Why Repatriates Resign: Interviews with Those Who Left

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Abstract

This research paper is a qualitative exploration of why repatriates resign from their organisation after returning to their home country, through the eyes of repatriates. Based on semi-structured interviews, resignation in part results from underemployment, relative deprivation and unmet expectations. Extending Bowen and Ostroff's (2004) theoretical framework to repatriation our research highlights a weak climate can be created in an organisation when all parts of the organisation are not working synchronously, thus influencing turnover. In particular our research found the lack of consistent communication by HR significantly affected the repatriate's experience and intention to leave. We found the pull towards boundaryless careers seemed to be a result of going abroad after repatriation. Our research highlights the importance of additional reward motivating continuance of international assignments.

Key Words

Company-Initiated Expatriation, Global Mobility, Qualitative Research Methods, Repatriates, Turnover.

I. INTRODUCTION

Chief Executives remain focused on undertaking more business globally. The major concern with expansion of business is a significant skills shortage. Consequently, a quarter of CEOs claim they were unable to pursue or progress an increase in their business due to the lack of human resources (PwC, 2012). As an interim solution to the talent crunch, organizations utilize expatriates to fill in the gaps. This may be a major contributing factor as to why 63% of organisations' expatriate population increased in 2011; a marked difference from the previous,

43% (Brookfield GMAC, 2012). Yet, statistics show that retaining expatriates when they return to their home country can be a challenge.

A. Previous Research

Much research has been conducted to determine why repatriates resign (e.g. Chi and Chen, 2007 regarding perceived psychological contract; Kraimer et al., 2009 discuss career advancement; van der Heijden et al., 2009 review career support); however, it has focused mainly on repatriates remaining within the organisations. Only a few studies have reached out to those who left their organisations. It is possible there is a gap in understanding the retention issue as there may be differences between those who resign and those who remain (e.g. van der Heijden et al., 2009; Lazarova and Cerdin, 2007). Suutari and Brewster (2003; Finnish expatriates); Kraimer, Shaffer, Harrison and Ren (2012; multi-country repatriates); and Reiche, Kraimer and Harzing (2011; Germans) conducted longitudinal studies, capturing data from some who left the organizations during that time. All of the studies were survey-based and none set out to determine differences between those who intended to leave and those who actually left. Very few differences were highlighted from these studies. Suutari and Brewster (2003) noticed that 'repatriation treatment' - use of expertise, interest level supervisors expressed in their experiences and level of supervisor support - as a motivator for leaving was significantly higher for repatriates who had 'intent to leave' versus those who left. Another difference shown in their data was: 'organizational status level' and 'career prospects' were more motivating to those who considered leaving; alternatively, 'external job offer' was more motivating to those who left (ibid). This implies that indeed there may be some disparity. Other researchers have admitted that only studying those who remain with the company is a limitation (e.g. van der Heijden et al., 2009; Sánchez Vidal, Sanz Valle and Barba Aragón, 2010). This study adds to the body of repatriate turnover knowledge by exploring the reasons repatriates leave. The research question is thus: from the perspective of those who have resigned, why do repatriates leave their organizations shortly after returning from international assignments?

B. Paper Overview

This paper begins with a review of the current literature regarding repatriates to determine some of the main themes regarding turnover. It examines traditional and more emerging reasons for turnover as well as considering the theoretical contribution of Bowen and Ostroff's (2004) work in terms of repatriation. We discuss the methods chosen including the final sample. The findings and analysis from the data obtained via themes gained through the interviews in the form of quotations from participants are presented. The paper concludes with discussion based on the research and provides suggestions for future research whilst acknowledging research limitations.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Researchers have found many reasons that repatriates resign but it is beyond the scope of this paper to detail all of them. Lazarova and Cerdin (2007) refer to traditional reasons: repatriates feel ignored and their newly acquired skills are not valued by the organization. The chapter will therefore start by focusing on unmet expectations, lack of support, and feeling overqualified. This will be followed by loyalty to one's own career path as opposed to the organization. A final

discussion is around Human Resource Management (HRM) policies and practices where we review the work of Bowen and Ostroff (2004) to include repatriation.

A. Expectations

Psychological contract, based on reciprocity, is the implied and unstated obligations both the employee and the employer have of one another (Rousseau, 1990). When both have held up their end of the psychological contract equation, an equal exchange has taken place (Morrison and Robinson, 1997). This exchange builds on Blau's (1964) theory of social exchange which is a quid pro quo: if one does something for another, he or she may feel the other is duty-bound or obligated to reciprocate. Obligations imply that expectations are put on one another. A repatriate expects the organization to treat or support them fairly; if they do not, reduced commitment or even resignation can follow (Chi and Chen, 2007).

When repatriates perceive a positive psychological contract, they are more likely to be committed and less likely to resign (Chi and Chen, 2007). To achieve this, organizations must manage expectations (Doherty and Dickmann, 2009; Kraimer et al., 2009). Howe-Walsh (2010) discovered an unwritten rule in her case study of a multinational organisation with multi-country repatriates. Even though repatriates were given no promise of a position upon repatriation, they felt the organization would take care of them. Jassawalla and Sashittal's (2009) study of multi-country repatriates found that nearly all of the negative feelings repatriates experienced were a direct result of their unmet expectations. Bolino (2007) proposes that the degree to which expectations are met impacts retention. One of the reasons this could be true is that expectations affect repatriate adjustment (Sánchez Vidal et al., 2010) and adjustment affects retention (implied by Black, 1992).

To avoid incongruent expectations in the psychological contract, communication is vital as it plays a key role to avoid misunderstandings or unrealistic expectations (Chi and Chen, 2007). Even if all promises are impossible to keep, the organizations honesty about the situation may help in lessening negative feelings (ibid). Based on their study of North American repatriates, Lazarova and Caligiuri (2001) believe that planned, frequent communication is vital for adjustment and a smoother repatriation process, leading to a reduced likelihood of resignation (Sánchez Vidal et al., 2007 and 2010).

Repatriates may be disenchanted with their role upon repatriation, causing them to believe that if they had not gone abroad they would be in a better role. This gives feelings akin to a sense of loss identified as counterfactual thinking (Roese, 1997). Counterfactual thinking is usually triggered by a significantly negative event or feeling which prompts one to consider what should have been done for a more positive outcome (ibid). This is significant because it has a direct relationship with turnover intentions (Chi and Chen, 2007).

B. Repatriation Support

Participants in Jassawalla and Sashittal's (2009) study reported HR to be disorganized and ill prepared to deal with repatriate needs and expectations. Many participants described HR as being ad hoc and reactive. As organizational support is negatively related to retention (Lazarova and Cerdin, 2007), it is something organizations should consider. It is interesting to note that Shaffer, Kraimer, Chen, and Bolino's (2012) review of the literature found HR had little involvement and most responsibility was devolved to the line manager with short-term assignments, whereas with long-term assignments HR was responsible for all aspects.

In many cases, expatriates are not guaranteed a position upon repatriation (e.g. Howe-Walsh, 2010; Doherty and Dickmann, 2009). A large number in Lazarova and Caligiuri's (2001) study stated they had a position only because they worked hard on their own to procure it. It should be noted, contrary to this, a high number (83%) of expatriates were promised a position upon return in Stahl, Miller and Tung's (2002) study of Germans. However, as their study was not longitudinal, it is unknown if those promises were kept and what kind of position they were given.

Forster's (1994) research of UK repatriates found that over half were not happy with the amount of overall support they received both before and after repatriation. This could be rooted in something discovered in two other studies: a majority of organizations did not have clear repatriation policies in Suutari and Brewster's (2003) study and all participants' organizations in Kulkarniet al.'s (2010) study of Indian repatriates lacked a formal repatriation support program. In another study of multi-country repatriates, only 42.4% of participants had communication about the repatriation process and a mere 41.9% of participants had career planning sessions available to them (Lazarova and Cerdin, 2007). But simply having a policy does not necessarily mean practice is executed properly. One example was found in Howe-Walsh's (2010, p97) study; expatriates whose assignments were ending were occasionally "overlooked in planning and... simply forgotten by the business". This "out of sight, out of mind" situation can cause great difficulty in securing an appropriate position upon repatriation (Shen and Hall, 2009, p810). Another example is found in the Brookfield Global Relocation Trends 2012 survey. Many organizations do not have alignment of their repatriation policies with other HR policies in such a way to facilitate effective career support: 71% of organizations had written repatriation policies but only 16% were linked to career management and retention (Brookfield GMAC, 2012).

As a result of being abroad for a long time, reorganizations, etc., expatriates may lose their contacts in the home country. This disadvantages them in finding a position upon repatriation (Dickmann and Doherty, 2008; Bolino, 2007). Mäkelä and Suutari's (2009) research of Finnish repatriates discovered that a number of their participants experienced this challenge. One suggestion to mitigate this issue is by assigning a home country mentor to apprise changes in personnel and other important information of the expatriate (Carraher, Sullivan and Crocitto, 2008). Moreover, expatriates' opportunity for promotion increases when a home country mentor is present, presumably having a positive impact on their careers (ibid). Additionally, career planning should be carried out well before repatriation (Shen and Hall, 2009) and both home and

host HR should work together to find positions, focusing on utilization of newly acquired skills (Lazarova and Cerdin, 2007).

How employees perceive organizational support is important; it is their perception of support that is impactful and is a factor in retention (Lazarova and Caligiuri, 2001; van der Heijdenet al., 2009). Perceived organizational support (POS) theory is the extent to which an employee feels their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson and Sowa, 1986). Repatriates who are unhappy with their company's support are more likely to resign (Stahl, Chua, Caligiuri, Cerdin and Taniguchi, 2009; Lazarova and Cerdin, 2007). Support oriented to a long-term career and security aids retention (Dickmann and Doherty, 2008) and is one of three elements that make up organisational support (Kraimer and Wayne, 2001). As it applies to expatriates' careers, research has shown that perceived career support (PCS) has a negative relationship with intention to resign (e.g. van der Heijdenet al., 2009; Kraimeret al., 2009).

C. Underemployment

Many expatriates believe international experience will help advance their career (Kraimeret al., 2009; Suutari and Brewster, 2003). To their great disappointment, this expectation is often unrealized (Stroh, Gregersen and Black, 1998; Black and Gregersen, 1999). In fact, repatriate careers are often in a "holding pattern without a clear assignment, job, or set of responsibilities" (Black and Gregersen, 1991b, p688), leading to feelings of being undervalued (Doherty and Dickmann, 2009). This is poignant because repatriates feel increased levels of competency from their expatriate experience and are ready to take on more challenging work (Jokinen, Brewster and Suutari, 2008). Only 4% of the participants in Jassawalla and Sashittal's (2009) study were very happy with their career after repatriation.

Underemployment is the feeling of working in an inferior, lesser, or lower quality position than the individual is qualified for (Feldman, 1996). Thus repatriates who are not promoted feel underemployed. Forster (1994) stated repatriates should be given positions which are at least equal, if not higher, status than the ones they held before expatriation. However, Kraimeret al.'s (2009) research found only 17% of expatriates received a promotion upon return. Underemployment is a genuine concern; it creates decreased job satisfaction and commitment (Bolino and Feldman, 2000), leading to a higher probability of turnover (Kraimeret al., 2009). Although not always practicable, it has been suggested that, because its criticality, it is best for expatriates to remain abroad until an appropriate position is found (Shen and Hall, 2009).

In stark contrast to the previous research highlighted above are findings from Kulkarniet al.'s (2010) study of 27 repatriated Indians from varied industries. All participants reported that their international experience helped them positively upon return through increased opportunities; utilization of newly acquired knowledge, skills and abilities; and promotions (the authors are careful to mention the reasons for this disparity could be because they were all very senior managers and there was strong economic growth in India at the time). Doherty and Dickmann's (2009) case study of a UK company raise an additional issue: although the positions

repatriates were given when they initially returned did not show the value of their newly acquired skills, they found that in the long term repatriates were eventually moved into better positions. In another UK case study of two firms it took a year for three participants to recover their career trajectory (Dickmann and Doherty, 2008). It would seem there may be some evidence that if repatriates have patience, their international experience might be rewarded.

Feldman, Leana and Turnley (1997) associated underemployment with relative deprivation. Later, Feldman, Leana and Bolino (2002) empirically proved that feelings of underemployment lead to feelings of relative deprivation, resulting in negative feelings toward one's job. Relative deprivation theory states the desire to have something derives from seeing others with it, feeling it is their right to have it, it is viable to obtain, and it is through no fault of their own that they do not have it (Crosby, 1976). It is associated with feelings of anger, injustice and/or resentment (ibid). In view of international experience, repatriates may feel deprived because "their organization does not provide them with appreciable benefits relative to their colleagues who did not complete international assignments" (Kraimeret al., 2012, p403).

D. Goals of Individuals

Some researchers believe turnover has more to do with the individual's goals. Stahl et al. (2009) and Lazarova and Cerdin (2007) posit that organizational support may be pointless because some repatriates leave simply to further their career at another organization. Lazarova and Cerdin (2007) found that 'career activism', taking control of one's career, and the perceived availability of other positions outside the company (boundary less careers) increases the likelihood of repatriate resignation, regardless of the amount of organizational support. Inkson, Arthur, Pringle and Barry (1997) and Biemann and Andresen (2010) postulate that those who take up international assignments (IAs) do so more for their own development versus out of a desire to meet company objectives. This has been echoed by others who say skills development for boundaryless career pursuers is for the purpose of being more attractive to the outside job market (van der Heijdenet al., 2009; Lazarova and Cerdin, 2007). Some view foreign experience as a "valuable competitive asset" (Biemann and Andresen, 2010, p433) because IAs provide a wealth of opportunities for learning and development, confidence-building and networking (Jokinenet al., 2008; Fink et al., 2005).

Alternatively, Zikic, Novicevic, Harvey and Breland (2006) describe how many expatriates begin a transformation toward the end of their IA as they reflect on their experiences (professionally and personally) and consider their path forward, referred to as career exploration. Expatriates' experience abroad influence[s] their self-awareness on personal values, work interests and capabilities (Jokinenet al., 2008). Because of this transformation in capability and identity it is difficult for a repatriate to go back to what they were doing before without feeling unfulfilled (Hall, Zhu and Yan, 2002). This would imply that boundaryless career focus may actually be an outcome of the international experience itself. This is potentially because of changes in how they view the world, changes in the home country organization, or unmet expectations. As a result of this process, "…they construct a new identity of being resilient, resourceful, and adaptable people" (Shen and Hall, 2009, p795).

E. HRM

There has long been debate over whether 'best practice' (Pfeffer, 1994, 1998 cited by Kinnie, Hutchinson, Purcell, Rayton and Swart, 2005), a specific set of HR practices that purportedly benefits an organization regardless of context, or 'best fit', the context of the organization impacts which HR practices are most effective, impacts organisational performance (Schuler and Jackson, 1987 and Miles and Snow, 1984 cited by Kinnieet al, 205, p9).

Extending HRM theory, Bowen and Ostroff (2004, p207) present a theoretical framework of HRM and firm performance developing our understanding of the link between strength and the HRM system. They postulate a shared and cohesive (a.k.a. strong) 'climate' in the organization enhances an employee's understanding of what "behaviors are expected and rewarded", thus impacting organizational performance. Bowen and Ostroff's framework utilizes Kelley's attribution theory (1967) which proposes that individuals' attributions are dependent upon three distinct variables that of: distinctiveness; consistency and consensus. The framework outlines a set of nine attributes related to HRM process: Distinctiveness (the degree to which a repatriates have a clear understanding of HR practices and what they can expect in terms of HR assistance) within distinctiveness the first four attributes are noted: Visibility defines the degree to which HRM practices are important and readily observable. Understandability refers to the way in which different workers classify the information gathered from each HRM practice. For example, how easy is it to determine who will help the repatriate secure a return position. Legitimacy of authority is related to the perceived power of HRM in the organization, how HR is viewed by employees. Relevance relates to how useful the HR practices are. For example would the use of a repatriation bonus retain an employee if it is paid immediately upon return? Consistency relates to how consistent relationships are over time, people and contexts. It is composed of the next three attributes: Instrumentality refers to the perceived cause-effect relationship between personal behaviors and rewards, which are stimulated by HRM practices for example is there an increase in salary for accepting an assignment? Validity is concerned with whether the HR practices deliver what was intended. For example, did the assignment develop the individual's career? Consistent HR messages refer to the degree to which HRM practices convey similar and consistent messages across the organization and across time. Is there an unwritten rule that the repatriate will have a return position? Finally, Consensus is the degree of agreement among employees. It incorporates the final two attributes: Agreement among principal HR decision makers and the degree to which workers perceive agreement across HR. This could be complicated in the case of a repatriate where they are working with home and host HR. Finally fairness of HRM practices relate to how individuals perceive the HR activity. For example, if the individual believes the appraisal system is undertaken equally amongst all employees or is an IA seen to compromise the appraisal's equity?

Studies have provided empirical support for Bowen and Ostroff's model in relation to 'customer service' as a strong climate created within a hotel industry (Tang and Tang, 2012), a strong climate for knowledge transfer (Minbaeva, Mäkelä and Rabbiosi, 2012) and a strong climate conducive to learning (Prieto and Pérez Santana, 2012). Although research into repatriation has

yet to explore Bowen and Ostroff's model it is possible to extend the theory to repatriation. For example, Jassawalla and Sashittal (2009) found that all of the managers in their study were unsatisfied and felt ambivalent and powerless regarding the repatriation process. They note that one of the reasons for this was that most did not experience anything tangible which indicated their IA was valued by the organization. From this example it appears that a weak climate was created, at least in part, from conflicting messages. The first message is the importance to the organization that sending someone abroad gives. The second message is that the organization does not value their new experience. Another example is if stakeholders do not clearly know their roles in the repatriation process, as was found in Howe-Walsh's (2010) research, then certainly there would be negative repercussions on the climate. Additionally, she found that some HRBPs did not have a clear understanding of the contents of the repatriation policy which lead to inconsistency with how people were dealt, misalignment of policies, vital information not being shared with all expatriates and policies being misused to suit different agendas.

III. METHODS

A. Research Design

This study centred on why repatriates resigned from their organization after repatriation; hence, understanding, empathy, and gathering personal beliefs and feelings were important elements to interpret participant stories. An interpretative approach was adopted (Jankowicz, 2005). This research concentrated on understanding people as individuals and it is participants' frame of reference which influences behaviors. This can only be adequately achieved through the use of participants' words suited to a qualitative study (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Willig, 2008).

B. Sampling Strategy

A small sample was desired to explore in depth information from the participants. The researchers were concerned with gaining a variety of views and not about obtaining a representative sample. Thus only those repatriates who had been sent by their organization to work in another country were of interest to the researchers. Self-initiated expatriates were precluded from the study as they may have different motivations and reasons for resignation. The length of time after repatriation was considered based on turnover statistics (Brookfield GMAC, 2012), two years is deemed appropriate. Participants were located through convenience sampling via word of mouth and personal contacts. Self-selection from posting online requests for participants on networking websites was also used.

C. Data Collection

Online conferencing was chosen as the interviewing method because its benefits outweighed the alternatives: geographical location was of no consequence, international calling costs were eliminated and it allowed for clearer voice recording than using a telephone speakerphone.

Research was conducted in accordance to the University's ethical guidelines. Ten interviews took place but one was eliminated because the participant did not fully repatriate before resigning. Therefore, nine interviews were included in the analysis. The sample was all male except for one, with ages ranging from 27 to 47. India was the home country for six participants, USA for two and one was from Canada. Five participants had long-term IAs while the remainder worked on short-term assignments. Participants resigned from their organization between 1 and 15 years prior to this research (see Appendix I for participant demographics).

D. Interview Questions

Motivations for participants accepting their IA were asked to determine if it was to advance within the company or to be more marketable outside of the company. Questions regarding expectations upon repatriation were asked to see how those, met or unmet, may have influenced their decision to resign as discussed by Chi and Chen (2007) and proposed by Bolino (2007). Inquiries into career support were made: both van der Heijdenet al. (2009) and Kraimeret al. (2009) found that perceived career support was negatively related to repatriates' intention to leave the organization. The researcher asked about the position upon repatriation and skill utilization. As Feldman (1996) stated, feeling overqualified for a position can lead to feelings of underemployment. Some questions were posed to see what sort of information might lend support to Bowen and Ostroff's (2004) theoretical model as well as determine how well-equipped HR were to handle their needs and expectation (see Appendix II for semi- structured interview questions).

IV. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Interpretative phenomenology was used to provide insights into the data. This form of analysis was selected because it lent itself well to the research aim of getting repatriates' perceptions of their experience, while also understanding that the researcher's perception of the data would naturally influence results (Willig, 2008). The researchers read transcripts noting insights and questions, summarizing, and highlighting salient words or phrases. Themes were identified and, in table format, were put into an Excel file and organized into hierarchical form, listing subcategories under each theme. A column was created for quotes or summary statements, providing examples of the themes and completed across for each transcript. A second researcher undertook the same process to establish the themes and aid consistency.

A. Themes

The themes that emerged from the data are as follows: expectations and skill utilization, career support, motivation for accepting IA, transformation and weak climate. There was one theme noted not previously covered by repatriate literature: the urgency in obtaining another IA to save money or send money back to families while abroad.

1. Expectations and Skill Utilization: Psychological contract has to do with what obligations or expectations the employer and employee has of each other (Rousseau, 1990). When a repatriate does not feel expectations are met it can ultimately lead to resignation (Chi and Chen,

2007). One participant felt a break in the psychological contract because he felt he was "*defending the company... looking after their interest*" but when he came back there was no appreciation. He felt he was "*just part of the bunch*" whereas before he was "*seen with bedded eyes for development... and a career with the company*". But, because he was gone for such a long period of time he felt he was suddenly "*out of the picture...*" (I9MLCanada)

In order to avoid breaks in the psychological contract, expectations need to be managed (e.g. Doherty and Dickmann, 2009). Most of the participants had unmet expectations of what would happen when they repatriated, many having to do with skill utilization. The following quote expresses this frustration.

> *I'd gained all of this experience internationally, I knew so much more about the company... I felt like I had a wealth of knowledge to offer corporate and... the value didn't seem to be... acknowledged by the company...*
>
> (I1FLUSA)

According to literature, being in a position which requires a lower skill level than capable of causes feelings of underemployment (Feldman, 1996) and leading to a higher probability of resignation (Kraimer*et al.*, 2009). We found participants in this study in part resigned because of feeling underemployed and not being promoted. This supports Chi and Chen's (2007) findings that some feel their roles would have been better if they had stayed in the home country. Two repatriates even perceived they were demoted upon return to their home country.

> *...I felt like... I was demoted... as in I would return to the same job I left two years prior when I came back from the repatriation.*(I1FLUSA)

Not all had a negative trajectory in their career upon repatriation. One participant (I8MSUSA) was given a promotion upon return; however, he still did not feel challenged and subsequently resigned. In the second case, the repatriate was given a promotion but it was with great difficulty that it was granted to him.

> *... the responsibilities [were] given to me after I pretty much <u>forced</u> them to give it to me... [T]hey were... offering me two levels less than what I was asking... I was like "No. That is what I was doing two years back..."*

(I2MLIndia)

2. *Career Support:* Only one participant reported career support; this is similar to the dismal results of Lazarova and Cerdin's (2007) study wherein so few had career planning sessions available to them.

...[T]here's no career planning as such they lay out... for us, it is the way you work and... it is more... reactive than putting down a planned career path...

(I3MLIndia)

Causing feelings of relative deprivation (Crosby, 1976), three participants were passed up for positions they felt would have been ideal with their experience.

...[Instead of] me, they sent some other people to those assignments where I said 'I am the most eligible person for that.'

(I4MSIndia)

Change in management during the life of an assignment was found. I9MLCanada's manager told him "*...When you come back, most likely you will come at a higher level than when you left.*" However, while the repatriate was away on an IA for 2.5 years, his manager moved to a different project and hence, upon repatriation, found he had a new manager. He was left asking himself "*So everything that was promised... who do I go to now to ask for these things?*" This supports Dickmann and Doherty (2008) and Bolino's (2007) assertion that losing key contacts can make it difficult to secure an appropriate position.

3. *Motivation for Accepting IA:* None of the participants accepted their IAs as a way to make themselves more marketable outside of the company. This seems to be in contradiction to the belief that employees' motivation for accepting IAs is more for personal career gain without regard to the organization (e.g. Biemann and Andresen, 2010)....I never thought if I had a US experience that would... make my CV more valuable- I didn't consider it that way...(I6MSIndia)

Most had a genuine interest in getting the exposure of working abroad with the intention it would be useful in their career within the company and/or enrich them intrinsically. In fact, motivations were closely tied between self-development and progression or contribution to their company.

4. Transformation: This study supported Zikic*et al.* (2006) claim that expatriates go through a transformation because they ponder how they want to move forward with their personal and professional lives, a process which takes place around the time of repatriation. Nearly half of the participants used words of empowerment which seemed to indicate dramatic changes. I1FLUSA commented that she was not going to be a "*victim*" and "*took... more control into my hands of my career and what I wanted in my future...*" She also explained that "*…before that experience I had very strong loyalty to the company and would move wherever they requested me to. It was a pivotal experience that, in hindsight, was of great benefit to me. My loyalty shifted from the company to me.*"

The participants had experienced a higher level of responsibility and more challenging work when they were abroad, indicating they were dissatisfied when returning to their old jobs. This supports Hall, Zhu and Yan's (2002) claim that repatriates feel unfulfilled returning to their previous jobs.

...[A]fter being in the project I was [in South America]- it was a new airport from scratch, you know buildings, runways and tower and terminals so there were so many things that make it interesting and you are coming back to the one project and just doing the regular thing again... it doesn't feel fulfilling.

(I9MLCanada)

...[T]he work that I was doing when I returned was definitely not as challenging.

(I10LIndia)

5. Weak Climate: Bowen and Ostroff (2004) proposed that a strong climate could be created to guide employees on how to behave, assuming all parts within the organisation worked in sync, reaffirming each other. Instead, it was evident in a number of situations that a weak climate was being created.

The first example is regarding the involvement HR had with the repatriates. Six participants said that HR had a nominal involvement in the process, usually just transactional pieces. When HR is viewed simply as a function which handles relocation or signing paperwork, they are not likely to be viewed as having "high-status" or authority which Bowen and Ostroff (2004, p209) discuss as one element in creating a strong climate.

A second area in which a weak climate was created was with expatriation and repatriation policies. The majority of the participants said the repatriation policy was not written. This is similar to Suutari and Brewster's (2003) study wherein the majority of repatriates' companies

were found not having a clear repatriation policy. Possessing policies (and carrying them out in practice) which are clear and communicated is the first piece Bowen and Ostroff (2004) discuss in creating a strong climate. This may be why there was such a varied response from participants in this study when asked to rate HR on being focused, prepared and/or organized. On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 10 (excellent), average participant score was 5.6 with answers ranging from 1 to 10. Three scores out of this sample seemed to give some currency to Jassawalla and Sashittal's (2009) study, wherein none of their participants felt that HR was focused, prepared or organized. It was noted that two of those three said there was no clear or written expatriation or repatriation policy; the other said the repatriation policy was not well-developed.

There were other issues identified in the interviews. I1FLUSA had a number of challenges with HR being in sync either with other areas of HR or with management. One issue began while she was abroad when HR conducted interviews for a position. Her manager said she did not have to interview because they knew her skills. However, upon repatriation she was told she was not eligible for the position because she did not interview for it. Disconnects created a lot of confusion and frustration, ultimately playing a part in her decision to resign. Another situation where a weak climate seemed to be created was where managers were no longer available having moved to another part of the business. If managers and HR (host and home) were working together they would have known that planning needed to take place for these two to find positions.

6. New Insights: A new insight from this research not discussed previously in the literature was financial. Turnover was linked to the dollar-to-rupee-conversion. Some repatriates resigned to go on another IA because of their ability to earn a higher wage with the favorable foreign currency exchange. Participants, both Indian, implied that they earned a higher salary working abroad, thus their salary went further because of the conversion rate and cost of living.

One of the reasons [for resignation] was... conversion between dollar and rupee. If I stayed [in the USA] I could actually save more money.

(I6MSIndia)

Another Indian participant mentioned that his organisation was aware of this financial benefit and seemed to take advantage of it when he repatriated.

...in the US we used to get salary in US dollars... so when we go back [after repatriation] they work on our salary again and they give it in India which was way less than what I was expecting when I went back... 'You have earned enough... why should we give you... the salary of your experience back in India?'

(I3MLIndia)

Research shows it is commonplace for migrants from developing countries such as India, Bangladesh (Arun and Ulku, 2011), Barbados and Mexico (Campbell, 2009) to send money to their home countries. In a 2011 study of South Asians in the UK, Indian temporary workers sent an average of £150 per month to their home country (Arun and Ulku, 2011). An average of 75% of remittances went toward "increas[ing the] average consumption levels of recipients" (typically family members), 33% was designated for savings and 20% for education (Yang, 2011, p136; Arun and Ulku, 2011). One benefit temporary workers may receive is a strong host country currency to a weak home country currency (Yang, 2011). Naturally, the reverse can be true also. There is scant regard in the expatriate literature regarding sending currency home as a motivating factor. Furthermore, the influence of repatriating and the desire to continue sending money home provides additional insight into turnover.

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this research was to explore reasons why repatriates resign based on data gathered from multi-country repatriates who left their organization within 12 months of repatriation. Support for turnover was found resulting from underemployment, relative deprivation, unmet expectations, and transformational experience. This research offers a rare insight into the experiences of repatriates who have resigned from their organization. In extending the theoretical framework of Bowen and Ostroff (2004) we develop discussion regarding the complexity of a strong HRM system where HR practices cross borders. Our findings contribute to knowledge regarding boundaryless careers in that we found boundaryless careers seemed to be a result of going abroad. Lastly we highlight the importance of monetary reward upon repatriation and the link between turnovers.

A number of participants argued that the skills they developed while abroad were not utilized (Kraimeret al., 2009) and were left feeling underemployed (Feldman, 1996). When someone else was given the position they felt was ideal for them, this led to feelings of relative deprivation (Crosby, 1976; Feldman et al., 1997; Feldman et al., 2002). Unmet expectations of some sort were mentioned by many of the repatriates. In terms of career support the participants felt the organization had not delivered what they had expected. Thus the repatriates did not perceive organizational support or valued by the organization (Eisenbergeret al., 1986; Stahl et al., 2009; Lazarova and Cerdin, 2007). Some felt their career path would have been better if they had not gone abroad, noting that their return was tantamount to a lateral move with no career progression. In some cases repatriates perceived their return position as a demotion.

When examining boundaryless careers, none of the participants said they accepted their IAs with the motivation of making themselves more marketable outside of the company (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996 cited by van Der Heijdenet al., 2009; Stahl et al., 2002; Biemann and Andresen, 2010). The majority were mainly interested in developing themselves and advancement within the company. However, after going through a transformational experience, they were

subsequently interested in pursuing other opportunities outside of the organization where they could continue to develop (Zikicet al., 2006; Jokinenet al., 2008; Hall et al., 2002). This is contradictory to previous research that employees accept IAs for boundaryless career pursuit (Inksonet al., 1997; Biemann and Andresen, 2010; van der Heijdenet al., 2009; Lazarova and Cerdin, 2007). Our findings contribute to research, in that the reverse may be true: boundaryless careers seemed to be a result of going abroad.

In order to develop academic theory we have attempted to extend Bowen and Ostroff's (2004) theoretical framework to repatriation. Creating a strong climate in which all parts reinforce each other to indicate how repatriates should behave in terms of a strong climate was difficult to support however it seemed that a lack of policies and nominal HR involvement created a weak climate in a number of situations. Although these were not specifically stated as reasons for resignation it did lend partial support to extending Bowen and Ostroff's (2004) theoretical framework. Our research also highlighted the issue of different HR departments (home and host) as well as HR and line management not working synchronously.

Another contribution from this study is the finding that the reason for leaving the organization was to continue working abroad to earn more money. It is curious that although it was a motivator to resign it was not a motivator in accepting the IA in the first place. Literature indicates that many expatriates from developing countries send money home for multiple reasons including to supplement family income or for savings (Arun and Ulku, 2011; Campbell, 2009). It would be interesting to conduct a larger study of repatriates from developing countries to see if this is a wide-spread motivator for accepting IAs and for resigning if they are not speedily sent abroad again.

As with all studies, there were limitations. The small sample size for this research does not allow for generalization. However, as the purpose of the study was to explore reasons for turnover, it was deemed as appropriate.

APPENDIX

Appendix I – Participant Demographics

	T1FT.USA	T2MT.India	T3MT.India	T4MR.India	T6MR.India	T7MR.India	T8MR.USA	T9MT.Canada	T10T.India
Age	47	30	34	34	44	27	31	37	40
Gender	Female	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male
Number of companies in current career	4	2	2	5	9	4	3	5	4
Number of years worked for above companies	20	8	11	12	21	6	7.5	9	17
Number of expat assignments	2	2	2	4	3	1	1	1	2
Home country	USA	India	India	India	India	India	USA	Canada	India
Host country	UK	USA	USA	China/France	USA	USA	China	S. America	Japan
Months on IA	24	27	30	11	6	4.5	6	30	21
Short or long-term assignment	Long	Long	Long	Short	Short	Short	Short	Long	Long
Months before exiting organization	3	14	8	8	5.5	6	3	5	12
Year exited organization	2001	2010	2007	2006	1997	2010	2008	2011	2000

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