The Repatriation of Corporate Female Executives: A European Study

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The Repatriation of Corporate Female Executives: A European Study

Colette Collins-O'Sullivan
THE REPATRIATION OF CORPORATE FEMALE EXECUTIVES: A EUROPEAN STUDY

Colette Collins-O’Sullivan, BBS

A Thesis Submitted for a Masters Degree in Business Studies

Department of Adult Education
Cork Institute of Technology

Research Supervisor:  Dr Margaret Linehan

JULY 2003
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The Interview Guide

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DEDICATION

To the memory of my Dad, he would have been so chuffed
I wish to express my sincere thanks to the following persons for the contributions they made to this research.

- First and foremost to my research supervisor and mentor Dr. Margaret Linehan for giving me the opportunity to conduct this research, for her constant guidance, support and encouragement throughout and for just being the ‘perfect supervisor’. Thanks a million Margaret.

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SUMMARY

Over the past number of years there has been an increasing recognition that an important element of a successful foreign assignment includes a successful repatriation process. In recent years, empirical studies of women in international management from a European perspective have been carried out, however, the topic of female repatriation still remains a relatively unexplored area. The majority of the existing research on repatriation is taken from a male perspective. The particular focus of this study is the repatriation process from a female perspective. Twenty-seven senior international female managers representing a wide range of industry and service sectors were interviewed. The study assesses an exclusively senior sample of female managers who have completed at least one international assignment and who have been repatriated to their home countries.

This study of senior female repatriated managers makes a theoretical contribution, not only to the analysis of gender and international human resource management, but also to wider debates within the contemporary women in management and career theory literatures. The aims of the study were to determine if there are issues which are specific to women during the repatriation process and to suggest measures which organisations could introduce in order to help their female international managers make as easy a transition as possible.

The results of the study indicates that there are issues which are specific to women during the repatriation process and which should be considered by organisations when they are formulating their repatriation policies. The implications of the study for research literatures in women in management and career theory are also explored and a future research agenda developed.
Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study examines the repatriation process from the perspective of female corporate executives. The perspective being explored is that of currently employed senior female managers in a wide range of organisations who have made at least one international career move and who have been repatriated to their home country.

According to Handler and Lane (1997), the repatriation process is a frequently overlooked dimension of the international career move which can often be problematic for returning expatriates, their families and their companies. Research shows that while many companies handle the expatriation process reasonably well, very little attention has been paid to repatriation (Business International, 1978). Repatriation problems are complex because they involve the challenges of personal re-entry and professional re-entry at the same time (Linehan & Scullion 2002). A corporation has the opportunity to deepen its management talent base through successful repatriation but runs the risk of losing that talent, either because it is not well used in the domestic setting or because former expatriates leave the firm (Business International, 1978). In practice, many firms continue to adopt an ad hoc sink or swim attitude towards both employees and their families and many expatriate managers continue to experience the repatriation process as falling far short of expectations (Stroh et al., 2000). After returning home, expatriates generally expect that their international skills will be utilised to enhance the firms' competitive position (Black et al, 1992; Harvey, 1989). Organisations need to be aware of the importance of closing the gap between expectations and reality for expatriates returning to their parent companies and realise that multinationals which prepare their managers
for coming home with effective repatriation programmes will have a greater likelihood both of retaining these scarce human resources and of helping them make the difficult adjustment to being home (Linehan & Scullion, 2002). It is clear that the manner in which home country management chooses to deal with international managers after their return can define the success or failure of the assignment (Linehan, 2000). Yet, despite the problems associated with repatriation, coming back from an international assignment seldom receives the organisational attention it requires because repatriation is not expected to be problematic, as all the problems are expected to be connected with going out and getting settled (Gregersen et al., 1998; Torrington, 1994). Multinational firms often assume, that the culture shock of coming home should not be problematic, when in fact, the challenges of repatriation are generally at least as great as those encountered when going overseas (Harvey, 1989; Adler, 1981). The available literature on repatriation indicates that the problems associated with reintegration into the home country and organisation, after successfully completing an international assignment, often result in the resignation of the expatriate (Black and Gregersen, 1998; Bennett, 1993; Crawford, 1993; Feldman and Thomas, 1992).

The rapid globalisation of business and its impact on firms are beyond dispute (Black et al, 1999). If multinational firms are to prosper now and in the future, they must develop managers who can successfully formulate and implement strategies, invent and utilise technologies and create and co-ordinate information in a global context (Black et al, 1999). International assignments are the single most powerful means for developing future global leaders (Black et al, 1999). Research indicates, however, that dissatisfied repatriates can leave their organisations as early as two months after their return from an assignment abroad. This is mainly due to disappointment with their new jobs, frustration because the organisation does not make use of their skills acquired abroad and difficulty affiliating back into the home office (Breukel, 2001). Recent research regarding the improvement of the success of international assignments highlights
the challenges of repatriation (Cowell, 2001). A successful repatriation process can heavily influence retention rates of expatriates. Recent surveys report expatriate turnover in the range of 20-45 percent within two years of repatriation (Glezer, 2001). The costs to an organisation of losing these expatriate managers is very significant because they are valuable and expensive human resources who are capable of understanding the workings of both corporate headquarters and overseas operations (Stroh et al., 1998; Stroh and Reilly, 1997).

1.2 WOMEN IN INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT

One of the most significant features of the global labour market in the last half of the twentieth century has been the increasing labour force participation rate of women. In recent years, in particular, there has been an increase in the number of women pursuing managerial careers (Gordon and Whelan, 1998; Harris, 1995; Davidson and Cooper, 1993; 1992). Recent years have seen rapid increases in global activity and global competition in all industrialised countries, which has resulted in more women entering lower-level managerial positions (Izraeli and Adler, 1994:4). According to Alimo-Metcalfe and Wedderburn-Tate (1993), however, in terms of the managerial population, it is difficult to establish accurate figures for the proportions of women in management since definitions of management used by different studies may vary. Despite these definitional difficulties, however, it is evident from the extant research that women are not progressing to senior management positions at comparable rates to their male counterparts (Harris, 1995; Smith and Hutchinson, 1995; Burke and Davidson, 1994; Izraeli and Adler 1994; Bertyhoin-Antal and Izraeli, 1993; Davidson and Cooper, 1992).

Berthoin-Antal and Izraeli (1993) noted that, until the late 1970s, women managers were virtually invisible in most countries. In the mid 1980s, Ho observed that:
Statistics show that women represent one third of the world’s workforce, do two-thirds of the world’s working hours, but they earn only one tenth of the world’s income and own one-hundredth of the world’s goods … they hold less than one percent of the world’s executive positions (Ho, 1984: 7).

Despite women’s increased investment in higher education, their greater commitment to management as a career, the shortages of international managers, and the equal opportunity legislation, female managers in every country remain “only a tiny fraction of those in senior positions” (Adler and Izraeli, 1994:7). Adler’s (1987) North American research illustrated the success of women as expatriates, but home country senior male managers continue to be concerned about a woman’s ability to function effectively in countries where her activities may be curtailed because of local customs and regulations.

The option of limiting international management to one gender is an armchair ‘luxury’ that no company can afford (Adler, 1993b:55).

Berthoin-Antal and Izraeli (1993) reported that, during the 1980s, the under-representation of women in positions of power emerged as a ‘problem’, and became an item of high priority on the agenda of industrialised countries (Berthoin-antal and Izraeli, 1993: 53). Adler and Izraeli (1988) highlighted globalisation, skill shortage, labour force participation and women’s resources and commitment as the forces that contributed to this change. Adler and Izraeli believed that, first, the globalisation of competition created the need to encourage excellence and maximise the human potential in the work force. Second, demographic forecasts indicated a shortage of qualified white men for top-level jobs. Third, the increased participation of women in the labour force contributed to the perception of women as an underused source of human resources. Finally, the continuing investment in education and training made by women themselves
and their active searches for promotion made it more difficult to overlook them in recruitment and promotion decisions (Adler and Izraeli, 1988).

McGee-Calvert and Ramsey (1992) suggested that the study of women in management has not experienced "any dramatic leaps forward in quite a while", because using men as a standard of comparison and 'adding' females to the sample has not really changed the nature of the research (1992: 80). This study has taken as its starting point the unique perspectives and experiences of senior female international managers who have been repatriated. From these different perspectives and experiences, different assumptions about women in international management and female life-style choices are arrived at. McGee-Calvert and Ramsey also suggested that women's collective voice has been silenced in the field of management, because of pressures placed on women to conform to the existing norms of organisations and because of the rejection by women themselves of the notion that they are different, as difference has most often been defined as inferiority (1992: 83). This study has given women an opportunity to break the silence in the field of international human resource management. The findings from the study resonate with the description of women's voice put forward by Aptheker (1989):

*Women have a distinct way of seeing and interpreting the world. This is not to say that all women have the same consciousness or share the same beliefs. It is to say that women of each particular culture or group have a consciousness, a way of seeing, which is common to themselves as women in that it is distinct from the way the men of their culture or group see things.*

1.3 **RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

In an era when lightening-fast technologies and shifting global alliances can transform industries within seconds, companies need to be able to draw on a
depth of talent and breadth of views that only a healthy mix of women and men in the highest ranks can assure. If businesses are to retain their edge in this fast-changing environment, they must take action to attract and retain the most talented men and women (Kurek, 2001). A study by Linehan (2000), of fifty senior international managers, predicted that the participation rate of female international managers would increase in future years. This being the case organisations, therefore, need to consider the particular needs of women when introducing their international management policies. In recent years, researchers have given the topic of female international managers considerable attention. The research, however, has been mainly conducted in North America (Adler, 1981; Caligiuri & Cascio, 1998). It is essential that research is conducted on this issue, from a European perspective, so that any problems which are specific to women during the repatriation process will be highlighted. This is especially important as research has determined that expatriates are an investment and a successful repatriation process can heavily influence retention rates (Glezier, 2001).

The limited research which has addressed the issue of female repatriation suggests that the barriers to women in international management are very strong during the repatriation stage. Many European based multinationals have a low sense of awareness of the need for repatriation programmes in general and a lack of appreciation of the particular needs of female executives in relation to the repatriation process (Linehan & Scullion, 2002). There is a dearth of empirical research which details the repatriation phase for female international managers, presumably because of their relative scarcity. Recent research on factors influencing the adjustment of women on global assignments virtually ignores the repatriation issue (Caligiuri et al., 1999; Caligiuri and Tung, 1999: Caliguiri and Cascio, 1998). In recent years, the repatriation of female managers is becoming more significant for a number of reasons, because of the high cost of expatriate failure, the growing numbers of female expatriates and the inability to retain international executive talent (Linehan & Scullion 2002).
The overall purpose of this study is to examine the repatriation process from a female perspective. There are a number of objectives to this study:

(a) To examine the repatriation process from the perspective of female international managers and to establish if the barriers to women in international management are still present at the repatriation stage.

(b) To establish if there are additional problems for women during the repatriation process which organisations need to consider when preparing their executives for repatriation.

(c) To contribute to the existing literature on women in international management

(d) To generate a future research agenda in the field of women in international management.

This study is particularly relevant, as very few existing European studies have specifically addressed issues pertaining to the repatriation of senior female expatriate managers. Most of the research which has focused on the repatriation process has been conducted from a male perspective. According to the recent Price WaterhouseCoopers (1999/2000) only nine percent of expatriate managers were women. Research indicates however that women are beginning to make significant advances into senior international roles and this trend is expected to increase in the next number of years (Van der Boon, 2003).

The participants in this study are all of European origin, however, some of the foreign assignments they completed were in non-European countries. Berthoin-Antal and Izraeli (1993) cautioned that researchers of cross-national studies have encountered difficulties in defining 'manager', between countries as there is generally no agreed definition of the tasks or level of responsibility at which one is deemed to be a manager (1993: 57). Furthermore, Blum and Smith (1988) pointed out that "jobs labeled management span a wide range of the job hierarchy within any organisation" (1988: 540). This study, however, has ensured in its field design that all twenty-seven participating managers were employed in senior
managerial positions, and this was clarified with participants after the initial letter requesting an interview.

This study will examine the repatriation process from the perspective of female international managers and it will also investigate if organisations have policies in place to facilitate the repatriation of their international managers. The study will attempt to determine if there are difficulties encountered during the repatriation process which are specific to women. The study will also attempt to analyse if the barriers to women in international management affect women's careers during the re-entry stage. It is hoped that in the analysis of these particular areas the study will also determine if there are specific policies which organisations might implement which would address the needs of their female expatriates during the repatriation process. This study proposes to address questions to repatriated senior female international managers, whose practical experience should contribute to our understanding of female repatriation and also to report, discuss and analyse other relevant issues which arise from the field work to be conducted.

1.4 RESEARCH FOCUS OF THE STUDY

This study is exploratory as there is very little extant research specifically aimed at addressing the issue of the repatriation of senior female international managers in a European context. Most of the research available on the issue of female repatriation is from a North American perspective.

A semi-structured interview format was used to ensure that the interviews covered the same main questions, but allowed respondents to respond in a variety of ways and raise issues that were pertinent to the topics being investigated. In order to get a number of potentially different perspectives, interviews were conducted with twenty-seven senior female international managers across a wide range of industry sectors. The general conclusions of the study are reported based on a summary of the interviews.
None of the managers selected for inclusion in the study refused to be interviewed. The interviewees were eager to participate and provided open and honest discussions on relevant issues. The eagerness to participate in this study is an indication that the participants support the idea that this is an under researched area which needs to be examined. It also indicates that because there are relatively few women expatriate managers, topics and issues which are specifically relevant to their situations have received very little attention in the international human resource management literature.

In the current study, different profiles of age, marital status, number and ages of children, and choice of occupation caused subtle differences in the issues each female manager faced. A married female manager, for example, may have valued preparation for the repatriation process which would have dealt with issues which would have affected her spouse and children. The study, however, focused on commonalities among the senior female repatriated managers rather than on variations, as a way of highlighting major themes and issues. Quantitative statements of the number of managers maintaining views on the major themes and issues are presented, thus clarifying where minority views are also represented.

The study takes as its unique focus, therefore, the perceptions of senior international managers in relation to the repatriation process from a female perspective. The particular perspectives explored in this study are those of presently employed senior female executives in Europe who have been repatriated to their home country. In order to support these perspectives, an interview guide was developed by the author and used for conducting all twenty-seven semi-structured interviews. In summary, the study extends work primarily in the international human resource management literature, while also contributing to the research literatures on women in management and career theory. It focuses on senior female international managers in Europe and assesses, in particular, their perceptions of the difficulties in relation to the repatriation process.
The literature review, in Chapter Two, illustrates that research studies which have addressed the issue of repatriation have been predominately studied from the perspective of the male international manager. The relevant literature reviewed the lack of consideration which organisations give to the repatriation process from the female perspective. The limited available literature shows that research studies on women in international management have highlighted the barriers which prevent women from taking part in international assignments. The participants in this study, however, are twenty-seven senior female managers who have overcome these barriers both in their home and host countries. This study, therefore, adds to the existing corpus of empirical research on the issue of repatriation of female corporate executives in a European context. This study, also, broadens the existing corpus of empirical research to include career successes of senior female repatriated managers.

In Chapter Three, some of the philosophical issues involved in choosing a qualitative approach to research are presented. The steps associated with developing and carrying out a research project using in-depth interviews as a research approach are discussed. A detailed description of the selection of appropriate participants, gaining access to the participants conducting the interview, and the process of reducing, organising and coding the interview data for this study is also presented.

In Chapter Four the main findings from the research are presented. The field research based on data from the interviews with the twenty-seven senior female managers is detailed. A cross section of organisations was selected to ensure representation from a variety of industries. The interview excerpts are organised thematically from the interview transcripts arising from questions where were based on a review of the relevant literature. The thematic areas are as follows:

- Preparing for repatriation
- The repatriation process
- The Glass Ceiling/The Glass Border
• Work-family conflict
• Networking
• Mentoring

These thematic areas provided a structured process of engaging the research, and open questions were placed at both the beginning and the end of the interview schedule in order to provide respondents with opportunities to raise and explore other issues of relevance. The implications of the empirical findings are discussed. The discussion of the data confirms, challenges, or adds to earlier published literature.

In Chapter Five, the final chapter, the conceptual contributions of the research are presented. The thematic areas introduced in Chapter Four are used to structure the discussion throughout the chapter. The present research builds upon and expands our knowledge about the repatriation process from the perspective of female executives. The contributions the study has made to research in management are in the areas of women in international management and in particular, the repatriation process of female international managers. This study has revealed that there are issues during the repatriation process which are specific to female executives. This study also highlights the need for the repatriation process to be considered in the context of an overall career plan. Some recommended changes which organisations could adopt in order to aid the transition of re-entry for female international managers are presented. Finally, an agenda for future research, which can build on the findings of this study, is presented.
Chapter Two

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Internationalization and globalization have become two of the dominant corporate concerns of the last decade of the twentieth century. Companies must either embrace the internationalization of trade and commerce or perish (Burham and Devine, 1992). Almost all commentators on management and organizational behaviour believe that internationalization, broadly defined, is a universal and irreversible process (Burham and Devine, 1992; Business International Corporation, 1992; Reich 1991). To compete effectively on a global scale, multinational firms need to develop executives with global perspectives and skills who can formulate and implement sound strategy (Morrison and Roth, 1992; Bartless and Ghoshal, 1992, 1987; Yip, 1989; Ghoshal, 1987; Hamel and Prahalad, 1987; Prohalad and Doz, 1987; Hedlund, 1986; Kogut, 1985).

The current global business environment presents strategic challenges for organisations as they rapidly internationalize through strategic alliances, joint ventures, international subsidiaries, etc. As a result, firms are increasingly sending their employees on international assignments both to implement current global strategies and to enhance the organisation's capabilities for the future (Beamish and Inkpen, 1998; Stroh and Caligiuri, 1998a; Morrison and Roth, 1992; Bartless and Ghoshal, 1992, 1989; Yip, 1989; Ghoshal, 1987; Prahalad and Doz, 1987; Hamel and Prahalad, 1985; Kogut, 1985). The faster pace of internationalization and globalization over the past decade has resulted in the increased mobility of human resources (Gregersen, Black & Morrison, 1998). International experience is fast becoming an essential stepping stone to all levels
of management in growing numbers of companies. More and more companies are having to groom managers who can function effectively in any area of the globe where they have business interests. International assignments are becoming a prerequisite for the effective functioning of growing numbers of companies and for the career prospects of their employees (Barham and Devine, 1991). There is a recognition that global organisations require an adequate source of qualified international managers in order to achieve competitive advantage, but shortages of such managers is becoming an increasing problem for international companies (Scullion, 2001; Scullion & Brewster, 2001; Pricewaterhouse Coopers, 1999; Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1999; Gregerson et al, 1998). As global competition increases, so will the competition for high calibre international managers and thus organisations will need to develop new ways to identify, attract and retain international managers (Gregerson et. al., 1998). In the 1999/2000 survey conducted by Pricewaterhouse Coopers, nearly half of the 270 international organisations surveyed reported major and increasing difficulties over the previous two years in recruiting managers to go overseas. Scullion (1992) also noted that there was a growing recognition that where companies are seen to deal unsympathetically, with the problems faced by expatriates on re-entry, that managers will be more reluctant to accept the offer of international assignments.

Firms often send managers on international assignments in order to develop their global strategy formulation and change their knowledge and skills (Black et al., 1992; Adler, 1991; Tung, 1988). These assignments usually last from two to five years (Allen and Alvarez, 1998; Hammer et al., 1998; Tung, 1988). After employees finish the two to five year assignments, firms usually bring them home to a position within the parent company to leverage the skills and knowledge gained overseas (Black, Gregersen & Mendenhall, 1992; Feldman, 1991; Oddou & Mendenhall, 1991; Harvey 1989; Adler, 1981; Kendall, 1981). The cost of maintaining one employee on an international assignment was estimated by companies to be four to five times the cost of an employee in their home operation.
(Forster, 1996). Many firms invest more than one million U.S. dollars sending and supporting each expatriate overseas only to receive no long-term return on this financial investment when these "globally competent executives" return home but leave the parent firm to utilize their international skills elsewhere (Black et al., 1992; Adler, 1991; Harvey, 1989).

Managers who have been on overseas assignments usually understand the workings of both corporate headquarters and overseas operations. These managers are also capable of transferring important technology or information from the company's foreign subsidiaries back to the home office or of providing critical co-ordination and control functions in the home office out to local operations (Black et al., 1998; Stroh, 1995). Research, however, shows that the turnover rates among repatriates, at some firms, range from 20 per cent to 50 per cent, a significantly higher percentage than among non-repatriate executives (Black et al., 1999). The costs to firms of losing these expatriate managers is very significant (Stroh et al., 2000; Stroh & Reilly, 1997).

Clearly, devising ways to increase the rates of retention of repatriated managers is critical. One approach is to focus on increasing repatriates commitment to both their organisations and their new work units. Research has shown that when executives' commitment to their organisations and work units is strong, the rates of retention are higher than average (Stroh & Reilly, 1997; Gregersen & Black, 1996; Huselid & Day, 1991).

2.2 EXPATRIATION

An expatriate is an employee of an organisation who is sent on a temporary work assignment in a different country from their home country (Brewster 1991). The period of adjustment, for expatriates, normally takes from three to nine months, depending on previous experience, the degree of cultural difference being
experienced, and the individual personality (Lane and Distefano, 1992). It is now widely recognised that relocation is a life transition which, perhaps uniquely, encompasses both the public and private lives of individuals (Munton and Forster, 1993). Expatriation does involve a major upheaval for the expatriate managers and their families; and while it often proves to be a very positive experience in the long term for all concerned, the immediate transfer is frequently problematic (Brewster, 1993). The transition from one location to another is often difficult for people to make, and it can result in a variety of financial, social, familial, marital, and psychological problems (Pinder, 1989). Research illustrates that interacting effectively with host nationals while overseas is the most difficult facet of cross-cultural adjustment (Black & Gregersen, 1999, 1991). Research also suggests, however, that individuals make cross-cultural adjustments, not only, when going on international assignments but also when returning home (Black et al., 1992, 1991; Adler, 1991, 1981). Gaining international experience and skills typically requires a significant sacrifice from expatriates and their families (Black et al., 1992; Adler, 1991; Black, 1988; Tung 1988).

For expatriates in particular, perceived organisational dependability is critical, since employees and families experience significant challenges throughout international assignment cycles and the organisation is seen as playing a critical role in supporting them during the assignment (Black et al., 1992; Brewster, 1991; Adler, 1991; Oddou & Mendenhall, 1991; Tung, 1988). The experience of working abroad transforms the traditional employer-employee relationship into one that involves the family and the partner’s satisfaction with and adjustment to an international relocation is a significant predictor of the success of the assignment. (Brett et al., 1995). When partners adjust poorly to being abroad, managers do too (Stroh et al., 1994; Black and Stephens, 1989). Sixty-two percent of companies believe that international assignments fail due to the problems faced by partners and families in adjusting to a new culture (Cowell 2001). It is often relocating partners who may have the most to lose from a move abroad – particularly if this means they have to give up work, or put their careers on hold (Forster, 2000).
Literature on adjustment among expatriates shows that, while spouse and family related variables are strong predictors of expatriates' adjustment, organisational policy can also have an impact (Stroh et al., 1994; Feldman and Thomas, 1992; Black and Stephens 1989; Mendenhall, Dunbar and Oddou, 1987).

Other factors which have shown to have a positive effect on expatriates' adjustment and willingness to complete their foreign assignments include having a mentor in the home office, pre-departure training, an appropriate and systematic selection process and having a corporate culture that positively values an expatriate assignment (Stroh et al., 1994; Black et al., 1992; Black, Gregersen and Mendenhall, 1992; Adler, 1990). Issues related to repatriation also affect expatriates' adjustment and performance (Stroh et al., 1994).

Torrington's (1994) work suggested that there is no profile of the ideal expatriate but that culture, economic development, geographical location and the job are important issues that should be considered in the selection of expatriates. A survey conducted by Harris (1995) revealed, that out of four hundred British based organisations employing a total of 3,619 expatriates, 91 percent of expatriates were male and nine percent were female. Research by Wells (2000) concludes that the ideal manager is seen as being a masculine, and this masculine image still exists. Research indicates that for female international managers cultural differences are often more significant than for male managers (Torrington, 1994).

Borg and Harzing (1995) noted that the first six months abroad are perceived by most expatriates in a similar way. At the beginning of the assignment many things are new and exciting, but after about three months difficulties begin to emerge as the expatriate experience what has been described as "culture shock". Land and Distefano (1992) defined culture shock experienced by expatriates as a behavioural pattern associated with powerlessness. These authors identified symptoms of culture shock as fatigue, tension, anxiety, excessive concern about
hygiene, hostility, an obsession about being cheated, complete involvement with work, family or the expatriate community, or in extreme cases, excessive use of drugs and alcohol. After about five or six months the expatriate starts to adapt to the foreign culture and gradually moves to a more neutral state.

Despite the recognition of various problems encountered with international assignments, on average, only 25% of aspirant expatriates receive preparatory training prior to departure. Most training, however, is of a very short duration, generally lasting only a few days (Linehan, 2000). Interestingly, in a study conducted by Linehan (2000), of fifty female international managers, only 10% of the managers received any form of training. Baumgarten (1995) noted that in 80% of the cases where training is provided, the partners are not included in the training programme. In Linehan's (2000) study, the interviewees believed that additional training should be provided for female expatriate managers to help them cope with the additional stressors associated with balancing work and home life in their new surroundings. The interviewees believed that pre-departure training would have been very beneficial to them, particularly since they had no female role models to follow. They also stated that it took one to two years for them to adjust to their new situations, as balancing work and home life was particularly difficult for them. They also reported that another contributory factor to their longer adjustment period was the lack of networking facilities and the lack of female role models.

2.3 REPATRIATION

Research suggests that repatriation can be an even more difficult adjustment than expatriation (Foster, 2000; Black & Gregersen, 1998). The available literature on repatriation indicates that the problems associated with reintegration of an expatriate into the home country and organisation, after successfully completing an international assignment, often results in the resignation of the expatriate.
Between 20% and 50% of all expatriates resign—a significantly higher percentage than among non-repatriate executives (Black & Gregersen 1998). Recent surveys in the Netherlands report expatriate turnover in the range of 20-45 percent within two years of repatriation (Glezer, 2001).

On average, expatriates have more than twelve years of experience with their companies, so that they are often at a stage in their careers when they hold a broad array of significant expectations about such matters as how their skills will be used when they return home (Peltonen, 1998; Black and Gregersen, 1991). They may also have specific expectations about the parent company and the work unit in which they will be placed. Not having these expectations met can lead to what Louis calls 'surprise', i.e. a difference between the individual's anticipations and subsequent experiences in the new setting (Louis; 1980). Expatriates also develop expectations while they are overseas, based on assumptions about the roles (and contracts) of other managers who have had international assignments. Many managers falsely believe, for example, that completing an international assignment usually leads to advancement and other accolades after coming home (Black et al., 1999). Expatriates may expect the firm to reward them for their sacrifices and/or give them a 'hero's welcome' upon return (Black et al., 1999). The repatriate is likely to expect to be rewarded with high-level job opportunities, opportunities to utilize skills acquired while abroad, expressions of interest from co-workers and friends in the overseas experience, and so on (Stroh, 1995).

After adjusting to a foreign culture overseas, expatriates generally face a significant readjustment dilemma when coming home (Adler, 1991; Black & Gregersen, 1991; Harvey 1989). It is often difficult for expatriates to go back to a domestic position which often seems less exciting and challenging (Glezer, 2001). Throughout their international assignments, expatriates must adjust to new cultures and work environments, which tends to alter mental maps and
behavioural routines about what to think, say and do both on and off the job (Black et al., 1999; Stroh and Caligiuri, 1998b; Brett et al., 1992; Nicholson, 1984). Behavioural adjustments made to facilitate adjustment overseas may be inappropriate to the home country and inhibit repatriation adjustment (Black & Gregersen, 1993; Adler, 1981). At the same time, changes may have occurred at home in the parent company, from corporate restructuring to shifts in strategy and policy. In addition, company executives, managers and staff are likely to have changed during the assignment. Changes are likely to have taken place as well among friends, family, in neighbourhoods, and in other areas of the expatriates' non-work life. In short, when expatriates return home, they have changed, the company they work for has changed, and their community has changed. Their adjustment experience is very much like that of a newcomer, in that there are inevitably more surprises that may require many attempts at sense-making (Louis, 1980).

Adjusting to one's home culture can be more difficult than adapting to the foreign culture (Adler 1991; Martin 1984). This may occur due to critical differences between acculturation and repatriation in such areas as:

(i) differing expectations: sojourners expect difficulties in adapting to a foreign culture, repatriates do not expect difficulties when returning to their home culture,

(ii) host versus home perceptions: host nationals understand that sojourners may not behave the way native members of the culture do, while members of the sojourners home culture do not expect the repatriate to act differently, and

(iii) change: sojourners expect to encounter changes when moving overseas, they typically do not expect to find changes when returning home (Martin, 1984).

Both practitioners and academics tend to assume that repatriation should be easy, after all, the person is "coming home". Research suggests, however, that a
return from a lengthy international assignment is often accompanied by a process of reverse 'culture shock' (Peltonen, 1997; Foster, 1994; Black, 1992; Weissman and Furnham, 1987). Managers may find that adjusting to being home is more difficult than adjusting to being overseas and for some managers, the process of adjustment may be so difficult that the only solution they see is to seek employment elsewhere (Adler, 1996; Stroh, 1995; Foster, 1994; Black and Gregersen, 1991). Research findings reveal that in some cases the readjustment to the home-country organisation often takes between six and twelve months (Linehan 2000).

Organisational commitment after repatriation is important because of the positive relationship between commitment and executive retention and the much higher turnover rate for repatriated executives compared to their domestic counterparts and the high direct and indirect costs associated with repatriation turnover (Gregersen & Black, 1995; Black & Gregersen, 1992: Oddou & Mendenhall, 1991; Brewster, 1991; Harvey, 1989; Kendall, 1981). Clearly, retaining organisational commitment is critical, since research has demonstrated that this is closely related to executive retention (Stroh and Reilly, 1997; Huselid and Day, 1991; Mowday et al., 1982).

During repatriation, research suggests that multinational firms need to enhance expatriates' commitment to the parent firm and develop commitment to the new local work unit to facilitate the retention of these strategic human resources (Gregersen, 1992). After making extensive sacrifices to complete international assignments expatriates often come home expecting a firm to highly value their international experience (Black et al., 1992; Adler, 1991; Oslund, 1991; Oddou & Mendenhall, 1991; Brewster, 1991; Torbiorn 1982). Research on U.S. expatriates indicates, however, that they often return to domestic organisations in which international experience is considered a liability, not an asset (Black & Gregersen, 1992; Oddou & Mendenhall, 1991; Harvey, 1989; Adler, 1981; Kendall, 1981). As many expatriates are literally and psychologically "out-of-sight
and out-of-mind” during international assignments, due to geographical and cultural distance between a parent company and a foreign operation the commitment of expatriates to a parent firm may deteriorate significantly by the time they return home (Black & Gregersen, 1991: Brewster, 1991; Harvey, 1989; Oddou & Mendenhall, 1991; Tung 1982).

Research indicates that the repatriation reality seems to be that expatriates are more often than not placed in “holding patterns” without any real job assignment for several months and relatively few receive promotions when returning home (Black et al., 1992; Black & Gregersen, 1991; Harvey, 1989). In the absence of immediate utilisation and any discussion of potential future utilisation, repatriates assume that what they have gained is not valuable to the firm (Gregersen & Black, 1991). Results from a number of studies indicate that:

(a) one out of every five employees who finish an overseas assignment want to leave the company when they return,

(b) less than half of returned expatriate managers receive promotions upon return, in spite of the fact that they were working years in the overseas operation,

(c) two-thirds of returning expatriates feel their overseas assignment had a negative impact on their careers ‘out of sight, out of mind’ and

(d) approximately 50% of returning employees felt their re-entry position was less satisfying than their overseas assignment (Linehan & Scullion, 2002; Adler, 1991).

Repatriation is often overlooked as a career issue instead of being seen as the final link in an integrated, circular process. Often when managers return home, they face an organisation that does not know what they have done for the past several years, does not know how to use their knowledge and does not care (Solomon, 1995). The repatriation of a corporate executive into the domestic organisation and social environment simultaneously has a sudden and profound impact on the individual as well as family members (Gregersen & Black, 1996, Tung, 1988). While there have been several attempts to define the relevant
issues associated with repatriation, little empirical evidence has been presented to support these concerns (Harvey, 1988).

2.4 PLANNING FOR REPATRIATION

Research indicates that the repatriation process can often be problematic for returning expatriates, their families, and their companies (Linehan 2000, Hundler & Lane, 1997). While there is increasing awareness among multinationals regarding the cross-cultural dynamics of adjusting to a foreign culture, there is less recognition of re-entry difficulties that often times accompany managers and their families as they re-adapt back into the home country environment (Brislin & Yoshida 1994; Black 1994, 1992; Black et al., 1992; Fontaine, 1986). The assumption by managers in the corporate headquarters is that the re-entry to the parent country is relatively non problematic or even an non-issue (Stroh et al., 2000; Black & Gregersen, 1998). Many expatriates and managers in corporate headquarters assume that after living and working for several years in a foreign country, returning to the parent company and being surrounded by one’s previous friends and associates should be easy. Research indicates this is just not the case. Rather than being an easy adjustment, returning “home” can be as challenging as being a newcomer in a foreign country, for changes have inevitably occurred (Louis 1980).

Even though the literature on repatriate management is less extensive than the expatriate literature, recent research suggests that the experiences of returning expatriates merit serious attention. The biggest single problem encountered by UK companies over the last ten years has been with the repatriation of employees rather than the management of expatriation (Forster, 2000). Previous research by Forster showed organisations had concerns about the management of repatriation. There were some fears that their preferred candidates for foreign assignments were starting to turn down offers for international assignments
because of uncertainties surrounding the move home (Forster, 1996). Yet, despite the problems associated with repatriation, it seldom receives the organizational attention it requires because repatriation is not expected to be problematic, as all the problems are expected to be connected with going out and getting settled (Gregersen, Black & Morrison, 1998; Torrington, 1994). Little appears to be done by companies to facilitate returning managers (Black et al., 1999: Gregersen & Black, 1995).

The result is often costly and dysfunctional to the effective functioning of both the returning employee and the organisation (Adler 1991; Kendal 1986). Poor management of the repatriation process negatively affects an organisation’s bottom line and is often related to lower levels of effectiveness and efficiency among expatriates while they are on foreign assignments (Black et al., 1992; Gregersen, 1992). According to Linehan (2000) not enough attention from home-country senior management is given to the problems experienced by the returning expatriates. Previous research also states that coming home can be just as stressful, challenging and disorienting as expatriation. Returning executives need just as many helpful resources and as much advice as they did when they moved abroad (Storti, 2001).

Stroh (1995) suggests that organisations should plan for repatriation well before employees on foreign assignment arrive back at the parent organisations. Consultation and planning before their return to identify possible ways to use their new skills should pay off in lower turnover rates and greater willingness among repatriates to stay with the organisation. Both the expatriation assignment and the repatriation move should be examined as parts of an integrated whole, not as two discrete – much less unrelated- events in the individual’s career path (Clague & Krupp, 1978).

Non-work issues such as housing and social status has a significant spill over effect on repatriation work adjustment. Given that firms often provide financial
incentives to attract executives into international assignments, it may be that while these incentives help recruit talent into overseas positions, it may make it harder to not have a decline in housing conditions and social status upon repatriation and thereby incur the negative impact of these factors on repatriation work adjustment and job performance (Black and Gregersen, 1991). In some cases, there may be little companies can do about this dilemma, but it is also possible that given how poorly many firms seem to plan for repatriation in general that these issues are simply not examined thoroughly enough (Black and Gregersen, 1991; Harvey 1989). It is clear from research that, if the partners and families of relocating employees are experiencing difficulties and stress, this can have a knock-on effect on the work performance of those employees. In other words, if partners and families can adapt quickly to the return home the principal breadwinner should adjust better, both at work and at home (Munton 1991).

Although research suggests that both expatriation adjustment and repatriation adjustment are difficult, it may be that the presence of a significant relationship between expatriation adjustment and intentions to stay in the overseas assignment and the lack of a significant relationship between repatriation adjustment and intentions to stay in the parent firm are a function of the difficulty and consequences of “leaving” in each case. Compared to leaving an overseas assignment, leaving a firm once one has returned to one's home country may be relatively easier (Harvey, 1989; Black, 1988; Tung, 1988; Adler, 1981).

Empirical work has found three facets of repatriation adjustment:

(1) adjustment to work (e.g., tasks, supervisory responsibilities, etc.)
(2) adjustment to interacting with home country nationals (e.g., socialising with home nationals), and
(3) adjustment to the general non job environment (e.g. housing, shopping, etc.) (Black et al., 1992).

By providing repatriates with accurate expectations about the job demands, constraints, and discretion in their new jobs, as well as in such non work related
parts of their lives as living standards and the overall financial situation, repatriates will not only more likely stay with their company upon return but also will be more committed to both their local work units and parent companies (Stroh et al., 1998).

The longer employees have to prepare for moves the easier it is for them to plan effectively, and to maintain a sense of control over, the move (Munton, 1991). A study by Forster (1994) shows that fifty per cent of respondents believe that they were not given adequate opportunities to discuss the return with those responsible for managing it. On their return to the home country expatriates often find that assignments do not prove to be as valuable as they had hoped. They return with their international experience not recognised and with no future career path, become disillusioned and leave the company – and a valuable company investment is lost (Cowell, 2001). Companies that prepare their managers for coming home by providing them with “repatriation training” and realistic, accurate information before their managers leave their global assignments are helping to increase the odds not only of retaining these valuable employees but of helping them to make the often challenging adjustment to being home (Stroh et al., 1998). Studies have shown that expatriates who work for organisations that provide challenging jobs for their repatriates are better adjusted while they are on their foreign assignments and that ultimately the companies they work for are more successful (Stroh et al., 1994).

Repatriating executives from overseas assignments is a top management challenge that goes far beyond the superficial problems and costs of physical relocation (Adler, 1986). Repatriation, in fact, means much more than coming home. Expatriates need to be managed when they are on international assignment. It is wrong to assume the assignment is career development enough. What expatriates have learned also needs to be captured (Cowell, 2001). Feldman and Thomas (1992) argue that multinational organisations, and global research, should focus more on corporate development programmes that
might enhance the adjustment and retention of repatriates. A good international assignment policy creates clarity and manages expectations for all parties involved. In a written policy the company can define its stance in matters related to assignments, such as preparation, compensation and benefits, responsibilities, relocation and repatriation (Kayzer, 2001).

2.5 THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT

Research by Harris (1998) suggests that international management has been hailed as a golden opportunity for women to take their place in global management positions. The skills widely acknowledged as being essential for effective international managers are those more closely attributed to a feminine style of management, such as interpersonal, intuitive and co-operative skills. A survey of women expatriates by Wilen (2000) concluded that more than half of the international managers surveyed believed that being female was more of an advantage overseas than a disadvantage. The study further stated, that, the Western corporate world is neither satisfying women's expectations nor assessing their overseas situations accurately. The study suggested that companies need to develop a new corporate attitude toward sending women managers on international assignments. The fifty interviewees in a study of female international managers by Linehan (2000), believed that it is much more difficult for female managers to be selected for an international assignment than it is for their male counterparts. The managers believed that, because of the additional risks involved in expatriate assignments, female managers are further disadvantaged in the selection process. In the study thirty-one married participants noted that home-country senior management presumed that they would not be interested in being selected for an international assignment because of their domestic responsibilities. The managers also believed that if they had not asked to be included in the selection process, they would not have been considered by home-country senior management. Research by Wells (2000)
concludes that in general the ideal manager, from an organisational perspective, is seen as "the white male". This concurs with research by IBEC (2001) which suggests that organisations generally regard characteristics considered to be masculine (forceful, aggressive, independent, objective, competitive) as traits required for management, rather than so-called 'feminine' characteristics (such as co-operative, flexible, subjective, intuitive, emotional), which can be viewed as ineffective management traits. Wilen (2000) states that worldwide, women hold a very low percentage of all international management positions. He suggests that this circumstance not only hinders the business success of multinational firms abroad but it also limits opportunities for women to succeed at home. After all, a multinational company would naturally prefer that its most senior staff have abundant overseas experience. Excluded from that experience, women are excluded from promotions and power.

Women occupy only about ten percent of management positions in Europe and women managers remain concentrated in junior and middle management positions (Vinnicombe & Colwill, 1995). Research studies suggest that fewer than five percent of women occupy senior management positions in Europe, and that this figure may be as high as eight percent in Greece and as low as two per cent in the United Kingdom (Davidson and Cooper, 1993). Research from Asia by Van der Boon (2003) indicates, however, that in the Asian business environment, the best man for the job is very likely a woman. Women working internationally find they are treated as a foreign expert first, and a woman second (Van der Boon, 2003).

Adler's (1994) North American research based on a study of 686 major multinational firms, revealed that only three percent of expatriate managers were female. Research suggests that the promotion of females to senior international managerial positions has grown at a very slow rate (Linehan, 2000).
Participants in Linehan’s (2000) study of female international managers believed that the adjustment period for female expatriates took longer because of lack of networking and scarcity of female role models, together with stereotypical attitudes and social and cultural norms which still associate successful management with male characteristics. The participants suggested that their own particular international career moves were more difficult, as they did not have female role models to follow. The interviewees perceived that these difficulties could be further reduced, if there was a female career path that they could follow, they also believed that not enough attention is paid to long-range career planning when arranging international assignments. The managers revealed that the stages of career development for female managers do not have the predictable phases that male life patterns tend to have. The participants confirmed that evaluating many life choices, for example, whether or not to have children, is more difficult and complex for female international managers. The interviewees perceived that tokenism, isolation and exclusion are often more pronounced for female international managers than for female domestic managers, due to even more male-dominated cultural and societal norms in many host countries.

Research studies of women in management world-wide, suggest that probably the single most important hurdle for women in management in all industrialised countries is the persistent stereotype that associates management with being male (Berthoin-Antal and Izraeli, 1993). A review of the relevant research literature in management shows that women face barriers to progression within organisations, barriers which are not faced by their male counterparts (Davidson and Cooper, 1992; White et al., 1992; Schwartz, 1989). According to Wilson-Solovic (2001) women battle against flawed beliefs and expectations, such as the view that they should not be given demanding jobs because they will leave to marry or raise families. Linehan’s (2000) interviews with women managers showed that the respondents perceived that the barriers to women in management appeared to be strong internationally.
The specific problems and pressures which have been identified as unique to female managers include: burdens of coping with the role of the ‘token’ woman; being a test case for future women; lack of role models and feelings of isolation; strains of coping with prejudice and set stereotyping; and overt and indirect discrimination from fellow employees, employers and the organisational structure and climate (Cooper and Davidson, 1982; Henning and Jardim, 1977). Female managers are frequently the sole female in an otherwise all-male environment, consequently they face increased stereotyping, visibility and performance pressure (Linehan, 2000). Linehan's (2000) research found that her interviewees believed that changing many male managers' negative attitudes towards female managers will take a long time.

Women managers in token positions are subjected to isolation imposed by males at work, which in itself can restrict social and business life. For a woman in management, the task of breaking into this male-dominated 'club' can prove difficult, and she can be denied policy information, opportunities, contacts and social support. It has been estimated that over 50% of all jobs in management come about through personal contacts. These difficulties, on top of trying to maintain a family and home, are creating enormous pressures on women in management, which may manifest themselves in a variety of undesirable ways (Davidson and Cooper, 1992, 1984). Research suggests that organisations generally have not succeeded introducing training and development strategies that effectively meet the needs of women (Linehan et al., 2001).

2.5.1 BARRIERS TO WOMEN IN INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT

The following section highlights the main barriers faced by women in international management as outlined in the relevant literature.
(a) The Glass Ceiling and The Glass Border

In a number of countries, while women are gaining managerial experience, they still encounter a glass ceiling – a term used to describe a barrier so subtle that it is transparent, yet so strong that it prevents women and minorities from moving up the managerial hierarchy. The glass ceiling is not simply a barrier based on the person’s inability to handle a higher-level job, it applies to women as a group who are kept from advancing higher because they are women (Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990). Marvin (2000) describes the glass ceiling as being a term used in Europe and elsewhere to describe all the frustrations of working women at every level who can see where they want to get to but who find themselves blocked by an invisible barrier.

Research shows that while organisations may be prepared to promote women through their domestic managerial hierarchy, few women are given opportunities to expand their career horizons through access to international careers (Alder and Izraeli, 1994; 1988). This is what Mandelker (1994) describes as the ‘glass border’, a term which describes the stereotypical assumptions by home-country senior management about women as managers and about their availability, suitability and preferences for international appointments.

In a recent study of female expatriates in multinational corporations, however, Meckman (2002) found that most of the respondents stated that the host nationals’ attitudes overall, were positive to them being sent on foreign assignments and that their male host national colleagues were not reluctant to accept them as expatriates.

(b) Work-family Conflict

Research indicates that the adjustment period for female international managers takes longer than for their male counterparts because of additional family and home responsibilities (Linehan, 2000). Work-family conflict is experienced when pressures from the work and family roles are mutually incompatible, such that
participation in one role makes it more difficult to participate in the other (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). Various studies have shown that women continue to take responsibility for household tasks and child rearing, regardless of how many hours they work outside the home (Hochschild, 1989; Lewis & Cooper, 1987; Pleck, 1985). A real sharing of household duties does not exist, and the 'dual burden' is still a source of stress for the majority of women (Winkler, 1990). Increasingly, many employees, especially women, face the pressure to have a satisfying life on the job while satisfying their career demands. Although egalitarian arrangements where men and women share home responsibility are "trendy", mothers in general are more responsible for worrying about what gets done at home and by whom (Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000). A study on equal opportunity and women academics in the U.K. by Forster (2001) found little evidence that their partners had made the career sacrifices that the women themselves had.

British research reveals that compared to married male managers, married female managers are much more likely to experience high pressures in respect of career and spouse/partner conflicts, career/home conflicts, and career and marriage/childbearing conflicts (Davidson, 1989). Some organisations operate a double standard for marriage: they view the married male manager as an asset, with a stable support network at home allowing him to give his undivided attention to his work, but they view the married female manager as a liability, likely to neglect her career at the expense of her family at every possible opportunity (Vinnicombe & Sturges, 1995).

Family responsibilities involving marriage, childcare, and household activities, can hinder women managers’ career achievements. These family responsibilities produce work-family conflicts to which women may respond by reducing their employment involvement, which, in turn, restricts career opportunities and advancement (Gutek et al., 1988; Olson and Frieze, 1987). Women experience more constraints than men and have to make more trade-offs. It is difficult to be
highly involved in both career and family simultaneously, but it is possible to be highly involved in both (Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000).

Linehan (2000) found that the interviewees in her research perceived the organisations they worked for to be too inflexible regarding the additional demands of balancing home and work, for example, while settling children into new schools, or on occasions when children are ill, or when child minders are ill. The interviewees believed that they experienced the additional strains associated with inflexible organisational policies particularly during the early stages of relocation and they also expressed that this affects females more than males. Furthermore, the interviewees in her study asserted that unless human resource management policies were re-examined and reassessed women would remain a small minority in international management. Friedman & Greenhaus (2000) suggest that workplace changes are necessary to promote more flexibility so people can better balance their work and family roles.

(c) Mentoring
According to Ragins (1989), one explanation for the disparity in advancement of women to senior international management is the gender difference in the development of mentoring relationships. Mentors have been defined as higher ranking, influential, senior organisational members with advanced experience and knowledge who are committed to providing upward mobility and support to a protégé's professional career (Kram, 1985; Collins 1983). Generally, a mentor provides information, training, advice, direction, achievement of social and professional integration in organisations and psychosocial support for a junior person in a relationship lasting over an extended period of time (Lewis and Fagensen, 1996; Davidson and Cooper, 1992).

Some of the benefits of mentoring include:
- profile raising,
- power enhancement,
role modelling and career guidance (Johnson, 1997).

Research illustrates that individuals who were mentored were found to have better career outcomes than individuals who were not mentored, regardless of their gender or level, and were found to have more organisational policy influence and access to important people and resources (Fagenson, 1989; Ragins, 1989). Research has also found that the most effective way of monitoring international career development is through mentoring. With a trusted mentor to turn to for information and support during their assignments expatriates will have an easier time coming home. The mentor ensures that the assignee was kept up to date with structural changes, promotional opportunities and general company knowledge (Cowell, 2001).

Research suggests that mentoring relationships, while important for men, may be essential for women, as female managers face greater organisational, interpersonal, and individual barriers to advancement (Burke and McKeen, 1994; Collins, 1983: Kanter, 1982: Farris and Ragan, 1981). Although mentoring relationships may be particularly important for the advancement of women in organisations, there is a smaller supply of mentors available to women than to men and women may be less likely than men to develop these relationships (Burke and McKeen, 1994; Brown 1985; Burke, 1984). There are two explanations suggested for this, the first explanation is that women may have trouble finding mentors because there may be potential discomfort in cross-gender relationships (Burke and McKeen, 1994). The second explanation put forward for the under-representation of women in mentoring relationships is that mentors may be unwilling to select female protégés. The selection process may, therefore, be biased by the tendency of male mentors to choose male over female protégés. Even if women are considered as suitable candidates for the protégé role, male mentors may choose male protégés because they may be more comfortable developing a professional and personal relationship with another male (Ragins, 1989). Studies have found that a key element in the selection
process is the degree to which the mentor identifies with the protégé and perceives the protégé as a younger version of himself (Bowers, 1984; Blackburn et al, 1981). Male mentors may be reluctant to sponsor female protégés because they perceive them as being a greater professional risk than their male counterparts. The failure of protégés may be a reflection on the competency and judgement of the mentor. Mentors of female protégés may therefore have more "at stake" and may profit less from the relationship than mentors of male protégés (Ragins 1989).

Women may seek to avoid the difficulties associated with obtaining a male mentor by seeking a female mentor. Research has established that women having a mentor of the same gender can abolish sexuality problems, and same-sex mentoring relationships do not have the disadvantages associated with the sexual connotations of cross sex relationships (Ragins & Cotton, 1991; Arnold & Davidson, 1990). Another difficulty may arise, however, that of finding a female mentor, as there are still very few senior female managers in comparison to males (Arnold & Davidson, 1990; Ragins 1989).

An Irish research study by Monks (1998) showed a positive relationship between female career advancement and mentoring. Monks reported on a mentoring programme with eighteen women managers who were mentored by male senior managers. Ten months after the programme began, the female managers revealed that they had more realistic expectations of their careers; they had learned the political skills of organisational life faster than if they had not been involved in the mentoring process, and they had matured and increased in self-confidence. Two years after the programme started, four of the female managers had been promoted and many of the others were recognised as candidates for future promotions. Linehan's study (2000) of senior international female managers found that having a mentor in their home organisation while on international assignment is particularly beneficial to women in terms of receiving social support and providing information on repatriation assignments. The study
concluded that female managers with mentors in their home organisation are more likely to have successful international careers than those without mentors.

(d) Networking

According to O'Leary & Ickovics (1992) networking is essential for success in any professional career. Networks usually involve contacts with a variety of colleagues for the purpose of mutual work benefits (O'Leary & Ickovics, 1992). The benefits of networking can be categorised into five types:

- information exchange,
- career planning,
- professional support/encouragement,
- access to visibility, and
- upward mobility (Welch 1980).

Studies on both networking and mentoring suggest some similarities. Both mentors and peer relationships can facilitate career and personal development. Mentors are particularly useful at the early stages of career, however, networking can be useful at all stages in career development (Burke & McKeen, 1994). Exclusion from organisational networks, however, compounds the isolation experienced by managers within the minority gender, which is usually female. This suggests that one of the most significant problems facing women seeking international careers can be found within the organisational culture (Linehan, 2000).

Managerial women are still less integrated with important organisational networks, and it is these internal networks that influence critical human resource decisions such as promotion and acceptance (Burke and McKeen, 1994). It is important for women to penetrate male networks to a greater extent if they wish to become sufficiently visible to win organisational promotions (Parket and Fagenson, 1994). Breaking into the male-dominated networking system is important because politics and networking are bound up with power, and unfortunately the power is still held
predominantly by men (Davidson and Cooper, 1992). Women's lack of advancement to high levels of management often results from their having less fully developed informal networks than men (Powell, 1993). A study of female international managers in Europe by Van der Boon (2003) concluded that the exclusion of women managers from business and social networks in Europe compounds their isolation, which in turn prevents them from building up useful networking relationships which might be advantageous to their international careers. Men, being the dominant group, want to maintain their dominance by excluding women from informal interactions.

2.6 REPATRIATION OF FEMALE EXECUTIVES

A study of international female executives by Linehan (2000), broached the subject of repatriation with the repatriated participants in the study. The interviewees, perceived that as many female international managers are in a pioneering role, this increases their uncertainty regarding re-entry. They believed that examples of gender discrimination which they had experienced at the re-entry phase included lower salaries and fewer promotions than those of their male counterparts. They also expressed concern about the opportunities or lack of opportunities to get desirable assignments on their return. The respondents suggested that two important factors were, the clarity of the repatriation process and the repatriation training received prior to returning to their home countries. They perceived that training for international managers and their families for the re-entry process, and for any likely problems related to repatriation, should reduce the uncertainty normally associated with re-entry. They believed that planning for repatriation to be a very important element in the international career move.

Linehan (2000) found that the main difficulties experienced by female repatriates were:

(1) failure to receive credit from home-country management for their achievements internationally
not having a suitable position to return to
outgrowing their home organisations
problems for social readjustment for themselves and their families, and
missed promotional opportunities due to home-country senior management overlooking them while abroad.

The return of pioneering female managers with international experience can cause difficulties for home managers when the returning managers are redeployed to suitable positions. Missed promotional opportunities because of being overlooked is a greater risk for female international managers, due to a scarcity of networking opportunities and mentoring relationships (Linehan, 2000).

The interviewees, in a further study of repatriated female managers by Linehan et al., (2001), perceived that home-country management do not always recognise the difficulties associated with re-entry. The managers believed that re-entry is often overlooked and their views echo those of Solomon (1995) who suggested that when expatriates return home they face an organisation that does not know or care what they have done for the past number of years.

In a recent study of thirty-two repatriated female international managers, by Linehan and Scullion (2002), findings suggest that little appears to be done by companies to facilitate returning managers, as only two companies in this study prepared employees for repatriation. The interviewees from these two companies asserted that preparation for re-entry facilitated the process and eliminated many of the problems that are normally associated with repatriation. Of the thirty-two repatriated managers, twenty-two were married, five were single and five were divorced or separated. Of the twenty-two married respondents, ten respondents believed that the progression to the top of their managerial careers was facilitated by the careers of their spouses becoming the secondary career. The fact that the overseas assignment may require that the accompanying spouse give up the continuity of their life and career can make dual-career issues problematic for the
repatriate couple. The interviewees believed that spouse-related problems are more serious when men have to adjust to the role of the secondary breadwinner. The participants in the study believed that spouses accustomed to working and having a career may be particularly frustrated if they encounter difficulties in finding work upon return to their home countries. The findings from Linehan & Scullion's study also indicated that in the majority of cases, despite the demands of returning to a 'new' job, the female repatriated manager takes responsibility for running a home, does most of the shopping, most of the house-cleaning and raising the children. The six married interviewees in their research who did not have children spoke of choosing a career in preference to children, and of devoting themselves 100% to their careers. These interviewees believed that family ties are seen as obstacles for promotion because these ties stand in the way of their availability at work, and being available is seen as essential for overseas assignments. The managers spoke of the additional problems they experienced which were associated with tokenism, isolation and exclusion, which they believed their male counterparts do not have to endure. The female executives also spoke of their concerns about their ability to get a desirable assignment on their return. Many of the repatriated interviewees returned to positions where they did not utilise the skills and experiences they acquired overseas. Thirty-one of the thirty-two repatriated interviewees believed that they had experienced a loss of status, loss of autonomy and faced major changes in their personal and professional lives when they returned to their home countries.

Linehan & Scullion (2002) also found that the interviewees believed that the difficulties with re-entry are underestimated at present, and that the re-entry process should receive more attention in the future. The participants also believed that not enough attention from home-country senior management is given to the problems experienced by the returning expatriates. The interviewees suggested that the re-entry stage should be built in as part of an overall career plan before the expatriates initially leave their home organisations. This plan should be developed to identify the probable length of stay, projected
responsibilities while abroad, and subsequent job position upon repatriation. The interviewees believed that if they had the support of mentors or networks during their international assignment the re-entry process might have been easier, as they would have been informed of developments in their home organisations while abroad.

The interviewees in Linehan & Scullion’s (2002) study who had the experience of mentoring relationships believed that their advancement to international management may be partially based on the successful development of mentoring relationships. The findings, from their study, suggest that in an international management context, and particularly at the repatriation stage of the international career move, a mentoring relationship is even more important than in domestic management. Linehan & Scullion’s (2002) study illustrated that the participants who had mentoring relationships, indicated that their mentors provided information, training, advice, and career direction for re-entering their home organisations. In addition, mentors were seen as important for introducing them to the informal networks which existed in their organisations. The interviewees suggested that while participating in international assignments improved their self-confidence and increased their visibility in organisations, mentors provide the contact and support from the home organisation which in turn facilitates re-entry. They also suggested that their mentors helped them keep in touch with their home organisations, which meant that when they re-entered their home organisations the ‘out of sight, out of mind’ syndrome was reduced. The findings from their study support the conclusions of previous studies on mentoring in domestic organisations, which reported that more women than men who advance to senior management positions have mentors, and women who fail to reach these levels cite the absence of mentors as critical to their failure (Burke & McKeen, 1994: White et al., 1992; Ragins, 1989).

The interviewees in the study by Linehan and Scullion (2002) also believed that networking may be particularly important for the repatriation of female managers
as a significant number of women may not have mentors. The interviewees further believed that the exclusion of female managers from business and social networks compounds their isolation, which in turn may prevent female managers from building up useful networking relationships which would be advantageous for their repatriation. The managers noted that peer relationships and interpersonal networks provide an additional source of organisational support for managers. The findings indicate that, given the absence of family and friends while abroad, the benefits provided by formal and informal networking in international management are of greater value when re-entering home-country organisations. The participants believed that networks provide means of "keeping in touch" with the home organisation and helped with future promotional opportunities.

The findings from Linehan & Scullion's study also indicate that, arising from their international assignments, the participants who have re-entered their organisations are now considered role models for future female international managers. The repatriated interviewees reported that in their senior managerial positions they attempt to help junior managers deal with barriers to advancement, and thereby provide psychosocial support and role modelling functions. They believe that as role models they are providing support and encouragement, and are helping to reduce isolation for junior female managers. They believe that if they can show junior female managers that it is possible to combine a successful international career with family life, more female managers may be encouraged to apply for international assignments. These interviewees stated that they received a sense of satisfaction and fulfilment from fostering the development of junior managers.

Research illustrates that many European based multinationals have a low sense of awareness of the need for repatriation programmes in general and a lack of appreciation of the particular needs of female executives in relation to the repatriation process (Linehan, 2000; Linehan & Scullion, 2002). This lack of attention to repatriation may have a long run impact on the performance of these
organisations because of the consequential problems for repatriate managers and their companies. There is also evidence that poor handling of repatriation issues may influence the willingness of future managers to accept foreign assignments. Research suggests that companies should develop integrated approaches to repatriation for female executives which incorporates both organisational/career issues and individual issues and suggests that effective mentoring and networking strategies are key elements of successful repatriation management for female international managers (Linehan & Scullion, 2002).
Chapter Three

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

It is a capital mistake to theorise before one has data
Conan Doyle (Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes, 1893)

3.1 THE PHILOSOPHY OF RESEARCH DESIGN

The purpose of research is to discover answers to questions through the application of scientific procedures. These procedures have been developed in order to increase the likelihood that the information gathered will be relevant to the question asked and will be reliable and unbiased (Sellitiz et al., 1951). According to Easterby-Smith et al., 'research design' is more than the methods by which data are collected and analysed. It is the overall configuration of a piece of research: what kind of evidence is gathered from where, and how such evidence is interpreted in order to provide good answers to the basic research question (1991: 21). In the current study, the answers provided to the chosen research questions are those of twenty-seven senior female managers, throughout Europe, who have been on at least one foreign assignment and who have experienced repatriation to their home countries.

There is never a single, perfect research design that is best for all research projects, however, Emory and Cooper (1991) suggest that good research should meet the following tests:

- The purpose of the research should be clearly defined and sharply delineated in terms as unambiguous as possible.
- The research procedures used should be described in sufficient detail to permit another researcher to repeat the research.
• The procedural design of the research should be carefully planned to yield results that are as objective as possible.

• The researcher should report with complete frankness, flaws in procedural design and estimate their effect upon the findings.

• Analysis of the data should be sufficiently adequate to reveal its significance, and the methods of analysis used should be appropriate.

• Conclusions should be confined to those justified by the data of the research and limited to those for which the data provide an adequate basis.

In choosing a research design Buchanan (1980) suggests that the researcher must be prepared to use her own judgement continually — and this is one of the most important outcomes from the use of research projects (Buchanan, 1980: 45-48). Morgan and Smircich observe that the appropriateness of a research approach “derives from the nature of the social phenomena to be explored” (1980: 491). Easterby-Smith et al., suggest that a knowledge of philosophy can help the researcher to recognise which design will work and which will not (1991: 21).

Furthermore, Easterby-Smith et al., advise that it is unwise to conduct research without an awareness of the background philosophical and political issues. They contend that it is possible to give advice about research methods, but that this can rarely be definitive (1991: 2). Some of the philosophical issues involved in choosing a qualitative approach will now be discussed.

3.2 QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research can be defined as “An unstructured, exploratory research methodology based on small samples which provides insights and understanding of the problem setting” (Malholtra, 1993). Qualitative methods have their philosophical origins in phenomenology or subjectivism (Burrell and Morgan, 1979: 22). A phenomenologist believes that the world and reality are not objective
and exterior, but are constructed socially and given meaning by people 
(Easterby-Smith et al., 1991: 24). A phenomenologist views human behaviour 
as a product of how people interpret their world. The task of the 
phenomenologist, and of qualitative methodologists, is to capture this process of 
interpretation (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975: 14). Van Maanen defines qualitative 
methods as “an array of interpretative techniques which seek to describe, decode, 
translate and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of 
certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world” (1983: 9).

Qualitative methods consist of three kinds of data collection: in-depth open-ended 
interviews; direct observation; and, written documents, including such sources as 
open-ended written items on questionnaires, and personal diaries (Patton, 1987: 
7). Qualitative methods permit the evaluator to study selected issues, cases, or 
events in depth and detail; the fact that data collection is not constrained by 
predetermined categories of analysis contributes to the depth and detail of 
qualitative data. In the qualitative case, the issue is not one of generalisation, it 
is much more intensive than extensive in its objectives (McCracken, 1988: 17).

Qualitative methods in management owe their origins most directly to the 
ethnographic and field study traditions of anthropology and sociology. More 
generally, the philosophical and theoretical perspectives which undergrid 
qualitative methods include phenomenology, symbolic interactionism and 
naturalistic behaviourism, ethnomethodology and ecological psychology. An 
integrating theme running through these perspectives is the notion that the study 
of human beings is fundamentally different from other scientific inquiries, such as 
agricultural and natural sciences (Patton, 1990: 20).

As mentioned above, qualitative methods have their philosophical origins in 
phenomenology or subjectivism (Burrell and Morgan, 1979:22). A 
phenomenologist views human behaviour as a product of how people interpret 
their world. The task of the phenomenologist, and of qualitative methodologists, is
to capture this process of interpretation (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975: 14). Qualitative methodologies refer to research procedures which produce descriptive data: people's own written or spoken words and observable behaviour. According to Bogdan and Taylor (1975), this approach directs itself at settings and the individuals within those settings holistically: that is, the subject of the study, be it an organisation or an individual, is not reduced to an isolated variable or to an hypothesis, but is viewed instead as part of a whole (1975: 4).

Bogdan and Taylor also argue that the methods by which we study people affect how we view them. They add that when we reduce people to statistical aggregates we lose sight of the subjective nature of human behaviour. Qualitative methods allow us to know people personally and to see them as they are developing their own definitions of the world. We experience what they experience in their daily struggles with their society (Bogdan and Taylor 1975).

The philosophical roots of qualitative methods emphasise the importance of understanding the meanings of human behaviour and the social-cultural context of social interaction. The phenomenologist, therefore, views human behaviour – what people say and do – as a product of how people interpret their world. To do this requires empathic understanding or an ability to reproduce in one's own mind the feelings, motives, and thoughts behind the actions of others. In order to grasp the meanings of a person's behaviour, "the phenomenologist attempts to see things from that person's point of view" (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975: 14).

Qualitative research is a field of inquiry in its own right and it crosscuts disciplines, fields, and subject matter (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 1). According to Marshall and Rossman, those who conduct qualitative research face a challenge. There are no explicit, guaranteed recipes to follow for pulling together a coherent, convincing, winning research study. Proponents of qualitative research designs do best by emphasising the promise of quality, depth, and richness in the research findings (1989: 19). Geertz advises that researchers who are convinced
that a qualitative approach is best for the question or problem at hand must make a case that ‘thick description’ and detailed analysis will yield valuable explanations of processes (1973: 5). Guba and Lincoln have made the point that qualitative methods are preferable to quantitative methods when the phenomena to be studied are complex human and organisational interactions and therefore not easily translatable into numbers. When researchers use such methods as interview, observation, use of non-verbal cues and unobtrusive measures they use tacit as well as propositional knowledge to ascribe meaning to the verbal and non-verbal behaviour that is uncovered (Guba and Lincoln, 1981: 88).

Qualitative data have been described by quantitative researchers as ‘soft’, ‘unscientific’ and ‘non-reproducible’; while to the qualitative researcher neither the data nor the method are ‘soft’ or ‘unscientific’, they are ‘rich’. Fineman and Mangham suggest that in their experience it has been the ‘soft’ qualitative parts that have saved many of the research studies of the day, not the ‘hard’ quantitative parts. Whereas qualitative data can be both ‘rich’ and ‘deep’, quantitative data which are obtained at a distance from everyday activities may have ceased to ‘live’ (Fineman and Mangham, 1983: 297). Wells identifies the crucial aspect of qualitative data as the richness of the information generated: “Compared to words, numbers are sort of round and smooth. They don’t have little fish-hooks of meaning standing out all over them” (1976: 13-16). In support of a qualitative approach some researchers (Van Maanen, 1983; Fineman and Mangham, 1983; Geertz, 1973) make reference to the thick description, rich insight and full, rich, earthy holistic and real data which arise from qualitative studies.

Disadvantages associated with the qualitative method are its labour intensive nature; analysis and interpretation of data may be very difficult; and in the past, policy makers gave low credibility to studies based on a qualitative approach (Easterby-Smith et al., 1991: 104). This credibility problem, however, appears to
be changing as management research moves into the post-positivist era (McCracken, 1988: 14).

According to Filstead (1970):

The qualitative perspective in no way suggests that the researcher lacks the ability to be scientific while collecting the data. On the contrary, it merely specifies that it is crucial for validity – and, consequently, for reliability – to try to picture the empirical social world as it actually exists to those under investigation, rather than as the researcher imagines it to be (1970: 4).

According to Bennett (1991), when choosing a research methodology it is important to know if the research is concerned with exploring what might be, or verifying what is, and to choose methods appropriate to this. There are other points that should be borne in mind when choosing an appropriate research method. These include:

Answering the research questions The method chosen must allow the research questions to be answered. It is clearly important to know and thoroughly understand what questions researchers are seeking to answer. A clear statement of the research questions will enable both the level of research and level of rigour to be more adequately determined. It will also enable a check to be made on the understanding of the nature of the research problem involved.

Current state of knowledge If little is currently known about the nature of the variables involved in the research problem then it is likely that more qualitative, exploratory research methods will be needed. If, on the other hand, a review of the literature shows that a good deal is already known, it is then possible to isolate the key variables involved. This would then determine the extent to which a hypothesis or hypotheses could be established and made available for testing. This in turn would lead to a choice of method which allowed hypothesis testing to
be carried out. However, even where the variables are known in advance their very nature may prevent the use of experimental research methods.

The nature of the variables involved The choice of method will also be governed by the extent to which the variables involved can be manipulated and measured in a controlled way. In the physical sciences it is often possible to make the subject of the research do what you want it to do. In the social sciences this is not always the case (Bennett, 1991: 89).

In summary, the purpose of qualitative research, and in particular the qualitative interview, is not to discover how many, and what kinds of, people share a certain characteristic. How many and what kinds of people hold these categories and assumptions are not the compelling issues. Qualitative research is much more intensive than extensive in its objectives (McCracken, 1988: 17). The qualitative research uses a lens that rings a narrow strip of the field of vision into very precise focus. The quantitative researcher uses a lens that permits a much less precise vision of a much broader strip (McCracken, 1988: 16). In qualitative research, the investigator serves as a kind of 'instrument' in the collection and analysis of data (Guba and Lincoln, 1981; Cassell, 1977). This metaphor has proven to be a useful one because it emphasises that the investigator cannot fulfil qualitative research objectives without using a broad range of his or her own experience, imagination, and intellect in ways that are various and unpredictable (Miles, 1979: 597). Qualitative research demands techniques of observation that allow the investigator to sort and 'window' the data, searching out patterns of association and assumption. This process of detection is hard to mechanise (McCracken, 1988: 19). The author having taken all of the above factors into consideration decided to draw on the merits of the qualitative methodology for this study.

Following the advice of Bennett (1991) and McCracken (1998), the in-depth interview technique was found to be an appropriate methodology to answer the
research questions in the current study, as interviews, semi-structured or unstructured, are appropriate methods when:

(i) it is necessary to understand the constructs that the interviewee uses as a basis for her opinions and beliefs about a particular matter or situation;
(ii) the step-by-step logic of a situation is not clear;
(iii) the subject matter is highly confidential or commercially sensitive;
(iv) the interviewee may be reluctant to be truthful about issues other than confidentially in a one-to-one situation (Easterby-Smith et al., 1991: 74).

Details of the interview technique used in this study are discussed below.

3.3 THE LONG INTERVIEW

According to McCracken, the long interview is one of the most powerful methods in the qualitative armoury. For certain descriptive and analytic purposes no instrument of inquiry is more revealing. The method can take us into the mental world of the individual and glimpse the categories and logic by which he or she sees the world. It can also take us into the 'life world' of the individual, to see the content and pattern of daily experience. The long interview gives us the opportunity to step into the mind of another person, to see and experience the world as they do themselves (McCracken, 1988: 9).

According to Burgess (1982), the depth interview is a conversation in which the researcher encourages the informant to relate, in their own terms, experiences and attitudes that are relevant to the research problem. It provides:

.....the opportunity for the researcher to probe deeply to uncover new clues, open up new dimensions of a problem and to secure vivid, accurate inclusive accounts that are based on personal experience (1982: 107).
Jones highlights a number of issues that researchers need to consider in order for interviews to be successful. The first issue is how much structure to put in the interview. She makes the point that:

There is no such thing as a 'presuppositionless' research. In preparing for interviews researchers will have, and should have, some broad questions in mind, and the more interviews they do and the more patterns they see in the data, the more likely they are to use this grounded understanding to want to explore in certain directions rather than others (1985: 47).

Researchers must, therefore, be able to conduct interviews so that the opportunity is present for these insights to be gained. Failure to achieve this could result in a superficial exchange of information, which might have been better and more cost effectively achieved via a semi-structured questionnaire (Easterby-Smith et al., 1991: 73).

The first step of the detailed, qualitative interview begins with an exhaustive review of the literature. According to McCracken, a good literature review has many obvious virtues. It enables the investigator to define problems, assess data and provides the concepts on which subjects' precepts depend. A thorough review of the literature allows the data of one's research project take issue with the theory of one's field and it is a way to manufacture distance (McCracken, 188: 29-31).

Literature reviews are not simple exercises in idea collection: they are a form of qualitative analysis. They are also critical undertakings in which the investigator exercises a constant scepticism. Reviews search out the conscious and unconscious assumptions of various authors. They determine how these assumptions force the definition of problems and findings. The good literature
review is a critical process that makes the investigator the master, not the captive, of previous scholarship (McCracken, 1988: 29-31).

Another purpose of the literature review is to aid in the construction of the interview questionnaire. The literature review establishes the areas the interview will explore and aids in specifying categories and relationships that may organise the data. A review helps to determine what the respondent should ask about and what he or she should listen for. By the end of the literature review, the investigator should have a list of topics from which questions must be prepared (McCracken, 1988: 31). This list of topics allows for the creation of the interview guide.

3.4 THE INTERVIEW GUIDE

The interview guide is a list of questions or issues that are to be explored in the course of an interview (Jones, 1985). The questions which formed the interview guide for this study are included in the Appendix. An interview guide is prepared to make sure that essentially the same type of information is obtained from a number of people by covering the same material. The interview guide provides topics or subject areas about which the interviewer is free to explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject. Perhaps the most fundamental use for the interview guide is to serve as a basic checklist during the interview to make sure that all relevant topics are covered. The interviewer is thus required to adapt both the wording and sequence of questions to specific respondents in the context of each actual interview as it occurs. The interviewer remains free to build a conversation within a particular subject area, to work questions spontaneously, and to establish a conversational style — but with the focus on a particular predetermined subject (Patton, 1990: 111). Perhaps the primary advantage of an interview guide is that it can help to make sure that the interviewer has carefully decided how best to use the limited time available in an
interview situation. The interview guide helps make interviewing different people more systematic and comprehensive by delimiting the issues to be discussed in the interview (Patton, 1990: 111).

Jones (1985) also recommends the preparation of an interview guide which can be used as a loose structure for the questions to be used in the ‘live’ interviews. She advises that, although researchers are to some extent tied to their frameworks they shouldn’t be ‘tied up by them’ (1985: 75). Based on the literature review (Chapter Two), an interview guide was created by the author which attempted to provide an appropriate structure for questioning, ensuring that the author included what were considered to be the more pertinent issues in the literature (Easterby-Smith et al., 1991: 73; Patton, 1987: 111). The ‘interview guide’, however, allowed for deviation from the sequence to follow any interesting or unexpected line of enquiry and to facilitate an unbroken discussion (Easterby-Smith et al., 1991: 75). The label ‘qualitative interview’ has been used to describe a broad range of different types of interview, from those that are non-directive or open, to those where the interviewer takes a prepared list of questions and is determined to ask these questions. In between these two extremes is an abyss of practice (Easterby-Smith et al., 1991: 73). The interview technique utilised by the author in the current study could be considered as falling within this abyss of practice, using a loosely structured interview guide to discern the perceptions of the interviewees.

3.5 THE INTERVIEW POOL

A key difficulty in qualitative research utilising the interview technique is to determine the precise number of interviewees (Mintzbeg, 1979: 584). The approach adopted in selecting the number of interview participants was based on a strategy called ‘theoretical sampling’, where the actual number of cases studied is relatively unimportant (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 69). According to Siedman
(1991), there are two criteria for "enough". The first is sufficiency. Are there sufficient numbers to reflect the range of participants and sites that make up the population so that others outside the sample might have a chance to connect to the experiences of those in it? The other criterion is saturation of information, when the interviewer begins to hear the same information reported and she is no longer learning anything new (Siedman, 1991: 45). What is important is the potential of each case in aiding the researcher to develop insights into the area being studied (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 56). The selection of the respondents must be made accordingly. Mason (1996) suggests that qualitative samples are usually small for practical reasons to do with the costs, especially in terms of time and money, and for generating and analysing qualitative data (Mason, 1996: 96).

Recently published interview studies in Management show the number of interviewees tends to be between fifteen and twenty-five. This number may be due to a combination of the time and resources available for the investigation and of the 'law' of diminishing returns in research (Kvale, 1996: 102). Seidman (1991) suggests that because hypotheses are not being tested, the issue is not whether the researcher can generalise the finding of an interview study to a broader population. Instead the researcher's task is to present the experience of the people she interviews in compelling enough detail and in sufficient depth that those who read the study can connect to that experience, learn how it is constituted, and deepen their understanding of the issues it reflects (Seidman, 1991:41).

3.6 THE SAMPLE

In this study the research focuses on the repatriation of senior female international managers in a European context. Twenty-seven female managers were selected for inclusion in this study. A listing from the IDA’s International companies based in Ireland, Business and Finance 100 top companies and Fortune 500 top
companies provided the starting point for targeting interviewees. Initially, an introductory letter was sent to the Chief Executive Officers of international companies in Ireland, England, The Netherlands, France, Belgium and Germany detailing the criteria for inclusion in the study. The criteria were that, first the women had to be in senior positions within the company, and second, that they had to have at least one international career move, and third, that they had to repatriated to their home countries. One-hundred and ninety-five letters were sent in total. One hundred and ten replies were received, and of these, seventy-eight replied that they did not have any female manager to fit the profile, however, thirty-two supplied names of employees to contact. Out of these thirty-two, twelve did not meet the required criteria. Other contacts were also made through e-mail addresses acquired over the internet. A snowballing effect from these initial contacts resulted in another seven people being identified. It is important to state at this stage that actually locating the women who fit the criteria for this study was a long and arduous task. Table 3.1 presents employment details of the twenty-seven senior managers who were interviewed:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manager No.</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Business of Company</th>
<th>No of years on foreign assignment</th>
<th>Location of foreign assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manager 1</td>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>Clothing &amp; Footwear</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager 2</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>Food retail</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Hungry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager 3</td>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>Consumer goods</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager 4</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Media</td>
<td>1.6 years</td>
<td>China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager 5</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Computer software</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager 6</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>6.5 years</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager 7</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager 8</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Electronics</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager 9</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Computer software</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager 10</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Importation</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager 11</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Computer software</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager 12</td>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager 13</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Computer software</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager 14</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>2.5 years</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager 15</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Computer Software</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager 16</td>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>Consumer foods</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager 17</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Belgium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager 18</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>Financial Services</td>
<td>2.5 years</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager 19</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Public company</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Stockholm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager 20</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager 21</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>6.5 years</td>
<td>England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager 22</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Financial Services</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager 23</td>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
<td>Financial Services</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager 24</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Electronics</td>
<td>1.5 years</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager 25</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Telecommunications</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Beijing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager 26</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager 27</td>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>Financial Services</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The twenty-seven senior managers who participated in this study were representative of a broad spectrum of industries including: software engineering, pharmaceutical/chemical manufacturing, financial services, tourism, electronic components, telecommunications, computer manufacturing and state-owned enterprises. At the time of the interviewing (June 2002 – January 2003) sixteen of the participants were based in Ireland, five in The Netherlands, three in England, one in Northern Ireland, one in Germany and one in France (this participant was Irish, she was repatriated at the end of her first assignment and was on her second foreign assignment). All interviews were conducted in the countries where the participating managers were then based. Table 3.2 categorises the number of interviewees by marital status, number of children and career status of interviewees relative to their partners.

Table 3.2
Marital Status, Number of Children and Career Status of Interviewees Relative to their Partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>No. of children</th>
<th>Relative Career Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16 Single</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Married</td>
<td>3 with no children</td>
<td>5 main careerists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 with 1 child</td>
<td>5 &quot;equal&quot; careerists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 with 2 children</td>
<td>1 secondary careerist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 with 3 children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.7 GAINING ACCESS

Martin has argued that “the venerable university name is as much a factor in gaining access as anything else” (1985: 15). For the purpose of this study, a direct approach to gaining access was adopted. This approach took the form of
an introductory letter on headed notepaper from the Department of Adult & Continuing Education, Cork Institute of Technology, which was used to provide institutional legitimisation. A few days later the author made follow-up telephone calls to the companies to establish if there were managers who fitted the criteria for inclusion in the study and if they would be willing to be interviewed.

3.8 ARRANGING DATES

In reporting their survey of élite personnel, Groholt and Higley (1970) underline the problems of time tabling a series of interviews. Élite personnel are prone to last-minute changes in schedules; it is therefore important to build some ‘slack’ into a programme of interviewing. Interviews with senior business executives typically have to be arranged some time in advance, since the respondents can often be away on business. This is even more important if the interviewer has to travel long distances to conduct an interview for a series of interviews in a given area. It is recommended that initial contact should be made three to four weeks in advance of the time the researcher wishes to conduct the interview (Groholt and Higley, 1970). The author followed this recommendation of making initial contact three to four weeks in advance of the interview. This was necessary because of the international schedules of many of the interviewees. The interview dates and times were then confirmed by e-mail and, finally, the day before each interview was due to take place the author telephoned interviewees to ensure that their schedules had not changed and that interview would go ahead at the time agreed.

3.9 ARRANGING TIME AND TIMING THE INTERVIEW

According to Hart (1991), it is unwise to arrange appointments shortly before lunch or at the end of the day unless the interview can be completed with certainty. Hart’s research experience suggests that respondents’ impatience can
be problematic, and such arrangements are risky if the respondent is late for the interview (Hart, 1991: 192). She also suggests that, generally, arriving 'just on time' is unsatisfactory where the interviewee's time is restricted. In many instances, the interviewee is not called until the interviewer has arrived, at which point the secretary or receptionist has to locate the respondent, who might often be in a meeting or making an important telephone call. Ten or fifteen minutes can often elapse before the respondent is free, which could cause problems when he or she has stipulated an hour for the interview. Arriving about a quarter of an hour early compensates for this and allows extra time for gleaning valuable information at the reception (Hart, 1991: 193).

Hart also suggests that the location of the interview is not without importance and suggests that most interviewees will suggest a quiet office as an interview venue (Hart, 1991: 193). For this study, the author followed the timing suggestions made by Hart (outlined above), and arranged mutually suited times to conduct the interviews. All of the Interviews for this study were held in participants' offices.

3.10 INTERVIEW PROCEDURE

The duration of interviews conducted ranged from thirty-five to fifty minutes. Miller advises that in general interviews should be kept within a forty-five minute time span. Public opinion interviewers have reported that most respondents begin to weary and show less interest in the interview at this point (Miller, 1991: 159). For this study, a few minutes of idle chatter before the opening stage of each interview was engaged in, to give the respondent a chance to feel comfortable with the interviewer (Berent, 1966: 32-39). This provided important time to reassure the respondent because it is in these opening stages that he or she sets his or her defences (McCracken, 1988: 38).
All interviews were recorded on tape. The key advantage of tape-recording was to relieve the interviewer from the burden of intensive writing in order to concentrate on the interview process. By comparison with note-taking, which involves a good deal of on-the-spot selection, and which undermines the reliability of the data collected, tape-recording ensures complete transcriptions for analysis (Martin, 1985: 13-23). Managers were asked to feel free to turn off the tape recorder when they so desired (Easterby-Smith et al., 1991: 79). This latter contingency, however, did not arise in any of the interviews conducted.

The use of interviews was particularly advantageous in the context of this research study, as interviews provide depth; information from non-verbal behaviour; an opportunity to probe; greater sensitivity to misunderstandings; and, more spontaneity in the answers given (McCracken, 1988: 65). As a research technique, however, interviewing consumes large amounts of gross and net time — arranging, travelling to and from each interview, actual interview time, transcribing, analysing, and collating overall findings (Miller, 1991: 161).

In this study it was felt that the particular strengths of interviewing, however, far out-weighed any weaknesses, especially in the use of immediate follow-up questions, and the yield of rich sources of data on people's experiences, opinions, aspirations and feelings (May, 1993: 91), as revealed in Chapter 4. "The fundamental principle of qualitative interviewing is 'to provide a framework within which respondents can express their own understandings in their own terms' (Patton, 1987: 115; McCracken, 1988: 41). The twenty-seven interviews which were conducted for this research yielded a large amount of relevant data. On completing each interview the author asked if direct quotes could be attributed to the interviewee. All of the managers agreed to this. All managers interviewed expressed an interest in the study, and asked for a summary of the research findings. All interviews were transcribed verbatim immediately after each interview.
3.11 DATA ANALYSIS

In qualitative research, the investigator serves as a kind of 'instrument' in the collection and analysis of data (Cassell, 1977: 414; Reeves, 1979: 528). This metaphor is a useful one because it emphasises that the investigator cannot fulfil qualitative research objectives without using a broad range of his or her own experience, imagination, and intellect in ways that are various and unpredictable (Miles, 1979: 597). Glaser and Strauss perceived an undue emphasis by researchers on verification of theory and not enough on discovery. They developed the grounded theory approach in which researchers would seek to generate theory on the basis of observations made in the course of conducting research (1967: viii). The grounded theory approach methodology begins with qualitative data (e.g., a transcript) and then engages in a 'process of sifting and categorising in an attempt to develop hypotheses grounded on the data' (Beard and Easingwood, 1989: 3). Easterby-Smith et al. considered the grounded theory approach particularly good for dealing with transcripts. This approach recognises that the large amounts of non-standard data produced by qualitative studies make data analysis problematic (Easterby-Smith et al., 1991: 108).

The analysis of qualitative data is a creative process, there are no formulas, as might be the case in statistically driven research. It is a process demanding intellectual rigour and a great deal of hard, thoughtful work (Patton, 1990:146). Many researchers after collecting qualitative data spend a great deal of time turning it into numbers or otherwise attempting to quantify it. They recognise that numbers have a seductive air and, sometimes, thinking politically of the acceptability of their findings, they gear their data to quantititative statements. Others argue that doing this spoils the richness of the data, often so painstakingly collected, and fails to give the holistic view so important in qualitative research (Easterby-Smith et al., 1991: 105).
A model of data analysis, developed by Easterby-Smith et al., was chosen for the analysis of data in this study. The first step of analysis according to this model is familiarisation. This meant re-reading the interview transcripts to enable some first thoughts to emerge and notice what was of interest. The second stage is reflection. This meant a process of evaluation and critique as the data were evaluated in the light of the literature review in Chapter 2. The third stage is conceptualisation. This meant that the author needed to go back to the data and search for concepts and methodically highlight them where they appeared. Different coloured pens were used to highlight the different concepts. The fourth stage is recoding. This meant going back to the data and comparing what was actually said in order to redefine and recode the concepts. This is called laddering. Laddering took place both up and down the databank, this meant enlarging or collapsing the codes selected. The final stage is linking. This meant linking all the variables which were identified as important into a more holistic theory. This involved linking the empirical data with the more general models in the literature review, and took the form of going backwards and forwards between the literature and the evidence collected in practice (Easterby-Smith et al., 1991: 108-111).

According to Miles, the analysis of qualitative data is perhaps the most demanding and least examined aspect of the qualitative research process (1979: 595). The author agrees with McCracken (1988: 41) that the exact manner in which the investigator will travel the path from data to observations, conclusions, and scholarly assertion cannot be fully specified. The above details, however, show how the analysis of data for this particular research study was conducted.

3.12 SUMMARY

The empirical element of this research study was completed using a qualitative methodological approach. The method of analysing the qualitative data was
that of the Easterby-Smith et al. model. The results of the research findings and an analysis of the data are presented in the next chapter.
Chapter Four

FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The main findings from the interviews are presented thematically in this chapter. The twenty-seven subjects interviewed are all employed in senior positions in international organisations and have all completed at least one overseas assignment and have subsequently been repatriated. Direct quotations from the interviewees are presented. In order to respect the anonymity of the participants in the study, each quotation is identified only by the broad industry sector in which the interviewee is employed. A full transcript of each interview is available from the author.

At the time of this study very little empirical research existed on the issue of repatriation, from the perspective of female executives. This study has attempted to assess new developments in the study of the repatriation process from the perspective of female executives, by conducting empirical research with twenty-seven senior female international executives in Europe. The findings contribute to filling an empirical gap in the international human resource management literature, where researchers such as Scase and Goffee (1990) observed that "without empirical research, such discussions [about female repatriation] are often sterile and do not contribute to policy formulation and action-setting agendas" (1990: 124).

Prior research has called for additional empirical work, particularly across occupations and organisations in order to increase our knowledge of women in international management (Linehan, 2000; Harris, 1995; Berthoin-Antal and Izraeli, 1993; Punnet et al., 1992; Scase and Goffee, 1990). The repatriation of
female international executives, in particular, has been identified as an area which requires further research (Linehan & Scullion, 2002).

4.2 PREPARING FOR REPATRIATION

In most foreign assignment situations the typical strategy is that the expatriate will return to the home organisation on completion of the assignment. Repatriation is generally seen as the final phase of the international career move. The participants in this study believed that it is necessary for expatriates to have a formal process for keeping in contact with senior management while they are on foreign assignment. Only three of the participants in this current study had a formal procedure laid down by the organisation to ensure that they kept in regular contact with senior management in the home organisation. These three participants stated that this greatly facilitated their repatriation as management were aware of their existence and the experiences that they were acquiring while they were abroad:

*I was actively encouraged by the organisation to stay in regular contact with the people responsible for me. This is essential especially when people move, one has to get to know the successors to make sure that when one comes back they know who one is* (Director, Marketing Company).

*Having a formal policy for keeping in contact with senior management ensured that I was not forgotten about and this facilitated the repatriation process* (Service Consultant, Computer Company).

*There would have been regular meetings and contact with senior management in the home organisation. This really helped the*
The other participants, however, had no formal contact with senior management while they were abroad and this caused various difficulties at the repatriation stage. The participants believed that because of this they were "out of sight, out of mind" and nobody knew exactly what they were doing while they were abroad. They believed that they "lost out" in situations where restructuring or changes had occurred in the organisations as the new management did not know them. They suggested that had there been a formal policy for keeping in contact with senior management this would have helped the repatriation process:

There was no formal policy to keep in contact with senior management in the home organisation. Therefore, I had no contact with the management in the home country. It would have been beneficial at the repatriation stage had there been regular check points (Manager, Computer Company).

There was nothing to help keep in contact with the home plant. There was no communication with the management, the only communication was my wages going into my account. As a result of this when the organisation was restructured I was not around to be part of it and they forgot all about me. When I returned there was no position for me and I was made redundant (Project Manager, Telecommunications Company).

In this study only three of the twenty-seven participants were given any form of preparation for the repatriation process, however in contrast, the majority of the participants were given various degrees of training/preparation for going abroad. This suggests that many organisations do not consider that the repatriation process needs to be prepared for. This finding concurs with previous research
which suggests that the assumption by managers in the corporate headquarters is that the re-entry to the parent country is relatively non-problematic or even an non-issue (Stroh et al., 2000; Black & Gregersen, 1998). Repatriation seldom receives the organisational attention it requires because repatriation is not expected to be problematic, as all the problems are expected to be connected with going out and getting settled (Gregersen, Black & Morrison, 1998; Torrington, 1994).

The three managers in the study who were prepared for the repatriation process did find it of benefit to them and believed that it helped to make the process less stressful. This concurs with previous research which states that companies that prepare their managers for coming home by providing them with “repatriation training” and realistic, accurate information, before their managers leave their global assignments helps to retain these valuable employees and also helps them to make the often challenging adjustment to being home (Stroh et al., 1998).

The other twenty-four managers did not receive any preparation for the repatriation process and eight of them believed that the move back to their home countries would have been less stressful had they been prepared for some of the issues they had to face. They were very surprised to find that they found the transition so difficult. After living abroad for a number of years they were unprepared, both for the changes which had occurred during the time that they were away and how these changes impacted on them:

*When coming back you get more of a shock because things have changed so much* (Engineering Manager, Software & Communications Company).

*A lot of people change their lifestyles when they go abroad, so one of the things organisations should be doing is talking to them about the*
intellectual and emotional impact they will have when they go home (Store Manager, Retailing Chain).

It would have been beneficial from the point the view of understanding cultural differences and to be able to recognise things when I saw them and what to look out for and things not working the way you expected them to work. When you come back there are things that are different, preparation for repatriation would have given me some skills to cope. I found the first few months that I was back very stressful (Engineering Manager, Software & Communications Company).

Ten of the managers who had not received any preparation for the move home, could not envisage how such a process would have been of benefit to them and believed that they would still have had to face the same types of problems. Not having the experience of such a process they questioned its validity. There was an underlying agreement, however, that in hindsight they may have benefited from some form of preparation as they all had some issues regarding repatriation which they found difficulty with and which they did not expect:

I'm not sure how training might have been beneficial, perhaps if they had provided some awareness for what to expect, that would have helped (Head of Consumer Foods, Food Production Company).

I suppose there should have been some type of preparation there, to what level it's hard to know. The problems that I experienced surprised me, they were the out of work things – getting used to the fact that a lot of the friends that I had before I went abroad, had moved on while I was away – that was probably the hardest thing, I wasn’t prepared for that (Project Engineer, Engineering).
Another five of the interviewees were quite emphatic that they would not have benefited from preparation for the repatriation process and it was even suggested that such a process would have been a waste of organisational resources. These same managers, however, admitted to having a lot of difficulty in coming to terms with returning to live in their home country because of their expectations being different from the actual reality of returning "home":

"I don't think that preparation for coming back would have been necessary at all, because you are coming back to what you know best, to what is familiar" (Foreign Correspondent, Media Company).

"I don't think anybody can help you with repatriation, you just have to go through it. When I first came back, there was this thing by the organisation, of let's find a job for "her". After a while a job was created or found. I was waiting for a good while to take over the job from somebody else. I found this very frustrating. I hadn't realised how much I would hate moving back into my old house and even the city. After five years of being away you have to refresh old friendships, things are not the same. I wasn't expecting any of that" (Vice President Consumer Understanding, Marketing Company).

"I suppose some type of training may have been beneficial but I don't think that I would have really needed it. I got on the job training when I did come back" (Senior Manager, Financial Services Company).

This manager, however, found that it was the outside of work aspects which caused her the most difficulties:

"I must admit though that I thought it would be easier to come back. I'm back two years and it's only now I am beginning to feel like home. There were a lot of changes in Ireland between 1995 and 2000. When you come back it's not like your friends left huge big gaps in their lives for you to step into. You find that you have to actively go out..."
and meet new friends and you do not expect to do that in your own country at this age. (Senior Manager, Financial Services Company).

It is evident from this study that there are extra issues for women returning with families. This agrees with findings from a study by Linehan (2000) where the participants believed that the adjustment period for female managers takes longer when there are additional family and home responsibilities. The married women in this study indicated that preparation for repatriation should also focus on issues which would impact on spouses and children. One very important factor which was highlighted was the need to register children in schools prior to the move home, not having been aware of this practical issue caused great distress and worry for some of the women. There was also the added aspect of worrying about the emotional impact of the move on their spouses and children:

I found the whole thing of getting the home situation on an even keel very difficult. The things about finding schools and creches are very real and practical things – also a lot of schools register children long before they are due to start, I was not aware of that and this caused us great difficulty. My husband found it very difficult to come home. Perhaps an awareness of some of the issues, with regard to the whole family, would have been of help (Head of Group Human Resources, Computer Company).

We did not think of enrolling our children in secondary schools in advance and when we came back the schools were already booked out and it was only because of a last minute cancellation that we got our son into a school of our choice. It was all very traumatic, worrying and unsettling (Foreign Correspondent, Media Company).

I think probably being a woman is a little bit different. Perhaps more help and support in terms of schooling. Probably if there was more
help from my husband's end in relation to what he was going to do, what are the job opportunities out there and the child care facilities available. There were a lot of changes since I left Ireland ten years ago and in terms of support I think with women, such as child minding, schools, etc. we are a little more unique (Director, Pharmaceutical Company).

Some of the single women also identified issues which they felt impacted specifically on them, during the repatriation process, because they were female. They stated that on their return to their home countries they found that their friends had moved on and they suggest that it is harder for them to find a new social network than it is for men. This is something that they had not expected and which they found very difficult to cope with:

When I returned many of my friends had moved on, had children. I was still single, I found that very difficult, as it is more difficult for females to integrate on a social scene, it is not as acceptable to go out on your own. It is very difficult when you reach a certain age, and you are single, to find an arena in which to make new friends (Project Manager, Importation Company).

I am single, it is harder to meet people, I won't go into a pub on my own. This is open to guys and it is easier then for them to hook up with people. When a lot of your friends are married or have children they have other stuff to be doing. They have moved on (Project Engineer, Engineering Company).

In retrospect I should have treated the move 'home' as if I were coming to a new country. I didn't make as much as a social effort as I should have had. I took my old social network for granted but a lot of friends
had moved on and I found I wouldn’t have much on for weekends. I found this very difficult (Manager, Public Body).

This study highlights some very important issues with regard to the preparation for repatriation. The first stage in preparing for the repatriation process is to ensure that expatriates have procedures for maintaining formal contact with senior management in the home organisation. This study has highlighted the necessity for this contact to take place in order to facilitate the successful repatriation of the executive to the home organisation. The participants in this study believed that had they formal policies in place to keep in contact with senior management this would have ensured that they would not have been forgotten about and it would have been easier for them at the repatriation stage. This concurs with previous research which states that an expatriate should be brought back to their home country several times throughout the course of their assignment. These trips home should allow the expatriate to network with their peers and to keep in contact with home management (Glezer, 2001).

The participants, in this study, also believed that there should have been a preparation process for repatriation before the move home occurred. This study emphasises that those who receive preparation for the move to their home countries find the transition a much easier one, than those who receive no preparation. Preparation for the repatriation process makes expatriates aware of the issues or difficulties that might be facing them. This awareness seems to lessen the “shock” of re-entry. This concurs with previous research which found that repatriates suffer from professional and social re-entry culture shock that tends to be neglected by most organisations. This can be prevented by ‘pre-re-entry guidance’, which can start months before the expatriate leaves for his/her move home (Breukel, 2001). This study also highlights that it is only after the repatriation process that many people realise how difficult the move actually is and that initially they often do not expect it to be problematic. In this study, some of the participants did not believe that preparation would have been of
benefit to them but yet their general discussion regarding the repatriation belies this as they all confessed to having faced difficulties which were brought about because of a lack of awareness. The findings of the study concur with research conducted by Louis (1980) who states that returning "home" can be as challenging as being a newcomer in a foreign country, for changes have inevitably occurred. This study also emphasises the point made by previous research that, repatriation of overseas employees is not something that happens easily or naturally (Black et al., 1999; Gregersen & Black, 1995).

An important aspect of this particular study is in further identifying some issues which are specific to women during the repatriation process, issues which should be taken into account when considering preparation for the repatriation process from a female perspective. In this study both the married and the single women subjects identified some additional issues they faced as a result of being female and which they believed were specific to women.

The married women in the study believed that they were ill-prepared for the transition. They believed that preparation for the repatriation process would have helped them with many of the difficulties regarding settling both themselves and their families. They found that they worried about their spouses and children settling into their new lives and they had to take this on board as well as, in many cases, starting a completely new job. They stated that the preparation process, from their perspective, should also include issues which would be relevant to spouses and children. Research by Hammer et al., (1998) also suggests that re-entry training should focus on the repatriate executive and his/her family. They further suggest that re-entry training should focus primarily on helping the repatriate manager and spouse align their expectations with the actual situation that will be encountered upon arrival in the home culture both within the organisational context as well as more broadly with the social milieu. Depending on the degree that corporate communication and re-entry training activities helped the returning executives and spouse in expectation alignment,
the executives level of re-entry satisfaction should be higher and the degree of re-entry difficulties less. The married women in this study stated that organising schooling for children was a particular source of concern. They also believed that the extra worry of settling other members of the family added greatly to the already stressful repatriation process. This agrees with previous research which suggests that, if the partners and families of relocating employees are experiencing difficulties and stress, this can have a knock-on effect on the work performance of those employees (Munton 1991).

In this study a new finding is being presented with regard to single women. The single women who participated in the study found that when they returned, from foreign assignments, they were in an older age bracket. This caused unseen problems for them as their friends now had extra responsibilities and interests and were not available to socialise with them, as they had been previously. They found that the social network which they used to have had disappeared. The women believed that it was more difficult for them to break into a new socialising network than it would be for their male counterparts. They expressed a reluctance to go out socialising and meeting new people on their own. They believed that this was not a problem which was faced by men. Many of them had not anticipated this problem and found it very difficult to settle again in their home country. This is a very interesting finding and one which has not been identified previously in any existing research on female repatriation.

4.3 THE REPATRIATION PROCESS

This study highlights a particular aspect of the repatriation process, namely a lack of time off in which to get settled, which the interviewees found very difficult. Twenty-four of the participants in this study reported that the repatriation process entailed finishing the expatriate assignment on a Friday, returning to the home country over the weekend and being expected to begin their new positions, in
the home organisation, the following Monday. Organisations seemed to consider this a very reasonable demand. This is probably as a result of organisations failing to consider the move home to be problematic. The participants suggested that there should be official time off allotted to enable expatriates to sort out their personal lives after returning home:

_Friday evening I was saying goodbye, on Saturday morning I was on a plane, Sunday morning I arrived home and on Monday morning I had to start at my new office. That was very tough. This type of schedule is quite normal and people just go along with it_ (Regional Director, Financial Services Company).

_The organisation's expectation is that one leaves one's assignment on Friday and starts the new job on the following Monday. I think that this expectation needs to be reviewed because people do need to take some time off to settle back in and get things sorted at home_ (Marketing Manager, Manufacturing Company).

_It's too much to expect somebody to go back into work and do a good job when things have not been sorted out. The organisation should give the expatriate time off and they should recognise that one is completely changing one's life and this does take time to arrange_ (Director, Financial Services Company).

The interviewees further suggested that because there was no official time off given for the repatriation process they did not request extra time off even though they did need it. They stated that because they were women they would have felt very conscious of asking for time off. They did not want people saying that they were getting extra favours. They believed that if there was an official repatriation policy and a set number of days were given then they would have availed of this time:
There was no time off given, coming back with three small children I could have done with some. I suppose the one thing about being female with kids is one doesn’t want to make a fuss so I never asked for time off. I try very much not to have people saying that just because you have kids we’re giving you this allowance, I would be very conscious of that. I suppose I am trying to behave the same as a man who has a wife at home (Senior Manager, Financial Services Company).

There was no time off. I left London on the Friday morning and was at work the following Monday morning in the home organisation. Companies should have a formal policy with this built in. Being a woman I would have felt conscious of asking for time off, so I didn’t (Project Manager, Importation Company).

They could have given a few days off. I could have asked for time off, but, being a woman, I would be very slow to do that. When one is settling into a new job, possibly with a new manager, then one doesn’t want to have to ask for time off when it is not something that is expected or written down. If there was an official policy which specified that people are entitled to take so many days then it would be much easier to take the time off because it would be seen as an entitlement (Engineering Manager, Telecommunications Company).

I would never have asked for extra time off because I wouldn’t have it said that I would do it. I would never wanted people to assume that I couldn’t do things because I was a woman. Women often are at pains not to be seen to let their domestic life impact on their work lives (Head of Group Human Resources, Software Company).
Another issue which affected the participants in this study, during the repatriation stage, was the utilisation and value placed on the experiences they had gained while they were on foreign assignments. Previous research has illustrated that on average, expatriates have more than twelve years of experience with their companies, so that they are often at a stage in their careers when they hold a broad array of significant expectations about such matters as how their skills will be used when they return home (Peltonen, 1998; Black and Gregersen, 1991). In this study fourteen of the participants (fifty per cent) believed that the experiences they had gained on foreign assignment were valued and utilised by the organisation on their return to their home country. As a result of this recognition, they believed that their careers had progressed. This made them feel that the sacrifices they had made, going on foreign assignment, were very worthwhile:

On a career level I wouldn't have been able to get to the level in Ireland at that stage without having taken the foreign assignment, I would have had to wait probably a good number of years longer, so from a promotional point of view it was very good (Marketing Director, Manufacturing Company).

Yes, my experience was acknowledged, I got promoted after I came back and I got a very good promotion. It was one of the best things I did in my whole life (Engineering Manager, Software & Communications Company).

My experience was very much recognised by the organisation. I was brought back home early because they wanted me to come back for the job that I was being groomed for which came up earlier than expected, there was a high demand for me in my job (Head of Group Human Resources, Computer Company).

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It's definitely been recognised that I have been abroad and the experience I gained and the international experience is valued (Service Consultant, Computer Manufacturing Company).

In some cases the recognition did not happen straight away but again this was not seen to be as a result of gender:

I am back three years. The organisation recognises my experiences more now than when I came back first. That was just the situation and nothing to do with me being a woman. Having gone on foreign assignment has worked to my advantage and I have got a promotion because of it (Project Engineer, Engineering Company).

Eight of the participants believed that going on foreign assignment did nothing for their careers within their organisations and they returned to similar positions to the ones they had previously. In contrast to Linehan's (2000) study of female international managers, however, where participants believed that at the re-entry phase they had received lower salaries and fewer promotions than those of their male counterparts, the participants in this study believed that even though their careers had not progressed they believed that this was not as a result of them being female or of being treated any differently than men. They suggested that this was due to situations within the organisations themselves:

On a career level it did absolutely nothing for me – the only thing is that I was promoted to go but I would have been promoted had I stayed also and had I stayed and not gone abroad I would have a better job now than I have today. I was out of circulation for three years and I lost ground. That would have been the way no matter what gender I was (Store Manager, Retailing Chain).

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My experiences were not really recognised by the organisation, but I don’t believe that this was because of my gender. I spoke with other male expatriates and they had the same experience (Group Vice President of Strategic Planning, Manufacturing Company).

A further five of the participants identified reasons for not getting promoted on their return as being a result of restrictions within the organisation or merely poor planning on behalf of the organisations themselves, and again reiterated that it was not because they were female:

I didn’t get a promotion when I returned, there are very few promotional opportunities within the company. Unfortunately a lot of people coming back would go back doing the same roles that they did before going abroad and that would be whether you are a female or a male. It is very hard, it is very frustrating. I was taking a step back in one sense, but that applies to most situations and would have nothing to do with the fact that I was a woman (Senior Marketing Executive, Public Body).

The organisation did not really recognise the experience I gained. In this organisation they are supposed to be rewarding people who have been abroad and encouraging people to go abroad and the reality was that it was like I stepped off the moon when I came back, they had poor regard for any experience which I had gained. I don’t think that it was because I was female but rather bad planning on their part (Senior Manager, Financial Services Company).

Frequently, the consequences for an organisation when an expatriate returns to the home country and when expectations are not met, are that the expatriate loses loyalty for the organisation and takes the decision to leave. Three of the participants in this study made this decision after they were repatriated. They
believed that their experiences were not valued by the organisation. This agrees with previous research which states that, problems associated with reintegration of an expatriate into the home country and organisation, after successfully completing an international assignment, often results in the resignation of the expatriate (Bennett, 1993; Crawford, 1993; Feldman & Thomas, 1992). Even though these participants stated that their experiences were not utilised by the organisation they believed that this was not as a result of them being female but rather circumstances within the organisation:

My expectation would have been that my experiences would have benefited me in my career but it didn't and the point is that it wouldn't matter if I were a man or a woman it would still have been the same outcome. But I used my experiences to move on to a different organisation and they are definitely of benefit to me now (Regional Director, Public Body).

If the senior management had still been there when I came back I would have got promoted but because they were all gone when I returned I was not. This was not because of my gender, it was very much because of the change in the home organisation, so I chose to go elsewhere (Group Vice President of Strategic Planning, Manufacturing Company).

When I came home the experience I had gained was not recognised by the organisation. When I was away the home organisation was reorganised. It had nothing to do with gender issues it was just circumstantial. However, I used my experiences to move on to another company (Project Manager, Telecommunications).

When I came back I found that the positions available to me were limited. They did not recognise the three years out there and all that
was on offer was something that was similar to what I was at before I went out. I was disenchanted with that. So I left (Group Vice President of Strategic Planning, Manufacturing Company).

Another point which was highlighted in this study was that even though, in some instances, the experiences were not recognised by the organisations which they had been repatriated with, however, having successfully completed a foreign assignment gave the participants an understanding of their own worth:

*I don't feel married to the company any longer. They lost my loyalty. I feel now that I know what I am worth, I have operated very successfully in another environment and if I can make it there I can make it anywhere. I feel I have a choice now, which I never felt before, I have a much more independent frame of mind and I have the confidence to move on* (Senior Manager, Financial Services Company).

In this study only ten of the twenty-seven participants believed that the repatriation process was considered by their organisation in the context of an overall career plan. These ten participants believed that this was very important to them from a career point of view, as they knew that the organisation had plans for them:

*They do plan your career. They don't send you off on an assignment and invest in you like this without having a plan for you* (European Manager, Computer Manufacturing Company).

*It was always a three year plan and it was specifically designed to gain a broader experience* (Manager of Corporate Finance, Financial Services Company).

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I was sent out on foreign assignment so that I would ultimately return with my experiences to the home office (Marketing Manager, Manufacturing Company).

The other seventeen participants, however, believed that the repatriation process had received very little consideration or planning by the organisation. The interviewees did not, however, see this as a gender issue. They believed that the organisations did not give enough consideration to the repatriation process in general and believed that organisations frequently sent people on foreign assignments with little forward planning on how their newly acquired skills could be utilised on completion of the assignment. Previous research has found that it is important for home management to begin assessing the home country assignment options that will most likely be available to the expatriate upon their return. Planning for the next potential opportunity should begin with the start of the expatriate assignment (Glezer, 2001).

In her study of female international managers, Meckman (2002) suggests that multinationals should ensure that repatriation discussions should take place before the woman expatriate is sent overseas so that everyone is clear about what happens upon repatriation. When people are sent abroad on foreign assignments they typically acquire new skills and experiences on an international level. A successful completion of a foreign assignment results in the expatriate having gained valuable experience which they believe should be utilised by the organisation. As a result of the lack of planning, however, the organisation can find it difficult to find a suitable position in the home country for the expatriate when the foreign assignment comes to an end. It is as a result of this that expatriates, believe that they suffer a lack of status on their return to the home country. Previous research has stated that dissatisfied repatriates can leave their organisations as early as two months after their return from an assignment abroad. This is mainly due to disappointment with their new jobs, frustration because the organisation does not make use of their skills acquired
abroad and difficulty affiliating back into the home office (Breukel, 2001). Expatriates often return to the position which they had before they went abroad or to new positions which do not offer any challenges to them. This results in them feeling that they have taken a backward step in their careers and in many cases culminates in them leaving the company. For seventeen managers, in this study, knowing that there was no definite plan for them once the foreign assignment was over made them feel vulnerable and caused anxiety during the repatriation phase:

_The repatriation process was not considered in the context of an overall career plan. This is frustrating but there is not any great career path planning for anybody, male or female, in the company_ (Regional Manager, Public Body).

_I returned to the home organisation at one stage and I remember going away feeling very disconcerted because there was no plan and I had no idea what was in line for me when I was to come home. At the time I felt very vulnerable – I had no idea what was going to happen. If the repatriation process had been considered in the overall career plan this would not have happened_ (Head of Group Human Resources, Software Company).

_I ended up with my present job because I was approached by other managers who knew I was coming back. There was no planning involved_ (Service Consultant, Manufacturing Company).

_I was in a situation where I was running an entire office while I was abroad, I was responsible for three countries but when I came back I went back to the same level as I was before I left. I was taking a step back in my career in one sense. That applies to most situations and_
would have nothing to do with the fact that I was a woman (Senior Marketing Executive, Public Body).

An important element highlighted in this study is the portrayal of the relationship between the organisational uses of expatriates' experiences on their re-entry and the rebounding effects that this has on expatriates and how they are likely to perceive their future with the organisation. Having their experiences acknowledged and utilised is a very integral part of a successful repatriation process for most expatriates. Failure to do this can produce negative effects which culminate in the expatriate leaving the organisation. The organisation then loses a valuable resource. This is borne out by previous research which states that, the result is often costly and dysfunctional to the effective functioning of both the returning employee and the organisation (Adler, 1991; Kendal, 1986). The participants believed that having the repatriation process considered in the context of an overall career plan helps to alleviate any anxieties that expatriates might have and also demonstrates the organisations' commitment to them. This, in turn, develops a sense of loyalty in the expatriate for the organisation. Previous research suggests that best practices for companies employing managers in international business are careful personnel selection, thorough preparation and training, ongoing support while on assignment and solid repatriation (Marx, 1999).

4.4 THE GLASS BORDER AND THE GLASS CEILING

Twenty-five of the participants in this study were approached by senior management and asked if they would consider accepting a foreign assignment. Two of the participants applied for promotional positions abroad. This study suggests an important change of attitude by senior management towards the suitability of women for international assignments. Previous research states that while organisations may be prepared to promote women through their
domestic managerial hierarchy, few women are given opportunities to expand their career horizons through access to international careers (Adler and Izraeli, 1994;1988). None of the participants in this study, reported any difficulty in being assigned a foreign placement and believed that they did not encounter "the glass border" or that they were not treated any differently to men in this respect:

The opportunities to go on assignments are open to both men and women equally if one decides that one wants to go for it (Engineering Manager, Software & Communications Company).

When the organisation wanted to set up a regional head office in Asia they asked me to go out to set it up. My assignment was for three years (Regional Director, Financial Services Company).

I was requested to go on foreign assignment. This is a very job specific area and it is gender neutral (Director, Financial Services Company).

One of the participants did state that there are some issues which organisations take on board when assigning foreign placements to women, but she stated that these were for safety measures and were justified:

I was offered an assignment in the Caribbean but they changed their minds because they thought that it was not a posting that they should offer a single woman. They were right. There are some places one cannot go on foreign assignment to, when one is a single female. I was offered a different assignment instead (Vice President Consumer Understanding, Marketing Company).
Research by Linehan & Scullion (2002) suggests that the "glass ceiling" is very much in evidence during the repatriation process. The participants in their study, of international female managers, expressed concerns about their ability to get desirable assignments on return to their home country. In the current study, only one interviewee believed that she was treated differently because she was a woman, however, the other twenty-six participants believed that they were not treated any differently to men at the repatriation stage and believed that their careers had advanced to the same degree as it would have had they been a man:

*If you have the ability you will be valued, irrespective of gender. When I was repatriated to the home organisation I got a very good promotion and my experiences were recognised by the organisation* (Director of Technical Developments, Pharmaceutical Company).

*Gender is irrelevant, they look at possibilities of senior people not gender specific and this is also true at the repatriation stage* (Head of Group Human Resources, Computer Company).

*It happens that there aren't a lot of women but our business is not a very sexy business, women don't get into it. There is no difference with regard to what gender one happens to be during the repatriation process* (Marketing Director, Manufacturing Company).

The participants in this study believed that women's own attitudes on the issue of the glass ceiling is crucial. They believe that it is essential for women to have a positive attitude in order to overcome obstacles:

*I think the whole glass ceiling thing comes down to women's attitudes and if women think that there is a glass ceiling there then the glass ceiling is there for them and the women who don't think it is there then*
it is not there for them. The opportunities are out there and one makes them for oneself and it's really down to one's own attitude when one is going for assignments or promotion. One has a lot of it in one's own hands. This is especially so at the repatriation stage, one has to know what one wants and what opportunities exist in the home organisation (Engineering Manager, Software & Communications Company).

I feel that it is very much up to women themselves to make their expectations known especially during repatriation. In performance driven companies, if one works hard and performs well and one has a bit of luck as well with regard to what positions come up, then, yes a woman has all the chances (Marketing Manager, Manufacturing Company).

The participants suggested that, traditionally women were not very good at making demands and were not strong enough in voicing them. In other words, "they sold themselves short". They suggested that, heretofore, women lacked confidence in themselves. The interviewees suggested that it is essential that women believe in themselves, and be forceful in making their career plans known. The managers believed, for example, that men have always been better at doing this than women. They further suggest that if women are aware of what they want and make their demands known then it is possible for these demands to be met:

_Women have to learn that they have to have expectations and let people know that_ (Regional Director, Financial Services Company).

_A woman has to be very specific about her demands, this is especially important when considering re-entry to the home organisation after being abroad. Being a woman will not come against me as regards progression. The issue is on the table now. If I am clear about what_
I want then I'm sure that I will get it (Head of Consumer Foods, Food Production Company).

I really hate women going on about the women versus man thing and women cribbing about being dominated by men. If one wants something I think one can go out and get it. When my foreign assignment was nearing the end, I was very specific about what I wanted when I returned to the home organisation. My demands were met (Foreign Correspondent, Media Company).

It is up to women themselves to crash through the glass ceiling and I think that gender can't be used as an excuse. In my experience the glass ceiling is not an issue at the repatriation stage. Gender is a convenient excuse but I don't think that it is a reality in 2003. If something stops me it certainly won't be my gender, something else such as lack of ability but not my gender (Department Manager, Public Body).

Women do not always push for the job that they should have and this is especially so when returning to the home organisation. Women have to learn to push harder. One has to go for it, if there is an opportunity then one needs to take it. I got there because I took the opportunity. The position I had in Asia was a very high profile position, I reported to the executive board. This was a very, very, high position which was in one way extraordinary for a woman to have. As a result of this assignment I became a Director when I returned to the home organisation (Director, Financial Services Company).

While four of the participants in the study believed that their organisations had a different career plan for women than for men, the other twenty-three interviewees stated that they did not believe that their organisations had a
different career plan for women. They believed that their organisations have the same career plan for both men and women and there were equal opportunities for progression within the organisations for both genders:

I think that women have a perception that an organisation would have a different career plan for women than for men and that is the problem. It's a root of a lot of our problems. As women, we have different perceptions, that the organisation and perhaps the world has a different view on us. This organisation does not have a different career plan for women. At the repatriation stage a woman has the same opportunities as a man (Department Manager, Public Company).

I don't think that there is any great career plan for anyone and I don't think that the company discriminates against women. During the repatriation stage gender is not an issue (Store Manager, Food Retail Company).

Interestingly, fifteen of the participants, however, followed this by stating that because they were women, they had to actively prove themselves and therefore they consciously worked harder than their male counterparts in order to progress in their careers:

I believe that women have to work much harder to get to where they are than their male counterparts do (Store Manager, Retailing Chain).

I consciously did work much harder than my male counterparts in order to prove myself (Regional Director, Financial Services Company).
I am conscious that I have to work harder to prove myself because of being a woman. A lot of my friends who are in senior positions within organisations are the same, there is no doubt that they have to work harder than their male colleagues in order to progress (Foreign Correspondent, Media Company).

The interviewees suggested that the reason they have to work harder to prove themselves is as a result of the mainly male dominated senior levels of management. Seventeen of the participants believed that preference for male members of staff, was not as a result of discrimination which was done purposely or even consciously but that it was the natural consequence of one gender being in a more dominant position than the other. In general, men hold the positions of power in organisations. Men who are in senior positions will generally choose other men for promotion. The interviewees suggested that men recognise potential in other men because they think alike and behave alike, they will also see similarities to themselves. Women by their very nature are different and often, will have to prove themselves and bring themselves to the attention of senior management in order to be selected for promotion. Thus, they believe that they have to work harder to counteract this trend. The participants suggested that when more women get to more senior levels within organisations this imbalance will be resolved.

People at the top because they are men recognise potential in a man because they see themselves as they were years before and recognise this potential in a man but women have to show them that they can do it before they are sponsored to move on. It may be a bit different when there are more women higher up in the organisation who make the selection (Director, Marketing Company).

The General Manager and the Board used to be all male but now they have two women in there as well. These women are now involved in
the selection processes for senior management positions. This is changing the balance of power (Marketing Manager, Manufacturing Company).

All the recruitment teams for higher management positions are mostly men, there are hardly any women there. Men are more likely to choose other men, women have to work much harder to make an impact. Unless you have very good contacts with senior management this can effect your career during the repatriation process (Regional Director, Financial Services Company).

The people deciding on the jobs are men and a lot of the traits that they look for are traits that they have themselves and they would tend to see them more in the men than they would in the women. Women therefore have to work much harder in order to be chosen (Director, Public Body).

There were some varied suggestions made by the participants with regard to the reasons why there are such a small number of women in senior positions in their organisations. Twenty-four of the interviewees believed that many women decide not to go forward for senior positions. One of the suggestions was that women with families, in particular, did not want the extra responsibilities of a senior position as they believed the demands of such a position would not be conducive to their family responsibilities. Women, therefore, make the choice not to go forward as they see the work/life balance as being too difficult. It was suggested that while some women’s priority is their families, others just decide to opt out because of the extreme difficulty of combining a career and family life and do not see any other option:

I think it’s just that there are not enough women that are interested in progression at this stage. I’m 40. To cope with the degree of travel
and hours work one makes a choice. If one has children and one is in a position where the two people have to work, and have creches and baby minding, its really very, very difficult. The ability to travel at short notice - is critical. A lot of women decide not to go down that road (Director of Technical Developments, Pharmaceutical Company).

I think the reason the glass ceiling exists a lot of time is because of women’s own choices. I would not push myself to go up the ladder very fast because I have young children and my priority is to go home at 5.00 p.m. and not have to stay until 7.00 p.m., or travel around the world to different conferences or events and meetings. For this reason I was happy to accept my present position when I returned to the home organisation, I did not want a position which would have demanded more of my time (Senior Marketing Executive, Public Body).

I think that women feel that they have to make a distinct choice between career and family. And I think for a lot of women it is a personal choice. Many of them decide that if both partners are equally ambitious very often it’s the woman’s career that suffers but that is their choice (General Manager, Computer Software Company).

Another interesting suggestion, on the lack of progression of women to senior positions, suggested by these women is that they see that women’s psychology as being very different to that of men’s. They suggest that, in general, women put more emphasis on quality of life and spending time on other things outside of work. They suggest that women are less willing to put themselves in the position where they are ‘living to work’ and that, very often, women feel that there is more to life than ‘the job’:
I think women in general place a much higher value on quality of life than men. I think that today a lot of women decide that it is not worth the hassle or sacrifices that have to made (Regional Director/Public Body).

At some point women who work hard for ten years or so just do not want to do it anymore. To some their social life is very important and they decide that working 60 hours a week is not where they want to be (Marketing Manager, Manufacturing Company).

The interviewees believe that this is in contrast to the way in which men look at life as often men consider their work to be the most important element in their lives and they willingly and unquestioningly sacrifice time spent with their families for their jobs. This difference of outlook between men and women has been documented in previous research which states that women are more concerned with having stimulating tasks and with the career goal of professional development while men are more concerned with securing a solid financial base. Men pay a price for their greater career commitment, in that they have less opportunity to participate in their children's development or to gain satisfaction from family life (Friedman & Jeffrey, 2000). A recent survey on work-life conflict with male medical staff reported that while they saw themselves as being very involved in their families lives, they however spent very little time with their families and most of the child rearing and domestic duties were their spouses responsibility. The participants in the survey reported that they worked from sixty to eighty hours per week and were resigned to the situation of long hours and put it down to the nature of the job (Lennington, 2002). The participants in this study suggest that it is not as easy for women to make this type of sacrifice.

I think that women themselves go so far, even myself, I am asking is it worth all the stress that you have to go through to get there. In relation to men, it doesn't seem to bother them that they have to work
weekends or work until all hours, whereas it bothers me. I will decide to go so far and not any further but it will be my decision. I think that certainly a lot of women make this decision (European Manager, Computer Manufacturing Company).

I think women are not prepared to put up with the things that men put up with and I think that women tend to make less compromises with their values than men do. I think also that men are likely to put up with so much more when it comes to sacrifices for their jobs, whereas generally women are likely to sacrifice less for their job than for their family (Store Manager, Retailing Chain).

I think women choose not to play the game. Women just like doing the job whereas the guys like to see themselves as being very important. I don’t think women need that as much. I think women think that it is not worth all the hassle and that there is more to life and that they value other things in life more (Regional Manager, Public Body).

This study suggests some significant developments regarding the career progression of women. The interviewees in this study did not believe that they encountered any significant obstacles when it came to actually being sent on foreign assignment and they believed that they were given the same opportunities as men. This suggests that the “glass border” is no longer the obstacle that it once was and that organisations recognise women’s suitability for foreign placements. This finding is of major importance to the whole area of women in international management. In her European study of female international managers Meckman (2002) found that most of the respondents in the study stated that the host nationals’ attitudes were positive overall and that their male host national colleagues were not reluctant to accept them as expatriates.
The majority of the interviewees in this study firmly believed that they were not treated any differently from men during the repatriation process with regard to being assigned positions on their return to the home organisation. They certainly did not perceive that their careers were hindered as a result of the "glass ceiling". A further suggestion from the participants in this study is that the "glass ceiling" can be a perception in women's own minds rather than being a reality. The participants suggest that if women perceive that the glass ceiling exists then it probably will exist for them. They suggested that women's attitudes to the issue is crucial to their own career advancement. This concurs with recent research which states that in spite of excellent management and leadership skills, women contribute to their own inability to break through the glass ceiling in subtle ways stemming from personality attributes, social conditioning and learned management styles (Van der Boon, 2003). The participants, in this study, suggested that if women have a positive attitude and are forceful and confident in showing that they have expectations and in making their demands clear, then career limitations as a result of the glass ceiling will not exist for them.

A significant finding of this study is that the majority of the participants did not believe that their organisations have a different career plan for women than for men. They believed that there were equal opportunities for both genders, however, they pointed out that women's attitudes had a big bearing on how they progressed within the organisation. This concurs with research by Goodson (2000) who suggests that women did not create the glass ceiling but they do help to maintain it. Even women who understand how important visibility management is in the modern workplace often hesitate to translate their knowledge into effective self-presentational behaviours. She states that women have to realise that nobody is going to do it for them, not even other women who have made it to the top. Career women have to learn to help themselves and each other to "shine more brightly in today's competitive work settings". The participants believed that women have to be very strong in their approach (Goodson, 2000).
The participants in the current study stated that they were very aware that, because they were women, they felt obligated to consciously work harder than their male counterparts in order to prove themselves. They believed that it was very necessary to do this in order to advance in their careers. This agrees with research which states that women generally have to show they are more qualified and harder workers than men to get a high profile job (Wilson-Solovic, 2001). The participants believed that this was not because of any conscious discrimination against women within organisations but rather as a natural result of one gender being in a more dominant position than the other and therefore holding the balance of power. They believe that, even though things are changing, and women are beginning to be appointed to senior management positions within organisations, the majority of positions of senior management are still held by men and this poses a problem for the progression of women. Men automatically see potential in other men because they recognise a likeness to themselves, they do not see this potential naturally in women. This concurs with previous research which states that men promote men because they feel comfortable with them, play golf with them, talk with no inhibitions around them, and they don’t have to explain them to their wives. They can bond with each other (Lougheed, 2000). The participants, in this study, believe that they have to counteract this phenomenon by working harder to become better than their male counterparts in order to get on an equal platform to men and to bring themselves to the notice of people in senior positions. The participants believe that this issue will be redressed when there are larger numbers of women in senior positions. This concurs with findings from a survey of women in management in Ireland which suggests that male senior managers are often the gatekeepers to women’s entry into senior management, however, when more females achieve senior positions, this will change (IBEC, 2001).

An important finding regarding the lack of women in senior positions emerged in this study. The participants believe that rather than the issue being one of conscious discrimination against women, they suggested that, the lack of women
in senior positions is as a result of women themselves not choosing to go forward for high profile positions. They believe that there are a combination of two reasons for this. First, that family commitments, generally, become the woman's priority when there is a dual working relationship. Second, a very interesting suggestion is that women demand more from life than a job and in many organisations this is not compatible with many senior management positions. Men are willing to make the sacrifices that the organisations demand, women are not. The general belief of the participants in this study is that women themselves decide to go so far and then they make the conscious decision not to go any further. This adds a new dimension to the existing research on women in management.

This study further highlights some new and interesting dimensions to the existing research of women in management, as it suggests that the "glass border" is no longer the obstacle that it used to be. It also suggests that the "glass ceiling" is no longer the clear cut, straightforward, discrimination of women "just because they are women", but rather something which can be both brought about or diminished by women's own attitudes and perceptions. This suggests that perhaps women can have more of an impact on their own careers than has been previously thought. It has also been suggested that perhaps women create their own "glass ceilings" by the choices they make. This agrees with previous research which states that women's own limitations inhibit her success in management by causing her to choose lower-ranked or career-limiting positions within the firm. Thus, firms offer men more opportunities to gain power, prestige and monetary rewards, leaving women under represented due to the uneven distribution of women in key roles (Wilén, 2001; Adler & Izraeli, 1994).

In conclusion, the participants in this study believe that the glass ceiling had very little impact on the repatriation process from their perspective. The majority of the participants believed that they were not treated any differently to men with regard to the positions they were assigned when they repatriated to their home.
organisations. They believed, however, that it is essential that women are strong and vocal in making their demands and expectations known. The participants in this study suggested that this is where many women “fall down” as they accept proposals which are put to them but do not push for the positions that they should get. As one participant stated “women are happy to get a raise or a promotion but in the same circumstances men would look for double their salary”. The participants believed that in many cases this is the kernel of the problem. They believed that women can influence this by being stronger and more demanding about what they want.

4.5 WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT

The participants in this study agreed that work-family conflict, especially regarding senior management positions, is a very difficult situation. The interviewees believe that women often make the choice to put their careers second to their family responsibilities. This agrees with previous research which states that, family responsibilities involving marriage, childcare, and household activities, can hinder women managers’ career achievements (Linehan & Walsh, 2000). These family responsibilities produce work-family conflicts to which women may respond by reducing their employment involvement, which, in turn, restricts career opportunities and advancement (Gutek et al., 1988; Olson & Frieze, 1987). The participants in this study suggest that some women make this decision by choice, but they also state that some women are forced into the decision as they cannot see how they can combine these two separate aspects of their lives:

*It’s a very demanding profession and it’s a profession that demands a lot of flexibility and demands a lot of one’s time and it’s not a 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. If one decides that one wants to have children, my experience has been that typically the woman is the one that ends up*
making the hard decision and takes the back seat (General Manager, Computer Software Company).

To achieve the partner status you have to be prepared to work the long hours. Women generally are not prepared to work because they have a family (Manager of Corporate Finance, Financial Services Company).

If I had been in a position to accept an assignment in Africa or Russia, I would have become a Director also. In the last two job moves I’ve made, the location has been my key criteria. As a result I’ve had to lower my sights on what job I put myself forward for during the repatriation process. I think that happens a lot to women who are constrained by their family circumstances (Vice President Consumer Understanding, Marketing Company).

One of the reasons that there is so few women in senior positions – is that it is difficult if you have a family. The work life balance in senior roles is very difficult. This is especially so when you re-enter the home country as generally the opportunity will exist for a more senior position and sometimes women feel that they cannot take on these added pressures (Director of Technical Developments, Pharmaceutical Company).

Research by Linehan & Walsh (2001) found that interviewees in their study perceived organisations to be too inflexible in their demands, and suggested that some of the women managers who abandon the work force for family reasons are doing so only because their work environments are not sufficiently flexible to allow them to balance work and family demands. In the current study, the participants agreed that in the majority of cases, when a couple have a family, generally it is the woman who makes the decision to put their careers “on hold".
The participants believed that organisations should introduce more flexibility, for women, so that they would not be forced to make the difficult decision of foregoing their careers for their families if they did not wish to. The participants suggested that because men have been the driving force in organisations, the demands put on employees in senior positions and the lack of flexibility or acknowledgement that perhaps “things could be done differently” is a very male view point and one which organisations should review:

Organisations have to change their ways because without thinking about it they are stopping us because of the way people have to work to survive (European Manager, Computer Manufacturing Company).

The working environment is often not conducive to women wanting to continue with their careers (Vice President Consumer Understanding, Marketing).

If a woman gets a senior position they have to put in the longer hours and a lot of women decide not to do that. So the feeling is that we do not have family friendly practices (Senior Marketing Executive, Public Body).

Four of the married participants had negotiated more flexible arrangements with their organisations and they found that this worked very well and they were able to combine both aspects of their lives. They stated, however, that it is up to women to force the issue and initiate new ways of operating and show that things can be done differently, with more flexibility, while achieving the same results:

Organisations are becoming more flexible, slowly, but it is happening. At the repatriation stage, I instigated more flexible working arrangements for myself. The key thing is that women have to be
strong, you have to enough self confidence to say that this is the way that I want to do it. It can be done but you have to show them and tell them that you want to stay and do it this way. I am with the kids after school but then I work up the hours sometime else. The work still has to be done (Director, Consumer Goods Company).

The participants in this study believed that the work life balance was extremely difficult where traditional male methods of operating i.e. the necessity of spending long hours at work, were not conducive to women with families and in many cases women are forced to make a choice between these two aspects of their lives. They believed that this is especially so during the repatriation process as many of them came back to positions involving more responsibilities and travel. They found the combination of their career and home responsibilities very difficult. As a result of the difficulty of combining these two aspects of their lives and the lack of flexibility within their organisations, they questioned how much further they could progress in their careers. Research by Forster (2001) states that it is important that organisations recognise that insensitivity to family issues and workplace inflexibility are still major impediments to women in business and changes need to be made to organisational cultures to reflect the needs of women managers. The participants in this study suggest that organisations will have to instigate new practices which incorporate more flexibility and innovative ways of operating so that women with families can continue to advance in their careers and will not need to make a choice. This agrees with research by Linehan and Walsh (2000) with female international managers which states that most women believe that promotion is their careers has been achieved at the expense of time with their children and of the quality of their family lives.

The participants in the current study suggest that the introduction of more family friendly work practices would allow women to spend quality time with their families and also allow them to continue with their careers. Research by
Friedman & Greenhaus (2000) suggests that workplace changes are necessary to promote more flexibility so women can better balance their work and family roles. The participants in the current study also suggest, however, that women themselves should instigate and even demand these changes and demonstrate to organisations that things can be done differently.

4.6 NETWORKING

All of the participants in this study agreed that it was essential to be part of the organisational network. They believed that this was extremely important during the repatriation process because the re-entry to the home organisation, after a period abroad, is much less traumatic when one has an existing network support:

*I think that being part of the network is essential when dealing with the repatriation process because it helps you to slot back into the home organisation* (Marketing Manager, Manufacturing Company).

*Networking is very important it is the lifeblood of the company and especially so when you are returning home after being abroad* (General Manager, Computer Software Company).

Only two of the organisations in the current study had policies in place to ensure that the expatriate kept in regular contact with the home organisation whilst they were abroad. All of the interviewees believed that it was essential to keep in contact with their networks in the home organisation. They believed that this was essential both in keeping abreast of what was happening in the home organisation and also in maintaining links with colleagues so that their re-entry into the home organisation would be easier. In this study, twenty-five of the participants believed that they did not feel in any way excluded from the
organisational networks. This is in contrast to research by Burke and McKeen (1994), who stated that, managerial women are still less integrated with important organisational networks, and it is these internal networks that influence critical human resource decisions such as promotion and acceptance:

I would have gone drinking with the lads and felt as I belonged and would have felt part of anything that was going on. I felt very comfortable in being on the executive level in Ireland, despite being a woman, that was very easy it was a very good environment (Head of Group Human Resources, Computer Company).

I was very much part of the management team and I knew what was happening, but again that's very much up to personality and getting on with it. Men do not purposely prevent women from becoming part of the informal network – if you are a woman and if you want to play golf you can (Project Manager, Telecommunications Company).

I don't feel in any way excluded. I'm used to going out and realising that I am the only woman present but that does not bother me, I'm well able to hold my own, I'm used to it (Engineering Manager, Software & Communications Company).

Sixteen of the participants in this study believed that the informal male networks no longer existed. Eleven of the interviewees believed that the informal networking did still exist, however, seven of this group stated that they believed that if they wanted to be involved in them they could have been and they would have been accepted:

I think that the informal male networking is still very strong in this industry, however, it is possible for a woman to be involved in that if they choose to be (Director, Financial Services Company).
I have never felt excluded from the informal networks I could have got involved if I had wanted even though they are pretty male dominated (Head of Consumer foods, Food Production Company).

Eighteen of the interviewees suggested that even though informal networking would have been open to them, they choose not to be involved in the informal networks and they did not believe that their careers suffered as a result of this. This contradicts research by Powell (1993) who stated that, women’s lack of advancement to high levels of management often results from their having less fully developed informal networks than men. The fact that these women choose not to be part of the informal networks, suggests that women do not put the same emphasis on the importance of informal networking:

I have never been in the informal network, however, I have never felt excluded because of my gender, I just was not interested (Plant Manager, Engineering Company).

If I did play golf I could get in to it but then I don’t have the time to do things like that and I don’t really have an interest in doing it. I have to get home to the kids, I have other priorities (Senior Manager, Financial Services Company).

I personally would not go out to outside of work networking events, I would select what I would go to. I choose not to go to them but if I went there would be no problem. If I did play golf there would be no problem and I could be involved (Project engineer, Engineering Company).

I choose not to be involved in the informal networks (Director, Financial Services).
The participants suggested that the feeling of not belonging to the organisational networks can be down to personal attitude. They suggested that often women perceive that they will not be accepted, but that this would not necessarily be the case. They suggested that women, in particular, have to be proactive and make an effort if they want to be a part of these networks:

> I think that it is like anything you can make these things into a handicap if you want to or you can work around it (General Manager, Computer Software Company).

> I think people are open to women being involved in the informal network but one needs to be proactive. This doesn't always come naturally to women but its not that the guys don't want women as part of their network but women have to be aware and make the effort (Marketing Manager, Manufacturing Company).

> I would never allow myself to feel excluded from the organisational network (Foreign Correspondent, Media Company).

> I have never felt excluded I don’t feel that there is a exclusively male informal network that women do not belong to, but, then perhaps that is my personality because I don't feel that way. I think that if you look for these things you will probably find them, however, if you get yourself involved then there is no problem (Senior Marketing Executive, Public Body).

Nine of the participants believed that the development of a forum for networking specifically for women, would be a positive development and would counterbalance the effect of the informal male networking of the progression of women. A further seventeen, however, were emphatic that such a development
would be very negative and would only make the division between men and women much more pronounced:

Why focus networking only with women because it's the guys we want to network with? There should be one non-specific network and not a male network and a female network (Marketing Manager, Manufacturing Company).

I think that it is not a good thing to distinguish between male and female in these areas. I think that this only adds to the problem and makes the division even more so (Plant Manager, Engineering Company).

We had such a forum for just women and I felt that this was a false environment because it needed to be a mix of the environment that one works in (Group Vice President, Manufacturing Company).

I think that it is important to have a good network with the male environment because you deal with men all the time. It should not be exclusive to women (Regional Director, Financial Services Company).

There is a huge structure in place here. There is a formal review assessment and this means that no matter how friendly people are outside work that the formal review process has still got to be gone through. I don't think that there is much of the old boys thing here. It is tampered by this formal process. This process is very non gender specific. A woman has the opportunity to shine as well as the men (Engineering Manager, Software & Communications Company).

The system provides a level of transparency particularly in a group or team and there is then a better visibility of the people who have talent
coming through, for both men and women (General Manager, Computer Software Company).

The company has a coaching for excellence process. This is an annual process and one is assessed against one's peers. One's name does show up on various sheets of potential candidates for opportunities because of this. This process is indiscriminate (Marketing Manager, Manufacturing Company).

All of the participants, in this study, believed that it is essential to be involved in organisational networks. They suggested that maintaining contact with these networks is particularly beneficial when on foreign assignment, as it is through these networks that the expatriate keeps abreast with what is happening in the home organisation. More importantly maintaining contact with these networks helps to make the repatriation process less traumatic. The participants in this study, did not believe that they were excluded from either the formal or informal networks because they were women. This contradicts research by Linehan (2000) who found that exclusion from organisational networks, compound the isolation experienced by manager with the minority gender, which is usually female.

Twenty-five of the interviewees in the current study stated that they did not find any difficulty fitting into the organisational networks in the home organisation. They attributed this to having kept in contact with their former networks whilst they were abroad. As a result of this they believed that they slotted back, very smoothly, into the home organisations. Whilst ten of the participants agreed that the informal male networks were still in evidence they stated that they would have been accepted as part of the networks had they wanted to be involved. The participants stated that they were not interested in belonging to the informal networks as they had other priorities and responsibilities. This suggests that women do not place the same significance or importance in these networks as
their male colleagues do. The interviewees suggested that it was by choice that they were not involved and not because they were excluded. They also suggested that women need to be proactive if they wish to belong to organisational networks and that in some cases the reason women do not belong is down to their own perception that they would not be accepted.

In this study, three of the organisations had introduced a process to facilitate networking specifically for women. The majority of the participants in this study, however, did not agree with the implementation of such a process as they believed that networking should not be gender specific. They also believed that the introduction of such a process would only deepen the division between men and women. The participants believed that performance assessment systems brought about an element of transparency to organisations. These systems also increased women’s visibility within the organisation and offset any negative effects of the informal male networking to the career progression of women. These processes helped to ensure that people were treated equally and women, in particular, were recognised and rewarded for their contributions.

In conclusion, the participants in this study believed that they were not excluded from the organisational networks. They did not believe that being women came against them in any way regarding belonging to organisational networks. They believed that because they were involved in organisational networks and because they had purposely maintained contact with them whilst they were on foreign assignment helped them when it came to the repatriation process. They believed that their transition to working in their home organisation was made easier because of this. The participants believed that performance assessment systems bring about transparency and visibility within organisations. This was seen to be particularly beneficial to women, in particular, as it ensures that their achievements and experiences are highlighted equally to men’s. These systems help to ensure that career advancement is credited on measures
of performance and ability rather than on gender or influence from informal networks.

4.7 MENTORING

It is evident, from this study, that very few organisations have official mentoring practices in place. Four of the twenty-seven interviewees stated that their organisations had an official mentoring system. These systems, however, were aimed at new recruits and not at management positions. Twenty-two of the interviewees believed that having a mentor would have been very beneficial when dealing with the repatriation process. They believed that having a mentor in the home organisation would have ensured that they would still have been on people's agendas and this would have lessened the likelihood of their being "out of sight, out of mind":

*If it were more of a coaching role for your personal development then it could be worthwhile especially when dealing with the repatriation process* (Regional Director, Financial Services Company).

*There isn't a formal process in place for managers. It would definitely be a good thing when dealing with the repatriation process* (Engineering Manager, Software & Communications Company).

*The company was restructured while I was on foreign assignment and they forgot about me. If I had had a mentor who was at a senior level then this would not have happened. But without a mentor I was on my own, I was stranded and my link for coming home was not strong as a result* (Project Manager, Telecommunications Company).

Seven of the participants, in this study, reported that their organisations were restructured while they were on foreign assignment. This had a major
significance for the expatriates as they were not known by the new management teams who were in place when they returned to the home organisation. They believed that they lost out because of being away at the time of the restructuring. The participants believed that if they had a mentor this would not have happened:

The whole management team had changed in the three years that I had been away and when I returned I had some expectations because of the development that I had had over the three years. The people in senior management who had sent me abroad and recognised what I could do were no longer there. When I returned I was more or less starting from scratch with a new team that did not know me. If I had a mentor perhaps this would not have happened (Group Vice President, Manufacturing Company).

While I was away the home organisation was reorganised and restructured and I was not around to be part of it and because the management was changed I got forgotten about, most of them didn’t even know me. When I returned there was no position for me and I was given notice two weeks ago. Next week is my final week with the company. A mentor would have informed me of the changes and kept me in mind for a position (Project Manager, Telecommunications Company).

Whilst very few of the organisations had an official mentoring process in place, twelve of the participants had unofficial mentors in the home organisation while they were on foreign assignment. They believed that these people were their contact with the management team in the home base, who kept them “in tune” with what was happening and when it came to returning to the home organisation they had inside knowledge on suitable positions which were available:
I had an unofficial mentor. Somebody in the organisation who had some power to influence the organisation to take me back when I returned. My sponsor worked really hard for me and lobbied a lot of people to get the right job and kept me on people’s agenda’s (Store Manager, Retailing Chain).

I had an unofficial mentor, it was an ex boss of mine. When I left to go abroad, he was really taking care of me and having me always in mind for positions, pulling strings on my behalf while I was away (Service Consultant, Manufacturing Company).

Twenty-two of the participants believed the gender of the mentor to be irrelevant. Only two of the participants showed preference for a woman mentor. Of the twelve interviewees who had informal mentors only one of the mentors was a woman, the other eleven were male mentors and the interviewees stated that the relationships worked very well. This contradicts previous research by Ragins (1989) who stated that, one explanation for the disparity in advancement of women to senior international management is the gender difference in the development of mentoring relationships. It was suggested, in the current study, that the important factor in mentoring relationships is not gender but rather the matching of the two personalities involved:

The gender of the mentor would not matter to me, not at all. I think that it is more a personality thing on how well you get on with somebody (Plant Manager, Engineering Company).

I think that it would be down to personality. I think some people have a natural inclination for mentoring (Vice President Consumer Understanding, Marketing Company).
It depends on the personality really more so than gender (European Manager, Computer Company).

One of the interviewees stated that her organisation had a process of mentoring aimed specifically at women. Eighteen of the participants in the study, however, were not in favour of organisations implementing such processes specifically for women. The participants in this study agreed that mentoring would be a good thing, especially when dealing with the repatriation process, however, they did not agree that it should be specific to women:

If an organisation were to introduce a system of mentoring specifically for women then that would undermine our ability to function on the same level. I don’t think that would be a positive development for women or for the equality issue. Mentoring is excellent but not gender specific (Department Manager, Public Body).

I wouldn’t like to see any distinction in something like that, I think that if an organisation embraces mentoring then it should be right across the board, I don’t favour a bias either way (General Manager, Computer Software Company).

In this study, none of the organisations represented had mentoring policies which were aimed at staff at management levels within the organisation. The participants, however, believed that having a mentor would have been very beneficial to them, especially, when on foreign assignment and during the repatriation process itself. This concurs with previous research by Linehan and Scullion (2002) who found in their study of thirty-two female international managers, that the interviewees believed that if they had the support of mentors during their international assignment the re-entry process might have been
easier. They suggested that their mentors helped them keep in touch with their home organisations and the 'out of sight, out of mind' syndrome was reduced.

Even though there were no formal organisational mentoring policies many of the managers in this study had developed relationships with people on a senior level to themselves and these people acted as informal mentors to them. This suggests that organisations are not recognising the obvious needs of staff in management levels with regard to mentoring. In previous research it has been suggested that women may have trouble finding mentors because there may be potential discomfort in cross-gender relationships (Burke and McKeen, 1994). In this study, the majority of the women who had informal mentors, had male mentors. They found that these relationships worked very well for them and they believed that the gender of the mentor was not important. They stated that the success of a mentoring relationship was due to the two personalities involved.

The majority of interviewees in this study believed that having mentoring policies aimed specifically at women would not be a good development. They believed that if organisations were to implement mentoring policies for senior management then they should not be gender specific. Of the twenty-seven managers interviewed, in this study, seven of them reported that their organisations had been restructured whilst they were on foreign assignment. They believed that because they did not have a mentor they were forgotten about and returned to organisations where the new management teams did not know them. They suggested that going on foreign assignment can be a risk, especially in today's climate, where restructuring is a common phenomenon for a lot of organisations. Having a mentor, especially in these circumstances, would be a safeguard especially when dealing with the repatriation process itself.
4.8 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the main findings from the interviews which were conducted with twenty-seven senior female repatriated managers. All of the interviewees spoke openly and honestly about their experiences. From the discussions with the participants it is clear that, in their experiences, there are some issues which are specific to women during the repatriation process.
Chapter Five

CONCLUSIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter has three sections. In the first section, the main findings of the study are summarised. In the second section some recommendations to companies for making the repatriation process as easy as possible for their female expatriates are presented. Finally, in the third section some suggestions for areas of further research are presented.

The primary research domain to which this study attempts to contribute is the international human resource management literature. The figures given for women in international management positions show that participation remains very negligible – with three percent of all expatriates being the most commonly stated figure (Harris, 1995; Adler, 1984). Whilst there has been some research, in recent years, on female international managers, there is very limited research available on the repatriation of female executives. Most of the available research on repatriation details the male repatriate. This is probably due to the relatively small number of women, in senior management positions, who hold expatriate positions.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

The findings from this study suggest that preparation for the repatriation process should begin even before the employee is sent abroad. The participants in this study believed that having a formal procedure ensuring that contact between the expatriate and senior management in the home organisation is maintained on a
regular basis over the duration of the assignment is an important element of the actual repatriation process. Many of the participants in this study had no contact with senior management in the home organisation while they were abroad. They believed that as a result of this they were forgotten about and this caused them many problems at the repatriation stage.

The findings of this study reveal that preparation for the move home is a very necessary and worthwhile process and should take place before the actual move. The interviewees believed that the 're-entry shock' which they experienced would have been significantly reduced had they received preparation for the transition. They believed that an awareness of the problems that they might face would have equipped them to deal with such issues. They believed that because they did not expect to have any problems with the move 'home', the transition proved to be very difficult when things did not go as smoothly as they had expected.

The study also identified issues, which are specific to women during the repatriation process. The married women believed that they faced additional difficulties because they were returning with families. They believed that because they were women they had extra responsibilities to cope with, during the repatriation phase, in comparison to their male colleagues. They believed that because they were women they automatically took on the worry of trying to ensure that the other members of the family were settling in to their new lives. They believed that preparation for repatriation should include issues, which would be relevant to spouses and children. Schooling for children was identified as a particular area of concern. They stated that they were unaware of the necessity of pre-booking schools before their return to their home country. This resulted in them not having their choice of schools for their children on their return and they found that this greatly affected them. Employment opportunities for their spouses was another issue which they believed should be dealt with. They believed that if these problems were highlighted in advance of the actual
move then they would have been prepared and better equipped to cope with these added pressures.

The single women found that they also had a particular difficulty that they had not anticipated. They stated that they were in an older age bracket on their re-entry to their home countries and this had a very significant affect on their repatriation. They found that many of their friends had moved on and had formed relationships, got married or had children while they were abroad. The managers stated that they had expected to return to their former social network but instead returned to find that their previous networks were no longer there. Friends had other commitments and were not available for them to socialise with. They believed that because they were women there were not as many opportunities open to them, as there would be to men, for example meeting a new network of people to socialise with. This particular aspect of the repatriation process was very difficult for them to deal with and added greatly to the length of time it took them to settle into their new lives.

The findings, therefore, suggest that there are some issues that are specific to women during the repatriation process. The participants, in this study, believed that an awareness of the issues would have prepared them for the transition. Without this preparation they believed that they had to suffer through the difficulties on their own. They believed that they should have received more support from the organisation. They suggested that they had been "looked after" while they were abroad but once they returned home the organisation seemed to unaware as to how difficult things were for them. As a result of this they found the transition very difficult.

The findings from this study suggest that, on their return to the home organisation, women are as likely to be rewarded and valued as much as men. The interviewees believed that they were treated in exactly the same way as they would have been had they been men. There were varied accounts of how
their experiences were utilised on their return to the home organisation. Some had very positive experiences on their return, whilst others had negative ones, however, this was seen to be as a result of circumstances within the organisations rather than a gender issue. In essence the participants believed that they were treated no differently than male colleagues.

The findings suggest, therefore, that organisations recognise the suitability of women for senior international management roles and their gender is no longer seen to be an impediment. The participants believed that the opportunities for women to advance in their careers are there – but they suggest that it is up to women themselves to make their expectations and demands known, especially during the repatriation stage. They suggest that traditionally women have not been good at doing this. The findings in this study indicate that organisations do not have different career plans for women than for men. The interviewees believed that equal opportunities exist for both genders. The participants, however, believed that even though women are beginning to move into the senior management positions, men still hold the balance of power. They believed that men automatically recognise potential in other men because they recognise traits in them that remind them of themselves. The participants suggest that this is a natural phenomenon. To counteract this the women believed that they need to prove themselves, they do this by working harder and being better than their male counterparts.

The findings also suggest that the lack of women in senior positions is not as much a result of the ‘glass ceiling’ but rather of women themselves taking the decision not to go forward for senior positions. A number of reasons were given for this. Women decide not to forward their careers because this would involve more time, travel or responsibility and these extra pressures would not be conducive to spending time with their families. The participants believed that some women choose not to go forward for senior positions because they do not want to, while others make the decision because they believe they have to be
the one to put their careers on 'hold'. The participants also suggested that women, in general, demand more from life than 'the job', and decide not to go any further in their careers because they do not see themselves fitting into a life that demands the majority of time spent in the job.

The findings of the study suggest that very few organisations plan the repatriation move in the context of an overall career plan. The participants suggest that this should be an integral part of the foreign placement programme and one which organisations should give more thought to. The managers stated that while they were on foreign assignment they were aware that there was no plan for them and this made them feel very vulnerable and apprehensive about the return home. They suggested, however, that this was the same for men and women.

The barriers to women in international management have been cited, in previous research, as being very much in evidence during the repatriation process for female executives. The findings in this study, however, suggest that the glass border is beginning to be broken. None of the participants in this study encountered any problems in being granted a foreign assignment. Interestingly, the majority of them were selected to go on foreign placement by senior management. This suggests that women are now considered as suitable candidates for foreign assignments. It further suggests that being female is no longer seen as an obstacle.

The findings also suggest that the glass ceiling is no longer a straight forward discrimination of women because they are women. The participants believe that the boundaries of the glass ceiling have changed. They suggest that women create their own glass ceilings by the choices they make. They further suggest that the glass ceiling can be attributed to women's own attitudes. They suggest that women can have their career progression in their own hands as long as they
have a positive attitude, be strong in making their demands and have clear expectations.

The findings further suggest that the work-life balance is extremely difficult for women, in particular, and this is again in evidence during the repatriation process. Many returned home to new positions with extra responsibilities. They suggest that organisations lack the flexibility that women need to combine these two aspects of their lives. They also suggest, however, that because men have been the driving force behind organisations the methods of operating are the stereotypical male managerial style. The participants in this study believe that women themselves should be the instigators in demanding more flexibility and in pioneering new operating practices, which allow for greater flexibility in organisations.

The findings also suggest that the male networks are no longer as strong as they used to be. The participants in this study believe that they were not excluded from the organisational networks. They attributed this, however, to attitude. They suggest that women have to be proactive and make an effort if they wish to be part of the informal networks. They believe that women will not be excluded if they want to be involved in the organisational networks. The findings also suggest that women are not as interested in the informal outside of work networks as men are. This suggests that women do not give as much importance to the informal networks.

The findings further suggest that organisations that have performance assessment systems in place are seen to be giving equal opportunities to their employees. The participants believe that these systems create transparency and help to lessen any negative effects of the informal male networks. These systems can be particularly beneficial to the progression of women within organisations.
The findings illustrate that women are no longer alienated from organisational networks. The participants in this study used these networks to keep in contact with the home organisations while they were abroad and believed that this facilitated their repatriation. They did not believe that their careers suffered because of a lack of network support. They believe that organisations that have performance assessment systems in place actively facilitate the advance of women and diminish the negative effects of male networking.

Finally, the findings demonstrate that mentors can be very beneficial to expatriates while they are on foreign assignment. While none of the organisations represented had a mentoring policy in place, many of the participants had informal mentoring relationships and they believed that their careers benefited because of these relationships. They did not believe that there were fewer mentors available to them because they were women. All except one had a male mentor. They found that these relationships worked very well and they had no problem with cross-gender relationships. They suggested that the success of a mentoring relationship was down to personality and had very little to do with gender. The participants suggested that mentoring policies should not be gender specific and that mentoring can be an invaluable source at the repatriation stage but that organisations should develop it for both men and women.

5.3 PREPARATION FOR REPATRIATION: SOME RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The study reveals that preparation for the repatriation process is not considered by many organisations to be an integral part of their foreign placement policies. Only one of the organisations represented in this study had a policy to cover the repatriation process. This study illustrates that organisations recognise that the move abroad is difficult and have expatriation policies in place to help their managers settle in to their new environments. The study also suggests that
organisations do not consider the repatriation process to be problematic as they offer very little help to their managers returning home. The participants in this study found repatriation even more difficult than the move abroad and they had not expected it to be so. They also stated that they had received help for the move abroad but “were on their own” for the move home. The majority of the participants in this study found the repatriation process very problematic and not a smooth transition as they had expected. The interviewees who had received preparation for the process found this helpful as it made them aware of the problems, which they might face. They believed that this benefited them and made the move less problematic. The interviewees who did not receive any type of preparation faced many problems, which they had not expected. They believed that they had been made aware of these issues they would have been better able to cope with them and the re-entry shock would have been lessened.

It is clear, therefore, that organisations need to provide preparation for the move abroad and also recognise that the move home can be just as difficult as the move abroad. Organisations should have a process in place to help their expatriate managers to acclimatise as easily as possible to the move home.

The interviewees in this study believed that there are elements during the repatriation process which are specific to women and which should be covered in preparation for repatriation. This study suggests that women are now being considered by senior management as suitable candidates for international assignments. It is reasonable therefore, to predict that the numbers of women in international management will increase in the future. When organisations are developing policies for international managers, therefore, they must ensure that they no longer consider these just from the male perspective. Organisations need to understand the different pressures which affect men and women and allow for these differences within their policies.

This study identified some issues which the interviewees believed specifically relate to women during the repatriation process. They believed that women
automatically take on more responsibility for other family members, both from the practical and emotional perspective. The effects of having these extra pressures can be very difficult to manage especially during the repatriation process. They suggest that when preparation for the repatriation process is being developed, consideration should be given to the fact that men and women have different stressors.

Ideally, all organisations should have a policy for repatriation. There should be a formal organisational policy handout which expatriates could avail of to make them aware of how the system operates. Preparation for the return to the home country should begin well in advance of the return date. Part of this preparation could take the form of a one-day induction course to cover both work and non-work aspects of the repatriation, which the employees may expect to encounter. Issues relevant to the individuals' personal circumstances should be covered. An organisational questionnaire could be designed in order to collect data on the experiences of people who have undergone the repatriation process. The feedback from these could be fed onto an intranet site for viewing by other managers who may be about to undergo the move home. Having a designated person assigned to the expatriate to advise on the logistics of moving house and other aspects of the return would be beneficial. A pre-move trip to the home country could be arranged to allow for the expatriate to make contacts in relation to housing, schooling, child-care facilities, employment opportunities for spouses, etc. Organisations could co-ordinate appropriate lists of contacts to cater for these needs. There should be an official allotment of time off given once expatriates have returned to the home country, in order to get their personal lives sorted out. The interviewees in this study stated that they left their expatriate assignment on a Friday and commenced their new position with the home organisation on the following Monday morning. They stated that this was expected by their organisations. The interviewees in this study stated that because they were women they were very slow to ask for time off. If there was
a formal policy, however, which gave a certain amount of time off to get resettled this would have made things much easier for them.

To reduce the problems encountered during the move ‘home’, organisations should develop policies, which would allow expatriates to keep in contact with the home organisation while they are abroad. This study highlighted the fact that many organisations do not have any official procedures in place to ensure that the expatriate keeps in contact with the home organisation. In this study, the expatriates themselves were aware of how important it was for them to keep in contact and they did this through their networks or the informal mentoring relationships, which they had set up. In many instances, however, because there was no official contact policy, these expatriates had no contact with senior management and were, in effect, forgotten about when management decisions were being made. The expatriates felt that they were “out of sight, out of mind” and this caused problems at the repatriation stage. To avoid this expatriates could be assigned to a designated member of senior management to ensure that contact with the home organisation is maintained and procedures for keeping in regular contact, with this person, should be developed. This would ensure that expatriates are not forgotten about whilst they are abroad.

This study has highlighted that very few organisations consider the repatriation process in the context of an overall career plan. Many of the organisations represented in the study sent their executives on foreign assignments but had no long-term career plan for them on completion of the assignment. The interviewees admitted to feeling a certain amount of vulnerability as a result of this as they had no idea what would happen to them once the foreign assignment was at an end. They suggested that the repatriation stage should be considered in the context of an overall career plan so that the organisation would have given some consideration to the type of position they would be suitable for at the repatriation stage.
5.4 AGENDA FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

A review of the literature and the research findings presented in this study provide opportunities for further research. As indicated by the literature review in this study very little empirical research has been conducted on the repatriation of female international managers. This phenomenon is especially under-reported in the European context. This study has, therefore, examined the repatriation of female international managers in a European context. It has investigated the assumptions put forward in the international human resource management literature, and empirically assessed these assumptions in a European context so as to add to the corpus of knowledge on the repatriation of senior female international managers. The study brings attention to the repatriation process from the perspective of female international managers and it invites further research on the topic. Arising from the interviews, a number of specific themes emerged, each of which could be further developed in future research.

The findings from this research indicate that while organisations provide preparation for the move abroad, they do not provide preparation for the move 'home'. Only one organisation in this study provided preparation for repatriation. The interviewees in this study believed that preparation for the repatriation process would have equipped them to deal with the problems they encountered. They believed that being made aware of the issues would have helped to make the transition less problematic. They also believed that there are issues, which are specific to women during the repatriation process. Given the difficulties associated with repatriation, research is needed to examine why organisations draw this distinction between the move abroad and the move home and why they are treated so differently. Research could also investigate the types (if any) of policies organisations have in place to cater for repatriation.
The findings in this study indicate that the repatriation process is rarely considered by organisations in the context of an overall career plan. This study and other research indicate that this lack of consideration of the repatriation process causes many difficulties for the repatriating expatriate. Research has established that organisations are finding it increasingly difficult to get managers to accept foreign assignments. Some managers in this study suggest that going on a foreign assignment was a career risk as they had no idea what would happen to them once the foreign assignment was over. Research has also established that when expatriates have expectations, which are not met by the organisation on their return to the home country, this often results in the manager becoming disillusioned and making the decision to leave the organisation. Having the repatriation process considered in the context of an overall plan would eradicate these problems. Research could examine the international career plans which organisations have in place for their executives and specifically look at how the repatriation process fits into these plans.

The participants in this study highlighted the importance for organisations to have formal procedures for their expatriates to keep in touch with senior management in the home country whilst they are abroad. This study indicates that the lack of communication with senior management in the home organisation can have detrimental effects on the expatriate during the repatriate process. Not having a formal procedure in place contributes to the ‘out of sight, out of mind’ phenomenon. Further research could examine the measures organisations have in place (if any) to ensure their expatriates keep in contact with senior management in the home organisation.

The participants in this study suggest that women can take control of their own careers by being strong in making their demands and making sure their expectations are known. They suggest that having positive attitudes to the glass ceiling and glass border and male networks can help to dissipate their effects on women’s career progression. The managers suggest that traditionally women
have not been good at doing this and in some respects it was their own attitudes which hampered them. The participants also suggest that if a woman wants something, she has to go out and get it, they do not see gender as being an obstacle if a woman has the correct attitudes. Future research might investigate the merit of this point of view.

One of the issues which was highlighted by this study is the difficulty of work-life balance on women and how this affects women's careers. The participants who were married with children stated that they had extra responsibilities because of their maternal role within the family. They suggest that women's personal responsibilities are not always compatible with the demands of their careers and often women are forced to make a choice. Many women choose to put their careers on hold and not put themselves forward for career advancement. The participants in this study suggest that if organisations provide the opportunity for more flexibility then this would enable women to further their careers and also deal with their personal responsibilities as well. Research might investigate the benefits that more flexible working arrangements would provide, both from an organisational and employee point of view. One of the suggestions in this study is that the boundary of the glass ceiling has changed in that women often create their own glass ceilings by their own career limitations. Future research could explore this suggestion.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX

The Interview Guide

- Can you tell me about your organisation?

- How many employees are in the organisation?

- Can you tell me something about yourself and your career?

- Did the repatriation process which you experienced meet with your expectations?

- Did you move back to your home country on your own or with a partner and/or family?

- Do you consider that there are additional problems for female managers during the repatriation process in comparison to male colleagues?

- Did your organisation provide training/preparation for the repatriation process?

- While you were on foreign assignment, did the organisation have policies in place to encourage you to keep in contact with the home organisation?

- Did you have a mentor in the home organisation while you were on foreign assignment?

- Did you retain contact with the network in the home organisation while you were on foreign assignment?
• Do you think that the experiences you gathered while you were on foreign assignment benefited you?

• How were you accepted by work colleagues when you returned to your home organisation?

• Was the repatriation process considered by your organisation in the context of an overall career plan?

• What preparations had your organisation made for you when you re-entered your home organisation?

• After re-entering your home country, how long do you think it took you to re-settle?

• What in your experience was the most difficult aspect of the repatriation process?

These questions were the lead questions of the areas explored in the interviews. Supplementary questions were asked where appropriate in order to explore more fully the experiences of the interviewees.