

Challenges of the Repatriation Process

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INTRODUCTION

The globalization process has brought the importance of human resources in international contexts, namely within multinational enterprises (MNEs). As such, organizations face many challenges because of the globalization. As a result, MNEs have witnessed an increase of human resources in international missions, which has led to the analysis of expatriation (Vidal, Valle & Aragón, 2007). Most MNEs understand that sending managers to other countries and cultures is crucial to developing global competencies, implementing successful business strategies, and maintaining competitive advantage (Knocke & Schuster (2017). Likewise, most MNEs that resort to international charters seek to transfer specific technological skills and operational knowledge (Jassawalla & Sashittal, 2009; 2011).

At corporate level, expatriation represents a process in which employees live temporarily abroad, for a period exceeding one year (Caligiuri, 2000). Additionally, the term repatriation encompasses the process upon which the managers/employees return to their home country. Moreover, although expatriation and repatriation has been studied thoroughly among MNEs, among more than 500 firms analyzed, has repatriation has not been studied at all (Ribau, Moreira, & Raposo, 2018)

Companies seeking to conquer international markets by sending leaders/managers that are able to develop international executive activities normally aimed at gaining market share or technology transfers that promote the international expansion of the company are the main cause for expatriation. While there are various stages during the expatriation process, depending on the complexity of international assignments, repatriation has been traditionally regarded as simply another stage of the expatriation assignment. However, repatriates play an important part for the company, since their international experience can be capitalized as relational/social capital allowing them to pursue international expansion strategies. Repatriates also have important knowledge regarding the cultural context of potential international target markets that they might have been involved in (Knocke and Schuster, 2017). This provides the company with unique competitive advantages, allowing them to explore international markets, and to explore the

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relationship with international branches, whether that is for exploring specific markets, or for transferring technology to those branches.

Repatriates experienced the company's performance in other countries and, as a result, they become part of a global social network that allows the company to pursue international strategies. They can help establish and expand the company's business at international level, since they have knowledge of the cultural context and specific information regarding market and customers. Hence, repatriates have an important role in the organization, since they are able to speed up the transfer of knowledge from subsidiaries to the parent company and vice versa. For these reasons, repatriates represent an important human capital investment. Moreover, the repatriation process represents an important research avenue, since the stay of an employee on an organization depends on the success of the repatriation process. Also, repatriation issues are often more challenging, more insidious and widely underestimated when compared to those experienced during expatriation (Knocke and Schuster, 2017).

However, most MNEs seem to neglect to transfer knowledge of their expatriates to other human resources of the organization in order to improve their response in global markets. With the increase of expatriate managers, an increase in the number of managers who go through the repatriation process is observed. Another important fact is that expatriates, after an international experience, become more committed to the development of their career (Lazarova & Caligiuri, 2001), which means that repatriates have high career expectancy when they return their careers in the company after international mission.

In an organizational context, repatriation is very important since this process involves a reverse cultural shock, as most of the executives feel forgotten after they return to the original organization they worked for (Deresky, 2004). Although the first article published on managers' repatriation process dates back to 1973, compared to research on the expatriation process, research on repatriation is much more limited in depth and quantity (Knocke & Shuster, 2017).

As such, the main purpose of this chapter is to fulfil a gap in the academic literature of repatriation. Bearing this in mind, the aim of this chapter is to broaden the knowledge on repatriation exploring previous studies. For this, we seek to answer the tow following research questions:

- Why the process of expatriation is regarded as more relevant than the repatriation process?
- What do organizations need to improve to assure a good repatriation process?

This chapter is divided in seven sections. After this introduction, section two involves the literature review where different articles regarding the repatriation of international managers are explored. Section three addresses the research method used to analyze repatriation. Section four presents the main results. Section five discusses critically the results. Section six presents the conclusion. Section seven puts forward future research directions.

BACKGROUND

Organizations are facing several challenges arising from the globalization that is taking place in the business world. This globalization led to a greater need for the internationalization of companies, which then resulted in an increase of the number of expatriates and an increased complexity of the human resource management (Vidal, Valle, & Aragón, 2007). A great number of companies understand that sending managers to other countries and cultures is essential for the development of core competencies, implementation of successful business strategies, and preservation of the competitive advantage in in-

ternational environments (Kraimer, Shaffer, & Bolino, 2009; Ren, Yunlu, Shaffer, & Fodchuk, 2015). It is often necessary for the majority of multinational companies to send some of their best managers to overseas operations in order to transfer specific technological competencies and operating knowledge (Jassawalla & Sashittal, 2009; 2011). The expatriation process is a way of transferring these specific competencies. However, many MNEs neglect the transfer of knowledge from their expatriates to elements of the organization itself as a way of improving their performance in global markets. Thus, this increase of expatriate managers involves a subsequent growth in the number of managers that go through the repatriation process.

Repatriation Process

According to Cambridge Dictionary, repatriation means “send or bring someone, or something, back to the country that person or thing came from” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2018). In an organizational context, the process of returning home is called “repatriation” and the employees who complete a service abroad are called “repatriates” by the employing organization (Lazarova & Caliguri, 2001). Repatriation continues to be a challenge for many international companies. However, there is little research regarding repatriation (Knocke & Schuster, 2017). The first article on the repatriation of managers was published in 1973, and the topic only started to receive more attention as of the 2000s (Knocke & Schuster, 2017). Compared to research on expatriation, research on repatriation issues is far more limited in scope and abundance (Furuya, Stevens, Bird, Oddou, & Menenhall, 2009).

Repatriation is seen by many organizations as the final stage of the expatriation process, and as a result this process is not given the attention it deserves. However, repatriation issues are usually more challenging and underestimated than issues experienced during expatriation (O’Sullivan, 2013). In order to bring proper attention to the process of repatriation of managers, it is important to take into consideration a few concepts that distinguish between two types of managers: the international manager and the repatriate manager.

An international manager is someone who works outside of their home country for a period exceeding six months (Linehan & Scullion, 2002). These managers are regarded as cosmopolitan, multilingual, and versatile individuals who have a stable family environment, and are able to work under pressure both from the company where they work and from the culture of the host country (Hurn, 2014). On the other hand, a repatriate manager is a manager who returns to their home country after more than six months working abroad (Linehan & Scullion, 2002). Repatriate managers are very important elements of international companies, since the knowledge, experience, and competencies that they acquired during expatriation are fundamental in order to achieve and manage a competitive advantage in a global environment (Vidal et al., 2007).

Repatriates Leaving the Organizations

If, on one hand, expatriation is a challenge for many international managers that see this process as an international career opportunity, repatriation may lead to unexpected issues for companies. The main problem in the process of repatriation is that it often ends with repatriate employees leaving the organizations to seek other job opportunities – and taking with them part of the intellectual capital acquired during the expatriation. It is argued that over 50% of these employees quit during the first two years following their return to their home country (Kraimer et al., 2012; Szkudlarek & Sumpter, 2015; Brookfield Global Relocation Services, 2015). Furthermore, 25% to 35% of repatriate employees eventually leave

their current organization in order to work for the competition (Suutari & Brewster, 2000). Nevertheless, a high percentage of those who stay in the organization have seriously considered changing their job (Suutari & Brewster, 2003).

According to different authors, there are several factors that explain why these employees deliberately leave their jobs. Repatriates end up leaving the organization because they feel that they have been given less challenging positions with fewer responsibilities upon their return, which is often due to the organizations not being able to assign positions or understand what they can do for their repatriated managers (Knocke & Schuster, 2017). After their return, repatriates feel that their new positions do not fulfil their competencies and experiences since they are unable to exercise competencies they developed in other cultures (Naito, 2016).

Female managers experience even more difficulties in the repatriation process since not only are there less female managers than male managers going through the repatriation process, but those that do go through expatriation processes are viewed as pioneers by other elements of the organization (Linehan & Scullion, 2002). However, when these female managers returned from their international assignments, they felt that they were once again placed in positions with fewer responsibilities, thereby increasing the possibility of leaving the organization.

In addition to the aspects that contribute to personal frustration regarding organizational work, managers who go through an expatriation experience develop new competencies that appeal to the competition. On one hand, companies expect repatriates to undertake a leadership role and contribute to the increase of the organization's global talent (Collings, 2014). On the other hand, companies also need to be aware of their competition since many repatriates receive new job offers from competitors upon their return (Lazarova & Tarique, 2005).

Although there are aspects outside of the organization that influence repatriation, there are also elements intrinsic to the organization that can have a negative impact, such as: inadequate support from the human resource management team; lack of information on the repatriation process; and lack of knowledge regarding responsibilities that the human resource department should have in this process. These faults lead to insufficient support and, as a result, repatriates do not feel integrated in the organisation (Howe-Walsh & Torka, 2017). However, it is not only the human resource department, as the formal support department, that can negatively influence the repatriation of managers. For instance, colleagues can be a strong emotional support system, but can also be a source of concern (Van Gorp, Boroş, Bracke, & Stevens, 2017). Moreover, the cultural diversity of the emotional support network of a repatriate also has an impact. This network, composed by friends and family, is not ready to face the difficulties associated with a repatriation process (Martin, 1984).

The repatriation process can be influenced by repatriates themselves, by circumstances unrelated to the organization, or by the organization's inability to manage this process. However, there is one common feature of the literature analyzed: the negative analysis of the repatriation process, which points us to the fact that there still is little research on this topic in comparison with the expatriation process, and the fact that, in general, repatriates end up leaving the organizations after returning to their home country.

Considering that it takes between six to twelve months to fully reintegrate someone into an organization (Linehan & Scullion, 2002), companies must manage the repatriation process as more than just a simple completion of the expatriation process. Moreover, if expatriates express any abandonment feelings deeply related to the idea of "out of sight, out of mind" by feeling that during their expatriation their connection to the organization tends to fade, thereby affecting relationships with colleagues, repatriates can still carry this abandonment feeling when they return to their home country (O'Sullivan, 2013).

Improvement of the Repatriation Process

Although there are various situations that may negatively influence repatriation, it is possible for organizations not to lose these valuable employees. Nowadays, companies can resort to a vast amount of social media available to us in order to increase repatriates' participation in different elements of the organization, thereby reducing the risk of feeling disconnected from the organization during the expatriation (O'Sullivan, 2013). Linehan and Scullion (2002) and Jassawalla, Asgary, and Sashittal (2006) propose the development of mentoring programs for managers, starting from their expatriation and until they feel fully reintegrated in the organization after repatriation. Thirdly, due to their great importance and major influence in the repatriation process, the organization must see family as a stakeholder that can have either a positive or negative influence in the process (Howe-Walsh & Torka, 2017). Consequently, companies should try to provide the manager with a set of offers that increase their fulfilment, such as, for example, assistance with repatriation of the whole family. If the family is involved in the expatriation process, offering tickets to visit the home country is a good way of promoting the re-adaptation of everyone in the family, while also making the repatriation experience less complicated (Hurn, 2014).

Companies should try to develop internal training programs on how to handle different scenarios, providing employees with more support regarding cultural shock (Osman-Gani & Hyder, 2008). Furthermore, when they return to the company, managers feel that the organizations should provide more support regarding quality of life, for them and for their families. For this reason, preparation workshops on how the repatriation process works and what managers can expect from the organization during such process would be highly significant, giving the repatriate more realistic expectations on their career development (Osman-Gani & Hyder, 2008).

RESEARCH METHOD

The Scopus database was used for the development of this chapter. Nine articles regarding the repatriation topic were analyzed. For this purpose, we decided to focus on the TOPIC: ("managers") and excluded all articles prior to 2000. Also, articles were limited by the area of investigation, in this case, business and management, only articles in English were included, and the called "grey literature" was excluded.

The nine articles analyzed use three main methodological approaches. Questionnaire surveys (Vidal et al., 2007; Naito, 2016; Osman-Gani & Hyder, 2008) focusing repatriates in several firms in several countries. Howe-Walsh and Torka (2017), Van Gorp et al. (2017) and Linehan and Scullion (2002) chose the interviewing technique, which was carried out with repatriate employees and manager teams. Finally, Knocke and Schuster (2017) carried out a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), based on the following four questions:

1. What is the general level of emphasis on repatriation in management journals?
2. What is the primary content of the relevant articles?
3. Which theories are applied to analyze repatriation?
4. What is the general methodological background and what analytical approaches are employed?

This SLR, covering research from 1973 to 2016, is very important as it covers different points of view and provides a sense of what has already been developed on this topic within the academic world. These authors identified, assessed, and described the literature, creating knowledge about repatriation.

Hurn (2014) chose to study thoroughly a case study on repatriation, providing important information regarding the organizations' Human Resources in a globalized environment as we live in today. Finally, in her article, Sussman (2001) proposes an analysis of North-American managers that return to their home country after an expatriation period from six months to four years.

RESULTS

This section includes a brief summary of results found by different authors. This section is highly important, allowing us to briefly analyze what has been achieved over time, based on a critical assessment regarding how the different researches were carried out. Moreover, it helps us answer some of our own research questions based on previous research.

Sussman (2001) found that there is no actual connection between job dissatisfaction and a difficult repatriation experience. Furthermore, there is a significant connection between a complicated experience abroad and feelings of angst during the repatriation process, which is also the case regarding the proportionality between the repatriates' detachment from the cultural identity of the host country in comparison with their home country, and their feelings of distress; when one of such factors grows, the other one follows. In short, repatriates who had less preparation were diagnosed with greater feelings of angst and concern related to the repatriation process.

Linehan and Scullion (2002) focused on studying the repatriation process of top female managers, at a time when there were still very few female managers able to achieve these international positions in organizations. Linehan and Scullion (2002) reached the conclusion that the majority of these managers were placed in positions with less responsibility upon their return, thereby decreasing their overall job satisfaction and causing them to leave the organizations.

Vidal et al. (2007) tried to understand how job satisfaction influenced the repatriate managers' intention of leaving their companies. In other words, they tried to understand the extent to which managers are or are not, upon their return, satisfied with the job that was waiting for them in their home country and what type of impact said satisfaction has when deciding whether to leave or stay in the company. Vidal et al. (2007) reached the conclusion that the repatriate managers' satisfaction is usually negative, taking the following three aspects into account: work content that is adjusted to the employee; whether managers are given a promotion after repatriation; and having specific expectations regarding the task managers will take up after repatriation.

Osman-Gani and Hyder (2008) addressed the topic of manager repatriation from a human resource point of view, i.e. how human resources can train and develop the international managers in repatriation. The authors concluded that the majority of companies do not provide the necessary support during the repatriation process. Feedback from repatriates is negative, since they mention that they wished they had training or had attended a workshop on how to handle cultural shock when they returned, and they also think it is necessary to provide more support regarding quality of life. Organizations should also invest in giving employees realistic expectations regarding the career progression of their repatriates.

Hurn (2014) carried out a critical evaluation of the challenges faced by the human resource management in an increasingly globalized world. He concluded that MNEs are trying more and more to decrease the failure in assignments abroad, making it one of their main goals. The increased competition regarding the recruitment of high quality international managers makes it necessary for the companies' human resource management to provide the best preparation and training for their expatriates and operate in

various ways. For example, providing a careful and efficient repatriation program aimed at ensuring that repatriates stay in the company.

Naito (2016) studied the core aspects of the readjustment of expatriates, giving MNEs the opportunity to use this knowledge for talent management. Naito (2016) concluded that repatriates who report having a better readjustment and job satisfaction are those with less household stress and family issues, who are more eager to return while abroad, with realistic expectations, experiencing a short-term repatriation process, whose company benefits from their skills, and that have a good relationship with their superiors.

Howe-Walsh and Torka (2017) explored the influence that repatriates' supporters have during the repatriation process. They concluded that both family and top and line managers are important for the repatriation process; however, human resource managers have a greater role. In addition, they conclude that a poor support from the HR department to the repatriate is mostly caused by lack of information on how to provide this support throughout the process.

Van Gorp et al. (2017) studied the influence of emotional support during the repatriation process. They conclude that, in most cases, lack of support from the company in the home country leads to reintegration difficulties. On the other hand, family support eases this process, as well as previous experiences abroad. In order to improve the repatriation process, they believe that social and training activities with both the repatriate and their family should be implemented, along with visits from colleagues of the home country, thereby improving the repatriation adaptation.

Lastly, Knocke and Schuster (2017) reached the conclusion that companies, similarly to scholars, give more importance to expatriation since they see repatriation as the final stage of the expatriation process. These conclude that it is necessary to include contextual factors, so that researchers are able to carry out more realistic micro, meso, exo and macro environment analysis, as well as the temporal aspects of the repatriation process. With this, they wish for future researchers to step out of their comfort zone and use alternative research approaches, which can help broaden horizons on this process. The main conclusion of this article points to the lack of understanding of repatriation as an isolated process.

DISCUSSION

By analyzing these articles and their results, it is possible to understand that different authors use different research methods. However, all researches used only one research method, instead of a mixed approach, for example. Thus, new authors who wish to address the repatriation process need to go much further when carrying out their research, so that it becomes richer and more in-depth, obtaining increasingly complementary results (Knocke and Schuster, 2017).

After considering all the articles mentioned in this work, and in light of what it has been analyzed herein, it is now possible to present a critical opinion. Firstly, it is clear that due to the globalization and internationalization of companies, expatriation has earned an increasingly important role in the communication with different cultures, while also helping companies achieve a competitive advantage over their competitors (Hurn, 2014). We believe that this is a very significant item, because if this process is given greater importance, the repatriation process should also follow its lead, so that organizations are able to keep managers who return with a new set management and communication competencies instead of losing them to competitors.

Secondly, Human Resource Management has a fundamental role in the repatriation process, not only regarding the planning of the repatriation of employees, but also by ensuring that repatriates stay in the organization afterwards. Planning, i.e. the preparation of managers for the repatriation process is still

an undervalued stage in many organizations. However, this process plays an increasingly key role in keeping repatriate managers from leaving the companies, which is one of the reasons why we propose a growth in the study of this topic by the scientific community (Hurn, 2014).

Hence, the repatriation process begins before the employee returns to their home country. The company's Human Resource Management should prepare their managers well before the expatriation process, through psychological support for the expatriate manager and their family, as well as preparing the manager to ease their adjustment to the cultural identity of the host country, by attending trainings and workshops (Sussman, 2001). Moreover, we consider that these practices carried out by the company, associated with the implementation of support strategies for the manager during the expatriation process, are essential in order to foster the best possible expatriation experience. These strategies could be, for example, frequent contact between the company and the expatriate in order to monitor the whole process closely; to offer visit trips in cases where the family stayed in the home country; to provide support for the spouse and support regarding both education and health insurance and specialized medical support not only for the expatriate manager, but also for their families. In view of what was highlighted by the author, we believe that this article is a positive contribution for the academic study of the repatriation process, since it focuses on the department that is responsible for the organizations' human resources. This focus in a specific department can contribute to minimizing the negating impact that repatriate managers experience throughout the whole process. There is a significant connection between a good expatriation experience and the existence of a successful repatriation process leading to the stay of the repatriate manager, making it extremely important for organizations to implement these practices (Sussman, 2001).

Due to the growing globalization, these expatriation and repatriation events have earned great importance within organizations, leading to an increase in the competition for the recruitment of top quality international managers (Hurn, 2014). If, on one hand, it is evident that the preparation of managers on how to handle the repatriation process has clearly failed (Osman-Gani & Hyder, 2008; Sussman 2001; Hurn, 2014), on the other hand, the human resources management department has an important role for the implementation of strategies that minimize this failure and keep managers in the company after their repatriation.

In addition to the preparation carried out by the human resources management department regarding what repatriates should expect when returning to their home country, this preparation should be undertaken in accordance with the gender of expatriated/repatriated manager as female top managers face greater difficulties throughout this whole process (Linehan & Scullion, 2002). The importance of the female repatriation process does not arise from the little attention that it has been given, but rather because it arises from the fight for gender equality in the highest hierarchical positions at corporate level. Moreover, a multicultural perspective is on high demand, especially involving female expatriates from developing nations where women play more traditional roles *vis-à-vis* male managers.

Emotional support provided throughout the whole process, and the preparation of the network of contacts from family and friends are matters that deserve further development. Third parties significantly influence the repatriate manager and are often responsible for whether they stay or leave the organization, depending on the preparation they must deal with the situation, or on the support provided by the organization itself. Also, repatriates with lower family stress levels present higher job satisfaction levels as well as better readjustment at work. Another interesting result is that repatriates who expressed a greater desire to return to their home country had better readjustment levels (Naito, 2016).

Expatriates with more appropriate expectations regarding leisure time have higher readjustment levels. It is concluded that repatriates who value time and the family that accompany them in the expatriation process report spending more time with family during the experience abroad than upon their return. This

is because there are usually more daily tasks in the home country, which means less spare time to spend with family than during the experience abroad. This situation often leads to negative return experiences (Van Gorp et al., 2017).

CONCLUSION

The starting point of this section was based in two research questions. Regarding the first question (Why the process of expatriation is regarded as more relevant than the repatriation process?), one can put forward three different reasons. Firstly, organizations address the repatriation process simply as the final stage of the expatriation process, instead of perceiving them as two separate, different and complex processes. And, in today's world, organizations need to look at the different stages of international assignments and distinguish how to manage each one. Secondly, companies are still very focused on work submitted during the expatriation process and that allows them to achieve the desired results, neglecting the adaptation needs of repatriate managers and their contribution to the future of the company. Thirdly, organizations focus a lot more in the results from the expatriation process than in the aspects that influence them. Since the repatriation process is far more connected to influencing factors (personal factors, such as a manager wanting to go back home; external factors, such as the adjustment to the country's culture; and organizational factors, such as the integration of the skills acquired by the repatriate manager within the company's business) than to organizational results, companies often undervalue the analysis of the repatriation process.

Considering the second research question (What do MNEs need to improve to assure a good repatriation process?), it is possible to put forward the following four dimensions to effectively assess the repatriation process: feedback of the manager, network of contacts, human resources management and organization.

Firstly, regarding the feedback of the manager, it is necessary to introduce an analysis of the repatriation of the manager, with respect to their presence abroad and the monitoring of the manager for a certain period of time following their return. This feedback must be as complete and elaborate as possible, so that organizations are able to increase the success of the repatriation process. Thus, companies have to manage future work expectations of the expatriate and repatriate managers, as well as the supports that they would like to receive upon their return. Such feedback should combine personal expectations of repatriate managers with the expectations of the organization, leading to cooperation between them so that neither of the parties feels unsupported.

Secondly, regarding the network of contacts consisting of friends, colleagues, and family of the managers, it is important that organizations promote the existence of contacts between the repatriate and their emotional support systems. For that, organizations need to be prepared to explore this network of contacts in order to help repatriates in their integration. These networks should be created before the international assignment and be kept during and after the experience to accompany the individual and the choices he/she makes overtime.

Thirdly, organizations need to prepare managers for their future roles/positions so that they can have real expectations regarding their future careers. Another issue worth considering is the fact that repatriate managers fear they will lose their workplace when they return, since it is taken by another element of the organization during the expatriation. Besides being afraid of losing their workplace, managers also feel that, when they return, organizations give them jobs with fewer responsibilities, thereby reducing the challenges that motivate them. This claimed reduction may make them choose careers in competing companies, that benefit from the skills and competencies they acquired abroad, in order to create

and achieve new competitive advantages. It is important for organizations to understand that they can achieve a favorable position compared with competitors due to what repatriates learned during expatriation. Repatriates' feelings of importance and loyalty to the organization increase, since they do not feel like they are being set aside. In connection with this approach, colleagues are a fundamental factor for the reintegration of repatriate managers. If, on one hand, they can help create a family-like environment for managers, on the other hand, they can also leave them behind due to the lack of contact during the expatriation process, thereby increasing the odds of having managers leave the company.

Lastly, the human resources department plays the main role regarding the management of this whole process within the organization. Thus, the human resources department should be duly informed about the feelings of repatriate managers, their future career expectations, and the support they expect to receive from the organization. In short, this department will put all that has been said into action. We consider the development of mentoring programs extremely interesting, providing managers with organizational support throughout the whole process.

In a world of developing change and internationalization processes, and by analyzing some of the literature regarding the repatriation of managers, it is possible to understand that organizations need to train specialists who focus on repatriation in order to increase and improve their human resources and not lose important assets to the competition after they return from an expatriation service. Organizations who wish to compete in a global world must begin to understand that repatriation and expatriation processes are not part of an isolated process, but rather interdependent processes that, in order to succeed, require the analysis of the different stages associated therein and meeting their different needs. Organizations aside, it is also necessary to undertake more research on this topic at an academic level, especially in what concerns the process of repatriation of managers, since this field has the highest dropout rate in organizations.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Our first suggestion is to investigate the aspects that influence the repatriation process within the managers' context, considering cultural, organizational, family and personal aspects. If domestic culture is important in international businesses, it is important to know how ethnocentric or geocentric-oriented structures can compromise the repatriation of managers. Likewise, organizational culture may have some influence in the expatriation and repatriation of managers, which proves the need to explore this perspective in the future. Complementarily, if family and personal aspects are important, it is necessary to investigate the extent to which they uphold solely the managers' experience within the organizations or are more influential in the repatriation process, and the extent to which they complement organizational measures.

It is equally important to explore gender issues in the repatriation process, since they affect women and men differently. These situations are important since it would be useful to analyze how expatriation to countries with cultural and religious standards that are similar to the host country can influence the repatriation of female managers.

Since the network of contacts of the expatriate manager is a key element in the repatriation process, future research should be expanded mainly to family, friends, and colleagues in order to better understand their opinion regarding the entire repatriation process. Although this network of contacts is not able to solve internal matters of the organization, it is important to know how it eases the repatriation of managers. Lastly, it is relevant to analyze repatriation from the point of view of the parent company and the company where the expatriation was carried out, recognizing the role each of them plays in the

repatriation process, which can be revealing regarding the relation between attachment and organizational success concerning two independent yet interconnected entities.

If expatriation/repatriation has been analyzed among MNEs, it would be of added value to analyze how smaller firms address these unique processes as the globalization process brought about new forms of expansion among SMEs as is the case of born global firms and new international ventures that demand a rapid internationalization process. As such, the study of expatriation and repatriation among SMEs can bring new light to the repatriation phenomena, as can involve high tech small firms as well as family firms, which have been extensively ignored.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Company-Assigned Expatriates: Are individuals expatriated through the organizations they represent and for which they will perform a particular function outside their country of origin. Normally, their assignments are clearly defined in terms of managerial tasks to be performed abroad and time horizon of the assignment.

Expatriate: A person who lives outside her/his native country. Is an individual/manager that is transferred from one country to another one during a period that may last for three years.

Expatriation: The process by which an individual/manager is transferred from one country to another to exercise corporate responsibilities.

International Charter: Formal document or instrument that creates a legal entity or privilege. In case of an organization, or multinational company, a charter defines or mandates its function(s) and lays down rules for its conduct or governance. Certain multinational companies mandate an expatriate to exercise/lead the company in a certain country/region.

Repatriates: It is the individual/manager that returns to the home organization after a mandate abroad.

Repatriation: It is normally the inverse process of expatriation. It corresponds to the first job of an individual/manager after returning from an international assignment, that normally does not last more than two years.