Anu Elina Lapinoja

Factors of Success of Female Expatriates During International Assignments

Business Economics and Tourism

2012

VAASAN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU

Kansainvälisen kaupan koulutusohjelma

TIIVISTELMÄ

Tekijä	Anu Lapinoja
Otsikko	Naisekspatriaattien menestystekijät ulkomaankomennuksien aikana
Vuosi	2012
Kieli	Englanti
Sivumäärä	84 + 2
Ohjaaja	Rosmeriany Nahan-Suomela

Tämän opinnäytetyön tarkoitus oli selvittää mitkä ovat naisekspatriaattien menestystekijät ulkomaankomennuksien aikana. Lisäksi tavoitteena oli saada selville miten yritykset voisivat tukea naisekpatriaatteja tulevaisuudessa, sekä mitkä tekijät ovat naisekspatriaattien menestyksen esteenä.

Teoriaosuudessa käsitellään ulkomaankomennuksia yleisesti, ekspatriaatteja, ulkomaankomennuksien onnistumista, epäonnistumisesta, sekä menestyksen esteitä. Lisäksi tutustutaan naisekspatriaatteihin ja tekijöihin, jotka vaikuttavat heidän menestykseen.

Empiirinen osuus toteutettiin kvalitatiivisena tutkimuksena, johon osallistui seitsemän naisekspatriaattia, jotka ovat tällä hetkellä ulkomaankomennuksella, tai ovat jo palanneet kotimaahan. Tiedonkeruu tapahtui käyttämällä e-lomaketta.

Tutkimuksen mukaan naisekspatriaattien menestystekijöitä ovat verkostoituminen, mentorointi, henkilökohtaiset ominaisuudet; uran, avioliiton ja lapsien onnistunut yhdistelmä, tukea antava sosiaalinen verkosto, sekä vastaanottavan maan kansalaisten positiiviset asenteet naisekspatriaatteja kohtaan. Tutkimuksen tuloksia käsitellään tarkemmin kappaleissa "Tutkimustulosten esittäminen" ja "Tutkimustulosten analysointi".

Avainsanat   Ulkomaankomennukset, Naisekspatriaatit, Menestystekijät

VAASAN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU

VAASA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

International Business Program

ABSTRACT

The aim of this bachelor's thesis was to study what the factors of success of female expatriates are during international assignments. Also, the objective was to find out how companies could support and enhance these factors in the future and what kind of barriers of success there exist for female expatriates.

The theoretical study examined international assignments in general, expatriates, success and failure of international assignments and the barriers of success. Also, female expatriates and their critical success factors were discussed in the theoretical study.

The empirical study was carried out as a qualitative study in which participated seven female expatriates who were currently on an international assignment or were already repatriated. An e-form questionnaire was used as a data collection method.

The study indicates that the success factors of female expatriates are networking, mentoring and personal characteristics; the successful combination of a career, a marriage and children, having a supporting social network and the positive attitudes of host nationals. The results of the study are explained in more detail in chapters "Presenting the Results" and "Analyzing the Results".

CONTENTS

1. Introduction

As companies have become more and more global in response to the internationalisation of markets, the demand for expatriate employees has rapidly increased. In today's economy, it is critical to be able to attract the best employees with global knowledge and experience. Therefore it is a necessity for globalizing companies to develop a pool of expatriates to manage their overseas operations. Traditionally this pool of expatriates has excluded women from international assignments. However, there is a rising trend of female business expatriates which forces companies to re-examine their reluctance towards women in international assignments. (Cole and McNulty, 2011; Selmer and Leung, 2002 & 2003)

Taken into account the scarcity of women managers abroad, companies may question whether women can succeed in international assignments. Adler (1993) examined this issue and discovered various barriers which hindered the participation of women in international assignments. Adler (1993) found out that companies were reluctant to select women for international assignments because of negative perceptions of managers at corporate headquarters which discouraged them from selecting women. Also, companies expressed their concern about problems related to dual-career couples and women's physical safety. Female expatriates are associated with the phenomenon known as the "glass ceiling" of which women need to break through first at their home organizations in order to be selected for managerial positions abroad. (Adler, 1993; Selmer and Leung, 2002 & 2003)

Tung (1982) points out that one of the most important factors of the success of an international assignment is the ability to adapt to new cultures. According to Guthrie, Ash and Stevens (2003) females more often exhibit personal characteristics which are associated with successful expatriation. Also, Adler (1979) confirms that women may possess exceptional skills for managing internationally, consisting of a preference for co-operating; an ability to work on several tasks at the same time; emotional sensitivity; and interpersonal skills. These are often referred as the "female advantage". According to Adler's (1993) survey among 100 North American female expatriates, she found out that half of the respondents experienced it as an advantage to be a female. Visibility was one of the advantages experienced by female

expatriates. Women also benefited from the "halo effect", meaning host nationals are aware of how unusual women in international assignments are which made local managers to perceive female expatriates as being the best for the job. However, Hutchings, French and Hatcher (2008) found out that female expatriates perceive less organizational suppor than their male counterparts. (Adler, 1993; Cole and McNulty, 2011; Selmer and Leung, 2002 & 2003)

According to Smith and Still (1996) IHRM literature has not given much attention to women as expatriates since the majority of expatriates are men and therefore the research undertaken has typically focused only on male expatriates. Dallafar and Movahedi (1996) pointed out that often the studies on females on international assignments has concentrated on to the role of the expatriate wife. This has given a tendency to organizations to confuse the roles of female expatriate manager and female expatriate partner. Most of the studies of women in expatriate management have been conducted within national boundaries, predominantly in north America. In this field of study many questions still remain unanswered. (Linehan and Scullion, 2001, 392)

The purpose of this study is to determine the factors of success of female expatriates during international assignments. After determining these factors of success, the aim is to find out how companies could enhance these factors in the future in order to give more support for female expatriates. Also, another aim is to find out what kind of barriers of success for females there exist. I find this study important since there is a new generation of women graduating from high-level universities who whish to pursue a career abroad. These women are an equally important source of talent for global firms as their male counterparts and cannot any longer remain an under-utilized resource for international assignments.

1.1. Aim of the Research

The aim of the research is to find out what are the success factors for female expatriates and how these factors could be supported and enhanced by companies. Also, I want to find out which factors are determined as barriers of success according to female expatriates. In my opinion it is important to recognize these barriers to be able to overcome them in the future.

By conducting this research I want to share information to potential future female expatriates. Females are still underpresented in foreign assignments and in order to stay competitive in international markets, it is crucial to know these factors of success and enhance them. Since today there is a rising pool of female candidates for international assignments it is even more important for companies also to recognize this issue and start supporting female expatriation.

1.2. Research Problem

"A well-chosen thesis topic can lead to research questions that fuel your academic interests for years to come. At the very least, topics can be seen as occasions for making your writing relevant and meaningful to your own personal and academic concerns."

(Coming Up With a Thesis Topic, 2010, available in www-form: http://www.gradschools.com/article-detail/choose-thesis-topic-1576)

The topic of my thesis was born during the writing process. I knew I wanted to write about the female expatriate but the exact research subject was lost at the beginning. First, I wanted to write more broadly about the subject of female expatriates, but found this to be a too wide concept and, thus, too much work for one thesis. Finally, I discovered the topic 'factors of success for female expatriates during international assignments and the following research problems:

- **Which are the factors determining the success of female expatriates?**

- **How could companies support and enhance these factors in the future?**

And one additional question giving more insight info about the flipside of success factors:

- **What barries of success there exist according to female expatriates?**

1.3. Limitations of the Study

In the theoretical part of this thesis I define the concepts of expatriate success and failure. Especially, I will look into the female expatriate success factors. The theoretical study is followed the empirical study where a quantitative research is conducted by interviewing female

expatriates. I chose participants who all had at least one expatriate experience for the study. All the participants are Finnish. The participants were already repatriated or were currently on an international assignment. Since this study handles female expatriates on a general level, differences between these two groups was not researched.

This study is limited only to the success factors of female expatriates. I will not take into account the country specific differences based on where the expatriate assignment has been conducted. Neither I will specify the differences between industry types. By setting limits for this study, I will keep it narrow enough and thus, easier to work with.

1.4. Methodology of the Research

Besides the theory, this thesis includes an empirical research study in which the up-to-date information collected from female expatriates is analyzed which I hope will support the theoretical study. The research was conducted by using qualitative research method with an e-form questionnaire as a data collection method. In the empirical part of this thesis I try to find solutions to my research problems by analyzing the results of the questionnaire. Also I will give suggestions for the further research at the end of the thesis.

1.5. Structure of the Study

The first part of this thesis is the introduction where the aim of the research, the research problem and the limitations of the study are presented.

The second part of the thesis consists of theory where there are five main themes which I will go through separately in the following order:

1. *International Assignments*

2. *Expatriates*

3. *Success of International Assignments and Barriers of Success*

4. *Female Expatriates*

5. *Critical Success Factors*

These five main themes create the theoretical framework for the thesis. In every chapter various theories from different authors relating to these main themes and to the topic of this thesis are presented.

The third part of the thesis is the empirical framework where the research and data collection methods, the respondents and the questions of the e-form questionnaire are introduced. Also, the results of the questionnaire are presented and analyzed in-depth.

In the last part of the thesis conclusions of the results and suggestions for the further research are given.

- Introduction
- Theoretical Framework
- Research Methodology
- Presenting the Results
- Analyzing the Results
- Conclusion and Suggestion for Further Research
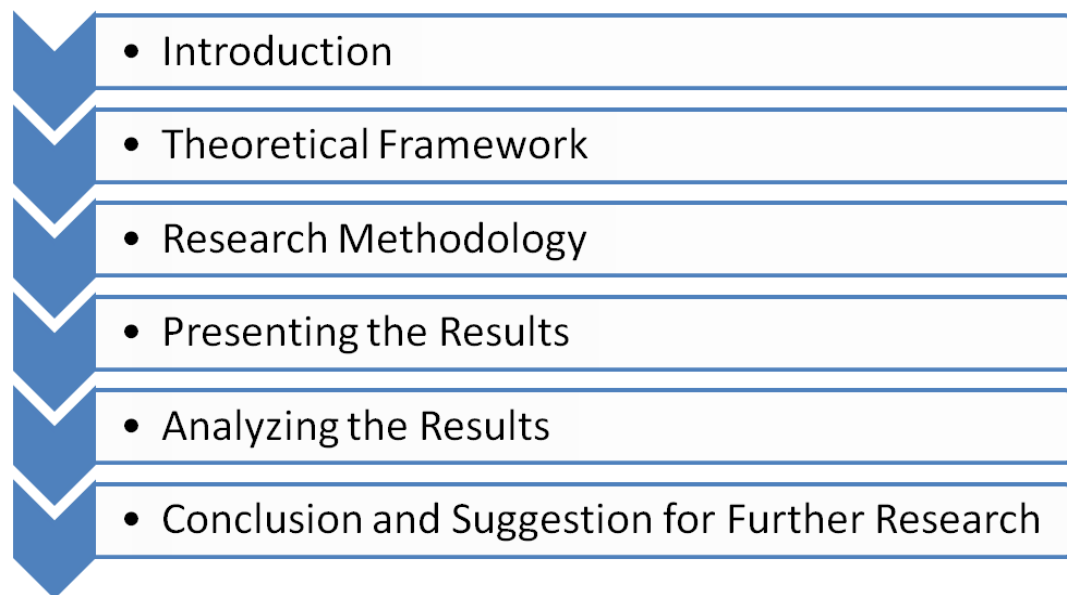
2. International Assignments

When the level of international activities increase, firms pass several stages of organizational development as their organizational structure changes. This change happens typically due to the strain imposed by the geographic distance of operations which creates the need for more effective coordination and control across business units. Also, the constraint caused by the host-country regulations on ownership and equity is one of the common reasons behind the organizational structure change. This evolution to a multinational enterprise may be a long process with many steps and important is to stress that it's not exactly the same for all firms. Some may go through these various steps quickly whereas others evolve slowly over time. (Dowling, Festing and Engle, 2008, 26-27)

This evolution is directly linked to IHRM policies and an appropriate IHR structure is needed in order to effectively conduct business in the global economy. The development and complexity of international business creates challenges for IHR in particular and forces it to provide new kind of key strategies for MNEs. IHRM plays a critical role in how MNEs organize their international business operations and IHR professionals are increasingly being asked for advice in designing, implementation and management of the MNEs. (Briscoe and Schuler, 2004, 65-70)

As the company becomes more involved in international business, the number of international assignments grows and, thus, more IHR support is needed. IHR professionals in multinationals face strategic choices - whether to standardize work practises the same way as other resources or not? Some host locations even require standardized policies to encourage equal treatment to all staff on international assignments due to the economic and political constraints. However, despite the impact international growth has on HR activities, the extent of that impact on corporate performance is not well understood by many managers. HR issues are more likely recognized by the management when international assignments become more significant strategically and are, therefore, leveraging more company resources. (Dowling, Festing and Engle, 2008, 100-102)

The global perspective needs to be applied to employees in the corporate HR department, at the regional HR level and to other business units HR managers. Managers working within IHRM should also undertake international assignments themselves in order to gain experience globally and to learn appreciate both global corporate and local unit concerns. When the MNE gains more international experience, it moves from IHRM management to global human resource management including all HR activities worldwide. (Dowling, Festing and Engle, 2008, 102)

It has been recognized lately that the success of MNCs depends on the success of its international managers. At the moment, one of the key human resource issues is to develop globally competent managers who are able to work successfully in today's global business environment. Also there is a growing competition for the top management talent in international operations. The MNCs cannot afford to ignore the pool of female professionals in the field. New competitive strategies for the MNCs should include the process for developing new global leaders despite the gender. (Brewster and Suutari, 2005, 8, 22)

2.1.   Staffing of International Assignments

When a firm gains more international experience, it develops over time and faces staffing issues which are not present in the domestic environment. IHRM literature uses four terms to describe the different approaches how MNEs manage and staff their international operations. It is possible to identify three different attitudes – *ethnocentric, polycentric and geocentric* – towards the degree of domination of the MNE headquarters have over subsidiary management and HR practises. Later on the fourth approach, *region-centrism* was added. (Briscoe and Schuler, 2004, 54; Dowling, Festing and Engle, 2008, 80)

Ethnocentrism is the initial orientation of many managers from homogenous national population with a strong patriotic culture. International activities are managed using the home-country standards and foreign subsidiaries seldom have any autonomy over the decision made in the headquarters. Ethnocentric approach is sometimes pursued due to the lack of qualified host-country nationals (HCNs) or in order to reduce the risk of fail of international operations. This is especially true to firms in their early stages of internationalization. The local managers may initially be replaced by parent country nationals (PCNs) to ensure the compliance with overall

corporate objectives. This kind of approach able the subsidiary to maintain good communication, coordination and control with headquarters. However, the ethnocentric approach limits the promotion opportunities of HCNs and also it may take long time for expatriate managers to adapt to host countries which in turn affects negatively to productivity and turnover. (Briscoe and Schuler, 2004, 54; Dowling, Festing and Engle, 2008, 80)

The next level of managerial orientation is referred as *polycentrism*. Each subsidiary has some autonomy and is treated as a distinct national entity. Local nationals (HCNs) usually manage the foreign subsidiaries and host-country standards are used as reference point when managing the company operations. This eliminates the language barriers and the adjustment problems of PCNs. However, this kind of distinction between the HCN and PCN managers may isolate the subsidiary and headquarters operations and as a result the subsidiaries will develop as independent national units with just some nominal links to the headquarters. PCN managers will have limited exposure to foreign operations and, on the other hand, HCN managers have limited opportunities to gain experience abroad. *Polycentrism* emphasizes autonomous operations of wholly-owned subsidiaries. (Briscoe and Schuler, 2004, 54-55; Dowling, Festing and Engle, 2008, 82)

The most global of the managerial orientations is *geocentrism.* A global approach is adopted by the MNE, recognizing the contribution of each subsidiary and the headquarters. MNEs with a geocentric orientation borrow the best practises around the world rather than giving preference to any specific local approach. The managerial goal is to create one transnational strategy which will be adopted worldwide. The geocentric approach encourages knowledge and resource sharing across operations and enables the MNE to develop an international pool of labour to draw expertise from. One drawback of this orientation is that it can be expensive to implement because a large number of PCNs, TCNs and HCNs need to be sent abroad for training in order to build the international team of competent managers. (Briscoe and Schuler, 2004, 55; Dowling, Festing and Engle, 2008, 82-83)

Regio-centrism is the most recent of the managerial approaches and it can be a way for the MNE to move from *ethnocentrism* or *polycentrism* towards geocentric approach. There are no national barriers and staff may move outside their countries. However, this happens only within some

specific geographic region, e.g. Europe. This approach reflects some sensitivity to local conditions but at the same time it can produce regional federalism and hold back the MNE from taking a global status. (Dowling, Festing and Engle, 2008, 83-84)

The critical factors affecting the MNEs staffing include strategy, organizational structure and subsidiaries. Depending on the strategy of the MNE, it chooses whether to use expatriates or host country nationals in its international operations. Also, expatriate managers may possess either ethnocentric, polycentric, geocentric or regio-centric values which translate into corresponding corporate behaviour and policies. The MNEs must not only select expatriates with skills, but also people who can cope with the organization culture of the MNE. (International HRM Notes: Staffing for Global Operations)

Since these four approaches to staffing affect on how MNEs select their expatriates, I wanted to bring this issue up in the theoretical framework of the study. In the next chapter the reasons behind international assignments and why MNEs choose to use expatriates are discussed.

2.2. Reasons for International Assignments

International assignments - defined as sending abroad an employee for a specific period of time – are triggered by many organisational and market-driven reasons. Given the difficulties related to international assignments, it is reasonable to question why MNEs persist in using expatriates. Despite the growing expatriate expenses in terms of benefits, services and support, firms expect the use of expatriates to grow in response to pressures for internationally mobile staff as indicated by the survey of 203 companies by PriceWaterhouseCoopers (2005). In order to assess the value an international assignment generates for the MNE, the reasons for the use of international assignments need to be identified and clearly distinguished from one another. The international management and IHRM literature has differentiated three key organizational reasons for international assignments:

- *Position filling.* When there are no suitable employees in the host country, MNE will transfer a suitable candidate from other operations. Position filling can be regarded as the most common reason for international assignments. Interestingly, today the important

driver for European organizations is the costs of staff rather than the problem of staff availability. (Dowling, Festing and Engle, 2008, 88-89; Schmidt and Minssen, 2007, 214-228)

- *Management development.* Employees may be moved into other parts of the organization for training and development and to assist in creation of common corporate values. Management development puts importance to the enhancement of the expatriate's individual competence through an international assignment. Also, international experience and career development can be regarded as one factor of creating motivation among employees. (Dowling, Festing and Engle, 2008, 88-89; Schmidt and Minssen, 2007, 214-228)

- *Organizational development.* The aim of organizational development is to improve structures and knowledge at the company lever and to transfer procedures and practises into various locations, e.g. implementing headquarter procedures at foreign subsidiaries. As a result organizational capabilities develop enabling a firm to compete in global markets. Another survey by PriceWaterHouseCoopers (2002) reported that greater staff mobility assisted in the creation of a global corporate culture and the cross-fertilization of practises and ideas. International assignments familiarise employees with more than one operation and thus, creates a broader perspective. (Dowling, Festing and Engle, 2008, 88-89; Schmidt and Minssen, 2007, 214-228)

Besides the organizational reasons for international assignments, there exist personal reasons which may determine whether the expatriate assignment will be accepted or not. Relocation can be financially advantageous since often the expatriate contract includes an attractive monetary compensation. Also, the expatriate assignment may boost the future career of the expatriate by offering developmental or promotional opportunities. Moreover, an international assignment offers a lifestyle change which includes the experiencing of new culture, language and international friends. By understanding these various reasons for expatriate assignments, companies are able to attract the best candidates and thus, the probability of success of the international assignment increases. It is important for this study to understand the underlying reasons behind the expatriate assignments as well. (Reiche, 2011)

As there are many reasons for international assignments, there also exists many different types of international assignments besides traditional expatriate assignment. Growing competition abroad has forced companies to reduce costs in order to stay competitive enough. This has set pressures to the global human resources to implement new kind of international strategies. In the following chapter it is introduced how international assignments are categorized and what types of international employees MNEs could utilize instead of expatriates. (Morney, Linehan and Scullion, 2003, 174-175)

2.3.   Types of International Assignments

Employees are transferred to international assignments for varying lengths of time depending on the purpose and the nature of the task to be performed. MNEs are particularly concerned about developing their employees through international assignments and their employees ability to disseminate knowledge and innovation through these assignments. Usually the categorization of international assignments is done based on the length or duration of the assignments.

- *Short term:* These assignments solve critical skills shortages until a more permanent solution can be found and usually include troubleshooting or project supervision. The duration of short-term assignments is from a couple of months up to one year and usually during this time the assignee is unaccompanied by the family. A short-term assignment is many times less expensive than a long-term assignment since not so much administrative work is needed. On the other hand, short-term assignments can cause relationship problems which can affect the performance of the employee. (Dowling, Festing and Engle, 2008, 90; Hyde, 2002)

- *Long term:* Long-term assignments can be referred as a traditional expatriate assignment and tend to last from one to five years involving a clearly defined role in the receiving company. Due to the long duration of the assignment, usually the family joins the assignee abroad. Despite the high costs, companies still opt for long-term assignments because of the deep knowledge assignees have and which fills skill gaps in local operations. Also MNEs need internationally experiences employees who can have

strategic and important roles when the company expands its operations. (Dowling, Festing and Engle, 2008, 90; Hyde, 2002)

Within these broad categories, it is possible to find many other types of international employees being utilized by MNEs. Even though the use of expatriates has seemed as a logical choice for staffing international operations, several issues has led IHRM professionals to seek other options for these traditional international assignments. Some of the issues include ,as already mentioned above, the high cost of foreign assignments, problems with adjustment and repatriation and many others. The following is a list and short description of types of some international employees which play a role in the staffing of today's MNEs.

- *Domestic internationalists:* Employees who never leave home but whose job includes frequent interaction with people in other countries (via telephone, e-mail or fax).

- *International commuters:* Employees who live in one country but who work in another country and commute on a weekly or bi-weekly basis to the place of work.

- *Frequent business trips:* Employees who take international trips which last a few days, weeks or months at a time. These trips may be e.g. for negotiations, to check up on deals or to work with development teams in multiple countries.

- *Localized employees:* Employees who are sent to work to a foreign country but hired as a local employee. This is usually the individual's choice, often because the marry a local spouse or a way of a company to dictate that the person is treated as equally as other local employees.

- *Permanent cadre or globalists:* Employees who spend their whole careers in international assignment, moving from one foreign assignment to another.

- *Returnees:* Emigrants who are hired to return to their home countries to work for the firm. For example, KFC employed a first-generation Chinese Americans to return to China to establish its restaurants.

- *Boomerangs:* This term is some ways similar to the previous term "returnees". Also this term applies to individuals who have experience in the foreign country, have returned home and are now hired to come back to the foreign country.

- *Second-generation expatriates:* Also referred as naturalized citizens (immigrants who have become citizens) who are sent to foreign assignments to countries other than their country of origin. They are seen as being "experiences expatriates" – after having experienced the move from their home countries to their new countries - and thus may be more effective in a foreign assignment.

- *Just-in-time:* People who are recruited only when the need emerges because they possess the specific skills required by the foreign assignment. No long-term commitment is received from the company.

- *Outsourced employees:* A situation where the MNE decides to pay someone else for the services of an employee or a group of employees. Typical work outsourced by MNEs to other firms are the call centers and back office operations in Eastern Europe, India and Philippines.

- *Virtual employees:* Employees who manage, from home-base, international responsibilities via video conferences, e-mail, telephone etc. Furthermore, frequent visits to the host country are necessary. Working across borders in a virtual form creates many problems with coordination, communication, language and culture and is not effective in every situation or with all employees. Virtual assignments are more common in Europe than in the companies located in the Asia-Pacific region.

Two issues appear to be reason for the use of different types of international assignees. The first is the growing needs which firms experience as their level of international business increases. The second is the problems firms experience as they try to cope with these growing needs. From the IHR point of view, international components of jobs of "regular" employees are also increasing and this must IHR consider in its global workforce planning. (Briscoe and Schuler, 2004, 212-224; Briscoe, Schuler and Claus, 2009, 167-169)

The type of international assignment will be chosen depending on the needs of the company. It is going to be challenging for companies to understand that not all of these assignments are suitable for everyone. Also different type of support from the company is required depending on the nature of the assignment. It is going to be crucial for the companies to be able to select the right type of an international assignment and the suitable candidate who is able to fulfil the expectations of the company. In other words, the organizational factors and the candidate's personal characteristics will determine the success of the international assignment. In chapter 4. the concepts of success and barriers and how they relate to international assignments are discussed in more detail. But first, in the next chapter the concept of expatriation is presented.

3. Expatriates

Of all the international employees, I will concentrate only on expatriates in this study. Expatriation has been historically viewed as the process of moving to a foreign country to live and work for a specific period of time. Sending employees abroad on international assignments has long since become a means of internationalization for companies. Today expatriates are considered a potentially huge contribution to the process of internationalization of a firm positively influencing on the corporate culture. (Schmidt and Minssen, 2007, 214-228)

Expatriation continues being a major concern for MNEs, while taking new different kind of forms especially in the large, global firms. In many firms, international experience is seen necessary for understanding the increased international components of business. Also, the same skills needed to work in different cultures in foreign assignments are often seen as precisely those skills needed at the top of MNEs. There is an ongoing stress for firms to carefully select the employees for overseas assignments who will help the firm to achieve its foreign-market objectives. (Briscoe and Schuler, 2004, 234-235)

As historical experience shows, the use of expatriates is high during the initial stages of internationalization in order to accomplish the technology and knowledge transfer and implementing a start-up. This period usually lasts the first couple of years after the start-up. As the firm's local staff assimilates this knowledge, usually the number of expatriates will decline to minimum necessary to ensure effective continuity of the business. The number expands again as the local firm increasingly becomes integrated into a global operations. Also, when a firm becomes more global, it needs to develop internationally experiences managers to enhance its competitive advantages. A question remains – who is this expatriate? In the following chapter the profile of the expatriate is presented based on the findings of the 2011 Global Relocation Trend Survey Report. (Briscoe and Schuler, 2004, 235-236)

3.1. Profile of an Expatriate

The following information is based on the 2011 Global Relocation Trend Survey Report which is the 16th annual report published by Brookfield Global Relocation Services. Each year's data is compared with "historical average" which includes data from the current and previous years. This helps out to point out the annual variations. The survey of 2011 represented 118 multinationals, both small and large organizations located throughout the world. For 41 per cent of the respondents, the company headquarters are located outside of the USA. The respondents from companies headquartered outside USA (64 per cent) were more positive about their future than their counterparts in the North America (58 per cent). This is due to the fact that North American companies are more reactionary to economic conditions than those in Europe.

According to the survey most expatriates are male (82 per cent) and between 50 to 59 years old (19 per cent). The percentage of assignees between 20 to 39 years was higher in the boom years 2005-2007 and was lower in the hard economic times – as today.

68 per cent of the assignees were married and 80 per cent were accompanies by spouses/partners while on the assignment. Only 47 per cent of the assignees were accompanied by children. The age of the assignees is closely linked to percentage of assignees who were accompanied by children. The respondents reported that 60 per cent of spouses/partners were employed before an assignment, however, only 12 per cent of those were able to find jobs during the assignment. This situation is somehow explained by the difficulties in obtaining work permits and the rise in number of assignments into emerging countries where unemployment figures stay high.

According to the respondents 39 per cent of single-status assignments were long term (1 year or more) and 61 per cent short term (3 to 12 months). For future development such as policies, respondents were most often considering localization policies (40 per cent), short-term policies (28 per cent), long-term policies (26 per cent), commuter policies (22 per cent), developmental policies (21 per cent), extended business travel policies (17 per cent) and one-way permanent move policies (17 per cent). These results are in line with companies' desire to utilize talent on a global basis and of course the cost considerations are reflected in the data.

It is important for this study to look at the percentage of female expatriates. According to the 2011 Global Relocation Trend Survey Report this was 18 per cent. The significant low number

of female expatriates prompts a series of questions: is the low female participation in international assignments due to career development issues or to personal and family issues? Is there a class ceiling for women regarding international assignments? These questions are interesting and will be discussed in more detail later on.

3.2. Roles of an Expatriate

Earlier it was discussed the various reasons for international assignments. These reasons underpin the expectations about the roles expatriates play as a consequence of being transferred from one country to another. The headquarter-subsidiary relationship has a huge effect on the role of an expatriate and the control mechanism used. In her article Anne-Wil Harzing (2001) describes the different control functions of expatriation with the following metaphors: *"bears, bumble-bees and spiders".* According to her the primary role of *"bear"*(formal direct control) is to ensure the subsidiary compliance trough direct supervision, enabling strategic objectives for local operation to be achieved. Harzing (2001) found out that German companies tend towards this type of bureaucratic control mechanism. To some extent, using expatriates as an agent of direct control reflects an ethnocentric approach towards internationalization. (Dowling, Festing and Engle, 2008, 93; Harzing, 2001)

Harzing (2001) describes expatriates who transfer corporate values as *"bumble-bees".* These expatriates act as agents of socialization assisting in the transfer of shared values and beliefs. The adaptation of common work practices is encouraged and the staff is exposed to different viewpoints which shape their behaviour, thus reinforcing their feeling of belonging. However, there is a little empirical investigation of how effective expatriates have been as agents of socialization. Often attempts to instil corporate values and norms have negative results at subsidiary level. (Dowling, Festing and Engle, 2008, 93; Harzing, 2001)

According to Harzing (2001) *"spiders"* are expatriates who act as network builders during their international assignment. Network of personal relationships changes as employees move between organizational units, leading to this role described by Harzing (2001). While short-term assignments may not allow the expatriate to develop as wide range of contacts as a longer assignment, over time the number and variety of networks can increase, giving opportunity for

the transfer of ideas. Thus duration of the assignment has an impact on the person's ability to develop networks. Also, it is important to note that not all people forms the type of relationship which builds productive networks. (Dowling, Festing and Engle, 2008, 93; Harzing, 2001)

In her study of the roles of expatriates in controlling foreign subsidiaries, Harzing (2001) found out that the roles of *"bumble-bees"* and "*spiders"* were especially important in subsidiaries which were relatively independent from headquarters. On the other hand, the expatriates' role as *"bear"* was more important in subsidiaries which were quite dependent on headquarters. It is anticipated that informal control mechanism is becoming more important in today's multicultural environment. As the study of Harzing (2001) indicates, expatriates are a good way when trying to achieve this type of informal control. (Harzing, 2001)

Besides the roles of an expatriate discussed above, expatriates may act as boundary spanners and language nodes. Boundary spanning refers to activities such as gathering host-country information and acting as representatives of their firms, for example, in a social event at a foreign embassy. Networking activity emerged as a way in which expatriates from various nationalities were able to engage in boundary spanning activities. Acting as a language node refers to repatriation: an expatriate who has learned to speak e.g. Spanish while working in South America, is now receiving inquiries from the firm's Spanish speaking operations which prefer to gain information directly from him in Spanish. Overall, international assignments are seen as an effective way of reaching various objectives and transferring competence and knowledge. Therefore it is important to select the suitable candidates who are able to fulfil the objectives of the company. In the following chapter criteria for selecting expatriates for international assignments are discussed and three different studies regarding the subject are presented. (Dowling, Festing and Engle, 2008, 93; Harzing, 2001)

3.3. Selection Criteria

"The top twenty-first-century manager should have multi-environment, multicountry, multifunctional, multicompany, multi-industry experience."

-   *Ed Dunn, Corporate Vice President of Whirlpool Corporation –*

(Briscoe and Schuler, 2004, 238)

Developing an appropriate selection criterion for expatriates has become a critical IHRM issue. Especially it is challenging for those responsible for selecting staff for international assignments. Important is to note that the selection is a two-way process between the organization and the individual. It is becoming more common that selection decisions are aligned with corporate strategy and goals. The more important the strategy and the more complex it is to implement, the more critical are the choices the MNE makes to staff its international operations. However, the most important factor is that potential expatriates are seen to be able to perform the specific tasks to which they are assigned for as well as to perform those tasks well in a different cultural environment. (Briscoe and Schuler, 2004, 236-239; Dowling, Festing and Engle, 2008, 119)

The first of the major studies in the field of expatriate selection practises was carried out by Rosalie Tung (1981). By examining 80 U.S. MNCs, she identified four general categories which contribute to success or failure on the expatriate assignment:

- *Technical competence on the job.* As in domestic operations, this factor is one of the primary determinants of success. Since technical and managerial competence can be determined on the basis of past performance, it is not surprising that the multinationals place heavy reliance on technical skills during the selection process. However, the dilemma is that past performance may have little bearing on one's ability to perform tasks in a different cultural environment. (Dowling, Festing and Engle, 2008, 120; Reiche and Harzing, 2009, 26-27)

- *Personal traits or relational abilities.* Expatriates require cross-cultural abilities which enable the person to operate effectively in a new environment and deal with his/her superiors, peers, subordinates, business associates and clients. This factor is not only limited to knowledge of another culture. The most critical element is the expatriate's ability to live and work with people whose systems, beliefs, customs and ways of conducting business differ from one's own significantly. In practise, even though this factor is recognized as important, it is difficult to precisely assess a candidate's suitability in this regard. (Dowling, Festing and Engle, 2008, 120; Reiche and Harzing, 2009, 27)

- *Ability to cope with environmental variables.* As in domestic operations, it is crucial to effective performance to be able to cope with governments, unions, competitors and customers. The host-country political, legal and socioeconomic structures may differ significantly from the systems with which the expatriate is familiar. The expatriate needs to understand these systems and be able to operate effective within them. (Reiche and Harzing, 2009, 27)

- *Family situation.* The contribution of the family, especially that of the spouse, makes to the success of the overseas assignment. The adjustment problems of living in a foreign environment is one of the reasons why some couples seek to return home prematurely. The situation comes even more complex if the spouse had to give up a career to accompany his/her partner abroad. Despite this link between the favourable opinion of the spouse to the international assignment and expatriate adjustment, it appears that companies are reluctant to include the spouse in the selection process. (Dowling, Festing and Engle, 2008, 121; Reiche and Harzing, 2009, 27)

Another important study is provided by Mendelhall and Oddou (1985). According to them, there is not enough information available about the expatriate acculturation, leading to the use of inappropriate selection process. They introduced a four-dimensional approach which links specific behavioural tendencies to probable overseas performance:

- *The self orientation dimension:* activities which strengthen the expatriate's self-esteem and self-confidence.

- *The perceptual dimension:* the knowledge the expatriate has in understanding why host nationals behave in a certain way and to be able to pinpoint the underlying reasons or causes behind host nationals' behaviour.

- *The others-oriented dimension:* activities which enhance the expatriate's ability to interact effectively with host nationals and the degree of desire to affiliate with them.

- *The cultural-toughness dimension:* this dimension is a mediating variable which can modify the importance of the first three dimensions. In countries which significantly

differ from the culture of the home country, the first three dimensions become even more important than in culturally similar countries.

According to Mendelhall and Oddou (1985), the evaluation of candidate's strengths and weaknesses should be based on these four dimensions mentioned above. An appropriate attention is given to cross-cultural ability and behaviour which complements the technical ability assessment. (Dowling, Festing and Engle, 2008, 125; Reiche and Harzing, 2009, 28)

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, multinationals heavily rely on the assessment of the technical skills when selecting the suitable candidates for the international assignment. Sometimes it is even the only criteria used. The reliance on the technical skills is mainly due the factor that it is perhaps the easiest to measure compared to the relevant interpersonal and cross-cultural competences. Frequently selection decisions rely on personal recommendations from personal staff or managers. (Dowling, Festing and Engle, 2008, 126; Reiche and Harzing, 2009, 29-30)

Harris and Brewster (1999) note that in reality the expatriate selection tends to be an ad hoc process which they describe as the 'coffee machine' system. The executives chat around the coffee-machine and the selection process starts through a casual conversation about an assignment when another executive can suggest the name of a potential expatriate. According to Harris and Brewster (1999), the following step for the multinational is just to legitimize the decision which has, in effect, already been taken around the coffee machine. The disadvantages of this selection system are that candidates are not formally evaluated and the candidate pool is very restricted. Also, in the organizations this type of selection system cannot be considered as a strategic approach to expatriation. (Dowling, Festing and Engle, 2008, 126; Reiche and Harzing, 2009, 29-30)

The selection process of expatriates should be carefully examined and evaluated by companies in order to attract the best candidates. This will minimize the expatriate failure and maximize the success of international assignments. Especially the theories from Tung (1981) and Mendelhall and Oddou (1985) I find useful when predicting the factors of success of expatriates. For example, if the candidate possess abilities from each category mentioned by Tung (1981), the

success of the international assignment is more probable. The study of Tung (1981) is closely related to theory presented by Caligiuri, Joshi and Lazarova (1999). In their study they also examined the predictors of success but taking into account the influence of gender. Later on the theory of Caligiuri, Joshi and Lazarova (1999) will be presented in more detail and it is discussed how gender has an effect on the factors of success. In the following chapter it is introduced how dual-career issue has an impact on the success of the international assignments.

3.4.   Dual Career Couples

When accepting on international assignment, this, not surprisingly, will affect the career of the expatriate's spouse or partner. The ORC Worldwide survey conducted in 2005 found out that spousal or dual career issues were the most common reasons for not accepting the international assignment by North American and European firms. This poses a dilemma for both companies and employees since there is a increase of dual-career couples worldwide. MNCs have fewer options when selecting employees from a diminished pool of candidates who may also be less qualified. Thus, MNCs need to come up with new solutions to overcome this challenge. So far two solution categories have been identified: making the assignments more family-friendly or finding other options to a traditional international assignment. (Blackhurst and Cummins, 2005; Dowling, Festing and Engle, 2008, 127-128)

According to the ORC Worldwide survey, nearly half of participants sent out expatriates unaccompanied by their families. This may be also due to the fact that some countries are seen as hardship locations with dangerous conditions and, thus, not suitable for a family. Also, short-term assignments together with commuter assignments remained popular alternatives. Approximately one third of organizations sent their employees on extended business trips. Despite the new technological inventions, the number of virtual assignments still remained remarkably low, only 7 per cent of organizations using this option. Even though these alternative arrangements may have short-term benefits in overcoming the dilemma of dual career couple's reluctance to move, is yet to be seen how effective they will be in encouraging these couples to accept international assignments. (Blackhurst and Cummins, 2005; Dowling, Festing and Engle, 2008, 128)

Some MNCs attempts to place the spouse or partner in a suitable job with another MNC. Other multinationals provide assistance with the employment search or by funding job-finding and the search fees. The logical option would be intra-company employment, meaning sending the couple to the same foreign organization. However, not all couples are comfortable with this idea of working in the same location. Also, one of the options is on-assignment career support. The MNC may assist spouses to maintain and improve career skills by paying e.g. educational expenses and language training. The idea of this is that the spouse is able to maintain skills and able to find work upon re-entry into the home country. (Dowling, Festing and Engle, 2008, 128-129)

According to Brett (1992) female expatriates in dual-career relationships more probably have spouses with professional careers than their male counterparts. For women this dual-career issue can be even more problematic since many organizations still base their IHRM policies on the assumption that all expatriates are men. The personal satisfaction of the accompanying spouse is especially important and more serious spouse-related problems can occur when men have to adjust to be the secondary breadwinner. According to the study of Linehan and Scullion (2001) the success of international assignments is directly linked to the happiness of the spouses and the main reason to the failure of international assignments are family problems. (Linehan and Scullion, 2001, 399-404)

Although the matter of dual career couples still needs attention, the above options may assists multinationals in overcoming this potential barrier. It is clear that multinationals attempt to address the issue and create different solutions for this mobility barrier. According to Potter (1989) organizations with successful family policies are the ones which will attract the best employees in the future. (Dowling, Festing and Engle, 2008, 129; Linehan and Scullion, 2001, 402)

4. Success of International Assignments and Barriers of Success

According to Merriam-Webster Learner's Dictionary success is defined as achieving wealth, respect or fame or is the desired result of an attempt. We all know that not everyone achieves success in their lives. Many books describe how successful people behave and suggest that everyone can become successful by acting likewise. These books imply that success is available to all even though some people might lack the inherent ability to succeed. Success is also one of the main themes of this study. In the following success and barriers are discussed and later on it is introduced how those two concepts relate to careers and to international assignments. (Lopper, 2010)

Jeff Brown and Mark Fenske (2010) studied the brains of successful people, also called as "winners", and found out that they have a different brain structure. Brown and Fenske (2010) identified 8 success factors which characterize successful individuals:

1. Having self-awareness
2. Keeping up motivation
3. Having focus
4. Balancing emotions
5. Memorizing past experiences
6. Having resilience
7. Being able to adapt to new situations
8. Continuous brain care

According to their study the authors found out that successful people had a highly developed sense of self-awareness which was linked to success in relationships and in career. Motivation and focus have been seen as two major success factors. Likewise Brown and Fenske (2010) stated that a winner's brain is able to keep up the motivation even though the potential reward is uncertain. The same goes with keeping the level of focus despite possible interruptions. Successful people did not deny their emotions but balanced those for the best effect. Also,

successful people were observed to utilize their memory to predict the future and how to best act in new situations. (Lopper, 2010)

Resilience is also one the factors of success according to Brown and Fenske (2010). According to their study successful people sometimes failed, but learned from each failure and tried again with resilience. This could also be called as Finnish 'sisu'. In terms of adaptability, successful people were able to adapt to new situations by adapting new thoughts and behaviours. Also Brown and Fenske (2010) state that successful individuals understand the importance of continuous brain care. This includes diet, exercise, sleep and stimulation. (Lopper, 2010)

Success in life can be defined as to be able to overcome one's barriers and reach goals. These barriers can be physical, mental or emotional and they can come in all shapes and sizes. As the definition of barrier already implies, it is something material or immaterial which blocks the passage. Most of the barriers are internally built, locally maintained and profoundly harmful. (Dieck, 2007; Rieger, 2011)

Many individuals possess personal barriers which keep them from achieving their goals in life. The most common barrier to success is our own imagination. An individual's determination and vision are the only limitations to success. The most successful people are the ones who have learned to break through the barriers imposed by their own minds. Failed attempts are also often seen as barriers which get in the way of our personal success. These incidents should be put aside in order for one to be able to accomplish the goals. (Dieck, 2007; Jackson, 2007)

Another common barrier to success is the lack of support systems. People surround you who are like minded and equally strive for success will help you to reach your goals and overcome your personal barriers. Also, one barrier of success which is less common is the lack of planning. Setting goals and figuring out how and when to reach those is crucially important and often an ignored barrier to success. (Jackson, 2007)

International assignments are often seen critical to the strategy of the company and the success of international assignment often determines the success of the company itself. Both companies and individuals experience the challenges related to international assignments. Success of international assignments depends not only on organizational arrangements but also on the extent

to which such arrangements are in accordance with the individual's expectations about the international assignment. Therefore it is essential to understand the concept of success and what factors determine the success of international assignments. (Yan, Zhu and Hall, 2002, 373)

From this discussion of success and barriers I will move on to the next chapter of career success, which is an important outcome of international assignments and, thus, important to my study.

4.1. Career Success

Many studies have been conducted about how gender, personality, education etc. are related to career success. There are two theoretical distinctions about career success: the *objective* and *subjective* careers. As the name already indicates, the objective career success is directly observable, measurable and verifiable by a third party. The objective career success can be measured by the amount salary, promotions and status. These attainments have long been considered as marks of career success across a range of societies. On the contrary, subjective career success is only experienced by the person herself/himself and is defined as an individual's job satisfaction about her or his career. Even though the objective criteria has been much present in career success studies, the subjective criteria has increasingly been adopted by researchers. In the following these two theoretical distinctions are discussed in more detail. (Heslin, 2005, 113-114)

Objective criteria

The most widely used indicators of career success are salary and promotions. These indicators are available from records, standardized and are easy to collect and measure. However, organizational changes during the past decades have reduced the relevance of these traditional indicators of career success. Today an increasing number of professionals are choosing to become outside contractors or consultants for organizations instead of choosing the traditional hierarchical progression through promotion. Also the objective career success can be heavily affected by factors such as occupational pay norms and labour market conditions: factors which are beyond an individual's control. The objective criteria cannot be used in many jobs where pay and promotions are industrialized e.g. in the military. (Heslin, 2005, 115)

However, there are more objective criteria people seek from their careers than just pay and promotion. For instance, bus drivers may base their career success on their years of driving without accidents, teachers on the learning of their students etc. Even though these objectives do not lead to an increase in pay or promotions, they still might be objective indicants of career success. Many people may also value less tangible outcomes such as work-life balance of their work. In addition, high pay nor promotions do not always make people successful. This highlights the importance of learning more about the subjective career success and its relationship with objective career success. (Heslin, 2005, 116)

<u>Subjective criteria</u>

Unlike objective criteria, subjective success criteria detect outcomes of a career which aren't visible from personnel records. Most commonly it is defined as job or career satisfaction since individuals who are dissatisfied with their jobs do not consider their career successful. But even though a person who is satisfied with his or her job may find it unsuccessful if there are limited prospects for future career opportunities. Similarly subjective career success is the result of high job satisfaction if it means sacrificing health, family relationships or other important personal values. (Heslin, 2005, 117)

Subjective career success is a broader concept than just one's immediate job satisfaction. It includes also a sense of identity, purpose and work-life balance. This makes it hard to conceptualize and measure subjective career success. Even though a career satisfaction scale has been developed, it is not necessarily sufficient to validly assess an individual's subjective career success. (Heslin, 2005, 117)

<u>Self- and other-referent criteria</u>

Career success can be evaluated against two different standards. These two standards are self-referent criteria (personal standards) and other-referent criteria (expectations of others). Self-referent criteria reflect an individual's own career-related standards whereas other-referent criteria include comparison with others e.g. colleagues. So career success depends upon the criterion which is chosen for the basis of comparison. (Heslin, 2005, 118)

It has been found out that people evaluate their objective and subjective career success in relation to other-referent, as well as self-referent criteria. It has been suggested that people nonetheless evaluate their career success outcomes to the ones achieved by other people. Also, people set personal standards and goals to their careers and experience career success if these goals are realized. Sometimes people value more highly self-satisfaction from acting in accordance with their personal standards than material rewards. When evaluating career success, different situations require different type of career success criteria to be used with. (Heslin, 2005, 118-120)

The point of view this study is subjective and self-referent criteria since the respondents of the study reflect their own career-related standards and they will present their own point of view about the factors of success which is not something measured by numbers. In the following chapter career barriers are defined and it is introduced how those influence on individuals.

4.2. Career Barriers

Career barriers can be described as any factors which hinder the achievement of career goals. These barriers can be either *internal,* such as lack of confidence or *external,* such as access to education. Studies have found out various career barriers, such as ethnic and gender discrimination, poverty, family attitudes etc. There are also cross-cultural differences in perception of these barriers. However, not necessarily career-related barriers are viewed as something negative; some individuals may view barriers more as a challenge which can be defeated. (Creed, Patton and Bartrum, 2004, 278-279)

According to the article of Creed, Patton and Bartrum (2004) optimism/pessimism is one internal person-related variable which likely influences the individual's perception of barriers as being challenging or defeating. A number of other studies have also found out that individuals who showed high levels of optimism planned their career more and had more career goals, whereas more pessimistic individuals had less career knowledge and were more indecisive about their future. Also optimistic individuals were more likely viewing external barriers as challenging rather than threatening to their career success. (Creed, Patton and Bartrum, 2004, 279)

Swanson and Woitke (1997) explained that career barriers are conditions which will hinder the career progress within the person itself or in the environment. During the career selection process barriers may influence on emotions and behaviour of individuals. If individuals feel that they will probably face career barriers and are unlikely to overcome these, career plans may be changed. Barriers influence career selection even though individuals would possess high level of confidence and interest. (Smith, 2004, 49)

Many studies of career barriers have observed gender and ethnic differences among results. Swanson and Tokar (1991a) studied gender differences in relation to career-related barriers among college students. Even though significant gender differences were not found, women were more concerned about work-family balance, equity income and career advancement opportunities than men. Luzzo and McWhirter (2001) examined career and educational barriers in relation to ethnic and gender among students. In their research Luzzo and McWhirter (2001) found out that women perceived more career barriers due to sex discrimination and ethnic minority students experienced career barriers related to their ethnic background. (Smith, 2004, 50-51)

In conclusion, we can say that gender and ethnicity have a significant effect on the career barriers experienced by individuals. Since the focus of this study is female expatriates, based on the findings of Luzzo and McWhirter (2001) an assumption that barriers experienced by female expatriates differ from the barriers experienced by their male counterparts could be made.

In the following chapters the concept of success and failure in relation to international assignments are discussed. Also, success is one of the main themes of this study. Therefore it is essential to define what successful expatriation is and what criteria are used to evaluate expatriate success.

4.3. Successful Expatriation

Since international assignments are becoming more important for the success of both individuals and organizations, likewise measuring of expatriate performance is increasing in importance. Three criteria have been used to evaluate expatriate success: (1) completion of the international assignment; (2) adjustment cross-culturally during the international assignment; and (3) performance during the international assignment. These three criteria should be treated as separate constructs, not as one unitary construct like often is done. (Caligiuri, 1997, 117-119)

The first of the criteria is the most basic one when evaluating success or failure of the expatriate assignment. Even thou this criterion is important, it should be evaluated carefully. As already discussed in the previous chapter, the premature return home is not a perfect measure of success or failure since the issue is far more complex. E.g. organizations are not interested in a foreign market anymore which forces an expatriate to return home early. Another example is when an expatriate's skills are required elsewhere and the organization may recall an expatriate before the assignment is completed. An expatriate himself/herself cannot affect on these organizational factors which causes the premature return home. A better way to assess the possible expatriate success is to assess their level of desire to remain on the assignment. (Caligiuri, 1997, 119-120)

The second criterion, adjustment cross-culturally means how psychologically comfortable expatriates are living abroad. The expatriate's inability to adjust and difficulty in merging with the foreign culture is a major drawback. It has been found out that the inability of expatriates and their families to adjust to the foreign environment is the most important factors of an early return home. Maladjusted expatriates are not willing to accept the host culture and show signs of depression and homesickness. Cross-culturally competent expatriates are open to the host culture but are able to integrate new norms and behaviour provided by their home cultures. The cross-cultural adjustment is an individual process and not all expatriates experience the same level of anxiety or culture shock. ((Briscoe and Schuler, 2004, 242; Caligiuri, 1997, 120-121)

According to the last criterion, besides remaining in the foreign assignment and being cross-culturally adjusted, organizations want their employees to perform their work abroad successfully. Since not all maladjusted expatriates leave their foreign assignment, approximately half of those may be performing ineffectively. As mentioned earlier, this can have long-term negative consequences for the organization. (Caligiuri, 1997, 121)

In his article Ben Van Den Anker (2009) adds another factor for expatriate success. According to him soft skills such as relation skills affect significantly to expatriate success. An important predictor of adjustment and performance is agreeableness or non-judgementalism. Other key variables of success are communication skills and personal characteristics in cross-cultural environment when working with host nationals. Van Den Anker (2009) states that good interaction between expatriates and host country national will affect positively on to expatriate effectiveness and there is a clear relationship between adjustment and overall performance.

According to Reiche and Harzing (2009) the assignment success should be evaluated based on both individual (e.g. adjustment, promotion) and organizational (e.g. accomplishment of organizational expectations) benefits resulted from the international assignment. The assessment should not be only limited to the actual period abroad, but should also include the post-assignment period after return home (e.g. how the expertise learned abroad was transferred to the home unit). (Reiche and Harzing, 2009, 47)

Surveys on expatriate managers have confirmed that there are some characteristics which predict expatriate success. These predictors of expatriate success are, besides technical ability and managerial skills, cultural empathy and adaptability, diplomacy, language competence, positive attitude, emotional stability and maturity. One of the earliest studies on this matter and one of the most significant ones was made by Rosalie L. Tung (1987), who examined the U.S., West European and Japanese multinationals. Despite the fact that this research was carried out a long time ago, the more recent literature also continues to use this study as the primary foundation of their arguments and therefore, I also wanted to use this article in the theoretical study of the thesis. (Chew, 2004)

In her research Tung (1987) found out that there are several common denominators to successful performance among European and Japanese multinationals. These factors are:

- The long-term orientation

- The use of rigorous training programs to prepare candidates for overseas assignments

- A comprehensive expatriate support system

Among European multinationals, three additional factors accounting for the success with expatriation was found:

- International orientation

- Longer history of overseas operations

- Language competence

The common denominators of success among European and Japanese multinationals will be looked into first. These multinational possess a long term orientation in their HRM practises meaning they are ready to invest large sums of money in career development programs and are more tolerant of circumstances which may temporarily affect on expatriate's performance in the initial period of international assignment. Consequently, some multinational allowed a period of adjustment up to one year and did not expect the expatriate to perform to full capacity until the third year of assignment. (Tung, 1987, 119)

According to Tung's study (1987) both European and Japanese multinationals provided a comprehensive support system for expatriates. This included mentoring, where usually a member of senior management is responsible for overseeing the well-being and career path of expatriates, so to say acting as a "godfather". This plays a major role in reinforcing the support provided by corporate headquarters. (Tung, 1987, 121)

All European executives Tung (1987) interviewed for her study, indicated that the reason for their successful expatriation is their employees' greater international orientation compared to their U.S counterparts. This can be explained by the relatively small size of the Europe and its countries physical proximity to others, with a greater exposure to foreigners and different ways of life. This spirit of internationalism has affected the HRM practices of European multinationals where the overseas assignment is considered as important prerequisite for high-level management positions. And as European multinationals have a long history of overseas operations, they have gained experience in dealing with foreign nationals and have experts providing valuable advice to younger generation of expatriates. As we can see, there are both

personal and organizational factors, which enhance the success of expatriates during the international assignment. (Tung, 1987, 122)

The flipside of successful expatriation is expatriate failure and therefore it is important to present this issue in the theoretical framework. In the next chapter the concept of failure in international assignments is defined and the cost of failure for companies is presented.

4.4.   Expatriate Failure

MNCs must select expatriates who, together with their families, will be the most able to adapt to a overseas assignment and who also possess the necessary expertise to be able to work in the foreign environment. Firms lacking experience of international operations overlook the importance of the cross-cultural skills and choose the candidate based on their technical excellence. This often leads to failure in the foreign assignment with premature return to the parent company. (Briscoe and Schuler, 2004, 242)

The term expatriate failure has been usually defined in term of early return to the home country. In such case the expatriate failure represents an error in selection and if often a sign of an ineffective expatriate management. But the premature return is not a perfect measure of success or failure, the issue is far more complex than this narrow definition. In some cases the premature return home might actually indicate success: a job is accomplished in less time than originally expected. Thus, instead of premature return the term 'under-performance' should be added to the definition of assignment failure. (Dowling, Festing and Engle, 2008, 112-113)

The article of Christensen and Harzing (2004) provides a more comprehensive definition of an expatriate failure, first the word 'failure' needs to be defined. According to the Oxford Dictionary failure is "*the lack of success in doing or achieving something, especially something that you are expected to do"* (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2000:451). Referring to the first part of the sentence, there's the inability to do something relating to that assignment. The sending organization expects that the required job is finished and that the organization gains added value. Because of an inability to effectively handle the new responsibilities or to adjust to the new country, performance level of the expatriate diminishes. This is not immediately

apparent but can have long-term negative consequences in the subsidiary. (Dowling, Festing and Engle, 2008, 112-113; Christensen and Harzing, 2004, 5)

The second part of the definition emphasizes the failure in doing something that is expected to be done. From the organizational perspective, this means the expatriate fails to succeed in what is expected by the organization. Both the employer and the employee hold expectations on each other, however, sometimes these expectations are not mutually agreed upon. What the company requires from the expatriate and how it communicates it, is crucially important to the company's opinion whether the expatriate succeeded or failed. To sum up the term expatriate failure, it means that the expatriate is not able to deliver the expectations of the organization. (Christensen and Harzing, 2004, 6-7)

Companies should note that the costs of expatriate failure are often more than just the assignee's salary, training, relocation costs and airfares, so to say, direct costs. The 'invisible' or indirect costs are harder to measure but can be even more expensive to the company. Failure at the foreign assignment may result in loss of market share; damage the customer relationships and contacts with host-government officials and also negative effect on morale and productivity of local staff. And, of course, the failure has an effect on the expatriate and his/her family concerned. The experience abroad can be traumatic which may mark future performance by decreased motivation and lack of promotional opportunities. (Dowling, Festing and Engle, 2008, 115; Reiche and Harzing, 2009, 39)

From this discussion I will move on to the next chapter which is one of the main topics of this study. In the following chapter female expatriates are presented and it is discussed why they are still under-presented in international assignments today.

5. Female Expatriates

During the recent years there has been a rapid growth of international business and a lot of new multinational companies (MNCs) have emerged. Also, the importance of revising expatriate policies and practices has gained a new kind of importance. Growing competition abroad and at home has forced companies to reduce costs in order to stay competitive enough. This has also set pressures to the global human resources to implement new kind of international strategies. The role of expatriates in MNCs has grown significantly and the performance of expatriate managers has been recognized as a critical factor determining success or failure of international business. (Morney, Linehan and Scullion 2003, 174-175)

However, despite the growing demand for international expatriates, the number of women in those positions remains remarkably low. Harris and Dickmann (2004) see it particularly worrying that number of women in international positions is increasing in such low rate despite the pool of women professionals nowadays. In their book they have presented some reasons possible to explain this number: lack of interest, prejudices against women, organizational reluctance, family constraints etc. In female-friendly sectors such as non-profit and charitable organizations women's participation rates are around 30 per cent whereas in construction and engineering the participation is as low as 6 per cent. (Harris and Dickmann 2004, 818; Shortland 2009, 366)

In her article Shortland Susan (2009) revealed 19 different theoretical explanations for women's low participation as expatriates. These 19 theoretical explanations can be grouped into four different categories: women's choices, their characteristics as assignees, social and societal norms and institutional aspects. Potentially as the most promising reasons for the low number of female expatriates Shortland Susan (2009) sees the sex roles, gender stereotypes, patriarchy, breadwinner models, social capital enhancing male structures, institutional theories supporting male expatriation and female identity. (Shortland 2009, 367-369)

Fischlmayr (2002) studied why women are under-presented in international assignments. In her study of Australian female expatriates she used the concepts of self-established and external barriers which are listed below.

Self-established barriers:

- Unwillingness of women to relocate

- The dual career couples

- Females might behave according to their gender-based roles which often creates a barrier to their own careers

External barriers:

- The reluctance to select females

- Culturally tough locations not suitable for females

- Stereotypes about female expatriates

In her study Fischlmayr (2002) found out that the major barrier to the selection of female expatriates were HR managers. In addition, self-established barriers had a strong influence on women. Australian female expatriates often requested to be sent to the international assignment whereas their male counterparts were required to participate in the international assignment. Some women also experienced stereotyping regarding their age. According to Fischlmayr (2002) women can be party blamed for their under-presentation in international assignments. (Dowling, Festing and Engle, 2008, 130-131)

Despite the increasing attention and literature of women expatriates, very little is still known about their personal characteristics. Referring to the survey made by Nancy Adler (1987), the direct comparison of the personal characteristics of female and male business expatriates showed that women were younger than men. It was also found out that women expatriates occupied lower hierarchical positions than men even though there were no differences regarding the previous expatriate experience or the tenure with the parent corporation. In their article Selmer

and Leung (2003) suggest that corporate headquarters may result in discrimination against women on foreign assignments if they have unfavorable perceptions about the success of female expatriates. It was also noted that women expatriates were less frequently married than their male counterparts. (Adler 1987; Selmer and Leung 2003, 195)

According to Tharenou Phyllis (2010) due to the lack of fair treatment in selection, the principle of assigning comparable women and men equally to positions in management abroad is not upheld. Supporting this, female professionals self-initiate their expatriation more often than they are sent by their parent companies. The most influential reason to this appears to be the lack of opportunity offered by the organizations. Also, may women may initiate their self-expatriation in order to advance their careers. According to the study of Mayrhofer and Scullion (2002) women were sent into a various number of countries, including culturally tough locations e.g. regions with an Islamic influence. In their study of male and female expatriates in German clothing industry Mayrhofer and Scullion (2002) found out that more women than men were sent for long-term international assignments. Due to this high proportion of women in the industry, gender appeared to be less of an issue. However, women were still less presented in the top senior management positions. (Dowling, Festing and Engle, 2008, 131; Tharenou 2010, 73-77)

Linehan and Scullion (2001) state that women find themselves excluded from expatriation through biased and informal selection processes and that there exist misconceptions regarding their willingness to go for the expatriate assignment. According to Adler (1984) it has been assumed that women do not want international careers and even if they were sent, they would face negative attitudes from host nationals. Adler (2011) indicates that these assumption have been replaced by new ones – namely that if women are part of a dual-career couple or have children they are not willing to go for the international assignment. (Shortland, 2011)

According to Napier and Taylor (2002) women fell into three categories: traditional expatriates, spouses of male expatriates, also called as 'trailers', and 'independents' who could be called self-selected expatriates. Adaptability, maintaining a social life, interpersonal skills and gaining credibility with local clients were found out to be important factors of success of female expatriates. Networking was also a major issue for business and social contexts. In their study Napier and Taylor (2002) concluded that being a female meant higher visibility and this could

prove to be a positive in terms of getting access to key customers. (Dowling, Festing and Engle, 2008, 131)

Linehan and Scullion (2008) suggest that expatriate women should take the advantage of networking strategies and operate in a political manner in order to ensure the visibility. Before fully entering networking arrangements on similar term to men, women need to earn recognition. According to Ibarra (1993) women have to build networks both within their female social group and within the senior male group. This can prove to be problematic since it is difficult to maintain relationships within two different work-related social groups. Kanter (1977) states that this can prevent women from fitting into either of the groups. According to Emmerick (2006) networking actually provides less career satisfaction for women than their male counterparts. (Shortland, 2011)

Linehan (2000) points out that the building of networks and friendships is considered critical for the success of international assignments. This can have a huge effect on the female expatriate adjustment since they are fewer in number. According to Hartl (2004) in host countries where there is a large cultural distance women face difficulties in adjusting. Taylor and Napier (2001) note that making friends can be a particular challenge to female expatriates in societies where women are not that often found in the upper level of the corporate hierarchy. (Shortland, 2011)

Selmer and Leung (2003) state that it is a strategic necessity for globalizing firms to develop a pool of mobile expatriate managers and that corporate assistance should be offered to prospective candidates. In their study among Western female and male business expatriates assigned to Hong Kong they found out that female business expatriates received less organizational support in developing their expatriate careers than their male counterparts. According to Selmer and Leung (2003) this creates a disadvantage to business firms in their struggle to internationalize since women may not be attracted to and motivated for international careers. Selmer and Leung (2003) suggest that by improving the corporate career support for women will create advantage both for international companies and for their female employees; women enhance their international careers and companies boost their globalization efforts. (Selmer and Leung, 2003)

Women's low participation in international assignments continues to be a major challenge for companies and especially to IHR managers in the future. The failure of companies to build up efficient strategies to attract women to participate in international assignments will not only become expensive to companies but will also limit the pool of qualified expatriates. Until companies improve their IHRM practises and start offering more organizational support for female expatriates, the amount of women in international assignments will not increase. (Linehan and Scullion, 2001, 415)

In the following chapter the critical success factors of female expatriates are discussed and different theories concerning the subject are presented.

6. Critical Success Factors

Studies have shown that the majority of expatriates are men, which means that the studies conducted have usually concentrated on male expatriates. The following chapter is based on the finding of the study made by Linehan and Scullion (2001). The research subjects of their study were 50 female expatriates who had successfully completed at least one international assignment. The aim of their study was to reveal the barriers which limit women's expatriate career opportunities. From their study the following themes emerged:

- Breaking through the glass ceiling at the home organization

- The accompanying spouse during the international assignment

- Finding a balance between a career, a marriage and children

- Mentoring support

- Lack of female expatriate role models

- Networking

- The influence of gender on female expatriate's career

(Linehan and Scullion, 2001, 392-394)

Next I will go through these different themes which have an effect on the success of female expatriates.

<u>Breaking the glass ceiling</u>

The glass ceiling is not just a barrier which is based on someone's ability to handle a higher-level job but it can be applied to women who are kept from advancing because they are women. The respondents of the study of Linehan and Scullion (2001) perceived it to be critical to the success of their international careers. Most of the respondents were aware of the existence of the glass ceiling in their home organizations and had personal experience of it especially at the early

stages of their careers. Even though they moved up the hierarchy level in the organization, women continuously needed to break through the glass ceiling. Old tradition and negative stereotypes slowed down the progression of women to higher managerial positions. The respondents felt that at the early stages of their careers they were generally judged on their appearances and it was more difficult to be taken seriously – unlike their male counterparts. (Linehan and Scullion, 2001, 394-395)

For female expatriates also lifestyle choices are even more difficult. One fifth of the respondents believed that in order to be able to break through the glass ceiling, it would mean sacrificing much of their personal lives e.g. having less leisure time which could lead to problems with a marriage. The respondents felt that they need to choose among different lifestyle options like when to marry or when to have children or decisions about the importance of a career. Thus, it is not surprising that women managers are less likely to be married or have children than their male counterparts. So to say, for managerial women it is more difficult to "have it all". (Linehan and Scullion, 2001, 395-396)

The view of the participants of the survey by Linehan and Scullion (2001) was that a successful career is still based on a male career model which does not take into account a marriage or a family. Also, there still exists the perceptions by senior management and a society that a woman's main role is to be a mother and not an international manager. All of the 50 respondents believed that they need to be more competent, more ambitious and more ready to travel than their male counterparts in order to be able to break through the glass ceiling. In addition, the respondents suggested that one of the factors of success of their careers was that they persistently asked for more responsibility and promotion, rather than waiting it to be offered and that they were better at handling various responsibilities at the same time than their male counterparts. (Linehan and Scullion, 2001, 397-398)

The study of Linehan and Scullion (2001) reveals that the same barriers in the home organizations which prevent females from reaching the high-level positions are similar to those experiences by female expatriate managers. Because of these barriers, many female managers choose not to take part in the international assignment. The critical factor of success in the

female expatriate career is first to break through the glass ceiling in the home organization before pursuing the expatriate career abroad. (Linehan and Scullion, 2001, 399)

The accompanying spouse

As mentioned earlier, another factor for success is the accompanying spouse. The additional difficulty for female expatriates is when a male is in the role of an accompanying spouse since women may decline the international career due to this issue. Today female expatriates are more likely to have spouses with professional careers than their male counterparts. The respondents of the survey by Linehan and Scullion (2001) emphasized that having a supportive spouse who took care of the household duties during the international assignment absolutely had a positive effect on their careers. However, organizations still base their practices on an assumption that all expatriates are males. Also, the respondents stated that it was difficult to receive any assistance from their home organizations to deal with the dual-career problems. In the future organizations with successful family policies will attract the best candidates for international assignments. (Linehan and Scullion, 2001, 399-402)

It is suggested that due to the increase of women as the labor force commuter marriages are likely to increase rather than sacrificing one's career. Spouse-related problems are even more severe when men are the accompanying spouses. To make this kind of transition is relatively easy for women since it is not yet common to males to be the secondary breadwinner. Often these couples are also considered as "oddity". The respondents of the survey noted that it was not easy for them to adjust to the new neighborhood where their neighbors also considered it strange that a man stayed at home. The respondents thought that the success of the international assignment was directly linked to the happiness of their spouses. (Linehan and Scullion, 2001, 403-404)

Mentoring

Since female managers have to overcome more barriers than their male counterparts when progressing to high-level management positions, as a result women need more psychosocial support than men. This support includes mentors and interpersonal networks. The study of Linehan and Scullion (2001) shows that mentoring plays an important role in the career success

of females and improves the quality of organizational life for females expatriates. This is especially true in the early stages of their careers. The respondents of the survey thought that a "good boss" supported them and gave advice, helping them to get their names known and increased their motivation. Most of the mentors were found out to be men since there is not yet enough female expatriate managers to act as mentors. However, the mentor's gender didn't influence on the effectiveness of the mentoring. (Linehan and Scullion, 2001, 404-405)

Mentoring is even more important in an international than in domestic environment. Mentors can offer support from the home organization during the international assignment which in turn will facilitate the re-entry. In addition, according to the respondents, the mentors improved the self-confidence and increased their visibility and promotional prospects. All of the respondents who had mentors believed that the opportunities provided by the mentors undoubtedly attributed to their success in the international assignment and facilitated their career advancement. (Linehan and Scullion, 2001, 406-407)

Networking

In many organizations the concept of networking is often perceived as a men's club or an "old boy network". This old boy network is still strong in many organization throughout Europe, especially in established industries e.g. law. The female expatriate managers responding the survey by Linehan and Scullion (2001) believed that networking is even greater value abroad than networking in domestic environment. The participants felt that there's still a barrier to gain access to male-dominated networks. Women are in disadvantage since often male managers discuss business and make useful contacts outside work when they network informally. Many of these network systems are through rugby, football or golf clubs which women don't have an easy access to. (Linehan and Scullion, 2001, 407)

The most hostile climate towards female managers was found prevailing in established industries. Females managers felt that they are in a minority group and isolated by male colleagues. This division to female and male managerial groups may nurture negative attitudes and prejudices towards female managers, discrimination and less promotion and career development opportunities. Female managers also felt that they are in disadvantage because they

have less time to network than their male counterparts due to family and home responsibilities. Some of the respondents had initiated their own informal networks which were meant solely to females. Although this is beneficial for female managers, more benefits are still gained from networking in male-dominated groups, since still mostly men hold the power in organizations. Women did not want female networks be seen as a "busy bees' club". (Linehan and Scullion, 2001, 408-409)

The findings of the study by Linehan and Scullion (2001) suggest that the exclusion of female managers from networks results in their isolation which in turn affects the ability of female managers to build up networking relationships which could be useful for their careers. For male mangers there are available mentors role models and appropriate networks, which female managers are at the same time missing out. Perhaps when female networks become stronger, more females will reach high-level positions in international management. (Linehan and Scullion, 2001, 409-410)

Another which article which I want to bring up is written by Caligiuri, Joshi and Lazarova (1999). One of the issues they examined in their research was whether the predictors of success are the same for men and women and which predictors are unique to women on international assignments. In their article Caligiuri, Joshi and Lazarova (1999) present the model for predicting the success of female expatriates. This model consists of four factors: (1) personal traits, (2) organizational support, (3) family support and (4) host nationals' attitudes towards female expatriates. Even though these four factors would be applicable to both male and female expatriates, the context of the international assignment itself may be different for men and women. In their research Caligiuri, Joshi and Lazarova (1999) tested this model and below each of these factors predicting success are discussed and how they are unique in the context of female expatriates is presented. (Caligiuri, Joshi and Lazarova, 1999, 165).

<u>Personal characteristics</u>

There are some personal traits which can be associated with cross-cultural adjustment. This can be applied both male and female expatriates. These three personality orientations of well-adjusted expatriates are:

- *Self-orientation:* This attributes to stress reduction and technical competence. Self-orientation is especially important for female expatriate since females must demonstrate an extraordinary level of technical competence to be accepted by colleagues. Also females must possess the stress-management skills resulting from being the only female in the specific working environment. These abilities have been found out to be positively related with good cross-cultural adjustment. (Caligiuri, Joshi and Lazarova, 1999, 165)

- *Others-orientation:* This dimension means the ability to form relationships and the willingness to communicate with host nationals. It has been noted that when women want to achieve goals, they rely on co-operations and adopt an indirect style of communication. This is particularly useful in high-context cultures e.g. in Asia and in Latin America. The ability to form relationships with host nationals is an integral part of the successful performance of female expatriates. Also in the domestic environments this ability plays a key role in the career advancement of women. This increases the opportunities of support and networking for females in the organizations. Others-orientations in an international context enables women for better cross-cultural adjustment. (Caligiuri, Joshi and Lazarova, 1999, 165-166)

- *Perceptual orientation:* The ability to understand the behaviors of others is especially important for women. They need to understand besides the cultural differences the gender differences which are present in some cultures seeing a more traditional role for women in society. Female expatriates in such cultures need to be open to differences in values, norms and behaviors. Studies have indicated the expatriates who are open towards cultural differences and are willing to learn from different cultures are better adjusted to international assignments and thus, are more successful abroad. (Caligiuri, Joshi and Lazarova, 1999, 166)

Organizational support

Today there is an increasing demand for expatriates which has outstripped the supply of male candidates, thus organizations cannot longer ignore the pool of women for expatriate positions. Organizations need to better utilize their talented women candidates for international

assignments and provide support to facilitate the cross-cultural adjustment of the female expatriates throughout the period of their international assignment. The studies have proved that there are differences between organizations how they delegate their information sources and support among men and women. The failure of organizations to provide these elements for women decreases their possibility of success during the international assignment. Organizational support can be cross-cultural training of host country values and norms relating to women and possible problematic situations female expatriates may encounter during the assignment. This factor may be critical when predicting the success of female expatriates. (Caligiuri, Joshi and Lazarova, 1999, 167)

Family support

As mentioned by Linehan and Scullion (2001), also Caligiuri, Joshi and Lazarova (1999) present in the model for predicting the success of female expatriates the importance of the family support. It has been noted that the inability of the family to adjust overseas is related to the ability of the expatriate to adjust and succeed during the international assignment. For the adjustment of females, family support may be especially important. Male spouses may have the additional burden of coping with societal norms in an overseas location and may also feel isolated among other trailing spouses who are women. According to the study of Caligiuri, Joshi and Lazarova (1999) married female expatriates experienced greater cross-cultural adjustment than single female expatriates. But since this subject has already been discussed above, I will not look more into this. (Caligiuri, Joshi and Lazarova, 1999, 166)

Host nationals' attitudes

In their article Caligiuri, Joshi and Lazarova (1999) noted that this fourth factor of predicting success has been relatively ignored by researchers while the first three factors mentioned above have received more attention. The research of Caligiuri, Joshi and Lazarova (1999) suggest that successful female expatriates did not perceive 'being female' as a disadvantage. It is important to note that the attitudes of host nationals towards female expatriates are only relevant if they have an effect on the ability of women to perform their job, thus lowering their adjustment to the working environment of the host country. Also, the perceived status of women in the

organizations may influence host nationals' attitudes towards female expatriates. In case of female expatriates, women who are perceived to be more powerful in the organizations are viewed more favorably by host nationals. (Caligiuri, Joshi and Lazarova, 1999, 167)

6.1.   Summary of Critical Success Factors

Even today a successful expatriate manager is stereotypically characterized by those qualities which are typically related to male managers. The societal assumptions about men and women affect the image regarding the suitability of a person as an expatriate manager. The participants of the survey believed that management itself is typically related to masculinity. Women are not perceived to be different than male managers and thus not selected for expatriate positions. Women need to be determined and be willing to ask for these expatriate positions. Also the lack of role models for women reconfirmed the traditional view about them and kept sex labeling intact. (Linehan and Scullion, 2001, 410-411)

Multinationals need fully utilize their pool of potential female expatriate candidates. As the study of Caligiuri, Joshi and Lazarova (1999) confirmed, the key factor for female expatriates' success is the support received from both the company and the family. In addition, the expatriate experience of women may differ depending on their level in the organization since lower-level female expatriates had lower cross-cultural adjustment and more negative experiences of the expatriate assignment than high-level women. The organizations need to act promptly to ensure that their female expatriates along with their families may successfully complete their international assignment while having supportive organization behind them. (Caligiuri, Joshi and Lazarova, 1999, 176-177)

The research of Linehan and Scullion (2001) indicate that the number of women in international management will remain a minority until organizations re-examine their IHRM practices. Information about the specific requirements of women who might be interested in a career abroad should be collected by organizations. Also organizations should understand what motivates women and drives their career aspirations. In the future the challenge for companies is to create a pool of female expatriates who could act as mentors and role models for females who

wish to break through the glass ceiling and into careers abroad. (Linehan and Scullion, 2001, 413)

The empirical study of the thesis is based on the theoretical framework presented above. Especially to the findings of Linehan and Scullion (2001) and Caligiuri, Joshi and Lazarova (1999) is referred when analyzing the results of the study.

7. Research Methodology

Two syllables, *re* and *search*, form the word *research.* A prefix *re* means again, whereas *search* means examining something. Together they form a research, which is a scientific and systematic quest for information on a specific subject, formulating hypothesis, collecting the data and analyzing it and reaching conclusions towards the concerned research problem. The aim of the research is to answer the research questions through scientific procedures. The main aim of the research is to discover the hidden truth. The research method must have been tested for its reliability and validity and must be conducted in a objective manner without introducing the researcher's own interest. (Research Methodology; Research Methodology: An Introduction)

I will start the empirical part of this thesis by introducing different research methods and the method which I have chosen for the study. Next the process of data collection is presented and in the final chapter I will discuss how reliability and validity relates to this research.

There are two theoretical distinctions of how a research can be designed. These theoretical distinctions are quantitative and qualitative research methods. Both types of research methods are valid and useful. The researcher needs to choose one of the methods based on the research problem he/she wants to find solution to. However, Bryman (1988) has argued that the best solution would be to combine the quantitative and qualitative approach. (Hughes, 2006)

Quantitative approach is the first of the two research methods. It consists of those studies where the data can be analyzed in numbers and therefore the results are more readily interpreted. Quantitative research emphasizes relatively large-scale set of data and seeks to confirm hypotheses about phenomena. The instruments of quantitative research method use more rigid style when eliciting and categorizing the results of the questionnaire. The strengths of quantitative approach are that it has the ability to predict causal relationships, the study design is stable from beginning to end, more sophisticated analyses can be made by using statistical techniques and it's easily replicable. Limitations of quantitative approach are that it does not take into consideration how people interpret their experiences and construct their own meanings. Neither is it totally objective since the researcher will participate in the choosing of the research

problem and analyze the results. (Hughes, 2006; Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide, 3)

The other research method is qualitative research. It is more open and time-consuming than the quantitative research method. In qualitative research the information is collected and analysed in many forms, however, mostly non non-numeric. Qualitative research seeks to explore phenomena, trying to describe and explain relationships and individual experiences. It allows greater spontaneous interaction between the researcher and the participant making the relationship often less formal than in quantitative research. Mostly open-ended question are used which allows research subjects to respond in greater detail and freely by using their own words. Also, responses will not just be simply 'yes' or 'no'. The advantages of using open-ended questions are that they create responses which are:

- Meaningful both to the participant and to the researcher

- Unexpected

- Rich, giving a lot of explanation about the subject

Another advantage of qualitative research is that the researcher may ask additional questions relating to the participants' responses. The researcher needs to listen carefully and encourage the participant to speak freely. Important is to note the differences between individuals and their personalities and use suitable interview style with each of them. Limitations of qualitative approach are that it is difficult to replicate and the researcher's presence may have a profound effect on the respondents. (Hughes, 2006; Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide, 3-4)

The key difference between quantitative and qualitative research methods is flexibility. With quantitative methods such as surveys the researcher asks the same questions from every participant in the same order. This makes the quantitative research methods inflexible. The advantage of this is that the responses may be easily compared across participants. Qualitative methods are typically more flexible allowing greater spontaneity and adaptation. (Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide, 3-4)

For this study I chose qualitative research method since it allows research subjects to give much 'richer' answers to questions by providing information of how people experience a given research issue. Also, qualitative research method is effective when identifying intangible factors such as status, gender roles, ethnicity etc., which could have been missed by using any other method. The other reason why I chose qualitative research method is that there are not that many research subjects in the study and, thus, the quantitative research method would not give valuable and comparable information on the aim of the study. The responses given will be analyzed by their quality, not by quantity. (Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide, 1-2)

7.1.   Collecting the Data

The data can be collected either by using *primary* or *secondary* data. The research method specifies both the data which is needed and how it should be obtained. First needs to be looked at secondary data which has been developed for some purpose other than for helping to solve the research problem at hand. After that it will be analyzed which data is missing and needs to be obtained still. This is also called as primary data. Secondary data may be collected fast including theories, models, statistics etc. An important way to obtain primary data is to conduct a survey. (Chapter 6: Primary and Secondary Data Sources, 1-2)

When conducting this study I have utilized both primary and secondary data. Secondary data I have collected from books and articles, primary data from the respondents of this study. Next it is discussed how the data is collected specifically in quantitative and qualitative research methods.

First the researcher needs to decide which people can best provide the information and determines the number of individuals needed to provide the data. In quantitative research the researcher will choose a sample of individuals who are representative of a population. First the population is selected and defined, then a sample from this population is chosen. Probabilistic sampling means choosing the individuals randomly based on a systematic procedure. In qualitative research the researcher will identify a small number of individuals who are able to

provide in-depth information about the research subject. Purposeful sampling means intentionally selecting participants who have experience of the key concept being explored. Also one popular way to sample is to choose individuals who hold different perspectives on the phenomena. In this way the views of the participants reflect difference which provides a good qualitative study. (Chapter 6: Collecting Data in Mixed Methods Research, 112-113)

The researcher needs to examine different options for data collection in order to find out which sources will best answer the research problem. In quantitative research the data is collected by using instruments which measure individual performance or individual attitudes. This data is factual and in the form of numbers. In qualitative research the data is much more extensive. The most common methods for collecting data in qualitative research are:

- *Focus groups:* The researcher brings together participants to discuss the topic of the research. Usually the size of the group is relatively small so that participants do not feel intimated and can express their opinions freely. The researcher aids the discussion and makes sure that different aspects of the topic are covered. Focus groups are effective in generating broad views of the topic of the research.

- *Direct observation:* The researcher may collect the data on naturally occurring behaviours in their usual context by acting as an external observer. Or a participant may collect the data by observing the usual way of working. In this type of study the researcher aims to understand the values and beliefs held by individuals of some specific group of people.

- *In-depth interviews:* This type of research method is optimal when collecting data on individual's personal perspectives and experiences, especially when the topic is sensitive. The interviews are classified either as *structured* or *unstructured*. The structure refers to the amount of freedom the interviewer has in modifying the questionnaire depending on the situation. The same principle of interviews is used as with focus groups, only the participants are interviewed individually. Usually there are no predetermined questions, but the researcher encourages the participant to express their viewpoints about the topic

being explored. (Chapter 6: Collecting Data in Mixed Methods Research, 114-115; Helpsheet 9, RDSU Peninsula Research & Development Support Unit)

In this study I chose to use the e-form questionnaire meaning all participants are asked the same questions in the same order. This type of data collection method is easy to replicate. The main advantages of using a questionnaire is that the data is relatively easy to analyze, a large sample of respondents can be contacted from remote locations at relatively low cost and since respondents are not required to answer immediately; they have time to think about their answers. (Milne, 1999; Sociological Research Skills, Research Methods)

The weakness of questionnaires is that it might be difficult for the researcher to study complex issues. Sometimes respondents answer to questions in no detail or depth even though open-ended questions are used or questions are misunderstood. Questionnaires might also be ignored which makes it difficult to obtain sufficient number of responses. (Milne, 1999; Sociological Research Skills, Research Methods)

I sent the e-form questionnaire to the carefully selected respondents by email. I received the names of the respondents from the HR department of the company I am working for. Additionally I received some names through friends. Since I had a limited time to receive the answers and analyze them, I did not conduct in-depth interviews as I originally had planned. Also, the fact that I did not know the respondents beforehand, I thought might affect on the atmosphere of the interview situation making it more difficult to receive open and trustful answers from the respondents than sending in the questions in written form.

The responses received from the e-form questionnaire I analyzed confidentially. I did not separate the answers individually but analyzed them as a whole looking for similarities and differences. In chapter 9. the results will be analyzed more in-dept.

7.2.   Reliability and Validity of the Research

 Two very important aspects of a research are *reliability* and *validity*. Reliability concern whether repeated measurements provide a consistent result when the initial circumstances are the same.

Validity is the degree to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure. These two factors should be a concern for any qualitative researcher who designs a study and analyzes results of it. (Handley; Golafshani, 2003, 601)

Kirk and Miller (1986) have identified three reliability factors: (1) when the measurement is repeated, the results remain the same (2) the measurement is stabile and (3) the measurement is conducted in the same way over a specific time period. The term 'reliability' can be used with all kind of research even though it was first only used for testing quantitative research. Assuming the circumstances are the same in the beginning a test, it should give the same result every time the test is performed for it to reliable. When the test is taken over time or performed by different people, reliability is often at risk. The researcher must ensure that errors of reliability are minimized and the data differences are not caused by the behaviour of the researcher himself/herself. (Handley; Golafshani, 2003, 598-601)

The concepts of validity measures how truthful the research results are. Validity determines which data needs to be gathered and how this needs to be done. Validity may be affected by the researcher's own perception of validity. In research, validity can be either internal or external. Internal validity means whether the results are valid because of the way the research subjects were selected or how the data was collected. For example poor internal validity may occur if testing is not conducted the same way in different groups. External validity means whether the results can be transferred to some other groups. For example the results of a study conducted in a specific race may not be applied to other racial groups. Important is to note that without internal validity, neither external validity exists. (Handley; Golafshani, 2003, 599-602)

To sum up the definitions of reliability and validity: whether the result of the study is replicable and whether the measurement is accurate and measures what it is supposed to measure. During the research process there exist threats to a study's reliability and validity which the researcher needs to minimize. It can be stated as a consequence of validity comes reliability. (Handley; Golafshani, 2003, 599-602)

In this study an e-form questionnaire is used which means all the respondents have the same questions to answer. The questionnaire was sent to carefully chosen respondents at the same time

which guarantees the measurement stability and reliability. Also, anonymity makes the research more reliable. The questionnaire is based on the theoretical part of the thesis and will answer the research problem, thus, I could conclude this study as valid.

8. Presenting the Results

In this chapter I will go through the background of the study, the respondents and the questions of the e-form questionnaire. In chapter 8.4. the results of the questionnaire are presented.

8.1. Background

My aim was to sent the e-form questionnaire to seven female expatriates who were currently abroad on the expatriate assignment or who were already repatriated. I found out that there are not that many female expatriates so, therefore, the number of respondents is relatively small. But since I have chosen the qualitative research method, this number will be sufficient. Also, the research will be more reliable when the respondents are carefully selected and related to the topic of the research.

Since the schedule was strict, the respondents had one weeks' time to answer to the questionnaire. In the next chapter I will go through the respondents in more detail and in chapter 8.3. I will present the questionnaire and how I categorized the questions based on the research problems.

8.2. Respondents

As already mentioned in the previous chapter, all seven respondents were currently on the expatriate assignment or were already repatriated. All were from Finland. They all had different work tasks and different kind of experiences about expatriation and being a female abroad. Despite that, all of them shared similar viewpoints about the success factors of female expatriates. When presenting the results in chapter 8.4. more information about the background of the participants is given.

8.3. Questions

I divided the questions of the e-form questionnaire based on the research problems. Altogether there were 18 questions. The first five questions related to the background of the respondents. The next six questions concerned attitudes and stereotypes towards female expatriates and their factors of success, which is the main topic of this study. The following six questions related to barriers and support experienced at home and abroad. The last question concerned the number of female expatriates now and in the future. Some of the questions may include similar issues, but on the other hand, every question will bring a new point of view to the topic.

8.4. Results

In this chapter I will go through the research questionnaire by presenting every question and the perceived answers one by one.

"Age and Educational background"
The age of the respondents varied from under 30 to over 60. Two were under 30, one between 31-40, three between 41-50 and one over 60. The respondents had different backgrounds and various experience about expatriation, some had been on more than one expatriate assignment and one respondent had already spent abroad the past 10 years.

The respondents also had various educational backgrounds. All the respondents were highly educated and possessed a university degree. Three respondents had technical schooling as their background, possessing the Master of Science (Engineering or Technical) or the B.Sc. Electrical Engineering degree. One respondent had a degree in the Master of Science, Finance and the other was a Licentiate of Political Science also possessing a Master's degree in Forestry.

"Current work tasks"
All the respondents had a high position in the company. One respondent was working as a Program Manager of African Leadership in ICT and the other as a Vice President of Finance & IT, both of them managing their own employees. Two of the respondents were working among engineering as a Consulting Application Engineer or a Site Engineer. One respondent had been working as a Credit Controller and an Area Credit Controller, the other was a Training

Coordinator and one was conducting financial analyses, identifying project development opportunities and supporting market development activities.

"How many years did you work for the company before the expatriate assignment and what were the reasons for the expatriate assignment?"

The number of years worked for the company before the expatriate assignment varied from two to ten years. The average was about five years. One of the respondents had been on the expatriate assignment twice and in the meantime had worked in Finland. The other respondent had been working four years in the previous expatriate assignment and directly after that went for the next expatriate assignment.

"What were the reasons for the expatriate assignment?"

The respondent reported various reasons for the expatriate assignment. Two respondents joined their fiancées to their expatriate period and went on the expatriate assignment themselves. Two other respondents mentioned that their business unit was moved to another location or the company wanted to increase its focus on project and market development activities in that specific region and therefore the company proposed the expatriate assignment. One respondent wanted to learn decision making under pressure and the other said that she wanted to use her skills in an international organization as she finds the work outside Finland more challenging and it teaches you more. Many respondents also mentioned as one of the reasons for the expatriate assignment the gathering of experience either of living abroad, learning languages and new cultures or gaining more experience professionally.

"Which personal characteristics would you attribute to a successful female expatriate?"

Many personal characteristics of a successful female expatriate were mentioned by the respondents. The most mentioned were having a strong professional background and good social and language skills. According to the respondents a successful female expatriate needs to be open-minded, to be able to work in a team and to be able to adjust to the new culture and to "men's world". Also, it came up from the responses that a successful female expatriate needs to have a good self-esteem, be strong and have the courage to make decisions, be independent,

positive and ambitious and needs to possess the determination and motivation to succeed. One respondent mentioned that pro-activity is needed and that a successful female expatriate cannot stay as a "wall flower", but needs to be eager to learn constantly, be curious and ask questions, but also needs to be good at listening. Sometimes a female expatriate receives criticism but she needs to be tough enough to handle it and turn it to something positive. All the respondents agreed that a successful female expatriate has to be prepared to work hard and be willing to face challenges every day.

"Which factors affect positively on the performance of female expatriates during the expatriate assignment? (E.g. mentoring, networking etc.)"

Almost every respondent mentioned that networking is the most important factor affecting positively on the performance of a female expatriate. This networking included colleagues in the host country as well colleagues around the world. The respondents mentioned that good co-operation with co-workers and having good relations also with the people in the home unit is needed in order to perform successfully during the expatriate assignment. Also having a social network in the host country was considered extremely important. Support may be received from other expatriates and especially from the family, e.g. spouse is taking more responsibility at home and takes care of the children during the expatriate assignment. One respondent noted that the private life of a female expatriate needs to be in order to be able to perform successfully abroad.

The second most important factor affecting positively on the performance according to the respondents was mentoring. The respondents considered mentoring from experienced superiors to be important and noted that it is the responsibility of a superior to offer active support in introducing a female expatriate to professional and social networks. Also the way how local employees receive and accept a female expatriate has either a positive or a negative effect on the performance of an expatriate during the expatriate assignment.

"Which factors affect negatively on the performance of female expatriates during the expatriate assignment?"

This question was a kind of an opposite of the previous question bringing up the same issues, but still revealing something new. The most mentioned factor was again networking, or more of the lack of it. The respondents felt that the lack of supporting social network, including family, friends and colleagues, affects negatively on the performance of female expatriates during the expatriate assignment. In addition, the lack of peer group will create uncertainty and feelings of loneliness. One of the respondents pointed out that if a female expatriate is working 24/7, this will affect negatively on social relationships and may create problems at home, which in turn has a negative effect on the performance of a female expatriate later on.

As already mentioned above in the previous question, the reception of host nationals will affect either positively or negative on the performance of a female expatriate. Few of the respondents mentioned that sometimes the local cultures do not recognize women as leaders or they do not trust their ability which forces women to show that they are able to do things just like men or even better before being taken seriously.

One respondent pointed out that an important factor affecting on the performance is cultural adjustment. This factor can also either have a positive or a negative effect on the performance.

"What kind of stereotypes towards female expatriates have you faced? (If any)"
In this question the answers were divided. About half of the respondents hadn't faced any stereotypes towards female expatriates, few had experienced that they had been viewed only as a wife of a male expatriate. One respondent mentioned that the general assumption was that her husband had been posted over and she was the house wife. On the other hand, one respondent felt that not even female engineers were viewed differently than men in the company. This question about stereotype experiences may be strongly related to the cultural environment of the expat country where female expatriates were working at.

"What kind of attitudes from host nationals have you experienced during the expatriate assignment? How these have affected on you?"

This question also received different viewpoints. Some said there were no significant attitudes; others mentioned that the attitudes were welcoming and hospitable which affected very positively to the female expatriate herself and to the atmosphere in the office. Host nationals were curious about Finnish female expatriates and considered them to be hard-working, independent and direct. One respondent even felt that she was considered a guru.

There were also other type of answers. Some respondents felt that bosses had problems treating females professionally since they do not know how to handle females possessing high expertise and, therefore, they felt challenged. One respondent said that in China there are women as managers so host nationals do not underestimate female expatriates. But when it comes to taking orders, they only have one leader to get orders from and a backup person is not enough, which may create problematic situations, for example, to persons who are assisting managers.

It came up from one of the responses that despite what the country of expatriation is, one's own attitude and the behavior will affect the attitudes of the host nationals. If people are respected and treated with dignity, you will receive the same in return.

"Would you consider 'being female' as a advantage or a disadvantage on the expatriate assignment? Please explain".
Almost all the respondents said that it is definitely an advantage to be a female on the expatriate assignment. Women stand out from the crowd and it is easier to be noticed, but also they need to show that they are performing excellently according to the respondents. One respondent mentioned that being a female, people were more curious and getting social contacts was easy. Also, some customers were positively surprised when a woman was presenting technological products.

However, a different viewpoint was expressed by one of the respondents. She felt that when settling in and finding friends it is easier to be a male. All social gatherings for women were taking place during day time, while most professional networks had only male participants. She felt that she had little in common with her expat colleagues and therefore she found it

challenging for her and her husband to find a close circle of friends. But when considering work, she found no difference between women and men.

"What kind of barriers have you faced at your home organization because of being a female? (If any)"

Many of the respondents felt that there still exists the "boy's club", where men make decisions and as a female it is difficult to get into it and advance in career. Some respondents mentioned that a woman is often viewed as an outcast or treated as someone without power. One respondent said that she has been sidelined from decision making and the other felt that as a young female she had to prove she is a professional. The other respondent mentioned that having no technical educational background makes it hard at times to work in an engineering company. Still, three of the respondents did not report having experienced any specific barriers at their home organization because of being a female.

"What kind of barriers have you faced during the expatriate assignment because of being a female? (If any)"

Four of the respondents did not mention facing any barriers during the expatriate assignment. This may be due to the cultural environment of the expat country. The other three had experienced some type of barriers. One mentioned that she had been left out from decision making but she had brought up the issue to discussions with her supervisors and the situation had changed. The other said that since she is a young female, she is sometimes not perceived as a business woman. People in China might think why she does not build up a family in her country instead of coming abroad. The third respondent said that professionally customers and colleagues do not treat her differently because of being a female. However, she feels that in conferences or networking occasions it is sometimes difficult to initiate conversation and keep it flowing with older male counterparts. According to her this may be partly explained because she is a female but also because of differences in ages and personalities.

"What would you consider to be the biggest challenge of the expatriate assignment for females?"

The respondents considered the balancing of work and family life to be the biggest challenge for female expatriates. The whole family needs to support the expatriate agreement and either work or studies should be arranged to the accompanying spouse also for the duration of the expatriate assignment. Few respondents considered as the biggest challenge the social side and the lack of fellow female expatriates. It also came up from the responses that equality between sexes is still not at the same level everywhere, especially in masculine countries, where more effort from females is required to reach the same level as males. In these countries Finnish independent females can be considered as a threat.

"How did the company support you before and during the expatriate assignment?"
Mostly the companies had supported the respondents in practical issues: contracts, housing, transportation, banking, local visas, schooling, social support etc. Most of these companies have previously sent many expatriates to work abroad and have already the knowledge regarding it. Also, local colleagues were mentioned to be very helpful in case of any questions or problems. However, according to two of the respondents no mentoring or other preparation about the expat life or the country's culture was given.

"How could the company support female expatriates better before and during the expatriate assignment?"
The two main issues which came up were that the company could offer more support from home and also offer more training, especially about women's position in the expat country and about the expatriate life in general. One respondent requested more support on networking; the other suggested that the superior from home could be in contact more often during the expatriate assignment. Also, the company could give a clear indication that a female expatriate will be able to benefit from the expat job when repatriating to Finland. One respondent mentioned that in case she had children, she would require more specific support and attention from the company. Overall the company should understand better family situations since according to the respondents those will determine either success or failure of the whole expatriate assignment.

"How did your family support you before and during the expatriate assignment?"

All the respondents concluded that their family has offered a lot of mental support during the whole process. Especially the support received from the family at home country has been considered important. One respondent said it keeps her on the ground and it s like good mental therapy to hear about normal everyday life in Finland.

Some respondents went to the expatriate assignment together with their spouses so all the arrangements were made together, which made the adjustment easier. According to one of the respondents the common targets and mission need to be agreed within the family before accepting the expatriate agreement in order to be successful in working abroad. Also the other respondent mentioned that the assignment will be very hard if children are not happy. She herself had experience of that since on her first assignment it was difficult for her child to adjust. She had no husband with her which made her dependent on hiring help to home.

The respondents felt that family ties are stronger abroad and support is needed from both the family at home and abroad in order to perform successfully during the expatriate assignment.

"Even today the number of female expatriates is remarkably low. What could explain this and how could this number of female expatriates be increased?"
The primary reason for the low number of female expatriates according to the respondents is family issues. Many women find it too challenging to move abroad with small children especially when they start school. Also, as one of the biggest barriers for females it is seen the fact that the spouse of the female expatriate may not find a job in the host country or is not willing to give up his own career during the expatriate period and stay at home and take care of the family. In many families women are still seen as the primary caretakers of children. One respondent concluded that in most families males earn more and are in higher positions, which makes them more likely to be posted on the expatriate assignment. In addition, this makes it more difficult for males to leave their jobs in case women are asked to go on an expatriate assignment. Therefore, many women find it easier to make a traditional and conventional choice of staying in Finland.

According to the respondents women are not encouraged enough to take expatriate assignments. Women also may think that only men can handle the life outside Finland and that the expat life is lonely and too hard. Still some women are just not strong enough or do not have the courage to go abroad. Many respondents mentioned that expat life should be introduced to women more as a good experience and as a possibility for professional and personal life. One way to do this would be to introduce few success stories of females who have gone abroad as expatriates, especially those with a family and small children. One respondent was an expatriate's daughter herself and she found it to be only positive experience and encouraged females to go for expatriate assignments together with their families.

According to the respondents the low number of female expatriates could also be explained by the fact that even today there are not that many women in top positions in the organizations. Women need to get better positions, which gives them more opportunities and, therefore, they will be more likely to accent an expatriate assignment. The equal responsibility of raising children would make easier the accepting of the expatriate assignment for women. Also, companies could offer more support for organizing studies for males who accompany their spouses abroad. One respondent mentioned that the best would be to find a package for the whole family in order to attract more female expatriates in the future.

9. Analyzing the Results

In this chapter I will analyze the results of the questionnaire compared to the theory presented earlier trying to find differences and similarities. Trough the questionnaire, I tried to find answers to the research problems: what are the factors of success of female expatriates, how companies could enhance and support these factors and what kind of barriers of success there exist for female expatriates.

9.1. Factors of Success

The answers received from the questionnaire were in accordance with the theories about factors of success of female expatriates presented by Linehan and Scullion (2001) and Caligiuri, Joshi and Lazarova (1999). Among the respondents networking was considered as one of the critical factors of success for females. The "boy's club" seems still to be strong in some organizations limiting the networking opportunities of females. Social gatherings for females were organized only during day time, while men had their own informal networks outside work, which made networking challenging for females. However, this seemed to be country specific since not all the respondents reported experiencing this.

Social networking and having a good relationship with colleagues at home and abroad were considered factors affecting positively on the performance of female expatriates. The support received from the peer group also affected to the overall adjustment of female expatriates during the assignment.

As the study of Linehan and Scullion (2001) already shows, the respondents agreed that mentoring has an important role in the career success of female expatriates. Active support from a superior is needed in introducing the female expatriate to professional and social networks which helps in getting their names known in the host country. So far, there are not enough females in international managerial positions who could offer support especially for female expatriates in the beginning of their careers. Also, it was considered important that the superior from the home organization offers support during the whole assignment, by being in close

contact with the female expatriate. It increases the feelings of security and facilitates the re-entry to the home organization when the superior gives a clear indication that the female expatriate is able to benefit from the expatriate assignment when repatriating. This will improve the performance of the female expatriate during the assignment. (Linehan and Scullion, 2001, 406-407)

One of the critical factors of success of female expatriates is whether they can successfully balance the work and family life during the expatriate assignment. The respondents agreed that it is important to receive support from the whole family before accepting the assignment. Also, it was mentioned in the responses that the ability of the family to adjust to living and working overseas will crucially affect on the success of the female expatriate and the assignment itself. This is in accordance with the theory of Caligiuri, Joshi and Lazarova (1999). This adjustment to overseas is easier for dual-career couples who together have accepted the expatriate assignment and will do all the arrangements together. When men have to be in the role of the accompanying spouse and stay home taking care of children, the problems can be more severe. In many families women are still seen as primary caretakers of children and therefore this kind of transition to stay at home is easier for women than men. According to the respondents it's important to make sure that the spouse has work or studies during the whole assignment. (Caligiuri, Joshi and Lazarova, 1999, 166)

As Linehan and Scullion (2001) point out, in the future companies need to implement successful family policies and to learn how to deal with dual-career issues in order to attract the best candidates for the expatriate assignments. (Linehan and Scullion, 2001, 399-402)

Also, personal characteristics will affect on the success of female expatriates. Caligiuri, Joshi and Lazarova (1999) presented three personality orientations of well-adjusted expatriates: self-, others- and perceptual orientation. According to their study females must demonstrate that they are performing excellent and possess an extraordinary level of technical competence before being accepted by colleagues. Besides having a strong professional background, the respondents added that a successful female expatriate needs to have good social and language skills. According to Caligiuri, Joshi and Lazarova (1999) in order to perform successfully, females need to have the ability to form relationships with host nationals, which increases support and

networking opportunities for females. Also, the respondents agreed that open-mindedness and the ability to adjust to the new culture is required. In addition, a successful female expatriate needs to be independent, positive and to possess the determination to succeed in the "men's world". As the most important personal characteristics the respondents mentioned that a successful female expatriate has to be prepared to work hard and be willing to face challenges every day. (Caligiuri, Joshi and Lazarova, 1999, 165-166)

In their study Caligiuri, Joshi and Lazarova (1999) noted that one factor of predicting success of female expatriates is the attitudes of host nationals. The respondent had either positive or negative experiences about the attitudes of host nationals towards female expatriates depending on the expat country. Some respondents had only perceived hospitable attitudes which affected very positively on their performance. On the other hand, some respondents perceived that their superiors felt challenged of how to treat females with high expertise professionally. But as Caligiuri, Joshi and Lazarova (1999) point out, these negative attitudes are only relevant if they affect on the ability of women to perform their job by lowering their adjustment to the host country. (Caligiuri, Joshi and Lazarova, 1999, 166)

In the following chapter I will discuss how companies have supported female expatriates and how this could be improved in the future.

9.2. Organizational Support

According to the respondents, most of the times the companies had offered support only in practical issues: contracts, housing, visas etc. Also, the local colleagues in the host country were mentioned to be helpful in case of any questions. However, mostly no mentoring or other preparation about the expat life or the country's culture was given to female expatriates before the assignment. According to Caligiuri, Joshi and Lazarova (1999), the failure of the organization to provide these additional elements for women decreases their possibility to be successful during the expatriate assignment. (Caligiuri, Joshi and Lazarova, 1999, 197)

In the future the companies should be able to offer more mentoring support for female expatriates. As the study of Caligiuri, Joshi and Lazarova (1999) confirms, the support received from both the company and the family is the key factor to success of female expatriates. Besides mentoring, the companies should offer more training support, especially about women's position in the expat country and about the expatriate life in general. This type of training could be seen as an advantage when sending females to culturally tough locations where the equality between sexes is not at the same level as in the home country. (Caligiuri, Joshi and Lazarova, 1999, 176-177)

Overall the respondents were concerned about how the company took care of family issues. In case of having children, more specific support and attention was required from the company. The other concern was the situation of the accompanying spouses. The respondents felt that the companies should offer better solutions to the whole family since organizational policies are still largely based on the assumptions that expatriates are mostly males. Dual-career issues should also be taken into consideration in the organizations in order to come up with different solutions of how to support better the accompanying spouses e.g. by offering support for studying.

Many respondents expressed that women are not encouraged enough to take on expatriate assignments. Even though all the respondent were highly educated and had many years experience of working for the company, to only few the company had proposed the expatriate assignment. Others had self-initiated their expatriation. In the future the companies should introduce expat life to women more as a possibility to gain more experience professionally and personally. More success stories from females who have been abroad as expatriates should be introduced in order to attract more females to go for the expatriate assignment. Also, companies should offer more expatriate positions to females in order to fully utilize the pool of female talent within the organizations.

9.3.   Barriers of Success

According to the study of Linehan and Scullion (2001) the same barriers which exist in the home organization are similar to those experienced by female expatriates during the expatriate

assignment. The study of Linehan and Scullion (2001) revealed it to be critical to the success of female expatriates first to break through the glass ceiling in the home organization before pursuing the expatriate career abroad. The respondents confirmed that there still exist the "boy's club", which makes the career advancement of women more difficult. Some respondents felt that they had been treated as people without power and been declined from decision making. However, not all the respondents agreed with this and reported not having experienced any kind of barriers in the home organization because of being a female. (Linehan and Scullion, 2001, 399)

The barriers experienced during the expatriate assignment varied depending on the country of expatriation. Especially young females had experienced stereotyping because of their age and felt that they were not perceived as business women. Many times these young females had to prove they are professionals. Also, some females had experienced that they had been viewed only as a wife of a male expatriate. According to Fischlmayr (2002) stereotypes can be considered as external barriers. (Dowling, Festing and Engle, 2008, 130-131)

As one of the barriers was also viewed that networking with older male colleagues was sometimes difficult due to age and personality differences compared to the younger female expatriates. But still some respondents did not mention to have experienced any kind of barriers or stereotypes toward females during the expatriate assignment. It is important to note that these respondents had been on the assignment in the USA which does not differ culturally much from to Finland.

However, despite these barriers of success, all the respondents viewed being a female definitely as an advantage which made them to stand out from the crowd. Also the study of Caligiuri, Joshi and Lazarova (1999) confirms that successful female expatriates do not perceive being a female as disadvantage. Mostly the respondents felt it was easier to get social contacts and mentioned that some of their customers were even positively surprised when females were working in the traditional male industry. But in the expat countries where female expatriates are not that common, it might be more challenging for females to find a peer group since all social

gatherings for women are arranged in the day time while most professional networks have only male participants.

10. Conclusion and Suggestions for Further Research

The aim of my study was to identify the success factors of female expatriates during international assignments. The findings of the study suggest that networking and mentoring are considered as some of the key factors influencing on the success of female expatriates on international assignments. Also, the successful combination of career, marriage and children was considered critical to the success of international assignments. This issue remains more difficult to female expatriates than to their male counterparts because there exist a linkage between female expatriates, their career and their role in a family. (Linehan and Scullion, 2001, 416)

Besides the factors mentioned above, the findings of the study revealed that personal characteristics and attitudes of host nationals towards female expatriates have an effect on the success of international assignments. My findings highlight that a successful female expatriate needs to possess excellent technical, social and language skills. In addition, she needs to be open-minded, able to adjust to a new culture, independent and be determined to work hard in order to success in the "men's world". According to the findings of my study attitudes of host nationals either increase or decrease the female expatriate's adjustment to the host country and thus, affect on the success of the international assignment.

Also one of the aims of the study was to find out how companies could support and enhance these factors of success of female expatriates in the future. The findings of the study revealed that female expatriates had only received organizational support in practical issues. In the future companies should offer more training and mentoring support which would effectively meet the needs of female expatriates. Also, the findings highlight the importance of encouragement of females to participate in international assignments since it was seen as an important possibility of gaining professional and personal experience.

In the study I also wanted to find out what barriers of success there exist for female expatriates. My findings confirm that there still exist the "boy's club" which hinders the career advancement and limits the networking opportunities of female expatriates. The findings of the study indicate that gender stereotyping is still in some countries an obstacle for female expatriates to overcome.

Particularly this stereotyping was related to the young age of female expatriates which forced them to prove they are professionals. However, according to my findings being a female is viewed definitely as an advantage which makes female expatriates to stand out from the crowd.

In the future one interesting research subject would be finding out the success factors of male expatriates and comparing those with female expatriate success factors. Also it would be interesting to know how companies enhance these success factors of male expatriates and whether there are differences compared to the female counterparts.

Also the same kind of research of factors of success of female expatriates could be conducted in different industries and between female expatriates located in different countries to see how much variation in the success factors can be found.

Another future research subject could be to investigate the difficulties faced by dual-career couples when a male is the accompanying spouse. In the future this issue of dual-career couples might be crucial to the success of expatriates and to their organizations. The willingness to handle this matter might also be a competitive advantage to the companies in the future.

REFERENCES

Adler, J. Nancy. 1993. Women Managers in Global Economy – Scarcity of Female Expatriates – Going Global. *HR Magazine.* [online]. [referenced 09.04.2012]. Available in www-form: http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m3495/is_n9_v38/ai_14530605/

Blackhurst, Samantha & Cummins, Siobhan. 2005. Expatriates and the Continuing Dual-Career Challenge. *International HR Journal, Fall 2005.* [online]. [referenced 05.03.2012]. Available in www-form: http://www.permitsfoundation.com/docs/Dual-Career.pdf

Brewster, Chris & Suutari, Vesa 2005. International Experience and International Development. Vol. 36, No. 1. pp. 8, 22. [online]. [referenced 22.09.2010]. Available in www-form: http://site.ebrary.com.ezproxy.puv.fi/lib/vamklibrary/docDetail.action?docID=10085671&p00=expatriation%20competitive%20strategy

Briscoe, Dennis R. & Schuler, Randall S. 2004. International Human Resource Management: Policy and Practise for the Global Enterprise. 2nd edition. New York. Routledge.

Briscoe, Dennis R., Schuler, Randall S. & Claus, Lisbeth. 2009. International Human Resource Management: Policy and Practices for Multinational Enterprise. 3rd edition. New York. Routledge.

Caligiuri, Paula M. 1997. Assessing Expatriate Success: Beyond Just "Being There". *New Approached to Employee Management,* Vol. 4, pp. 117-140. [online]. [referenced 03.03.2012]. Available in www-form: http://chrs.rutgers.edu/pub_documents/Paula_13.pdf

Caligiuri, Paula M., Joshi, Aparna & Lazarova, Mila. 1999. Factors Influencing the Adjustment of Women on Global Assignments. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management,* Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 163-179. [online]. [referenced 22.03.2012]. Available in www-form: http://www.chrs.rutgers.edu/pub_documents/Factors%20influencing%20the%20adjustment%20of%20women...%20Caligiuri,%20Joshi,%20Lazarova.pdf

Chapter 6: Collecting Data in Mixed Methods Research. [online]. [referenced 29.04.2012]. Available in www-form: http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/10983_Chapter_6.pdf

Chapter 6: Primary and Secondary Data Sources. [online]. [referenced 29.04.2012]. Available in www-form: http://www.scribd.com/doc/7179744/Primary-and-Secondary-Data-Sources

Chew, Janet. 2004. Managing MNC Expatriates Through Crises: A Challenge for International Human Resource Management. *Research and Practice in Human Resource Management,* Vol 12, No. 2, pp. 1-30. [online]. [referenced 21.03.2012]. Available in www-form: http://rphrm.curtin.edu.au/2004/issue2/expats.html

Child, J.D. 1981. Culture, Contingency and Capitalism in the Cross-National Study of Organizations. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, Vol. 3. Greenwich, CT. JAI Publishers.

Christensen, Claus & Harzing, Anne-Wil. 2004. Expatriate Failure: Time to Abandon the Concept? [online]. [referenced 29.02.2012]. Available in www-form: http://www.harzing.com/download/efrcdi.pdf

Cole, Nina & McNulty, Yvonne. 2011. Why Do Female Expatriates "Fit-In" Better than Males? *Cross Cultural Management,* Vol. 18, No. 2, pp. 144-164. [online]. [referenced 09.04.2012]. Available in www-form: https://login.ezproxy.puv.fi/connect?session=sI7BCAoCuCrjbebq&url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/864097700?accountid=27304

Coming Up With a Thesis Topic. 2010. [online]. [referenced 05.03.2012]. Available in www-form: http://www.gradschools.com/article-detail/choose-thesis-topic-1576

Creed, Peter A, Patton, Wendy & Bartrum, Dee. 2004. Internal and External Barriers, Cognitive Style, and the Career Development Variables of Focus and Indecision. *Journal of Career Development,* Vol. 30, No. 4. [online]. [referenced 25.03.2012]. Available in www-form: http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.puv.fi/business/docview/220393683?accountid=27304#

Dieg, Wil. 2007. Breaking Through Your Barriers to Success. [online]. [referenced 06.04.2012]. Available in www-form: http://ezinearticles.com/?Breaking-Through-Your-Barriers-to-Success&id=2605809

Dowling, Peter J., Festing, Marion & Engle, Allen D. 2008. International Human Resource Management: Managing People in a Multinational Context. 5th edition. London. Cengage Learning EMEA.

Global Relocation Trends 2011 Survey Report. London. Brookfield Global Relocations Services.

Golafshani, Nahid. 2003. Understanding Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research. *The Qualitative Report,* Vol. 8, No. 4, pp. 597-607. [online]. [referenced 27.03.2012]. Available in www-form: http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR8-4/golafshani.pdf

Handley, Chris. Validity and Reliability in Research. [online]. [referenced 27.03.2012]. Available in www-form: http://www.natco1.org/research/files/Validity-ReliabilityResearchArticle_000.pdf

Harris, Hilary & Dickmann, Michael 2004. Global Careers. Vol. 18, No. 3. pp. 181. [online]. [referenced 22.09.2010]. Available in www-form: http://site.ebrary.com.ezproxy.puv.fi/lib/vamklibrary/docDetail.action?docID=10069023&p00=women%20international%20managers

Harzing, Anne-Wil. 2001. Of Bears, Bumble-Bees, and Spiders: The Role of Expatriates in Controlling Foreign Subsidiaries. *Journal of World Business*, Vol. 36, No.4, pp. 366 –37. [online]. [referenced 22.02.2012]. Available in www-form: http://www-e.uni-magdeburg.de/evans/Journal%20Library/Intercultural%20Management/Role%20of%20Expatriates%20in%20Controlling%20Foreign%20Subsidiaries.pdf

Helpsheet 9: Qualitative Research Methods. RSDU, Peninsula Research & Development Support Unit. [online]. [referenced 26.03.2012]. Available in www-form: http://projects.exeter.ac.uk/prdsu/helpsheets/Helpsheet09-May03-Unlocked.pdf

Heslin, Peter A. 2005. Conceptualizing and Evaluating Career Success. *Journal of Organizational Behavior,* Vol. 26, pp. 113-136. [online]. [referenced 24.03.2012]. Available in www-form: http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.puv.fi/docview/224890327?accountid=27304

How to Evaluate EIS: Questionnaires. 2006. Evidence Base. [online]. [referenced 12.04.2012]. Available in www-form: http://www.evalued.bcu.ac.uk/tutorial/4a.htm

Hughes, Christina. 2006. Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches to Social Research. Department of Sociology. [online]. [referenced 29.04.2012]. Available in www-form: http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/sociology/staff/academicstaff/chughes/hughesc_index/teachi ngresearchprocess/quantitativequalitative/quantitativequalitative/

Hyde, Rob. 2002. HR Story: Assignment Types Explained. *Expatica the Netherlands.* [online]. [referenced 21.01.2012]. Available in www-form: http://www.expatica.com/hr/story/assignment-types-explained-10569.html#3

Information collected from the respondents via the e-form questionnaire.

International HRM Notes: Staffing for Global Operations. MBA Knowledge Base. [online]. [referenced 28.04.2012]. Available in www-form: http://www.mbaknol.com/international-business/staffing-for-global-operations/

Jackson, Gylon. 2007. Success – Barriers to Personal Growth and Development. [online]. [referenced 06.03.2012]. Available in www-form: http://gylonjackson.com/success/Gylon/success-barriers-to-personal-growth-and-development.html

Linehan, Margaret & Scullion, Hugh. 2001. European Female Expatriate Careers: Critical Success Factors. *Journal of European Industrial Training,* Vol. 25, No. 8, pp. 392-418. [online]. [referenced 17.03.2012]. Available in www-form: http://212.43.220.52/womeng/wp/library/5a%20european%20female.pdf

Lopper, Jerry. 2010. Success Factors from Psychology Studies on How to be Successful. [online]. [referenced 06.04.2012]. Available in www-form: http://jerry-lopper.suite101.com/success-factors-from-psychology-studies-on-how-to-be-successful-a245313

Merriam-Webster Learner's Dictionary. [online]. [referenced 24.03.2012]. Available in www-form: http://www.learnersdictionary.com/search/

McDonald, Frank & Burton, Fred. 2002. International Business. 1st edition. London. Thomson.

Milne, John. 1999. Questionnaires: Advantage and Disadvantages. Learning Technology Dissemination Initiative. [online]. [referenced 29.04.2012]. Available in www-form: http://www.icbl.hw.ac.uk/ltdi/cookbook/info_questionnaires/index.html

Morgan, P.V.1986.International Human Resource Management: Fact or Fiction. *Personnel Administrator*, Vol. 31, No. 9, pp. 43-47.

Morney, Michael J., Linehan, Margaret & Scullion, Hugh 2003. The Management of Expatriates: Contemporary Developments and Future Challenges. Vol. 23, No. 9. pp. 174-175. [online]. [referenced 22.09.2010]. Available in www-form: http://site.ebrary.com.ezproxy.puv.fi/lib/vamklibrary/docDetail.action?docID=10052829&p00=f emale%20expatriates

PriceWaterhouseCoopers. 2005. International Assignments: Global Policy and Practice Key Trends 2005. London. PriceWaterhouseCoopers.

Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide. Family Health International. [online]. [referenced 26.03.2012]. Available in www-form: http://www.ccs.neu.edu/course/is4800sp12/resources/qualmethods.pdf

Reiche, Sebastian. 2011. Why Would You Go Abroad? Professional v. Personal Reasons to Accept an Expatriate Assignment. IESE Business School, University of Navarra. [online]. [referenced 28.03.2012]. Available in www-form: http://blog.iese.edu/expatriatus/2011/04/26/why-would-you-go-abroad-professional-vs-personal-reasons-to-accept-an-expatriate-assignment/

Reiche, Sebastian & Harzing, Anne-Wil. 2009. Chapter 7: International Assignments. London. Sage Publications.

Research Methodology. Institute of Hotel Management, Catering Technology & Applied Nutrition, Mumbai. [online]. [referenced 07.04.2012]. Available in www-form: http://www.ihmctan.edu/PDF/notes/Research_Methodology.pdf

Research Methodology: An Introduction. New Age International. [online]. [referenced 07.04.2012]. Available in www-form: http://www.newagepublishers.com/samplechapter/000896.pdf

Rieger, Tom. 2011. Overcoming Barriers to Success. *GALLUP Management Journal.* [online]. [referenced 06.04.2012]. Available in www-form: http://gmj.gallup.com/content/145901/overcoming-barriers-success.aspx

Schmidt, S., & Minssen, H. 2007. Accounting for International Assignments: The Case of the German Chemical Industry. *Journal of HRCA: Human Resource Costing & Accounting,* 11(3), pp. 214-228. [online]. [referenced 18.01.2012]. Available in www-form: http://search.proquest.com/docview/210127588?accountid=27304

Selmer, Jan & Leung, Alicia. 2003. Are Corporate Career Development Activities Less Available to Female than to Male Expatriates. *Journal of Business Ethics,* Vol. 43, No. 1, pp.125-136. [online]. [referenced 01.05.2012]. Available in www-form: http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.puv.fi/docview/198070619?accountid=27304

Selmer, Jan & Leung, Alicia. 2002. Career Management Issues of Female Business Expatriates. *Career Development International,* Vol. 7, No. 6/7, pp. 348-358. [online]. [referenced 09.04.2012]. Available in www-form: http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.puv.fi/docview/219325112?accountid=27304

Selmer, Jan & Leung, Alicia. 2003. Personal Characteristics of Female vs. Male Business Expatriates. International Journal of Cross Cultural Management: CCM. Vol. 3, Iss. 2. pp. 195. [online]. [referenced 22.09.2010]. Available in www-form: http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=5&did=507935021&SrchMode=1&sid=20&Fmt=4&VI nst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1285070508&clientId=46965

Shortland, Susan. 2009. Gender Diversity in Expatriation: Evaluating Theoretical Perspectives. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, Vol. 24, No. 5. pp. 367-369. [online]. [referenced 22.09.2010]. Available in www-form: http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=3&did=1972991851&SrchMode=1&sid=5&Fmt=6&VI nst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1285069614&clientId=46965

Shortland, Susan. 2011. Networking: A Valuable Career Intervention for Women Expatriates. *Career Development International,* Vol. 16, No. 3, pp. 271-292. [online]. [referenced 01.05.2012]. Available in www-form: http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.puv.fi/docview/872341302?accountid=27304

Smith, Sheila. 2004. Career Barriers Among Information Technology Undergraduate Majors. *Information Technology, Learning, and Performance Journal,* Vol. 22, No. 1. [online]. [referenced 25.03.2012]. Available in www-form: http://www.osra.org/itlpj/smithspring2004.pdf

Sociological Research Skills, Research Methods. [online]. [referenced 26.03.2012]. Available in www-form: http://www.sociology.org.uk/methsi.pdf

Tharenou, Phyllis. 2010. Women's Self-Initiated Expatriation as a Career Option and Its Ethical Issues. *Journal of Business Ethics*. pp. 73, 77. [online]. [referenced 22.09.2010]. Available in www-form: http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=0&did=2104921721&SrchMode=1&sid=5&Fmt=6&VI nst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1285069614&clientId=46965&cfc= 1

Tung, Rosalie L. 1987. Expatriate Assignments: Enhancing Success and Minimizing Failure. *Academy of Management EXECUTIVE,* Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 117-126. [online]. [referenced 21.03.2012]. Available in www-form: http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.puv.fi/docview/210510806

Van Den Anker, Ben. 2009. Soft Skills – Successful Expatriation In a Nutshell. [online]. [referenced 03.03.2012]. Available in www-form: http://ezinearticles.com/?Soft-Skills---Successful-Expatriation-in-a-Nutshell&id=3459399

Yan, Aimin, Zhu, Guorong & Hall, Douglas T. 2002. International Assignments for Career Building: A Model of Agency Relationships and Psychological Contracts. Academy of

Management Review, Vol. 27, No. 3, pp. 373-391. [online]. [referenced 28.04.2012]. Available in www-form: http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/4134385?uid=4&sid=21100751469001

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1

Interview guide

1. Age
2. Educational background
3. Your current work tasks
4. How many years did you work for the company before the expatriate assignment?
5. What were the reasons for the expatriate assignment?
6. Which personal characteristics would you attribute to a successful female expatriate?
7. Which factors affect positively on the performance of female expatriates during the expatriate assignment? (E.g. mentoring, networking etc.)
8. Which factors affect negatively on the performance of female expatriates during the expatriate assignment?
9. What kind of stereotypes towards female expatriates have you faced? (If any)
10. What kind of attitudes from host nationals have you experienced during the expatriate assignment? How these have affected on you?
11. Would you consider 'being female' as an advantage or a disadvantage on the expatriate assignment? Please explain.
12. What kind of barriers have you faced at your home organization because of being a female? (If any)
13. What kind of barriers have you faced during the expatriate assignment because of being a female? (If any)
14. What would you consider to be the biggest challenge of the expatriate assignment for females?
15. How did the company support you before and during the expatriate assignment?
16. How could the company support female expatriates better before and during the expatriate assignment?
17. How did your family support you before and during the expatriate assignment?

18. Even today the number of female expatriates is remarkably low. What could explain this and how could this number of female expatriates be increased?