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The repatriation experience and adjustment strategies

of employees returning to Canada:

A qualitative interpretive study

by

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explores the repatriation experience and adjustment strategies of eight employees returning to Canada. Two research questions were posed: 1) What has been your experience with repatriation? and, 2) What strategies have you used to cope with repatriation issues? Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were utilized to gather information, and raw data was then analyzed through the use of qualitative interpretation. Three metathemes emerged from this analysis which include work adjustment, lifestyle adjustment, and psychological adjustment. Strategies associated to these areas of adjustment are also examined. Recommendations for both repatriates and multinational corporations are discussed, and counselling and research implications are reviewed.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Each year there are hundreds of thousands of employees worldwide who embark on foreign assignments (Engen, 1995). A survey of international companies forecasts a continual increase in expatriate workers (Windham International, 1998). While there exists an abundance of literature surrounding the dynamics of adjustment to foreign cultures, there is little recognition of reentry difficulties faced by workers and their families as they readjust to their home country environment (Black, Gregersen, & Mendenhall, 1992a). Repatriation appears to be the least carefully considered facet of global assignments, both in practice and in research (Feldman, 1991). Studies find multinational companies take much more responsibility educating employees for postings in foreign countries than they do preparing those sojourners for returning home (Harvey, 1982, 1989; Wang, 1997). Findings indicate that repatriation adjustment is as demanding if not more difficult than the original expatriation adjustment, and that a significant majority of repatriated employees are dissatisfied with the repatriation process (Adler, 1981, 1991; Black, Gregersen, & Mendenhall, 1992b; Black & Gregersen 1998, 1999b; Gomez-Mejia & Balkin, 1987; Piet-Pelon & Hornby, 1992; Richardson & Rullo, 1992; Wang, 1997; Wilson, 1988). With the globalization of economies, the large amounts of money invested in international personnel, and the growing incidence of foreign postings, the area of repatriation as well as accompanying adjustment strategies need to be addressed and studied in greater detail (Hammer, Hart, & Rogan, 1998).

This study focuses on the repatriation experience and adjustment strategies of Canadian employees who have lived and worked overseas and who are currently living and working in Canada. Particular attention is given to understanding the personal meaning of the experience of

repatriation as well as specific strategies employed during this transition process. This chapter reviews the significance of this research project, introduces the purpose of the study, and outlines the organization of the thesis.

Significance of the Research

As the prevalence of international assignments increase, repatriation is becoming a greater concern to those employees who have become part of the international world of work, to the corporations who have global operations, and to counsellors working in the area of repatriation adjustment. The significance of the present study is associated with areas in the literature on international assignments and to repatriation in particular which to-date have not been adequately addressed.

The purpose of examining existing research on repatriation and the employee is to determine how well the literature provides information regarding the experience of repatriation. A review of the literature discovers a focus on the problems associated with repatriation (Adler, 1981; Black, 1991; Brown 1994; Engen, 1995; Sussman, 1986), and offers little in respect to solutions or strategies aimed at alleviating reentry difficulties. All existing work has utilized questionnaires, with the exception of two known studies (Adler, 1981; Briody & Baba, 1991). Although questionnaires have contributed to the knowledge base of repatriation, the information tends to be disjointed and does not provide a complete picture of the repatriation experience. Furthermore, research has concentrated on American repatriates, resulting in virtually no information on Canadian repatriates.

This study examines repatriation from the perspective of the repatriating employee, yet understanding the literature from a business vantage point is also necessary. Studies reveal that

globalization is affecting the world of work through a steady increase in international work assignments (Deshpande, 1992; Chesters, 1996; Ioannou, 1995; Joinson, 1998). Although the number of employees working globally is on the rise, and the need for managing these international transitions has increased, the practice of implementing effective repatriation programs for returning workers has not kept pace with existing demands (Black & Gregersen, 1999a; 1999b). Some literature addresses the need for organizations to manage the career placement of repatriated personnel (Harvey, 1982; Richardson & Rullo, 1992; Scelba, 1996). However, there is a distinct lack of recommendations to corporations regarding other facets of repatriation, including repatriating family members, the lifestyle changes, and psychological adjustment that is all part of the repatriation process for employees and their families.

The literature contains recommendations on how the repatriating employee and the corporation may take steps to create an effective repatriation transition, but these articles do not address this as a collaborative process. Business journals tend to speak of global assignments in terms of efficiency and effectiveness, and the human side of understanding repatriation becomes lost. As well, psychological journals tend to be written from the perspective of what the organization should do for repatriating personnel, and does not consider the employee as an important part of determining repatriation outcomes. Richardson & Rullo (1992) recommend that the repatriate be responsible for overseeing the repatriation process, as it is too important a task to leave for anyone else to manage. This reflects a changing relationship with the corporation whereby the corporation is no longer the patriarch who is responsible for the needs of all employees, which was the perception of the corporation/employee relationship half a century ago (Bridges, 1995; Hesketh & Rounds, 1995). The world of work has changed, and a new outlook

on repatriation must reflect these changes.

The implications are that corporations must begin to listen to repatriated employees to gain a better appreciation of how repatriation affects both the individual and the company, and repatriates need to understand they can be highly effective in managing their repatriation adjustment. This collaborative relationship may be conceptualized in terms of the knowledge this study contributes to the literature and reflects one of the primary purposes of the current study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the project is to gain an understanding of the repatriation process of employees who have previously worked overseas and are currently living and working in Canada. The project will specifically examine the issues arising from repatriation adjustment and the coping strategies used to deal with these issues. The research is focused on participants' responses to two major questions: 1) What has been your experience with repatriation? and, 2) What strategies have you used to cope with repatriation issues?

By focusing on the experience of repatriation and strategies used to cope with this process this study: a) addresses some of the identified gaps in the literature, b) aims to understand the personal meaning of repatriation as it affects all aspects of life, and c) discovers solutions which help ease the transition and subsequent adjustment to life and work in Canada.

Knowledge generated by this research will be of benefit to repatriated employees, to multinational corporations, and to practitioners and researchers who work with both employees and organizations in the area of repatriation. This includes counsellors working in the areas of cross-cultural change and career transitions, career development and cross-cultural researchers, managers and human resource personnel who work with repatriates, and professionals who

develop and implement repatriation programs.

Organization of the Thesis

This chapter has introduced the topic of repatriation, the significance of this study, and the purpose of the current research. Chapter Two is a literature review of existing research which has been conducted in the area of repatriation. This examination of literature uncovers areas where research is lacking, thereby establishing rationale for the current study. Chapter Three outlines the research methodology and approach to the data analysis. Next, Chapter Four is a descriptive presentation of findings as discovered by the study. Finally, Chapter Five provides a discussion of the study's contributions to the literature as well as its limitations, and includes counselling implications and recommendations to both repatriates and corporations.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This review is organized into four sections designed to provide background information regarding repatriation and the rationale for the current study. Part I describes how globalization has increased the necessity of international assignments, and offers rationale for including repatriation practice in corporations. Part II reviews models and theories of reentry and adjustment in an effort to clarify the processes and outcomes of repatriation. Part III differentiates expatriation from repatriation, and defines repatriation as a multifaceted phenomenon. Part IV expands upon specific repatriation issues which are frequently occurring concerns for repatriates. The chapter concludes with how previous research has examined repatriation and how the current study plans to investigate the phenomenon of repatriation.

Part I: Repatriation, Globalization, and the Corporation

Literature on international assignments during the 1980's primarily addresses relocation, living and working overseas, and focuses on adjustment, stress, and cross-cultural training programs (Black & Mendenhall, 1989). Literature on repatriation developed in the 1990's acknowledged that returning to one's home country presents fundamentally different demands than faced by those who make corporate moves domestically (Black, 1992; Feldman, Tompson, & Holly, 1993). It has also been argued that repatriation adjustment is a more difficult transition than the adjustment to a foreign culture (Adler, 1981, 1991; Black & Gregersen, 1992, 1998, 1999b; Black et al., 1992b; Gomez-Mejia & Balkin, 1987; Piet-Pelon & Hornby, 1992; Richardson & Rullo, 1992; Wang, 1997; Wilson, 1988). Consequently, understanding globalized labour markets and the process of repatriation has become a necessity for counsellors whose roles involve working with repatriates and their corporations.

Globalization

On a simplistic level, *globalization* is the process of an activity becoming worldwide in scope (Sundaram & Black, 1995). Yet globalization is a complex phenomenon as countries become increasingly interdependent and must work together to share limited resources (Taylor, 1994). Firms in the international world of business strive to become and remain globally competitive through business decisions, state of the art technology, and strategically placed organizational structures (Black et al., 1992a). These commodities transfer back and forth over international borders at an increasing rate as political and economic changes create opportunities that expand the realms of commerce. Changes having substantial global impact include the democratization of Eastern Europe, unification of Germany, the U.S./Canada Free Trade Agreement, Western Europe trading blocs, movement of foreign corporations into domestic markets, liberalization of financial markets in Great Britain and Japan, and developing Third World countries (Herr, Amundson, & Borgen, 1990). As resources and knowledge extend into new marketplaces, the most important resource contributing to globalization is people.

Human resources facilitate globalization, whereby nationals of one country are sent to subsidiaries in foreign countries (Black, 1988). These global assignments play a strategic role in the coordination of international corporations (Black et al., 1992a). Managers who can understand and effectively work with people from different cultures and religions, and have the ability to manage cross-cultural teams are a valuable resource to corporations. Now and in the future, managers need foreign assignments to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to understand global markets, customers, suppliers, and competitors. International work can be a critical means of achieving corporate goals, are valuable in the organization of a firm's worldwide

operations, and are effective in the exchange of information, both during and after a foreign assignment.

Human Resources: The Key to Effective Globalization

In the past many companies did not fully appreciate the fact international human resource development is the key to effective globalization (Patterson, 1990), but as more companies venture into global markets they are finding that international success is based on having quality people in key positions in strategic locations (Thompson, 1992). More companies now believe that if they do not have employees with global skills they will lose their competitive ability (Black & Gregersen, 1999a; Richardson & Rullo, 1992).

The qualities necessary for globally competent employees include proficiencies that enable personnel to work with people of diverse cultural backgrounds (Arthur, 1998; Herr, 1993). This means understanding how culture impacts personal behaviour and the work place, and learning strategies for cross-cultural effectiveness including communication, decision making, and conflict resolution skills. Globally proficient employees possess cross-cultural competencies which are the key to employability now and in the future. During cross-cultural transitions, these workers will understand their own reactions to cultural changes, and use coping and stress management skills to help with the sometimes difficult reentry transition and repatriation process.

Corporations effectively managing foreign assignments have been shown to follow three principles: They send qualified people; they send these people to achieve strategic objectives; and they have repatriation policies and programs (Black & Gregersen, 1999a). But most North American firms create global assignments because there are no qualified applicants in their foreign affiliates (Black et al., 1992a) and are to solve problems rather than utilizing the relocation for

strategic objectives. The mind set of reaction rather than proaction means succession planning and managerial development are given little consideration. Globally competent managers return home to find that issues of repatriation and utilization of their international skills are insignificant to their corporation (Allen & Alvarez, 1998; McDonald, 1993; Wozniak, 1997).

International human resource development is the key to developing a globally competent workforce and for achieving success at the multinational level. Global proficiency also means understanding all aspects of the international assignment cycle as outlined in the following section.

The International Assignment Cycle

International assignments need to be viewed as a process, and all elements of global practice must be linked from one to the next. The components of the process include recruiting and selection, orientation, cross-cultural training, dual career support, relocation assistance, host country orientation and support, career management, realization of international business objectives, reentry planning and assistance, and repatriation and reintegration (Solomon, 1995). Repatriation and reintegration are often the forgotten links for many corporations (Hammer et al., 1998). More often than not, "repatriation services" means household goods are shipped back to the country of origin. The National Foreign Trade Council surveyed 100 companies employing 24,000 expatriates and found that only 33% of corporations offered any repatriation career development (Windham International, 1998). Most repatriates arrive home to an organization that does not know what they have done for the past several years or how to utilize their international knowledge and experience, and often believe they have no use for this expertise (Black, 1991; Brewster, 1997). Firms have frequently downsized and restructured while the expatriate has been on assignment and may not have a suitable position for the returning

employee. Most companies are unaware of the impact repatriation issues have at both the organizational and individual levels.

Importance of Effective Repatriation for Corporations

Few multinational corporations recognize the problems associated with repatriation (Dolan, 1994; Harvey, 1982), although repatriation of employees has begun to be identified as a major problem for companies (Brewster, 1997). Inadequate repatriation practice represents a significant human resource management problem and a potentially large barrier to successful globalization (Allen & Alvarez, 1998). Poor repatriation practice is costly (Black et al., 1992b), impedes the effective utilization of personnel (Adler, 1991), often leads to the loss of talented employees (Black & Gregersen, 1991), and is likely the main reason for employee hesitancy to accept overseas assignments (Harvey, 1983, 1989). Repatriation problems often send the message to employees that global assignments negatively affect one's career (Black et al., 1992a). Successful recruitment of high-potential employees will occur when repatriation is carried out more effectively and when overseas assignments are perceived by employees as career enhancement opportunities rather than career sabotage (Black, 1991; McDonald, 1993). A poor reputation makes it difficult to recruit high calibre employees for foreign work, which in turn increases the likelihood of problems throughout the expatriation-repatriation cycle (Frazee, 1996).

The Cost of Repatriation Failure

The lack of repatriation programs and insufficient value placed on international assignments (Black, 1991) leads to poor repatriation adjustment and turnover (Black et al., 1992b; Tung, 1998). An average of one quarter of repatriates leave their company and join a competitor within one year of returning home, which is double that of managers who do not go

abroad (Allen & Alvarez, 1998; Black & Gregersen, 1999a, 1999b; Black et al., 1992a; Frazee, 1997; Wozniak, 1997). Black and Gregersen (1999b) surveyed one company who lost all 25 managers within two years of repatriation. High attrition rates appear to be largely a result of returning employees being dissatisfied with the repatriation process.

Attrition rates signify lost investment for corporations. Foreign assignments last an average of 2 to 5 years (Black et al., 1992a), and expatriate packages including benefits amount to expenditures ranging from \$300,000 to \$1 million U.S. annually (Black & Gregersen, 1999a). Losing a single repatriated executive translates into an investment loss of up to \$5 million dollars. For firms with hundreds of employees worldwide, the costs can be astronomical (Black & Mendenhall, 1989). Repatriation failure means that companies lose a large development investment, a high potential employee (Allen & Alvarez, 1998), and valuable knowledge leaves with an individual who understands both corporate headquarters and the overseas subsidiaries (Stroh, Gregersen, & Black, 1998).

These statistics provide evidence that effective repatriation practice is invaluable to the corporation in terms of protecting worthwhile investments, for strategic purposes of global expansion, and in maintaining a competitive edge both domestically and abroad. Examining potential causes for the deficiency of effective repatriation programs is needed.

Lack of Perceived Need for Repatriation Practice

Multinational corporations are far more effective at preparing expatriates for entry into another country than they are at providing reentry assistance for repatriates back into their own culture (Feldman, 1991; Harvey, 1982, 1989; Wang, 1997). Windham International (1998) found that 70% of firms provide some form of cross-cultural preparation. Unfortunately, little attention

is given to the repatriation process, as less than 15% of North American repatriates and less than 10% of their families receive any sort of repatriation training (Black & Gregersen, 1999b). Engen (1995) estimates 90% of corporations offer less than three hours of training for the return home, suggesting corporations have yet to understand the importance of effective repatriation practice. A meta-analysis of cross-cultural training for expatriates found programs to be effective in helping expatriates adapt to their foreign postings (Deshpande, 1992), yet there is little perceived need for repatriation programs (Black & Gregersen, 1999a).

Home office executives often find it inconceivable that returning expatriates need to readjust to anything after a few short years away (Black & Gregersen, 1999a, 1999b; Harvey, 1989). Most often human resource managers handle the administration of international assignments. Black and Gregersen's (1999a, 1999b) research findings show only 11% of these individuals have ever worked overseas, and have little understanding of the challenges faced on international assignments. It appears that attention is given to repatriates only if something goes drastically wrong, and by that time it is usually too little, too late. Human resource personnel see the return of expatriates as a nonissue, when the reality is, two-thirds of expatriates find repatriation to be tumultuous, both personally and professionally (Black & Gregersen, 1999b).

Lack of repatriation practice is also caused by the tendency to segregate domestic and overseas operations into separate and unrelated businesses, where the international units are considered secondary to the domestic units (Allen & Alvarez, 1998; Briody & Baba, 1991). This results in the "out of sight, out of mind" syndrome where expatriates are out of regular contact with home country staff. The variation in repatriation experience may be related to the structural and ideological differences of organizations, where *coupled* systems are single structural units

integrating domestic and international subunits, and *decoupled* systems are the typical single structural unit containing either domestic or international subunits, and the North American operation is considered of primary importance. Decoupled corporate systems ignore repatriation issues, while the coupled systems that address repatriation are discussed in Chapter Five.

Summary

The decision to study the repatriation experiences and adjustment strategies of employees returning to Canada is threefold in nature. First, as globalization continues to grow and international assignments become more prevalent, so does the need to understand and plan for all aspects of expatriation and repatriation. Second, repatriation has not been studied to the extent of expatriation, yet repatriation issues are a reality. Third, there is limited Canadian research regarding repatriation. This section has summarized the impact globalization has on the workforce and the necessity of planning for all aspects of international assignments, with an emphasis on effective repatriation practice. To contribute to the understanding of repatriation, Part II discusses models of reentry and adjustment.

Part II: Models of Reentry and Adjustment

Most empirical research on the subject of repatriation adjustment has lacked theoretical grounding (Black & Mendenhall, 1990, 1991; Briody & Baba, 1991). Researchers believe that the primary theoretical process related to repatriation adjustment is uncertainty reduction: Factors that reduce uncertainty will facilitate adjustment, while factors increasing uncertainty will inhibit adjustment (Black, 1994; Black et al. 1992b; Black, Mendenhall, & Ad, 1991).

Literature on Reentry and Adjustment

To begin, the following reviews terms commonly used in repatriation models. The start of

the international assignment is referred to as *expatriation*, involving a move to a foreign culture and job-related geographic transfers (Adler, 1981; Black et al., 1992b). During the initial entry into a foreign culture, individuals often experience *culture shock*, or "a high level of uncertainty (about behavioural expectations in the new country)... This state of uncertainty leads to feelings of anxiety, frustration, and other symptoms" (Black & Gregersen, 1990b, p. 463). *Reentry* is the last stage of an international experience (Wilson, 1988) and is the transition back into one's country of origin (Sussman, 1986). Four reentry themes are found in the literature: Challenges to self-concept, values conflict, unconfirmed expectations, and a sense of loss (Austin, 1986; Hess, 1994; Wang, 1997). While the terms reentry and repatriate may be used interchangeably, *repatriation* is the process of reintegration of expatriate personnel into the home country environment (Allen & Alvarez, 1998). During the process *reverse culture shock* occurs, which is "a long-term process of coming to terms with oneself as a more complex, more multicultural individual in a changed but familiar setting" (Wang, 1997, p. 116), and occurs regardless of the international location.

The theoretical models now addressed include Berry's (1997) model of acculturation, Adler's (1981, 1991) model of reentry, Black's (1988) work role adjustment model, and Black, Gregersen, and Mendenhall's (1992b) theory of repatriation adjustment.

Model of Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation

Berry's (1997) model of acculturation is useful when considering the adaptation which occurs during both expatriation and repatriation. *Acculturation* occurs when people from one cultural group adapt to the culture of another group (Berry, 1997). It is a developmental process of reorganizing one's cultural identity, personal beliefs, and behaviours (Schonpflug, 1997). While Berry's (1997) model conceptualizes adaptation, individual differences also need to be considered.

Culture is not a monolithic concept, and individuals belonging to the same culture will have varying ways of coping, as well as differing beliefs and values (Ho, 1995; Lazarus, 1997).

Berry (1997) refers to three types of adaptation: 1) *Psychological adaptation* are internal outcomes including the sense of personal achievement and satisfaction in the new environment, and includes a definite personal and cultural identity (Searle & Ward, 1990); 2) *sociocultural adaptation* are the repertoire of behaviours which demonstrate the individual is competent in all life roles in the new environment; and, 3) *economic adaptation* is the degree to which the role of work is satisfying and productive in the new culture.

There are also three variables of adjustment: 1) *Culture learning* is the process of acquiring behaviours which are appropriate to the new culture; 2) *culture shedding* is unlearning aspects of their behavioural repertoire that were previously beneficial, and, 3) *mutual accommodation* is needed for positive adjustment, whereby people can live as culturally distinct individuals (Berry, 1997).

According to Berry (1997), there are three factors associated with acculturation: 1) *Mobility* occurs when individuals relocate to a different culture, or a new culture is brought to them, as in the case of indigenous people; 2) *voluntariness* is determined by whether individuals willfully or mandatorily move to another culture; and, 3) *permanence* refers to time spent in another culture and whether the move is temporary or long term.

There are two dimensions of acculturation. *Cultural maintenance* is the degree people of a cultural sub-group preserve their own culture, and *contact and participation* is the extent individuals become involved in the larger society in which they live (Berry, 1997; Berry & Kalin, 1995; Tung, 1998). From these two dimensions, four types of acculturation outcomes are

possible: 1) *Integration* refers to involvement in the culture in which one lives and preservation of one's own cultural norms; 2) *assimilation* is involvement in the culture in which one lives but non-preservation of one's own cultural norms; 3) *separation* is the preservation of one's own cultural norms accompanied by non-involvement in the culture in which one lives; and 4) *marginalization* is the non-preservation of one's own cultural norms combined with non-involvement in the culture in which one lives. Integration, also known as biculturalism (Triandis, 1997), is the optimal form of adaptation, marginalization is the least effective form of acculturation, while assimilation and separation are found between these two extremes.

Summary. Berry's (1997) model of acculturation highlights factors affecting repatriation adjustment and possible outcomes of reentry. This model defines adaptation not as a singular concept, but involving many life roles. Berry's model also suggests repatriates have tremendous control over the adjustment and adaptation process. This is an important consideration for the current study when examining methods of coping and adaptation strategies used by repatriates.

Model of Coping With Reentry

Adler's (1981, 1991) model of coping with reentry addresses the *coping mode* or attitudes used to approach reentry. The overall attitude of the repatriate is *positive* or *negative*, while his/her specific attitude is referred to as *active* or *passive*. Active reenterers work to change themselves and their environment to achieve the best possible fit in the home country and organization, whereas passive reenterers do not attempt such changes. Adler's research found repatriates who attempt to change their environments also endeavor to change themselves. Passive repatriates exhibit a similar correlation, and do not attempt to make changes to their environment or themselves. These attitudes are depicted by a quadrant matrix where *resocialized*

reenterers are optimistic and passive, *proactive reenterers* are optimistic and active, *alienated reenterers* are pessimistic and passive, and *rebellious reenterers* are pessimistic and active.

Resocialized reenterers (Adler, 1981, 1991) neither recognize or use their cross-culturally acquired knowledge, try to fit back into their home country organization, and behave as though they were never abroad. They are viewed by themselves and colleagues as highly effective and very satisfied with their home country jobs both before and after their foreign assignments. Resocialized reenterers are the most common among organizations without a global orientation, they tend to detach themselves from their foreign experience, and there is consequently little personal or corporate learning.

Proactive reenterers (Adler, 1981, 1991) recognize and utilize their international knowledge, are optimistic, and highly skilled at perceiving the environment, their social lives, and both foreign and domestic organizational situations. They synergistically combine both home and foreign country ways of understanding and working, and view themselves as the most satisfied and most effective in their home country jobs. This group's method of working is generally not valued by the home country office, and they are rated as only moderately effective by coworkers.

Alienated reenterers (Adler, 1981, 1991) are usually found amongst repatriates who have had numerous or long term international assignments, or are spouses rather than employees. These people "go native" abroad, adopting the host country's beliefs, while rejecting their home country's values. Upon return, they feel professionally unproductive and personally unsatisfied. These repatriates and their colleagues rated the alienated reenterers as the least effective of all groups. They tend to isolate themselves from the home culture and the home country firm.

Rebellious reenterers (Adler, 1981) are very aware of their cross-cultural knowledge, but

use these new skills only moderately. Their coworkers rated them as highly effective, but they see themselves as only moderately effective. Rebellious reenterers often work to control their home country environment and home organization upon their return. Rebellious reenterers were included in Adler's earlier work (1981), but subsequently eliminated (1991).

Adler's research (1981) found 51% of repatriates to be resocialized, 25% proactive, 12% alienated, and 12% rebellious. This distribution is considered to be a reflection of corporations' preference for offering foreign posting to people who fit easily back into the home country firm.

Adler's later research (1991) found two differences accounting for the distinctive coping styles: *Communication* and *validation*. *Communication* is the extent to which employees receive information and recognize changes while overseas. Repatriates who adjust most favorably upon reentry are those who recognize positive and negative changes in themselves, their organization, and their community. *Validation* refers to the amount of recognition repatriates receive upon return. Recognizing and valuing the foreign and reentry experiences is a powerful management technique for increasing repatriates' adjustment, satisfaction, and effectiveness.

Summary. Adler's (1981, 1991) model of coping with reentry focuses on adjustment to work, and highlights the impact corporations have on repatriation adjustment. This model also acknowledges the influence of individual attitude and corporate attitude. It therefore appears that both the repatriate and the corporation have a reciprocal effect on repatriation outcome, as each acts and reacts throughout the process.

Work Role Adjustment Model

Black's (1988) work role adjustment model is a precursor to his theory of repatriation (Black et al., 1992b). The work role adjustment model views adjustment to a new work role as

having three properties. 1) *Degree* of adjustment refers to both the objective and subjective aspects of change (Black, 1990). Objectively, it is the degree to which a person is proficient in various role requirements and demonstrates skill in role performance. Subjectively, it is the degree of psychological comfort in his/her new life roles (Black & Gregersen, 1990b). 2) *Mode* of adjustment is the manner in which a person adjusts to new roles. This means altering attitudes and behaviours to fit role expectations, or changing the environment to fit the new role. 3) *Facet* of adjustment includes each role a person must alter, including work and general adjustments.

Black (1988) found adjustment to foreign assignments contains at least two distinct areas of adjustment. He discovered work adjustment is negatively related to role ambiguity and positively correlated to role discretion, while general adjustment is positively related to pre-departure knowledge, associations with host nationals, and to family adjustment. The results of this research indicate past practices of defining work role adjustment as a unitary phenomenon conceals the impact of multiple areas of adjustment, particularly for international assignments.

Summary. Black's (1988) model of work role adjustment illuminates repatriation as a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, involving all life roles. The degree of adjustment will depend on the amount of change involved in repatriating, and adjustment can be highly individual. This model also suggests adjustment and knowledge are interrelated, whereby the greater the knowledge of each facet of the repatriation process, the greater the degree of adjustment.

Theoretical Framework of Repatriation Adjustment

Black, Gregersen and Mendenhall's (1992b) theory of repatriation adjustment draws on the work of Bell and Staw (1989), who argue that people in unfamiliar environments need to recover a two forms of control: 1) *Predictive control* is the ability to make sense of one's

environment by anticipating how one is expected to behave, and, 2) *behavioural control* is the ability to control one's own behaviours that impact the environment. These controls are regained through the process of repatriation adjustment.

Repatriation adjustment is a multifaceted phenomenon including adjustment to work, adjustment to interacting with home nationals, and adjustment to the environment and culture (Black, 1990, 1994; Black & Gregersen, 1990b, 1991; Black et al., 1991; Black et al., 1992b). Repatriation adjustment is affected by four variables: 1) Individual variables, including attitudes, values, needs, or characteristics; 2) job variables, or the tasks and characteristics of the individual's job; 3) organizational variables, or the characteristics of the home country organization; and, 4) non-work variables, being the repatriate's friends, family, and environment.

Black et al. (1992b) have articulated 15 propositions in their theory of repatriation adjustment:

1. Each expectation impacts the corresponding aspect of repatriation adjustment.
2. The greater the number of years away and the amount of change in the home country negatively affects accurate expectations.
3. The frequency and length of visits to the home country and home office during the foreign assignment is positively related to the development of accurate work expectations.
4. Task interdependence between foreign and domestic postings is positively related to the formation of accurate work expectations.
5. Adequate repatriation training facilitates the development of accurate work, interaction, and general expectations, and positively impacts all aspects of repatriation adjustment.
6. Regular communication with a home country sponsor (either an individual or department) is

positively related to accurate work expectations.

7. The frequency and content of contact between the domestic office and the foreign subsidiary positively affects the formation of accurate repatriation expectations.

8. All facets of repatriation are positively related to individual need for control and self-efficacy.

9. Adjustment to the international assignment and the cultural distance between the host and home country is negatively related to repatriation adjustment.

10. Repatriation work adjustment is positively related to role clarity and role discretion and negatively related to role conflict.

11. All facets of repatriation are positively impacted by appropriate post-arrival orientation.

12. Repatriation work adjustment is positively affected by congruent and clear organization and individual repatriation career policies and objectives.

13. All facets of repatriation adjustment are negatively related to a downward shift in social status and poorer housing conditions.

14. Spousal repatriation adjustment is positively related to general adaptation.

15. a) High repatriation adjustment and low organizational commitment is related to dysfunctional turnover; b) high repatriation adjustment and low organizational commitment is associated to functional retention; c) low repatriation adjustment and low organizational commitment is correlated to functional turnover; and, d) low repatriation adjustment and high organizational commitment is related to dysfunctional retention.

Summary. Black, Gregersen and Mendenhall's theory of repatriation adjustment (1992b) emphasizes the need to treat repatriation as a complex process involving distinct but interrelated variables. Communication during and after the assignment is a vital part in repatriation

adjustment, as information helps to clarify the repatriation process. This model also highlights expectations as playing an important role in repatriation adjustment.

Summary of Models of Reentry and Adjustment

The preceding models have outlined four themes: 1) Repatriation is a multifaceted phenomenon, affecting all life roles; 2) there are a number of variables affecting repatriation adjustment; 3) individuals and corporations have a synergistic effect on repatriation outcome; and, 4) communication, knowledge, expectations, and adjustment are very much interrelated. These models of reentry serve as a foundation for reviewing features of reentry and adjustment.

Part III: Reentry and Adjustment

The purpose of this segment is to address aspects of reentry and adjustment as it relates to repatriation literature. First, an analysis of differences between expatriation and repatriation is presented, then, all variables of adjustment are discussed, including individual, job, organizational, and nonwork variables. The summary ties these variables to the current study.

Expatriation and Repatriation Differences

The most documented concern is that repatriation adjustment is as difficult if not more difficult than the original expatriation adjustment (Adler, 1981, 1991; Black et al., 1992b; Black & Gregersen, 1992a, 1998, 1999b; Gomez-Mejia & Balkin, 1987; Piet-Pelon & Hornby, 1992; Richardson & Rullo, 1992; Wang, 1997; Wilson, 1988). This contrasts the implicit assumption that returning home should be easy because employees are returning to a familiar place (Stroh et al., 1998), and problems are not anticipated based on the fact that employees are going back to the same company (Westwood & Leung, 1994). While the majority of employees have expressed satisfaction with expatriation, most are unhappy with their repatriation experience (Tung, 1998).

Sussman (1986) believes adjustment difficulties differ from the initial overseas adjustment on several significant dimensions: 1) The unexpectedness of re-entry problems; 2) individual changes occur as a result of the overseas experience of which the individual may not be aware; 3) changes occur in the home country and the repatriate may not have accurate perceptions of these changes or conversely, the returnee may perceive the home culture to have changed in ways it has not; 4) friends, family, and colleagues expect returnees to exhibit "normal" or pre-sojourn behaviour and are not expecting new and different behaviours; and, 5) the lack of significant interest by colleagues and friends in the overseas experience is frequently a source of disappointment for the repatriate. The severity of these difficulties lead some repatriates to feel they never adapt to their home country, and many subsequently choose to become permanent expatriates (Black & Gregersen, 1999b). These dimensions are found in the following variables of repatriation.

Variables of Repatriation

Repatriation adjustment is affected by four variables as discussed in the theoretical framework of repatriation adjustment: Individual variables, job variables, organizational variables, and non-work variables (Black, 1990, 1994; Black & Gregersen, 1990b, 1991; Black et al., 1991; Black et al., 1992b). While these variables are discussed separately in the following sections, the reality is that these are not separate entities, as research shows the interaction of these variables is great (Black & Gregersen, 1998; Caligiuri, Hyland, & Joshi, 1998).

Individual Variables

There are three individual variables which influence cross-cultural adjustment during repatriation (Black, Gregersen, Mendenhall, & Stroh, 1999). *Self-oriented factors* are

characterized by confidence, high self-concept, and perseverance. People high in self-oriented factors believe they can adapt effectively, learn from mistakes, and adjust their behaviour to best fit situations. Secondly, *other-oriented factors* are characterized by the ability to develop relationships, and the willingness to interact and communicate with people. Thirdly, *perceptual-oriented factors* include the ability to comprehend unspoken rules and subtle ways of being.

The more repatriates have assimilated into the host culture, the more difficult it is to revert back to the rules of the home country (Black et al., 1999; Tung, 1998). After several years of living and working abroad, an individual's entire frame of reference often shifts to that of the host country (Engen, 1995). Most expatriates develop new mental maps and behavioural repertoires for their expatriate position and to life in the host country (Black et al., 1992a). Successful integration into the host country environment means there is undoubtedly changes in both attitude and behaviour and it is common to have profound changes in one's self concept (Wang, 1997). The employee is not the same person who left on the international assignment, returning forever changed, often with different values, more tolerance, and new insights (Piet-Pelon & Hornby, 1992). To complicate these changes, new reference points gained through global assignments often cause more negative than positive comparisons of the home country.

The transformation that occurs when people travel to another culture to live and work for an extended period of time is a change in worldview (Taylor, 1994). A *worldview* is one's perspective of the world, and is a process of creating meaning from an experience where the individual interprets events through the lens of his or her meaning perspective. Changes in one's worldview is the process of revising meaning perspectives which are incongruent with current perspectives. People who succeed at working through and learning from these types of cultural

experiences become interculturally competent in their new environment and over time develop more inclusive and integrated worldviews. This new perspective can be in conflict with previously held values and beliefs, which may lead to difficulties when reintegrating back into the home country culture.

Job Variables

One of the main predictors of repatriation success for the employee is job placement upon reentry (Black & Gregersen, 1998, Black et al., 1999), as overall satisfaction with repatriation is strongly related to the impact of the foreign assignment on career goals (Gomez-Mejia & Balkin, 1987). Yet many repatriates return home without specific job assignments: 68% were unsure of the job they would have prior to reentry (Black & Gregersen, 1990a, 1991, 1999a), and one third of repatriates surveyed were in temporary assignments three months after returning home (Harvey, 1982). Some repatriates report demotions or decreased rates of advancement (Adler, 1981). In a study of American repatriates, only 7% of respondents were promised a promotion upon return (Tung, 1998), and another study revealed more than 75% of repatriates felt their new position was a demotion compared to the job they held overseas (Black & Gregersen, 1991, 1992, 1999a). Repatriates are frequently faced with loss of autonomy and authority, loss of career direction, loss of track records domestically, limited or no opportunities to use their foreign skills, and reduced productivity (Adler, 1981; Allen & Alvarez, 1998; Brewster, 1997; Briody & Baba, 1991; Brown, 1994; Harvey, 1982; McDonald, 1993; Richardson & Rullo, 1992; Stroh et al., 1998; Wang, 1997; Wozniak, 1997). These problems appear related to the lack of planning for the return of expatriates, as less than 5% of firms give more than six months' notice of their return home (Windham International, 1998).

Some variables positively affect job adjustment. Research shows that meeting or exceeding job expectations leads to higher levels of adjustment and job performance than those whose expectations were undermet (Adler, 1981; Black, 1992). Role discretion is also important, as it appears to have the strongest impact on work adjustment (Black, 1994; Black & Gregersen, 1991), and allows employees to adapt their work role to themselves rather than adapting to the situation (Black et al., 1991). Greater role discretion allows repatriates use of previous behaviours which helps reduce the uncertainty of a new situation. As well, reducing job ambiguity and role conflict leads to greater job adjustment (Black & Gregersen, 1991, 1998).

Organizational Variables

The parent company's handling of the repatriation process has substantial impact on how returning employees adjust to coming home (Black et al., 1999b), as social support from the organization is positively correlated to adjustment (Black et al., 1991). Repatriation adjustment also impacts the employee's commitment to the corporation upon repatriation. Gregersen and Black (1996) found a firm's valuing international experience was the primary correlate to organizational commitment. Also, when a company considers role clarity, role discretion, repatriation compensation, and values international experience, there is a positive relationship to organizational commitment (Gregersen, 1992).

Nonwork Variables

Nonwork factors incorporate many variables of adjustment including the political, social, cultural, and economic. Early research ignored nonwork variables (Stroh et al., 1998), yet the difference between a new domestic assignment as compared to an international assignment is that new nonwork behaviours must be learned as well (Black & Mendenhall, 1990). Many repatriates

are challenged by readjusting to the general living environment (food, climate, transportation, schools, etc.), despite the fact they have lived most of their life in this environment (Black & Gregersen, 1992). When actual nonwork variables matched expected nonwork variables, repatriates had much higher levels of repatriation adjustment (Black, 1992).

Researchers have found the two factors of primary importance relating to nonwork adjustment variables are shifts in social status and changes in housing conditions (Black & Gregersen, 1992; Black et al., 1999b). Net losses in social status and housing conditions are determined to have a negative impact on all facets of repatriation adjustment (Black & Gregersen, 1991). Specific concerns related to social status, housing conditions, and other nonwork factors are discussed in detail in Part IV of this chapter.

Summary. There are a number of factors in this section that help build a rationale for the current study. First, the literature indicates there are very real differences between expatriation and repatriation. Second, defining repatriation as a process leads further credence to employing a qualitative analysis for purposes of understanding how the repatriation experience unfolds. Third, when employees repatriate, they have changed, their companies has changed, and their communities have changed (Stroh et al., 1998). Because these changes have occurred in all aspects of repatriates' lives, reentry must be treated as a multifaceted phenomenon. Fourth, the literature places responsibility for repatriation adjustment more heavily on the shoulders of the corporation than the individual. This suggests the importance of examining solutions and strategies, as adjustment will be greater for people who take an active role in their repatriation process. Part IV will address more specific adjustment issues.

Part IV: Specific Repatriation Issues

There are a number of specific repatriation issues relating to the four variables of repatriation, including individual, job, organization, and nonwork variables (Black, 1990, 1994; Black & Gregersen, 1990b, 1991; Black et al., 1991; Black et al., 1992b). The specific issues discussed in this section have been chosen because they are the most prevalent concerns faced by repatriates. All issues discussed imply repatriation causes difficulty with psychological well-being and general adaptation to life back home (Brown, 1994). The specific issues discussed in the following sections include expectations, status loss, financial issues, housing conditions, family considerations, friends and family, general environment, and organizational difficulties of reentry.

Expectations

A theme encompassing all facets and variables of repatriation adjustment is that of expectations, or rather disconfirmed expectations, which are the differences between expectations and realities (Arthur, in press-a). Reverse culture shock is often unexpected and occurs because repatriates don't expect they have to adjust, nor do corporations, friends, and family believe any adjustment is necessary (Frazee, 1997; Gomez-Mejia & Balkin, 1987). Repatriates often expect to be rewarded by their companies upon return, expect to start up where they left off with friends and family, and expect everything to be pretty much the same as they left. The more surprised returnees are by negative changes, the less efficient and effective the adjustment process (Adler, 1981; Black & Gregersen, 1999b; McDonald, 1993; Stroh et al., 1998).

Black and Gregersen (1999b) explain how unrealistic expectations develop, based upon their model of the four "C"s. Expatriates leave their home country where they were in "Control" of their environment, they felt "Comfortable", "Competent", and they received "Confirmation" in

all situations. Once overseas, expatriates lose the four "C"s during the adjustment to the foreign country, they miss the four "C"s they had back home, and they inflate how great the four "C"s were at home. This creates unrealistic expectations about life at home, which leads to repatriation adjustment difficulties which often include confusion and irritability.

Models of reentry, adaptation, and adjustment are founded on the belief that the primary theoretical process related to repatriation adjustment is uncertainty reduction: Factors that reduce uncertainty will facilitate adjustment, while factors increasing uncertainty will inhibit adjustment (Black et al., 1991, 1992). Reducing uncertainty means developing accurate expectations which leads to better repatriation adjustment (Black et al., 1992b; Black & Gregersen, 1998). When expectations are met, repatriation becomes a much easier transition. The following sections examine aspects of repatriation where problems exist in part due to disconfirmed expectations.

Status Loss

One of the most frequently cited problems associated with repatriation is loss of a way of life, as well as a loss of personal and professional status (Engen, 1995; Brewster, 1997; McDonald, 1993), which Teague (1975) aptly describes as "ego shock". The loss of a way of life usually includes a loss of lifestyle, loss of cultural advantages, loss of friends, and loss of a sense of freedom (Gomez-Mejia & Balkin, 1987; Wang, 1997). Many repatriates also face a sense of loss in their jobs where they have become accustomed to being a "big fish in a little pond" during the international assignment and must now adapt to being a "little fish in a big pond" at home (Black & Gregersen, 1998; Ioannou, 1994). There is usually a loss of personal status, as many expatriate benefit packages include luxurious housing and automobiles, private schools for children, servants, and exotic vacations (Richardson & Rullo, 1992). This loss of personal status

frequently translates into financial concerns for repatriates.

Financial Issues

Perhaps one of the most noticeable problems repatriates experience is that of financial stress. But while financial pressures may create one of the highest levels of stress, financial issues may be more short term than other repatriation issues (Harvey, 1989). Black and Gregersen (1992a, 1998) found 75% of American, 64% of Japanese, and 78% of Finnish repatriates experienced reduced standards of living upon returning to their home country, and surveys of American repatriates found only 26% receive a completion bonus upon their return (Windham International, 1998). Potential financial problems result when returning to domestic compensation levels, tax consequences, and loss of allowances including housing, automobile, education, travel, and cost-of-living (Engen, 1995; Tag, 1975; Harvey, 1982, 1989; Sussman, 1986; Wozniak, 1997). Problems are exacerbated by the start-up costs of purchasing a house, a vehicle or two, and possibly new clothes to better suit the climate (Piet-Pelon, 1992). Experiencing these expenditures all at once can be depressing for the repatriate who is often shocked by higher-cost consumer goods or inflation in automobile and real estate purchases.

Housing Issues

Changes in housing conditions can significantly influence adjustment for returnees and their families (Black, 1994; Black et al., 1999). The literature discusses three determinants of dissatisfaction with housing: 1) The repair costs to the home when rented out while on assignment as well as costs to live in a hotel while repairs are completed (often exceeding \$15,000); 2) the inconveniences of living in a hotel with the family, as well as moving out of a hotel or other temporary housing (usually because of the limited amount of time companies allow

for such an expense) before an adequate permanent residence is located or before financing has been approved; and, 3) discovering that one is priced out of the housing market upon return due to rising real estate prices (Black and Gregersen, 1999b; Black et al., 1999). Research suggests that locating appropriate housing was positively related to all three facets of adjustment and to the general adjustment of spouses upon repatriation. While locating appropriate housing upon repatriation is an immediate concern for the family, other variables also affect family adjustment.

Family Considerations

Most corporations minimize the importance of the expatriate's spouse and family, yet working abroad changes the traditional employer-employee relationship into one that involves the entire family (Caligiuri et al., 1998; Stroh et al., 1998). Ninety percent of spouses receive no repatriation training, often because corporations feel they should not be involved in the lives of the employee's family, even though the family was requested to accompany the employee overseas (Black & Gregersen, 1999b; Black et al., 1999). This lack of repatriation assistance appears to be a costly oversight for companies, as data shows that spousal and family repatriation adjustment has an enormous and positive impact on the employee's adjustment to work (Engen, 1995).

Another reason for organizations to consider spousal repatriation issues is that results indicate the percentage of spouses having repatriation difficulties is slightly higher than for employees (Black et al., 1999). The repatriated employee returns to a job which can offer greater structure and support, while the spouse is frequently more isolated and often bears the burden of taking care of all necessary plans to settle back into the home country. Dealing with all arrangements for moving the family back home has been cited as a frustrating endeavour if corporations do not communicate a clear picture of the repatriation process to the spouse.

It should be noted that 90% of repatriated spouses are female, and females have a higher rate of poor repatriation adjustment than males (Wang, 1997). For women there may be sense of loss of lifestyle, freedom, and status (Hess, 1994; Wang, 1997). Overseas, childcare and household work is usually carried out by others, which offers plenty of time to develop friendships and other pastimes (Piet-Pelon & Hornby, 1992). Women repatriates repeatedly comment they have forgotten how much time is taken up by family and household responsibilities.

Spouses may also have to manage their own career changes upon repatriation. Some spouses have relinquished a job during the foreign assignment and attempt to reestablish a career upon their return (Wozniak, 1997). Approximately 55% of spouses work before going abroad, while 30% are employed after returning home (Black & Gregersen, 1999b). Spouses may have difficulty obtaining employment, sometimes related to the loss of professional skills or networking contacts (Black et al., 1999). Some organizations appear reluctant to hire these spouses for fear they will leave their employment if another overseas posting occurs.

Spouses usually are responsible for helping their children adjust. The children are at different stages of development upon return, experiencing different needs than when they first went abroad (Piet-Pelon & Hornby, 1992). Some children are born overseas, or may have left their home country at an age when they were too young to remember, while others have lived and gone to school for most of their lives in another country. For these children, making the return "home" is actually a move to a foreign place. Repatriating children will find the educational systems quite different from what they have become accustomed to overseas. As well, children who had attended school previous to their departure overseas inevitably find their peer groups will have changed (Wozniak, 1997).

Family relationships are challenged through this readjustment period by a myriad of other causes (Wozniak, 1997). Reestablishment of social systems and readjusting to work and school can be difficult transitions. Financial problems can create dissent between spouses and negatively impact the spouses' adjustment to the general environment (Black & Gregersen, 1999b). Everyone in the family system often senses a reduction in life style, increased family stress, disorientation, and dissatisfaction (Harvey, 1982). Not only is the family affected by issues of repatriation, but friends and extended family are also impacted.

Friends and Extended Family

There is often the expectation that repatriates will just pick up where they left off with colleagues, friends, and family (Black & Gregersen, 1999b; Weiss & Grippo, 1992), and returnees are often dismayed to find this is not the case. Everyone has changed and few people are ready for the difficulties encountered in reestablishing old relationships. The years spent apart were not replaced by the occasional letter, phone call, or infrequent visit. Many returnees report envy and jealousy to permeate many of their alliances with friends, acquaintances, or even extended family. There seems to be two elements which cause difficulty with adjusting to these relationships. First, repatriates discover their perspectives have changed from the perspectives of their friends and neighbors who don't understand the experiences they have gained while abroad (Richardson & Rullo, 1992). The bonds of common experience that once existed have disintegrated (Engen, 1995), and repatriates may find they have little in common with those who remained at home (Wozniak, 1997). Second, there is the expectation effect. Returnees do not expect to feel so critical of their friends and family (Wang, 1997), and their family and friends expect they should be happier to be home. Hence, the sojourner's expectations are disconfirmed, and others'

expectations of the returning sojourner are disconfirmed (Hess, 1994). Disconfirmed expectations are not only found in these relationships, but may also extend to the general environment.

General Environment

Repatriates are seldom prepared to find the place they call "home" has changed considerably (Feldman et al., 1993; Wozniak, 1997). There can be potentially dramatic transformations at home, and endless small changes that have occurred during the course of a global assignment (Black & Gregersen, 1992; Harvey, 1989; Hess, 1994). The unexpectedness of adapting to the home country is compounded by the fact the expatriate and the family have grown and expanded their cultural awareness, and many of the changes they see at home reflect this new outlook (Ho, 1995; Weiss & Grippo, 1992). Repatriates comment there is feeling of being left out or left behind (Gomez-Mejia & Balkin, 1987; Piet-Pelon & Hornby, 1992), as they have not been a part of the social and political changes that have occurred in their absence (Patterson, 1990). The isolation may be the result of forgetting how to deal with the home country's style and pace, and a lack of current understanding of the behavioural repertoire of the home country (Thompson, 1992). While repatriates find their environment has changed, they usually discover their organization has undergone even more substantial changes.

Organizational Difficulties of Reentry

Companies go through tremendous changes over the years which may include reshuffling management, reorganizing the reporting structure, and redefining corporate culture (Black & Gregersen, 1999a). Being away from the home country organization for a number of years, the expatriate loses touch with the day-to-day operations and the subtle changes in the corporate culture, leaving the repatriate feeling like he/she doesn't fit in anymore (Engen, 1995). Depending

on the length of the assignment, the company may have downsized and changed dramatically, making the organization seem completely foreign to the repatriate (Black & Gregersen, 1992a; Brown, 1994; Thompson, 1992). Rationalization of the home country operation also means there are few unfilled positions suitable for repatriates in the majority of companies (Brewster, 1997).

Organizational difficulties of reentry are further complicated when home country executives are not aware of the expectations of their repatriates (Stroh et al., 1998). Most repatriates return home wanting to use their new skills and knowledge (Black & Gregersen, 1999a), and become frustrated by too little challenge (Patterson, 1990). Home-country managers tend to exhibit xenophobia (fear of foreign things), and prefer repatriates who do not exhibit "foreign" characteristics and do not utilize their international skills (Adler, 1981). In contrast, returnees believed themselves to be more effective when assimilating both foreign and home-country skills. Managers evaluated returnees more highly when they did not have characteristics of foreigners, nor used their cross-cultural learnings on the home-site job. When unable to use overseas expertise, the repatriated executive often feels undervalued by the home country office, which may in turn affect the employee's productivity and self-image (Harvey, 1989).

Contributing to these problems is that many companies see their home office as the most vital market and international markets as secondary (Briody & Baba, 1991). Repatriates often return with the perception they have accomplished a great deal of work which deserves recognition, yet the home country office believes the people who stayed behind accomplished more, and whatever happened overseas was not as important (Black & Gregersen, 1999a). Sometimes the returnee is treated as though they have just returned from a lengthy vacation (Black & Gregersen, 1992a; Thompson, 1992) which may result in resentment from colleagues

and other personnel (McDonald, 1993). Hence, it is not unusual to find co-workers who remained at home to have surpassed the repatriate on the corporate ladder (Gomez-Mejia & Balkin, 1987; Wozniak, 1997). This may be due to the repatriate missing out on technological advancements that have occurred (Dolan, 1994), and finding one's knowledge base has eroded when the repatriate has not taken part in professional development seminars for a number of years (Teague, 1975). Adjusting to the "new" corporation can be a difficult process for the repatriate.

Summary

Examining specific repatriation issues illustrates how the adjustment process touches all aspects of life for repatriates and their families. These issues reaffirm repatriation involves a sense of loss, and challenges one's self-concept, values, and expectations (Austin, 1986; Hess, 1994; Wang, 1997). These themes become an integral part of the current study.

The Current Study

To begin, an examination of Canadian content is necessary. While there exists information in the U.S. regarding repatriation, there is a tremendous lack of Canadian data and research. Adler's (1981) research is the only known published study of repatriated Canadians. While there is an abundance of information regarding American expatriates and repatriates through the annual Windham International publication (1998), information on Canadians is nonexistent. Statistics Canada (1998) has not established a source of information for reporting returning Canadians. Immigration Canada does not track our expatriate or repatriate populations, and Revenue Canada's information is deemed confidential (Brian Johnson, Immigration Canada, personal communication, April, 1999). Despite this lack of data, Canada's increasing participation in the global economy suggests more employees will be involved in cross-cultural work transitions

(Arthur, 1998, in press-a). Effective globalization includes effective repatriation of our human resources, and adjustment issues are of growing concern for Canadians, both now and in the future.

Having reviewed Canadian content, a synopsis of other previous research helps to guide the current study. Because of the small percentage of women working abroad (women are currently 15% of the expatriate population, Windham International, 1998), the vast majority of research on international workers has focused on males, and only anecdotal evidence exists on issues associated with female repatriates (Westwood & Leung, 1994). Empirical investigations have predominantly sampled repatriated American executives and managers (Black, 1991, 1992; Briody & Baba, 1991; Brown, 1994; Engen, 1995; Gomez-Mejia & Balkin, 1987; Gregersen, 1992; Hammer et al., 1998; Harvey, 1989; Stroh et al., 1998), there have been a small number of studies of Finnish (Gregersen & Stroh, 1997) and Japanese repatriates (Black, 1994; Gregersen & Black, 1996), and one study sampling repatriates from 26 different countries (Feldman et al., 1993). Research has highlighted repatriation problems, rather than repatriation solutions. Research has used questionnaires, with the exception of two studies utilizing semistructured interviews (Adler, 1981; Briody & Baba, 1991). Research data collected through questionnaires has generally analyzed data through regression analyses to discover relationships between repatriation variables and adjustment, while data from interviews has used phenomenological approaches by searching for patterns (Adler, 1981). Research to-date suggests a lack of qualitative research regarding the repatriation experience and the strategies used by repatriates during this process. Therefore, the researcher believes a qualitative research project will offer a greater contribution to the literature regarding the process of repatriation.

The current study focuses on the repatriation experience and repatriation strategies from the perspective of those who have lived it based on four premises. First, examining the entire repatriation experience will offer a more meaningful portrayal of the issues and adjustment as compared to an analysis of separate variables. Second, exploring the complete repatriation experience allows for a holistic view of the process and will clarify the personal meaning of repatriation variables. Third, most research has focused on the problems of repatriation and not the solutions, and lastly, repatriation strategies will lead to higher levels of adjustment.

It is believed this study will contribute to repatriation literature in four ways. First, while previous studies using questionnaires have taken a single measure or snapshot view of repatriation, this method of data collection may not capture the shifting nature of the experience. The current study plans to uncover repatriation experiences as they unfold over time, thereby providing a more complete picture of the process. Second, because there is a lack of Canadian content in repatriation research, this study will help contribute to the knowledge base of repatriated Canadians. Third, by examining repatriation strategies, it is hoped that multinational corporations will have a better understanding of how they may develop effective repatriation programs, and forth, repatriates may gain a greater understanding of repatriation and what they can do to become proactive advocates of their own process.

Summary

This chapter has provided a synopsis of the theories and research pertaining to the repatriation of employees, as well as cross-cultural adjustment theory and research. Critical reflection of this information provides a rationale and overview of important concepts to be considered when collecting and analyzing data obtained by repatriates who have lived and worked

overseas and have returned to Canada. The purpose of this review provides a rationale for the current study, and in particular the two research questions: 1) What has been your experience with repatriation? and, 2) What strategies have you used to cope with repatriation issues? This preliminary literature review also provides the researcher with a foundation of information which may be referred to during the process of data collection and analysis. This will allow the research methodology and data to help direct an on-going assessment of the literature. The next chapter outlines the chosen research methodology of qualitative interpretation as well as a description of the procedures and specific application to this study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Chapter Two has provided a background of knowledge on the issues surrounding repatriation. The review also addresses what is missing in the literature: There is a lack of qualitative research examining repatriation as a process, there is a need for more Canadian content, and there exists little examination of strategies used to minimize reentry issues and maximize the benefits of repatriation. The current study attempts to contribute to the literature information about the repatriation process for both corporations and repatriates.

Chapter Three provides an overview of the approaches employed in this research study, including a discussion of the research methodology and corresponding data analysis. I begin with clarification of the research questions, followed by my approach to the study, and a rationale for the methodology and subsequent analysis of findings. I then provide a review of the participants, the interview process, the data analysis, and resulting interpretation. Finally, this chapter is completed by a description of the credibility and outcomes of the study.

The Research Questions

The purpose of the current study is to gain an understanding of the repatriation process of employees who have worked in a foreign country and are currently living and working in Canada. The project will specifically examine the issues arising from repatriation adjustment and the coping strategies used to deal with these issues. I have chosen a qualitative methodology to focus attention on the perceptions and experiences of the participants which will result in a greater understanding of both the content and the construction of the subjects' realities (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 1993). In choosing the two research questions, I have followed the advice of a number of writers. For example, Creswell (1994) suggests that in phenomenology, research

questions are often stated broadly, without specific reference to the existing literature. Giorgi (1970) argues that appropriate research questions for understanding behaviour should make inquiries into meaning, and not measurement. Further, Gadamer (1985) recommends "The essence of the question is the opening up, and keeping open, of possibilities" (p. 266); and, Osborne (1994) advocates for questions that focus on discovery, description, and meaning.

After consideration of these recommendations, two research questions were generated: 1) What has been your experience with repatriation? and, 2) What strategies have you used to cope with repatriation issues? The first question is meant to be neutral and general so as to allow greater freedom of exploration of all possible variables of repatriation adjustment. Its purpose is to examine the inner world of human experience (Osborne, 1994), and to allow for discovery of themes associated with the stories and events shared by the participants. The later question is solution oriented in focus, and hopes to uncover strategies and methods of coping, which has the potential of enabling the process of reacculturation to be a more meaningful and purposeful experience for expatriates returning to Canada.

While I want to focus on ways repatriation may be more a meaningful and intentional endeavour, I began to recognize these characteristics were important considerations to how I approach the study as a whole. I felt that as a researcher, my approach to the research warranted further deliberation to enable this study to be as worthwhile and purposeful as possible. This led to me to consider my own values, and where I had come from in my own experiences to arrive at undertaking a thesis on this particular topic (van Manen, 1990).

Approach to the Research

I would like to include my approach to the research with the method and content, as I

believe that approach takes into account the researcher as a fundamental part of the study (Giorgi, 1970; van Manen, 1990). Approach is "the fundamental viewpoint toward man and the world that the scientist brings, or adopts, with respect to (her) work as a scientist, whether this viewpoint is made explicit or implicit" (p. 126). While it is impossible to make explicit each and every aspect of one's approach, it is worthwhile to make explicit whatever I can.

It is my premise that one can never be without presuppositions, that all knowledge is in perspective, and I must introspect and define those presumptions. I believe that all researchers have implicit views concerning the phenomena being studied, and they should allow these views to become public. Even with the awareness that the approach of the researcher is present, it has been suggested the presence of the researcher could be cancelled by assuming a "neutral" attitude. "But even a "neutral" attitude is the attitude of a human person" (Giorgi, 1970, p. 131). In the study of psychology, Giorgi argues that one needs to be present in a human way, not a neutral way, and it's better to acknowledge its presence than to ignore it.

Therefore I recognize I am not presuppositionless (Giorgi, 1970) and that I have been influenced in many ways by the issues of repatriation before undertaking this study. I know that I first became interested by repatriation issues when I worked in a professional capacity with expatriates and repatriates. Since that time I have been personally affected by the repatriation adjustment of many friends and family members who have lived and worked internationally. This influence has deepened further by my own experiences in other cultures. And finally, I have been forever changed by the wealth of knowledge I have gained from an exhaustive literature review. All of these experiences have accompanied me throughout the course of this study, and I must be reminded of how these experiences affect each step of the process, from the first interview, to the

final copy of this thesis.

After some contemplation, I concluded that my assumptions and presuppositions surrounding repatriation are as follows: My personal and professional experiences with repatriation had lead me to believe that repatriation is a predominantly negative experience. I have travelled internationally and sat by the pools in expatriates gardens, have been served meals prepared by servants, and been chauffeured by their drivers. I have also witnessed the corruption, the dangers, the frustrations, and the health risks of living in a developing country. These trips have led me to become profoundly interested in people, cultures, and religious diversity. Overall, repatriation seemed like a let down, and that life in Canada seemed mundane by comparison. Professionally, I had administered all earnings and benefits for expatriates in the multinational company in which I was employed, and differences in foreign and domestic compensation levels were large. Also, I only dealt with problems experienced by repatriated personnel, whereas I never heard from repatriates who did not voice any difficulty. It also seemed that repatriation was something people never talked about. People returned from living and working overseas and appeared to carry on life as though they had never left Canada.

My literature review gave me another perspective on repatriation. My presuppositions that were developed from these books and articles were two-fold. First, it appeared that corporations were not supporting the repatriation process of their employees. And second, repatriation seemed to be defined in simplistic, linear terms. The quantitative studies appeared to have found statistically significant correlations between many variables of repatriation, which were translated into theoretical propositions. My personal, professional, and research assumptions have subsequently gone through rigorous questioning during the course of this study.

It is from this approach that I have consequently defined the methodology incorporated into this research. My belief is that purpose, approach, methodology, analysis, and interpretation of the study needs to be compatible to achieve a coherent account of repatriation experience and strategies. These pieces are all interrelated aspects of the study and are now further outlined.

The Qualitative Interpretive Nature of this Study

I have defined this study as a qualitative interpretive study. This research uses the same logic that I follow as a practitioner, which is eclectic in nature. *Eclecticism* refers to the practice of deriving ideas from various sources and prescribes to more than one particular school of philosophy (Pearsall & Trumble, 1995). While eclecticism has been criticized as being ad hoc, it is my philosophy that this ideology has allowed me to chose the most appropriate aspects of compatible methodology and analysis that fit with my own beliefs, the purpose of the study, and the phenomenon of repatriation. I have assimilated some ideas from hermeneutics and phenomenology into this study, and the pieces I have chosen are discussed next.

Qualitative Research and Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics may be viewed as the "art of understanding" (Gadamer, 1985, p. 146) and involves "clarifying the conditions in which understanding takes place" (Kvale, 1996, p. 263). In this study I have adopted the Heideggerian assumption that all knowledge has an inescapable hermeneutic quality in the sense that it is ultimately derived from the basic human activity of interpretation (Gadamer, 1985). Therefore, hermeneutics takes the position that the presence of interpretation is unavoidable (Osborne, 1994), and that history and language are part of the nature of all situations (Klein & Westcott, 1994). Since what is known to an individual is situated within history and society, interpretation is influenced by the context in which one lives and the

boundaries of understanding within which one operates (Woolfolk et al., 1988). This finding had me questioning whether hermeneutic interpretation would constrain or taint the outcomes of this research.

I then came to the conclusion that rather than viewing preunderstanding as a barrier to new understanding, it should be viewed as an integral part of the process. If my own presuppositions and prejudices are properly brought into play, they will be at risk (Gadamer, 1985). This will lead to confirming or disconfirming my beliefs of repatriation and its related strategies, which will lead to greater understanding of repatriation adjustment. According to Heidegger, this form of understanding is not detached knowing, but engaged activity (Woolfolk et al., 1988), and the role of active involvement is the appropriate role I play as a researcher.

Hermeneutics helps to account for my approach, my previous experiences, and current knowledge of repatriation and its related strategies (van Manen, 1990). Yet to account for the experiences of the repatriates I have interviewed, a phenomenological approach is also incorporated into the study.

Qualitative Research and Phenomenology

Just as hermeneutics aims to clarify the nature of inquiry, phenomenology also seeks to understand the phenomenon under investigation (Dukes, 1984). While I am not proposing to have a phenomenological study in the strictest definition of the word, I have utilized a number of concepts from phenomenological writings. Phenomenological psychology is an umbrella for various methods of research which can be loosely labelled phenomenological, although there exist major philosophical differences and ambiguities in what actually constitutes phenomenology (Gadamer, 1985). In a sense it is not a methodology at all, but a view of what knowledge is to

psychology. Phenomenological studies examine detailed accounts of the experiences of the people being studied (Klein & Westcott, 1994), and is interested in obtaining descriptions of learning (Giorgi, 1985) and understanding the "lived experience". It is a method of research where the researcher thoroughly studies a small number of subjects to find patterns and relationships of meaning (Creswell, 1994). Phenomenology is interested in illuminating the experience and the manner in which it emerges (Kvale, 1996), through studying the world from the participants' perspective.

While the philosopher Husserl is viewed as the father of phenomenology (Dukes, 1984; Gadamer, 1995), I am more inclined to follow Heidegger's phenomenological philosophy. I do embrace Husserl's two premises of phenomenology: First, that human experience is intelligible and holds meaning to those who live it, and second, the logic of human experience is an essential part of the experience itself (Husserl, 1913/1982). From here I depart from Husserlian phenomenology which argues that through bracketing and reduction the researcher can view "things as they are" (Osborne, 1994, p. 170), without distortion. Phenomenological reduction or bracketing requires the suspension of judgement regarding the authenticity of the substance of an experience. I have employed a Heideggerian form of bracketing in the current study, which does not make the assumption of no presuppositions, but rather consists of a critical analysis of my own presuppositions (Kvale, 1996; Osborne, 1994). This form of phenomenological reduction considers my approach to the research, and my philosophy that to be presuppositionless is impossible (Osborne, 1994).

These paragraphs have accounted for my approach to the study, although other departures from pure phenomenology are outlined in the following sections. I will now briefly discuss

the participants who made this study possible.

The Participants

The number of participants in the study was to range from 6 to 10, as the nature of the study necessitates a comprehensive study of a small sample (Dukes, 1984). The actual number of subjects was determined when it became clear that I had found the "essence" or the essential structural invariants of the repatriation experience (van Manen, 1990). This occurred when I had interviewed eight participants. At this point there were varied situations and many experiences which had been presented to me, and the differences in repatriation seemed understandable.

The criteria for selecting these participants are employees who have worked overseas for a minimum of one year and have been repatriated to Canada for approximately one year or less. This population has been targeted because a minimum one year foreign assignment allows for a sufficient degree of acculturation to the host country to have occurred, and the first year after repatriation appears to be the time frame when most readjustment occurs (Adler, 1981; Black & Gregersen, 1991; 1999b).

The selection criteria were given to two corporations, a psychologist, and a family member who offered to contact participants for this research. I also obtained two repatriates through other participants in the study. These managers and the two participants distributed letters of introduction and consent forms (see Appendices C and D) to potential interviewees. The individuals interested in participating in the study then contacted me by telephone. After the potential subjects had indicated interest in participating in this study, signed consent was obtained. A questionnaire (see Appendix A) was administered to each participant prior to the first interview for the purpose of gathering demographics, to offer a brief picture of their international

assignment and repatriation experience, and to help guide the interview. The use of a questionnaire deviates from Osborne's (1994) recommendation that strict phenomenological research should not involve structured questions, but follows his (1990) advice that novice researchers are probably best advised to utilize a more structured approach. The questionnaire was useful in that it allowed the participants to consider repatriation as it affects each aspect of their lives, and also helped them look at some parts of the repatriation process that had not been given much, if any consideration. The interviews are described next in greater detail.

The Interview Process

The interview is the most commonly used method of information gathering in qualitative research (Osborne, 1994). Participants were interviewed individually at a time and place that was convenient for each of them. The first set of interviews ranged from one hour and thirty minutes to two hours. Only two second interviews were held, and these interviews did not contribute significantly to the data. Subsequently, six of the second interviews were conducted by telephone, for the purpose of clarifying information and confirming themes. The interviews were kept as conversation-like as possible, as the purpose of a conversation is to aid in the process of understanding (Gadamer, 1985). The interviews were semistructured in nature and focused on the two main research questions and on understanding the repatriation experience, the issues that arose during this process, and the strategies that were used during this period of adjustment. (For an expanded synopsis of interview questions, please see Appendix B.) A semistructured interview format is not considered to be part of a true phenomenological study, but is related to the eclectic nature of this research. A semistructured interview approach was chosen as there were a number of themes to be covered, yet this method also offers an openness to changes of sequence and

forms of questions in order to follow up the responses and stories shared by the participants (Kvale, 1996). A semistructured approach follows the basic premise of qualitative research interviews which centers on particular themes, yet are neither strictly formatted with standardized questions nor completely non-directive.

During the interviews I incorporated the qualitative interpretive methodology discussed previously to obtain descriptions, meaning, interpretations, and understanding of the subjects' lived experiences (Kvale, 1996; Osborne, 1994). My aim was to use the counselling ideal of listening "without prejudice". I also adopted the approach of listening to the multiple levels of meaning, with attention given to possible multiple interpretations, with regard to my own presuppositions in the questions I asked and how my interpretations are affected by these (Kvale, 1996). Questions were also asked to elucidate seemingly vague experiences, and to examine situations in which actions and statements about experiences appeared absent, paradoxical, or contradictory (Kvale, 1996).

All interviews were audiotaped, and these tapes were subsequently transcribed by myself. The long process of transcribing the interviews provided me with greater insight into our conversations. I found I was more immersed in the phenomenon through the transcription process because I had to be keenly aware of each spoken word as it was transformed from sound to sight. The written transcripts do not reveal the expressions of an experience to the extent possible during transcription, as meanings became more lucid and alive as I transcribed the audiotapes. These transcriptions formed the basis of my subsequent data analysis and interpretation.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The purpose of the data analysis was to obtain a valid and common understanding of the transcriptions (Kvale, 1996), and to find the invariant structures of the experience of repatriation (Dukes, 1984; van Manen, 1990). This may also be referred to as the "essence" of the experience, which is the substance or nature of the phenomenon of repatriation (Dukes, 1984). Data analysis proceeded through the use of thematic procedures to identify meaning structures (Osborne, 1994). After the first interview, transcripts were reviewed for themes and meanings and were clustered and recorded. Each individual was given a copy of his/her transcript and a summary for verification and clarification during the second interview. Any new information resulting from the second interview was synthesized with the original data, and the meaning structures and themes were further refined. A final draft of themes and meanings was reviewed by each participant to ensure the accuracy of these interpretations.

During the process of identification and interpretation of themes, I conducted two types of analyses. The first was a "within" person analysis which considered the themes and meaning clusters for each person, and this was followed by an "across" persons analysis, which looked for shared themes among the participants. The phenomena were intuitively grouped according to similarities for each participant and for the group as a whole (Giorgi, 1985; Kvale, 1996). A spiralling technique was used to identify patterns of meaning to allow for both contrasting and comparison of these themes (Klein & Westcott, 1994). I was also interested in identifying two types of experiences. The first are experiences which appear close to the surface, are consciously acknowledged by the repatriate, and easily identifiable. The second type is the prereflective experience, which is not readily noticeable, and is that which is experienced but not articulated

(Osborne, 1994). Reaching the prereflective experience involved a great deal of introspection, internal observation, and going beyond the surface characteristics of the text. I believe that my previous knowledge of repatriation and psychological training aided in supporting this process. Throughout this analysis I followed Dukes (1984) bracketing process, whereby I purposefully suspended attention of the facts in order to discover the essence of the experience. This was helpful in countering the danger of seeing what I wanted to see, and the problem of focusing on the facts.

These steps used in the analysis of data also served the purpose of adding credibility to the interpretations. The following section outlines other techniques I employed to ensure credibility of the current study.

Credibility of the Study

The question of validity in qualitative research is one of meaning (Moustakas, 1990). One must ask whether the final written analysis of the repatriation experience accurately depicts the meanings and essences of the experience. This involves identifying procedures that will establish credibility in the presentation of my findings. There are a number of ways to establish credibility during the process of data analysis. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend the techniques of member checks, prolonged engagement, triangulation, and debriefing.

Member checks involve receiving feedback from the research participants regarding the data, analysis, and interpretations. I provided each participant with a transcribed copy of our first interview, and during the second interview, checked for clarification and verification of accuracy. I also discussed with them my data analysis and interpretation of the transcript, so we could arrive at some mutual agreement as to the meanings behind their experiences.

Prolonged engagement refers to spending sufficient time engaged in the data for the purpose of developing a significant appreciation of the phenomenon. The months I have devoted to the study of repatriation, its literature, the actual experiences which have been presented to me by the participants, and the number of times I have combed through the transcripts has greatly increased my knowledge and appreciation of the repatriation experience.

Triangulation involves using multiple data sources to allow for confirmation or disconfirmation of possible themes or meanings. During this study I have interviewed a diverse group of repatriates who have worked in various occupations and countries for differing amounts of time. Five interviews involved repatriates' spouses, which added another perspective and helped to confirm the data. I have also entered into this research with my own personal and professional experiences of repatriation, as well as knowledge I have gained from the literature.

Debriefing refers to consultations with others regarding the research process. My debriefing was aided by keeping a journal of my thoughts and feelings after each interview. This was further assisted by consulting with repatriates not involved in the study and my supervisor throughout the research process. Both these measures helped to clarify the research process through the addition of another point of view.

A qualitative interpretive study of this nature also validates itself through the methodological circle by applying its method to itself (Osborne, 1994), which is rather self-validating, whereby statements of interpretation are accepted as true if they accurately describe the phenomenon. I have attempted to be as accurate and thorough as possible, through the presentation of convincing and coherent arguments, which help to describe and explain themes, and the experiences and strategies surrounding these themes (Osborne, 1994).

Throughout the process of data analysis I have borrowed from Kvale's (1996) seven hermeneutical canons of interpretation:

1. Back and forth process between the whole and the parts. For each transcript, I read the whole for a general feeling, then went back to specific themes, then I returned to the more global meaning of the text once deeper meaning had been developed.
2. A "good Gestalt". For each transcript I examined the final analysis to ensure there was unity in meaning and it was free of discrepancies.
3. Testing. I made comparisons between interpretations of single statements, the global meaning of the interview, and other information about the subject.
4. Autonomy of the text. I reviewed each text to determine if they could be understood on the basis of its own frame of reference, by interpreting what the text itself states about each theme.
5. Knowledge about the theme. Through my literature review and experiences with international assignments I have gained knowledge of repatriation themes which allowed me to be sensitive to the subtleties of meanings.
6. Not presuppositionless. I have attempted to be aware of my own presuppositions and to account for them during interpretation of the transcripts.
7. Appreciation for the interpretive process. I recognize that every interpretation involves some degree of ingenuity and creativity.

Outcome of the Study

The desired outcome of this study is to discover the structural invariants of the experience of repatriation (Dukes, 1984; van Manen, 1990). The conclusion of this data analysis results in an interpretive narrative synthesizing the knowledge gained from studying the participants' lived

experiences of repatriation, both individually and for the group as a whole (Creswell, 1994; Klein & Westcott, 1994). It is a series of themes describing the essence or meaning of the phenomenon (Osborne, 1994; van Manen, 1990). The outcome takes the form of language, which is the same medium which formed understanding and agreement concerning the phenomenon between myself as researcher and the participants (Kvale, 1996).

However, as contexts constantly change, I must be aware there can never be final or absolutely certain interpretations. This is because I am being formed by the ongoing accumulation of knowledge about repatriation, and this process is infinite (Woolfolk et al., 1988). "Human meaning is different from physical reality because of its inherent ambiguity and contextuality" (p. 18). This is what is to be achieved from a qualitative interpretive study of this nature.

Summary

My research questions are 1) What has been your experience with repatriation? and, 2) What strategies have you used to cope with repatriation issues? To discover the responses to these questions I have interviewed individuals who have lived and worked internationally, and have returned to Canada. I have chosen an eclectic approach to best suit the qualitative interpretive character of this study.

To understand the experience of repatriation and strategies used to cope with repatriation issues I have used a number of information sources. I have relied on my personal and professional experiences with repatriation, my ongoing literature review of repatriation and qualitative research methodology and analysis, the questionnaires completed by the participants, and their interviews.

These interviews were transcribed and studied in detail for themes of meaning. To establish the credibility of the analysis and interpretations, I engaged in member checks, prolonged

engagement, triangulation, and debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The outcome of this study has been the discovery of themes as they relate to the experience of repatriation and the strategies that have been used in working through repatriation issues. The following chapter provides a descriptive analysis of these results.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

This chapter contains a qualitative interpretation of the experience of repatriation of employees returning to Canada, as well as strategies employed to help with the transition. These representations are the result of data gathered from pre-interview questionnaires and interviews which focused on the two research questions: 1) What has been your experience with repatriation? and, 2) What strategies have you used to cope with repatriation issues?

The chapter begins with a brief introduction of the participants as well as comments on the interview process. The body of the chapter reviews the themes which have been extrapolated from the participants' responses, and the chapter ends with some general conclusions that have been drawn from this data. It is important to note these themes are artificial categories, and that all themes are interrelated, as each domain of adjustment impacts all areas of life.

Introduction of Participants

Individual descriptions of each participant risk compromising the anonymity of these individuals and the corporations in which they are employed, therefore a group description is provided. Pseudonyms have been assigned to each of the eight participants and their spouses who participated in the interviews: David and Sarah, Bob and Jane, Greg and Carol, Eric and Heather, Richard and Allison, Donna, Mark, and Russ. All participants are White Caucasians including seven men and one woman who range in age from 35 to 48 years. The length of their foreign postings extended from 3 years to 23 years, with six participants having been on multiple international assignments to more than one foreign country. The mean length of time working as expatriates is 8.9 years. The participants had been repatriated between four months and approximately one year, averaging eight months back in Canada. The positions held by these

individuals while working internationally include occupations in the areas of finance, management, oil and gas exploration, drafting, and education development. The participants lived and worked in many countries including Algeria, Australia, Brazil, Columbia, Ecuador, England, France, Indonesia, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Oman, Peru, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Scotland, Venezuela, and The United States.

The interview process appeared to be a form of intervention for many participants. A few of the participants observed the interview was therapeutic. Half noted the interview helped to clarify their repatriation experience, and they also voiced an appreciation for the opportunity to discuss their experience in detail. Some people found the analysis of their interview provided greater insight into their own meaning of repatriation. As well, almost all participants found examining the opportunities of repatriation offered a positive means of viewing their transition.

There was a tendency for the participants to speak at length about their experiences as expatriates. Initially I attempted to bring the conversation back to the focus of repatriation, but I soon recognized that expatriation and repatriation are intricately linked as one continuous process. Gaining a fuller appreciation of expatriation helped me uncover themes and understand in greater detail their meaning of repatriation.

Thematic Descriptions

Three metathemes were derived from the data provided by the repatriates. These themes provide a description of the essential meaning of the experience of repatriation for the participants, and are identified as 1) work adjustment, 2) lifestyle adjustment, and 3) psychological adjustment. Within each of these themes, subthemes are also identified. Table One provides a summary listing of the three major themes and related subthemes acquired from the data.

Table One

Summary of Repatriation Adjustment Themes

Theme One: Work Adjustment

Job Responsibilities: Career Development - Professional Status Loss

Colleagues

Organization

Theme Two: Lifestyle Adjustment

A New Lifestyle

Activities

Relationships: Family - Friends - Immigration of Family Members

Financial Adjustment

Freedom

Adjustment to Canadian Society and Culture

Theme Three: Psychological Adjustment

Choice

Expectations

Strategies

Positive Experiences, Learning Outcomes and Opportunities

Perception of Loss

Descriptions of each theme and supporting statements taken from the questionnaires and interviews follow. Statements or exemplars are provided to substantiate each theme and subtheme, and are indented and recorded on separate lines throughout this chapter to delineate between the repatriates' words and the words of the researcher.

Theme One: Work Adjustment

Work adjustment was one of the most salient themes in the research, as six participants were embarking on a new job within their home country organization and two were beginning new jobs with different companies. For all repatriates, there are a myriad of adjustment issues as described in this exemplar:

After returning to Calgary I found problems adjusting to regular office hours, the bureaucratic nature of a large head office, the feeling of not seeing the contribution I was making to the success of the company, and the lack of control I had over how I did my work. Instead of creating systems and solutions, I had to fit into an existing process. These are things that still bother me and have no specific solution that I can see. (Richard)

To best illustrate the diversity of these issues, the following paragraphs divide work adjustment into three sections: 1) Job responsibilities, 2) colleagues, and 3) the organization.

Job Responsibilities

Repatriates who were most satisfied with their current job had returned to responsibilities similar to the job held internationally. These employees found the only difference in their current position compared to their international job was the cultural component of their work. The employees returning to comparable positions had a more positive overall repatriation experience than those people assigned to jobs quite dissimilar to their foreign postings.

I think (my job responsibilities) are pretty much the same. I'm what you'd call a technical professional in oil and gas exploration, so the bases are different and the people are different and the cultures are different, but what you're trying to achieve job-wise is very much the same. Even from a mentoring point of view, a big part of my job in Indonesia and Norway was technical training, and coming back here that's still a big part of my job. We've hired a bunch of new people. From a work point of view it's very similar, from a people point of view, that's where the difference comes in. Basically all the cultural

barriers have disappeared, and the people part of it is still here. (Eric)

My network is always very similar except the local network. You know I still deal with our technological centre, our manufacturing centre, I still deal with Houston, all that doesn't change much. It's just a different chair in a different office and different scenery, and maybe a different staff and maybe a different customer base, but everything I do when I move is very, very similar. (Russ)

While Eric and Russ were fairly positive about their jobs in Canada, the majority of repatriates in the study were not. There was an overwhelmingly positive tone to the descriptions of their international jobs: "Fun", "focused", "energizing", "positive", "rewarding", "enjoyable", and "challenging" were frequently used to describe expatriate work. "Frustration" was the most common word used by participants to describe the current work situation.

The position I have now, my biggest frustration is that I didn't have a choice, there was no selection...whereas I chose my position in Algeria, and I didn't choose this one. That's been a big frustration. It's not where my strengths are, it's not an area where I think I have much advancement. In a lot of ways this isn't a job that was suited well for me. (Richard)

Some of this frustration was caused by becoming either more generalized or more specialized as expatriates. While most repatriates believed they had expanded the areas in which they could work because of the generalist work overseas, two found they had become more specialized which limited their opportunities when returning to Canada.

Upon return to Canada I had useful skills in the international oil business, but my Western Canadian geological experience and knowledge was out-of-date. This made me uncompetitive in the local oil business. My solution has been not to apply for jobs or contracts requiring an experience base in Western Canada but only apply for international jobs. This has reduced the pool of job opportunities open to me. (Greg)

It's very different from working in Western Canada, where the majority of people in Alberta have their experience. Stepping out into frontier and offshore is a very different type of experience, which you won't find much of in Calgary. From that point, it really limits your career opportunities...because your experience base is so narrow. There's probably 2,000 oil companies in Calgary, but there might only be a dozen to 20 of them that are doing the type of exploration or need the kind of skills I've acquired overseas. So that kind of sets up a bit of insecurity. (Eric)

Most participants felt their international experience was not beneficial to their career. All repatriates rationalized that any disadvantages imposed upon their careers were offset by the

personal gains of living and working overseas, which made the experience worthwhile.

Right now where my career is I couldn't sabotage it much more...position-wise I'm no better off. I could have certainly been at a higher level or in a higher position had I stayed rather than leaving. So it's been detrimental in that sense. So there's lost opportunities in a lot of ways, but there are definitely benefits, and I suppose that's one thing you have to examine on an item by item basis to see if it's worth it to have that lost opportunity.... Even now after being back here for a year, and not necessarily liking what I'm doing, I still would have done it. I would have done it differently, but I would not have not done it. It was still a positive thing, but it would have been really good if the repatriation had gone better, both for (Allison) and myself. I don't live to work now, but it would still be nice to have something different. (Richard)

Career Development

One of the costs of working internationally seemed to be lack of career development.

While career planning is often a benefit for domestically employed personnel, repatriates found they have missed out in this process while overseas. This lack of career planning became apparent for most people upon repatriation, as they returned to find colleagues had been promoted.

So career development, nobody really attended to, doing the annual appraisal. As they put it here, it fell through the cracks, and the person down there didn't choose to do an appraisal for me. And that was unfortunate. And then I spent another year working for that individual who has since been fired. He again didn't choose to do a performance appraisal on me, at a time when people up here in Canada were promoted. And then when I was down in Venezuela we did have a performance appraisal, which was great. I was working for an individual who tended to what his responsibilities were. So I think being excluded from the career development cycle for a couple of years because you're in a state of flux and losing connections with your home country affiliate, which you're eventually going to come back to, is detrimental. (Mark)

Career placement is a very big thing. If you can't have a system in place where the employee feels that the move overseas was rewarding, then who's going to go?...So you need to place your employees properly when they come back in order to utilize their skills, help their career, do something, because it won't be much longer before they won't be able to find people to go. The first time I applied (to go international) there was 13 applicants, the second time there was one to replace me. And the person wasn't well suited, so they had to go and start asking who would like to go. (Richard)

For those employees who were dissatisfied with their current positions, there was a noticeable sense of determination to find rewarding work. This meant if they could not find

professional fulfillment within their organization, they have chosen to seek employment elsewhere.

I'm not going to give up. I'm probably not going to stay here very long, if I can find something else....if I could go tomorrow, I'd go. I'd probably go this afternoon, I'd go home and get dressed up and start a job this afternoon. I would. Within an hour I could be there, including having my hair done. I could do it within an hour, maybe less. (Donna)

I've asked to leave (company name) in the merger because I don't want to be associated with the company anymore. So that's fairly drastic. There were some things that happened (during expatriation and repatriation), and I don't want to be part of the organization anymore. (Mark)

These are significant decisions as both these individuals are long term employees, with one having 18 years experience and the other having 24 years experience with the same organization.

Professional Status Loss

The majority of repatriates felt they had suffered some degree of professional status loss when returning to Canada. Two repatriates expressed the difference between working as an expatriate and a repatriate as the difference between being a "big fish in a small pond" and now working as a "little fish in a big pond." The most prevalent forms of loss were the result of moving from a managerial position overseas, to a non-managerial position within the home country office, or returning to jobs that do not utilize international knowledge and skills.

I had a staff of 15 over in Algiers, I have a staff of zero here. So some of those skills I had been developing over those 2 years I don't utilize at all. It's a totally different job, so I don't utilize those skills at all....I know most of the people who've worked overseas, and without exception, that has never happened, where they come back and ended up building upon the skills they built overseas. In fact, of the people who've gone overseas and come back, I'm the only one that's left with the company. (Richard)

It was difficult to feel that all the knowledge gained working overseas seemed to (a) not be understood, and (b) not be used in decision making for overseas business units. It was frustrating dealing with people making decisions about overseas operations when they had no such experience and were not willing to listen to those who did. (David)

Only two employees found their international skills and knowledge were utilized by their corporation upon return. I found them to be the least frustrated with their current positions.

(The company is utilizing my skills and knowledge acquired overseas), especially the stuff I did in Norway and Indonesia....I think it's they needed it, they're at that stage of exploration where they wanted to be and they needed people with experience to do that. So it's just a good fit. (Eric)

Overall, it appeared that adjustment to a new job varied for participants, but the more adjustments required, the greater the adjustment process. As well, the more adjustments that were required within the job, the less satisfied the repatriate was with the job. A second area of work adjustment involves colleagues in the workplace.

Work and Colleagues

The main theme regarding colleagues is what Greg described as "my network has been completely destroyed" due to turnover rates, organizational changes, and losing contact with people over time. This left people feeling out of touch upon their return home.

There was a fair amount of attrition at work, there was the takeover at work. I've been overseas twice, both people I reported to when I left were gone by the time I returned....This resulted in a lot of new individuals I did not know and an organization structure I was not familiar with. (Richard)

I'm always on the outside looking in. There is a hesitancy of coworkers to involve me. People did not seem to care that I had just completed the experience of a lifetime. There was an uncaring attitude in my particular workplace. I felt extremely energized upon returning but my enthusiasm quickly faded due to the environment. I'm trying to readjust, trying to fit back into the culture of (the organization). Many changes occurred during the years I was away and despite my frequent returns I was not part of the change. (Donna)

Other repatriates were pleased with their new colleagues, which seemed to make the work transition a more pleasant experience.

I've found it quite refreshing. There's more laughing in the office now than I've had for the last 10 years. It's actually quite light-hearted and quite congenial. (Eric)

There was a sense of frustration for some participants with management personnel in Canada. This appeared to be partially due to the repatriates' international exposure to other ways of conducting business. There was a tendency for repatriates to view their home country

colleagues as having an ethnocentric xenophobic mindset, meaning Canadians do not understand that culture plays an important role in international business and the North American way of conducting business is not necessarily best.

And the big thing was that the head office would not understand there was a different way of doing business overseas because of cultural, religious, or political issues.... To say to someone in North America that something is not culturally acceptable; has anyone in North America ever used that statement? Never. It just doesn't have any business or cultural connotation. It has very much to do with how you do business overseas. They don't understand that here. Don't do this, don't do that in terms of the culture. They don't understand. (David)

Adjustment to colleagues upon returning to Canada seemed somewhat dependent upon the work environment. While all repatriates have returned to changes in personnel, a feeling of alienation presents some adjustment difficulties, whereas a feeling of acceptance by colleagues and management has helped ease the transition. Finally, examination of the organization is necessary to understand work adjustment.

Work and the Organization

None of the companies associated with these repatriates had a formal repatriation program. All repatriates expected their organizations to provide some form of repatriation assistance, which tended to be financial in nature in the form of a relocation allowance. While a few repatriates were satisfied simply to receive a relocation allowance, most repatriates believed their companies could have done much more to help them repatriate. Some employees and their families believed they had made personal sacrifices by working internationally, and therefore the company should be obligated to provide repatriation support. Frustration arose when assistance was not forthcoming.

I'm more saddened that the (international corporations) of the world doesn't understand what it takes for people to go over and put your life on complete hold. And go through lots of shocks, and then do it all over again in reverse, when it shouldn't happen in people's lives. Companies have no appreciation of that whatsoever. It's tough to expatriate and repatriate. It is unbelievable how much easier both these processes would be if companies

would support those processes. And it is not expensive, if they've got any kind of turnover rate, it just kills anything they've gained. More focus has to be put on to the companies as opposed to the individuals. And the only way they're going to understand that is if they are made to understand how it impacts their bottom line. (David)

Two repatriates believed the repatriation assistance they received from their corporation was completely adequate. Both these employees seemed to have lower expectations of what their company's obligations were regarding repatriation assistance, and their repatriation needs seemed to be less than other participants in the study.

And I've always felt that (the company) takes as good care of you overseas as any company that I've seen, and even coming back, it's still a first class affair. They find an apartment for you, a temporary place for 5 months, and there's no pressure to find a place right away, and there's a relocation allowance, they make it easy for you. They don't hold your hand, you still have to find your own way. That's important when you're a foreigner when you're moving, is to have some degree of trust in the company and being able to feel good about them. (Eric)

Four participants suggested companies should offer counselling or seminars, preferably by specialists, which could be helpful for repatriation adjustment. They believed that some form of debriefing would have been helpful for them to develop accurate expectations of returning to live and work in Canada, which would have helped them understand changes that have occurred during their time away, and would decrease many of the surprises they have encountered.

If I had been given some form of debriefing counselling it would have been easier to adjust. (Donna)

The company didn't do anything with repatriation to help us adjust back....But our company has outsourced an employee assistance plan, but it wasn't just for (repatriation), if you have difficulty at any time. (Richard)

While Richard and Allison did try to take advantage of the psychologist in the employee assistance program for their daughter who was experiencing some adjustment difficulties, they were disappointed the person was not trained in the area of cross-cultural adjustment.

Subsequent to our interview, Richard's company was implementing a one-day repatriation pilot

seminar for employees who had returned to Canada.

Many repatriates commented that organizations need to acknowledge how international assignments change the employer/employee relationship to an employer/family relationship. For the employees who were able to arrange their repatriation schedules around family needs and schedules, repatriation has been an easier transition, but for other repatriates, the timing of their repatriation was not conducive to their own or their family's requirements.

But I think if the person went somewhere with the company, they went there because the company valued them. I think that in repatriating people, they need to be sensitive as to the impact it has on the family. The person I was dealing with wasn't sensitive. She said, "This has been decided and you're being repatriated." And she announced it to the group before I could even tell my wife. She said, "If you don't like this, and you do anything to hurt the team morale, then I won't be able to support your family staying in Venezuela, in their house, with their driver and the car, and in the school until the school year ends."....So it was a lot of this that left me very bitter. (Mark)

While all participants believed Human Resource Departments should be responsible for some aspects of repatriation assistance, a number of concerns were voiced regarding their involvement. Often Human Resource assistance was minimal due to a lack of repatriation policies, or the responsibility of repatriation was given to line managers, and regardless of which department was handling the repatriation, personnel were not trained or did not have experience dealing with international moves.

And I don't think the HR department was involved in the (repatriation) process at all, they pretty much left it up to the lines. I used to tell people that I think all the HR department did was sign the relocation invoice, because they had to. And it's a frustrating aspect when you're over there as well. You're prepared to come back and you have someone in Calgary you need to explain the steps to, someone who has maybe travelled on holidays, but never worked overseas, and doesn't understand some of the difficulties you can have in most things, in day-to-day life, in coming, in going, there's a lot of work involved they're not aware of. (Richard)

Another criticism regarding organizational handling of repatriation was there was not enough coordination between the home office and the overseas subsidiaries. For one repatriate,

the decision to repatriate him was not made by the home office or the foreign country office where he was working, but in a third country of operation. For others, the lack of communication between head office and the subsidiary meant returning to no available job.

Two participants used a beneficial strategy for their organizational adaptation. They believed that fitting back into the organization is a process that takes time to develop. Their patience and flexible attitude appeared very adaptive to their repatriation process.

The first issue is similar to that faced with any new assignment into a completely new office environment; that is finding your place and establishing yourself technically and personally in your new work environment. For a technical professional this means establishing yourself as a competent professional who has something to offer the new organization. Just as importantly it involves establishing the personal relationships you require to be effective in your work relationships. This is not a quick process, and based on past experience can take up to two years to fully happen. The process involves a number of strategies, primarily doing the best job you can in the task assigned to you, finding ways to contribute to the jobs and the goals of your fellow team members, and having personal relationships which allow you to contribute to others without them feeling threatened or pushed....I've read quite a bit about people who come back and they don't feel used and they don't feel valued, and I think that's natural.... I can't step back into (the company) in Calgary after being gone 12 years and expect to get handed all the prime things, because there are other people who have been here and worked hard and done things, and you come back and get a good assignment, and from there you have to build and find your own place. So I haven't come back with high expectations, and that's a good thing too, because you come back and go into a project, and you know, I might not be leading it like I did when I left Norway. (Eric)

As far as my expectations are professionally, eventually I would like to get involved more in system management. I'm willing to bide my time, it's almost like I'm coming to a new country again, to a new job, they've got to accept I'm coming from a different country, and I'm willing to bide my time to work up to the positions I want. (Bob)

Summary of Work Adjustment Theme

Work adjustment took various forms for each repatriate, and different issues affected the job, colleagues, and organizational variables. What was observed though, was a large spillover effect from one category to another: Employees who were most fulfilled with their jobs upon returning to Canada were also more satisfied with how the organization handled their repatriation.

Colleagues also seemed to play a role in work adjustment, and it was perceived that greater company efforts regarding repatriation adjustment (debriefing for example) could potentially have positive effects on adjustment to personnel.

While work adjustment appeared to be a large part of repatriation adjustment for employees, lifestyle adjustment is another major component in the experience of repatriation. The next section covers findings regarding lifestyle and related subthemes.

Theme Two: Lifestyle Adjustment

Lifestyle is defined as an individual's particular way of life (Pearsall & Trumble, 1995) and each participant found that repatriation meant adjusting to a different lifestyle compared to the one they had become accustomed to during their international assignment. While the foreign country lifestyle and the Canadian lifestyle varied for each participant, the common theme was that lifestyle had been altered. Exemplars of this theme include:

I think the whole crux revolves around lifestyle. When you go to a different country, you change your lifestyle. (Sarah)

It's a different type of lifestyle than in Indonesia....We had...a very specific lifestyle we wanted to get back to. (David)

My lifestyle changed dramatically, like night and day. (Donna)

It was definitely a more spartan lifestyle there, and maybe it was the contrast. (Richard)

We were longing for the North American lifestyle....the consumer lifestyle. (Greg)

Lifestyle revolved around five common subthemes: 1) Activities, 2) relationships, 3) finances, 4) freedom, and 5) Canadian culture and society. These are discussed in the following sections.

Lifestyle and Activities

Many repatriates defined their lifestyle through their activities, and almost all repatriates have found many activities have changed due to repatriation. For the individuals who were

involved in enjoyable activities during their international assignment, there appears to be a sense of lifestyle loss, while for the people who have returned to activities they longed for while overseas, there is a perception of lifestyle gain, and for others there is a trade-off between activity gains and losses. Examples of changes in activities include:

We missed our (Canadian) lifestyle, and for us it's the mountains and skiing. (David)

Camping, going for a walk in the park, playing ball, we couldn't do that in Saudi. (Bob)

Working on the fence digging postholes. It's something you don't do normally in Central London...Even the simple pleasure of washing the car in the driveway. (Greg)

We always did something that was oriented toward Russian society or culture everyday,....So (repatriation) was giving up a really rich culture that we were emersed in. (Donna)

We do a lot together, we did that overseas, and we still do that. And there's the things you do personally, and we still do those things, so it's been very easy. (Eric)

A recurring subtheme surrounding repatriation was the amount of activity that now occupies life in Canada. All participants commented on how busy their lives are since returning to Canada, and many of these activities are geared towards reestablishing themselves back into the community and reorganizing their personal lives. It seemed that repatriation is viewed as beginning again. Greg and Carol likened their life to a giant jigsaw puzzle that had to be pieced back together, while Bob saw repatriation as beginning a new life:

We had to take delivery and consolidate from several overseas postings and our original possessions from our former life in Canada. (Greg)

I think it was that we had to start at ground zero essentially, once we determined that we were buying a new house, a car; we never did that to the same degree in any of the other places we lived. (Carol)

Our whole life was going to have to start over anyway, no matter where we went; friends, job, housing, everything. I was going to have to start from scratch. (Bob)

Frequently the repatriates commented on the amount of work associated with being a homeowner, which is an adjustment, as most expatriates live in rental accommodations. All repatriates in the study owned homes, and five had purchased homes since their return. The following quotes describe their busy lives, which include work on their homes:

I find the pace of life busier here, and I didn't expect that....I just find it more hectic here. We're pulled in many different directions and maybe we need to control that a little bit better. And I'm not sure if that's a consequence of trying to compensate for not having done these things, and we're going in all different directions trying to find out what we're comfortable with and trying to experience it because we weren't experiencing it....We've put a lot of effort into the house since we've been back, external, internal, so that's a good point. So it is, in part trying to get established again. I never really thought of it before as part of the repatriation process, but perhaps it is. (Richard)

There's so much more happening that draws you out of the office than there is when you're overseas. I always found that so much of your life and your identity revolves around who you work for, and what you have to do. And now that we're back here, there's so much more going on. For instance, with the renovations going on, so everyday at 4:30 instead of worrying about what's going on at the office, there's more worries, there's a lot more going on in your life, to think about, and things that pull you away from the office and pull you away from your identity with your job, and I've actually found that quite refreshing. (Eric)

For all repatriates, their activities were different in Canada compared to overseas. It seemed that ease of adjustment was not related to how similar activities were internationally compared to activities in Canada, but rather to the amount of assimilation that occurred while living and working overseas. For the repatriates who truly adopted the foreign culture, adapting to Canadian activities has been more difficult, while for those who were not as integrated in the country of assignment, reestablishing activities here has been a relatively smoother transition.

Relationships and Repatriation

Activities returning to Canada include the reestablishment of relationships with friends and family, and also includes starting new relationships and maintaining relationships which were

established during the international assignments. This section first examines friendships, then extended family, and also discusses relevant immigration issues of family members.

Relationships with Friends

Friendships were significant during an international leave. As Allison explains:

You're put in a situation with people who are in similar circumstances, usually centered around school or work, where you have a lot in common in that sense, so we found it quite easy to meet people and socialize with people, and you become good friends with them in a short period of time....over there no one had any family, and you really had to depend on someone else if someone was sick or you needed to go to the hospital. People really came through for you and we really stuck together, so you become close very fast because you need to. (Allison)

Repatriation often means leaving meaningful friendships and working relationships, and the returnees have found they are no longer surrounded by people who share common visions, passion for the work, and those who embraced the cultural experience.

We were breaking longterm ties. We had tears at our going away party at work. There were friends that thought they'd never see us again. (Greg)

All repatriates had maintained some friendships in Canada to varying degrees, but everyone found some social groups had shifted or ended, or their Canadian friends had changed or moved during the time spent away. It appeared more difficult to start friendships here compared to developing friendships in expatriate communities. This was especially true for their returning children who found classmates tended to have longterm friendships. These experiences are described by the following exemplars:

(Friends) had also had experiences which had changed them and my expectations were that everything would be the same. I had difficulty relating to where people were at in their lives. (Donna)

Reestablishing friendships has not been easy. Social groups that had been in place, i.e. our gourmet group had changed or ended. Some of our friends had changed, situations

changed, hence it is not the same. One of our ways to deal with this was to get involved in volunteering for children's sports, school, and sports club. (Richard)

(The kids) just don't have that good friend, that longterm friendship developed. (Allison)

(The kids) don't seem to have as much in common with the well established Canadian kids, that have gone through elementary, junior high and high school together, so they seem to have moved into a circle of very nice kids by the way, but kids that are newer to the city, newer to the district, newer to Canada. (Russ)

The book club kind of disintegrated...I'm really glad that we kept our house, because it brings us back to the same community, and we could pick up with our old friends. (Mark)

One of the difficulties that seemed prevalent for these repatriates was feeling not quite connected to old friends, new friends, or even extended family. This was most often due to people not having an appreciation or understanding of the international experience.

I think we've read enough and talked to enough people that we know not to be overbearing about our experiences. It might have been pretty special to you, but that doesn't mean it's going to be special to somebody else. I think the kids really find that in school too. They hardly ever talk about it. (Eric)

Well after about 3 sentences they start nodding off. They have no interest whatsoever....We have found that very few people understand or are interested in our experiences of living and working overseas. Consequently we rarely talk to others about it unless we are asked specific questions. My wife writes in her diary about those experiences and about the return. (David)

Strategies used to limit this loss include keeping in contact with expatriate friends, and developing relationships with others who have international experiences. Examples include:

So it's easy to talk to them (people who had visited during the assignment) about what they experienced. But for most people, it's very difficult to really understand what it was like to live there. (Mark)

I was talking to (another repatriate) the other day, he was heading over to Gabon for a meeting and I could have a nice conversation about what he was going to do over there. Sharing similar experiences with someone who has been overseas is much easier than explaining it to someone else. (Richard)

We've got friends from every one of the assignments that we still keep in touch with. It's nice to keep in contact with them. (Heather)

When you know people who've been there, it's a big help. Just the other day this person in Nova Scotia who used to work for the same company in Indonesia,...called for an hour and a half, two hours, it's like, "God, you understand me." (David)

Relationships with Extended Family

Repatriation often means living in closer proximity to extended family. This has meant giving up free time to be with family, but also presents opportunities such as being able to help more with aging parents and the ability to spend more time with family members.

The only thing we've really noticed is being closer to our extended family has taken some getting used to. (Eric)

It's nicer (my parents) are closer to us, so they can participate in our life more. (Bob)

Being away for 23 years, we thought it was quite fitting to come back and maybe spend a couple years where we're a bit closer to (my parents) when they're in the sunset years. (Russ)

Heather and Mark explain there are both advantages and disadvantages to repatriation and the renewed closeness of extended family:

You know you're expected to show up at certain events. It cuts into your weekend and you just have to be there, because Opa turned 93, you've got to be there and you want to be there, but when we weren't, you'd just send a card....It's also good to be able to help, we've been able to help some people in the family, you can be more giving, it's good to show the kids that's what family is for too, not just coming home and partying with them for a few weeks. (Heather)

We had more time to travel, and we had more time to do things on weekends,... With your extended family it seems like you get a lot of obligations you don't control. You have a grandmother who wants to be a grandmother, she wants to be the matriarch, she has things planned for you and obligations. It's nice to have that, but it's also nice to have some distance too. (Mark)

Immigration of Family Members

For some families, the issue of repatriation was complicated with immigration-type concerns. Two repatriates had married foreign women and had children during the course of their international assignments. Bob has been very frustrated by the bureaucracy associated with his wife's immigration difficulties:

(My wife's immigration), it's been difficult. (Bob)

His wife explains:

I have to adjust to a lot of things. Friends, that sort of thing. I had a lot of friends in Saudi. So it's hard for me, especially now. I have to learn how to drive, because I'm stuck in the house. So then I could do a lot of things, like go shopping. I need to get more friends I guess, it's lonely. (Jane)

Russ talks about his children's identity not as Canadian, but existing between multiple countries:

They have a Brazilian passport and a Canadian passport, but I don't think they are any one of the two, I think they are more international-type kids than anything else. (Russ).

Another family had left their now grown daughter in Europe upon repatriation. So for them, repatriation means being further away from family, rather than closer.

I know if she had been younger and with us coming back, (repatriation) would have gone smoother. (Greg)

Still another family had returned with children who were very young at the time of expatriation.

It's a new assignment for them....They don't consider this home, it was strange for them, it's a new country. (Heather)

For these families, repatriation holds a slightly different meaning, depending upon their circumstances.

Activities and relationships varied greatly for each participant and their families, though all activities are geared towards reestablishing a life in Canada. The second form of lifestyle

adjustment involves changes in financial situation.

Financial Adjustment

Changes in finances is a part of the repatriation experience which affects lifestyle, as domestic pay is lower than international compensation packages, and is compounded by increased taxes. Not only do salary and benefits decrease upon repatriation, but there are many extraordinary costs incurred when returning to Canada, which often include the purchase of a home, vehicles, clothing to better suit the environment as well as many incidental expenses which can be overwhelming when occurring all at once. Exemplars of this theme include:

The financial adjustment has been difficult. You have to change your spending habits, definitely you're at a different salary level. It's like taking a big cut in pay. (Richard)

There was a 10 year gap that we hadn't bought a vehicle. Well the sticker shock was unbelievable when we got back. (David)

I guess the house was probably the largest outlay, and clothing. Clothing for the kids, all the family members.... We didn't own ski jackets. (Russ)

Not only do repatriates have to adjust to living on a different pay scale, but this is compounded with unfamiliarity of the Canadian cost-of-living. Eric describes this difficulty:

We really have no idea what it costs to live in Canada anymore, because there's so many extraordinary expenses, you know when you start renovating and moving to a new house. We still don't know at the end of the day how far my paycheque will actually go when things return to normal. I suppose we should know that, I guess we could figure that out, we haven't yet. I mean that's not the reason why we went overseas, but I mean being overseas financially it's a good deal.... For 12 years you see yourself going one way, and all of a sudden you come back and see yourself going the other way, and you wonder when it's going to stop. (Eric)

Certainly the most prevalent complaint is the amount of income tax paid when working in Canada. Nearly all participants commented on returning to such a highly taxed system:

My first Revenue Canada tax return was a fiscally shocking experience. (Greg)

I have a little trouble paying income tax....Here, there's about 60% less earning power. (Russ)

What's hard to get used to is paying the high taxes. It's just unbelievable. I mean the first pay cheque I got and seeing how much tax I had taken off. (Bob)

Most repatriates believed that sound financial planning and investments helped deal with decreased finances upon repatriation. Two of the participants suggested retaining real estate during the international assignment helps hedge against increased prices in the housing market.

We did keep our house, which was a good thing we did, because when we came back housing prices had just skyrocketed. (Allison)

We bought a house, and it was a rental unit, knowing we didn't want the house for us to live in, and when we got back we flipped it....Look at the real estate around here; it's tripled. (David)

Financial adjustment appears to be a result of three factors: 1) Decreased compensation and benefits, 2) extraordinary expenses due to relocating, and 3) increased income taxes.

Adjusting to new levels of income impacts the repatriate in one of two ways: 1) Spending is adjusted downward which affects lifestyle, or 2) spending is maintained which depletes financial resources accumulated during the foreign assignment.

Lifestyle and Freedom

The term *freedom* surfaced in many interviews, and its meaning is the condition of being free or unrestricted, the power of self determination, being free to act, or a privilege (Pearsall & Tumble, 1995). Participants found they had greater freedom of choice regarding cultural, religious, and political affiliations, more occupational choice, greater diversity in activities, and more freedom with respect to health and safety. Freedom is described in these exemplars:

(Being back in Canada) just gives you a sense of relief and freedom right away. (Heather)

We missed the freedom of doing what we wanted to do, whenever we wanted to do it.
(David)

...to come back to the lifestyle where you can walk without getting run over by a bajai, you weren't dodging rats, and it wasn't going to be so hot that you couldn't breathe, and you could breathe the air safely, just to come back to that was a major thing. (Sarah)

Bob had returned from a country with many restrictions, so for him, the freedoms Canada has to offer were very evident:

Freedom of choice. No one says I can't wear shorts in public. You can do whatever you want within the limits of the law. It's just nice to know I can go walk around the streets, I can feel safe with my wife on the streets....When our son goes to school, the freedom of being able to learn what he wants to learn and what the schools can teach. We always said we would have left before he was of school age because I don't want him to go to a school where he can't learn about religion, or learning about Christianity especially. And learn everything else there is to know, like the history of Canada. I want him to have every opportunity I had growing up, whether it's outside playing hockey or playing ball or sports, music, things like that. Over there, it's very restricted with those kind of things.
(Bob)

The sense of freedom also seems to be created by a of feeling of belonging to Canadian society and an identity with being Canadian.

My culture, my language, my education, the way I was brought up is not the way it is in Indonesia. I mean I will never be Asian, I will never be of Asian culture. It's just picking up a Calgary Herald and knowing what it all means. (David)

You come back and you're much more a part of society and you feel a part of it as a person....There are no more language barriers, no more feeling somewhat uncomfortable in a strange society....In Holland and Jakarta, and definitely in Stavanger, it's an expatriate community, things were done within that community, an English speaking community. You would have certain things to do, and it was very rare that you'd step outside into that community, probably because you weren't fluent enough in the language, or integrated enough into that culture to do that. So you were quite limited that way in what you did, or what you could possibly do. Whereas here, hey, the sky's the limit. (Eric)

Freedom seemed to hold different meaning for each participant and seemed to represent something lacking in the foreign country where they had lived. For example, those who lived in a country where they were not fluent in the language, freedom meant no longer having language

barriers. For those who lived in highly polluted areas, freedom was viewed as fresh air and water. Still another example are those who were required to have a driver now enjoy the simplicity of driving their vehicle at a moment's notice.

Adjustment to Canadian Society and Culture

As noted with freedom, adjustment to Canadian society and culture were often related to comparisons made to the countries of expatriation. One such comparison was the differences in consumer lifestyle. Repatriates commented negatively on Canadian consumerism compared to countries they had lived in or traveled to, and expressed their values had changed as they had become less materialistic. This is expressed in the exemplars:

I am not as materialistic as I used to be. (Donna)

One of the things we found after our return from Italy was society in Canada seemed so materialistic. This made us so uncomfortable initially we sold our house and rented for half a year. (Richard)

I guess we were living over in Christie Estates and everyone on our street had BMWs and we had been living in such a poor area of Italy, and people were so happy. We just discovered that it's not material things that make you happy, it's people. (Allison)

...going into stores and being so overwhelmed by the colours and choices that walking out felt like the only option. (David)

People found Canadians to be different than other nationalities. Participants commented on how outgoing and friendly Canadians are compared to the people in the countries they had lived and worked. While generally this was viewed as a positive difference, one couple now found it rather forward to what they had become accustomed:

Well, people are very friendly here. I mean this is a positive. This is an easy thing. I mean everyone looks at you, smiles, says "hello" and "good morning." (Heather)

You know the North American culture is more outgoing than anywhere else in the world.

You really notice that. (Eric)

I guess one thing I never realized was how talkative and how friendly Canadian are, in an elevator, on a street corner, at a bus stop, at a checkout counter, or wherever you happen to be. (Russ)

Another common theme was adjustment to Canadian technology. This was due to many countries of expatriation being less technologically advanced, and participants were not exposed to some technological advancements while on assignment.

We didn't know how to use some of those gas pumps....and some of those shopping carts. (Heather)

The girl at the counter hands me this (banking) machine to punch in my number and I said, "What's this for?" and she looked at me like I was from Mars. I didn't have a clue. (David)

The ability to speak English in society was particularly important for those repatriates who lived in non-English speaking countries or for those who were not fluent in the language spoken in their country of expatriation. For people like Allison and Eric, this provided a feeling of belonging:

And to be able to know what's going on, and to be able to converse with someone in the grocery store, when you understand completely what they're saying, that's a bonus to be back and to be able to speak English I guess, although learning French was a bonus over there. But just to be back and to feel comfortable again. (Allison)

You come back and you're much more a part of society and you feel a part of it as a person. You never really fit in when you're overseas. You're always a stranger, and I always found that difficult, and I think that was the major reason I always made an effort of learning some of the language, the embarrassment of trying to fit into a situation, you'd walk into a store and you'd say "Can you please speak English?", you know because you can't speak a word or understand what they are saying, I mean it's an extremely uncomfortable world to live in after a while, you're totally alienated from the society in which you are living. (Eric)

All repatriates but one identified negative aspects of Canada much more readily than positive differences in our society and culture. Allison commented on this tendency:

I think the grass is always greener. You know you're over there and you come back and everything seems so wonderful here. And you get back and you experience it and then it just seems commonplace again. I guess you look forward to a lot of reasons coming back, and then we get back and think, "Oh, it was so nice over there". We've said that a few times, that the grass always looks greener. (Allison)

It seems that exposure to multiple cultures has provided repatriates with a discerning view of the positive and negative aspects of different cultures. These exemplars express the variation in problems participants identified with Canadian culture:

It's very sterile here in many respects, it hasn't got the variety that you have in places that are less organized on a daily basis, because bank machines don't work, you get stuck in traffic jams, there's just a lot less predictability. (Mark)

I don't go out here 3 to 4 times a week to the ballet or opera, because they aren't here. (Donna)

And even the television programs; the language that is permitted now, wow, we were shocked! (Sarah)

Here the produce is...genetically engineered and tasteless." (Greg)

One thing I did notice is it's almost impossible to get any sales support staff in any of the stores. (Russ)

The negative comments regarding Canadian society and culture did not necessarily mean any disrespect to Canadian culture and society, but were the result of their growth through multicultural experiences. Each participant had discovered new and interesting ways of being, which results in questioning their own Canadian culture. Exposure to diversity has created new cultural possibilities for these people, and the recognition there can be numerous lifestyles and different advantages with each and every culture.

Summary of Lifestyle Adjustment Theme

The consequence of losing enjoyable activities, especially an active social life as an

expatriate and financial decreases seemed to create a sense of personal status loss for most repatriates. Other losses contributing to the feeling of status loss for some included no longer having servants, the decreased opportunity to travel, and the loss of expatriate status. This was also related to holding higher prestige jobs in foreign countries.

You're a grand poobah when you're in a country like Indonesia. You know, everyone shakes your hand and you're driven from pillar to post, you're great and wonderful, you're wined and dined. You come back here, you don't get that. (David)

As a manager in London, UK my wife and I have a rich social life involving the company. We were living in Central London for 10 years and our cultural and recreational life was rich. We traveled throughout Europe, even on long weekends, and were able to visit our daughter in France frequently. All this has changed in Canada. Culturally there is no comparison. Since I do not work for a flashy oil company the corporate social life is reduced to zero. Only recently have we been able to get out in the social scene and entertainment scene because we have been too busy resettling, improving the house and trying to make a new start in Canada. At times we are very "homesick" for our former life both in London and elsewhere overseas. (Greg)

While all participants lived varying lifestyles both internationally and upon their return to Canada, all have experienced lifestyle changes.

Summary of Theme One and Two

The preceding two sections have covered work and lifestyle adjustment for the repatriates in the study. These two areas, while broad in nature, cover the outer world of repatriation adjustment, and the situations repatriates return to in Canada. These two areas are the focal point of repatriation for these individuals, while the next theme, psychological adjustment, is the area given the least amount of consideration by both repatriates and their corporations.

Theme Three: Psychological Adjustment

One of the pitfalls of attending to the physical side of reestablishing life in Canada is that psychological reorganization is not given the attention it most likely requires. Bob describes his

repatriation to-date:

I mean everything was in such a rush when we got back, almost to this point where we haven't been able to sit back and just realize what kind of a whirl wind we've gone through in the past 6 months....I had an interview one day and was hired the next day, then from that point I was looking at...50 or 60 houses, and we still had to buy a vehicle, so everything was a big rush....So worrying about a job, worrying about a house, so it was probably harder coming back than going there. I prepared myself and went with an open mind, coming back you think, okay, you're life is going to change quite a bit in the next while. With everything. With your job, with your house, with your living, and paying taxes again, and also having the added responsibilities. (Bob)

From the interviews conducted with these individuals, repatriation is a process whereby aspects of psychological adjustment occur over time. Psychological adjustment appears to be affected by the following five factors: 1) Choice, 2) expectations, 3) strategies, 4) opportunities, and 5) perception of loss. These are covered in the following sections.

Choice and Repatriation

Choice refers to the option of returning to Canada and the timing of that decision. These differences were apparent when interviewing Eric and Russ, who chose to move to Canada at a time that was beneficial for them, while Mark had not wanted to return to Canada at this time.

Yes, we actually kind of arranged the return. There was no pressure, no plans on the company's part to return us, but we looked primarily at where the kids were in high school and it was either now or two years from now, because we weren't prepared to move (our son) in Grade 11 or 12. And there was an opportunity in Canada, we pulled the trigger and said we'd like to go back. And after 3 1/2 years, that was sooner than most assignments, but it was not done too soon, and they accommodated us. (Eric)

I saw this as an opportunity, and I kind of stuck up my hand and said, "We'll go home, and get the kids established (in university)", because that's the stage we're at right now. And after things are established on the home front and after things pick up on the industry side, then I can move on again. (Russ)

We weren't ready to come back. It happened a lot more quickly than we were anticipating. And we were very much enjoying where we were. So coming back here has been a significant adjustment....I probably carry a bit of resentment because of that

decision (to repatriate at this time), and that probably might come out through the course of the interview. (Mark)

Those participants who were in control of returning to Canada and the timing of their return seemed to adapt much easier, used more strategies, identified more opportunities, and were more flexible and positive in attitude.

The Expectation Effect

Expectations had an enormous impact on repatriation satisfaction. When expectations were met or exceeded, adjustment was a smoother transition. Expectations that were not met or were undermet (especially in the area of work) caused repatriation difficulty. David and Sarah had high expectations of returning to Canada, yet what they anticipated was exceeded:

The reality has been greater than the expectations. It's almost as if I'm on drugs here. I'm just buzzed all the time. I think it's almost something as simple as the mountains. (David)

Expectations were sometimes self-fulfilling prophecies. As exemplified above, David and Sarah expected to return to a wonderful lifestyle, and they did. For others, when repatriation was expected to be a tough adjustment, it was, and in Eric's case, he didn't expect to have a difficult adjustment, and he and his family have had a relatively smooth transition.

I don't see that we've really gone through a whole lot of (reverse culture shock). We didn't really expect a tough adjustment. We've been gone a long time, but I don't think we really felt changed as people, changed to the point where we wouldn't be happy living in Canada, and I think that's probably been true. I mean it's only been 5 months, that still could happen. I think a lot of things we were interested in when we were living here we're still interested in. I love doing things around the house, and I always missed that. And now we're renovating and there's lots of things to do. I find that very healthy and refreshing. We still love sports, we go to Stampeder games. (Eric)

When repatriates returned to jobs that did not meet their expectations, repatriation was a more demanding transition. For both Mark and Donna, their expectations regarding their jobs

have been undermet, and consequently repatriation has been more onerous for them:

I guess from a job point of view I came back here hoping I'd be comfortable with the way things were. But that hasn't turned out. I didn't expect that. I didn't think I'd come back here and want to quit. I expected to come back and be comfortable. (Mark)

A lot of people encouraged me to take this job, they said it would be a really good stepping stone to something else, and I haven't found that to be the case. (Donna)

Undermet expectations were just as difficult as expectations that could not be identified.

Some repatriates felt quite unprepared for their return to Canada, as they did not have firm expectations of what life in Canada would have to offer them. For most participants, areas of trepidation existed where there were not clearly defined expectations, and these must be experienced first hand:

Nothing ever prepares you for it....It was also that you were back here but you weren't sure if you really wanted to be back here. Many times my spirit was back over in England or Oman, it just wasn't here. (Carol)

We knew that all the reading in the world could never prepare us for coming back. And it was shocking....Repatriation for us was an even bigger unknown. Going from Aberdeen, Scotland down to England was one of the moves we made. There's a certain unknown to that. But far more stressful coming back to Calgary. (Greg)

Strategies used to develop accurate expectations included reading about repatriation, talking to others who have had similar experiences, and developing a flexible attitude during the repatriation process:

And I knew there would be a lot of changes in everything here when I came back. That was the biggest thing, was the ability to be flexible and be able to deal with those changes. (Bob)

We talked to people who have come back and you kind of know what to expect. (Eric)

If you read up on it you know what to expect or what not to expect. And be flexible. (Heather)

More repatriation strategies are covered in the following section.

Strategies and Adjustment

In this study there was most notably an association between strategies and adjustment, as it seemed that the more strategies used, the greater the adjustment. It should also be noted that while the participants utilized many strategies, most were not able to label their actions as strategies, and therefore had difficulty identifying the mechanisms that helped them cope with repatriation. One of the most effective strategies seemed to be goal setting accompanied by a plan of action, as goals allowed the process of repatriation to be a more purposeful endeavour.

(Planning) minimizes the surprises when you come back, so there aren't the shocks. There's shocks you can't do anything about, like walking into a store that's just overwhelming. But as long as you've got a plan, this is the house we're going to live in, this is the town we're going to live in, this is what we want to do for the first 6 months at least, you're maximizing the aspects that you have control over. I think that's a good way of putting it, because if you look at what reverse culture shock is, it's a lack of control of the things that affect you. So the more you can control those issues when you come back, the easier it is to repatriate. Having said that, we've shot our plans all to hell. (David)

In our case we had a very specific location we wanted to live, and a very specific lifestyle we wanted to get back to. And it all focuses on the outdoors and nature. Not many people I know of, whether they've been expats or not, having anything that specific. Because if it's only work, you're screwed. (David)

A useful strategy for some was to regard the move back to Canada as another foreign assignment. LeGuin (1974) describes this strategy in terms that "You *can* go home again... so long as you understand that home is a place where you have never been" (p. 48). This is sound advice, as all repatriates have experience adapting to another country, and strategies used to adjust as expatriates could also be useful for their repatriation adaptation.

After being away 23 years and moving as much as I've moved, I consider my move back to Canada no different than any other foreign move. (Russ)

I think you really have to treat it like a foreign assignment. Especially when you've been gone so long. Don't take anything for granted, because after 12 years or however long you're gone, things aren't the same. Not the way you've pictured them. Certainly not the way it seems like when you come back at Christmas for a couple of weeks or in the summer at Grandma's house. It's different. (Heather)

Strategies seemed most effective when they involved the family as a unit. Many of the non-working spouses were primarily responsible for settling the family.

I do have a strategy when I move. I devote myself entirely to getting the family sorted. I don't try and fit myself into anything until the family is settled and the house is settled. And I'm not pulling myself in all different directions. So I'm still concentrating on the family. (Heather)

Flexibility, a positive attitude, and patience were mentioned by half the participants as being important to repatriation adjustment. As all these repatriates had successful international assignments, this was probably useful when they were in the process of expatriation adjustment.

I think the key is to always have realistic expectations and to be able to roll with the punches. (Eric)

Patience...it's going to take some time to accomplish it all. (Bob)

Patience I guess, and don't be afraid to ask for help. (Russ)

While journaling can be an effective method of dealing with change, Sarah was the only repatriate who talked about taking the time to reflect through writing. This is a strategy she used while on foreign assignment as well, which gives her the opportunity to see the changes, and the similarities and differences as the international cycle has unfolded in her life.

It makes a big difference being able to put it on paper or a computer. It's like talking to somebody. You know I don't always go back and read what I've written, I might go back in three months and have a look, or look at something I had written when we lived in Manado when we first went to Indonesia. It's helped me to go back and read it. Maybe because it helps you see how much you've changed and how much you've been through, and how that makes you a different person today. (Sarah)

Sarah was also the only repatriate who had the opportunity to attend a one-day repatriation seminar at the time of our interview.

It made a big difference, it really did. It brought a lot of things together. It made you think about how you thought of such and such a thing before you left. And later, how did you view things? It gives you that perspective so you can see how you've changed. What areas you've changed a lot in, what difference that will make in your life. I found it quite beneficial. (Sarah)

Moving to another company was frequently cited as a possible repatriation strategy.

While two participants had been laid off from their overseas positions, one participant had quit his job as the answer to his repatriation difficulties at work, and four others said they would definitely consider looking for a job with another organization.

Yes I probably have to adjust. So I don't have any strategies developed other than constantly telling myself, "I have to get with it here, and I have to get enthused....It's just too draining, so I'm probably not going to stay here very long, if I can find something else. (Donna)

Related to finding new work, it was apparent all repatriates had an openness to new experiences, or other possibilities. For some, repatriation was viewed as temporary or part-time:

I'd say this is only ever going to be a part time solution unless in the next two to three years we get further settled in...we can chuck everything and go elsewhere...there's nothing holding us back. (Greg)

The detachment that you still feel, that you're not completely here...it didn't feel like home....if a wonderful opportunity came along we could close up the house, sell the house, whatever. (Carol)

The interview process perhaps helped repatriates realize they were using more adaptive strategies than they were able to consciously identify. In a way this was empowering for them to label actions they had taken as strategies for repatriation adjustment. Visits were also discussed as potential form of repatriation strategy.

Visits and Adjustment

Home visits have been considered a repatriation strategy and helpful for adjustment (Black et al., 1992b). During the course of the interview everyone was asked if visits to Canada during their international assignment were helpful for repatriation adjustment. All participants conceded that visits made no difference to any aspect of adapting to life in Canada.

Did visits help positively or negatively to repatriate? It had no bearing on it whatsoever. (David)

(Visits) were helpful to maintain contact with the family....you're kids aren't in programs, you're not living in your normal environment, you might be in a hotel or staying with friends....You don't get a sense of a place until you live there, and the same with home leaves when you come back, it's not really what it's going to be like. (Richard)

You're in vacation mode, you're not in living mode. (Sarah)

I realize now I was only a tourist when I was back here. (Donna)

Visits were described as a social occasion which does not deal with the day-to-day occurrences of life in Canada. For some, visits seemed to idealize Canada, and did not paint a true picture of life in Canada. Visits were also not conducive to reconnecting to people professionally.

Positive Experiences, Learning Outcomes, and Opportunities

Participants had some difficulty identifying positive aspects of repatriation. When opportunities could be associated with repatriation, there seemed to be greater repatriation adjustment. All participants agreed that looking at the positive side of repatriation was a good idea. There appeared to be two reasons why opportunities are difficult to identify: 1) Repatriation is a busy time with little opportunity to reflect; and, 2) there is more focus on the losses than gains associated with repatriation.

It's funny when I read that question, I had to really think about that. Because I'd never

thought about it in those terms. Being back gives you the ability and the time to reflect on what you've been through. You don't have time to reflect on what you're going through at the time you're going through it. (David)

I can't come up with anything positive...Isn't that awful that I can't come up with anything positive....I would say zero positive aspects from repatriating. Professionally....no, absolutely zero positive professionally. Zero. Things I've learned. I've learned negative things professionally. That people don't really care about what you've done, or how much you have to offer, it's not important. So it's negative learning, not positive. (Donna)

Most participants believed what they had gained was greater than any sustained losses.

And certainly the (international) experience outweighed any negatives (of repatriation). The opportunities we had over there outweighed any negatives. Even loss of jobs and opportunities, we just enjoyed it so much. (Allison)

Another positive aspect that was voiced by repatriates with children is that Canada provides more opportunities for their children in terms of education and extra-curricular activities.

This is a very child friendly society. I used to laugh in Italy, in the town where we lived there wasn't a single park for the kids to play in. When we moved into our house we had to have the landlord put in a lawn in order to have a place where the children could play. (Richard)

All non-working spouses who had left jobs upon expatriation were more aware of the career opportunities they had sacrificed by going overseas. Five of the seven spouses returned to work in Canada or planned to find work.

I can see my girlfriends who have stayed and they're doing resource work for special programs, whereas I don't have that opportunity now. I guess I've gone backwards. The young teachers are where I'm at right now, and I should be further on, or would like to be further on. (Allison)

There was a feeling of lost opportunity for my wife advancing her career. She was on leave for 2 years and felt like she was starting over. It was hard enough that she had and continues to have thoughts of changing careers. (Richard)

It seemed that the repatriates developed a sense of appreciation for what Canada has to offer and a gratefulness for aspects of Canada they missed while living internationally. This in

many ways also relates to lifestyle.

Another thing we gained an appreciation of back here is health, in other words, not that you worry about it every bloody day, but it's a concern over there, and we've had friends evacuated out, in one case it was a heart attack, and he was very lucky to make it to Singapore, it's a big issue, and you come back here, you realize it's a big issue. (David)

Repatriation allowed us to come back to the outdoor lifestyle we really enjoy. It has allowed us to appreciate driving our own vehicle, a restricted privilege overseas. Repatriation, because we each needed support, brought my wife and I closer together. My wife finds that it is the repatriation itself which makes us appreciate the experiences of having worked and lived overseas. (David)

We have a wonderful health system, we have wonderful roads, we have a good fire department, we have an excellent police department, all those things, but I still think there's tremendous waste in the system, and I think we're one of the highest taxed countries around. (Russ)

Family was also associated with the positive opportunities of returning to Canada. During the course of our interviews repatriates talked of the opportunities and benefits repatriation has meant for their family.

My mother is getting older, and it's easier to see her more often. That's good. We really enjoy our house, and that means a lot to us, and that's good. My wife's enjoys teaching, and even though it makes life more complicated and busy, she's enjoying it. My youngest son didn't have the opportunity to ride a bike in Venezuela, he didn't have the freedom of movement that he has here. He has a larger group of friends and acquaintances his age and he can do things, he can play outside a lot more, just roam around. As far as sports go, he and my youngest daughter have opportunities to participate in more organized sports. (Mark)

Many diverse opportunities were identified: Some repatriates spoke of returning to Canada as a coming back to a more efficient society, the chance to move to another job, and the opportunity for children who haven't lived in Canada to become more a part of this country.

And things are a lot more organized (here) and things happen more easily.... Things are more efficient here, so that's better, things are in the stores. (Mark)

It gives me much more opportunity and that comes with the freedom. If I want, I could

change jobs tomorrow, over there you can't do that. You're with one company and if you want to quit and leave you could, but you couldn't get another job over there. So it just gives me the opportunity and the freedom to move from city to city, and if we want to move somewhere else within the country, I can do that. So you're not restricted anymore, the freedom is there for you. (Bob)

I think one of the biggest benefits will be to have them learn in more detail what the Canadian culture is and what Canada is all about. (Russ)

Discussing opportunities appeared to be a new concept for repatriates because the perception of loss came across stronger in most interviews. Perhaps focusing on opportunities is a strategy to help understand repatriation through a new lens.

Perception of Loss

Losses mentioned by the participants included less travel opportunities, loss of cultural experiences, relinquishing relationships, the losses of personal and professional prestige, decreases in finances, and lifestyle losses. It became evident the greater the perception of loss, the more difficult repatriation issues became. There was a sense of grieving these losses. The realization of loss seemed greater when losses were not replaced with something else upon return. Donna describes her perception of loss:

A terrible loss, yes. I liked the people I met, I liked everything about what I was doing there. So this is really a let down, it's terrible....Repatriation in my case has been extremely difficult....I think this will probably be my last trip over there, the one coming up, and then I will feel another sense of loss, knowing I might not ever get back there. That would be horrible, I'd have to get back there somehow. Because otherwise that would be a tremendous loss. (Donna)

Another repatriate describes his losses with the expression:

Cold turkey in Calgary....And the loss of status, there's a big loss of status. (Greg)

For Greg and Carol, life as an expatriate was in effect a high, it was exciting, and perhaps addictive. In keeping with his saying, repatriation has been a sobering experience, and a form of

withdrawal. And for some, the professional losses have been difficult

...and consequently I don't want to be here anymore, so who's loss is that? It's my loss, and it's (the company's) loss maybe. (Mark)

David believed that losses associated with repatriation were overcome in time.

It's not something that lingers forever, more just because it's so sudden, and again you wean yourself off it, and it's a loss or sorrow that you get over, over time. (David)

Perception of loss varied for each participant, and each felt losses of a different sort. For those who regarded their losses to be extreme, repatriation has been a painful experience, but for those who found their losses to be minimal, repatriation adaptation has been relatively smooth.

Summary of Psychological Adjustment Theme

Responses to questions aimed at determining the experience of psychological adjustment to repatriation were certainly more difficult for the repatriates in this study compared to those regarding work and lifestyle adjustment. These are more complex concepts, perhaps because they had not been given much consideration, but these five psychological factors seemed to be the essence of the experience of repatriation. Work and lifestyle adjustment are not simply determined by the work and lifestyle repatriates return to in Canada. Repatriation adjustment is far more dependent upon choice, expectations, strategies, opportunities, and perceptions of returning to Canada. Therefore comprehending the meaning of repatriation involves understanding the factors of psychological adjustment.

General Conclusions

Supported by the data from this study, there are a number of general conclusions that can be drawn for both employees and corporations regarding the experience of repatriation and strategies used to aid repatriation adjustment. Many of these general conclusions have

implications for further research on the subject of repatriation, and provide information for repatriating workers, for corporations with international operations, and for professionals who work with repatriates.

1. Repatriation is not an isolated event, but an integral part of the international cycle.
2. All repatriation variables, including work, lifestyle and psychological adjustment are interrelated.
3. Repatriates focus on physical adjustment more so than psychological adjustment.
4. Physical adjustment generally occurs more quickly than psychological adjustment.
5. Psychological adjustment must be understood to grasp the essence of repatriation.
6. Repatriates want corporations to implement repatriation programs that address the needs of employees and their families.
7. The job repatriates return to has a major impact on repatriation satisfaction:
 - a) The more similar the repatriate position is to the expatriate position, the greater the job satisfaction.
 - b) The more the organization attends to career development, the greater the job satisfaction.
 - c) The greater the job satisfaction upon return, the greater the organizational commitment.
 - d) Repatriates want to use their internationally acquired knowledge and skills.
8. Strategies help repatriates adjust more efficiently and effectively.
 - a) Establishing goals and a plan of action helps make repatriation a more purposeful endeavour.

b) Visits are not a strategy that are conducive to repatriation adjustment.

9. Choosing to repatriate and having control over the timing of repatriation helps ease adjustment.
10. The attributes of flexibility, a positive attitude, and patience helps repatriation adjustment.
11. Establishing accurate expectations helps repatriation adjustment.
12. The greater the perception of loss, the more difficult repatriation adjustment.
13. The greater the perception of opportunities, the greater the repatriation adjustment.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to understand the repatriation experience of employees returning to Canada and the strategies used by these individuals during this transition. Three metathemes were derived from the questionnaires and interviews with participants. The previous chapter reviewed these findings and the researcher's interpretations. This chapter is a discussion of this information as it relates to existing literature, as well as the implications of the study. Part I reviews the three metathemes of adjustment, and the similarities and contrasts of these findings compared to existing research. Part II is a review of the implications and recommendations of the study which includes suggestions to both repatriates and their organizations, as well as counselling implications. Part III discerns the strengths and limitations of the study and offers direction for future research. Lastly, Part IV contains concluding remarks.

Part I: Contributions to the Literature

Black's (1988) model of work role adjustment illuminates repatriation as a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, involving all life roles. This section identifies these variables as work, lifestyle, and psychological adjustment and are now discussed in terms of the existing literature and how the current study adds to this knowledge base.

Work Adjustment

One of the main predictors of repatriation success for the employee is job placement upon reentry (Black & Gregersen, 1998, Black et al., 1999), as overall satisfaction is strongly related to the impact of the foreign assignment on career goals (Gomez-Mejia & Balkin, 1987). The influence of job placement on repatriation satisfaction was clearly evident in the data gathered in this study. Employees who returned to positions which were similar to foreign postings, and

those who could use their internationally acquired knowledge and skills, were clearly more satisfied with the repatriation process. Other work issues identified in the literature which were echoed by participants include loss of autonomy and authority, loss of career direction, and loss of track records domestically (Adler, 1981; Allen & Alvarez, 1998; Brewster, 1997; Briody & Baba, 1991; Brown, 1994; Harvey, 1982; McDonald, 1993; Richardson & Rullo, 1992; Stroh et al., 1998; Wang, 1997; Wozniak, 1997).

The lack of formal repatriation programs for these returnees appeared to be related to Black (1991) and Brewster's (1997) findings that corporations are not aware of the impact that repatriation issues have at both the organizational and individual levels. Communication during and after the international assignment plays a vital part in repatriation adjustment. Information clarifies the repatriation process (Black et al., 1992b), and many of the repatriates in this study agreed that lack of organizational communication created difficulties with work adjustment.

Most employees returned to companies that had undergone tremendous change during the international assignment, and fitting back into the organization was an adjustment for them. These transformations result in repatriates losing touch with day-to-day operations (Black & Gregersen, 1999a), with changes in corporate culture (Engen, 1995), and returning to find limited unfilled positions (Brewster, 1997).

What is not evident in the literature but came across strongly in this study were the feelings of frustration with the job, the organization, and the handling of the repatriation process. This sense of disappointment is not captured in previous quantitative studies, yet was apparent in the descriptions provided by the participants in the current study. Tung (1998) states that most employees expressed dissatisfaction with their repatriation experience, and the exemplars in

Chapter Four seem to provide a more meaningful understanding of discontent related to work adjustment. Here, the participants are not simply labeled as dissatisfied, but the specific areas of dissatisfaction are identified. As well, the reverse may also be said, that those employees who were satisfied with their current positions, the organization, and the handling of the repatriation process provided detailed descriptions of what this meant. Their satisfaction, the specific reasons for contentment, and subsequent ease of adaptation were explicitly described in their exemplars. These findings are also apparent in the next segment discussing lifestyle adjustment.

Lifestyle Adjustment

This study clearly indicates there are a number of lifestyle adjustments when returning to Canada. The literature refers to lifestyle adjustment as a loss of a way of life, as well as a loss of personal and professional status (Engen, 1995; Brewster, 1997; McDonald, 1993). Various losses cited by participants include loss of cultural and travel opportunities, loss of friendships, and financial losses. Due to Canada's high levels of taxation, it appears that financial losses are greater for Canadian repatriates than for Americans. While repatriates experience losses, lifestyle gains are not clearly indicated by the literature. Some lifestyle gains identified by the participants include greater freedoms, educational and extracurricular opportunities for children, a return to activities not possible in foreign countries, and living closer to family.

There are many similarities found in both the literature and the current study regarding lifestyle: It is a challenge adjusting to the general living environment such as food, climate, transportation, and schools (Black & Gregersen, 1992a), there is a feeling of being left out or left behind (Piet-Pelon & Hornby, 1992), a feeling of alienation upon return (Gomez-Mejia & Balkin, 1987), and forgetting how to deal with the country's pace (Thompson, 1992). As well, difficulties

reestablishing relationships with friends and family were noted, as the bonds of common experience that once existed often have disintegrated (Engen, 1995).

Strategies for dealing with lifestyle adjustment are addressed infrequently in existing literature (Black & Gregersen, 1999b; Scelba, 1996; Wang, 1997). While remedies in the literature can be useful tools for repatriates, they are rather generic. The strategies discussed by the participants in this study were tailored to their unique situation and to their own specific lifestyle adjustments. This suggests that because each lifestyle situation is different, solutions for optimal adjustment must consider each repatriate as unique. Individual distinctions in adjustment are also found in the area of psychological adjustment.

Psychological Adjustment

Adjustment includes psychological adaptation, which are the internal outcomes of personal achievement and satisfaction (Berry, 1997) of returning to life in Canada. Without hesitation, the findings of the study illustrate psychological adjustment is the essence of repatriation. As discussed in Chapter Four, psychological adjustment is affected by choice, expectations, strategies employed, opportunities, and perception of loss. These factors as they relate to existing literature are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Choice and Repatriation

Berry (1997) refers to choice in repatriation as voluntariness, or whether the individual moves willfully or mandatorily. Individuals with the ability to choose the timing of repatriation clearly expressed greater adjustment. This study adds to our understanding of voluntariness by showing that those people who freely chose to repatriate and the timing of their return adapted much easier, used more strategies, identified more opportunities, and were more flexible and

positive in attitude.

Expectations and Adjustment

Black, Gregersen, and Mendenhall's (1992b) work found expectations play an important role in effective repatriation adjustment, and this was confirmed by all participants in the current study. Repatriates who experienced disconfirmed expectations, or negative differences between expectations and realities (Arthur, in press-a), acknowledged adjustment difficulties. Studies recommend that reducing uncertainty will help develop accurate expectations, which leads to better repatriation adjustment (Black et al., 1991, 1992a). This was visible in the study, as the repatriates with more accurate expectations had a more effortless adjustment experience.

Strategies and Adjustment

Literature on transitions has determined that effective coping means being flexible and utilizing a number of different coping strategies (Schlossberg, 1984). This finding was also reflected in the data gathered for this study. The participants who were adjusting most favourably were those who used the most strategies. There were also two strategies which emerged from the interviews which have not been cited in the literature. The first is goal setting and establishing a plan of action upon return. The second is finding a new job in another organization which corresponds with career aspirations. Both strategies were reported by participants to be highly effective.

Opportunities and Repatriation

Adler's (1991) study determined repatriates who adjust well are those who recognize positive and negative changes in themselves, their organization, and their community. As noted in the previous chapter, participants often found it difficult to identify positive aspects of

repatriation, and tended to focus on losses. While all participants welcomed the chance to look for repatriation opportunities, the literature does not refer to opportunities or positive experiences of repatriating. This study was able to specifically identify opportunities of returning to life in Canada, which for some includes returning to a less polluted and less crowded environment, lower cost-of-living, better health care and education, a more efficient society, and better systems of transportation, to name a few examples.

Perception of Loss

This study also discovered the impact of perceived loss. As a general rule, it appeared that the greater the perception of loss, the greater the repatriation difficulties. It is interesting to note too, that those who seemed to have gained so much during their expatriation experience had the greatest perception of loss. While existing research addresses loss, it does not directly address the issue of perception of loss, which varied greatly for participants. The key to comprehending issues of loss is directly related to understanding the personal meaning associated with the perceived losses. This was accomplished in the interviews through listening to the repatriates' changes in worldview (Richardson & Rullo, 1992; Taylor, 1994) and expanded cultural awareness (Ho, 1995; Weiss & Grippo, 1992), which may lead to difficulties when reintegrating back into Canadian culture.

Summary of Contributions to the Literature

This study has made contributions to the literature in all areas of repatriation, including the variables of work, lifestyle, and psychological adjustment. The qualitative nature of this investigation offers a more in-depth understanding of the meaning of repatriation, and contributes knowledge to the unique Canadian perspective of repatriation. The next section further

contributes information to the literature in a discussion of implications and recommendations.

Part II: Implications and Recommendations

Part II of this chapter begins with a discussion on transition in relation to repatriation. The next sections involve recommendations to repatriates and corporations. The last segment consists of counselling implications for professionals working in the area of repatriation.

Transition and Adjustment

The idea of tying transition theories to repatriation theories provides a broader perspective to the process of repatriation. Both theories involve change, affect all aspects of life, and interaction between all life variables.

Repatriation may be viewed as one form of life transition defined as any phenomenon consisting of an ending, a period of disorientation and distress, and a new beginning (Bridges, 1980). The transition itself can result in changes to routines, relationships, and roles involving oneself, work, family, mental and physical health, and economics. Cross-cultural transitions are complex due to exposure to norms, values, and behaviour that often is in contrast with the individual's understanding of self or the world around them (Arthur, in press-a). These passages also "have no end point; rather transitions are a process over time which include phases of assimilation and continuous appraisal" (Schlossberg, 1984, p. 65). The process of disorganization and reorientation is ideally a time of evaluation, learning, and growth.

Adjustment is very much a part of repatriation transition as it is a response to change, and change necessarily occurs due to differences between the host country and home country (Black et al., 1991). Adjustment requires knowledge and implementation of adaptation skills, which are aimed at enabling individuals to cope with the perceived stresses of transition (Kealy & Protheroe,

1996). Dawis & Lofquist (1984) note differences in adjustment styles, whereby *active adjustment* occurs when individuals adjust to their environment, and *reactive adjustment* allows individuals to make changes within themselves to facilitate adaptation. Both types of adjustment are needed for optimal adaptation to life in Canada.

Viewing repatriation as transition helps to normalize the readjustment period as a time of temporary disruption where anxiety is to be expected. It is also a time of inner reorientation which offers the opportunity to assess the expatriation experience and evaluate new directions and possibilities. To aid repatriation transition, recommendations to repatriates are now addressed.

Recommendations to Repatriates

The following are recommendations based upon the insight of participants in this study. These suggestions were found to be helpful, and include strategies for work, lifestyle, and psychological adjustment.

Work Adjustment

Existing literature recommends repatriates make active attempts to change the work environment and to seek out information (Adler, 1981, 1991; Feldman et al., 1993). This advice was echoed by each participant in the study with the following suggestions:

1. Take the initiative regarding job placement and begin this process well in advance of returning. Update resumes prior to returning so managers understand the experience gained internationally.
2. Become informed by asking questions to develop an accurate understanding of what to expect professionally upon return. This includes becoming apprised of the firm's repatriation policies.
3. Recognize that returning may mean temporarily taking a step backward in one's career. To help alleviate this issue, keep current with technical skills, as managerial positions or jobs at a

similar level or higher may not be available upon return.

4. While on assignment, maintain contact with colleagues or managers to remain familiar with organizational changes.

Lifestyle Adjustment

Wang (1997) developed a reentry training program which offers suggestions for lifestyle adjustment. The focus of her work involves preparing for the return by gathering as much information as possible in the same way one would when going overseas. This concept was used as well as these ideas by the study's participants:

1. Develop goals and a plan of action.
2. Ask questions, and prepare for the return in advance of repatriating.
3. Formulate a financial plan to ease the fiscal shock and to prepare for the many extraordinary expenses of returning. If possible, retain real estate in Canada during expatriation.
4. Become involved in the community and partake in pleasurable activities.
5. Socialize with other repatriates.

Psychological Adjustment

The predominant theme in the literature for psychological adjustment is developing accurate expectations (Black et al., 1992b; Black & Gregersen, 1998), while psychological reappraisal or viewing the more positive side of a situation is also indicated (Feldman et al., 1993). Participants had the following ideas for psychological adjustment:

1. View repatriation as a process which takes time to adjust.
2. Develop realistic expectations. This can be accomplished by talking to other repatriates, reading, and gathering information about work and lifestyle issues.

3. Recognize you are a changed individual due to your expatriation experience.
4. Develop the attitudes of patience and flexibility.

Summary of Recommendations to Repatriates

One recommendation that covers all facets of adjustment is to supplement the strategies that were helpful during the process of expatriation. There is also a common thread that runs through these recommendations, which involves taking the initiative to determine the course of repatriation. It is empowering for individuals to make the transition of reentry a purposeful and meaningful endeavour by creating the future and determining one's destiny.

Recommendations to Corporations

The parent company's handling of the repatriation process has a substantial impact on how returning employees adjust to coming home (Black et al., 1999). An increasing number of companies are attending to repatriation (Black & Gregersen, 1999b) as they have begun to recognize the need to protect their investment in human capital (Arthur, in press-a). Companies may handle repatriation programs themselves, or outsource these programs. Most companies choose the latter unless they have the volume of international employees to warrant an in-house program (Windham International, 1998). Every effective company Black and Gregersen (1999a) studied considered repatriation an important issue, and the number of companies taking repatriation seriously are increasing. At the beginning of the 1990's studies showed that 31% of American firms had formal repatriation programs consisting of mostly career counselling and general relocation counselling (Black, 1991, 1992). Eighty-three percent of families received no pre-return training or orientation. In 1995, 75% of firms reported formally addressing repatriation issues, compared to 45% in 1993 (Chesters, 1996).

Repatriation and career development are very much interrelated, as both reflect the realization of a series of integrated decisions over time which facilitate the direction of the employee and the organization (Peterson, Sampson, Reardon, & Lenz, 1996). Repatriation programs are advantageous as they support personal adjustment, the career development process (Arthur, in press-a), and help companies retain people (Ioannou, 1994), thereby meeting both individual and corporate objectives. Effective repatriation programs means greater trust as perceived by the employees of the corporation valuing and using foreign experience (Scelba, 1996), and increased return on investment for the corporation. Through financing effective repatriation programs, the price of solving the high cost of repatriation failure is relatively low (Harvey, 1989). As an example, G.E. Medical Systems has concentrated efforts to improve their repatriation programs which has resulted in nearly eliminating unwanted turnover after repatriation, and international sales have increased from 10% to more than 50% of total sales in the last 10 years (Black & Gregersen, 1999a).

Goals of effective repatriation programs for corporations include: 1) creating a competitive advantage by retaining experienced global managers; 2) valuing expatriate experience upon reentry by using international expertise, technical skills, and market knowledge; 3) achieving high returns on investment from foreign assignments; and, 4) meeting strategic objectives through transferring knowledge over international borders (Ioannou, 1994; Scelba, 1996).

Reentry training will provide for the repatriate: 1) acknowledgement that reverse culture shock exists, that it affects every returnee to some extent, and that it often is overlooked; 2) encouragement to consider changes in themselves and at home, and how those differences will impact the reentry experience; 3) suggestions to start planning the return prior to repatriation;

and, 4) empowerment to ensure that repatriation is relatively worry free in the short term, and a positive learning process in the long term (Wang, 1997). Effective repatriation programs are advantageous for everyone involved, and both the repatriate and the corporation can benefit from reentry training when it is viewed as a constructive growth experience.

There are two broad categories of recommendations to corporations regarding repatriation of international personnel. This consists of the development and implementation of a formal repatriation policy which includes: 1) a repatriation package, and 2) a career development plan. These are discussed in the following sections.

Repatriation Package

It is recommended that a repatriation package be included in an executed contract outlining the entire international cycle extending prior to expatriation and following repatriation. The primary purpose of this process is to clearly define the roles and obligations of both the employee and the corporation. This document should outline the benefits and services available to the employee and family upon repatriation. The following combines suggestions by the repatriates of the study, from existing literature, and by the researcher which are based upon the concerns presented by the participants:

Home country sponsor. A home country sponsor is an important part of the repatriation package occurring during the international assignment. Some organizations have developed sponsor or mentor programs as links to assist the expatriate while abroad and lessen the corporate shock upon returning. The sponsor is a home office colleague or manager who keeps the expatriate apprised of the formal and informal organizational changes that occur during the overseas assignment (Weiss & Grippo, 1992; Zurawski, 1991). Research shows that

organizational sponsors or mentors are often suggested, but only used by 22% of American, 22% of Japanese, and 51% of Finnish multinational corporations (Black & Gregersen, 1992).

Assisting the physical aspects of repatriation. Supporting the physical aspects of repatriation includes any compensation and relocation allowances for the return of household goods as well as the parties responsible for each detail of the move. This will also incorporate information regarding temporary accommodation (eg. maximum length of time and allowable costs).

Assisting the psychological details of repatriation. Psychological provisions for both the employee and the family may include the following:

a) Debriefing by company personnel to discuss organizational changes, technological innovations, and information aimed at providing realistic expectations of the return to the home country office (Black & Gregersen, 1992; Thompson, 1992).

b) Counselling support if required. Counselling implications are reviewed in the last segment of Part II of this chapter.

c) Repatriation workshops. Some corporations have developed repatriation workshops for the entire repatriating family (Scelba, 1996). These are used as a means of examining the professional, social, and organizational changes associated with repatriation, and to assist in developing strategies to cope with repatriation transition. During these workshops it is recommended to keep a journal to record changes, to determine sources of frustrations and anxieties, and to note how one coped with certain situations (Black & Gregersen, 1999a).

Tracking critical incidents and ways of coping can be a useful strategy for managing cross-cultural transitions (Arthur, in press-b). Group programs may be beneficial so repatriates can share

experiences and strategies with others.

Spousal/family assistance. Data has shown that spousal and family repatriation adjustment has an enormous and positive impact on the employee's adjustment to work (Engen, 1995). Spousal and family assistance is part of recognizing that expatriation/repatriation changes the dynamics of the employer/employee relationship to that of an employer/family relationship. Many spouses make significant career sacrifices on global assignments, and companies may offer assistance in the area of job search or continued education upon return (Black et al., 1999; Zurawski, 1991). As well, spousal and family assistance needs to account for personal reasons that may affect the timing of repatriation.

This repatriation package will be most beneficial if it begins before reentry and continues during the process of repatriation adjustment. Furthermore, it is recommended these programs are provided by professionals who are trained in the areas of transition and cross-cultural adaptation. Job placement is the second aspect of the repatriation policy and is now discussed.

Job Placement

One of the strongest predictors of repatriation success for the employee is job placement upon reentry (Black & Gregersen, 1998, Black et al., 1999; Zurawski, 1991). To ensure optimal use of repatriated personnel, planning for the repatriate's return before the end of the assignment is necessary (Thompson, 1992). Home country executives should begin planning for repatriation 9 to 12 months before the end of the international assignment (Richardson & Rullo, 1992).

There are a number of ways cited in the literature to increase job satisfaction and ease the transition from the foreign posting to the domestic job. Most importantly, the company needs to outline a clear career path, and offer a challenging position which incorporates the employee's

newly acquired skills and expertise (Allen & Alvarez, 1998; Thompson, 1992). It is recommended that head office begins to consider assignments prior to reentry, and assesses the skills and knowledge gained on the international assignment. It may be beneficial for managers to obtain an updated resume as well as information on career goals so there is adequate information to make job placement decisions. Also, managers may want to meet with the employee to determine the best fit for the individual and the organization. This type of placement program has been proven to dramatically reduce turnover rates (Black & Gregersen, 1999a).

The corporate philosophy needs to consider the following points when developing an effective job placement program for repatriates: 1) Make career development a priority during and after the foreign assignment; 2) job placement must benefit both corporate goals and the employee's career aspirations; 3) link overseas assignments to long-term career plans; 4) clearly defined responsibilities and expectations creates greater efficiency and effectiveness in repatriation adjustment; and, 5) increased communication and coordination between the home office, overseas subsidiaries, and employees before, during, and after an assignment will help lead to optimal job placement upon return. These job placement strategies are an effective way of recognizing, valuing, and validating foreign accomplishments and are a powerful management technique for increasing repatriates' adjustment, satisfaction, and effectiveness (Adler, 1991).

Summary of Recommendations to Corporations

A formal repatriation policy which includes a repatriation package and well planned job placement benefit both the employee and the corporation in many ways. These include decreased attrition, improved return on investment, decreased adjustment time, and greater productivity, which are a result of increased employee satisfaction. These repatriation policies will ideally be

developed by professionals with qualifications covered in the following section

Counselling Implications

There are a number of counselling implications indicated by this study for professionals working with repatriates. First, the skills and knowledge necessary for working in this area of specialization is introduced. Second, direction for counselling repatriates is presented, and third, recommendations for professionals working with corporations are proposed.

There is a distinct skill set necessary for professionals working with repatriated employees and their families. This will include education in the areas of cross-cultural adaptation, transitions and adjustment, and career development (Westwood & Quintrell, 1994). These professionals will require familiarity with the entire cycle of international work and issues specific to repatriation. This knowledge and expertise may be gained through reading literature in these areas, course work, seminars, and through membership in professional organizations such as human resource development groups and international business associations.

These counsellors will necessarily be trained in counselling psychology and have a thorough understanding of how to develop a therapeutic relationship in a safe and supportive environment. They will also possess the ability to assess individual needs, which may or may not be related to the experience of returning to Canada. Part of working with repatriates will involve normalizing the anxiety and disorientation of repatriation (Bridges, 1980). This means approaching repatriation as a life transition, a time to examine all aspects of one's life, and for insight and reflection. Repatriation may be reframed as a period of change and growth, and an occasion to develop accurate expectations, learning outcomes, positive experiences, and opportunities. As well, identification of supports, resources, and strategies will help instill a sense

of internal control. This in turn can create a feeling of hope, the motivation to discover alternatives, the impetus for action, and a sense of purpose and direction (Magnusson, 1992).

Another important component of working with repatriates will be the development of the attitudes of flexibility, being positive, open-minded, and acceptance (Gelatt, 1991). Positive uncertainty is a new counselling framework to help people deal with change and ambiguity, accept uncertainty and inconsistency, and utilize the intuitive side of thinking and deciding. It is a way to plan one's career and to make choices about the future when one does not know what the future will bring. Developing the knowledge and skills involved in creative decision making will allow repatriates to use this decision making model as they face the many challenges and changes associated with repatriation.

Lastly, working with organizations regarding repatriation primarily involves education. Corporations need to understand the impact repatriation has at both personal and professional levels, and how effective repatriation programs benefit both the employee and the company. As well, assessment of the type of repatriation assistance which would meet the needs of both the corporation and repatriating personnel is necessary. With this information, the development and implementation of a repatriation policy may begin, which includes creating appropriate measures to determine the effectiveness of repatriation programs.

Part III: Strengths and Limitations

This section is a critical analysis of the strengths and limitations of the current study. The sample, timing of the data collection, the questionnaire and semistructured interview, and role of the researcher are all given consideration. The last segment offers suggestions for future research.

All participants except one worked for corporations that were related to the natural

resources sector of our economy. While this could be considered fairly standard for a sample from the Calgary area, it is not an indicative selection of repatriated employees from a larger geographic area. One cannot help but wonder if a greater diversity of industries would have demonstrated any substantial differences in findings.

The gender split of the participants in this study closely approximates American expatriates working abroad (Windham International, 1998). While the female participant in this study was single without children, it would also have been interesting to interview a woman who had worked internationally with a family, as this adds more dimensions to repatriation adjustment.

Much of the data presented by the participants represents a retrospective account of the experience of repatriation. As well, all participants had been repatriated for varying amounts of time, ranging from 4 months to just over one year. This raises speculation that differing conclusions may have resulted if interviews of each participant had occurred throughout the process of repatriation

The questionnaire and semistructured interview format is both a strength and weakness of the study. The questions helped to focus the interview while allowing individuals to explore areas of personal meaning (Kvale, 1996). While the questionnaire was useful in preparing the participants for the interview process, the questions themselves may have limited the topics discussed during the interview itself. To alleviate this problem though, the researcher did invite all participants to add any other issues they felt were relevant to the conversation. Also, as with any questionnaire or interview, there will exist a certain amount of undisclosed information, and it is impossible to determine how or to what extent this affects the results of the study.

The Role of the Researcher

While the researcher utilized established methods of analysis to reduce the subjectivity of interpretation, *perspectival subjectivity* occurs when researchers espouse varying perspectives and formulate different ways of approaching the same research questions to arrive at different interpretations of meaning (Kvale, 1996). While this is considered a strength when a study involves multiple researchers, it becomes a limitation when only one researcher is involved in the study. Despite the themes having been validated by the participants, my perspective, and therefore the extrapolation of themes may be influenced by my own personal and professional experiences with repatriation.

Suggestions for Future Research

The findings of this study indicate some areas where future research is warranted. This study has focused on the repatriation experience and adjustment strategies of eight employees returning to Canada. While the following suggestions are not exhaustive, they are meant to encourage reflection of possible research projects.

The literature is devoid of studies conducting longitudinal investigations of repatriates which follow reentry as an evolving process. While research has determined there are distinct stages of repatriation, these have been delineated through quantitative research using questionnaires (Black & Gregersen, 1999b; Black et al., 1992b). Qualitative studies utilizing semi-structured interviews over the span of repatriation adjustment may provide an even greater perspective on the personal meaning of repatriation.

Existing literature tends to identify repatriates by nationality (Feldman et al., 1993; Gregersen & Black, 1996; Hammer et al., 1998; Harvey, 1989; Stroh et al., 1998), yet few studies

provide information on occupation and industry. Studies comprised of repatriates from a broad spectrum of occupations and industries may provide greater insight into differences in repatriation based upon these demographic characteristics, and would most certainly provide information on the diversity in repatriate programs throughout various business sectors.

Another area where research is lacking is the repatriation experience of family members. This research could be aimed at understanding the repatriation process and adjustment strategies of spouses and children. Results of this type of study may also add to the knowledge of repatriation and the repatriated employee, as the interaction effect of adjustment and family members is thought to be large (Engen, 1995).

Part IV: Concluding Statement

As globalization continues to grow, so do the opportunities for international assignments. Telecommunications, aerospace, engineering, information technologies, banking, financial services, and natural resource firms are all prime targets for continued global expansion (Joinson, 1998). Companies of all sizes are continuing to expand internationally, whereby 80% of midsize to large companies have employees working overseas (Richardson & Rullo, 1992). Each year U.S. firms send 100,000 Americans to foreign postings, and there are approximately 300,000 U.S. expatriates on assignment at any given time (Engen, 1995; Windham International, 1998).

It appears the number of employees working internationally will continue to grow. Two thirds of respondents in a survey of 200 major corporations have increased their international assignments in the last five years, and two thirds plan to further increase this number in the next five years (Deshpande, 1992; Chesters, 1996; Ioannou, 1995). More recent news suggests the global financial crisis has affected the rate of expatriation, and although the expatriate population

and global business outlook is positive and continues to grow, a more conservative financial outlook is expected to slow global activity worldwide in the short term (Hansen, 1998; Newsbreak, 1999, April 12). These U.S. statistics demonstrate the considerable effect globalization has on the world of work, and emphasize the importance of understanding cross-cultural work transitions (Hansen, 1990). It is timely to consider the impact of globalization on the Canadian workforce.

This study has contributed to understanding the repatriation of Canadian employees in six ways. First, the use of qualitative analysis offers a more complete portrayal of the transition process and clarifies the personal meaning of repatriation. Second, the study contributes to the knowledge base of repatriated Canadians. Third, the data focused not only on repatriation concerns, but also solutions and strategies. Fourth, the analysis simplifies repatriation variables into three categories of work, lifestyle, and psychological adjustment. Fifth, the study helps multinational corporations gain an understanding of why effective repatriation practice is important and how to develop repatriation programs. Finally, the interpretation of data illuminates the experience of repatriation for employees, and offers solutions on how to become proactive advocates of their own process.

The current research has found repatriation to be a profound life transition affecting all family members and all life roles. This study also demonstrates that repatriation has a significant influence on the corporation, and the administration of the repatriation process can greatly affect corporate performance. Therefore, repatriation must be defined as a synergistic process, requiring a collaborative effort by both the employee and the corporation in order to attain optimal adjustment, growth, satisfaction, and achievement.

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APPENDIX A

REPATRIATION ADJUSTMENT: PRE-INTERVIEW INFORMATION

Number (completed by researcher) _____ Gender: M _____ F _____ Age _____

Occupation _____ Number of years in occupation _____

Company number (completed by researcher) _____

Type of company _____

Number of years employed with company _____

Brief job description: Current title _____

Current responsibilities _____

Overseas title _____

Overseas responsibilities _____

Country and city of overseas assignment _____

Length of assignment _____

Reason for repatriation _____

Length of time back in Canada _____

Brief description of any other overseas assignments (if applicable) _____

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

Answer any questions regarding the interview process, the purpose of the research, confidentiality, etc.

Brief summary and clarification of pre-interview information.

Compare and contrast your preparation for going overseas to your preparation for returning to Canada.

How would you describe your overseas experience on a scale from very negative to very positive?

When you knew you were repatriating to Canada, what was your reaction? (Both thoughts and feelings.)

Which strategies have been most helpful?

Which strategies have been least helpful?

Which issues would you say have been resolved?

Which issues are still outstanding? What are you, your family members, your organization, or others doing to work on outstanding issues?

What were your expectations of returning to Canada? Personally? Professionally?

How did your expectations match the reality of returning to Canada?

Were visits helpful for your repatriation adjustment?

Tell me about the opportunities, learning outcomes, and positive experiences which have occurred as a result of your repatriation adjustment.

What advice would you have for employees and their families who are repatriating?

What advice do you have for corporations who are repatriating employees back to Canada?

The focus of the second interview clarified the information previously collected and validated the themes extracted from the questionnaire and the initial interview.

APPENDIX C

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
Department of Educational Psychology
Room 302, Education Tower
2500 University Drive N.W.
Calgary, Alberta T2N 1N4

September 7, 1999

Dear _____,

My name is Susan MacDonald. I am a graduate student in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Calgary, conducting a research project under the supervision of Dr. Nancy Arthur, as part of the requirements towards a M.Sc. degree. I am writing to provide information regarding my research project entitled *The Repatriation Experience and Adjustment Strategies of Employees Returning to Canada*, so that you can make an informed decision regarding your participation.

The purpose of the study is to learn about the adjustment experience of expatriates returning to Canada after working overseas and the strategies used in this process. As part of the study you will be asked to complete a pre-interview questionnaire, and to participate in two individual interviews. The questionnaire will take about thirty minutes to complete, while each interview will be no longer than two hours each. You should be aware that even if you give your permission, you are free to withdraw at any time for any reason without penalty.

Participation in the study will involve no greater risks than those ordinarily experienced in daily life, and is not related to the subjects' current or future employment in any way.

Data will be gathered in such a way as to ensure anonymity. Regarding the collection of data, only number codes will appear on all questionnaires and interview schedules. Employers will not have access to raw data. With respect to future published studies, information may be presented at both the group and individual level. In cases of individual information, responses will not reveal names, but will use pseudonyms as part of a narrative analysis in which your chosen words may be used and published.

Once collected, responses will be kept in strictest confidence. The raw data will be kept in a locked file cabinet accessible only by the researcher and her supervisor and will be destroyed two years after completion of the study. Written documentation will be shredded, and audiotaped data will be erased.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 242-6115, my supervisor Nancy Arthur at 220-6756, the Office of the Chair, Faculty of Education Joint Ethics Review Committee at 220-5626, or the Office of the Vice-President (Research) at 220-3381. Two copies of the consent form are provided. If you would like to participate in this study, please return one signed copy to me and retain the other copy for your records.

Thank-you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Susan M. MacDonald

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
 Department of Educational Psychology
 Room 302, Education Tower
 2500 University Drive N.W.
 Calgary, Alberta
 T2N 1N4

I, the undersigned, hereby give consent to participate in a research project entitled *The Repatriation Experience and Adjustment Strategies of Employees Returning to Canada*.

I understand that such consent means that I will complete a pre-interview questionnaire which takes approximately thirty minutes, and take part in two individual interviews which will last about two hours each.

I understand that participation in this study may be terminated at any time by my request or at the request of the investigator. Participation in this project and/or withdrawal from this project will not adversely affect me in any way.

I understand that this study will not involve any greater risks than those ordinarily occurring in daily life, and is not related to my current or future employment in any way.

I understand that the responses will be obtained anonymously and kept in strictest confidence.

I have been given a copy of this consent form for my records. I understand that if I have any questions I can contact the researcher at 242-6115, her supervisor at 220-6756, the Office of the Chair, Faculty of Education Joint Ethics Review Committee at 220-5626, or the Office of the Vice-President (Research) at 220-3381.

 Date

 Signature

 Participant's Printed Name