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Great expectations? Female expatriates' perceptions of organisational performance and development reviews in supporting access to international assignments

Abstract

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of organisational performance and development review policy and practice on women's access to international careers via long-term expatriate assignments in the oil and gas industry, with a specific focus on women's perceptions of procedural justice.

Design/methodology/approach

A qualitative cross-sectional case study research design is used to analyse performance and development review, and international assignment policies in two firms, together with in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 14 Human Resource policy custodians and 21 female long-term current assignees.

Findings

Women assignees do not see performance and development reviews as effective mechanisms to access expatriate roles. Nonetheless, women use these procedures while also operating within senior male networks to signal their desire to expatriate.

Research implications

This study identifies differences between organisational policy objectives and policy implementation, and female assignees' experiences and expectations of accessing expatriate roles. Women's perceptions of organisational justice are not harmed because women place more

emphasis on process and conversations than on policy. Research propositions are suggested extending organisational justice theory.

Practical implications

Clear articulation of performance and development review processes aids organisational succession planning. Formalised, transparent expatriate career management supports women's access to expatriation. The roles of key personnel in determining access to expatriate career paths require clarification.

Originality/value

This article extends our knowledge of women's organisationally-assigned expatriate careers and perceptions of procedural justice. Women use performance and development reviews to access expatriate opportunities. Employer action aligned to policy intent could help increase female expatriate participation.

Keywords

Expatriates; gender; women; careers; performance and development reviews; organisational justice.

Article classification

Research paper

Introduction

Expatriation generates career capital (Dickmann, Suutari, Brewster, Mäkelä, Tanskanen and Tornikoski, 2018) and acts as a precursor to leadership (Dickmann and Doherty, 2010). Yet, women comprise only 25% of organisationally-assigned expatriates industry-wide (Santa Fe Relocation, 2018). Thus, impediments in undertaking expatriation are concerning not only to women who wish to pursue leadership roles but also to employers given increased organisational interest in building, maintaining and retaining a more diverse expatriate talent pool (Pinto, Cabral-Cardoso and Werther, 2012) and given recognised shortages of international managers (Collings, Scullion and Morley, 2007).

Women gain career benefit from expatriation (Mayerhofer, Hartmann and Herbert, 2004) and they seek assignments with the highest potential for career contribution (Shortland, 2016a). But there is a research gap (Sandberg and Alvesson, 2011) – we know little about career management processes and how these affect women’s access to expatriate careers. Examining organisational policies and processes, such as performance and development reviews, that ostensibly facilitate entry to expatriate roles is therefore an important avenue of enquiry in understanding actions that can help increase women’s career growth. Yet, studying the mechanics of policy implementation may be insufficient by itself. We need to understand whether women believe that they are able to gain access to expatriate career opportunities and how they make use of organisational procedures to gain the openings actually made available. Thus, examining women assignees’ perceptions of organisational action to implement policy as stated can assist us to identify whether women see justice as being enacted and thus whether they view the pursuit of access to expatriation as worthwhile.

This research examines one specific aspect of human resource policy that relates to access to expatriate roles, namely the management of performance and development reviews, set within the context of the oil and gas industry. Although oil and gas employs high and increasing volumes of organisationally-assigned expatriates compared with other industries (Air Inc., 2017), women comprise just 7-10% of its upstream exploration and production expatriate population (Shortland, 2014a). The choice of this sector as a research case might therefore appear to be an extreme, not widely applicable, example given its geographically isolated locations and the relative slowness with which women's share of expatriate roles has changed. Nonetheless, it presents an exceptionally relevant industry in which to conduct research into women's access to expatriation. From a research perspective, the study of 'extreme' cases can prove ideal for theory building (Pratt, 2009) as such case contexts can enable contrasting patterns in the data to be more easily identified together with clear "recognition of the central constructs, relationships, and logic of the focal phenomenon" (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007:27). From an organisational perspective, industries such as engineering and mining employ high expatriate volumes and also frequently operate in remote locations and emerging economies (Shortland, 2009). In addition, a wide range of other multinationals, including for example, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals and financial services, are increasingly entering fast-growing, newly emerging economies (Collings *et al.*, 2007; Holmes, 2013). With such relocations come the inherent challenges that these locations pose, including safety and security issues and the lack of traditional expatriate infrastructure (Cartus, 2018) and so all can potentially learn lessons from the oil and gas sector. In relation to expatriate gender diversity, industries with small proportions of female assignees such as mining (Richardson, McKenna and Dickie, 2014) may learn from the experiences of the

oil and gas industry as it endeavours to promote expatriate gender diversity as a business case (Permits Foundation, 2018).

If women's share of expatriate roles is to be maintained, even increased, the experiences of female expatriates working in difficult environments, such as those in which oil and gas firms operate, will prove invaluable. However, research on expatriation into emerging economies is limited (de Eccher and Duarte, 2018) and women's expatriation into such locations is also currently under-studied (Shortland, 2016b). Hence, lessons learned from women on the extent to which - and how - they believe organisational performance and development interventions can support their access to expatriation are potentially transferable to all industries relocating into male-dominated and/or less traditional expatriate environments.

This research sets out to identify differences between organisational intentions and female assignees' experiences and expectations of the performance and development reviews that feed into organisations' career path planning systems. Specifically, the research aims to address how these organisational processes, as applied by home and host country Human Resources (HR), line and senior management, act as perceived facilitators of access to expatriate careers for women. Set within the theoretical framework of organisational justice, with a particular focus on procedural justice, the following research questions are addressed:

1. What is the intention of organisational policy on performance and development reviews in facilitating access to expatriate career paths?
2. To what extent and how are female expatriates' expectations to access international careers met via organisational policy and practice on performance and development reviews and their input into career path planning?

3. How do organisational performance and development review and career path planning processes influence female expatriates' views of procedural justice?

Literature review

Organisationally-assigned expatriation refers to positions in foreign subsidiaries offered to employees by their current employers (Andresen, Bergdolt, Margenfeld and Dickmann, 2014). Commonly used to develop international competencies by employers building multi-national talent pools (Haslberger and Brewster, 2009), expatriation provides career development at managerial levels and leadership preparation (Orser and Leck, 2010). As Suutari, Brewster, Mäkelä, Dickmann and Tornikoski (2018) note, while firms recruit to bring in international experience, they are more likely to assign expatriate positions internally. Hence, working in a multi-national institution may bring employee expectations of organisationally-assigned international mobility and, given the career potential that is expected from undertaking an international assignment (Dickmann and Baruch, 2011), expatriation should provide an attractive option for individuals to develop career capital (Dickmann *et al.*, 2018).

Yet the literature points out that, despite the positive press on the career benefits of expatriation, this career choice is not risk-free to individuals or organisations (Baruch, Altman and Tung, 2016). At a personal level, willingness and ability to undertake expatriation are affected by a range of issues and some of these can present insurmountable barriers, particularly for women. For example, decisions to access expatriate assignments are affected by dual careers/incomes and marital status (Dupuis, Haines III and Saba, 2008). The willingness of the spouse to move can affect employees' intentions to seek an assignment (Mäkelä, Käsälä and Suutari, 2011), with career priority being a key predictor of assignment acceptance (Groeneveld,

2008). Perceptions of spousal job assistance affect willingness to go, especially for long-term assignments (Konopaske and Werner, 2005). Children's adjustment and schooling, as well as childcare availability, also influence assignment decisions (Hutchings, Metcalfe and Cooper, 2010) especially in culturally dissimilar countries (Tharenou, 2009). Indeed, Tharenou (2009) reports women are less willing to move to developing than to developed countries; and this is clearly an issue for the oil and gas industry focus of this study.

As well as spousal and family issues, women appear to face greater difficulties in accessing organisationally-assigned expatriation than men. For example, apparent organisational unwillingness to send women on assignments results from bias in selection (Harris, 2002). The requirement to build supervisor-subordinate relationships (where the supervisor is typically male) and convince selectors of women's abilities to work across geographical borders also raises problems for women pursuing expatriate opportunities (Varma, Stroh and Schmitt, 2001). As access to expatriate roles is reported as frequently resting on social capital, access to networks is particularly important but, overall, women have fewer networking opportunities than men (Shortland, 2014b). Given all the various hurdles that must be overcome, it would be expected that women aspiring to expatriate would seek reassurance that organisational career management policies and implementation practices will support their attempts to access potential assignments, thereby making their efforts worthwhile. Yet, this appears to represent 'a gap' in the literature which deserves further research (Sandberg and Alvesson, 2011). Thus, we need to understand how women who seek access to expatriation are affected by perceptions of the efficacy of their organisations' individual career review policies in facilitating their initial access and in gaining further expatriate opportunities to achieve their career goals. Understanding how expatriates interpret HR support, that is whether policy is received as intended, can help us to assess

expatriates' "strength of feeling, sense of injustice, and the perceptions of gains and losses" (McNulty, De Cieri and Hutchings, 2013:211).

International experience is recognised by assignees as a 'portable asset' (Haslberger and Brewster, 2009). Research by McNulty *et al.* (2013) suggests that organisationally-assigned expatriates favour individual over company career ownership. This means that rather than the organisation 'owning' their next move, individuals may adopt a more 'free agent' approach, taking the deliberate step of changing jobs and employers while on an international assignment. This is important to organisations because they stand to lose current assignees with valuable international competencies to their competitors if these individuals believe that their career expectations are not being fulfilled, for example through lack of access to future expatriate positions resulting from negative perceptions of performance, development and/or career path on-assignment processes.

Given women's lower representation as expatriates (Santa Fe Relocation, 2018) and organisations' desire to retain valuable international competencies (Shortland and Perkins, 2016), a study that examines how women use organisational policy access mechanisms and the extent to which they see these as just is necessary. This requires us to consider the implementation of organisational policy within the theoretical framework of organisational justice (Greenberg, 1990) and to understand the components of career reviews, including performance, development and succession planning processes. These issues are therefore discussed, in turn, in the following sections.

Organisational justice: beyond a matter of policy

Organisational justice writing may be dated back in the social psychological literature to Homans (1961) and Adams (1963): 'equity theory' discusses the idea that workers compare their work

inputs and outputs with others in relation to how these organisational contributions are recognised. Thus, as argued by Greenberg (1990), theoretical development of ideas about organisational justice was intended to enable systematic evaluation of perceived justice in social interaction between actors within organisations, not of organisations generally. Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter and Ng (2001) draw upon a wide-ranging review of the literature to delineate and specify the concept of organisational justice using two principal categories and two sub-categories. ‘Distributional justice’ focuses on fairness of outcomes and ‘procedural justice’ on fairness of the procedures followed in arriving at the outcomes (Bye and Sandal, 2016). In turn, unpacking the processual aspects, ‘interactional’ or ‘interpersonal justice’ looks at how the decisions made by the parties to the interaction that lead to organisational outcomes are implemented. ‘Informational justice’ considers communication: why certain outcomes are arrived at and why certain procedures are followed. It includes scope for employee voice to be exercised in the course of these social interactions (Rowland and Hall, 2012).

Further developments in the theoretical literature on organisational justice have put forward the argument that, instead of separating organisational justice into a series of structural dimensions, it would be better to focus on individual organisational actors’ perceptions of the overall ‘climate’ within which organisationally just outcomes and processes may be observed. This enables us to capture perceptions of the different, yet related, types of justice experienced collectively; in other words, a sense of overall fairness in social interaction within organisational settings between managers and those they manage. This, in turn, drives behaviour. Thus organisational justice is an embracing social concept, not simply a set of distinct facets (Lind, 2001). That argument notwithstanding, to analyse social interaction using organisational justice theoretically as a heuristic, it helps to take into account organisational actors’ perceptions of

whether the outcomes of social interaction are consistent with norms applicable to social institutions. This includes equal treatment, an issue of particular concern when it comes to fostering diversity (Rubino, Avery, McKay, Moore, Wilson, Van Driel, Witt, and McDonald, 2018). Thus, as Rubino *et al.* (2018) suggest, taking responsibility for equitable allocation decisions, such as access to career development opportunities, is crucial to serve distributional justice. The ability of employees to have a meaningful influence on those outcomes by having scope to engage freely in dialogue with decision-makers is necessary for procedural justice. In addition, consistent, ethical regulation of relevant procedures based on accurate information, free from unfair bias, is also critical to serve procedural justice. Explanations for decision-making outcomes and processes need to be candid and open so as to be credible, comprehensive, reasonable, timely, and personalised in order that informational justice is served. Finally, dignity and respect must characterise how people are treated. Due politeness and sensitivity when dealing with individuals with their own character, aspirations, and needs from the organisational experience are also required so that interpersonal justice can be served.

Implications for expatriates' performance and development reviews and career paths

The pool of expatriate talent is not large and, as more firms compete globally across an increasing range of destinations, the demand for competent and capable individuals rises (Collings *et al.*, 2007). This raises the issue of perceived equity to access expatriate opportunities and the role of performance and development reviews and career path planning in facilitating this. Employees' perceptions of the fairness of the processes used to deliver an offer of an expatriate role are crucial given the implications of expatriate assignments for building career capital (Haslberger and Brewster, 2009). A healthy sense of procedural justice (Palaiologos, Papazekos and Panayotopoulou, 2011) is important because expatriates' dealings with those

involved in performance and development review and career planning processes can generate the potential for expatriate failure (Perera, Chew and Nielsen, 2017). Given the potential high contribution that expatriates make to organisational wealth creation (Dickmann and Baruch, 2011), if individual performance declines through perceptions of unjust procedures, levels of organisational performance might also be expected to fall. Open and honest communication is required and hence interactional justice is also important (Rubino *et al.*, 2018).

With respect to the mechanics of organisational policy in relation to performance, development and career path processes, organisations are reported to vary in their approaches. For example, the frequency of conducting performance reviews, the number of elements in the process, and linking performance outcomes with pay may differ. Nonetheless, there are a number of commonalities. For example, performance and development reviews enable structured feedback, discussion and the opportunity to identify future developmental career moves, reflecting an inter-relationship between performance and development review policies and career path planning and talent review processes conducted within organisations. In addition, the trend of performance review processes becoming increasingly development-led has enabled individuals to realise their potential while improving organisational performance (Armstrong and Baron, 2000). However, it is still important to differentiate between management-led performance reviews and development reviews which tend to be employee-led to a greater extent. For example the personal development plans (PDPs), constructed by individuals under guidance from their managers which underpin development reviews, aim to promote learning, knowledge and transferable skills which facilitate career progression. For employees seeking access to expatriate roles, development reviews can present a potential opportunity to signal intentions to expatriate and set out development needs in order to achieve this.

When considering the effect of organisational outcomes of performance reviews, in particular the role of giving feedback, the focus needs to be on factors mediating and moderating the quality of the process involved, regardless of whether it is conducted for administrative reasons (pay, promotion reviews) or for developmental reasons (career path progression). If feedback contradicts employee expectations, potentially countering expectations of interactional justice (Colquitt *et al.*, 2001), this can create feelings of anger or disappointment and have negative effects on future performance – thus operating counterintuitively to arguments suggesting that clear feedback will enhance performance (CIPD, 2016). Thus, in relation to performance reviews potentially contributing towards access to expatriate roles, a clear articulation of performance objectives is required by expatriates before their postings. This is particularly necessary given the complexity of performance measures in different international contexts (Tarique, Briscoe and Schuler, 2016). For those on assignment who seek access to further expatriate opportunities once their current posting has ended, a dual home-host focus is necessary, with performance and development reviews carried out by appropriate personnel taking into account local host country factors. For example, direct host country supervisory input together with contributions from managers in headquarters will be necessary (Kang and Shen, 2016), and the limitations of standard systems must be recognised and tailored to local context (Collings *et al.*, 2007). Employer practices relating to how expatriates are managed link to levels of organisational commitment (Pate and Scullion, 2010). This has particular resonance with performance reviews as these take place on an on-going basis throughout the period abroad (Dickmann and Baruch, 2011) and thereby influence expatriates' perceptions of access to future international assignments as part of their career aspirations.

Method

This research represents one strand of a major project on female organisationally-assigned expatriation in the UK-based oil and gas industry. A case study approach was selected as this is appropriate for broad research topics that draw upon multiple evidence sources set within complex contextual conditions (Yin, 2003). Case study research enables in-depth understanding of social phenomena and permits a range of different analysis techniques; it also enables a line of enquiry that can explore unclear boundaries between data subjects and their environment, such as expatriates and their real-life employment contexts, to gain a deeper understanding of contextual issues on individuals' experiences (Richardson, 2017).

To gain access, the research proposal was presented to the membership of the UK Oil and Gas Industry Peer Group. From the 18 global oil and gas firms represented, two International Assignment Managers (IAMs) volunteered their organisations to participate. To preserve anonymity, company names and countries of operation were withheld. Background data on Oil Co. and Rig Co. (pseudonyms) are presented in Table 1. The firms operated in mainly similar host locations.

Table 1

Qualitative interviews were considered to be the most appropriate means of capturing points of view to gain insight as to what was seen as relevant and important by the organisational actors (Bryman and Bell, 2003). Both IAMs agreed to be interviewed in depth and offered the facility to analyse their international assignment, and performance and development review policy documentation. They provided interview access to 12 other HR professionals (three in Oil Co.; nine in Rig Co.) who had designed/developed these policies and/or who had responsibility for their implementation, monitoring and evaluation (Table 2). The IAMs supplied background

demographic data on all their current female assignees together with their assignment types, locations, job grades, and functions. They also contacted them to ask if they were willing to participate in the research and be interviewed.

Table 2

Oil Co. employed 27 female expatriates (8% of its expatriate population) and Rig Co. employed 66 female expatriates (11% of its expatriate population). Of their current 93 female expatriates, 55 were willing to be interviewed (11 in Oil Co.; 44 in Rig Co.). The majority in both firms were engaged in long-term assignments, typically three to five years' duration. Job demands, time zones, travel and business schedules precluded all from being interviewed during the access period offered; thus stratified sampling was used to select an appropriate sample (Collis and Hussey, 2009) ensuring representation of assignment locations, occupational function groups, seniority (grades), and marital, accompanied and family status. In total, 21 women on long-term assignments were selected for interview (seven in Oil Co.; 14 in Rig Co.). Although it was accepted that there can be significant variations within countries in a given region, locations were classified regionally and assignees were not named to preserve anonymity; grade descriptors (numeric/alphabetic) were anonymised through a three-fold classification: senior, middle, and junior. Assignee profiles are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3

As Table 3 shows, 16 female assignees were married or partnered and, of these, 12 were accompanied on their assignment by their partner. Eight women had young children and one had grown-up children. All of the female expatriates with young children were accompanied by them on assignment. The majority of the female assignees were aged between early-30s and mid-40s and in the middle grades. There were only two senior-graded female assignees – one in each

company. While Europe and North America featured as receiving locations, the majority of the host locations were considered remote (such as Australasia, and Central and East Asia) or potentially dangerous (such as North and West Africa, and the Caribbean). Given the locations of oil and gas exploration, worksites were typically distant from major cities and thus transport and infrastructure facilities were limited. Remote locations were classed as isolated, with long travel times between the host location and the home country where family members (parents/siblings) and friends resided, and where company headquarters or main regional offices were located. Potentially dangerous locations had poor security and/or prevalent disease. Precautionary safety measures were necessary including requirements for guards, personal drivers, and secure housing; limited healthcare provision was also a feature of some of the developing economies.

Documentation relating to the two organisations' annual performance and development review and international assignment policies was examined to identify any assurances or possibilities of expatriation leading to career development outcomes. If articulated, such written policy assurances could lead to women seeking access to expatriate roles to further their careers during their annual reviews. This organisational policy data, combined with pertinent aspects of the literature review, were used to formulate semi-structured interview questions for the IAM/HR policy custodians to establish how the policies operated in practice and their perceptions of women's desire to expatriate (Appendix 1).

The detail gleaned from the policy documentation (stating organisational intent) and the semi-structured IAM/HR interview research (providing confirmation of - or differences from - policy as implemented in practice) were used to draw up the semi-structured interview questions posed to the 21 current female assignees. It is important to note that all of the women in this study had already achieved expatriate positions and were currently on assignment – typically for

three to five years – after which they would return to their home country or apply for a further expatriate position. The assignee interviews thus addressed women’s actual experiences of performance and development reviews in supporting their access to their current expatriate assignment and their perceptions of these organisational processes in supporting access to further expatriate posts if desired (Appendix 2).

The assignees were interviewed separately from the IAM/HR managers and their candid responses were recorded confidentially. In this way, independent sources of information were obtained for analysis ensuring a triangulated research approach (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). Interviews were carried out on company premises. Before each interview, participants were asked if the conversation could be recorded, subject to confidentiality; all agreed. All of the in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted in the UK by telephone (with privacy ensured) if the assignee/HR professional was abroad, or face-to-face in a private room in the UK. Each IAM/HR interview took 30-90 minutes and each assignee interview 60-90 minutes.

All recordings were transcribed. The qualitative data analysis was first carried out using colour coding in Microsoft Word to identify and code main themes. Given the large volume of data, the decision was taken subsequently to use NVivo with coding carried out afresh to help eliminate coding drift to aid its reliability. A template analysis was undertaken (King, 2004). Coding trees were interrogated to group linked themes together. Data analysis highlighted agreement and disagreement between policy and practice, the views of the IAM/HR representatives, and the assignees, with rival explanations helping to support the internal validity of the research (Yin, 2009).

Findings

The findings are presented as a three-fold 'storyline' to demonstrate these 'rival explanations'.

First, 'the policy documentation perspective', as laid out in the organisational policies reviewed, indicates the two firms' espoused line on access to expatriate careers, drawing upon organisational international assignment, annual performance review (APR) and annual development review (ADR) policies. Second, 'the HR managers' perspective' addresses the IAM and HR managers' views on the implementation of these policies in practice. Finally to conclude the storyline, 'the female assignees' perspective' articulates the women expatriates' experiences of accessing their current expatriate posts and then their views on the efficacy of succession planning and talent management processes with their APR/ADR input in facilitating access to future assignments.

The policy documentation perspective

Rig Co.'s long-term international assignment policy states: "*All employees may be considered for international assignments in line with the Company's normal procedures, including the annual performance review/annual development review process*". In contrast, Oil Co. makes no mention of procedures to access to expatriation in its long-term international assignment policy. Both firms' annual performance review (APR) policies address similar issues (setting objectives, rating performance and undertaking formal reviews). In both, the APR is mandatory. Outcomes are clearly linked to bonuses/pay. APR policy includes the identification of individual skills development necessary to aid career advancement objectives. Both organisations have policies on, and operate, three stage annual development review (ADR) processes to identify and address development needs. Individuals prepare their development plans, discuss and set objectives with line managers and agree implementation actions and timing. Although both firms highlight

employee, line manager and organisational roles and responsibilities, the ADR is not mandatory. The broad similarity of policy across the two case study firms can be explained by peer groups sharing policy approaches.

The HR managers' perspective

Although Oil Co.'s policy documentation does not link access to international assignments with its APR and ADR processes, the HR professionals interviewed highlight accessing expatriate assignments as an important route to career enhancement. To initiate the process of gaining expatriate positions, Oil Co.'s HR acknowledge that the APR and ADR do play an important role; APR and ADR outcomes are used to identify "*emerging talent, high potential and our critical professionals*" (L & D, Oil Co.). These data are used in succession planning and talent reviews and to ascertain individuals suitable for expatriate roles:

"...where they (managers) think there is potential for them to go to, where they (employees) see their career going ... that may be another part of the selection process for determining expat assignments." (IAM, Oil Co.)

Oil Co. has no long-term structured career paths and no written policy on succession planning. For employees, career uncertainty is the norm, but its HR representatives believe that this is advantageous:

"One of the things that is positive about working in (Oil Co.) is it is an independent, smallish company compared to (the major firms). We ... make decisions quickly ... We are not process-burdened ... you know if you join (Oil Co.) ... you do not know where you're going to be in five years' time. We will have the opportunities. You could well be working in a different country. Whereas, if you are working in (the oil and gas majors) your career plan is mapped out for 10 years hence, and in three years' time you know

you will be going there and ... there are no surprises, whereas (here) there are lots of opportunities and change.” (L & D, Oil Co.)

Despite no written policy, Oil Co. operates a talent review process annually, through which succession planning and career path decisions are made. The executive vice presidents (EVPs), vice presidents (VPs) and function heads comprise an exploration and production leadership team which, with HR input, reviews the performance and development of all current assignees, maps their positions and discusses their performance and development. Existing expatriates’ access to further assignment opportunities is discussed by this team:

“We have a formal talent process whereby we hold formal meetings and during the first quarter and second quarter of each year, we identify talent ... emerging talent and high potential talent, and we keep a list. The talent process is very transparent, with all the data on line.” (HR-EA, Oil Co.)

This formal process has operated for several years and, as Oil Co.’s L & D representative notes, it raises *“awareness of who we have in the business”*. When new assignment opportunities are identified, access to these may be offered to individuals identified via the succession planning and talent review process with career benefits highlighted. Oil Co.’s L & D representative points out that employees are receptive to being able to access expatriate posts as a means of formalising their career development because this is *“something that you control”*. With respect to women’s access to expatriation, the HR professionals are unanimous in proclaiming that women are equally able to access expatriate opportunities as men but they are not given special consideration. Oil Co.’s IAM explains: *“we haven’t got enough resources to ... say ‘yes we would like this to be a woman’ (but) that is an opportunity for women to say ‘yes, I*

can go'." Nonetheless, she reports that sometimes women are encouraged to access an expatriate opportunity: *"you need to have international experience and this is your opportunity to get it"*.

In Rig Co., the HR personnel acknowledge the importance of accessing expatriate roles for career growth. However, they face a contradiction in terms of implementing potentially inconsistent policies in this respect: the firm's APR and ADR policies make no mention of expatriation, contrasting with the explicit reference to the contribution of the ADR and APR processes in the long-term international assignment policy. Rig Co.'s HR representatives appear to side-step this by referring to line and functional managers' contribution to enabling employees to access expatriation, remaining silent on their own HR input. Rig Co.'s HR managers thus report that line and functional managers are critical to expatriate career access because line managers carry out the APR and ADR and function heads manage any succession planning and talent management reviews:

"So if you have got a good manager who has got good understanding of (Rig Co.) and has got a reasonably good handle of what sort of experience blocks you need to get, (they'll say) ... 'you really need to get out to an asset, John, and so let's see what roles are out there for you'." (HR-D, Rig Co.)

"We have a very powerful (functional) manager structure. So (in) each skill set or function ... they are ultimately responsible for the career development of all the people for whom they are responsible, by definition." (IAM, Rig Co.)

Interestingly though, while recognising line managers' role in the APR and how this review can be used to access expatriation, Rig Co.'s HR managers say that this is not really the appropriate forum to state mobility aspirations and discuss access to expatriate opportunities. Instead they highlight the APR's main function as being to *"look at their performance within the*

year, and their short-term development needs” (HR-R, Rig Co.). The focus is strongly on current performance, not future roles:

“We (have) a performance contract culture ... people ... have a set of objectives that are very clear-cut business-related objectives in terms of ‘deliver this report’, ‘make this much profit’, ‘hit this milestone by this date’.” (HR-P, Rig Co.)

“As soon as you start talking about new roles, next jobs and things like that, that is then more the development review discussion” (HR-Rec, Rig Co.)

That said there is HR recognition that the APR can play a role in accessing expatriate opportunities: *“Sometimes these things cross over, you know it might just be the opportune moment.” (HR-Rec, Rig Co.)*

The ADR is reported by Rig Co.’s HR personnel as the main forum to explore access to expatriation. However, as the ADR is *“not mandatory” (HR-T, Rig Co.)* it is described as *“questionable ... not taken seriously” (L & D, Rig Co.)*. Rig Co.’s career ladders aim to provide transparent and structured routes to career opportunities but its HR managers say that adherence to the ADR process timelines is inconsistent across regions and functions. This leads to gaps in employee data and results in unstructured implementation of succession planning and talent management processes. Indeed, the talent management process that ostensibly enables access to expatriate positions receives considerable criticism:

“We haven’t got particularly structured talent management systems in place, we keep trying to, but the organisation keeps throwing it out because actually the organisation quite likes, well, the senior people quite like, to be able to say ‘well sod the process’. I just want to take so-and-so because I trust him and I like him, so you know a lot of our senior roles tend to be done more in that way and we might occasionally put the veneer

of the process on top of it but the bottom line is, it is still done this way, because it is someone you know". (HR-D, Rig Co.)

This has particularly negative implications for women trying to access expatriate posts: *"The women ... find it harder to build up the same level of patronage and sponsorship." (HR-D, Rig Co.)*

The female assignees' perspective: access to current expatriate posts

In both firms the women interviewed had already gained access to expatriate assignments.

Looking back over the steps taken to gain entry to their current postings, the women reported using the APR process in a manner closely aligned to policy intention. Written objectives and good quality conversations with line/functional managers helped the women to formulate their career thinking, state development objectives and alert others to these. In addition, they took advantage of the opportunity of this mandatory review to raise their desire to expatriate, speaking of how they signalled their interest in expatriate opportunities and pressed their bosses to gain access to their current posts:

"I sat down with (boss) and had a chat with him about it (via) the formal review process"
(D)

"You can say anything that you want ... and ... I have always taken those opportunities to express ... what I wanted" (H)

"Every year, we have a performance review, and as part of that review, we talked about what I would like to do within (my) career for the next two, three, five ... years and where (I) would like to go." (U)

With respect to the ADR, the assignees in both firms reported that this helped to crystallise their career intentions and that they had used it to state their desire to access their

current expatriate roles. It was also cited as an opportunity to highlight their future availability for international mobility:

“I put in my application, that in my ADR I said I want to move into (this post)... I told everybody that I said I was interested in it in my ADR so they (didn't) just think it's some random application ... So I am using it for myself in that way.” (Y)

“I used the usual internal process, through the annual development reviews, to do that and there is always a section on the forms that we fill in that talks about mobility and ... where you see yourself going in five years, what kind of mobility you expect to have or want in the future.” (W)

However, the female assignees in both firms said they did not know what happened to their ADR paperwork once it was completed:

“Now how (Oil Co.) uses that I have no idea, if it gets thrown in the trash or actually gets put into a database and then when they say, ‘oh, we need somebody for (location) do they actually pull up the list and see who is willing to go? I don't know how that is used internally.” (F)

“But the development review, the ADR, that is supposed to have a bearing on the next assignment and would help meet your career goals. However, I don't know who looks at these things. Your manager signs it off, and then it hits a dead zone somewhere.” (K)

Yet not knowing what happened to the paperwork was not seen as a particular concern; the women said that the opportunity to gain access to expatriation rested on the APR/ADR conversations:

“The processes help the conversation. It is a conversation that will get you the assignment. So yes, they are important, but just filling out the form and writing things

down and saying I want to go to, does it really do much? But it obviously aids the conversation with your manager and as long as your line manager buys into your ... posting, then that helps.” (P)

“So, I had a plan to go and talk to different people and tell them what I was interested in and obviously I put it on my ADR and APR.” (Y)

The female assignees’ perspective: access to future expatriate posts

With respect to looking forward to accessing future expatriate roles, the women report that the formal career management channels (the APR/ADR) do not necessarily provide the means to alert the succession planning decision-makers to their expectations:

“You articulate that to your line manager and then if he/she gets asked ‘heh we have got this position coming up in this far-flung corner of the world do you know anybody who might be interested?’ ... that line manager may then think well so-and-so is looking for a job ... but it is a bit of a long shot, really. I don’t see the ADR and APR as particularly feeding into that.” (S)

Although the female assignees in both firms believe that career-enhancing international assignments can flow from succession planning, their expectations of being able to access such future opportunities are reduced by what they believe to be unclear links between the APR/ADR and the management conversations within the succession planning/talent review processes. Oil Co.’s women expatriates express greater awareness of succession planning than those in Rig Co., reflecting Oil Co.’s more formal, centralised and time-scaled talent review scheme. Nonetheless, Oil Co.’s assignees are by no means more confident of process transparency and links with the APR/ADR than those women in Rig Co.:

“The quality of that conversation really depends on your manager to be honest, and I have worked for good guys and I have worked for bad guys in that respect. Some managers are very engaged in the process, and some really don’t care.” (D)

“It just depends on well, what are your goals and what you are saying in your APR and ADR to make sure you are in that talent management box. And that you are actively being managed as opposed to not actively being managed. You have to perform to be there to be fair, I mean, why should they move people around that don’t perform? And I agree with that. But then, it still falls into a bit of a black box.” (M).

Women also report their dissatisfaction with international career path uncertainty in both firms:

“You know, I am coming in from a company that succession planned to the nth degree so I have no idea what my career holds for me here. (Previous firm) wasn’t specific about where your assignments were going to be, but you knew what they thought of you and you knew to some degree whether you had what they would call ultimate potential, were you going to be the next CEO, were you going to be a level of VP, were you going to be a manager or were you always going to be a worker here? Sooner or later you would get an idea of where you were, and the system, and I don’t get any of that here. I don’t know what they think of me. I do my work and I’ve stopped worrying. I have stopped, and I don’t want to say being interested, because I am very much interested in my career, I just have stopped guessing and I have stopped asking.” (F)

The women state that they prefer a far more systematic approach:

“What I am missing is ... you are going to go to this assignment and we are going to expect you to develop in this way and we have got this vision for you.” (N)

In an attempt to combat the lack of expatriate career path certainty, the women assignees in both firms say that they extend their conversations about willingness to expatriate beyond the APR/ADR processes to improve their likelihood of getting access to future international positions:

“I am always going to have to drive my career ... if I need certain opportunities I’ve got to ask.” (K)

They highlight their reliance on their line managers for information and how they maintain conversations with them so as to advance their expatriate careers in the future:

“He will know when we want to move. He won’t need the ADR or the APR to tell him that.” (I)

Yet, reorganisations and changes in line management responsibilities are reported as detrimental to this strategy. As a result, formal line manager reviews alone are considered insufficient.

Women assignees confirm the need to build strong relationships with their *“boss’s boss ... He knows what jobs are coming up” (W)*. The importance of ensuring that host country managers know of their capabilities and desire to expatriate are also viewed as critical: *“You’ve got to have a face on it” (M)*. Thus, to supplement the role of the APR/ADR in contributing to the succession planning process (which the women see as opening up future access to expatriation opportunities), they report taking direct action via networking with higher ranking male contacts.

Discussion

The findings from this research indicate that Oil Co.’s written international assignment and APR/ADR policies do not directly highlight access to expatriate opportunities and thus do not intend to set up automatic employee expectations of international mobility as a means of gaining

career growth. Rig Co.'s written international assignment policy suggests access to expatriate opportunities via the APR and ADR processes but the review policies themselves make no mention of expatriate career opportunities. Despite the literature highlighting career benefits from undertaking organisationally-initiated expatriation (Suutari *et al.*, 2018) and long-term assignments in particular (PWC/Cranfield, 2006), organisational performance and development review policy in the case study firms presents a surprisingly neutral picture. This might suggest the firms are cognisant of uncertainties linked to long-term international mobility and repatriation career problems (De Cieri, Sheehan, Costa, Fenwick and Cooper, 2009) or, more simply, that expatriation does not provide a publicly acknowledged route to career development.

However, Oil Co.'s HR professionals do imply career growth will flow from expatriation under their firm's succession planning process, which has input from the APR/ADR processes. This suggests implications for procedural and interactional justice: a neutral effect should result from policy documentation by itself but potentially women may have expectations of access to expatriation from the implementation of the succession planning/talent review process. Rig Co.'s HR professionals are explicit – access to expatriate career opportunities is unlikely to flow from its APR, ADR and talent management and succession planning actions and women face particular difficulties in navigating through the obstacles to gain any opportunities that may be available. This suggests negative procedural justice implications in Rig Co.; women's expectations of access to expatriation emanating from the implementation of formal organisational policy are likely to be dashed.

In practice though the picture that emerges in both firms is one of women's determination to make the best use of their organisations' annual review opportunities to access expatriation and to raise their profiles such that they can be considered for any future international mobility

via the succession planning/talent management processes. The women assignees understand that the APR is primarily concerned with performance in their current role, but they are also cognisant that APR policy includes reference to career advancement and development opportunities, even if not explicitly around expatriation. As such the women pursue these career aspects of the process in a resolute fashion, contributing to securing their current expatriate positions. They also make use of the mandatory APR conversations to highlight their interest in future expatriate positions, reflecting their knowledge that the APR feeds into succession planning in some way or another, even if they are unclear as to exactly how the firms' talent reviews operate. The ADR presents a further opportunity to engage in conversations with their line managers to state their availability for international mobility, highlight interest in specific positions, press to gain access to expatriate postings, and signal desire for future expatriate roles.

Once again, although they have no clear knowledge of how the paperwork from the ADR contributes to succession planning and talent reviews, the women believe that these conversations with their managers are crucial to making their ambitions known. They therefore place much effort into the ADR process as part of their career strategy, despite it not being a mandatory activity. Women thus report using the ADR in conjunction with the APR, saying that the ADR also contributed to them accessing their current roles, and that they plan to engage with it in future as part of their career plans to secure further expatriation. While the two firms make no specific promises of career advancement, women are concerned about what their firms actually deliver (Montes and Zweig, 2009). They are particularly dissatisfied with the lack of structured career paths and thus they take additional action beyond the annual APR/ADR reviews via networking in senior male circles to further highlight their expatriate ambitions and pave the way for access to these roles.

Organisational justice has been theorised in ways that help us contextualise the analysis in this paper. The relative perceptions between the parties of the ‘effectiveness’ of performance and development reviews in multinational organisations can be considered within this theoretical frame in terms of the outcomes for women wishing to access expatriation and the processes for arriving at expatriate access decisions based upon formalised and informal interactions.

Human interaction gives rise to judgement between the parties as to the effectiveness of that interaction and the outcomes it produces. Effectiveness is, however, a relative term – what one interlocutor regards as ‘effective’ may vary considerably from another. This is particularly so where the roles being played are those of line manager on the one hand and subordinate on the other with the latter, in the context of this paper, being the subject of a performance and development review process, and being on the receiving end of application of organisational policy in respect of these activities. Attention is required to the quality of the social exchange taking place (Bye and Sandal, 2016). By applying relevant organisational policy and related procedural guidelines devised by the HR function, the line manager whose responsibility it is to undertake the review should expect an ‘effective outcome’. That is likely, in the case of performance and development review processes, to result in positioning the subordinate employee as a resource, part of the collection of ‘human resources’ under the manager’s purview, that will achieve corporately mandated (or strategic) priorities. The manager will wish to ensure that the capability of the subordinate to make that contribution is maximised against criteria specified by the organisation, linked to its plans and goals. As one in the chain (or ‘line’) of command, the line manager will wish to be able to justify to their own superior(s) that the human resources made available to them to achieve organisational effectiveness outcomes do just that. At face value this is an administrative issue for the manager, namely one of

coordinating human potential to perform and, in turn, to be ‘developed’ against organisational criteria so as to perform further in accordance with corporate priorities in the future.

However, simply executing an administrative process as part of a line manager’s activities implies the willing cooperation of subordinates. Yet, each individual subordinate’s perceptions of what an ‘effective outcome’ is, is indeterminate. For example, in the context of this research in relation to performance and development reviews to access expatriation, each woman subordinate has agency. She has to decide on the extent to which she wishes to cooperate and, in turn, to feel satisfied with the basis of her cooperation. While an individual’s agency in the context of performance and development processes may, in principle, be subject to the terms of an employment contract, in practice, it is unlikely such a contract will specify the details of the degree of cooperation (Marsden, 1999). In addition, the level of satisfaction achieved from engaging in the interaction with management around performance and development, in turn creates conditions for whether or not any willing cooperation is sustainable.

Thus, the question arises of the basis upon which a subordinate employee will judge whether or not the interaction may be considered effective. For a woman who is interested in career development in the form of expatriate assignments within a multinational organisation, among these possible criteria will be her perceptions of the extent to which outcomes from performance and career development interactions are just. The organisational justice ‘climate’ (Rubino *et al.*, 2018) provides a lens through which to describe and interpret individuals’ “justice experiences” (Ambrose and Schminke, 2009:491). Do individuals view organisational outcome decisions, processes and interactions as justified? At one level, effectiveness as a basis for an employee to assess a just outcome may be viewed in terms of the relative distribution of positive outcomes (Colquitt *et al.*, 2001). Does the female subordinate in this study, when comparing

herself against peers, consider that the distribution of performance assessment and career development opportunities arising from her own and her (predominantly male) peers' interactions with her (male) line manager are justified? This leads to the following research proposition:

- Organisational performance and development review and career path planning processes influence women expatriates' views of procedural justice within an overall organisational justice climate measured in terms of the individual's assessment of whether their agency within these social interactions is enabled or constrained in terms of accessing one or additional expatriate assignments in comparison with (male or female) peers, as one element in career capital building.

However, additionally it may be theorised that in order to evaluate the justness or otherwise of effective outcomes from performance and career development interactions for access to expatriate careers, female employees will pay attention to additional factors going beyond the structural considerations of the distributional results that prevail. In addition to 'what' occurs, attention may be directed to the character of 'how' outcomes are arrived at. Thus, women will consider the application by the line manager of relevant organisational policies through procedures mandated by the organisation, taking into account the interplay between the effectiveness of performance and development review systems, and ethical and fairness considerations (Rowland and Hall, 2012). This leads to the following research proposition:

- Perceived influence on organisational performance and development review and career path planning process outcomes by aspiring new or continuing women expatriates, and assessment as to whether these are procedurally just, will be informed by their sense of

having scope (or not) to engage freely in dialogue with decision-makers based on accurate information, free from unfair bias, and being treated overall with the same level of dignity applicable to male counterparts.

Beyond such formalised processes, the perceived quality of the interpersonal interaction itself is also an important consideration. The characteristics of such interactions may not be wholly subject to organisationally specified criteria as to how the interactive process of performance and development reviews are carried out. In effect, these characteristics may vary depending on how the line manager concerned chooses to interpret procedural requirements, with scope therefore for variation between individual managers (Folger and Cropanzano, 1998). This variation, depending upon how the female subordinate wishing to access expatriation perceives it, may influence the extent to which she regards the entire interaction and its outcomes as 'effective'. Again, this is not just an issue in terms of administrative efficiency in matching their resource potential to a manager's view of organisational international mobility priorities, but also in terms of whether the process feels just to women attempting to further their careers via accessing expatriate opportunities. This leads to the following research proposition:

- Aspiring or continuing women expatriates' views of the procedural justice associated with organisational performance and development review and career path planning processes will be informed by their perceptions as to whether interactions with decision-makers at first-line and additional levels up the corporate hierarchy reside within a framework of consistent, ethical regulation of relevant procedures.

Implications for practice

Women assignees welcome formalised, transparent expatriate career management and need to be confident in their managers to act justly in relation to their performance and development reviews in ways that create and sustain conditions for their success. The roles of key personnel in determining expatriate career paths require clarification and clear articulation of how APR/ADR processes link into organisational succession planning are required. Alongside formal processes, networking continues to play an important part in women's access to expatriation. The facilitation of networking initiatives that embrace women to further their access to international career opportunities should also be considered.

Concluding remarks

The case study firms' annual performance and development review policies do not specifically make mention of expatriate careers. However, these reviews do contribute to organisational succession planning and talent review processes which include expatriation. Although performance reviews focus strongly on performance targets and development reviews on developmental interventions, both mention career advancement. Women make use of this aspect of the annual reviews to steer discussions towards gaining access to expatriate roles. They report a lack of understanding of how annual performance and development review processes are used by top management within organisational succession planning and talent reviews. Nonetheless, women recognise the value of review conversations and use these to ensure their future expatriate ambitions are known. Thus, women's perceptions of organisational justice remain intact while they maintain belief in the efficacy of the procedures used to implement review policies to access expatriation. Notwithstanding this, women are cognisant that annual reviews may be insufficient by themselves to gain access to expatriate positions, so they cultivate other

means of raising awareness of their expatriate ambitions, including informal networking with senior management. As such interpersonal conversations support women's sense of interactional justice in their pursuit of international careers.

Limitations and directions for further research

This study uses a cross-sectional research design in two medium-sized oil and gas organisations. The majority of the female assignees are mid-graded and undertaking long-term assignments, with many based in emerging economies. Neither firm has long-term career path planning structures nor policy and practice to support these. Further research is needed to examine different industries, organisational sizes, and lengths, types and locations of assignments. Research is also needed in firms with more defined long-term career paths. Longitudinal research is also needed to follow young women's careers as they rise up organisational hierarchies to monitor changes in their perceptions of organisational policy, process and culture in supporting women's access to expatriation.

Access was not given to women who were, for whatever reason, unable to access expatriate roles and thus further research might usefully explore the issues that prevented women from gaining expatriate opportunities to advance their careers. As more firms send expatriates into emerging economies, it would be valuable to research whether women's access to expatriation is affected by assignments being of 'pioneer status', that is whether organisations are less likely to send women as the 'first expatriates' into a developing country.

Access was not granted to line, functional and senior management due to resource constraints. Further research would benefit from hearing from these organisational representatives to cross-check their interpretations against those of HR. For similar reasons, access was also not granted to male expatriates. A comparative study that examines men and

women undertaking various assignment types and their experiences of career management processes is needed to assess any differences between the sexes regarding perceptions of performance and development reviews in promoting expatriate career access. Once an expatriate role has been accessed, further research might then consider how career management processes can assist with gaining career development, advancement and leadership opportunities for both women and men.

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Table 1: Organisational background

	Oil Co.	Rig Co.
Countries of operation	20	30
Headquarters base	USA	UK
Employees worldwide	12,000	6,000
Expatriates as % of workforce	3%	10%
Number of women expatriates	27	66
Women as % of expatriate population	8%	11%

Table 2: HR manager interviewees' roles and responsibilities

Oil Co.	Rig Co.
International Assignments Manager (IAM)	International Assignments Manager (IAM)
Learning and Development (L & D)	Function Head (FH)
Resourcing (HR-R)	Graduate Scheme (GS)
HR East Asia (HR-EA)	Resourcing (HR-R)
	Development (HR-D)
	Recruitment (HR-Rec)
	Training (HR-T)
	Performance (HR-P)
	Learning and Development (L & D)
	Training and Development (T & D)

Table 3: Expatriate interviewee profile

Assignee	Home region	Host region	Current occupational function	Current Grade	Age range	Marital status	Children	Accompanied status
Oil Co.								
A	Western Europe	East Asia	Engineering	Middle	40-44	Married/partnered	1	Yes, by partner and child
B	North America	Central Asia	Engineering	Senior	50+	Divorced/widowed	0	No
D	Western Europe	East Asia	Exploration	Middle	30-34	Married/partnered	1	Yes, by partner and child
E	East Asia	Western Europe	Human Resources	Middle	35-39	Single	0	No
F	North America	East Asia	Exploration	Middle	35-39	Married/partnered	0	Yes, by partner
G	East Asia	North America	Engineering	Junior	30-34	Single	0	No
H	North America	Western Europe	Information Technology	Middle	50+	Divorced/widowed	2	No, children were adults
Rig Co.								
I	Western Europe	Caribbean	Exploration	Middle	40-44	Married/partnered	3	Yes, by partner and children
K	Australasia	West Africa	Commercial	Middle	40-44	Married/partnered	0	Yes, by partner
L	Western Europe	Australasia	Commercial	Middle	30-34	Married/partnered	0	No
M	Western Europe	Central Asia	Commercial	Middle	40-44	Married/partnered	0	Yes, by partner
N	Western Europe	Middle East	Engineering	Middle	35-39	Married/partnered	0	No
O	Western Europe	Australasia	Information Technology	Middle	40-44	Married/partnered	0	Yes, by partner
P	Western Europe	Western Europe	Commercial	Middle	25-29	Married/partnered	1	Yes, by partner and child
R	Western Europe	Australasia	Corporate Social Responsibility	Middle	30-34	Married/partnered	0	Yes, by partner
S	Western Europe	North Africa	Commercial	Senior	35-39	Married/partnered	1	Yes, by partner and child
U	Western Europe	North Africa	Legal	Middle	40-44	Married/partnered	1	Yes, by partner and child
V	Caribbean	North America	Legal	Middle	40-44	Married/partnered	1	Yes, by child
W	Western Europe	East Asia	Exploration	Middle	35-39	Married/partnered	2	Yes, by partner and children
X	Caribbean	West Africa	Commercial	Middle	40-44	Single	0	No
Y	Western Europe	Central Asia	Commercial	Middle	40-44	Married/partnered	0	No

Appendix 1: HR interview schedule

1. How is available internal talent matched to roles? Problems/difficulties and how managed?
2. What career development policies/initiatives do you have? How are expatriates' careers planned, managed and tracked? What has been the outcome for gender diversity? For women's career expectations?
3. How does the APR/ADR process work for expatriates? Who is involved in it? When does it take place? Who owns the process? How are very senior grades reviewed? How is the APR/ADR linked to employee's ability or potential to state their international mobility? What happens to the paperwork and the discussions? How are they actioned? What are links between HR, the line, functional, senior managers?

Appendix 2: Female assignees' interview schedule

1. To what extent do you believe that going on International Assignment (IA) is crucial to: Your development? Your career progression?
2. How did you make it known that you wanted an IA/ how will you make it known that you would like another IA?
3. In getting your current IA (and to get your next IA, if applicable), how instrumental do you feel the following company processes were/are: APR? ADR? Talent management and succession planning process? Others? How do you perceive these processes support/hinder your career progression via access to IAs?