, several studies (Oddou, Medenhall & Ritchie, 2000; Carpenter, Sanders & Gregersen, 2000; Suutari & Brewster, 2000; Gill, 2005; Nerdrum & Sarpebakken, 2006) point out that overseas experience, either company sponsored or self-initiated is essential for developing global leaders in today's world, as career progression has shifted from a traditional upward promotion system to a more holistic competence building and best-fit perspective (Suutari & Mäkelä, 2007). Similarly, Mäkelä and Suutari (2009) recognize the importance of social capital that many people who sojourn develop. This is, individuals who had to adapt to a new culture tend to develop valuable social skills that allow them to relate to a wide range of people easily. Additionally, returnees commonly built extensive relationship networks internationally, which organisations may hope to capitalize from. Therefore, sojourning and returning whether organisationally organised or self-initiated, is an important concept for organisations to take into account as it diversifies and alters the talent pool they are recruiting from. But it also has to be recognized as a major life and career changing event for individuals choosing to sojourn. However, while sojourning can have benefits for personal and career development as explained above, individuals often face a number of challenges in order to derive at these benefits, such as the concept of culture-shock and reversed culture-shock.

## **2.5 Culture Shock**

Regardless of where people sojourn to or for what reasons, they take their culture and embedded behavioural norms with them, which generally serve as a framework for interpersonal and social interactions (Stewart & Leggat, 1998). The contact with an unfamiliar culture, or overwhelming newness, can affect people on various levels including emotionally, behaviourally, physically and intellectually showing in symptoms of psychological distress (Stewart & Leggat, 1998). However for most sojourners it is an accepted and recognized stage of confusion and anxiety that is as part of cross-cultural adjustment in the beginning of their overseas stay (Xia, 2009). However, most do not expect those similar feelings to return upon reintegrating home (Furnham, 2012).

The term culture shock has been coined by Oberg (1960) and is widely recognized to describe “anxiety that results from losing all of our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse” (1960, p.177). Generally, there are three main reasons an individual would experience culture shock, as pictured in Figure 1, those reasons are: 1) loss of familiar cues, 2) breakdown of interpersonal communications, and 3) an identity crisis (Furnham, 2012). Studies have shown that culture shock is not exclusive to expatriation and the process of adjusting to a host culture but it can equally occur upon returning home and re-adjusting to ones home culture (Gaw, 2000). Although the conceptual academic literature argues that no repatriate is exempt from experiencing reverse culture shock to some degree (Adler, 1981; Zapf, 1991), empirical literature does not support that notion conclusively across studies but it generally recognize that children and adolescents may experience the impact of culture shock more severely (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Gaw, 2000).

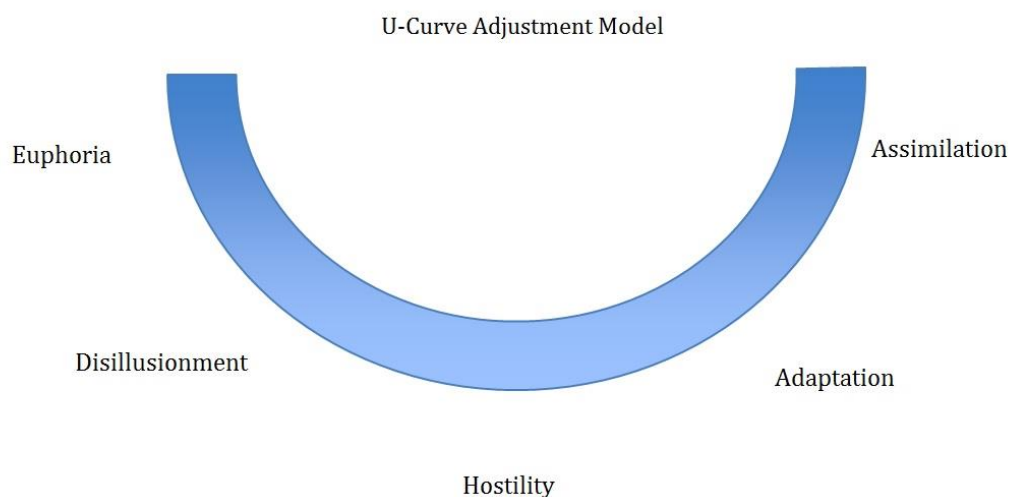


Figure 1: The U-curve model of culture shock. After Hottola (2004).

Due to the multifaceted challenge sojourning and returning home presents, it is regarded to have the potential to accelerate personal growth (Milstein, 2005). While culture shock generally has a negative connotation (Ward *et al.*, 2001), many researchers highlight the positive affects on cultural learning and personal growth and see it as a valuable learning experience that enhances intercultural understanding (Adler, 1975; Furnham & Bocher, 1986; Kim 2001; Ward *et al*, 2001). Kim (2001) argued that ‘intercultural personhood’ can

be an emerging benefit resulting from higher levels of intercultural competence gained on the sojourning experience.

Within the existing literature the majority of research has focused on the initial adjustment of sojourners to the host culture (Caliguiri, 2000; Black & Stephens, 1989). While career aspirations and living preferences may gradually change while living in the host country, many sojourners return home eventually due to family ties, sense of security, commitments, immigration or career promotions (Shen & Herr, 2004). The re-adjustment or repatriation of sojourners back to their home country after living abroad for an extended period of time has received little attention in the academic literature, yet research has recognized it can be just as challenging if not more challenging than integrating into a host culture (Andreason & Kinneer, 2005; Martin & Harrell, 2004; Martin, 1984). It is often perceived a difficult process, as sojourners frequently underestimated the implications and are therefore not prepared for the challenges they are faced with (Bossard & Petterson, 2005). Similarly, individuals sojourning for an extended period of time, have little to no opportunity to assess changes in their home country and evaluate them against their personal changes (MacDonald & Arthur, 2003). Upon returning home the person is faced with a sudden confrontation of the critical changes in their home environment and forced to assess quickly how they fit into those changes to complete the adjustment process (Wielkiewicz & Turkowski, 2010).

This process can cause the sojourner to experience distress and a perception of loss and grief in regards to the previously held conditions (Chamove & Soeterik, 2006). The problems and challenges encountered upon repatriation largely stem from unfulfilled expectations and therewith the perceived gap between reality and expectation (Suutari & Brewster, 2005; Rogers & Ward, 1993). Martin's (1984) research was one of the first to recognize and support that sojourners have very different expectations concerning the acculturation process to the host environment, where individuals expect to be faced with newness and difficulties adjusting to a foreign environment. Additionally members of the host environment recognize that the sojourner may be facing difficulty and are more accommodating towards assisting their re-adjustment. However, upon returning to the home country, not only is the repatriate not expecting to be facing any challenges as they are unaware of changes in the home environment and within themselves but also their family and friends do not expect them to be facing any difficulties and are thus not supporting the readjustment process as would be necessary (Gaw, 2000).

The sudden confrontation sojourners face upon coming home may be enhanced by the ‘out-of-sight, out-of-mind’ syndrome, which can occur when a person goes overseas for an extended period of time and is not in consistent contact with people at home (Black, Gregersen & Medenhall, 1992). While the ‘out-of-sight, out-of-mind’ phenomena has mainly been investigated as part of the corporate repatriation process (Stahl & Cerdin, 2004; Gregersen & Stroh, 1997; Harvey, 1989; Adler, 1981) it can be hypothesised that it also has a direct correlation to the re-adjustment of non-corporate sojourners. This is due to the fact that business- as well as non-business sojourners alike build new networks and integrate into their host culture environment which may lead them to compromise or neglect their contacts in the home country (Gregersen & Stroh, 1997). While the considerable physical distance and the involvement in new experiences makes staying in touch or networking in the home country more difficult, literature suggests sojourners should make an effort to keep engaged and updated on proceedings in the home country to avoid disappointment and confusion upon repatriation (Joniken *et al.*, 2008). It can also be upsetting for the repatriate to realize that while they were ‘out of sight’ they were also ‘out of mind’ for their peers. Namely, the repatriate realized that nobody within the organisation was directly affected by his or her absence. Similarly, peers may be impatient listening to the repatriate’s overseas experiences rather than idolizing the repatriate for the overseas achievements and experiences as may be expected (Suutari & Brewster, 2003).

The repatriation process generally takes between 12-18 months depending on the individual (Liu, 2005). However, this may vary substantially depending on the variety of personal internal external factors influencing the unique repatriation experience and the diverse cultural, employment and family dimensions as well as the subsequent extent of mobility and connection to other locations following the re-entry. Conceptual frameworks, such as the U-curve and W-curve model, have attempted to depict the different stages within the expatriation experience and provide intuitive insight into the process, however their inherent limitation of overgeneralizing and potentially being out-dated in light of recent technological advancements (Cox, 2004).

## 2.6 Curve Adjustment Models

As mentioned earlier, people planning to travel abroad are generally aware of the culture shock phenomena, they may experience upon integrating into a new environment and unfamiliar culture (Adler, 1975; Oberg, 1960). Lysgaard (1955) developed a U-curve model (Figure 2), which depicts the adjustment process of sojourners. It includes the initial ‘honeymoon stage’, where the sojourners experiences euphoria upon first arriving in the host country. This is followed by a stage of depression or anxiety when the sojourners encounters and realizes the difficulties and differences associated with adjusting to a new culture. Lastly, in the ‘recovery stage’ individuals adjust to the new culture and positive feelings become more dominant again. Oberg’s research (1960) supports the model of the U-curve and its described intercultural adjustment process, however, Church (1982) reviewed a number of studies and concluded that empirical evidence supporting the U-curve theory is weak as he found readjustment challenges do not fall into a concise patter but rather exist over a wide range.

The U-curve model was adapted and expanded upon by Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) who developed a W-curve model (Figure 2) to include the repatriation phase and therewith re-adjustment of a sojourner to their home country and culture.

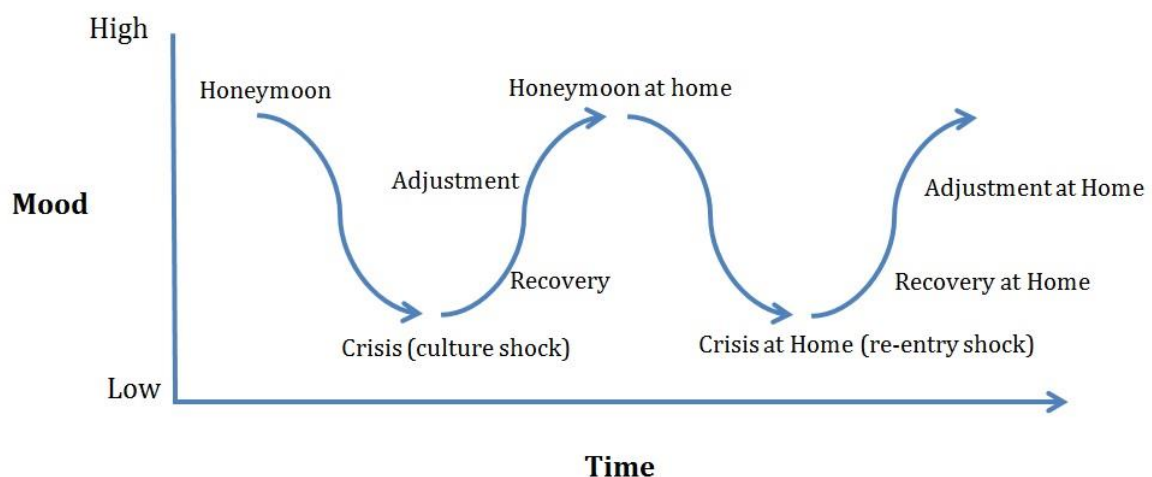


Figure 2: The W-Curve model. After Gullahorn & Gullahorn (1963).

Their W-curve model depicts that sojourners undergo a second phase of adjustment upon returning to their home country, identical to the initial host culture adjustment, characterised by initial euphoria, a phase of depression and anxiety before levelling to a satisfied readjustment. They argue that this is due to the fact sojourners are out of phase with the home culture and previously commonly accepted behaviour, practices or social norms in the home country, which may be perceived as annoying or undesirable upon returning home (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963).

Christofi and Thompson (2007) support that adjusting to a new culture may leave sojourners with expectations and behaviour that is incompatible with their home culture as values have been shaped by the time abroad. The W-model includes the important stage of readjustment as part of the sojourning experience, which can cause as much emotional stress and anxiety as adapting to a new environment. However, an inherent limitation of this model is the lack of insight into the gravity of challenges faced as part of re-entry shock depended on a variety of factors and can vary depending on the individual, which are not accounted for in the W-curve model (Uehara, 1983).

Academic research evaluating the applicability of the W-curve model is divided. Sussman (2001) challenges the curve-linearity of the re-adjustment process depicted by the W-curve model. Other studies criticise the model for its assumption of direct correspondence between the cultural adjustment and re-adjustment process (Onwumechili *et al.*, 2003). Ley and Kobayashi (2005) similarly argue that migration and re-migration cannot be viewed as a linear process but shall be viewed as a dynamic one, aligning with Onwumechili *et al.* (2003) suggestion for a multiple re-acculturation model to understand complex international transitions as part of the life course. While studies report a variety of challenges for returning sojourners, the specific problems are variable for each individual and will influence the degree of readjustment difficulty encountered upon re-adjustment. Studies report re-adjustment problems such as: 1) depression and grief, 2) anxiety, 3) interpersonal difficulties, 4) cultural identity conflict, 5) academic/work problems (Rogers & Ward, 1993; Furukawa, 1997; Gaw, 2000; Cox, 2004; Chamove & Soeterik, 2006). Additionally, Gaw (2000) points out that repatriates may be facing challenges such as disorientation, value confusion, anger, helplessness and disorientation.

While some repatriates may not experience the full gravity of re-adjustment, other returning sojourners face serious difficulty and their response to the re-entry process can be described as severe. A study conducted by Raschio (1987) examined the re-entry problems of 11 study abroad-students via interviews upon their return to the United States. His findings report that some returnees experienced only mild emotional dissonance, while others re-entry experiences were much more severe, combating feelings of alienation, isolation as well as hopelessness. Overall, these students did report increased feelings of autonomy and independence after returning as well as a sense of personal change and value clarification.

These findings are consistent with later studies such as Walling *et al.* (2006) who examined readjustment problems of returned missionaries via focus groups. More than a third of their participants reported notable re-entry difficulties, however the main challenges reported were the overall negative perception of the home culture, which is consistent with the research of Chamove and Soeterik (2006) that states repatriates may experience feelings of grief or loss upon re-entry and alienate against their home culture. The cultural identity concept allows for understanding into the possible reasons for perceived negative feelings towards the home culture.

## **2.7 Cultural Identity**

The findings of the above studies are also consistent with the concept of cultural identity. Cultural identity has the potential to significantly influence the repatriation process alongside other factors (Lövblad, 2007). Repatriates may not always be aware of cultural changes that take place over time as this is a slow process. Additionally, they may not realize to what extent they have changed personally until returning home (MacDonald & Arthur, 2003). Cox (2004) assessed cultural identity patterns and classified them as home favoured, host favoured, integrated and disintegrated. He found that experienced depression and social difficulty was lowest in individuals with high home - or host country intercultural identities. Disintegrated cultural identity was associated with the highest level of depression. He also found that expatriates who favoured the host countries cultural identity displayed the highest level in social difficulty upon repatriation. It can thus be said that the more successful the adaptation to the host country is, the more difficult and distressing the re-adjustment to the home country tends to be (Kohonen, 2008; Brein & David, 1971; Brisling, 1981). Similarly, a theory of the transition cycle based on a psychological framework was proposed by

Sussman (2002), which focused on self-concept and associated cultural identity. The proposed cultural identity model (CIM) suggests four critical aspects: 1) self-concept incorporates cultural identity as a critical aspect, 2) the essence of cultural identity is related to cultural transition, 3) cultural identity is fluid and dynamic meaning it changes and adapts as a consequence of overseas experiences and self-concept changes, 4) any shifts in one's cultural identity serve as a mediator between cultural adjustment and the re-integration experience. Sussman (2002) also reported that expatriates with weak home country cultural identity perceived repatriation as most challenging. From that it can be inferred that it would be beneficial for organisations and self-initiated sojourners to critically assess ones cultural identity in order to anticipate possible re-entry problems. However, similar to the curve models, using the concept of cultural identity limits insight into individual re-adjustment problems and generalises influencing factors too much to be deemed an exhaustive measure.

## **2.8 Individual Re-adjustment Factors, Internal and External**

As recognized by illustrating the limitations of the W-curve model and cultural identity concept, it is essential to investigate repatriation as the multifaceted challenge it is and consider the numerous contributing variables, which can be divided into internal and external contributing factors (Jassawalla, Connolly & Slojkowski, 2004; Suutari & Valimaa, 2002; Gregersen & Stroh, 1997). Research has introduced numerous variables that can contribute to the gravity of difficulties experienced as part of the re-entry phenomena depending on individual differences. A number of factors can have a direct impact on a repatriates psychological re-adjustment, socio-cultural re-adjustment as well as overall satisfaction with the process of reintegrating into the home culture.

### **2.8.1 Internal Variables**

#### **2.8.1.1 Age**

Age is a frequently researched variable in consideration of its correlation with re-entry problems. Numerous studies have indicated a positive correlation between re-entry adjustment and age, associating higher age of the repatriate with less re-entry distress (Hyder & Lövblad, 2007; Cox, 2004; Rohrlich & Martin, 1991). Age can not only serve as an indicator of the psychological distress experienced upon re-entry but is also associated with



the degree of social difficulties experienced upon returning to the home country (Cox, 2004). This is consistent with the research of Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) as well as Gaw (2000), who recognize that children and adolescents may experience the impact of culture shock more severely. Cox (2004) argues that this could be attributed to the higher cultural learning abilities of children and adolescents as well as their ability to adjust to the new culture more coherently, which can result in a more radical identity change during the sojourn and therefore lead to greater re-adjustment difficulty upon re-entry. It is relevant to note that older research questions the relationship between age and re-entry difficulties (Uehara, 1986; Hammer *et al.*, 1998), and a study by Suutari and Välimaa (2002) found the contrary to above research, that older repatriates experienced more difficulties than younger returnees. Zhou (2014) found that the age of the repatriate and retrospective stage in the career influence re-entry success to Japanese multi-national corporations. Lui (2005) used the age and career related theory to suggest that a person's age and career stage has an influence on the psychological contract to the organisation, which is argued to be an indicator for repatriation success (Yan, Zhou & Hall, 2002; Gerber *et al.*, 2012). He found that the different career stages of an employee evoke differing characteristics of psychological contracts, arguing that younger people (age 30–45 years old) in the determining stages of their career view the relationship with the organisation as purely transactional, whereas mature employees (age >55 years old) perceive it as balanced and relational where mutual loyalty is an indicator for repatriation success (Lui, 2005). However, more mature employees may be reluctant to expose themselves to the often stressful expatriate experience and Enderwick and Hodgson's (1993) found in their study with New Zealand organisations that employees between the age of 31-40 years old were deemed as most suitable for expatriates assignments and share their subsequent knowledge and experience within the organisation upon their return.

#### 2.8.1.2 Relationship status

Research has found that single sojourners are more likely to experience depression or anxiety compared to sojourners who are in a relationship or married and experience the return process together with their partner (Hyder & Lövblad, 2007). This is due to the fact that they share similar re-entry problems and repatriation is facilitated as they can emphasise, understand and support each other through the difficult time (Huffman, 1989; Moore *et al.*, 1987; Martin & Harrell, 2004). Thus relationship status of sojourners can be recognized as an

influential factor predicting re-adjustment problems. Additionally, Cox (2004) found that single sojourners tend to identify more strongly with the host culture and experience greater social difficulty upon returning to the home country. This is supported by the research of Hyder and Lövblad (2007), who developed a re-entry model showing that sojourners returning as singles experience greater re-entry difficulties compared to those returning in relationships. A lot of the international human resource literature has recognized that positive re-adjustment patterns of a spouse often positively influence the work performance and repatriation success of an expatriate into the company, and can result in consequent retention likelihood (Andreason & Kineer, 2005; Black *et al.*, 1992; MacDonald & Arthur, 2003).

### 2.8.1.3 Gender

A number of empirical studies have been dedicated to investigating a correlation between gender and repatriation difficulties, and suggest a significant difference in the way male and female tend to perceive re-entry (Rohrlich & Martin, 1990). It is important to distinguish that the re-adjustment difficulties of female-spouses, as opposed to single female sojourners would differ significantly (Martin & Harrell, 2004). There is a limited number of existing literature available on the potential effect of gender on repatriation difficulties but it has been found that females tend to experience greater re-entry distress compared to males (Brabant *et al.*, 1990; Rohrlich & Martin, 1991), especially single female sojourners (Martin & Harrell, 2004). The traditional role of females and their assumed responsibility in regards to family and household management in addition to their normal working hours can also add additional strain in the re-adjustment process (Cox, 2004). This is consistent with Gama and Pedersen (1977) who highlight the family challenges returning females are facing and their assumed responsibility for the smooth re-adjustment process and general well-being of the rest of the family, which may leave them struggling to successfully meet their expected role themselves upon re-entry. However, there are still inconsistencies in the literature creating a demand to research the correlation further as Sussman (2001) found no significant relationship between gender and re-adjustment problems. Enderwick and Hodgeson's (1993) conducted semi-structured interviews with 39 New Zealand companies on their expatriate management practices and found that the majority, 65%, of their selected expatriates were male. Although females were interested in expatriate assignments, their findings showed that organisations were reluctant to send female employees on overseas assignments. This further aligns with the sexism in regards to expatriation selection pointed out by Brewster (1991) and Vance

(2002), indicating that females appear to have less opportunity to expatriates and the research on gender differences is therefore inherently limited. Yet, research has shown that the benefits resulting from overseas experience could be greater for females than males as they were found to be more receptive to empathetic, which helped them integrate into the host-environment faster, especially in self-initiated expatriation where females had the opportunity to choose less risky, more secure sojourning destinations that provided advanced career opportunities, resulting in greater career capital (Myers & Pringle, 2005).

#### 2.8.1.4 Prior intercultural experience

It can be argued that individuals who have prior intercultural experience and have undergone a process of re-adjustment will be more likely to have more realistic expectations in regards to repatriation (Martin & Harrell, 2004). This is supported by the cultural identity theory and Sussman (2002) suggests that numerous re-integrations to the home culture may reflect upon the cultural identity of the individual by strengthening the home country cultural identity patterns. A study by Cui and Awa (1992) also found that prior overseas experience was a valid indication for better adaptation to future overseas assignments due to the experience gathered in coping and dealing with cultural differences. However, further research is needed as Cox (2004) did not establish a significant correlation between ease of repatriation and prior intercultural experience.

### 2.8.2 External Variables

#### 2.8.2.1 Length of sojourn and time since return

An obvious external lending variable in influencing repatriation difficulties is the length of time the individual has spent abroad. Studies have found that the longer a person sojourns, the more integrated the individual becomes in the host culture and adapts behaviour, attitude and cultural identity patterns (Sussman, 2002; Forster, 1994). Older research found no connection between the length of sojourn and degree of re-entry challenges (Uehara, 1986). Similarly, Gregersen and Stroh (1997) found in their study that Finnish repatriates experience significant difficulties re-adjusting to work and the home environment but the length of sojourn did not serve as a valid indicator for general re-adjustment. However, other research did find a correlation between length of sojourn and re-adjustment although not

conclusive as Black *et al.* (1991) found that the length of sojourn is an influencing variable to the re-adjustment process but only in the context of work. In contrast, Suutari and Valimaa (2002) found that there is no correlation between the variables for predicting re-adjustment in a work context but did find length of sojourn a valid predictor for possible challenges with the general re-adjustment to the home country. A study concerning Turkish migrants found that the length of time abroad was directly correlated to the repatriation distress experienced (Sahin, 1990). Additionally, the time since arriving back home can be used as an indicator of re-adjustment challenges as they are recognized to decrease over time when an individual gradually re-adapts to the home environment (Gregersen & Stroh, 1997). Furthermore, Yoshida *et al.* (2002) found that repatriates who returned to the home country more recently were displaying higher amounts of re-adjustment distress and difficulties. Supporting this notion, Hervey (2009) found that repatriates who had spent longer in the home country had re-adjusted better and were experiencing fewer difficulties compared to repatriates who returned more recently. This was attributed to repatriates having more time to find and re-adjust their identity within the home environment and re-adapt to the culture and behavioural norms. However the research of Brabant, Palmer and Gramling (1990) reported that time since re-entry was not an indicating variable to how the repatriate experienced the re-adjustment, arguing that it depends on individual internal factors as to how well somebody re-adjusts, which are introduced in section 2.8.1 .

#### 2.8.2.2 Cultural distance

Additionally, the cultural distance between home country and host country has been argued in the literature to have an effect on repatriation as it can affect the degree of change within the individual (Arnaez *et al.*, 2014). Numerous studies recognize that the challenges in regards to cultural difference between host and home country can be particularly influenced by social norms and freedom (Black *et al.* 1992b; Gregersen & Stroh, 1997; Kidder, 1992). Directly influenced by cultural distance is the behavioural aspect of repatriation based on the Culture Learning theory (Furnham & Bochner, 1986). This means that sojourners learn and internalize new behaviours which are expected in the host country. This may then lead to some old behavioural patterns from the home country being forgotten or replaced by new behavioural responses learned in adapting to the host culture. Generally, it can therefore be said that the greater the cultural distance between home and host country, the greater the divergence of behavioural responses, which often results in repatriates having to re-learn the

social skills and familiarize themselves with behavioural norms of the home country upon returning (Kidder, 1992). Behavioural control has been pointed out as one of the most important aspects to successful re-adjustment by Black *et al.* (1992b), which can be facilitated by cognitive adjustment before the return home. The Cultural Learning theory encompasses that successful adaptation to the host environment predicts successful and less stressful re-adaptation upon repatriation due to having acquired adaptive skills in the expatriation process, which will be re-used upon repatriation (Ward *et al.*, 2001). However, there are critics of this theory, arguing that host country adaptation is unrelated to repatriation and questioning whether the skills acquired during the sojourn have a future use or are discarded upon repatriation (Selmer, Ebrahimi & Li, 2000).

### 2.8.2.3 Contact with home-country individuals

As alluded to earlier, individuals who remain in consistent contact with individuals in the home country and keep themselves informed about current proceedings may experience fewer difficulties upon re-entry (Cox, 2004; Brabant *et al.*, 1990; Butcher, 2009). To minimize anxiety and stress-levels concerning the repatriation process Black *et al.* (1992) suggested that it is beneficial to include frequent home visits to maintain one's cultural identity and relationships in the country of origin. Similarly, Cox (2004) found in his study that less home visits were correlated with higher distress and anxiety levels of repatriates. While the considerable physical distance makes networking in the home country more difficult, sojourners who make an effort to stay engaged with home-country contacts can reduce disappointment and confusion upon repatriation (Berry, 2005; Joniken *et al.*, 2008). Cox (2004) notes that the use of modern technologies such as e-mail and internet play an important role in staying connected with home-country individuals. Further studies are needed as technologies have continued to advance and are used more commonly, thus contact with home-country individuals will need to be addressed in the contemporary environment. The concept of staying in contact with home-country individuals is also directly related to cultural identity as scholars have found that major disruptions to a sojourner's social circles can bring about greater identity change. The neglecting and loosening of contact to home country individuals tends to create instability to a sojourner's cultural identity, which makes it more receptive to adapt to surrounding host-culture norms (Kohonen, 2005; Shaffer *et al.*, 2012; Sussman, 2000). However, studies also found that extensive social contact with host-country nationals has the potential to assist sojourners in

coping with the stressful adjustment period of adapting to a new culture, which often makes sojourners more aware of their own cultural values and assumptions (Molinsky, 2007; Kohonen, 2008; Sussman, 2000), and the increased host culture-contact may lead to adopting new cultural values and changes in the sojourner's cultural identity (Kohonen, 2005).

#### 2.8.2.4 Contact with host country individuals

The amount and quality of contact with host-country individuals has been argued by scholars to act as a predictor for re-entry challenges (Rohrlich & Martin, 1991). Superficial integration within the host country, or dissatisfaction with living there has been found to bring about an inclination to repatriate (Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010). Kim (2001) found that the quality and amount of contact with host country individuals correlate positively with expatriation adjustment. It can therefore be argued that the more a sojourner interacts with host country nationals, the more immersed and adapted the person becomes into the host culture, which will bring about greater changes in cultural identity and adoption of new behavioural patterns (Sussman, 2002; Furnham & Bochner, 1986). Additionally strong ties with people from the host country can provide in-depth cultural knowledge (Van Vianen *et al.*, 2004), resources that make living in a new place easier and more fun (Farh *et al.*, 2010) as well as emotional support, which assists sojourners in adjusting their behaviour and perceptions to the host culture (Mao & Shen, 2015). However, further empirical research is needed to test this relationship as Hammer *et al.* (1998) did not find a connection between contact with host country individuals and re-entry challenges in their empirical research but do point out the need for further research in this area.

## 2.9 The Concept of Home

The concept of home has mainly been explored in the psychology literature without a direct link to the repatriation literature. However, it should be considered as one of the crucial forces influencing the repatriation process. The concept of home stands in relation to Maslows' (1970) identification of the 'need to belong' as one of the most basic human needs that need to be fulfilled in order for the individual to be content. Embedded within the construct and concept of home is a sense of security and Hogarth (2015) found that it is this sense of security that draws people back to their home or make a safer place home. This is associated with the existing literature on Sense of Community, which states that sense of

belonging and sense of community increase the longer somebody has resided in a particular community, especially if the person has been brought up in the community (Prezza *et al.*, 2001), which then generates feelings of security that may prompt a return if the individual is feeling stressed, unhappy or generally dissatisfied elsewhere. Numerous literature recognizes that the concept of home is not only a physical place but also carries an emotional link of security, sense of belonging, relationship and selfhood (Gorman-Murray & Dowling, 2007; Wiles, 2008; Mallett, 2004). Nowicka (2007) similarly recognizes that home is not necessarily a fixed place but often the relationship to people and things associated with home is even more important. However, the literature on belonging is highly contested and the concept of home remains elusive. Due to globalisation and more opportunities for fluid mobility movements the fixity of home in regards to it being a place has been challenged and geographical boundaries which once were notorious indicators of who belonged or didn't belong to the area or nation may have been outdated (Antonisch, 2010). This is also remarked upon by Chow (1993, p.15): "The question of borders should not be a teleological one. It is not so much about the transient eventually giving way to the permanent as it is about the existential conditions of which permanence itself is an ongoing fabrication."

Some literature suggests that the concept of home should be viewed as a dynamic process rather than a fixed object, which involves seeking emotional commitment and personal security in new locations the person may sojourn to (Valentine, 2001). This process has been termed 'home-making-practice' by Blunt (2007), which stipulates that individuals create their home on an on-going basis, mediated by their interactions with self, others and the current location. However, despite the need to belong, not everybody gets to experience or claim belonging. This becomes particularly evident when considering racialized groups and immigrants but also applies to expatriates who may not experience the same level of belonging in a foreign country as at home, especially in the initial stages of their sojourn (Liu, 2014). However, the existing literature recognizes that not everybody associates the concept of home with positive emotions such as joy, comfort and protection for everybody, on the contrary depending on upbringing and past experiences some may associate negative feelings such as alienation, fear, violence or conflict with the concept of home (Brickell, 2012).

## 2.10 Applying Repatriation to the New Zealand Context

New Zealand is often described as a very mobile nation especially with the common conception of the 'OE' as part of rite of passage for young adults. The popularity of extended travelling and migrating could possibly be attributed back to New Zealand's history of colonial settlement as the country was originally populated by individuals from Europe with a history of mobility (McCarter, 2001). Since then New Zealand has always had a close link to Britain and the concept of 'cultural cringe' which persisted in New Zealand until the 1950s further motivated individuals to travel to Britain as a 'cultural necessity' (Ell, 1994; Bell 2002). Thus the migration of New Zealanders appears deeply anchored in the colonial roots of the country and the availability and ease of acquiring working holiday visas for a wide variety of countries further fostered these concepts today (Wilson, Fisher & Moore, 2006). The New Zealand 'overseas experience' (OE) or gap year is little researched in the academic literature (Lidgard & Gilson, 2002; Inkson & Myer, 2003; Bell, 2002), which is surprising as it is a clearly understood and well-integrated phenomenon in everyday life, as well as documented in fiction or literary biographies (Bell, 2002). The mobile notion of the nation is easily captured in daily living experiences by hearing people planning their travels and saving money for their OE, parents missing their adult children who have ventured overseas or people talking about travelling tips and their favourite destinations (de Pont, 2012). Little is known about the characteristics or dynamics of volunteer sojourns, especially New Zealand volunteer sojourners, as no existing research is offering much insight into the repatriation of sojourning volunteers (Hudson & Inkson, 2006) and it is thus a requirement for future research. Hudson and Inkson (2006) investigated the motivators and personality characteristics of 48 New Zealand NZ Aid Volunteer Service Abroad volunteers but offered little insight into the repatriation process beyond the fact that participants reported increased self-awareness, personal skills as well as cross-cultural communication, which are consistent with general benefits associated with sojourning (e.g. Gill, 2005; Hugo *et al.*, 2003; Nerdrum & Sarpebakken, 2006; Suutari & Brewster, 2000).

Due to the fact that New Zealand is relatively isolated geographically, people often capitalize on going abroad by doing so for extended periods of time. Therefore it has become a common practice in the New Zealand culture to live overseas for a prolonged period of time before returning home (Wilson, Fisher & Moore, 2009). The evident lack of research in assessing what challenges New Zealand returning sojourners experience and which problems



they perceive as most prominent is a matter this dissertation will address. It is essential that a mobile nation like New Zealand gains better insight into what the most prominently perceived challenges are, which factors influence the individually perceived gravity of re-entry problems and how returning home can be facilitated for New Zealanders. This research will also address whether the extended sojourn has an influence on the individuals' career aspirations and how this might affect the difficulty of re-entry.

Inkson and Thorn (2011) noted in their research that New Zealanders can build their 'career capital' by going overseas to experience and work in cross-cultural, cross-national and cross-disciplinary environments, which encourages the development and release of different and new talents in regards to individual competencies and increased confidence as well as building new networks, which would not have been possible for them in New Zealand. Thus it can be inferred that overseas experience has positive effects not only on the individual but on the world and if New Zealand sojourners return a positive effect on home-country if their new skills, talents and competencies are harvested effectively.

Another factor highlighted in the New Zealand migration literature is that cross-boarder migration Trans-Tasman has commonly existed, where the decisions of New Zealanders to expatriate to Australia are strongly influenced by the state of the New Zealand economy (Larner, 2007). This was especially evident in the 1980s and 1990s when the unemployment rates in New Zealand were high and nationals considered opportunities overseas but The Sydney Morning Herald reported on 1<sup>st</sup> Feb 2016 that due to a weak Australian economy, for the first time since 1991, more New Zealanders are returning to New Zealand than are migrating to Australia. Statistics New Zealand provided that there were 25,273 people moving to New Zealand from Australia (not exclusively New Zealanders) compared to 24,504 people moving from New Zealand to Australia. However, the nature of circular and shuttle migration have to be considered especially as these people have gathered experience in migrating and may perceive less obstacles to do so in the future again if better opportunities present themselves overseas (Vertovec, 2007).

### **2.10.1 New Zealand Repatriate Characteristics**

Reviewing the literature it becomes apparent that repatriates tend to share some common characteristics in a demographic and socio-economic sense (King *et al.*, 1983). As Lidgard

and Gilson (2002) have found New Zealand returning migrants are no exception. They completed a study on “Return Migration of New Zealanders” in 1990 and replicated it in 2000, based on data acquired from departure and arrival cards by Statistics New Zealand as well as surveys completed by repatriates; they investigated common characteristics of returnees and associated reasons for leaving and returning to New Zealand. One of the most notable common characteristic they found of New Zealand returnees was that the majority were around the age of 30 years old. This is consistent with numerous other international studies, which have found that return migrants share have a common age composition, clustering around the age of 30 years old (Richmond, 1968; Campbell & Johnson, 1976; Bell, 2002; Inkson & Meyer, 2003). Inkson and Myer (2003) found in their study that the majority of their participants returning from an OE was an average age of 28 years old, and two-thirds of the participants tended to leave for their sojourn before the age of 25, recognizing the overseas experience as an activity of the 20s. However, when considering these characteristics it has to be alluded to the difference of visa regulations and their impact on overseas stay. Australia has been a popular destination for New Zealanders to sojourn to, often it’s more for professional reasons than travel reasons, and their stay is not pre-determined by restrictive visa regulations, rather there is no control over New Zealanders living in Australia as they can do so indefinitely if desired. In contrast, the visa restrictions for the UK generally only allow migrants to stay for a maximum of two years, thus people bound by this restriction and not extending their overseas stay by moving to a different country, tend to return in their twenties (Lidgard & Gilson, 2002).

While the UK is one of the most popular destination for short-term migration for New Zealanders, due to reasons suggested above, it should also be noted that other destinations are becoming more popular which may be correlated to the increasing number of New Zealand born immigrants, who may wish to spent an extended amount of time in their families country of origin to foster relationships and emerge themselves in the culture (Lidgard & Gilson, 2002). Another characteristic of NZ returnees that stood out was that the majority of people were single and had never been married, especially those returning from the United Kingdom (Lidgard, 1992). Lidgard and Bedford (1999) found that New Zealanders returning from Australia were more likely to be married or divorced, which is likely to be associated with the slightly higher age when returning from Australia (Lidgard & Gilson, 2002). In alignment with the notion that a relationship break-up may prompt a return home to the familiar ‘safety’ of New Zealand and family presence, Lidgard and Bedford

(1999) also remarked on the number of New Zealanders returning to New Zealand with their Australian-born child but without a spouse. It is also remarkable that a large proportion of New Zealanders appear to migrate alone, without a travel companion and even more so return without a travel companion indicating that they split up overseas to travel alone (Lidgard, 1992). This supports the common perception that an extended time abroad can facilitate personal development and enhance intercultural and communication skills by immersing oneself into a new environment and culture, which can result in personal change to arrive at personal growth (Walter, 2006). To get the full extent of the experience, many people choose to experience it alone, as a rite of passage and challenge to themselves (Bell, 2002). The preference to be travelling alone can then be said to reaffirm the popularity and intent of shorter migration on the basis of an OE or (working) holiday rather than intent of permanent migration, which as hypothesized, would include more family groups in the returnee population rather than individual travellers.

### **2.10.2 Brain Drain & Brain Exchange**

The movement of human capital across nations is referred to as “Brain Drain” and one of the most influential forces contributing to educated people going overseas are imbalances in the political and economic world system (Portes, 1967). The concern of the “Brain Drain” became internationally known from the 1960’s. However concerns became more apparent with the facilitating economic and global political changes during the 1990’s, which gave rise to new patterns in international mobility (Gould & Findlay, 1994). During the year 2000 the term “Brain Drain” continuously arose in the New Zealand news headlines, going as far as suggesting that New Zealand had “lost a generation” (New Zealand Herald, 5/10/2000). Returnees to New Zealand are generally highly educated; Lidgard and Gilson (2002) found in their survey from 2000 that over half of the repatriates had received some form of tertiary training, which exceeds the percentage found in the New Zealand population at large (Lidgard & Bedford, 1992). Chaban *et al.* (2011) reported that 24% of New Zealanders with higher, tertiary education had migrated overseas. In the context of self-initiated overseas experience, Inkson & Meyer (2003) found that nearly three-quarters of their participants held a tertiary education at the time of their departure, and 50% were degree qualified, insinuating that overseas experience may be a middle class phenomenon not only due to financial reasons but also motivating factors. The significant number of highly educated people leaving New Zealand has sparked the debate and concern over the “Brain Drain” from New

Zealand. As reported by Larner (2007) New Zealand government officials commonly quote that around 1 million New Zealanders are currently living abroad, including expatriates, spouses, children and individuals who stopped travelling on New Zealand passports. As a result of the increasing awareness surrounding the concept of “Brain Drain” and the large number of New Zealander’s leaving their home country the government explored initiatives as to how these people could be attracted to move back home. It was recognized that “Brain Gain” strategies, initiated in an attempt to get people to repatriate to their home country have largely failed, and alternatively numerous governments have introduced options for expatriates to work for their home country without requiring them to repatriate (Larner, 2007). However, even if sojourning New Zealanders return to their home country, often they experience a financial loss compared to their previously held conditions as New Zealand has a comparatively lower income range compared to Europe (Garry & Hall, 2015) and other popular sojourning destinations. Additionally, the lacking high-end professional opportunities may lead them to sojourn again, becoming subjects to the concept of shuttle migration (Bedford, 2001). However, Fursman (2010) pointed out that New Zealand has a ‘comparative advantage’ in offering a good lifestyle, which has the potential to re-attract New Zealanders back home, especially when their priority is to have a family.

## 2.11 Chapter Summary

The literature review highlights that there is a significant amount of existing literature concerning the topic of repatriation, re-entry and re-adjustment. However, the literature on repatriation is largely fragment being addressed in the International Human Resource Management, Tourism, Migration, Education, Mobilities, Second Homes and Multiple-Dwelling, Cross-Cultural Psychology and Intercultural communications literatures (Black *et al.*, 1992; Hottola, 2004; Jonkers & Tijssen, 2008; Brabant, Palmer & Gramling, 1990; Zhang, 2013) and there are various groups of sojourners, who can expatriate for a wide range of reasons from business expatriates, to students and self-initiated sojourners for missionary, volunteering or general overseas experiences and have research needs although some aspect may overlap. Yet, there is an evident lack of combining and integrating the findings from different research areas. The majority of research has been conducted on business expatriates and their return to the home-country and parent-organisation, however parallels can be drawn between findings from the business repatriate literature and that of student and self-initiated sojourners, such as, that majority of repatriates view their sojourn as very positive despite

often facing re-adjustment challenges upon returning home, or in a business context even leaving the organisation they expatriated for. Repatriates, across categories, generally report that they have benefited significantly from the sojourn by enhanced personal development, acquiring a broader worldview, better understanding of themselves as well as understanding for cultures and cross-cultural communications skills.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Despite continuing research into the repatriation process of people returning from sojourning, research is still limited and generally fails to account for the complexity of the problem by considering only a limited number of aspects that influence repatriation or conceptual models that fail to consider individual differences. This chapter will outline the research methodology used to arrive at the data addressing the research interest of the current study. The chapter commences illustrating the implemented research design and interpretive framework before explaining participant recruitment and selection. The chapter continues with providing thorough insight into the data collection process and data analysis tailored to address the research questions of this study. Concluding for this chapter the researcher's role and potential bias will be addressed as well as providing an essential insight into the background of participants via participant profiles and the ethical considerations of this study.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

A qualitative exploratory research paradigm including semi-structured interviews will be implemented in the current study. This methodology is based on the existential-phenomenological model of von Eckartsberg (1998), which aims to understand and describe human experiences. Phenomenological inquiry has been deemed the most appropriate interpretive approach for data collection aligning with the purpose of this study as it is based on European Philosophy, recognizing the existence of a perceived reality with common features, which is applied to the recognized existence of challenges as part of the repatriation process (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). This approach allows for a deeper understanding of lived experiences by encouraging thick descriptions, exposing assumptions taken for granted and understand how meaning is created by embodied perception (Sokolowski, 2000).

The conversational format of in-depth interviews encourages a feeling of ease between interviewer and interviewee due to the inherent rapport building of this method (Christofi & Thompson, 2007; Gullick & West, 2012), which encourages the sharing of deep and detailed experiences. Due to her own experiences and understanding of the topic the interviewer was able to build rapport easily, further facilitated by providing a comfortable yet professional

interview setting in one of the University of Canterbury meeting rooms for the majority of interviews and sharing personal stories as well as using techniques like funnel questioning and active listening during the interview. Phenomenology allows for a non-directive, explorative approach during interviews where participants were asked to describe their experiences and emotions upon returning to New Zealand and their meaning in depth (Creswell, 2012). The interview questions were open ended and as least directive as possible in order to gain a broad understanding of the participant's experiences. The participants thought processes were driving the interview which further contributed to a relaxed atmosphere, allowing the conversation to flow naturally. The aim was for the participant to describe their experience in detail during the interview, which was assisted by probing questions from the interviewer to enhance details and clarity of the experiences described. Empathy and rapport were deemed essential tools and skills for the researcher in this study to gain a rich understanding of personal perspectives on return short-term migration. Discourse analysis and grounded theory is deemed unsuitable as it has greater chances of inhibiting participant's responses (Wimpenny & Grass, 2000; Brown & Yule, 1983).

For the purpose of this study participants had to have returned from a short-term migration or OE, which was defined as 12 months or more away from New Zealand. People with short-term visits home during their sojourn still qualified for the study in light of shuttle migration (Lidgard & Gilson, 2002). This aligns with the research of Xia (2009), who outlined that the adjustment and integration process to a new culture and environment takes around 12 months and that amount of time indicates a desire to settle in a foreign country temporarily or ongoing. Due to the strong popularity of completing an OE and the majority of participants having returned from an OE it should be mentioned that the general intended timeframe is between three months to five years (Milne *et al.*, 2001). The literature provides no clear guidelines in regards to how long the repatriation effect continues for as great variability between individuals has been reported (Sussman, 2002). To define the qualifying parameters for participants, it was determined that participants should have returned to New Zealand from their sojourn in the last 18 months, in order for the experiences to be fresh and vivid in their mind and being able to recall the details and emotions of what it was like to return home to Aotearoa.

### **3.3 Interpretive Framework**

The current study has the aim to understand the lived experiences of New Zealand repatriates as illustrated and described in their own words. With exploring how participants perceived their lived experiences at the centre of this research, an interpretive framework was required to support the explorative nature of the current study. Phenomenological enquiry was deemed as most suitable to obtain findings that truly reflect individual differences and commonalities within the re-adjustment process to New Zealand after sojourning for a minimum of 12 months.

### **3.4 Participant Selection**

Participants were recruited via personal networking and flyers on public notice boards such as at the University of Canterbury, Sydenham Library and a Gym (Appendix A). The snowball method was applied across all methods to recruit additional participants. Participants were recruited till the point of saturation, which was reached at 8 participants. The participant pool consisted of adult sojourners, who have lived abroad for a minimum of 12 months. For the purpose of this study, all participants had to fit the following criteria in order to qualify for participation: 1) lived overseas for a minimum of 12 months, 2) have returned no more than 18 months ago 3) willingness to share in-depth experiences. In order to be recruited, participants had to be willing to set aside enough time to allow for a thorough interview to share their in-depth experiences and be articulate enough to convey the details of their perceived reality. The names of participants will be replaced with pseudonyms to entice a deeper sharing of experiences by creating a sense of security.

### **3.5 Data Collection**

As part of the data collection, 'bracketing' was conducted in the initial phase before participants interviews commenced, to allow the researcher to approach the topic with more awareness in regards to her biases and preconceived notions and refrain from imposing those on interviewees (Idhe, 1986). The bracketing interview technique assists the investigator in becoming more conscious of her own opinions and set them aside to refrain from asking participants leading questions during the interview, which would reflect or support her opinion on the topic. The potential biases of the research were identified and clarified by subjecting the researcher to an identical interview process as the participants would undergo,



with an independent third party. The researcher discussed in detail her past experience of sojourning to two different countries and the difficulties she encountered upon repatriating. This thorough bracketing process allowed the research to gain insight into her biases to become aware of them and avoid prompting participants to say something similar with directive questions, which would be against the nature of phenomenology (Creswell, 2012).

### Stage 1 – Pre-interview

Prior to the commencement of the interview the researcher introduced herself, the topic and research interested before handing participants the participant information sheet (Appendix B) alongside the consent form (Appendix C) to read individually. The researcher returned to the room after participants had read the information to clarify any questions and hand them the pre-interview questionnaire (see Appendix D) and personal summary, which was aimed at clarifying the physical details and dates of their sojourn and the questions encouraged a reflection on their repatriation experience as a warm up for the interview. The questionnaire was self-administered, had no time limit and was composed of closed questions meaning participants had to choose the most accurate answer out of four answer options, forcing them to answer in a more specific way, where they may have been inclined to generalise that point in the interview.

### Stage 2 - Interview

The researcher conducted the unstructured, open-ended interview without a given time limit but until the point participants reached saturation when describing personal experiences. This is consistent with other research conducted in the field of exploring repatriation experiences (Chaban *et al.*, 2011; Walter, 2006). Interviews generally lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and were voice recorded with the permission of the participant, as outlined on the consent form (Appendix C). Interviews began with the question “What is your experience re-entering into New Zealand after your extended time abroad?”, which is similar to questions used by Christophy and Thompson (2007), who asked participants “Now that you are back home what experiences stand out for you?”. From asking the initial interview question, the interview was participant-centred and encouraged them to freely and elaborately describe their experiences. The interviewer asked clarifying questions or encouraged examples to further highlight the described experiences where necessary. There was a subset of questions provided as a guideline (Appendix E), which participants referred to when needing ideas on which areas to elaborate their experiences further. Questions included inviting interviewees

to share some of the motivation and background information to their sojourn, such as whether they had been overseas before, where they sojourned to and what their living conditions were like during the sojourn, before exploring their decision and planning to return to New Zealand and the experiences and emotions at the time of return and re-integration to New Zealand. Interviews concluded with inviting participants to share some insights about their perceptions of New Zealand and the New Zealand culture as well as enquiring about their potential desire to sojourn again. The researcher deemed it important to understand the comprehensive cycle of the sojourn in order to gain a full understanding of the repatriation experience.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

This phenomenological research approach focuses on analysing the linguistic essence of the data rather than behaviour. Every interview was recorded with the permission of the participant and transcribed afterwards to be analysed. In accordance with the thematic data analysis protocols (Creswell, 2012; Moustakas, 1994) each interview was evaluated in a three step process: 1) segregate each interview into units or themes, 2) determine and communicate the essence and meaning of every unit, and 3) cluster the meanings of every unit into categories that provide an overall description of the core commonality and structure of the phenomenon.

To analyse each interview transcript Colaizzi's (1978) process was adapted to include:

- Transcribing each interview
- Read every individual transcript numerous times and highlight different units and themes that emerge and label them coherently
- Support every core theme or unit with a direct exemplary quote
- Find core commonalities across the different segregated transcripts
- Compile summaries of the individual transcripts, highlighting the main themes

As noted above, the literature suggests a variety of external and internal factors that influence the perceived difficulties as part of the re-entry process. It is therefore hypothesised that the interview transcripts can be segregated into the main themes of external and internal factors influencing the challenge of re-adjustment, however as participants determine the content of the interview this dissertation takes an exploratory approach to investigating the challenges

of repatriating to New Zealand as described by the participants. Depending on the content provided by participants the following research questions are of interest in this study:

*Research Question 1:* What factors influence the repatriation process for a sojourner and do they overlap to predict repatriation difficulties based on individual internal and external differences?

*Research Question 2:* How is the repatriation process experienced in a New Zealand context and what role does the New Zealand culture play?

*Research Question 3:* Do sojourning and re-adjustment generally tend to elicit benefits and positive change or can re-adjustment challenges be so severe that the sojourn is perceived as an overall negative experience?

*Research Question 4:* Are the behaviour, attitudes and skills acquired abroad of future use or discarded upon re-entry to the home country?

### **3.7 Researcher Role and Bias**

Bracketing was conducted before participant interviews commenced for the researcher and interviewer to become aware of her own biases concerning the repatriation, re-entry and re-adjustment to one's home country after sojourning for an extended period of time. The bracketing process included an independent party interviewing the research based on the same interview protocol used for the qualifying research participants. This identified that the researcher held a couple of biases concerning the repatriation process. Namely, she assumed that anxiety would naturally occur during the re-adjustment process, another bias of the researcher was that all repatriates would find the re-entry process as difficult and would be inclined to move abroad again to escape the difficult process of re-adjustment or because the re-adjustment is unsuccessful. Gaining awareness of these biases made it possible for the researcher to consciously avoid bringing up these topics during the interview and therewith influencing participants. While the research made dedicated efforts to avoid personal biases to influence the study, it shall be recognized that the exclusion of biases cannot be guaranteed as implementing a thematic analysis framework in this research meant that the

coding and analysis of the data is subjects to the researcher's interpretation. This aspect is also noted as a limitation of the current study in section 5.3.

The researcher is a German citizen, where she lived until the age of 15, before sojourning on an exchange year to South America. Upon returning to her family in Germany she struggled to re-adjust and decided to join her brothers who were planning to move to New Zealand six months after her return to Germany. The researcher has been living in New Zealand since July 2009, completing her final year of highschool education, before completing her Bachelor of Commerce at the University of Canterbury and continuing her education with a Master of Commerce. Thus, un-doubtly her personal and professional experience with sojourning influenced her interest in the current research topic and her attitudes towards repatriates, especially being open, attentive and listening empathetically, which came naturally as she could relate to many of their experiences.

### **3.8 Participant Profiles**

The current study incorporates the illustrated experiences on returning to New Zealand of 11 participants. Saturation was reached at 11 participants as no new themes relevant to repatriation and the returning home process were introduced, the experiences participants highlighted fitted into re-occurring themes. The names of all participants have been changed in order to guarantee their anonymity.

While all participants travelled independently of each other to various overseas destinations the consensus was that they considered their time abroad as an enriching, even life changing experience. Reflecting upon the interviews it becomes apparent that there are several common themes across participant interviews and their re-adjustment experiences when returning home from sojourning. However, the extent to which they experienced certain aspects and perceptions of the return process differed depending on their individual background and circumstances. It is thus essential to gain an understanding of participant's backgrounds, as provided in this section, in order to understand and correctly analyse their perceptions of the re-adjustment process (Le, 2014). An overview of the participants is provided in table 1.

Name	Age	Overseas Country	Time of sojourn	Time since return	Education	Previous experience
1. Lucy	31	Germany (1yrs) Belgium (2yr) London (2yr)	5 years	12 months	Tertiary education	Born in Germany and lived there till age of 5, moved back to NZ, considers herself a Kiwi
2. Natasha	21	U.K.	20 months	10 months	High School	NONE
3. Lauren	21	Perth, Australia	23 months	12 months	High School	Short holiday (Aus)
4. Sarah	29	U.K.	2 years	10 weeks	Tertiary education	Short holidays (Aus)
5. Tom	22	U.K.	21 months	12 months	I.C./Tertiary (2 years)	NONE
6. Holly	24	Australia	2 years	9 months	Tertiary education	Short holidays (Aus & Europe)
7. Megan	31	Vietnam	3 years	1 year	Tertiary education	Short holidays (Aus & Bali); Camp America (3 months)
8. Eleanor	29	Australia	6 years	11 months	Qualified hair dresser	NONE
9. Sophie	24	America	10 years	6 months	School	NONE but left with her parents
10. John	35	Canada	15 months	2 months	Tertiary education	Short holiday (Aus)
11. Paul	30	Sweden	14 month	14 months	Paving specialist	Short holidays (Aus & Fiji)

Table 1: Participant summary as created by the researcher based on questionnaire & interview information.

Each participant had a story to tell and often they greatly enjoyed re-living some of their overseas experiences and venting about the coming home and re-adjustment process. The background and uniqueness of every participant is illustrated based on information gathered from the pre-interview survey and information during the interview. All participants were friendly and courteous, communicated well and showed obvious interest in participating in the study and sharing their personal experiences about returning to New Zealand. Some freely told elaborate stories while others were a little bit more reserved. A summary of the background of every participant is provided in Appendix F.

### 3.9 Ethical Considerations

This research dissertation will be completed in accordance with the guidelines of the Human Ethics Committee of the University of Canterbury and permission will be obtained before starting the data collection process. Participant's names will be changed and the researcher will explain the purpose and use of collected data thoroughly, however participants will be made aware that due to the depth of experience illustrated through phenomenological interviewing their identity cannot be guaranteed to be rendered securely anonymous. Any

data gathered as part of the data collection process with participants will be summoned securely on University grounds for a period of six years.

### **3.10 Chapter Summary**

The 11 participants of this study were recruited via public notices and personal networking. They qualified for participation based on a specific set of criteria, they had to have sojourned for a minimum of 12 months, returned no longer than 18 months ago and had to be willing to share their sojourn and reation experiences in-depth with the researcher. These criteria were set based on existing literature recommendations (Xia, 2009; Milne *et al.*, 2001; Sussman, 2002). Utilizing phenomenological enquiry via exploratory, open-ended interviews participants were invited and encouraged to share their deep and in-depth experiencing about their sojourn and the return and re-adjustment process home to New Zealand. With permission of the interviewees, interviews were recorded and later transcribed by the researcher in order to code and analyse their content and address the research questions of this study. The coding highlighted a number of different themes that influenced or had an effect on the repatriation process of the participants and coherently generated a deep understanding of the participants' experiences and the complexity of the repatriation process.

## 4. Findings and Discussion

### 4.1 Introduction

The findings of this study are presented and discussed in the current chapter. They are divided into different subthemes, arrived at by analysing the results from the pre-interview questionnaire as well as the interviews. Each subtheme discusses and highlights different aspects that influence the overall repatriation and re-adjustment experience of individuals upon returning to New Zealand. Themes are presented according to the common timeline of events during repatriation, starting with internal re-adjustment factors as pointed out in the literature review before discussing the relevance of re-adjusting to New Zealand. A total of 16 influencing subthemes is presented and discussed to external influencing factors before illustrating the findings in regards to the main challenges during provide a thorough insight into the numerous aspects influencing the repatriation process for an individual. This further emphasises the necessity to investigate repatriation as the multifaceted challenge it is, with each aspect having the potential to affect the gravity of repatriation experiences depending on individual internal and external differences (Jassawalla, Connolly & Slojkowski, 2004; Suutari & Valimaa, 2002; Gregersen & Stroh, 1997). Chapter four continues with outlining participants reasons for returning home. The discussion is integrative of many different factors including the lifestyle overseas and trip home as the return home generally commences prior to physically arriving in New Zealand, by logistically, physically or even mentally preparing for it. The discussion illustrates whether sojourners have undertaken preparations or planning for the return home as ill-preparedness has the potential to intensify re-entry difficulties according to existing literature (Sussman, 2001). The various re-adjustment challenges are highlighted and the effect of the potential benefits of a sojourn and its retrospective value in New Zealand are discussed in their effect on the repatriation process. Lastly, the chapter illustrates participant's potential desire to sojourn again as well as repatriation challenges specific to the context of returning to New Zealand. In order to understand the repatriation experience as a whole, it is vital to assess all facets introduced in this chapter carefully and evaluate their impact on the return experience.

## 4.2 Sojourner Age, Gender and Relationship status

This study included a total of 11 participants, 8 female and 3 male, ranging from the age of 21 to 35 years old. Five participants were under the age of 25 years old and the remaining six participants were 29 – 35 years old, clustering around the age of 30 years old. Thus, this study does not clearly reflect the common age composition of returning New Zealander's as pointed out by existing studies (Lidgard, 2002; Population Monitoring Group, 1991), who report that the age composition of sojourners returning to New Zealand distinctively clusters around the age of 30. While the majority of participants were within this distinctive age group of New Zealand repatriates, it is also important to note the younger participants who sojourned to take a break from university, gain life experience or in an attempt to find clarity to their life's path:

“So I left him (ex-boyfriend) and I left home and wanted to start something new and explore the world because none of my friends had really lived overseas, some of them had travelled but none had lived overseas. I really wanted a change and gain some life experience.”

Holly, 24 years old, sojourned to Australia.

“I've always wanted to travel, the world's always really intrigued me, and I did actually go to Otago University for a year. At the end of the year I was like 'why am I here? I don't want to be here right now. I hoped my time overseas would help me decide what I wanted to do with my life.”

Natasha, 21 years old, sojourned to the U.K.

While the more mature return participants still sojourned with the motives of experiencing a different country and culture, their sojourns also had career motives. All participants from the age of 24 years onwards had finished their tertiary qualifications or apprenticeships and worked in their professional field prior to going overseas and hoped to gain further experience overseas or even earn a better salary.

“I did want to get out of New Zealand for a while and having worked in paving before leaving I was really intrigued by the cobbling and paving art, much more commonly implemented in New Zealand, specifically the old, historic paving, which we don't have here. So I went to work for an artesian paving company in Sweden, but also did a job with them in Nurnberg, Germany. I learned so much, I would have never been able to learn here.”

Paul, 30 years old, sojourned to Sweden.



As pointed out in the literature review, studies have indicated that repatriation may be less stressful for older people, who are generally more established in their sense of belonging, cultural identity and social position compared to children or young adults (Hyder & Lövblad, 2007; Cox, 2004; Rohrlich & Martin, 1991). The findings of this research partially support these claims. Sarah and Natasha, both 21 years old and the youngest participants of this study, held especially negative memories of Christchurch compared to their fun sojourn and thus were sceptical and deprecatory when thinking about returning home to New Zealand. Natasha is one of the participants that struggled most in re-adjusting to her home country.

“It's genuinely hard sometimes, being home, in all aspects. I can be fine for a while, and then all of the sudden I'll be super depressed about having come back, and that's terrible but sometimes I really, genuinely miss it so much because life is just like, so different. It's really hard to have gone and to have come back.”

Natasha, 21 years old, sojourned to the U.K.

As indicated in the literature review, age can not only serve as an indicator for the gravity of potential psychological distress experienced upon re-entry but can also serve as an indicator for the degree of social difficulties a repatriate may experience upon returning to the home country (Cox, 2004). While the friend groups of the 21-year old returnees in this study changed completely upon return as they felt they did not have much in common anymore, this was also the case for some older participants, such as 31-year old Megan. However, a distinct difference that emerged from the analysis is that older participants generally did not lose contact with their old friends all together but made less effort and caught up less frequently. Comparatively, the younger participants tended to make a lot of new friends and lost touch with the majority of their old friends after a while:

“I am still friends with my old friends. But not as close as we used to be as I feel we don't have much in common anymore. I met a lot of interesting people through a meet up group when I came back, the majority of them has been overseas as well or are from overseas so I relate to them better and we have a lot of fun. My old friends all have children and it kind of really made me realise who my friends were or weren't. Some of those people, high school, I was clearly just friends with due to situational circumstances.”

Megan, 31 years old, sojourned to Vietnam.

The findings of this study support the existing literature in stating that females tend to experience greater re-entry distress compared to males (Brabant *et al.*, 1990; Cox, 2004), especially single female sojourners (Hyder & Lövblad, 2007; Martin & Harrell, 2004). Indeed the current research found that all female participants reported greater repatriation distress compared to the male participants. However, as outlined in section 5.3, male participants in this study were limited and formed a minority of three compared eight female participants. Future research is recommended to further validate this aspect of the findings.

“I slotted right back into my old group of Kiwi friends but I also made new friends at university now seeing I am behind most of my mates university wise. I felt like nothing had really changed between us as friends, so I just fitted right back in there. I’m flattening with some of my old friends, it’s pretty much like I never left.”

Tom, 22 years old, sojourned to the U.K.

“It probably would be really different if I was in a relationship. If I had a long-term relationship or if I was in a relationship I think that would be quite different and I wouldn’t find it as challenging because I know it’s very different because I’ve had that for a long time. I think because I’m single I want to do more things and that’s what I find I’m up against back here because basically no one ... not a lot of people are like that. As soon as you have a partner here, it’s like, settle down and do nothing.”

Lucy, 31 year old female, sojourned to Germany, Belgium and the U.K.

Lucy’s statement is consistent with the findings of Moore *et al.* (1987), who found that single repatriates tend to find it more difficult to re-adjust to the home country compared to people returning with a partner. All but one participant in this study were single upon returning to New Zealand, although two female participants moved overseas with their long-term partners from New Zealand. Both of these relationships fell apart while overseas (Lucy & Eleanor), which was a cause for distress and reason to return home in itself as illustrated in section 4.8 and 4.12. Another female participant was in a long-term relationship while overseas, however settled back to New Zealand by herself after attempting to make New Zealand their home together:

“things between Ian and me weren’t good enough to make it work. He didn’t want to live in Melbourne anymore, which I loved. I didn’t want to move back to Perth, which was what he wanted and when we came to New Zealand for just over two

months to see whether he'd like living here, he didn't like it either. I knew I ultimately wanted to move back to New Zealand so it just wasn't going to work. He moved back to Perth, I went on holiday with my sister and then moved to Halswell (Christchurch) by myself."

Holly, 24 year old female, sojourned to Australia.

Sophie was the only participant who moved back to New Zealand with her partner, who is originally from Canada but they met in Beijing, where they were both sojourning.

"We decided to move to New Zealand at the end of January and then I moved he (boyfriend) arrived one week later. I felt a bit nervous hoping he would like New Zealand but I was also really excited to be moving in with him. Him moving here with me made the whole move to New Zealand really exciting and it is much easier getting used to everything having somebody else who is going through the same."

Sophie, 24 years old, sojourned to America and China.

Thus, while the literature indicates returning home with a partner is easier and two participants supported this hypothetically only Sophie provided empirical evidence in this research, creating a need for further research to investigate the repatriation process for New Zealand returnee couples. Sophie explained that she felt it was much easier to move to New Zealand with her Canadian partner because they had each other and did not rely on immediately meeting new people. When Holly moved home for two months with her partner at the time before going on an extended holiday, she explained that she was very much focused on helping him settle and did not integrate much into daily life herself especially knowing she would go on a four months holiday shortly after and not see him during that time. She therefore did not engage as much with the home culture and explained that those two months did not feel like 'returning home' as she was preparing to leave shortly after for her holiday.

"we were only home for 2.5 month before going to Europe. Ian and I were trying to spent as much time together as possible seeing I was leaving soon so I didn't spent all that much time with friend or family at that point either but we talked about that and they all understood."

Holly, 24 year old female, sojourned to Australia.

### 4.3 Prior Intercultural Experience

Only four of the 11 participants in this research had been overseas for longer than three weeks prior to their sojourn. Two of the four participants went onto family holidays longer than three weeks visiting their mothers' country of origin. One participant moved overseas with her parents (Sophie) and only one participant (Megan) had travelled independently overseas for a short-term sojourn. Megan worked at 'Camp America' for four months two years prior to her three-year sojourn to Vietnam. Out of the remaining 10 participants, three had never been away from New Zealand before moving overseas for their sojourn and seven had only been on short holidays of up to three weeks, mostly to nearby Australia or the Pacific Islands. Thus, the majority of participants had no or limited intercultural experience before commencing their sojourn and were therewith relatively unfamiliar with re-adjustment or the process of returning home. This is important to consider as Rohrlich and Martin (1991) found that fewer previous transitions can be associated with higher repatriation distress. However, the analysis of the findings does not support that people with fewer prior intercultural transitions experienced greater repatriation distress as distress levels of participants who had never left New Zealand before were in some instances even lower compared to those who had been away on extended holidays.

Interestingly, Megan, the only person with previous transition experience, was also the only participant who actively planned her return home to New Zealand prior to leaving and organised things in accordance with her upcoming move home.

"I guess to just try to focus on what was ahead of me rather than immersing myself further into my life in Vietnam. I stopped going out as much and meeting new people and instead started working and organising my life back home again. I had to give notice to the tenants in my house, I started applying for jobs and I just started doing things for when I get back home and didn't really give myself a chance to second-guess the decision."

Megan, 31 years old, sojourned to Vietnam.

The empirical findings of this study support Martin and Harrell's (2004) research, saying that individuals who have prior intercultural experience and have undergone a process of re-adjustment will be more likely to have more realistic expectations in regards to repatriation and take a more proactive approach in preparing themselves for returning home. Megan had sojourned to America for four months prior to her three years in Vietnam, thus although the

timeframe of her previous sojourn was shorter it still gave her experience in the process of returning home and intercultural re-adjustment. As highlighted in her quote above, she proactively pre-occupied herself with organising things for her return, which gave her tangible things to come back to such as a job and her house. Interestingly, she was also the only participant not to move in with family upon returning to New Zealand. All other participants moved in with their family upon returning home for a minimum of two weeks but many stayed longer or are still continuing to live with their parents.

One of the participants, Lucy, was born in Germany to New Zealand parents who were teaching at a German International School. She identifies herself as a New Zealander and while she does have memories of her childhood in Germany, the move to New Zealand happened at a young age and was supported by her parents.

“My dad is from Ireland but identified himself as a New Zealander. I lived in Germany, was brought up as a German girl, and at the age of ten, so '95, we moved back to Christchurch because that's where my mum was originally from. She wanted to be closer to her parents again, who were getting older”

Lucy, 31 years old, sojourned to Germany, Belgium and London.

While she does remember that it was difficult in the beginning to adjust to New Zealand it was a move and adaptation to a new country for her not a repatriation process, yet it can be classed as prior intercultural experience as there are parallels between the culture shock upon expatriation and the re-adjustment process upon repatriation (Gaw, 2000). Returning from her sojourn Lucy did struggle to re-adjust to New Zealand and found it a frustrating process, interestingly her parents, who have prior intercultural experience did not specifically assist her with re-adjustment strategies:

“My parents have been in this position quite a few times themselves. My mum knows how hard it is to readjust, so, I think it's more just that they understand. They understand for instance my frustrations that I have with some of my old friends, my frustrations that I have with the way people think here, because they have them as well but they didn't really prepare me for it before coming home.”

Lucy, 31 years old, sojourned to Vietnam.

There were two participants, Anna and Tom, who grew up in Aotearoa and identify as New Zealanders but have had prior intercultural experience to some extent as their mothers are

originally from overseas and still have strong family ties in their country of origin, which prompted a number of family holidays for Anna and Tom to visit relatives in those countries, which incorporate a deeper immersion within the culture than an ordinary tourist holiday. Anna's mother is originally from the Philippines and they visited and stayed with her mother's relatives when Anna was 4, 12 and 17 years old for 6 weeks at the time. Tom's mother is originally from South Africa and he has been over there a number of times visiting places where his mum grew up and meeting that part of the family. Tom said:

“That (England) was the first time I had been overseas by myself, but I wasn't that daunted because I had been overseas before. My mum is South African, so I travelled a lot as a kid.”

Tom, 22 years old, sojourned to the U.K.

However, the analysis showed that Anna still experienced significant re-adjustment difficulties returning from her sojourn as well as Tom, although his were less severe, which the analysis attributed to consistent, quality contact with many home country individuals (see section 4.7) and his gender (see section 4.2). As highlighted above, prior overseas holidays only appear to have an effect on making the initial decision to sojourn, as it made participants more confident to travel by themselves, however prior holidays were not found to assist re-adjustment. Prior to leaving the host country the majority of participants were attempting to live in the moment and make the most of their remaining time overseas before embarking on their return trip direction New Zealand. It was a re-occurring theme that participants did not want, or tried not to think about their return to New Zealand beyond the basics of booking a flight and arranging to be picked up from the airport.

“My visa ended in June and I travelled for two months before coming back to NZ. I basically based myself in Paris for most of the time and then I did lots of different trips throughout France like Nice, Marseilles, Luxembourg, Spain, Italy, then back to France. Did Morocco as well, and then Dubai on the way home. I just wanted to make the most of my time in Europe and didn't think about New Zealand too much, I figured I could deal with that when I got here.”

Anna, 29 years old, sojourned to the U.K.

Thus, this research suggests that the term prior intercultural experience, as coined in the existing literature, is too broad to be applied as a valid influencing factor on repatriation distress. This is due to the fact that even participants who had been on extended holidays and

have family relations in a different country did not appear to benefit from their prior intercultural experience when it came to the re-adjustment process after their sojourn. Rather, the analysis indicates that a prior sojourning can serve as a valid indicator for less repatriation distress as previous re-adjustment experience has the potential to assist returnees to manage their repatriation pro-actively, making returnees more aware of what to expect and consequently dealing with the re-entry distress more effectively.

#### 4.4 Time Overseas

The length of the sojourn varied greatly across the participants of this research. They reported overseas stays from 14 months to 10 years. Part of the criteria for participation in this study was to have spent a minimum of 12 months abroad. As illustrated in the literature review, generally, longer sojourns (Moore *et al.*, 1987, Harvey, 1989), and more recent return (Yoshida *et al.*, 2002, Hervey, 2009) have been associated with higher distress upon repatriation. The literature has identified a correlation between the amount of time spent overseas and the intercultural identity of an individual, arguing that the longer they are overseas the more integrated the person becomes into the host culture, which changes and alters their behaviour, attitude and cultural identity patterns (Sussman, 2002; Forster, 1994). Cox (2004) argues that the longer a person spends overseas the more strongly they identify with the host culture, which makes returning home more stressful as they identify less with the home culture, indicating a significant shift in their cultural identity.

When participants were asked whether it was the right time for them to return to New Zealand or whether they would have liked to stay overseas for longer, seven participants said they wish they had stayed overseas for longer and only four said that it was the right time to return to New Zealand, one of the four indicated it was the right time to return but plans to move overseas after completing her studies again (Natasha). The length of time individuals sojourned for did not appear to serve as an indicator for moving back home in itself as the four people who indicated it was the right time had been overseas ten, six, three and two years respectively, which involve a variance too great to be able to generalize results. Participants who said they wish they had stayed overseas for longer were away for five, two and two years, 21, 20, 15 and 14 months. Thus, there are great variations between length of time spent overseas and the perception of whether it was the right time to return home. This study highlights that length of sojourn cannot be generalized to be a valid indicator for

potential repatriation difficulties as individuals, their circumstances and adjustment patterns differ significantly, any of which may motivate them to return to New Zealand and influence their consequent re-adjustment. Additionally it is important to note that participants who indicated it was the right time to return to New Zealand still faced adjustment challenges, some relatively severe ones others less so:

“I have this really different group of friends now; the location of my work is different so I didn't actually know any of my colleagues. I knew where everything was and it was my house, but it was kind of disappointing to me that everything was exactly the same as I had changed and in three years I would have expected things here to change too. I also struggle with the kiwiness of the people here. I think we are quite ungrateful, ignorant and materialistic. A whole heap of generalisations, which doesn't apply to everyone I know that. I do feel angry at times seeing how for granted people take certain things. I dated a couple of guys since coming back, typical Kiwi blokes, and so boring, no interest in life beyond New Zealand.”

Megan, age 31, sojourned to Vietnam.

“It did feel right to move back home, definitely the right thing to do at the time. But there was a lot to think about because like I said you have broken up with somebody you have been with for so long, left the job you loved, your friends and I left most of my belongings there and gave up my whole lifestyle. I mean you can still live a similar lifestyle over here but it is different. So it was just really my whole world turned upside down but I realised it was the perfect opportunity to start again with my career or whatever I wanted to do. I had already started to want to move back home in the last 6 months before breaking up with my husband. I was getting to the age where I wanted to start settling down and have a family. That's why it did not feel like a step back for me moving home to New Zealand because I knew the next step of my life would be, finding a great partner and re-marring and then having children and settling down. And I was lucky meeting James a few months after I came back, that just made it really easy, like it was meant to be and he likes the stay-at-home wife”

Eleanor, age 29, sojourned to Australia.

Consequently, the current research does not support length of the sojourn as a valid indicator for repatriation difficulties as Eleanor who lived in Australia for six years did not experience more significant re-entry challenges compared to some of the participants who sojourned for two years, on the contrary, the re-entry challenges some of the participants who were



overseas for less than six years or more were much more severe. This aligns with the older research of Uehara (1986) who found no connection between the length of sojourn and degree of re-entry challenges (also Gregersen & Stroh, 1997). However, other research did find a correlation between length of sojourn and re-adjustment; although not conclusive as Black *et al.* (1991) who found that the length of sojourn is an influencing variable to the re-adjustment process but only in the context of work. On the contrary Suutari and Valimaa (2002) found that there is no correlation between the variables for predicting re-adjustment in a work context but did find length of sojourn a valid predictor for possible challenges with the general re-adjustment to the home country. It therewith becomes evident that the influence of time spent overseas is disputed in the existing literature and the current research found no conclusive evidence that longer sojourns are associated with greater repatriation challenges, suggesting that personal factors such as reasons for return (section 4.8) are more valid indicators for potential repatriation difficulties. However, the analysis found that repatriation distress is greatest after first returning home and decreases with amount of time spent in the home country after returning, therewith supporting the findings of Yoshida *et al.* (2002).

#### **4.5 Overseas destination, Cultural distance & Identification**

The 11 participants sojourned to a variety of different destinations, all independently of each other. The U.K., England more specifically, was among the most popular destinations with four of the 11 participants living there for an extended amount of time. The U.K. was followed closely by Australia with three of the 11 participants sojourning to different parts across Australia. This supports the claims of the U.K. and Australia being the most popular destinations for many sojourning New Zealanders as pointed out in the literature review with the findings of Lidgard and Gilson (2002). Who also pointed out that the majority of people returning from overseas, and the U.K. specifically, tend to be single. Whereas New Zealanders returning from Australia were much more likely to be married or divorced (Lidgard & Gilson, 2002). The findings of this study reflect previous research as the majority of participants returning to New Zealand were single, except Sophie, who returned from China with her boyfriend and Eleanor, who returned from Australia as she was divorcing from her husband. Interestingly, solely the participants who sojourned to Australia had significant romantic relationships abroad, although they fell apart upon or prior to returning to New Zealand.

“Because we wanted different things in life it did not look like it would work out in the long run. I would never have just left; I mean we were married, because I wanted to move home when he didn't. If our marriage would have been strong enough we would have made a decision together and I may have stayed, you work things out. But once realising that you have grown apart and have lost those feelings, we broke up and I then decided I'm going back home to New Zealand.”

Eleanor, 29 years old, sojourned to Australia.

Interestingly all participants except two, only sojourned to one country, but often incorporated short holidays to explore the surrounding countries. The general consensus was that once established in one country they enjoyed living there and rather moved home than ‘starting over in a new country’. This further highlights the fact pointed out in section 4.3 and 4.12 that participants did not expect substantial difficulties upon returning home, and certainly did not perceive it as a form of starting over.

“I don't know if I would have gone to Ireland or stayed somewhere else for a year. At the time I didn't feel like starting over so I decided to come home.”

Anna, 29 years old, sojourned to the U.K.

There were two participants who lived in multiple countries during their sojourn; Sophie lived in America for 10 years, Spain for one year and China for three years before returning to New Zealand. Lucy was the other participant to live in multiple countries for a significant amount of time during her sojourn:

“I lived in Dusseldorf for a year, where I really wanted to go back to having lived there as a child and then I moved to Belgium with my partner at the time because he was transferred to Belgium with his job, and I was in Belgium for 2 years teaching and then I moved to London for 2 years by myself because I didn't want to be there anymore since we had broken up.”

Dusseldorf was very different culture wise compared to Heidelberg, where she had lived as a child she explained, therefore it didn't really appear very familiar and her German was not very good anymore. Belgium felt like a much easier country to adapt to for her as there are so many expatriates there and everybody speaks really good English, which was not the case in Germany. While Lucy indicated that she would have loved to stay overseas the break up from her long-term partner was very difficult for her and had her parents lived in New

Zealand at the time as opposed to China, she probably would have moved home to New Zealand rather than moving to London as she was seeking the security of home. Therewith her multi-country sojourn was sparked out of travelling with her partner and later a need, as returning home to family wasn't possible at the time. Consistent with descriptions in the existing literature (Wearing, 2000) of travelling becoming exhausting (section 4.8), this research found that participants were more inclined to return home at the end of their sojourn to relax although they may have the intention to go overseas again later.

The sojourn destinations of other participants will be briefly introduced, commencing with Vietnam, where Megan sojourned to for three years and described as very different from New Zealand:

“I just loved Vietnam. I got there and I hit the ground running straight away. The weather was awesome and it is a cheap place to live. I had very few bad experiences while I was there. But Vietnam is a really different experience compared to New Zealand. It is very poor, there is people in Vietnam living of one cup of rice a day and work 7 days a week their whole lives yet they are so happy. Also Ho Min Chin is not the safest city, if you are careful it's fine but I just got really sick of the corrupt police stopping you wanting money. I actually got to the stage where I was quite scared to drive, because you essentially have a big dollar sign on your head for being white.”

John spent his sojourn in Canada, which he purposely chose due to it being a less common destination for sojourning New Zealanders.

“One of the reasons I did choose Canada, was because as it seems that a lot of Kiwis will either go to Sydney, Melbourne or London, which seem the Kiwi hotspots. As I didn't want to do the same as everyone else, and I wanted to do something different, and I would have just been living the same stories that I was hearing going to London.”

John, 35 years old, sojourned to Canada for 15 months.

However, Canada is a Western country and so in regards to differences between Canada and New Zealand and cultural distance John explained:

“Coming from Christchurch with only 400k people, landing in a massive city of 5.5million, it's all a bit daunting, but months role by and you get comfortable and

you start loving it, so you think less about home and you really get immersed in the place. But really Canada is not culturally so different from NZ, in like it's not your missing everything from NZ society there. Like there are a lot of crossovers, and similarities, first world countries with liberal societies, so it's not like going living in Kenya or something. “

Paul spent 14 months in Sweden and found it ‘welcomingly different’ from New Zealand. He said that he was initially worried about not speaking the language but found the Swedish friendly and appreciated they made it easy for him with their great English.

“I found Sweden quite different from New Zealand in some ways, the language being the obvious one, and it was a much bigger city yet shops closed early. The people seemed quite reserved, not as open as Kiwis and it took a while to actually make friends but I had good work mates. They also have random little things to get used to like always taking the shoes off before entering a house but overall it was fairly similar to New Zealand, mind you the Winter was horrible and dark but work sent me to Nurnberg for a project so that was better. Sometimes I got annoyed about them always being so precise but now back in New Zealand I was the one annoyed when somebody is running late or we go out for dinner and one of our friends gets the cheapest bar snack instead of a main yet we still split it evenly between us. Why?”

Australia was generally perceived as the most similar destination to New Zealand in this study. Whether it is Perth or Melbourne there were a lot of other home country nationals living in the city, which strengthened the feeling of not being very different from New Zealand although bigger, as Eleanor described:

“But really Australia is not that different from New Zealand, sometimes it can feel like you are just living in a different part of New Zealand. And there are lots of other New Zealanders living there. But I was getting to a point where I didn't make the most out of everything Melbourne offered because I just wanted to settle and we were trying to save money for a house, which are very expensive over there.”

Sophie, who moved to Wisconsin with her parents 10 years ago, is quite different compared to the other participants as she migrated rather than went on an ‘OE’ like the other participants. However, it is interesting to assess repatriation from the background as well. Moving with her parents buffered her experiences of cultural differences and while she did

not know her grandparents well, as well as the rest of the family lived in the same town, so she felt settled although she missed the New Zealand landscape in particular:

“When I grew up here I took a lot for granted, so when I moved to Wisconsin I was like where are the mountains, it is also so safe here, you can walk around barefoot everywhere.”

Thus, the analysis suggested that Vietnam, Germany and Sweden were the most culturally diverse countries participants of this study sojourned to. However, they were not necessarily the people experiencing the strongest re-adjustment difficulties upon returning to New Zealand. Lucy, who as part of her sojourn lived in Germany, struggled quite significantly in re-adjusting to New Zealand, however she lived in different countries for the following four years before returning to New Zealand, so while she may not have had an extended time to adjust to one culture significantly adjusting to three different ones may have had a similar effect as argued by Sussman (2002) that sojourners learn and internalize new behaviours which are expected in the host country and in turn some old behavioural patterns from the home country being forgotten or replaced. The findings of this study do align with Sussman’s (2002) findings that less identification with the home culture resulted in greater repatriation distress. The findings of this research do not however support the aspects of the Cultural Learning theory, which suggests that successful adaptation to the host environment predicts successful and less stressful re-adaptation upon repatriation due to having acquired adaptive skills in the expatriation process, which will be re-used upon repatriation (Ward *et al.*, 2001).

When Natasha is asked what she views as home now after her sojourn, she provides clear insight as to how much more she identifies with the lifestyle and culture in the U.K. and how she struggled to identify with aspects of home upon returning:

“I’ve never said this to anyone, because of the change that the UK has had on my life and where I’ll eventually go. I just love the UK, it will always have a really, really special place for me in my heart. I don’t know, the UK feels, it just clicked with me, now that I’m home, I don’t feel like I belong here anymore. And it made sense, and living over there is just who I am, and the lifestyle I ultimately want to have.”

This further supports the re-appearing consensus among the literature that cross-cultural adaptation can be associated with a change in a person's cultural identity (Kohonen, 2008; Shaffer *et al.*, 2012). As well as provide empirical evidence reinforcing existing literature, the findings of this study support that living in a host country for an extended period of time can bring about attitude changes in the sojourner (Masgoret, 2006), as well as a raised awareness and understanding of oneself (Kauffmann *et al.*, 1992) which will be discussed in more detail in section 4.13.

#### **4.6 Contact with Host Culture and Lifestyle Overseas**

In order to understand repatriation difficulties it is essential to investigate the lifestyle of the sojourner while overseas and how integrated the person was within the host culture and the host culture individuals. As pointed out earlier an active involvement within the host culture may lead to greater cultural identity changes, which in turn have been found to make re-adaptation to the home country more difficult (Kohonen, 2008). As pointed out in the literature review, it may also be the change in the general lifestyle between home and host country, as well as associated activities and social relationships that makes re-adjustment a challenge (Lazarova & Cerdin, 2007).

Sarah, who lived in Perth for two years, loved her lifestyle over there and it did not take her long to find a job in Australia, which she said integrated her into the daily life over there. She particularly enjoyed that people in Perth focus more on a healthy lifestyle, which got her engaged in gym, yoga and meditation. In comparison to Christchurch, Perth offered a lot more things to do as well as a warmer climate and beautiful beaches. However, in regards to integrating with host country individuals she did say:

“In Perth there's like a lot of Kiwis, so I found that a lot of the friends I made were New Zealanders who were already over there. Perth can be quite clicky, like Christchurch can be too I suppose, and often cultures kind of keep to themselves. If I hadn't been living with two Australian housemates then I think I would have been a lot less integrated into Australian culture than I was.”

Holly had a similar experience during her two year sojourn in Australia, the first year in Perth and the second in Melbourne. When she first moved overseas she was very focused on looking after herself and going to the gym and while she really enjoyed that she explained:

“The only difficult thing about Perth, that there are lots of Kiwis there who all sort of stick together in their groups. So I didn’t actually have any Kiwi friends, until I got my Australian boyfriend and I did meet a few more Australians through him and it probably made me a little bit more Australian as I was fitting into his life, which was the Australian way of life.”

Once they moved to Melbourne she continued to spend a lot of time with her boyfriend and while she said she had her mates at work, they would not really ‘hang out’ and she did not have a big friend group in Melbourne. While both Sarah and Holly experienced some repatriation difficulties they were not as severe as that of other participants such as Lucy, Natasha or Paul, who formed strong friendships overseas. Thus, this research highlights that superficial integration within the host country, or dissatisfaction in living there, is likely to bring about an inclination to repatriate (Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010).

Eleanor, yet again, really enjoyed the lifestyle overseas:

“I loved living in Melbourne, it was really easy to work there in the beginning and set up our own life. It is the whole lifestyle over there the shopping, entertainment, restaurants and all that which makes it a very fun city because there is always so much going on. The weather and money is also much better.”

Similar to Holly however, she did not engage or integrate much with host country nationals beyond her circle of co-workers, some of who were New Zealanders as well. Living in Australia with her husband at the time led them to spend the majority of their time together, building their own life, which was not very integrated into the New Zealand culture as Eleanor admitted and while she did spend some time with her friends occasionally; her circle of friends was small.

Interestingly it was mainly the three participants who sojourned to Australia that had the most contact with other New Zealanders and only little host country immersion with few local friendships and bonds with their work colleagues. Comparatively, after analysing the data, Eleanor and Holly were also among the repatriates experiencing the mildest re-adjustment distress, closely followed by Sarah. This indicates a supportive result for the Wang and Kanungo’s (2004) findings, which portray that high-quality interactions and ties with host-country individuals, assist sojourners in assimilating to the host culture, altering

their cultural identity. These high-quality ties were restricted in the case of the participants who sojourned to Australia and host culture immersion and adaptation was low. Furthermore, the mild repatriation distress can be attributed to less cultural identity change of these individuals due to the similarities of the New Zealand and Australian culture.

Something that became evident in the current study supports the findings of various empirical studies (Black, 1992; Cox, 2004; Gregersen and Stroh, 1997; Sussman, 2001, 2002; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999), which showed that whereas expatriates may experience less difficulty in expatriation adjustment when they are more assimilated into the host culture, however they then often encounter greater repatriation challenges because of loss of home-culture values and beliefs. Conversely, individuals who experience less repatriation distress often have more difficulty in expatriation adjustment due to a lack of adjustment to the host-culture values and beliefs. The remaining participants integrated well to their host country and generally had less contact with New Zealanders in the host country but rather their social relationships abroad included other expatriates from around the world and host country nationals and upon returning home the analysis showed that they experienced greater repatriation distress compared to the three participants discussed previously.

Lucy lived in an apartment in Dusseldorf with her boyfriend at the time and while Germany was quite an adjustment for her she said:

“and I loved, I just loved the European kind of way of life, you know, biking around everywhere, and going to all these different shops to get your things. I just really like it.”

While she was living with her partner, he had his own busy work schedule that often included working late in the evenings, which meant Lucy ventured out to socialize with her friends. She worked at language schools during her time overseas, which by definition meant she was exposed to a diverse environment often with many other expatriates teaching English. However, she did find it quite handy as those people often had a similar interest to her of exploring what the country and city had to offer.

“I love international teaching. It's so fun because it's kind of a melting pot of different cultures. I think the only thing with international schools is it's quite cliquy, and so you end up only really socialising with the people from work, and



you fail to meet local people, so I didn't really know a lot of Belgian people or German people.”

Anna lived in London for 2 years and was sharing a flat with seven Australians and New Zealanders but made friends with other expatriates and English people through her work as she didn't get on well with her flatmates. She said it took her around six months to establish herself in the job and make friends with the people from work, who were all British. Initially she found London and the lifestyle very different compared to New Zealand but learned to love it quickly:

“I guess the personalities and use of language, joking is very different there; they are just taken on a different level. They're probably a bit more serious whereas we joke around. There's a lot of people compared to New Zealand and they walk fast, if you stand on the wrong side of the escalator you'll get bounced out of the way. There you cannot afford to stand aside and let people get off the bus you have to be quick to be able to get on and you don't say goodbye to the bus driver like you would over here. Especially on the tube it's everyman for himself. I found that that was different, but I think you adapt. I think I adapted quite quickly and I found it kind of fun being in such a lively city.”

Megan had a very similar living arrangement in Vietnam, flatting with a New Zealand couple, who had been there for a number of years and were able to give her some guidance when first arriving but she did not socialize much with them beyond living together:

“The couple I lived with was really nice and he was quite social but she never wanted to go out much as she can't drink and there is quite a string drinking culture among the expatriates there as it's cheap and hot and just what you do. So I was forced to meet people otherwise, through an expat network I found through the Internet, which is how I met those girls, they were from America, England and Canada. There was 5 of us and we were all about the same age and they wanted to do the same stuff I wanted to do and I guess I only realised then that I didn't really have that with my friends in New Zealand. They became my family over there. Apart from those two teachers at work I didn't interact much with the Vietnamese really.”

For Megan the language barrier posed a hurdle in getting to know host-country individuals but similar to Lucy, she found herself immersed in the melting pot of international teaching and the similarities of their situation and interests formed strong bonds and friendships with

other expatriates. She is still close friends with them, although they all have returned to their home countries now. One of her expatriate friends has been to New Zealand to visit her four months after she arrived, which Megan loved as it gave them the chance to reminisce together, and she is visiting another friend in America in December 2015. They still embraced the culture and national customs while in Vietnam, as it was required of them by their work and as Megan said earlier she loved the food, weather and overall lifestyle she had in Vietnam, which meant they re-adapted to the host culture and saw themselves as immersed. Similarly, Sophie struggled with the language barrier in order to make friends with the nationals when she moved from America to China in 2013:

“Most of my friends in Huang-Cho and later Beijing certainly were American or other Expats. I did make a couple of Chinese friends, but I just wasn’t speaking the language well enough.”

Five of the participants immersed themselves fully into their host country culture and did not have much contact with other New Zealanders or expatriates which, for some, was purposely so as we learned about John earlier, who chose his sojourning destination on the basis of not encountering many New Zealand sojourners and aimed to experience a lifestyle more different compared to the common London stories, people returning from an OE commonly share. John additionally had a couple of Canadian friends who he had met in New Zealand who introduced him to more of their friends, Canadian as well and he initially stayed with them. Living with his friends upon first arriving in Canada build a stronger connection and denser network within the host-country, which facilitated support and the establishment of trust, which, as Kilduff and Brass (2010) point out, contributes to cultural immersion and adaptation resulting in cultural identity changes. Paul was in a similar situation:

“I moved to Stockholm to live with a friend I met travelling around New Zealand, he worked in paving as well and helped me find a job. He took me out and I met some really awesome people. Loved Stockholm, it is so different compared to here, all those different islands, the old buildings and historic cathedral. Plus pretty much all the streets in the city were cobblestone. It was pretty expensive living there but I earned alright so it was fine. When I went to Germany I stocked up on Alcohol.”

Similarly, Natasha, Sophie and Tom were fully immersed in their host culture without surrounding themselves with many home country individuals or other expatriates, which interestingly also brought about a change in their accents as they all sojourned to English

speaking countries. Natasha explained her accent changed relatively quickly as she was working at a call centre and people struggled to understand some words with her New Zealand accent, hence she adapted her pronunciation. However, the same held true for Sophie and Tom without encountering problems at work:

“My accent changed pretty fast, as I didn’t talk to any Kiwi’s apart from home, I worked in Oxford, and there I really went into the community, participated in local events and made so many friends and things, which was great.”

Tom, 22 years old, sojourned to England.

The current research thus supports previous studies highlighted in chapter two, which indicate that strong ties with people from the host country can provide in-depth cultural knowledge (Van Vianen *et al.*, 2004), resources that make living in a new place easier and more fun (Farh *et al.*, 2010) as well as emotional support, which assists sojourners in adjusting their behaviour and perceptions to the host culture (Mao & Shen, 2015). While the findings of this research support that close relationships with host country nationals result in a cultural emersion and integration of the sojourners, the findings of Shen (2010) are equally as supported by this empirical research highlighting the fact that even if there are no strong ties with host-country nationals a close-knit expatriate network of friends can substitute that and provide the sojourner with resources and cultural information as well as emotional support.

#### **4.7 Contact with Home Culture**

In order to understand possible repatriation difficulties, it is not only important to analyse the interactions with host-country nationals but equally the quality and frequency of the ongoing relationships and communication with individuals from the home country. A sojourner’s communication habits while overseas have been studied as an influential variable for the re-adjustment process upon returning home (Rohrlich & Martin, 1991). The existing literature suggests a correlation between less supporting and stable relationships with home country nationals that provide social validation, and the seeking of new relationships within the host country to find support networks and manage relocation challenges (Berry, 1997; Butcher, 2009). As alluded to in section 4.6, some of the participants of this study surrounded themselves with home-country nationals during their sojourn in the host-country, specifically

the participants who sojourned to Australia, which can be classed as a form of home country contact.

The general consensus among the participants of this study was that they kept in touch almost daily with usually one main person at home, which was the mother for five of the 11 participants (Sarah, Lucy, Tom, Natasha, Sophie). This is consistent with the research of Martin (1989), who found that family relationships often provide the primary contact to the home culture while overseas, as well as provide the most support during repatriation. Friendships tend to provide less but more varied contact and support often through individuals in the host country (Martin, 1989). The participant's contact with home and their family was often initiated by the mother, which prompted the majority of participants to send brief messages every day:

“I spoke with my Mum regularly. Like...just a message or something but close to everyday...I don't think there'd be many days I wouldn't speak to Mum.”

Sarah, 21 years old, sojourned to Australia.

This was welcome by the majority of participants and some made it a daily routine:

“We talked everyday [laughs]. I would Skype on the way to work But it was only for a few minutes sometimes. I've always been like that with my family.”

Lucy, 31 years old, sojourned to Germany, Belgium and London.

While contact was frequent it cannot necessarily be classed as quality contact that would have substituted the requirement for new relationships in the host country, as contact was often brief as participants described. It shall also be mentioned that none of the participants were homesick and therefore desired to chat home frequently for their personal benefit, the contact with home-country individuals was used to catch-up on what the other had been doing. While these participants had contact to home almost daily one of the participants did not welcome this initially but participated to avoid disappointing the parental figure, which resulted in low quality, superficial contact:

“My mum messaged me every day [laughs], bless her soul. Like, Viber, but nearly every day. When I first got there it annoyed me she was talking to me so much, there was times in the first couple of months when I was working at the camp

where I just wanted to tell everyone at home to leave me alone, which I know is horrible, but I remember wanting to say to mum, look I am here to learn, I need you to just not talk to me for a while. But I could never do that to her that would be awful. And, so I'd obviously just message her back, just quick replies.”

Natasha, 21 years old, sojourned to England.

Participants in this study reported that they did not keep in touch much with their New Zealand friends, apart from Tom, who appeared to be excellent at keeping in touch with his friend network at home, which also made him one of the few people whose social network did not change drastically upon returning:

“I slotted right back into my old group of NZ friends but I also made new friends as a lot of my old friends had moved away after graduating to find a job. I felt like nothing had really changed between us as friends, so I was really happy I just fitted right back in there. I think with some of them I have even gotten closer, just by talking regularly from overseas.”

Some participants, Megan and Holly specifically, who were not as close with their mothers, kept in regular contact with their sister(s) and as a substitute also initiated more contact with their New Zealand friends compared to other participants:

“So I talked to my sister in Sydney actually more than I do now. I also talked to my dad a lot, as I am very close with him and he came over 4 times, he loved Vietnam. Mum came over 3 months before I left. I talked to my family and friends via E-mail and Facebook. Only short messages though and occasionally I would send a big e-mail. I also had a blog so people who were interested could go on that and look at photos and what I've been up to.”

Megan, 31 years old, sojourned to Vietnam.

“And I was very lucky because my two sisters pretty much talked to me every day and I would talk to my New Zealand friends regularly also. On the way to and from work we would often talk. I was on the train for an hour so that was the perfect time, my routine to talk to everybody.”

Holly, 24 years old, sojourned to Australia.

The analysis of these comments does not support the claims in the literature that the strength of social relationships within the host country may affect the strength of the relationship with individuals in the home country (Mao & Shen, 2015), as regardless of frequency and quality

of contact with home country individuals sojourners still build strong friendships based on shared experiences within the host country, either with other expatriates or host-country nationals. The findings of this research do support that modern technologies play a vital part in keeping in touch with home country nationals (Cox, 2004), as it was the chosen method of communication by all participant for ease of use, affordability and possibility to spent little time on brief messages to stay in touch. While Cox (2004) pointed out e-mails as primary method of staying in touch, most of the participants reported Facebook and Skype to be popular methods of keeping in touch, as well as other free messaging apps such as Viber or WhatsApp. Therefore, this study suggests that some existing literature may be out-dated in light of the generational change and access to new instant communication technologies. Participants also reported that Snapchat is an easy way to stay in touch via sending instant photos that do not require much typing and can be sent to multiple recipients at once to share what they were currently doing. Future research into how these instant communication tools effect integration into the host-country and dis-integration from the home-country during sojourning is suggested and their consequent effect on repatriation.

As outlined in a quote above, for five of the participants (Lucy, Tom, Eleanor, Sarah, Megan) contact with home-country individuals also occurred by family coming to visit them at the sojourning destination or proximity of the sojourning destinations. Their parents generally stayed for around three weeks and while sojourners reported it wasn't a necessity for the parents to come and visit, all sojourners enjoyed spending that time with their families, which often included showing them where they have been living and working. But the participants also said that those visits from their family made them realize that they were not ready to return home yet:

“My mum came over about half way though, for a few weeks which was fun. It was nice, I wasn't like homesick or anything so it's not like I really needed it, but it was really good, and it was so much fun to show her around.”

Tom, 22 years old, sojourned to England.

“My parents left and I really realized that I wasn't ready to go home yet, they also thought that I would be gone still for a really long time.”

Natasha, 21 years old, sojourned to England.

The analysis highlighted that the leaving of family at the end of their holiday often brought about the realization for sojourners that they were not feeling ready to return home yet and were looking forward to continuing their sojourn. As participants reported, this led them to the realization they needed to make the most of their remaining time within the sojourning country.

While Holly did not have her parents visit her in Australia, her sisters and friends visited her twice due to the close proximity to New Zealand, which made it more easily accessible for a weekend visit. She enjoyed having people come to visit her and used it as an attempt to convince some of her close friends to join her in Australia, which was unsuccessful. Eleanor, also sojourning to Australia, had a similar experience, with not only family visiting her but also friends, she reported they always had a lot of visitors from New Zealand and they themselves returned for a holiday to Christchurch once every year or two.

Only three participants (Eleanor, Megan, Lucy) returned home for a holiday during their sojourn. Eleanor returned once a year, which was feasible being only three hours of flight time from New Zealand to catch up with her family. Megan returned for a holiday two years into her sojourn and for a funeral shortly before her move back to New Zealand, similarly Lucy returned for a holiday 2.5 years into her sojourn and caught up with old friends in Christchurch, as her parents were overseas.

“I was there for 2 years and in my summer school break I came home for 4 weeks, it was winter here. I caught up with basically everybody, I started down South with my mum and drove up the country and really caught up with everybody, I spent a week in Christchurch and it was a really busy months. I had a great time seeing everybody but I was really looking forward to come back to Vietnam and seeing my friends there. It just felt really different, I felt really different and it was like a life-changing thing for me. I guess that has to do with the fact that my New Zealand friends then already had kids and really weren't Asia type of people. They would ask me how Vietnam is and I would just say that I really love it and that would be it.”

Megan, 31 years old, sojourned to Vietnam.

Returning home for a holiday or having visiting parents leave direction home again appeared to spark a realization in the participants who were subject to those circumstances.

Participants reported it made them realize that they were looking forward to spending more time in their host country, enjoying their new won friendships and lifestyle, which then re-affirms that participants were well integrated into their life overseas. Megan and Lucy for example, who returned to New Zealand for a holiday, were both really looking forward to going back to their host-country and realized that they were not ready to move back to New Zealand yet. This however, does not necessarily support Brabant *et al.*'s (1990) research, which stipulated that fewer home visits during the sojourn resulted in higher re-entry difficulties. Lucy did still face significant re-entry challenges. Eleanor was one of the participants who returned to New Zealand most frequently and displayed mild re-adjustment difficulties upon return, however, this is due to dealing with the bigger problem of her marriage break-up, which were all consuming and made re-adjustment challenges appear of lesser importance. The distress Eleanor was experiencing could still be attributed to re-adjustment, however re-adjustment to life without a partner after having been in a partnership for 10 years, as opposed to environmental, lifestyle and cultural re-adjustment. Megan still experienced re-entry challenges upon returning home, which were alleviated by her taking a proactive approach in organising her life at home prior to repatriating.

Paul and John had less contact with people in New Zealand in general, and no contact with their friends while overseas, Paul said he may have commented on a Facebook post or picture but there was no designated effort to catch up. They did still talk frequently to their families but not as often as the other participants above, which could be attributed to their gender but also age as they are more mature.

“Mostly would only ever have talked to my mum, I wouldn't have really talked to my friends at all, but maybe like every 2 weeks skype my mum, and otherwise just texting 3-4 times a week.”

John, 35 years old, sojourned to Canada.

#### **4.8 Reasons for Coming Home and Expectations**

All of the participants of this study were self-initiated sojourners and therefore had the freedom to decide when they wanted to return home to New Zealand and for what reasons, although some had limited time to stay within one country due to visa regulations (King, 2000). The main reason the participants of this study decided to return home were study or career reasons, followed by financial, health, social reasons or visa regulations. However, the



overarching reason for their return to New Zealand was that their families are living here, which is consistent with a number of studies that describe family can be a significant pull-factor for repatriation, either because the sojourner misses their company and security or because the family is actively seeking the sojourner to return (Hugo *et al.*, 2003; Harvey, 2009). The literature does suggest that people in their 30's commonly return to their home country to start a family (Lidgard & Gilson, 2002), which is reflected by three participants in this study who chose to return home partially because they were getting to the stage where they were thinking about finding a partner and starting a family. Anna, Eleanor and Megan are 29-30 years of age, and it felt like the right time for them to move home as they realized they ultimately wanted to find a partner, have a relationship and a family and bring up their children in New Zealand, as it is home and they described it as a 'good place to raise children'.

"I was growing apart with my ex-husband so we had been together for 12 years, which was a really long time and with us growing apart the feeling emerged of what will I do if we break up? Stay here or not, then I thought the best option would be to come back home and be with family again, who I had started to miss the last 6 months before moving. And I didn't want to stay and potentially be tied to Australia for the rest of my life then by maybe meeting an Australian man."

Eleanor, 29 years old, sojourned to Australia.

One of the most influencing reasons in making the decision to return home, was the health of the individual, mentioned by four participants (Lucy, Anna, Natasha, Sophie, Megan) as an influencing factor. This ranged from being in an unstable place mentally, to physical illness or exhaustion and taking preventative measures by moving out of highly polluted countries to avoid long-term consequences. Megan and Sophie who sojourned to Vietnam and China both reported that the pollution 'was very real over there'. While they did not experience any immediate effects, it did worry them and they didn't want to expose themselves to it long term. When Sophie landed in New Zealand after having lived in Beijing, she said that it was 'so nice to breathe in all this fresh air'. This problem did appear specific to people who sojourned to Asian countries, whereas people who sojourned to the U.K. reported that it was very dull sometimes and personal problems contributed to poor general well-being:

"I started becoming quite unwell, it was one February, the winters overseas are horrendous, and I'd been in London for about a year and I was kind of not in a good

space personally, I was still very much grieving from my separation because it was a very hard one.... And, my job, I was starting to not really enjoy teaching, and so it kind of happened really fast. I had to take some stress leave from my job and then I just realised that this wasn't going well for me, that I was not well. That I needed to make some really big changes in my life and to do that I needed to go home ...”

Lucy, 31 years old, sojourned to Germany, Belgium and London.

John reported an equal struggle with the winters in Canada, which are very long and people do not go out to socialize as much, Anna explained how the seasons impacted her timing to leave London:

“The weather in London impacts the highs and lows as well as it is often so grey and dull, winter from January onwards is especially terrible and quite depressing. I found it quite hard around January-February so I didn't really want another winter there. New Zealand winters are cold but at least sunny.”

Additionally, she mentioned that she got to a stage where travelling became “quite stressful”, which aligns with the description of Wearing (2000, p.25) in ‘A passion for travel’ where she says:

“It (travel) is at once exhilarating and exhausting, this motion, the sensation of an old covering gradually flaking being replaced by a new. Fear becoming excitement, excitement becoming exhilaration, exhilaration becoming exhaustion and exhaustion becoming renewal.”

A quote from Sophie illustrated this feeling of the sojourn and the new environment being exciting but very tiring after having lived there some time. It did generate the desire in her for a calmer environment and country to live in:

“China is exciting but also so challenging and draining at times, like being taken advantage of knowing that you are paying too much for something but there is no way I would ever be able to pay what Chinese people are paying for the same thing. I was stolen from a lot in China, which had never happened to me in other places I travelled to. While that didn't really want to make me leave, there was just something new every day, life there is crazy and it is a fun place to be when you are young but I was starting to feel like I was done with that. So New Zealand seemed very appealing as I had always wanted to move back here and my brother is living here as well. While I didn't have any concrete job prospects here I was confident

that there would be opportunities and I was looking forward to coming back to a calmer environment, the more laid-back New Zealand.”

It can then be said that the feelings of exhaustion participants experienced resulted in the desire to live in a less stressful, less draining environment again, which all participants naturally seemed to associate with New Zealand and ‘home’. Inkson and Myer (2003) had similar results in their empirical research, finding that after around two years of travelling many participants wanted to go home to their familiar environment, although some sojourned again after living in New Zealand for short of a year, becoming subjects to shuttle migration. The desire to return home aligns with the research of Hogarth (2015) who notes that the concept of home has security and familiarity embedded in its construct and it is specifically that sense of security, which has the potential to draw people back to their home. This is associated with the existing literature on ‘Sense of Community’, which states that sense of belonging and sense of community increase the longer somebody has resided in a particular community, especially if the person has been brought up in the community (Prezza *et al.*, 2001), which then generates feelings of security that may prompt a return if the individual is feeling stressed, unhappy or generally dissatisfied elsewhere. Numerous literature recognizes that the concept of home is not only a physical place but also carries an emotional link of security, sense of belonging, relationship and selfhood (Gorman-Murray & Dowling, 2007; Wiles, 2008; Mallett, 2004). This further aligns with the findings of Maslow (1970) pyramid, which indicates the ‘need to belong’ as one of the most basic human needs. Participants seemed to become more aware over time that they were a foreigner in a foreign place, which ranged from the obvious physical differences that made participants stand out who sojourned to non-Western countries to the basic realisation that staying permanently could be difficult because they may struggle to acquire the same benefits and governmental support as host country nationals:

“Chinese used just to stare at me on the streets, especially in Huang-Cho, and point at me and say “You are so white”. I don’t think they mean it in a racist way, they are just pointing out an obvious difference. They also wear really warm jackets when it is windy outside although it may be 30 degrees. So when they saw me wearing a dress on a hot but windy day they would say: ‘You have very good health, must be because you are foreign.’”

Sophie, 24 years old, sojourned to America & China.

“The biggest problem is the special category visa, while we Kiwis can just move there and live there, we cannot become citizens or permanent residence. So that means that if we had children there and one was disabled we would not be eligible for disability funds and are not considered students for public transport when they are at school, all until they are 10 years old, then they can become citizens. If you move and you already have children it is harder because you will never be able to get that. So I was always worried finding that out, what if they changed the retirement fund regulations and you had lived your whole life over there...”

Eleanor, 29 years old, sojourned to Australia.

None of the participants appeared to have negative feelings associated to the concept of home (Brickell, 2012), as they were generally looking forward to seeing their families, commonly described as ‘coming home’, and the difficulties and negative feelings predominantly appeared to result from grief over the loss of previously held conditions (Walling *et al.*, 2006; Chamove & Soeterik, 2006). Other reasons for returning home to New Zealand were that participants ran out of money and were no longer able to afford staying overseas. This was specific to the younger sojourners who were not working in professional jobs overseas as they had not completed their tertiary education before going overseas.

“I did come home early, but that was because I completely ran out of money. I also had just found out that my family was moving overseas, so I basically went to thinking that I had 6 months to being home within a week because that was the cheapest ticket. I would have stayed longer but I just couldn’t afford it. So yea, I definitely wasn’t ready to come home, and that still to now, I’m still like I need to go back.

Tom, 22 years old, sojourned to the U.K.

Anna and John, who were working in professional jobs overseas, earning a good salary and had completed their tertiary education prior to leaving still reported that it was expensive to live overseas and while they returned home without any financial saving funds they remained debt free, making it work while overseas. Closely linked to the reason for returning home of having no financial funds available was the realization that they wanted and needed to return home to acquire an education, return to study to change their career or that they would be better off financially in New Zealand:

“I felt I couldn’t keep working deadbeat jobs, I needed to go home and get an education so that I’m not going to be climbing this stupid ladder all the time and being an absolute nobody and being bossed around by stupid people.”

Natasha, 21 years old, sojourned to the U.K.

“Before leaving it did feel like a step back returning to NZ, yes in the sense in how happy I was in Toronto, but once I got here there was part of my brain that was telling me it is time to be sensible and settle down and buy a house and face real life. From that point of view I thought it was probably sensible to return to NZ, because I knew that I would get a better job in NZ that I would have in Toronto, because there is too much competition in Toronto I knew from a financial point of view, that NZ was the far smarter choice for me, but from a living life point of view, and then Canada was the best choice.”

John, 35 years old, sojourned to Canada.

Similarly, Sophie said that career wise she felt China did not offer her many opportunities and while she did not have concrete job prospects in New Zealand she felt it would be easier for her to find a job here that aligned more with her interests:

“I got to the point where I felt I was spinning my wheels a bit. I was teaching English part time, as well as interviewing Chinese high school students as part of the application process for American universities, I was also consulting and as a fun job on the side I worked at the micro-brewery. So that felt very temporary with all those different jobs and like it wasn’t really going anywhere for me.”

Visa restrictions and close friends leaving were also among the reasons mentioned for returning to New Zealand. While all participants apart from Eleanor and Sarah reported they would have loved to stay overseas longer, only Paul, Anna and John maximised their visa time and stayed until the last possible date. This indicates that visa restrictions may not be the primary reason for returning home. Stronger factors for initiating a return, superseding visa restrictions, were found to include aspects such as missing family, becoming unwell, depleted financial assets or the desire to study, which prompted the desire to seek the security of home. This aligns with the notion that self-initiated expatriates in particular, need strong intentions as a motivator to repatriate as they leave an environment they have become familiar with to start something new and unfamiliar, face the uncertainty around finding a job and the challenge of re-adapting to home when they are often not forced to return but make the decision voluntarily based on their strong motivators (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee *et al.*, 2001,

Kanfer, Wanberg & Kantrowitz 2001). The current research then proposes that if the factors initiating the intention to repatriate do not affirm to be as valid and strong upon arrival as expected, re-adjustment challenges are more severe due to the fact that the sojourner perceives there was no immediate need to return and they would have rather stayed abroad. In order to facilitate re-adjustment to the home country the reasons for returning must be validated and re-affirmed upon re-integrating into the home environment. These proposed findings support Roger's and Ward (1993) that met expectations upon repatriation facilitate the re-adjustment process and incur less distress.

Participants generally had little expectations about what it would be like returning to New Zealand as many of them avoided thinking about what it would be like being home again. This somewhat aligns with the findings of Schlossberg (1988) who argued that unplanned or early termination of the sojourn can lead to more severe re-adjustment challenges because the sojourner had limited opportunity to physically or mentally prepare for leaving. Avoiding to think about the return home would offer equally little chance to mentally prepare for the re-adjustment process. The research of Butcher (2002) forms a relevant correlation to the findings of the current study, indicating that the lack of expecting any re-entry challenges and consequent lack of accepting the grief can increase negative feelings and psychological challenges upon re-entry (see also: Bossard & Petterson, 2005). As alluded to in section 4.2, Megan was the only participant who actively planned her return to New Zealand, which made re-adjusting easier for her, which reaffirms the research of Sussman (2002), who argued that mental preparedness facilitates the re-adjustment process.

“I hadn't really thought about it, I hadn't really had time to think about it, I was ready to leave at that point because I had said goodbye to everybody. I was looking forward to going to Indonesia but even leaving Bali, I didn't even really think about coming home.”

Natasha, 21 years old, sojourned to the U.K.

Beyond that Anna and John expected it to be difficult to find a job they were interested in, which is interesting as that was one of John's main reasons for returning to New Zealand. This further emphasises the need for the factors that brought about repatriation to be validated upon return. Generally a lot of participants were just looking forward to living a more settled life again.

“I'd say my expectations were, finding a decent job, finding something that I really wanted to do, absolutely loved. I want to stay here, and you can't have a good lifestyle without a job you enjoy. I hoped to have a quiet life, but in a positive way, just not so much drinking...”

Sophie, 29 years old, sojourned to the U.K.

With the overall main reason for returning home across participants being family, the findings of this study align with the findings of Hazen and Albert (2006), arguing that social and personal factors, such as family connections have the potential to prompt a desire to return home, but the important variance to which extent sojourners experience the pull home is based on personal factors, which can be attributed to the experience and integration to the host culture, financial and general well-being reasons as well as different personalities. It is thus essential to examine the individual internal and external variables for sojourners to understand their complex motivating factors to return home and how these factors influence the repatriation process.

#### **4.9 Trip Home**

The trip from the sojourning destination back to the home country has not been considered sufficiently in the repatriation literature. However, this research proposes that analysing the way sojourners structure and plan their trip home is in direct relation to their feelings about returning and re-integrating into daily life in the home-country. Seven out of the eleven participants in this study purposely dedicated one to four months to travelling after they concluded their sojourn in their main overseas residence. For many the holiday was spent at a destination on route between their host country and New Zealand.

“I think if anything India just prolonged coming home, even though I knew I was coming home. I think me going to India was just like, I was not ready to do that direct flight from Europe to New Zealand, I needed somewhere to stop in the middle, to have some time, just absorb a lot of things. I do remember quite distinctly though in India probably a month before I left I started getting quite anxious about the fact that I was coming home.”

Lucy, 31 years old, sojourned to Germany, Belgium, London.

The notion that a holiday at the end of the sojourn was a time to reflect on experiences and come to terms with returning home was a re-occurring theme across the interviews with seven participants:

“Breaking up the trip home definitely helped wrapping my head around moving back to NZ. I needed to have gone somewhere and done something, experienced something new just before coming home. I'd never experienced a country like Southeast Asia so it was great to experience that and really have a holiday. I definitely think it really helped me wrap my head around coming home and I started to feel ready to go home. Indonesia was awesome.”

Natasha, 21 years old, sojourned to the U.K.

“It was annoying and upsetting having to leave Sweden and all the awesome friends I made over there, so going to Germany, Austria and Italy for a holiday as well as stopping in Singapore on the way home, made leaving Sweden not too bad because I still had something to look forward to....”

Paul, 30 years old, sojourned to Sweden.

“I think I had very mixed feelings, especially leading up to the departure date, by the end I had made some friends, even locals, British people. So you were just really integrated into the life there. I found that I also knew more about what was happening in the UK than NZ...by then I had kind of lost touch with New Zealand.”

Anna, 29 years old, sojourned to the U.K.

Participants also reported they really enjoyed a holiday as, highlighted in the last section, many participants were feeling exhausted from their busy sojourning lifestyle. They also wanted to make the most of being geographically close to other countries they had wanted to visit and explore in order to return to New Zealand without the feeling that they could have made more of their time overseas. Thus, this research suggests that an intermitted trip may help sojourners by marking the tangible end of the sojourn and making a point of finishing it on a positive note. It also may assist the sojourner with their mental preparedness for repatriating to the home country, which according to Sussman (2002) is essential to reduce distress upon re-entry.



#### 4.10 Arrival Home

All of the participants in this study got picked up from the airport by a member of their family. The majority met their parents apart from Natasha, who did not let them know the return date and surprised her parents and Lucy, who flew into Auckland to drive down to Christchurch with her brother:

“I flew into Auckland, because my brother lives in Auckland and my request was that I wanted him to drive me to Christchurch. It's like I needed more time. It was so good just looking at all the scenery as we were driving down to Christchurch; it reminded me how beautiful New Zealand is.”

Lucy, 31 years old, sojourned to Germany, Belgium, London.

Participants explained that having some time to slowly ease back into the New Zealand way of life was really important to them, just sitting back and observing, enjoying the scenery while ‘wrapping the head around being back home’. It is essential to note the difference between self-initiated expatriates and business repatriates, as the participants in this study, who self-initiated their sojourn did not receive any assistance in the repatriation process as it is often the case for business sojourner (Osman-Gani & Hyder, 2008). This research found that participants who commenced the repatriation process slowly experienced less distress compared to participants who felt overwhelmed and found themselves subject to external pressures:

“When I got out I was feeling really tired, mum gave me the biggest hug and said 'I am so glad that you're home' and I just said to her 'No not yet mum, it is just a bit too early yet I'm still getting used to it.' The tenants had moved out so I slept at my house. It was very mixed feelings, it was cold and I was tired and all my stuff was still in storage... If you had given me a plane ticket the next day, I literally would have taken it, going anywhere but staying here. Me and my mum get on ok but she was just soooo happy that I was home and it was just a bit too much for me, I actually had to tell her to tone it down a little bit as that was not working for me. She didn't really understand but my dad came the next day and helped me get all my things out of storage, which was really good.”

Megan, 31 years old, sojourned to Vietnam.

The timing of the arrival home appears to play an important role in the re-adjustment process and the majority of participants timed their arrival home to be before Christmas or shortly before the commencement of their studies or otherwise pre-planned arrangements. It was

important to participants to arrive back to something, as they said returning home to nothing in particular would have made it difficult to re-integrate:

“I think it is a good time to come back just before Christmas because it is summer - lots of people have time off, lots of my friends were studying and had time off Uni, so they were free to hang out. There's so much going on over summer - there's New Year's, which is always fun. There's Christmas so you see all the family that you hadn't seen for two years. Um and definitely, I think coming back to that kind of like, positive busy, fun environment - which Christchurch isn't always, Christchurch can be quite dull sometimes so, I was definitely a good way to come back in when there was lots going on, broke myself into it. “

Sarah, 21 years old, sojourned to Australia.

Thus the timing of the arrival home in relation to the starting date of work, study or a social arrangement seems to be an important factor to consider in the re-adjustment process. This study found that a sense of purpose and involvement and establishment of a routine shortly after returning home can significantly help returnees to reduce re-adjustment distress as it indicates how they fit into society and pre-occupies them with adjusting to the new challenge rather than dwelling on their time overseas.

#### 4.11 Time since Return

The participants in this study all returned to New Zealand at different times and independently of each other. The time since returning to New Zealand varied between 8 weeks and 12 months. As pointed out in the literature review, repatriates who returned more recently were found to experience higher re-entry distress as opposed to repatriates who returned home some time ago (Yoshida *et al.*, 2002; Hervey, 2009). The findings of this study found that participants who returned more recently were still in the conscious stage of re-adjustment compared to those participants who had been back in New Zealand for longer. Anna for example said:

“I have been back 10 weeks now, it's good because having a job makes things feel more normal again but there are so many things that stand out to me being back here and it's not easy sometimes. But I am getting used to it, I guess I will adjust, I just need to give it more time.”

Anna, 29 years old, sojourned to the U.K.

John returned home to New Zealand from Canada two months prior to the interview and, at that time, had already found a job he was enjoying and intended to stay living at home with his mother. He explained he was still very much getting used to life in Christchurch again, and while he mentioned that it is difficult to move back to a small city like Christchurch when having lived in a metropolis like Toronto, he does appreciate the financial stability New Zealand offers, which was a unique point across participant interviews. Lucy, Sarah, Tom and Megan had been home for one year at the time of the interview and while all were actively engaged in their daily lives back at home, they still experienced some re-adjustment challenges. The analysis of this study found that some of the participants who had been back in Christchurch significantly longer than John, were experiencing greater repatriation distress. For example, Lucy who returned home 12 months prior to the interview said:

“Yeah, it's hard being back here, it's the first European summer that I've not been there for a long time, and so I'm like, oh, I just want to go back! The mentality of the traditional Kiwi's here drives me crazy. But I'm happier now than I was six months ago... it is getting better; although I'm not quite there it's not getting any worse...”

Lucy, 31 years old, sojourned to Germany, Belgium, U.K.

Other participants, such as Megan and Natasha who have been home from their sojourn for an extended period were similarly still experiencing more significant re-adjustment challenges as opposed to John who returned home two months ago:

“I was not optimistic about being happy when I came back to NZ, but it really worked out, and just with the job, starting work a week after I got back unexpectedly, in a role that I actually really like, it distracted me completely from that I was back in NZ! So I was not always thinking, aww I'm no longer in Toronto, and the job really helped. Being in a different job that I didn't really like would have made re-adjusting harder, and I remember the first week when I didn't have a job, still jetlagged, and had to get a new Drivers License, and I am standing in the queue at AA and thinking what am I doing here, why did I come back here.”

John, 35 years old, sojourned to Canada.

Thus, the findings of this study do not conclusively support the findings of Yoshida *et al.* (2002) or Hervey (2009), who suggested length of time since return is a single valid indicator for repatriation difficulties. The findings of this study suggest that the length of time since

returning to New Zealand is indeed a relevant factor to consider as repatriates reported the greatest re-adjustment difficulties approximately two weeks after their return, however, this current study supports the findings of Brabant, Palmer and Gramling (1990), propositioning that as time since the initial return home passes, re-adjustment distress decreases. However, this is valid in the context for individual repatriates only and time since return cannot be deemed a valid indicator for repatriation distress without considering individual differences and other influencing factors. This is consistent with the findings of Gregersen and Stroh (1997) who found that re-entry distress decreases over time due to the gradual re-adjustment to the home country environment.

The majority of participants experienced an initial high and period of excitement, which lasted for approximately two weeks from halfway through their final flight to New Zealand to arriving home and seeing everybody. Participants were looking forward to seeing their family and friends to catch up with everybody but the majority of participants explained that this initial excitement ebbed off after around two weeks, when they had visited most family and friends, the novelty had worn off and they were part of the daily routine again. This is consistent with Gullahorn and Gullahorn's (1963) findings of the W-curve which suggests an initial phase of euphoria repatriates experience upon first arriving back home followed by a phase of anxiety or depression before re-adjusting to a point where the person is satisfied living at home again.

“It was great arriving and seeing everybody, it was probably the time after the first couple of weeks or so that was especially hard and consumed with those thoughts of just wanting to be overseas again and not wanting to be here...”

Natasha, 21 years old, sojourned to the U.K.

In fact, all participants except John and Eleanor reported experiencing an initial stage of euphoria before falling into a phase of second guessing whether they made the right choice coming home, realizing that they may not have as much in common with their friends and missing certain aspects of the host country. It is argued in the literature that the phases of euphoria, depression and satisfied re-adjustment occur as sojourners are out of phase with the home culture and behaviour or social norms, which may be perceived as annoying or undesirable upon returning home (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Christofi and Thompson, 2007). This partially aligns with the findings of Heyward (2002) who affirms the initial

period of euphoria upon first arriving in the home country but stipulated that repatriates tend to act more as a spectator of surroundings and interaction between nationals.

The findings of the current study indicate that returnees were pro-active at engaging with their old contacts and as a natural part of that observed their surroundings and others' interactions to become re-acquainted. Furthermore, the current research somewhat supports the existence of this three-step-pattern upon returning to the home country, however emphasising that there are exceptions and not all returnees experience the depression stage or only experience it very mildly. The quote above from John is an excellent example for the loose existence of the phases as he experienced excitement and euphoria upon first returning, realized a view cultural patterns that led to him questioning why he returned home, but because he then started working in a job he really enjoyed he almost surpassed the depression phase, manoeuvring to satisfied adjustment. This could be attributed to expectancy theory (Hammer, Hart & Rogan, 1998; Lövblad, 2007), as John expected it very difficult to find a job in Christchurch but was positively surprised when he found one within a week, which positively influenced his overall re-adjustment experience as financial stability as one of the most important factors for him returning to New Zealand. However, the majority of participants had similar experiences to Paul:

“I really started to look forward to seeing everybody when I was changing planes in LA and it was only another 10 hours till home. Loved catching up with everybody the first couple of week, but everybody had work so they didn't have much time, I came back at a crap time, in May, starting to get cold, it was annoying nobody wanted to do anything after work, I didn't really know what to do with myself for a while, Christchurch seemed really dull, but then I started work for a paving company so that was good, got me thinking about other stuff than just wanting to go back.”

While the current research supports the general three phases as a common experience for many returnees it also calls for a more dynamic view on those three phases as the curve-linearity of the W-curve re-adjustment process fails to account for personal differences and the gravity to which a repatriate may experience the different phases. This is consistent with existing criticism in the literature towards the W-curve model that it over-simplifies the complex process of international transitions (Uehara, 1983). However, the current research supports it as a valid starting point to raise awareness amongst sojourners towards possible

re-entry challenges, as mental preparation has been found to ease distress upon repatriation (Sussman, 2002).

#### 4.12 Re-Adjustment to New Zealand

The points mentioned in the discussion thus far explore their relation to and effect on the re-adjustment of a sojourner back to the home country. This section will outline specific challenges that returnee participants reported they were struggling with upon re-integrating to their home country. What stood out to them about the New Zealand culture upon returning will be discussed in 4.16 below. As highlighted above in section 4.8 the majority of participants did not expect to encounter any difficulties upon returning home but found repatriating an unexpectedly challenging process (Bossard & Petterson, 2005), which for many of the participants in the current study was still ongoing at the time of the interviews. This is consistent with Lui's findings (2005) that the repatriation process can take between 12-18 months. However, as Lui (2005) suggested, the current research further emphasises that the re-adjustment period can vary significantly across repatriates as illustrated by quotes in previous sections. How long the re-adjustment period takes is subject to the various individual-specific internal and external influencing factors discussed throughout chapter four. The majority of participants experienced a minimum re-adjustment period of six months until they felt settled in New Zealand again, but certain aspects, such as less things to do and the New Zealand mentality, continued to stand out to them beyond that period.

“I think it would have been half-way through this year, 8 months after coming home, when I felt completely comfortable with Uni. So once I kind of reached this point it was ok... I've got a solid friend group now that I feel really secure in, that took a bit longer because initially it's like you're kind of hanging out with people but it doesn't necessarily have that intimacy, it can be somewhat a superficial level of interaction. So getting a secure friend group and having a lot of that extra curricula stuff happening - I suppose all that stuff came together about a few month ago, about 10 months after.”

Sarah, 21 years old, sojourned to Australia.

Some participants experienced re-adjustment challenges to the workplace and the associated workplace etiquette when returning to New Zealand. This indicates strong parallels with the business repatriate literature presented above, even though the participants in this study were

self-initiated not corporate sojourners. Chapter two presented various studies indicating that professionals returning from international assignments can struggle significantly re-adjusting to the work environment in the home country, although this is most often the return to the previous workplace, challenges not only occur due to things having changed, and the repatriate being out of sync with proceedings in the parent organisation, but also because the general behaviour and interactions at the home-country company may be significantly different compared to the host-country company. This is a challenge that Anna and Paul, participants of the current study, reported upon returning home and starting work. Although they were not on an organisational expatriate assignment returning to the parent company, re-adjusting to the work environment in New Zealand was challenging:

“It was good because the working hours were relatively flexible as long as you you’re your hours up, whereas here in New Zealand I find it so different. If I am 5 or 10 minutes late somebody will comment "Oh you're 10 minutes late" and you're like "Oh I was bussing...". So coming back here I found the transition quite hard, it seems very controlling. The Brits like Kiwis and Aussies, because we work so hard. Over there you get your work done but it's not as much pressure.”

Anna, 29 years old, sojourned to the U.K.

“People here seem much more rigid in the way they do things, I’ve learned a lot of new techniques and a more robust way of paving in Sweden and Germany but people over here just weren’t interested. I also found the work life balance better in Sweden, here I work overtime pretty much every day and when I have to leave earlier one day and want to take half a day off they are being weird about it.”

Paul, 30 years old, sojourned to Sweden.

The re-adjustment challenges to the workplace as described by Paul and Anna above, align with the findings of Abueva (2000), stating that repatriates may struggle with the loss of autonomy and status associated with their overseas position upon returning to work in the home-country. As Anna, and the majority of participants reported, New Zealanders are well regarded overseas for their diligent and hard-working attitude, whereas returning to New Zealand participants lost this positive stereotype of being hard working and additionally found their overseas work experience did not mean much to their New Zealand employers and wasn’t valued. The findings of this study then also support the findings of Oddou *et al.* (2013), pointing out that the talents and skills the sojourner has acquired overseas are often underutilized upon returning home. While Oddou *et al.*'s (2013) research was conducted

within an intra-organisational repatriation process, it is suggested that the findings can be applied to the repatriation processes in general, even if it is not within an organisation. Being dissatisfied with the working conditions upon returning to the home country can lead to commitment and productivity issues (Nery-Kjerfve & McLean, 2012), of which the commitment issues become apparent for participants in the current study as Anna as contemplating moving to Melbourne after only five weeks in the job and Paul was already in the stages of applying for a new job. Sophie, Megan and Holly reported that they were enjoying their jobs in New Zealand but remarked upon the fact that the wages, in comparison to living cost, were a lot lower in New Zealand than what they were used to from their sojourns to Asia. However, analysing work re-adjustment appears very dependent on where people sojourned to and what job they were holding while overseas. For example, while Sophie and Megan were financially a little worse of moving back to New Zealand, John was much better off financially as he worked in a non-professional job in Canada, where living costs were high comparatively to his wages, whereas upon returning to New Zealand he entered a professional job, leaving him much better off financially. Enjoying his job and being better off financially made re-adjustment easy for John as highlighted in previous sections. Thus the current research argues that work conditions in the home country comparatively to the host country are an important factor to consider when predicting re-adjustment challenges. Equally these insights should be considered by practitioners, exchange organisations, self-initiated expatriates and similar in order to reduce repatriation distress.

Participants indicated that it was crucial to their re-adjustment to get involved in something that gave them purpose and they were passionate about. For some participants that was study, a change of careers or a new job and for one participant it was a new relationship. Without being engaged in what gave them purpose shortly after their repatriation, all participants indicated they would have struggled significantly more. This strongly aligns with the notion presented in the corporate repatriation literature, that in order for repatriation to be successful, there has to be a sense of accomplishment for the repatriate (Jokinen, Brewster & Suutari, 2008).

“I wouldn’t have come back to Christchurch unless it was for a very specific reason, like studying something I had been interested in for a very long time and finally have that change of career. There would have been no point coming back



otherwise as I do ultimately want to live abroad. But I arrived in December and I didn't start university until February, that was a couple of months and I was just, it was quite like: shit, is this the right thing?"

Lucy, 31 years old, sojourned to Germany, Belgium and London.

In a more general context, participants reported they struggled to re-adjust to the lifestyle back in New Zealand, as it significantly differed from their retrospective lifestyle overseas, as pointed out in section 4.6. The four participants that returned to New Zealand to study, were not only re-adjusting to a different environment and lifestyle but also significantly less financial means compared to working full-time overseas. They also reported a significant shift in the pace of their life, now that they have returned to New Zealand, especially those who sojourned to Western cultures and bigger cities that exposed them to a much more fast-paced environment.

"The fact that I worked so much when I was overseas, always doing stuff, and then I didn't want to get sucked back in to the like, lazy student mentality of like sleeping till midday and half-arsing stuff. I thought that's not me, I'm going to do everything I've learned towards a better way of life and ... but yeah, things turned out way different from lazy first year before going away, so that's good."

Natasha, 21 years old, sojourned to the U.K.

This is consistent with the findings presented in Chapter 2, highlighting that after living abroad for an extended period of time repatriates commonly experience difficulty readjusting to the lifestyle in the home county (Suutari & Valimaa, 2002). The majority of participants also noted that they personally had developed while they were away and returning home to a familiar environment was 'boring' and although the rebuild since the earthquakes had picked up since they left, they perceived it to be very much the same still. This formed a stark contrast to their accelerated personal development leading to re-adjustment difficulties based on negative feelings towards the home country as it was unable to provide them with the same 'high', positive and exciting feelings they experienced in the host country.

"One of the things that Christchurch is lacking, for me, is that there is not as much to do here. Every experience isn't new, possibly due to growing up here, it's nice to travel down south and go to the lakes like Queenstown but it's just not the same when you are in a whole different country, and you have never done it before and 400k people vs 5.5 million is a big difference."

John, 35 years old, sojourned to Canada.

The existing literature reports that repatriates are likely to feel negative attitudes towards their home country because nothing has changed but they personally have developed significantly and feel they have ‘outgrown’ their old surroundings (Liu, 2005). However, the findings of the current research alert to the fact that re-adjustment difficulties not only arise due to repatriates feeling they have ‘outgrown’ the home environment but more so, it is human nature to perceive new environments and experiences as exciting whereas the country one has grown up in can provide a sense of security but is unlikely to provide feelings of excitement and the associated endorphins due to lack of significantly new experiences. However, this participant pool mostly consisted of short-term sojourners, encompassing living overseas for one to five years. The analysis of the interviews with the two participants who sojourned for six and ten years indicated that the exciting life in a new city becomes routine after a while as Eleanor outlines:

“But I was getting to a point where I didn't make the most out of everything Melbourne offered because I just wanted to settle and we were trying to save money for a house, which are very expensive over there. It wasn't a boring life, I was still very happy over there but we didn't make the most of the reason why we moved over there anymore. So I then also realised that I might as well be back in New Zealand, and the houses are cheaper here too.”

Sophie, who sojourned for ten years, went on numerous abroad exchanges while she was living in America and going to college, before moving to China for three years, desiring a change after living in America for seven years. Thus, this research emphasises that repatriation difficulties are not only highly likely to occur when somebody has been overseas for a long period of time and is completely adjusted to the host-culture, which encompasses a significant difference to the home culture, but also when sojourners return and feel they have not been able to make the most of their time overseas and wish they would have stayed longer.

None of the participants were experiencing re-adjustment difficulties as severe as depression, which has been associated with repatriation challenges in the existing literature (Black, Gregersen & Mendenhall, 1991). However, as mentioned previously, the majority of participants were facing significant re-adjustment challenges upon returning to New Zealand in regards to the general lifestyle, the work environment and most notably the social re-

adjustment, which is discussed in detail in section 4.13 and certain aspect of the re-adjustment specific to the New Zealand culture, as discussed in section 4.16.

Lucy, Natasha and Paul were experiencing the most severe forms of culture shock, where even after 8-12 months after their re-entry they were still struggling with certain aspects and were re-affirmed in their desire to move overseas permanently in the future. This time period is consistent with Lui (2005) who pointed out that it can take 12-18months to fully re-adjust. These participants continued to hold onto the negative feelings for much longer, and illustrated that they were often still pro-actively contrasting New Zealand with their experiences overseas. The New Zealand mentality was something they struggled re-adapting to in particular, while emphasising they actually do not want to adjust to that. Megan held a very similar attitude but had overall adjusted a little bit better due to enjoying her work, buying property and having the intent to find a significant other and ultimately remain living in New Zealand, although she contemplated another sojourn. Their severity of re-adjustment difficulty was closely followed by that of Anna and Holly; interestingly both the participants who most notably struggled to re-adjust to the New Zealand work environment in addition to the lifestyle. Tom and Sarah experienced less severe re-adjustment difficulties, mainly associated with the different lifestyle as Tom enjoyed the history and performing art culture in the U.K. whereas Sarah missed the healthy lifestyle commonly lived in Perth and the hot weather, both found re-adjusting socially a challenge. John and Sophie experienced little repatriation distress, which was only evident for a short couple of weeks after returning to New Zealand. Both said it was finding a fulfilling job that made re-adjusting easier for them. Additionally John was one of the few returnees in this study who retained his original circle of friends after coming back to New Zealand, whereas Sophie returned with her partner, which eases repatriation difficulty. Eleanor experienced near to no distress as a result of repatriation challenges upon returning to New Zealand, which the analysis attributed to minor differences between the New Zealand and Australian culture, her having lived in Melbourne for six years and coming to the realization that she 'wasn't making the most of what Melbourne had to offer' because her priorities shifted to buying a house and settling. Most importantly, she left Australia because she broke up with her husband of 12 years, which overshadowed any cultural re-adjustment challenges as emotional distress of the breakup and re-adjusting to life by herself took priority.

“It was relatively easy to re-adjust to the Kiwi lifestyle for me but I think that is also due to the fact that my relationship broke up in Melbourne so there was nothing really there for me anymore. But it definitely still took getting used to as there is not all that much available or to do over here, but I try to make the most of what's on offer. If I kept comparing it to Melbourne, the shopping, restaurants and entertainment, there would be no point, Christchurch doesn't compare. You want to find the happy things about where you are. “

Eleanor, 29 years old, sojourned to Australia.

However, eventually repatriates accept their home culture and become re-integrated into the environment and aware of their role within it (Martin, 1984). Even the participants who experienced severe repatriation challenges developed strategies and compromises to re-integrate while still holding onto some of their knowledge and habits developed overseas:

“So, for instance, as soon as I got back I bought a bike. And I bike everywhere. I bought some Birkenstock to make me feel German, I try to go out once or twice a week to theatre or to the movies or just ... just not get so routine, like I find people are here. Um, travel. One of my things was I had to see more of New Zealand, because I haven't been to many places in New Zealand. So I have been trying to do that, every couple of weekends do something else.”

Lucy, 31 years old, sojourned to Germany, Belgium and the U.K.

Organisations as well as individuals should remain patient and flexible, accepting repatriation as the complex process it is (Liu, 2005; MacDonald & Arthur, 2003), which approximately a third of the participants recognized and mentioned that while they had not fully adjusted yet, they just needed to give it some time:

“I'm not really feeling that settled in New Zealand yet. I guess I will just have to give it some time to see whether I will completely settle back in or whether I'd like to go to Australia for like a year or so and then come back and stay. I only got back 3 months ago. I also feel I am more coming into the age where you need to settle I guess. But I feel like I still want to go out and do things. Going overseas now for a bit might be the last chance to maybe do a year overseas and then come back and that's it. But I will stay for a while now to give it a chance.”

Anna, 29 years old, sojourned to the U.K.

Thus, the findings of the current research support the existing literature, which highlights that repatriation can be a difficult process for the returning sojourner especially as they are often

not prepared for the challenges they are confronted with (Bossard & Petterson, 2005). Participants also reported that they mainly kept in touch with their family members from the home country, as discussed in section 4.7, but were largely unaware of what was happening in New Zealand the country at large, which contributed to feelings of being ‘out-of-sync’ upon returning and aligns with the findings of Wielkiewicz and Turkowski (2010), that the sudden confrontation of the unfamiliar home culture forces repatriates to quickly assess how they fit into that environment, which causes distress. Additionally, the perceived loss of their exciting time overseas has the potential to cause grief and alienation against the home culture (Walling *et al.*, 2006; Chamove & Soeterik, 2006). A number of participants were concerned with the fact that returning home was ‘a step back’, which also caused mild and short-term anxiety in some cases:

“I just feel like returning to New Zealand is a step back. I know it isn’t because I am changing my career to go overseas again but I think for my personally I’ve still got a lot of my own developing to do. I find in New Zealand some are more focused on things that I’m not really that focused on such as buying a house, having children ... because I’ve come back and all of my friends have children and are married, and I don’t like being in that environment because I feel they’re really old and I feel like, I’ve got catching up to do whereas when I lived in Europe, I’m young, I’m in my career, it’s such a different way of thinking, your life is about you, generally your priorities are really different. I just thought if I came back to New Zealand I’d just end up like all my friends, you know, sitting at home doing absolutely nothing, I’m not ready for that....”

Lucy, 31 years old, sojourned to Germany, Belgium and the U.K.

Overall the re-adjustment challenges of the participants in the current study are reflected in the following categories as outlined in the existing literature: Depression and grief to be back home, initial anxiety about how one would fit in, interpersonal difficulties, cultural identity conflicts of trying to fit back into the home culture but wanting to hold onto behaviour learned in the host country as well as work re-adjustment difficulty and the initial disorientation or feeling of ‘being lost’ (Rogers & Ward, 1993; Furukawa, 1997; Gaw, 2000; Cox, 2004; Chamove & Soeterik, 2006).

### **4.13 Social Re-Adjustment**

The analysis of the current research showed that participants experienced most difficulty and distress with their social re-adjustment upon repatriation. All but one participant moved in

with their parents immediately after returning to New Zealand. As already found by Butcher (2002) this was a common cause for tension after the initial re-entry period of 2-4 weeks as repatriates were experiencing a stark contrast between their independent lifestyle overseas and 'smothering' environment of living at home with their parents.

"I was living with my family who I hadn't lived with for two years, and I'm very used to like...I suppose I'd lived with the girls for two years and we'd go home and go to our rooms and no one would be like "Oh what's wrong? Why are you going to your room?" because like, I wanted to be antisocial I could. I think it took a while for our family to readjust to people's habits. Like if I came home and went to my room they'd be "Is everything alright?" and I'd be like "I just like my own time! Leave me alone for a bit." So yea, it felt odd to begin with, it felt unusual."

Sarah, 21, sojourned to Australia.

However, the findings of the current research contradict Butcher's (2002) findings that returnees struggled to find work, which in turn made them more dependent on their parents. All participants in this research were able to find work relatively quickly after repatriation. It was a common theme across female participants that they told their parents, their mother more specifically, that they wanted to maintain their independence, which included less checking up from the parent's side.

Building a common understanding between parents and the returnee, re-adjusting to each other and what the other needed or expected was a typical difficulty repatriates faced in the initial stages of their re-entry. However, most participants managed to clarify their expectations and arrive at common ground where they were comfortable continuing to live together, which five of the eleven participants intended to continue to do. The six remaining participants moved into flatting situations after an initial period of living with their parents to get organised. Megan was the only participant moving into her own house immediately upon arriving in New Zealand and found flatmates to join her within a short time thereafter.

The flatting situation they moved into also had a direct impact on participant's re-adjustment, which was particularly noteworthy for Natasha, who moved into a flat sharing it with culturally diverse people:

“I was so lucky finding my flat - there's 8 of us, two Japanese girls, one Mexican guy and the rest of them are Italians and then there's me, so basically I live in the United Nations. My mum says this to me because I'm about to move out, because they're starting to drive me nuts because we have couch surfers all the time and I can't concentrate on study, but she said you have to be so grateful for how easy living in an international flat made your transition and I hadn't thought about it like this, but it's so true!”

In contrast to that, Holly's living situation was very different as she ended up living by herself aft initially living with her mother and sister for a short period of time:

“Ian and I had broken up over the time I was travelling with Christina but originally the plan was to live in grandma's house together just the two of us. But because that ended I was living there by myself, in Halswell, an area I wasn't familiar with. It was such a transition from always having lived with somebody, so it was a bit lonely living there sometimes, but I liked being independent so I did have that. And then I got a job really quickly so that kept me busy, which was great and what I needed. I was glad I got a job quickly because although I wanted to catch up with other people they all had jobs and weren't free during the day.”

Thus, this research proposes the social situation a returnee is exposed to upon arrival can have a significant effect on their repatriation process. All female participants, apart from Eleanor, reported that they particularly enjoyed the company of other people who had been overseas as they were able to relate to each other better than to New Zealander who hadn't lived abroad. All participants, except John and Tom, significantly changed or expanded their circle of friends as they felt they 'did not have much in common with their old friends anymore'.

“I think maybe this is where the disappointing came really early on, I caught up with a lot of my friends and their children because I haven't met all of them, but I just found ... I got nothing from the whole experience because no one asks me about me. It's always talking about the kids. And so I said to one of my really close friends, I said that I probably wasn't going to do that, I'll meet people one on one with their child, but a while group of mothers and babies? I remember once we went to the botanical gardens, I just left feeling like, maybe I do need to find a boyfriend, maybe I do need to have babies. I just didn't get anything from it.”

This aligns with Mooradian's (2004) study, which reported that people and the consequent relationships with those people had changed while they were abroad, which the returnee was not prepared for. The current research found that not expecting the differences that have emerged while the sojourner was overseas, can result in serious disappointment for the returnee and cause a feeling of 'being lost', sad or lonely for a period of time before eventually making new friends. It is the perceived lack of interest and support from the changed social network that can result in feelings of disappointment or anger.

"I like being back home now, but it's an adjustment. Especially in the beginning I just felt a bit lost, I didn't really know who to go out with. But then I met up with another girl I knew of who lived in London and came back before me, we went for a drink and it all came out. She could relate how difficult it is sometimes. I think my friends who have also travelled all know it's an adjustment. But I don't think people who haven't been overseas really understand. Because they cannot imagine what it is like as they have never experienced it."

Anna, 29 years old, sojourned to the U.K.

Yoshida *et al.* (2002) found that communication with parents and other repatriates has the potential to have a positive influence on the re-adjustment process. As mentioned above, the participants in this study found talking to other repatriates valuable and the majority were actively seeking contact with other returnees or foreigners, which gave them the feeling they were 'holding onto their international life for a little bit longer.

What became very evident from the findings of this study is that participants did, to some extent, feel pressure to conform to social norms and perform according to the life stage they are in, as society expects them to. However, it appears participants were experiencing a dilemma of wanting to fit into society and conform to those norms but also hold onto the freedom and lifestyle they have accustomed to overseas. Participants generally dealt with that in one of three ways: Conform and embrace societal expectations like John, Eleanor, Tom and Sarah:

"Yes, so it is one more year gone I suppose now coming back from Canada, it's true, that is part of my thinking and part of why I came back, so I can really sort of get the house and get the golden retriever and the 2.5 kids. Even though I have these sorts of concerns in my head, I rationally know that sometimes life isn't about living by rule, yet I think I will save up and buy a house soon hopefully."

John, 35 years old, sojourned to Canada.



While these people embraced social norms of New Zealand society and no distress was evoked by not wanting to conform, it did allude them to the fact that they ‘could have bought their house sooner and already paid of some of the mortgage’ as Eleanor said or lived at the University halls with all their friends as Tom pointed out. However, nobody regrets going overseas and these things they potentially missed out on while sojourning do not feel like a loss as the gain from the overseas experience was perceived as greater. Other participants such as Paul, Anna, Sophie and Holly accepted the social norms without feeling an immediate pressured to comply

“I’m 30 now so it is getting up there, I am happy for most of my friends who have families already, not something I’d necessarily want right now but it would be nice to meet somebody and maybe head that way, if not all good also.”

Paul, 30 years old, sojournd to Sweden.

For Lucy, Natasha and Megan the social norms and expectations were not welcome upon their arrival and these three participants felt annoyed about the pressure society puts upon people to conform to a certain behaviour at a certain age, especially contrasting this to their lifestyle overseas:

“Yeah. I think that going overseas makes you realise, why do people have to grow up so fast here? I don't get it. For me, I'm just like, wow, I'm thirty and I'm just changing my career, I'm just figuring out I think what I want to do, how can people know this at the age of 25? I don't get it. Like all of my friends have children and are married, and I don't like being in that environment because I feel they're really old.”

Lucy, 21 years old, sojournd to Germany, Belgium and the U.K.

One of the most frustrating things participants reported in regards to their social re-adjustment was that people in New Zealand and their old friends often did not ask many questions about their time overseas or seemed particularly interested. It is within the nature of humans to want to share good, exciting experiences and memories and it can be upsetting for the returnee to realize that nobody is interested to hear about their time overseas or that they were even ‘out of mind’ while they were ‘out of sight’ for their old friends (Suutari & Brewster, 2003). All participants consistently reported that they did not talk much about their time overseas or experiences to their friends upon coming home, with the exception of to

somebody who wanted to go overseas as well and asked them specific questions. There is little existing research offering insight to how repatriates are treated by their peers and other home-country individuals and how they react to the repatriate re-adjusting, however it has been found that peers tend to display some degree of dislike or prejudice against the returnee, often fostered by the fact that they have not experienced anything similar (Adler, 1981), which is reflected by the findings of this study where participants not necessarily experienced a dislike against them, but a disinterest in their overseas experience. As the reactions of peers to the repatriate play an empirical role in the re-adjustment process at large more research is needed in this area to understand the various contributing factors to the repatriation process of students returning from abroad in more detail. The reasons for not talking about their overseas time were that friends did not ask them about their sojourn, returnees felt that people would not be able to relate and that talking about the sojourn would be perceived as bragging by other people.

“In general I really feel like I don't like talking about my overseas experiences, I feel a bit rude. Like I absolutely hate talking about my life overseas, people are always like; don't brag about it, so I genuinely don't talk about traveling to people very much, um, because I just feel like a bit of a dick....”

Natasha, 21 years old, sojourned to the U.K.

“But here, Christchurch is so closed and clique. When I came back I joined a meet-up group here in Christchurch, which is just my favourite thing ever. They are all returnees or international people and there is just no crap like, which school did you go to, I don't know you so I won't talk to you... I just get on so much better with them, and the friendship happened so much faster, and is so much deeper just because those people are more open-minded and we have shared experiences. Some of the friends I have been friends with since school, that connection is just so different. I guess that has to do with the fact that my New Zealand friends already have kids and really aren't Asia type of people. They would ask me how Vietnam is and I would just say that I really love it and that would be it. They didn't get it and couldn't ask any actual questions so it was back to talking about their children. We just didn't really talk about Vietnam. It was just really far from what they were used to and know. People that were really interested and asked a lot of questions were mostly those that wanted to do something similar and were really interested in travel.”

Megan, 31 years old, sojourned to Vietnam.

The current research proposes that not talking about the experiences overseas has the potential to be something specific to New Zealand and the New Zealand culture as it is not discussed adequately in the existing literature. The reason for it being specific to New Zealand may be associated with the commonly recognized ‘tall poppy syndrome’, which is discussed in more detail in section 4.15. Notable are the associated findings of Butcher (2002), who proposed the re-entry should be viewed as a grieving process, which cannot be openly acknowledged or mourned. This is reflected in Tom’s statement:

“I don’t talk much about my time overseas because I didn’t want to be that person who comes back and just rubs under everybody’s nose that they had the best time ever. I didn’t want to be that person so I didn’t really talk about it. I think I didn’t want it to appear like I was sad to be back, although I was very sad when I first came back but obviously I didn’t want my friends to know that. That would not have been nice for them as they were excited I was back. It would have been awful of me to be back and say that I actually wish I was still over there. And I was obviously really happy to see them. So I don’t talk much about it on my own accord but when people asked me about it I’d tell them. Coming back from previous smaller family holidays, it had been mentioned to me that we are your friends too and you don’t have to rub under our nose how great everybody else was over there and brag about your experiences. I mean that was high school drama but I think it’s just stuck in the back of my mind.”

Tom, 21 years old, sojourned to the U.K.

Not being able to talk about the grief or difficulties of being back home has the potential to intensify the feelings of sadness, loneliness or anger however most participants reported they talked to their parents and while not all of them necessarily understood, they supported them the best they could, which helped sojourners re-adjust. Notable external changes such as to the personal presentation and style of clothing of repatriates (Kidder, 1992) also helped them with the adjustment process as they were expressing part of their identity acquired overseas as pointed out in section 4.12, which can significantly help with the re-adjustment:

“When I got back to New Zealand a lot of my friends told me I dressed fancy. I really don’t, just tidy. But people in Sweden and Germany simply do dress nicer; they don’t go out in their pyjamas like people over here, which I really can’t stand now.”

Paul, 30 years old, sojourned to Sweden.

Contrary to some reported difficulties in the existing literature (Kidder, 1992) concerning communication challenges, the participants in the current study did not encounter any as such upon returning to New Zealand, which can be associated with the fact that all of them mainly spoke English during their sojourn.

Through the process of social-readjustment the participants that did encounter difficulties came to realize that it was a positive to make new friends who they felt they have more in common with and therewith accepting their sojourn as a 'filtering system' that would break ties with superficial and situational friends.

"I remember the first year of uni, everyone that I went to high school with was kind of, like friends with each other, you know? And traveling broke that tie. Those people from high school I haven't spoken to for three years, and I wouldn't really pick off where I left with them because our friendships beforehand now seem very situational. It's kind of a good filtering system process. People you don't need in your life are... gone."

Natasha, 21 years old, sojourned to the U.K.

"I feel like, the time overseas really identified my real friends, the ones I was close to were the few people I actually kept in contact with. Although the next sort of friend circle, not the closest, I lost because they aren't people you speak to all the time. Not that that is a bad thing because I don't need that. But I guess if I was to have a party 3 years ago 30 people would have come, now 10 people would come."

Holly, 24 years old, sojourned to Australia.

Thus, the current research proposes that while the social re-adjustment may have been one of the most difficult processes for the majority of participants, exploring how they fit into their old circle of friends and making new friends is ultimately what helped them to feel more settled and at home in New Zealand again. The analysis made evident that social re-adjustment is not an easy process and often associated with disappointment, anger and feelings of loneliness before the repatriate realizes it is more beneficial to make new friends who align more closely with their post-sojourn interest and identity.

#### **4.14 Benefits of Sojourn**

The existing literature, as presented in chapter two, has recognized commonly perceived benefits of sojourning for an extended amount of time, despite facing significant re-

adjustment challenges upon re-turning to the home country. Worldwide sojourning, whether self-initiated or in an organisational context is appreciated for its potential to increase employment opportunities, professional development and acquiring a better understanding of the world and different cultures (e.g. Gill, 2005; Hugo *et al.*, 2003; Nerdrum & Sarpebakken, 2006; Suutari & Brewster, 2000). This is supported by the findings of the current study, for example Sarah said:

“I would say I've gained a deeper insight into like the contrast of two cultures and being able to take what I think is positive from both and use that for my advantage, and understanding that maybe the way one culture sees things isn't necessarily right, because everyone thinks it's right because they don't know any better. I've got a deeper insight into customs or trends, social trends and learned to be more open get along with anybody.”

Most of the participants in this research did not go abroad for better employment opportunities or professional development, but rather to experience different cultures and improve their understanding and diversity of the world as pointed out in section 4.7. However, the majority of the participants in the current study reported that their professional development was indirectly enhanced by their overseas experience due to gaining better social skills, the ability to work and cope in a busy environment as well as relate to a diverse range of people. This aligns with the findings of Inkson & Meyer (2003) who reported that the majority of their participants were optimistic about their overseas experience and newly adopted skills, attitudes and behaviours to positively influence career opportunities.

Two participants, Anna and Paul, reported that their overseas work experience had a direct impact on improving their professional work skills, although this did not appear to be as appreciated and utilized by their new employers upon returning to New Zealand.

“It is a good experience working in a big city; I'd think employers would probably see my London experience as positive as there are much bigger companies I worked in and it taught me how to handle that bigger environment and much larger sums of money. But nobody really asked me about that when I was applying for my current job.”

Anna, 29 years old, sojournd to the U.K.

Thus, while the existing literature discusses employment opportunities and professional development as a direct result of experiences overseas, the findings of this research however, highlight the indirect benefits of a sojourn on the professional development, which is a point neglected in the existing literature. Participants in the current study all reported significant personal growth and development brought about by sojourning to a different culture and environment, which was one of the most significant benefits remarked upon by all participants. This is consistent and supports the findings of Milstein *et al.* (2005), reporting that it is the multifaceted challenge sojourning and returning home present that have the potential to accelerate personal growth. Kohonen (2008) found that many repatriates reported their overseas experience as profoundly meaningful, generating a transformation within themselves and their outlook on the surrounding environment. These findings are strongly supported by the results of the current study as participants reported a strong transformation within themselves, and the change of environment assisted four participants in the current study with finding their future career direction as they saw themselves exposed to different options in the host-country, which they had not been aware of or considered previously in New Zealand:

“My future career direction was directly influenced by my time overseas. It never was something that was on my agenda before; I never thought about studying International Business, I never would have been exposed to those factors that led me to decide upon it here in New Zealand. Overseas, the media is different, you learn about a lot of different things, like how cultures interact, and how the nature of globalisation impacts the world that we now live in, international relations are so important and I never would have thought about it without going overseas, although it really encompasses my passions.”

Natasha, 21 years old, sojourned to the U.K.

These findings of the current study are a critical aspect contributing to the understanding of repatriation as finding one's passion and career goals while sojourning directly influenced the decision to return home for a number of participants in this study as pointed out in section 4.7. Furthermore, the repatriation process was facilitated significantly for those individuals as they realized they were working towards realizing their passion.

Participants of this research appreciate their sojourn as the invaluable personal development tool it turned out to be for all of them (Bachner, Zeuschel & Shannon, 1993; Nielsen, 2014;

Kim, 2016). They reported increased confidence, openness and curiosity for new things among the most notable personal development benefits, as well as increased independence and maturity by having navigated life in a foreign country by themselves.

“My overseas time made me more open minded, assertive and aware of other people, tolerant. Adapting to a host culture you have to adapt to their habits and be tolerant of their ways of life because I am the foreigner in that situation. So generally I feel more tolerant of people and their actions now and wonder why instead of judging immediately. Overall I am also a lot more confident now and I think going overseas really accelerates growing up and being independent”

Sophie, 24 years old, sojourned to America & China.

These attitude changes reported by the participants of this study are also noted in the study of Masgoret (2006), stating that sojourners can experience significant attitude changes as a result of adapting to the host culture. For many participants in the current study, these changes only became evident upon returning to New Zealand and inevitably comparing themselves to home country residents who did not go abroad. Additionally friends who did not sojourn often remarked upon how the returnee had ‘changed’. While participants said their friends were often unable to explain how exactly they had changed, often saying they are more ‘mature’, ‘organised’ and more ‘present’. This aligns with the concept of ‘international personhood’, which can be an emerging benefit resulting from higher levels of intercultural competence gained on the sojourning experience (Kim, 2001).

It is thus not surprising that an increasing amount of people ventures overseas during their studies as part of their personal development and gain a competitive edge when graduating and applying for jobs (Salim & Uh, 2014).

Mäkelä and Suutari (2009) recognize the importance of social capital that many people who sojourn develop. The current research found that the majority of participants adapted to the host culture and as a consequence built valuable social skills that facilitate relating to a wide range of people naturally and build networks and friendships abroad. Nine out of the eleven participants said they still talked to their overseas friends frequently and hoped to visit or receive them as visitors so as to maintain these friendships.

“I was forced to meet people overseas as I only knew one person over there. I did meet new people through an expat network I found through the Internet. I would have never gone to online arranged meet ups here in New Zealand, I didn't even like going to parties here where I wouldn't know anybody. But there it was different, once I had met a few people I realised you connect so much deeper through same experiences. Now that I am back it doesn't faze me, I will go to a party where I don't know anybody. I have made so many awesome friends overseas by just getting involved and we still talk quite a lot, those four girls, we have experienced so much together, that are lasting friendships.”

Megan, 31 years old, sojourned to Vietnam.

While none of the participants realized that their networks abroad could be a valuable asset for organisations in their home country who are hoping to expand or recruit this study emphasises that overseas networks commonly exists and are maintained by the sojourner upon return, which would offer the potential for organisations to tap into these networks. However, due to many New Zealand organisations remaining relative conservative in their management, this benefit of sojourning may be less utilized in the New Zealand context, however practitioners are encouraged to explore the opportunities with their employees who have sojourned previously.

The social capital gained on sojourns directly aligns with the concept of a boundaryless career. The participants in the current study all self-initiated their sojourn and feel more confident than they did before living abroad. The majority of participants would consider sojourning again, not only to immerse themselves into a different lifestyle but more so because there may be more prosperous career opportunities than in New Zealand. Thus this research argues they have built the foundations for establishing a boundaryless career, considering opportunities overseas if New Zealand is unable to provide what they strive for. As highlighted earlier, John for example, is very happy in his current job after returning in New Zealand but is hoping to become an internationally recognized author, which he envisions will take him overseas to gather inspiration, public speaking and market his publications:

“I am hoping to publish a book and get involved in public speaking on an international level, something I probably would have never aspired to without living abroad for 15 months.”



While not all participants of the current study may have had the intention to move overseas in the immediate future due to study, family or similar reasons, they reported they are much more aware of the amount of opportunities out there and they don't necessarily restrict their ambitions to New Zealand anymore. Holly for example said:

“I am looking forward to living in Christchurch, close to my family for a while, I don't know how long or if I will move overseas again, but I very well might as I know the money is much better in Australia and there are more opportunities with more and larger organisations.”

The concept of boundaryless career, introduced in Chapter 2, is therefore directly relevant to a large number of non-business sojourners, who relocate and travel for extended periods of time voluntarily and take a proactive approach to migrating (Thomas, Lazarova & Inkson, 2005).

While their motivations to sojourn may not have been directly career related, this research argues that a sojourn is likely to make an individual much more employable due to accelerated personal development, social capital and other intangible skills learned abroad. This builds on Schein's (1996) findings that globalisation is making the business environment more international and careers more global due to increased global competition. This, in turn, creates the need for organisations to employ people with international experience and capitalize on their knowledge gained from overseas experiences.

#### **4.15 Sojourn's Value**

As part of the interview participants were asked whether they believed, or had experienced, that their overseas experience is valued now that they are back home in New Zealand. As highlighted in the previous section, the sojourn is often a life changing experience for the returnee and as highlighted in the literature review, disappointment can arise if there are discrepancies between the expected reaction of others to their sojourn and the actual reactions, which may not be as interested as the sojourner imagined. As pointed out in the literature review, Tharenou (2008) also found that people who sojourn tend to associate beneficial outcome expectations for their career with sojourning, such as having more career opportunities upon returning.

Interestingly, when the participants were asked whether their OE was valued, none of them were sure it or knew whether it was but they did hope so. While emphasising that they personally value it they did not receive any external feedback or validation on having lived abroad and overcome the challenges associated. Six out of the eleven participants in this study started to work shortly after they moved back to New Zealand, and reported it was easier to find a job than they had expected, mostly due to networking and contacts. The maximum amount of time it took for the participants to find a job was one month post their return to New Zealand. While all of them enjoy their work, none have received any feedback from their employer as to whether their time overseas is valued or influenced the recruitment decision. Sarah captures the common consensus among participants in regards to this question by outlining that there seems to be a distinction between people in New Zealand who do value overseas experience and are interested in it; those tend to be the people who have been overseas themselves, and people who don't appear to value overseas experience much:

“I think that we as a culture can be quite anti people leaving. It can be seen as kind of like betrayal almost. I think it's really valued by people who have had overseas experience themselves; you often have a lot in common with those people. But in terms of people who haven't been, I wouldn't say it's been particularly valued. I wouldn't say it's been unvalued [sic], but it's not valued having that experience and stuff.”

Sarah, 21 years old, sojourned to Australia.

Holly, who sojourned to Australia, worked there for two years for the same company she coincidentally found a job with upon returning. Upon interviewing and discussing the Christchurch position with her she explained there was no mention of her overseas work experience as such, it came down to the fact that she was employed for the position she held in Australia, which was similar to the one she applied for in Christchurch. At no time did the recruiter mention that her experience working in a larger retail environment with a significantly larger customer base would be of benefit. Similarly Megan said:

“Yes and no, it is very regulated here which I found a little bit difficult re-adjusting to as it is not at all over there. But working with second-language children and within different teams looks really good on my CV. Nobody really said to me whether they value it or not but I guess it is. It has got to be seen as a positive surely.”

Yet again, the above participant quote highlights, that New Zealand employers and even New Zealanders at large seem to offer little validation for sojourning, ignoring potential benefits for their organisation and fail to recognize it as an achievement with the potential to bring about significant personal growth and development. Aitken and Hall (2000) recognize this phenomenon in a similar manner, recognizing that diversity management skills are becoming increasingly important in today's global world, yet their research within the New Zealand tourism industry reflects that employers are often ignorant towards people that bring with them the valuable foreign skills, which could be utilized to enhance organisational success. This forms a stark contrast to the perceptions of sojourners, who often feel proud of having lived overseas and having overcome the associated challenges as well as highly value their variety of acquired tangible and intangible skills. It stands in close relation with the point mentioned in 4.11 that sojourners generally feel discouraged to talk about their overseas experiences as it can be perceived as 'bragging' in the New Zealand culture. However, even if not talking to other people about their overseas experience, all participants reported to highly value their overseas experience themselves and are incredible glad and grateful that they did go overseas as they reported to have learned so much during that time. Participants appreciate their increased intangible knowledge and more complex worldview, something they say would have been impossible to acquire staying in New Zealand, which aligns with the notion pointed out in the literature, that personal development is a strong motivator to sojourn for many expatriates (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1966; Nielsen, 2014, Kim, 2016). Participants believe that while their overseas experience may not be directly valued as much as they had hoped, the gained life experience and personal growth associated may be beneficial to be selected for certain programs or employment opportunities:

"I'm hoping when I apply for the clinical program that the fact that I have lived overseas and that I've worked overseas counts for a lot because you've dealt with different societies and different cultures and you've had to adapt. And I think that's a really hard thing to do, not everyone can do it happily."

Lucy, 31, sojourned to Germany, Belgium, U.K.

The intangible personal development participants have gained from their sojourn, as outlined in 4.14, is bound to benefit them in acquiring a job or further career development as commonly reported aspects of personal growth such as increased confidence, openness and enhanced cross-cultural communication skills are commonly valued traits by employers

(Jokinen, 2005). Thus, while it may appear that a sojourn is not directly valued, it can be inferred that it is significantly valuable as it influences the life of the sojourner in intangible ways, by behaving more confident, open, curious, tolerant and positive than they did before their sojourn.

However, regardless of the sojourn being valuable to them in the long term, often repatriates experience a feeling of disappointment upon returning home, as people may not admire or validating their overseas experience and achievements as much as they expected. This discrepancy between expectation and reality but also the feeling of not being understood has the potential to increase repatriation distress (Hammer, Hart & Rogan, 1998; Lövblad, 2007). Participants commented that home-country nationals often cannot relate to what they have experienced, which tends to alienate the repatriate based on feelings of being on ‘different wave length’ to people from the home country:

“It is quite a process moving overseas, starting a new life and then having to come back home. None of my friends actually understand that. It can be really hard sometimes. I’m still good friends with them, but it’s like I never left, we just don’t talk about my time away, I think they just can’t relate...”

Paul, 30 years old, sojourned to Sweden.

#### **4.16 New Zealand Culture**

The current study analyses the repatriation process of New Zealanders returning from a sojourn of 12 months or more. In order to build a holistic understanding of what the re-entry process was like, the New Zealand culture and its impact on the re-adjustment process for the current participants and therewith potentially for New Zealand repatriates at large. As alluded to in earlier sections (e.g. 4.12) New Zealand may treat, perceive and value repatriates differently compared to residing home-country nationals. Fursman (2010) pointed out that New Zealand has a ‘comparative advantage’ in offering a good lifestyle, although his term was used broadly in the study to include a number of things, the majority of participants in the current study agreed and appreciated New Zealand for its more relaxed lifestyle and generally friendly and save atmosphere compared to what participants experienced at their overseas destinations. Participants also appreciated the nature and ease of getting around upon returning home.

“Everybody would agree that the quality of life here in New Zealand is better. I mean it has to be better. Even overseas people say that. I think we have a good work / life balance and it is easy to go out, get into nature and get involved in things. It is not as overregulated as other countries maybe because there is less people. Houses are affordable here and you can build a really good life for yourself even if you haven’t gone to Uni.”

Paul, 30 years old, sojourned to Sweden.

There were a number of things that commonly stood out to the participants in the current study upon returning to New Zealand. Such as the accent, how friendly New Zealanders are, even to strangers, but also that people dress relatively poorly and do not engage in many social activities during the week, especially outside of summer, which was frustrating for many repatriates and prolonged their re-adjustment process, proving an aspect difficult to get used to after living a very social lifestyle overseas.

“I think people over here have a much, much higher tendency to want to stay at home. I think getting out and about it much more common overseas, to do something after you've finished work, to go out in the evenings even if it's a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. Here I've always found that a lot of people don't want to do anything after 6 o'clock. And it's because we have houses which are a lot of work, we don't live in apartments which are more easy care, but I find it's maybe somewhat more social over in Europe.”

Lucy, 31 years old, sojourned to Germany, Belgium and the U.K.

“I have talked about that with other friends who have moved overseas, it's almost like it's simply not the culture here, nobody does much during the week after work. It's probably the old-style way of our parents, and people here seem very set on "Finish school, go to Uni, get a job, and stay in that job, climb through the ladder and save money and then buy a house" - I think for many people the key goal or dream here is to buy a house, so I think that's why people just want to save their money and don't want to go out during the week.”

Anna, 29 years old, sojourned to the U.K.

Those re-entry experiences align with the concept of reverse culture shock (Ward *et al.*, 2001; Furnham, 2012; Welsh, 2015), which can occur when repatriates return home after having assimilated to their host culture. Similar to the concept of culture shock upon arriving to the host country (Oberg, 1960), reverse culture shock can result in distress due to the loss of familiar cues, breakdown of interpersonal communications and an identity crisis

(Furnham, 2012). Stewart and Leggat (1998) pointed out that people take their culture and embedded behavioural norms with them and utilize them as a framework for interpersonal and social interactions, which suggests that once sojourners have assimilated to behavioural norms in the host country and re-adjusted their framework, they may find it unapplicable upon returning to the home country. During the sojourn the majority of participants adapted well to the host culture and assimilated to the behavioural norms of the host country, thus upon returning to New Zealand, participants experienced distress because their interpretive framework had shifted to represent the host country but was no longer applicable to the home country, which forced repatriates to quickly assess their situation and how they fit into the environment.

“I just felt that I couldn't be friends with New Zealanders, they're so annoying, they're so close-minded, in the beginning I was so worried about having to have friends that I didn't feel were particularly interesting. I just don't understand people who don't want to travel like so many New Zealanders here. Or people that have no desire to learn things about the rest of the world, or they've got no comprehension that people are very different, and there are very different cultures out there and are just really ignorant, racist even sometimes. I've met Kiwi travellers and they're great, but it's a mentality of the general consensus. The New Zealand culture, we're just not particularly considerate of people who are different. It really annoyed me when I first came back how people could be so inconsiderate and I definitely did not want to become part of that again.”

Natasha, 21 years old, sojourned to the U.K.

Many participants reported that returning home after their sojourn has actually enhanced their intercultural understanding as they noticed aspects about their home country that they were oblivious to previously, not having experienced anything different. This supports Ward *et al's* (2001) findings, who researched beyond the negative connotations associated with culture shock and highlighted the positive effects it can have on cultural learning and personal growth, which is further supported by research that highlights the consequent benefits of experiencing and overcoming culture shock (Adler, 1975; Furnham & Bocher, 1986; Kim 2001). As alluded to in section 4.13 participants did not feel welcome or encouraged by fellow home country nationals to talk about or share their overseas experiences. On the contrary, they often felt discouraged as it could be perceived as ‘bragging’ within the New Zealand culture. This aligns with participants recognizing the ‘tall-poppy syndrome’ in New Zealand upon their return, which they described as New Zealanders’ not liking, celebrating

or encouraging high achievers, attributing it to being a small country where people don't really like those who stand out in anything apart from sports competitions.

“I think definitely the thing that's really stood out to me is this Tall Poppy Syndrome here, not liking high achievers. Even just things like in Australia like, all the people that I'm friends with they'd make Facebook posts regularly but here, people don't want to put up pictures of themselves in case people think they're up themselves or people don't want to celebrate if they're doing something well, and I think that's such a harmful, such a harmful kind of culture to have. So I try to not let that influence me, but of course you can't help its potential to a degree.”

Sarah, 21 years old, sojourned to Australia.

Thus, this research found that the New Zealand culture was perceived more consciously and critically by the repatriated participants in this study. They encounter a number of re-adjustment difficulties associated with their home-country culture, which can be attributed to their altered cultural identity and reverse culture shock. As recognized in the existing literature this process can cause the sojourner to experience distress and a perception of loss and grief in regards to the previously held conditions, especially because the participants did not necessarily expect any difficulties re-entering their home country (Chamove & Soeterik, 2006; Suutari & Brewster, 2005; Rogers & Ward, 1993).

#### **4.17 Intentions to Sojourn Again**

All participants except Eleanor said they would want to go overseas again for an extended amount of time. For the majority however, this is subject to completing their studies, acquiring some financial savings or spent a good amount of time with their family and taking a break before considering the next overseas sojourn. Three participants (Lucy, Natasha, Sophie) stood out in this category as they indicated that they do not envision New Zealand to be their permanent home and will definitely move abroad again, as Lucy described:

“Because I really believe that I'll probably leave again soon. Not soon, like in a few years when I've done my studies, but I will move away I just really I don't see this as a permanent place. If I ever had a family I'd really love to have my children spend some of their upbringing overseas. I just think the richness and culture that that gives is priceless. I just think I know how much it's benefited me growing up

being multi-cultural. It's the most amazing thing it's like a gift you can give someone.”

Other participants reported that while they would consider sojourning again, their decision will likely be influenced by external factors, such as meeting a significant other in the next while they are living in Christchurch. Four participants (Sarah, Megan, Anna, Holly) said they would like to go overseas again and have already seriously considered it since returning, but Megan and Anna intent to stay in New Zealand for a while due to career and financial reasons. Sarah wants to complete her studies and Holly dedicated some time to spend with her family in Christchurch. If they would meet somebody they could see a future with in their next time in Christchurch, all of those four participants said they would be very unlikely to follow through with moving overseas again:

“I would like go away again. I prefer living somewhere than travelling, because you're like immersed, and you learn a lot more and you develop more, if you're passing through it's quite a superficial experience. Um, but obviously at the moment I'm down here having to study. So it depends a lot on if during my study time I meet a partner, have children, where is your life? It's not something that I'd like to pre-empt at this point!”

Sarah, 21 years old, sojourned to Australia.

“I do know that you can get a visa for Canada easily until you're 35 though. So there's still more like options [laughs]! But for now I will stay here, work, relax and spent some time with my family, I might even meet somebody...”

Anna, 29 years old, sojourned to the U.K.

Other participants (Paul, Tom, John) did want to go overseas again but most likely more on extended holidays or combining it with freelance work due to visa restrictions or realizing that the financial prospects would ultimately better in New Zealand compared to overseas. While it is interesting that all participants with that attitude were male, the sample size is limited and further research is suggested to verify male sojourners attitudes towards sojourning again. John shares his intentions:

“I knew that once my visa in Canada was up that I would return to NZ, but that was not to say that I would not have future plans to go live somewhere else. Like I discovered that Boston is a super cool city and I would definitely live there. I do want to go back overseas, but probably not to the same extent, I do writing when I



am not doing my job, and I guess an ambition of mine is to be sufficiently successful in those things that I write about that I could combine my passion for writing and for philosophy with travel.”

John, 35 years old, sojourned to Canada.

Eleanor was the only participant who had no ambition to go overseas again, she is happily living in Christchurch now, close to her family, knowing it is where she wants to bring up a family which is her focus in and goal for the next two years. Eleanor was the only participant in this study who had entered into a relationship since returning to New Zealand and as she explained:

“I am now very happy living here, at home, and it feels like a blessing that I met James and I feel really lucky to have met him. We are hoping to start a family soon.”

One of her reasons for leaving Australia was that she did not want to meet a significant other native to Australia, as she had the desire to bring up a family closer to her parents. Consequently, entering a relationship with a New Zealander upon returning home strengthened the desire to remain in New Zealand and validated her reasons for coming home.

The majority of participants experienced significant re-entry challenges, which does not appear to influence future sojourning intentions as the majority of participants would consider sojourning again, being aware of the potential difficulties they may face upon returning home again.

#### **4.18 Chapter Summary**

The main aim of this chapter was to present the findings of the study and discuss their relevance, while offering comparisons to the existing literature. Sojourning is not without trade-offs and many participants did not expect the difficulties they were faced with upon returning to their home country. Though, it is important to emphasise that despite any re-adjustment difficulties, all participants reported their sojourn to be a positive, life-changing experience, including feeling their time overseas has contributed greatly to their personal development, including greater confidence, better cross-cultural communication skills and

being more tolerant and open minded. As becomes apparent in this chapter, the current study has found numerous variables that have an immediate influence on how returning sojourners experience the re-adjustment process to New Zealand, which highlights the complexity of the repatriation process.

The findings in relation to internal variables that impact how an individual perceives the repatriation process were found to be relevant indicators as female participants tended to experience repatriation distress more severely compared to male participants and the majority of participants was around the age of 30 years old when returning to New Zealand, which is consistent with existing literature (Lidgard & Gilson, 2000). An indicative correlation between the relationship status of being single and experiencing slightly higher repatriation difficulties compared to sojourners returning with their partner was also supported in the current study, however, the number of participants returning in this study was limited and further research is required. Furthermore, prior intercultural experience was found to facilitate the re-adjustment, however building on the existing literature, prior experience was only found relevant in the context of a prior sojourn, even if short-term, rather than prior holidays, which commonly don't involve an immersion into the host culture (Martin & Harrell, 2004).

External variables were found to be equally relevant as quality contact with home-country individuals throughout the sojourn as the potential to result in less re-entry distress (Cox, 2004) and sojourners who are deeply integrated and have quality interactions with host-country individuals tend to experience greater repatriation distress (Kim, 2001), as it is associated with a greater change in their cultural identity (Lövblad, 2007), which is bound to intensify reverse culture shock (Gaw, 2000). The current study did not find the length of time spent overseas to be a valid predictor for repatriation distress, as individual circumstances differ too much to generalize across individuals that the longer they spent overseas, the more re-entry distress they are likely to experience (Uehara, 1986).

A sojourner's reasons for returning home were found to be one of the most valid indications for potential repatriation difficulties especially in association to assessing whether the reasons for return have been validated upon moving to the home country (Hazen & Albert, 2006). Gaining an understanding of the sojourner's trip home from the overseas destination was

found to offer valuable insight into the individual's attitude and strategy towards returning to New Zealand.

The participants' experiences of the repatriation process to New Zealand were highlighted in section 4.12, discussing the main difficulties sojourners experienced upon re-integrating to the home country. Repatriation difficulties were further discussed in the context of social re-adjustment, which was found to prove among the most challenging factors for repatriates as they reported to struggle adapting to the mindset of home country individuals and many participants drastically changed their circle of friends upon returning as they perceived to not have much in common with their previous friends anymore, which added distress to the repatriation process in form of frustration and disappointment. Consequently the benefits of the sojourn as reported by participants were discussed, as they often only became evident upon returning home and comparing themselves to the original environment and previous social environment (Kohonen, 2008; Masgoret, 2006). A further point discussed was how valued the sojourn is in the home country compared to the high value the repatriates regards his sojourn with, which was found to elicit disappointment in returnees as their time overseas was not found to directly benefit them, rather indirectly through the personal development associated (Jokinen, 2005). The chapter concluded with discussing factors about the New Zealand culture that stood out to repatriates upon returning, highlighting aspects such as the "Tall Poppy Syndrome", which participants reported made coming home to New Zealand more difficult. Lastly, participants potential intentions to sojourn again were discussed and their influence on their re-adjustment process. It was found that a number of returnees planned to sojourn again and those participants who intended to sojourn permanently suffered the most repatriation distress.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into the repatriation, re-entry and re-adjustment processes of sojourners returning to their home country New Zealand after having lived abroad for a minimum of 12 months. The current study aimed to address and answer the following research questions:

*Research Question 1:* What factors influence the repatriation process for a sojourner and do they overlap to predict repatriation difficulties based on individual internal and external differences?

*Research Question 2:* How is the repatriation process experienced in a New Zealand context and what role does the New Zealand culture play?

*Research Question 3:* Do sojourning and re-adjustment generally tend to elicit benefits and positive change or can re-adjustment challenges be so severe that the sojourn is perceived as an overall negative experience?

*Research Question 4:* Are the behaviour, attitudes and skills acquired abroad of future use or discarded upon re-entry to the home country?

This chapter offers a summary of the key findings of this study in relation to the research questions and concludes with acknowledging limitations, potential for future research areas. Lastly key recommendations are identified that have the potential to facilitate the re-adjustment for New Zealanders returning home after sojourning. The key findings of this study are discussed addressing the research questions in numerical order in the following section.

### **5.2 Summary of the research purpose**

Existing studies on repatriating to New Zealand after sojourning are sparse in the available literature and generally only address one of the many aspects of return migration

(Szkudlarek, 2009; Lidgard & Gibson, 2002; Inkson & Myer, 2003; Bell, 2002). The current study aimed to provide a holistic insight into the return process for New Zealand sojourners, highlighting the individual differences in the process of returning home, analysing influencing factors carefully starting from making the decision to return while overseas to the potential desire to move overseas again. A distinct difference of this study is that individual characteristics and differences are highlighted to assess repatriation challenges beyond the over-generalized concepts of reverse culture shock and curve adjustments (Zapf, 1991; Gaw, 2000; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Onwumehili *et al.*, 2003).

A phenomenological research design was implemented, which included a pre-interview questionnaire and an in-depth interview, to gain a thorough understanding of the lived return experiences of participants, which were then analysed in a thematic coding construct to arrive at meaningful findings.

*Research Question 1:* What factors influence the repatriation process for a sojourner and do they overlap to predict repatriation difficulties based on individual internal and external differences?

This study found that all returnees experienced some form of re-adjustment challenges upon returning to New Zealand; however the degree of re-entry distress varied significantly across individuals. Male participants generally tended to experience lower re-entry distress compared to the female participants in this study, with the exception of Sophie who returned with her partner and experienced similar low levels of re-adjustment distress (Cox, 2004; Hyder & Lövblad, 2007). Thus, the findings of this study suggest that females and single returnees tend to experience higher re-entry distress, whereas the age of the sojourner was not found to be an influencing factor on predicting re-entry distress (Hammer *et al.*, 1998). Further internal factors that the study found to be a valid predictor for re-entry distress were prior intercultural experience (Martin & Harell, 2004), stipulating that this specifically refers to prior sojourning experience rather than extended holidays, which do not offer the same experience of adjusting and immersing oneself into another culture. People who have sojourned previously and have prior re-adjustment experience were found to still experience re-adjustment challenges but manage them proactively and thus experiencing less distress by being more aware.

To further address the key findings in relation to research question one, valid external factors influencing repatriation challenges were found to be the overseas destination, with people sojourning to non-English speaking countries generally experiencing greater changes in the sojourners identity (Kohonen, 2008; Arnaez *et al.*, 2014 ), however although the cultural distance between the non-English speaking countries participants sojourned to and New Zealand was greater, re-entry distress due to increased cultural distance was equally as valid for participants who sojourned to the U.K., an English speaking country. Sojourners that experienced relatively mild re-entry distress based on cultural distance were those who sojourned to Australia, which they described as ‘almost another part of New Zealand’ and thus culturally very similar to their home country (Lidgard & Bedford, 1999). Greater immersion and quality contact with host culture individuals and low quality contact with home country individuals were found to be indicators for re-adjustment challenges upon return (Joniken *et al.*, 2008; Butcher, 2009). It is noteworthy to highlight the difference this study makes compared to existing literature, in highlighting that the contact with home and host country individuals must be of quality rather than superficial interactions to have an impact on potential re-adjustment challenges (Kim, 2001). This study then suggests that the degree to which a returnee is able to identify with the home culture upon returning to New Zealand is directly related to the external factors of cultural distance, home- and host-country social interactions as well as length of sojourn. Failing to be able to identify with the home-country was found to serve as one of the most valid indicator for potential re-entry distress. However, to gain a holistic understanding of how the repatriation process affects returnees and in which aspects their re-adjustment challenges emerge, factors beyond the internal and external variables have to be considered. Those shall include an individualistic assessment of return reasons, the general and social re-adjustment challenges encountered, whether returnees have intentions to sojourn again as well as other factors, as outlined in Chapter four. It is crucial to consider the entirety of these various factors in order to address and understand the complex phenonema of repatriation adequately (Szkudlarek, 2009).

*Research Question 2:* How is the repatriation process experienced in a New Zealand context and what role does the New Zealand culture play?

Addressing the key findings in relation to the second research question it was found that the return process to New Zealand is relatively distinct compared to other countries due to its geographic isolation (Wilson, Fisher & Moore, 2009). This motivated participants to truly

make the most of their time overseas before returning to New Zealand as they expected it to be costly and difficult to go abroad soon again. This led the majority of participants to convey that they were not ready to return to New Zealand yet, and therewith made re-adjusting more difficult for them. However, a benefit specific to New Zealand, which was positively perceived upon returning was the countries natural beauty, healthy living standards and a relaxed lifestyle as already pointed out by Fursman (2010). The repatriation process in the New Zealand context was facilitated by the easy going nature of people and lifestyle as well as less competition for job seekers and admission to educational programs, which made it easier for repatriates to fulfil some of their reasons for returning home. This was found to increase overall repatriation satisfaction, contributing to reducing repatriation distress while not necessarily eliminating it completely. Thus, this study points out the relevance of a sojourner's reasons for returning home to the repatriation process and their need to be validated upon arriving home, assuring the sojourner he or she has made the right decision in moving home. This is a an important contribution of this study to the existing literature and it is suggested to investigate potential models in future research.

A factor found to make the repatriation process more difficult for New Zealand repatriates was that certain characteristics of many home-country individuals lead to frustration for returnees as they generally perceived New Zealanders as relatively basic people with a narrow mind-set, set in their ways, ignorant and at times even racist, specifically those who have not been overseas before (Mooradian, 2004). More so, the majority of repatriates found it difficult to accept that people do not tend to go out and socialize as much during the week, which was something all participants missed greatly about their overseas lifestyle. Hence, many participants reported that living at home in New Zealand again was relatively quiet and boring compared to their time overseas, which the research found to prolong the re-adjustment period as returnees desired to be back in the host country. Another distinct characteristic of repatriation in the New Zealand context is that participants generally perceived they were not welcomed to talk about their overseas experiences because it may be viewed as 'bragging' in the New Zealand culture. As a result, returnees can suffer from increased repatriation distress as they may feel they are undergoing the re-adjustment process alone and cannot talk to people about their difficulties (Yoshida *et al.*, 2002). This further contributes to the stereotype of New Zealanders, who have not been abroad before, being slightly ignorant, which often tended to lead the returnee to second guess as to why they have returned home. However, the majority of participants appreciated the more relaxed lifestyle

of New Zealand to recover from their often 'stressful' time travelling, as they described (Wearing, 2000).

*Research Question 3:* Do sojourning and re-adjustment generally tend to elicit benefits and positive change or can re-adjustment challenges be so severe that the sojourn is perceived as an overall negative experience?

The key findings in relation to the third research question clearly illustrate that all participants viewed their sojourning experience as incredibly positive, although they may have been facing significant challenges re-adjusting to their home country (Nerdrum & Sarpebakken, 2006; Suutari & Brewster, 2000). The findings support the existing literature as participants reported significant personal development and growth, including more confidence and openness to new experiences, as well as the ability to relate to a wide range of people easily (Milstein, 2005). The findings of this study deviate from the existing literature, which states that overseas experience is directly correlated to greater employment opportunities. This has not been found to be applicable in the New Zealand context. The findings of this study show that sojourner's time overseas has the potential to indirectly assist with employment opportunities due to the increased personal development. However, New Zealand employers were generally not found to appreciate or proactively seek to utilize the skills and experiences individuals gained overseas (Aitken & Hall, 2000).

*Research Question 4:* Are the behaviour, attitudes and skills acquired abroad of future use or discarded upon re-entry to the home country?

This directly aligns with the fourth research question concerning whether skills acquired abroad are continuously utilized after returning or whether they are being abolished in order to re-adjust to the home country. The findings of this study support existing literature in saying that re-adjustment is often a gradual process and returnees are not necessarily aware of changing their behaviour to re-adjust (Gregersen & Stroh, 1997; Wielkiwicz & Turkowski, 2010). The current study suggests that intangible factors such as behaviour, accents and clothing style of a returnee acquired abroad gradually fade and are often subconsciously assimilated again to home country standards (Kidder, 1992). However, it is important to note that the majority of participants had certain aspects they adopted overseas, which they consciously desire to hold onto upon repatriation. For example Lucy continued to



use the bicycle as main mode of transport; Megan embraced meeting new people or Anna continuing to make a point of going out during the week. Holding onto certain aspect from their overseas experience was found to help returnees adjust and re-integrate without feeling they are giving up everything they have become during their time overseas. As alluded to earlier, all participants experienced significant personal growth, such as ability to relate to a diverse range of people and more confidence, which are intangible skills likely manifested in the majority of returnees in order for them to benefit of this personal growth continuously after repatriating. However, changes in returnee behaviour and attitude can occur as they re-adapt to the surrounding environment, but generally returnees were found to have a stronger sense of themselves, how they fit into the world and what they aim to achieve (Kim, 2001).

### 5.3 Limitations

The inherent limitation of this study is that the phenomenological interviews this study implements for data collection are participant driven and therewith directly depend on the willingness of participants to share their experiences in-depth providing as much insight as possible. The research does recognize that there may be potential hesitations to open up about negative experiences and that there is a risk participant will attempt to gloss over the problems rather than illustrating them in depth. However, this was addressed by clearly communicating research intentions during participant recruiting and making expectations transparent as part of the participant screening. It is challenging to keep participants on track talking about their repatriation experience when they naturally gravitate towards talking about their exciting overseas experiences rather than the, often sad and challenging, process of coming home.

While the research made dedicated efforts to avoid personal biases to influence the study, it shall be recognized that the exclusion of biases cannot be guaranteed as implementing a thematic analysis framework in this research purports that the coding and analysis of the data is subjects to the researcher's interpretation.

A further limitation to be mentioned is the relatively small number of male participant in this study compared to female participants. Future research is needed to further confirm gender differences within the repatriation process. Additionally, the difference between sojourners

returning in a relationship compared to returning as a single shall be investigated further as the current study incorporated a small amount of participants returning in a relationship.

#### **5.4 Future research**

Three recommendations will be offered for future research. Firstly, as noted in 4.2, it is suggested that future research is conducted with a larger sample size of New Zealand repatriates (Bell, 2002), including greater balance between male and female participant numbers (Rohrlich & Martin, 1990) as well as returnees with a significant other compared to single returnees in order to confirm the validity of the effect of internal variables on the repatriation process (Hyder & Lövblad, 2007). A greater sample size would also allow making generalizations more confidently for the New Zealand returnee population at large. The second recommendation aligns with this, suggesting a quantitative study on repatriation in the New Zealand context to establish whether the findings of the current study are representative of the New Zealand returnee population at large (Lidgard & Bedford, 1999). Building on that notion, the third recommendation calls for a longitudinal study to assess the long-term effects of the repatriation process, especially given the complex phenomenon of migration, considering circular and shuttle migration (Lidgard & Gilson, 2002). Furthermore, future research into recently emerged instant communication tools and their effect on integration into the host-country and dis-integration from the home country suggested and their consequent effect on repatriation.

#### **5.5 The contribution of this study**

The current study has identified opportunities for the New Zealand government, employers, education providers and other authorities as well as the New Zealand population and country at large to facilitate the re-adjustment for sojourners returning to their home country by acknowledging them and valuing sojourning experiences. The areas that can pose specific challenges for returnees have been pointed out in chapter four and shall be taken into consideration, especially from section 4.6 onwards; representing the external factors which people can have an impact on. This study highlights that it is essential to build more awareness and understanding around the potential difficulties returnees face and home country individuals, similar to host country individuals, shall adopt a more empathetic and assisting approach for returning sojourners who are re-adapting to New Zealand. The findings

of the study advocate that there are strong reasons to do so as repatriates are often eager to share their experiences and skills acquired abroad which poses a valuable source of knowledge and new networking opportunities as pointed out in Chapter two and four. Against the obvious benefits of pro-actively re-engaging returnees in society and utilizing their overseas experiences, repatriates of this study often did not necessarily feel their overseas experience was welcome or valued within the New Zealand society and corporate environment upon returning home.

The current study made valuable contributions to understand the neglected re-adjustment process of New Zealanders returning from a sojourn of 12 months or more to live in their home country again. The focus of this study was to build a holistic understanding of the complex repatriation process from the sojourner's internal variables influencing the process, making the decision to return, re-adjusting and becoming aware of how the perception of a sojourn in the New Zealand culture affects repatriates and their potential desire to sojourn again. In doing so and providing a holistic insight, the current study has addressed significant gaps in the existing literature, where studies generally tend to focus on examining repatriation on the basis on one or two concepts but neglect individual differences which are highlighted and embedded in broader repatriation concepts in the current study. Additionally, in a national context the current study has contributed to the narrow offering of existing literature assessing repatriation to New Zealand, as the majority of existing return literature originated in the United States. The phenomenological research design achieved a number of valuable insights by encouraging rich participant descriptions, which resulted in recommendations to improve understanding, encourage and assist New Zealanders in the return and re-adjustment process to their home country and value their acquired tangible and intangible skills.

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**Appendix B:** Participant information sheet, emailed to participants upon successful recruitment and handed out prior to the interview.



## **Participation Information Sheet**

### ***Coming home: Repatriation, re-entry and re-adjustment to New Zealand after sojourning***

*Department:* Department of Management, Marketing and Entrepreneurship  
*Information Sheet for:* Participants volunteering for interviews as part of this research  
*Locality:* University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand  
*Lead researcher:* Lara Davina Penke  
*Contact phone number:* 022 – 094 – 9814  
*E-mail:* lara.penke@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

You are invited to take part in a study on the challenges of re-adjusting to New Zealand after having lived abroad for an extended amount of time (more than one year continuously). This study is completed as part of a Masters degree of Commerce at the University of Canterbury. Whether or not you take part in this research is your choice. If you do not want to take part, you don't have to give a reason, and it will be accepted unquestioned. If you do want to take part now, but change your mind later, you can pull out of the study at any time. Participation will not incur any cost.

This Participant Information Sheet will help you decide if you'd like to take part. It sets out why I am doing the study, what your participation would involve, what the benefits and risks to you might be, and what would happen after the study ends. I will go through this information with you and answer any questions you may have. You do not have to decide today whether or not you will participate in this study. Before you decide you may want to talk about the study with other people, such as family, whānau, friends, or healthcare providers. Feel free to do this.

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign the Consent Form attached to this document. You will be given a copy of both the Participant Information Sheet and the Consent Form to keep. This document is 3 pages long, including the Consent Form. Please make sure you have read and understood all the pages.

### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?**

The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding of the re-entry and re-adjustment process to New Zealand after having lived abroad for a minimum of one year continuously (also referred to as sojourning). Participants will be asked to delve into the positives, challenges and problems associated with the re-integration in order for the researcher to identify common themes across research participants and suggest practices on how the re-adjustment process could be facilitated for returning New Zealanders that have lived abroad for at least twelve months.

New Zealand is commonly recognized as a mobile nation, with the 'OE' and overseas work experience regarded as being part of New Zealand's culture. Yet, experience of returning



from these prolonged overseas stays and re-adjusting to New Zealand has been neglected as a research topic.

Participants will be asked to share in-depth descriptions of their return experience, to respect participants' privacy all names of participants will be changed for the use in the research.

The project is being carried out as a requirement for a Master's degree of Commerce by Lara Davina Penke under the supervision of Professor C. Michael Hall, who can be contacted at michael.hall@canterbury.ac.nz. He will be pleased to discuss any concerns you may have about participation in the project.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee, and participants should address any complaints to The Chair, Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz).

### **WHAT WILL MY PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY INVOLVE?**

In order to qualify for the participation of this study, you will have lived overseas for at least 12 months continuously and have returned no more than 18 months ago. You will be at least 18 years of age and are willing to share rich, in-depth illustrations of your experience of returning to New Zealand.

Participants will be asked to convey their experiences via interviews, which are based on a starting question posed by the researcher and participant driven from then forward. Interviews are expected to take around one hour. Interviews may be recorded via an audio tape with consent of participants. Once the researcher has transcribed and summarized the fully transcribed interview and summary, it will be e-mailed to the participant, who is then encouraged to read and check the transcripts for accuracy.

### **WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS?**

The nature of participation is voluntary, meaning that participants are free to decline to participate, or to withdraw from the research at any practicable time, without experiencing any disadvantage. If you choose to withdraw, I will remove information relating to you as long as you withdraw prior to the final submission date of 19.02.2016. Participants have the right to access information about them collected as part of the study. You will be issued the transcribed interview held as part of the research to ensure accuracy of information and are encouraged to highlight any point you feel may have interpreted differently to how you intended during the interview.

The results of the project may be published, but you may be assured of the confidentiality of data gathered in this investigation: Your identity will not be made public without your prior consent. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, interview notes and transcripts will be stored securely on a private computer only accessible via password entry by the researcher. The data will be stored securely for 6 years and will be destroyed and permanently deleted after that. A thesis is a public document and will be available through the UC Library.

**Appendix C:** Consent form emailed to participants upon their successful recruitment and explained in person prior to the interview for participants to sign.



**Consent form for participation in a research interview**

Concerning the research topic:

**Coming home: Repatriation, re-entry and re-adjustment to New Zealand after sojourning**

I agree to participate in a research project led by Lara Davina Penke, a post-graduate student at the University of Canterbury. The purpose of this document is to specify the terms of my participation in the project through being interviewed.

1. I have been given sufficient information about this research project. The purpose of my participation as an interviewee in this project has been explained to me and is clear.
2. My participation as an interviewee in this project is voluntary. There is no explicit or implicit coercion whatsoever to participate.
3. Participation involves being interviewed by Lara Penke for the purpose of understanding processes and challenges encountered as part of the re-adjustment process to New Zealand after sojourning for a minimum of one year. There is no time limit for the interview, I understand I can take as much time as I feel is necessary to share my return experiences in-depth. I allow the researcher to take written notes during the interview. I also allow the recording (by audio) of the interview. In case I do not want the interview to be taped I am entitled to request non-recording of the interview or withdraw from participation entirely.
4. I have the right not to answer any of the questions. If I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to withdraw from the interview at any time.
5. I have been given the explicit guarantees that, if I wish so, the researcher will not identify me by name or function in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure.
6. I have been given the guarantee that this research project has been reviewed and approved by the Human Ethics Committee of the University of Canterbury. For research problems or any other question regarding the research project, the Human Ethics Committee may be contacted.
7. I have read and understood the points and statements of this form. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
8. I have been given a copy of this consent form co-signed by the interviewer.

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date:

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date:

For further information, please contact: Prof. Michael Hall, Senior Supervisor of this research project, Michael.hall@canterbury.ac.nz.

**Appendix D:** Pre-interview questionnaire participants completed independently prior to the interview.

**Repatriation, re-entry and re-adjustment to New Zealand after short-term migration**

Thank you for taking part in my research. Before we start the interview I would like to find out a little bit more about your experiences and confirm some details around your time overseas. You will remain completely anonymous in this research as your name will be changed to "participant x".

1. How long (in total) were you overseas for?

2. Which countries did you go to and where did you spent most of your overseas time?

3. How long have you been back in New Zealand for?

4. What was your main reason for moving overseas?

	Main reason (select one)	Other factors?
Work / income prospects	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Different culture / lifestyle experience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Travel	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Family / Partner overseas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Study	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>	

5. Did you travel back to New Zealand during your time overseas?

- Yes, more than once a year.
- Yes, at least once a year.
- Yes, every two years.
- No, never.

Comments (optional)

6. Did you stay overseas for the amount of time you intended to?

- Yes, I planned to stay overseas for the amount of time I did.
- No, I stayed longer than originally planned.
- No, I came home earlier than originally planned.
- I did not plan a specific timeframe.

Comments

7. What was the main reason for returning to New Zealand?

	Main reason (select one)	Other factors
Lifestyle	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Family / Friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
New Zealand is my home	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work / income prospects	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opportunities for spouse and children	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Immigration issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

8. What, if any, did you have waiting for you at the time of returning to New Zealand?

- Own house to live in in New Zealand
- Significant savings from my time overseas
- Pre-arranged employment in New Zealand
- Pre-arranged rental accomodation
- Moved in with family

Other (please specify)

9. What was your economic well-being like after returning to New Zealand compared to overseas?

- Much worse off
- A little worse off
- About the same
- A little better off
- Much better off

10. What was your overall general well-being like after returning to New Zealand compared to overseas?

- Much worse off (please specify why)
- A little worse off
- About the same
- A little better off
- Much better off

Other (please specify)

11. Do you feel you came back at the right time?

- Yes, it was the right time to return to New Zealand
- No, I wish I would have stayed overseas longer
- No, I wish I had returned earlier

Comment (optional)

12. Do you consider yourself "settled" in New Zealand now?

- Yes, I am glad to be back for good.
- Yes, but I would consider living overseas again if the opportunity arose.
- No, I am planning to move overseas again in the future.

13. How old are you?

14. How would you describe your personality before going overseas?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire and reflect on your personal perceptions. I look forward to chatting to you about your return experiences.

**Appendix E:** Interview question guidelines which offered suggestions for further talking points if the participants got stuck in the interview.

### **Coming home: Repatriation, re-entry and re-adjustment to New Zealand after sojourning**

#### **Interview protocol for repatriate research participants**

1. Introduce myself
2. Explain the purpose of this interview and the participant's rights briefly.
3. Give the participant the informed consent form to review and sign.
5. Thank for participating in an interview.
6. Start with initial research question, use probing questions as needed.
7. If an interviewee has difficulty answering a question, provide examples.
8. Sub-questions will be used as needed to invite the participant to elaborate more.

#### **Interview Questions**

##### **1) Please tell me about yourself and any previous overseas experience (family, education, occupation, important things in your life...)**

- Your family background
- What did you study? In New Zealand?
- Where have you lived / sojourned to apart from New Zealand? (the use of the term sojourning will be explained)
- When did you return?
- How many years were you living in .... ?
- Did you come back to New Zealand at all during that time?
- How and why did you make the decision to return to New Zealand?
- What are you doing now? / How did you get to be in your current professional position? To what extent did the overseas experience help?
- What are some important matters in your life right now? How do they relate to your overseas experience?

##### **2) Why did you decide to go to ....?**

- Did you consider going to any other foreign countries?
- Were there any particular benefits sojourning to the country you have been to? E.g. do you have family / friends there?
- Who / what influenced your decision to go to ....?

##### **4) How would you describe your experience at your sojourning destination?**

- Specific examples of positive and negative experiences?
- How did being a "Kiwi" influence your experience?
- Anything you didn't expect when you arrived?
- Who helped you?
- What were your experiences with locals, work, and community?
- Did you make many friends during your sojourn? Where were they from? How would you compare those friendships to your New Zealand friendships?

**5) How did your sojourning plan evolve over time?**

- Before going to .... what was your plan regarding what you would do after the planned time of sojourn had lapsed?
- How did your plan change over the course of your sojourn?
- At the end of your sojourn, when you were getting ready return to New Zealand, what was your plan for the future?
- Why and how did you decide to come back to New Zealand?
- Did you come back because you have more personal and professional connections in New Zealand?

**6) What is your experience returning to New Zealand after your extended time abroad?**

- How did you feel about returning back to New Zealand just as you were departing .... to come back home? Were you excited / happy / nervous / sad, ...?
- How did you feel in the first 2 weeks after returning?
- What was the most positive experience in your first 2 weeks of return, and what proved difficult in the first 2 weeks of return?
- Did you talk much about your overseas experiences when returning to New Zealand? Who with? Locally or overseas friends?
- How did you feel about returning to New Zealand once the initial excitement of catching up with everybody ebbed off? Did you miss anything about ....?
- Reflecting back on the past months, what has been the best thing about returning to New Zealand? What has been the most difficult?
- Are there certain things about New Zealand / our culture that stood out to you returning?
- Personally, do you think the sojourn changed you / your views/ opinions/ priorities?
- Professionally, do you think your sojourn will have a positive influence on your career goals?
- Have you had any experience so far how New Zealand employers perceived and reacted to your overseas experience? Did it help you in the job application process?

**7) What do you think you have gained or lost as a result of your sojourn experience?**

- Is your overseas experience valued in New Zealand
- How do you think other people perceive you?
- What are some important skills/competencies you have acquired during your sojourn in ....?
- What kinds of connections did you gain?
- What did you lose?

**8) Is there anything else that you think would be important for me to know in understanding the experience of people from New Zealand living overseas for an extended period of time?**



**Appendix F:** An overview of the background of each participant of the current study is provided in the following participants profiles to assist the understanding of their individual repatriation experience. Presented in the order participants were interviewed.

**Lucy.** Lucy's interview was conducted in a meeting room on the University of Canterbury Campus. She is 31 years old and returned from her five years overseas in December 2014, which means she returned to New Zealand 12 months ago and has not left since. She returned to New Zealand for one 3-week holiday after having been abroad for 2.5 years. She came across as a cheerful and outgoing lady with a positive attitude; she laughed a lot and was very open. She told the researcher she had been looking forward to participating in this research and sharing her experiences. Lucy grew up in Germany with a Kiwi mum and an Irish/Kiwi dad and attended a German Kindergarten and first year of school until her family moved back to New Zealand when she was the age of five. Growing up Lucy maintained her love for travelling and Germany, which reflected in her taking German as a subject through school and University. She graduated with a degree in teaching from the University of Canterbury and then followed her desire to go overseas and move to Germany. She is a dual citizen of New Zealand and Germany but identifies as a Kiwi. Lucy moved to Germany with her boyfriend at the time, where they lived in Düsseldorf for one year before her partner was restationed to Belgium where she lived for a consequent two years before moving to London, by herself, for another two years. She easily found work as a language school teacher in all three countries and was pleased she completed her degree before going overseas to avoid having to work in basic jobs such as waitressing. This aligns with one of her main reasons for going overseas, which were better work and income prospects but also the desire to experience new cultures and a different environment. Lucy described her personality before her sojourn as conscientious, inquisitive but reserved and perceives her overseas time to have greatly contributed to her personal development, becoming more confident and outgoing. The European lifestyle also made her realize that there is no hurry growing up. Returning to New Zealand she struggled to identify with the common social norms of finishing Uni, working, buying a house and settling and decided it is not for her. She makes conscious efforts to maintain some aspects she adopted during her sojourn in Europe, such as biking everywhere, going out during the week and trying new things. While she loved the European lifestyle, which she perceived to be much more social compared to New Zealand and described her time as "amazing", "fun" and "life-changing", Lucy returned from her sojourn earlier than she expected. She had planned to be living overseas for many years but personal

issues and the desire of changing her career led her to return to New Zealand after five years overseas. Upon returning to New Zealand she moved in with her family as she was seeking the security of home and family to deal with her personal issues. While she was a little worse off in regards to her economic well-being upon returning to New Zealand, she described her overall well-being as a little better off after repatriating as she felt she needed a familiar environment to deal with the breakup from her long-term partner. She described re-adjusting to New Zealand as very difficult: “It was so strange being back home. When you drive down those roads and start seeing all this familiar territory but it's not familiar, but it is familiar, like the first time I went to the mall, I was just like, oh my god, this is so weird! I just thought oh my god, New Zealand, God, really I am back here?”. She also emphasised the fact that while she is still friends with the closer circle of friends before her sojourn, she feels they do not have much in common and she has formed deeper friendships with other people who share more common interests and a worldly, open-minded attitude.

**Natasha** came across as a curious, carefree, young 21 year old lady upon arriving to the interview in one of the meeting rooms on the University of Canterbury Campus. She was very open and talkative during the interview and mentioned she felt at ease talking to the interviewer who was not originally from New Zealand. Hence Natasha said she felt more comfortable opening up about her perceptions about New Zealand upon returning from her 20 months stay in England and the difficulties she experienced upon re-adjusting. Natasha had never been overseas before sojourning to England but always had the desire to go abroad and see the world. She described this was further fostered during her first year at University where she met a few more international people. She returned to New Zealand in February 2015, 10 months prior to the interview and just before she commenced her studies at the University of Canterbury, which was her main reason for returning to New Zealand. Working in non-professional jobs overseas she realized she really wanted to acquire a tertiary education before moving overseas again. She did not quite stay the entire two years of her visa as originally planned and while she is sad to have left England she hopes her education will enable her more opportunities overseas. She did not return to New Zealand during her sojourn but her family visited for three weeks and they holidayed around Europe together. Upon returning to New Zealand she moved in with her family until she found a flat close to University. Her economic well-being is a little worse off since returning to New Zealand, being a student she is still poor but in England she was earning a full time wage and spending all her money on experiences, being poor as a consequence as well. Her general well-being is

a little worse off as she still struggles to re-adjust to the New Zealand mentality and wishes she was still living abroad. However, she does recognize it was the right time to return to New Zealand as she needed an education to improve her living conditions and ran out of financial means in England, unable to afford staying any longer. Prior to going abroad, Natasha described herself as less confident and open as well as a bit shy. She also feels much more independent and determined to pursue her goals now.

**Sarah** is a 21 year old female who returned from a 23 months sojourn in Perth, Australia, in December 2014. During her interview at the University of Canterbury Campus she was open and genuine with her answers, although they did follow the question format (Appendix 4) closely without initiating many topics independently. Her main reasons for moving overseas were the desire to experience a different lifestyle and culture as well as travel. She did not visit New Zealand at all during those 23 months and stayed longer than she originally anticipated as she was enjoying it that much. Her main and only reason, as she points out, for returning to New Zealand was the desire to commence her University studies. She does feel it was the right time to return to New Zealand but has the desire to move overseas again after completing her studies. Sarah indicated her economic well-being after returning to New Zealand is much worse off compared to Australia, due to the fact that she was working full-time overseas and is now a student working part-time. However, her overall-general well-being has improved a little compared to her time overseas as she is enjoying the security and ease of living at home while being able to immerse herself in her studies, without having to worry about house duties or cooking. Prior to going overseas Sarah was relatively unsure of herself and more introverted. Her sojourn has made her more enthusiastic about all aspects of life as that is what a lot of people in Australia were like she feels; she also adopted a healthier lifestyle and has become more confident and uninhibited to make new friends.

**Anna** is a bubbly and talkative 29 year old accountant who lived in London, U.K., for two years before returning to New Zealand 10 weeks ago, October 2015. She sojourned overseas because she felt the social life in Christchurch was lacking, especially after the earthquakes with less bars or clubs, and she was seeking to live somewhere that had more to offer and experience a different lifestyle. She always had the desire to travel once she completed her university degree and worked for some time to save up some money. She also believed that going overseas would be beneficial in regards to work and income prospects for her being a qualified accountant. Anna maximised her one-off two year work visa for the U.K. and

stayed the full two years as she originally intended to, without returning to New Zealand during that time. The main reason for her return home was that her visa expired and thus she saw herself forced to leave the U.K. but she does wish she could have stayed overseas for longer, ideally another year or two with the intention to ultimately move back to New Zealand. Anna did manage to secure herself a well-paid accounting job while in London, which explains her economic well-being back in New Zealand to be a little worse off, although she secured an accounting position four weeks after arrival home. However, Anna indicated that in regards to her general well-being she is much better off being back home as it is a quieter lifestyle. She was partying and drinking a lot in London and while she loved doing so much overseas and making the most of after-work time and the weekends, she explains that she was starting to feel exhausted at times. Her sojourn with its social and festive lifestyle has helped her overcome initial shyness when meeting new people and given her more confidence and self-assurance, which she said she was lacking prior to her time in London; however, talking to her during the interview it seems unimaginable that she used to be shy. Re-adjusting to living with her family upon returning home was quite difficult for Anna as she feels a little bit controlled, which is a big contrast to her independence overseas. She also If the opportunity arose she would like to live overseas again, at the time of the interview she was contemplating moving to Melbourne for a year before settling down in New Zealand but she decided it would be wiser to give her job and settling back a proper chance and re-evaluate her situation in another 3 months.

**Tom** came across as a funny, young guy during our interview on the University of Canterbury Campus. He is 22 years old and lived in Oxford, England for the majority of his 17 months sojourn. Tom left to go overseas after his first year of University, where he studied law and history but didn't feel in the right mindset to continue onto the second year. The desire to experience different cultures and travel has led him to take a break and sojourn, where he stayed longer than the one year originally intended but he did not come back to New Zealand during that time. The main reason for Tom to return was a change in family circumstances as his parents were moving to Australia on short notice but he also felt ready to re-commit to his studies in order to complete his University degree. The sojourn to England has deepened his interest in history and brought him to the realization that he does not want to continue with his law degree but instead focus on history only. Upon returning home Tom moved in with his family for a month before they moved to Australia and he went flatting in Christchurch to continue his studies at the University of Canterbury. His economic

well-being is a little worse off now that he has returned to New Zealand and studying rather than working, additionally he describes his general well-being a little worse off now that he is back in New Zealand too. Which aligns with his desire to stay overseas for a little bit longer but if the opportunity arises after completing his studies he considers himself likely to move overseas again for a period of time. Prior to his sojourn Tom described himself to be quiet and unsure about things, which prompted him to observe situations rather than get involved. He was also naïve having grown up in a small New Zealand community but friendly and independent which aligns with his preference to travel alone.

**Holly** came across as a mature 24 year old lady during the interview and while she seemed a little stressed after a long day at her new work she was open and talkative during the interview. She lived in Australia for two years and first returned to New Zealand nine months ago, however, after three months of working in New Zealand she went on holiday with her sister for just over three months travelling though America and Europe. Holly completed her degree in education but knew she didn't want to teach so it seemed the perfect opportunity for her to go overseas, which she had wanted to do since starting university. As she said, the timing of going overseas worked out really well as Christchurch was not an exciting place to live in after the earthquakes and she had also been trying to split up with her boyfriend at the time and felt distance would be beneficial to get over that relationship. Holly initially moved to Perth and stayed with her dad, who moved back to New Zealand after the first two months. After a year in Perth her company moved her to Melbourne, which she loved. Her new boyfriend, who is from Perth originally moved with her. She loved Melbourne and would have loved to stay longer but her company was not offering her any further career progression and she started to miss her family, her younger sister especially who has been missing her a lot and she feels responsible for.

Another reason she returned to New Zealand to go on a long-planned holiday through America and Europe, with her sister, so she moved to New Zealand in February 2015, which aligned with her cousin's wedding. Her partner at the time moved with her to Christchurch and their plan was to find out how he would enjoy living in Christchurch, as an option for the both to settle once Holly got back from her holiday. She said that those three months between coming home and going on holiday did not really feel like coming home as she was just trying to spent as much time as possible with her boyfriend as well as earn as much money as she could before leaving. The reality and feeling of coming back home was in

September 2015 when she returned from her holiday. She had broken up with her boyfriend while on holiday and thus said it was quite challenging finding her feet in Christchurch again as she was not only trying to re-adjust to life in New Zealand again and finding a job but also re-adjusting to living by herself. Something that has really stood out to her is the lower salaries here in New Zealand for exactly the same job, yet living costs are comparative. However, Holly said that it was really beneficial to be close to her family during that time and while she wishes she hadn't moved away from Melbourne she does not have the desire to go back there.

**Megan** is a friendly, yet little bit reserved, 31 year old primary school teacher who has been living in Vietnam for three years and three months before returning to New Zealand in December 2014. She had completed her university degree, taught as a primary school teacher for a number of years in Christchurch as well as bought her first house before she fell badly ill one winter, which prompted her to seek options to spent the following winter in warmer climate to avoid falling ill again. One of her friends was working in Vietnam at a primary school and suggested she followed as there was a job available. As she always had been interested in travelling and experiencing other cultures she accepted the 12 month work contract in Vietnam without thinking about it too much. She loved her time in Vietnam and found continuing work at an international primary school easily, which led to her staying a lot longer than she originally intended. She did come back twice during that time, once for a holiday of three weeks and another time shortly before her return to New Zealand for a funeral. Her main reasons for returning to New Zealand were that Megan felt she had been overseas for long enough and it was time to return home. Most of her close expatriate friends were returning to their home countries around the same time and she did not want to be the only one left. She also felt her teaching standards were slipping a little due to no training opportunities or assistance in Vietnam. Additionally the teaching standards in New Zealand require teachers to re-register if they have been overseas for longer than three years. She was also starting to become concerned about her health and safety in Vietnam as police had been increasingly stopping Western looking individuals out on the street, alleging they had done something wrong in order to extort them resulting in her becoming uncomfortable going outside by herself. Megan feels it was the right time for her to return to New Zealand, partially also because she felt she was getting to the age where she would like to date somebody again and perceived Vietnam short of eligible bachelors. Her economic well-being back in New Zealand now is about the same compared to her time in Vietnam and she feels a

little better off in regards to her general well-being. Megan said that shortly before leaving Vietnam she really tried to get organised for her return home, which is a contrast to the majority of other participants who were focusing on making the most of the remaining time overseas and not think about the return home too much. She gave notice to the tenants in her house, where she moved in upon her return and got in touch with people at home. She also managed to get in touch with her old employer which resulted in her having a job to start shortly after returning home to New Zealand. Her time overseas has made her a lot more confident, she is now not worried going to a party where she nobody knows whereas she would not have done that prior to living in Vietnam. She is more open to new experiences now and less reserved. She enjoys being back home in a safe country, however, Megan does really struggle re-adjusting to the mentality of many New Zealanders, which has resulted in her friend circle changing drastically, now reflecting a more international and diverse group of people who she identifies well with as opposed to many 'narrow-minded Kiwis', as she describes them.

**Eleanor** strikes as a friendly and bright young lady during the interview, while being a little shy. She returned from living in Melbourne for six years with her ex-husband just 11 months ago. She moved overseas after completing her professional apprenticeship in hairdressing in Wellington where she grew up as she wanted to experience a different lifestyle and was aware that the income prospects in Australia would be beneficial for her. She moved to Melbourne together with her partner at the time and both really enjoyed what Melbourne had to offer as well as their professional jobs. They returned to New Zealand for their wedding after two years and came home for a short visit every year or so, overall Eleanor stayed longer in Melbourne than she anticipated. After a 10 year relationship Eleanor was coming to the conclusion that things with her husband at the time were not working out in the long run so within 6 weeks she decided to move back home after mutually agreeing on ending the relationship. Being with her family during that time was her main reason for coming home, she could not have imagined living in Melbourne by herself. It was a difficult time for her after returning to New Zealand as she not only had to re-adjust to being home but also dealing with the break-up of her marriage. She enjoyed being back home, it gave her a sense of security, although she said it was difficult at times living with her family again after being used to doing everything herself. Economically Eleanor says she is a little worse off in New Zealand as she was earning well in Australia however in regards to her general well-being she feels much better off. Upon coming home she was unsure as to what she wanted to do

and exploring the opportunities in Christchurch took some re-adjustment. She met her current partner five months ago, which she said has helped a lot to re-adjust and feel settled at home again, hence she has no ambition to go overseas again but is looking forward to have a family in New Zealand.

**John** is a friendly 35 year old man who diligently answered any questions during the interview, though without being overly chatty. It was obvious he loved his time overseas as his conversations continued to deviate to experiences in Canada rather than the process of returning home. He lived in Canada for 14 months and travelled parts of the United States before returning to New Zealand two months ago. He completed his degree at University and worked for a few years before realizing that he really wanted to travel and live somewhere else before he got too old. He didn't want to go to the stereotypical overseas destinations for Kiwis such as London or Australia and hence decided on Canada, more specifically Toronto where he has a couple of Canadian friends. He stayed overseas for the amount of time he intended to although he would have loved to stay longer his work visa expired, which was the main reason for his return to New Zealand. Upon coming home he moved in with his mother, which he enjoys at the present as it also allows him to save up funds to pay off his debt acquired through travelling. Hence he indicated that his economic well-being has increased drastically with his return to New Zealand as it is very difficult to find a good job in Canada, his overall well-being remained about the same returning to New Zealand. He feels his sojourn has made him much more comfortable 'getting out and about' now, experiencing new things and meeting new people, whether it is by himself or with others. I realized that due to financial reasons he is happy to be back in New Zealand but definitely plans to move overseas again and is actively working on his writing, which he would like to adopt as a career to work from anywhere. Upon first returning to New Zealand John felt quite restless and worried about finding work, however settling back was made easy for him he said as upon visiting his old colleagues he got offered a job that started the next week. While he finds it difficult being back because he traded all the new and exciting things overseas for familiar and boring things he appreciates having found a job he likes so quickly as it gives him purpose, direction and 'no time to dwell on being home'.

**Sophie**, a 24 year old bubbly female, differs quiet significantly from the remaining participants in this study as she has moved to America with her parents, who moved there for job prospects, when she was 10 years old and lived there for 10 years before sojourning to



Spain for a year, China three years and then returning to New Zealand in February 2015, 10 months prior to the interview. Obviously the move to America was due to her family moving, but sojourning to Spain for a year when she was 19 years old was initiated by her desire to experience more of the world and improve her Spanish learned at College. After the year in Spain she returned to America, finished her university degree and moved to China as she had the desire to life abroad again and China was a place she hadn't been to before and promised the great unknown adventure she was looking for. She did not plan a specific timeframe for living abroad but after working in China for three years she was starting to feel exhausted and was starting to desire a less busy lifestyle. She was also becoming increasingly concerned about the pollution and its consequences on her health in China. She decided to return to New Zealand as she still viewed it as her home, known for its clean and natural beauty and her brother was living in Christchurch as well. During the 14 years she had lived away from New Zealand she returned twice, for a two months holiday and a two week holiday. She moved to New Zealand with her partner, who she had met in China, a Canadian by birth, and both moved in with Sophie's brother upon first arriving in New Zealand before organising their own flat two months after that. She had significant savings, which she acquired while working in China on a good salary and low living costs. Thus, her economic well-being is a little worse off in New Zealand as salaries are low compared to living costs but her general well-being is much better off, due to low pollution levels and less stress, which makes her confident it was the right time to return to New Zealand. However, she would definitely consider moving overseas again and during the interview she said: "I just realized my visa for China is still valid, so I could go back!"

**Paul** came across as a confident and friendly young man during the interview. He is 30 years old and sojourned to Sweden for 12 months and spent an additional two months in Germany. He returned to New Zealand in May 2015, seven months prior to the interview, as his working visa was running out. He would have loved to stay in Sweden for longer but with the European winter commencing the company that sponsored his Visa, was not able to provide enough work. However, he was aware of the visa restrictions and stayed overseas for the amount of time he originally intended to, maximising his visa. His main reasons for moving overseas were the desire to see more of the world and experience a different culture, while combining it with improving his work skills. He did not return to New Zealand at all during his sojourn and did not have any friends or family visit him while abroad. Upon returning home, he moved in with family and did not have work pre-arranged. As his

lifestyle in Sweden and travelling was relatively expensive, John did not come home with any savings and reported that his economic well-being is a little better off now that he is back in New Zealand, which he mainly attributes to managing his money more rather than spending everything on lifestyle and travelling. Short-trips throughout Europe in particular are more expensive than one would think, he noted. His overall well-being is about the same now that he has returned to New Zealand, and although he misses the European lifestyle and would consider moving abroad again, he has settled back to New Zealand reasonably well, which was majorly assisted by him starting to plan to set up his own company, which he describes as an exciting step, giving him purpose.