

**CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE FACTORS RELATING  
TO THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN INTERNATIONAL  
ASSIGNMENTS: A TWO STUDY PERSPECTIVE**

Jane L. Menzies & Helen De Cieri

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**Abstract**

Women's participation in international work assignments is low and barriers to women participating remain apparent. A conceptual framework of the factors relating to women's participation in international assignments is presented and developed in this paper. The factors include the organisational environment, interpersonal factors and support, and individual attitudes. The framework is empirically tested using interviews with two groups: international assignees (n=33) and human resource (HR) managers (n=20). The factors relating to the participation of women in international assignments are investigated and the major findings of the two studies enable development of a more comprehensive framework.

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# **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE FACTORS RELATING TO THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN INTERNATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS: A TWO STUDY PERSPECTIVE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this study is to understand the factors related to the participation of women in international assignments. In the study three major factors are postulated to be important in explaining women's participation. These are; the organisational environment, interpersonal factors and support, and individual attitudes. The study uses two samples, namely a sample of international assignees (Study 1) who's country of assignment were in Australia, Mozambique, Kosovo, Azerbaijan, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Tonga, and Montenegro, and a sample of HR Managers (Study 2) who were located in Australia and reported on their organisation's practices for the expatriation of women. These organisations were often large multinationals that were headquartered in other countries such as the United Kingdom (UK), and United States (US). Given these two samples, it is argued that the arguments made in this paper have relevancy across other developed countries. This paper therefore addresses the international work experiences of women from developed countries, but not the experiences of women from developing countries. For the purposes of this study, an international assignee is defined "as someone employed by an organisation on an international appointment, secondment, assignment or transfer to one country other than their home country for six months or more" (Adler, 1984b, p. 79).

There are many reasons why it is important to examine this topic. The most important is that women's participation rates remain unrepresentatively low (GMAC Global Relocation Services, 2003), despite the steady increase in international business activity by multinational enterprises (MNEs) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003). The use of international work assignments for employees of MNEs provides valuable benefits for those individuals in terms of career development, and for the MNE in terms of organizational development. Further, the legal context for equal opportunity in the workplace creates pressure on MNEs to eliminate discrimination based on gender in selection decisions. Research suggests, however, that barriers continue to prevent women from participating in international work assignments (Smith & Still, 1996). These barriers reduce the pool of potential assignees, leading to lost opportunities both for employees and for employers.

Numerous scholars have researched and discussed female international assignees (e.g. Adler, 1984a; Linehan, 2002). However, it is argued that most of this literature is fragmented with the exception of Adler's work in 1984 that examined women's experiences from the perspectives of organisations, individuals and societies; some research focuses on micro-level, individual factors, while a separate body of research has explored factors that are at a macro-level, such as the organizational context. The aim of this study is to increase understanding of the factors that influence women's participation in international assignments. The contribution of this paper is to bridge the gaps evident in the extant literature and to bring together disparate elements by developing a conceptual framework that spans macro- and micro-level factors related to women's participation in international assignments. The paper is structured by firstly reviewing the literature and presenting our initial conceptual framework. Next, the research method and main findings are presented. Finally, the findings of this study are discussed in relation to the development of the framework and implications for future research and practice.

## **EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS**

We identified three areas representing factors that relate to women's participation in international assignments: organisational environment, interpersonal factors and support, and individual

attitudes that may either positively or negatively influence women's participation<sup>1</sup>.

## Organisational Environment

For the purposes of this study, we define organisational environment as the selection systems and perceived opportunities within an organisation. Previous research suggests that selection systems used for international managers may be a barrier for women and so may provide some explanation for women's low participation rates (Harris & Brewster, 1999). Harris and Brewster (1999) examine selection for an international assignment and develop a typology that explains that selection systems for international managers can vary on a continuum, from being *open* to *closed*, and *formal* to *informal*. In their typology, there are four types of international assignments selection systems, which include *open/formal*, *open/informal*, *closed/formal*, and *closed/informal* systems. Harris and Brewster (1999) argue that the selection process for "most" international assignments is *informal*, and hence this impacts women more negatively because women are less likely than men to have informal networks that enhance their chances of selection. Women will have the greatest opportunities to participate in an international assignment under an *open/formal* system because the system is *open* to everyone, women with the right qualifications can apply, selectors assess candidates against *formal* criteria, and bias is reduced because managers need to take into account equal opportunity principles (Harris & Brewster, 1999). On the other end of the continuum is the *closed/informal* selection system. In this system, compared to the others, women have the least number of opportunities to participate in an international assignment compared to men, because the process is subjective, and women have a lack of access to *informal* processes that favour males (Harris, 2002). Therefore, this typology provides a useful basis for the present study, as we aim to increase understanding of how women obtain international assignments.

Another issue that relates to women's participation in international assignments is whether individual women perceive they have an opportunity to participate. These perceptions of opportunities may be influenced by a greater proportional representation of women in the organisation, which is the argument put forward by Kanter (1977). Kanter's (1977) theory on the proportional representation of women in the organisation was chosen as women's participation in international assignments has been reported as low because organisations are male-dominated (Linehan, Scullion, & Walsh, 2001). In terms of Kanter's (1977) theory, women will have more promotional opportunities in organisations that have an equal representation of men (50%) and women (50%) in the organisation, than in male-dominated organisations, because the increased numbers of women affect the culture of the group, and women can form coalitions to support other women in selection processes. Therefore, women in male-dominated organisations will have less opportunity for advancement and promotion in international assignments, whereas women in gender balanced organisations will have equal opportunities for advancement and promotion. Although Kanter's (1977) work was based within organisations (groups in organisations), past research has applied Kanter's work across organisations (Ely, 1995), an approach adopted in this study. Building on this literature, to explore the organizational context for women's participation in international assignments, the following research question is asked:

Research Question 1: What are the organisational environment factors that are related to women's participation in international assignments?

## Interpersonal Factors and Support

Interpersonal factors involve relationships between people. In this section four factors were examined, which include the attitudes of line/senior managers, perceptions about sending women to culturally different countries, suitable selection criteria and the attitudes of HR managers towards women participating.

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<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting here that the research presented here focuses on women expatriating from developed countries to other developed countries, and sometimes developing countries. Although it is not the focus of the current study, women from developing countries moving to other developing countries would be an area for future research.

It is apparent that for women to participate, they must have supportive attitudes from managers. For example, Adler (1984c) reported that managers believed women were qualified, were willing to go, and they would be effective overseas, and this had a positive influence on their participation. However, Linehan (2000, p. 92) notes “that exclusively male networks may be responsible for developing and nurturing negative attitudes and prejudices towards female managers”, which limits their participation. There is also evidence from past research that males reinforce their power in organisations by promoting people who are most similar to themselves (Linehan, 2002), supporting principles from similarity-attraction theory (Byrne, 1971).

Managers may perceive that host-country nationals (HCNs) will be biased and prejudiced against female international assignees (Caligiuri & Cascio, 1998) and therefore, women are perceived as unsuitable for culturally different countries. This may present a substantial barrier for women, as HCNs are “key players with whom international assignees will be expected to do their job with (e.g. clients, co-workers, superiors and subordinates)” (Caligiuri & Cascio, 1998, p. 404). However, it is useful to note that Adler’s (1987) research found that in different cultural environments women were perceived first to be a foreigner and second to be a woman. Therefore, foreign women in the workplace were given greater respect in the workplace than their home-country counterparts. Selecting managers therefore need to be aware of this.

The perceptions of suitable selection criteria for an international assignment are also an important issue, as these influence the types of people who are selected. The issue here is that women may not participate because they are perceived as unsuitable, or that compared with the expatriate population, they do not fit (Harris & Brewster, 1999). For instance, Harris (1999) and Linehan et al. (2001) point out that there are male-orientated stereotypes of people who are suitable for international assignments.

Supportive attitudes of HR managers and suitable HR support can have positive influences on women’s participation in international assignments (Adler, 1995). Linehan and Walsh (1999) found that some organisational policies were outdated and based on the assumption that males have traditional families. Obviously, this would have a negative effect on motivating women to participate. To explore the issues raised in the extant literature, the following research question was developed:

Research Question 2: What are the interpersonal factors and support that are related to the participation of women in international assignments?

### **Individual Attitudes**

Past research has shown that there are a number of reasons why women [and men] would participate in an international assignment. This includes interest (Stroh, Varma, & Valy-Durbin, 2000), the ability to travel (Adler, 1984b), cross-cultural experience, personal growth, the job, money, career advancement, good location, satisfying life, spouse and family (Adler, 1986). There is significant amount of knowledge that has examined why women participate in international assignment (Adler, 1987; Van der Velde, Bossink, & Jansen, in press), and therefore it was chosen to include individual attitudes in the conceptual framework. In particular, understanding the major reasons why women would take on assignments was of interest. On the other hand, women may also have doubts and concerns about taking on an international assignment, which influences their participation. Studies on students have shown women may be concerned their assignment will not lead to career development, (Hill & Tillery, 1992), or that the cultural differences and political risk overseas, may make it difficult to operate professionally (Lowe, Downes, & Kroeck, 1999). Therefore, the following research is developed to explore individual attitudes:

Research Question 3: What are the attitudes of individual women and men towards participating in an international assignment?

Based on the review of the relevant empirical research we developed an initial conceptual framework of factors relating to women's participation in international assignments (see Figure 1).

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Figure 1 about here  
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This study builds on the existing literature by testing this meso-level framework through interviews with international assignees and HR managers.

## **METHOD**

### **Participants**

Two groups of participants were included in this research. The first group was male and female international assignees,  $n=33$  (Study 1); the second group was HR managers,  $n=20$  (Study 2). The international assignees were derived from personal business contacts and the snowball method, where one participant identifies another participant. The HR managers were derived by examining Dun and Bradstreet's organisational directory to determine organisations that had international operations. Once organisations were identified, the HR Manager's of these organisations were called to determine if they were suitable to be interviewed. Sometimes these organisations had dedicated international assignments managers and these individuals were more suitable to interview. The main characteristics of participants and organizations in each study are presented in Tables 1, and 2. The ages of women ( $M = 31.6$ ,  $SD = 6.2$ ) and men ( $M = 35.5$ ,  $SD = 7.4$ ) were similar. A t-test revealed that there was no significant difference between men and women. For length of assignment, the results for women ( $M = 32.9$ ,  $SD = 15.3$ ) and men were also similar ( $M = 34.8$ ,  $SD = 22.3$ ) and a t-test revealed there were no significant differences. Twenty-four of the international assignees in Study 1, were assigned to Australia, from other western countries such as the UK and the US. These individuals are technically third country nationals, as they were transferred within their organisation, but not from headquarters (Erdener & Torbjorn, 1999). The remainder were Australians transferred to diverse foreign locations.<sup>2</sup> The HR managers, who were interviewed in Australia came from organisations that were headquartered in Australia, the UK or US (See Table 2). Therefore, it would be expected that the results found in this study would not differ from those results that would be found in countries such as the UK and the US.

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Tables 1 and 2 about here  
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A qualitative research method using structured interviews (Sekaran, 1999) was considered appropriate for the research because we aimed to explore and understand how women obtain assignments. Two participant groups were included because interviewing international assignees only tells part of the story; HR managers who are responsible for international selection were also interviewed. For Study 2, we attempted to use the HR managers from the employers of the international assignees; however, it was only possible to negotiate access in 4 organisations from Study 1 to interview their HR managers for Study 2. Hence, 16 additional organisations were represented in Study 2.

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<sup>2</sup> ANOVAs (gender, nationality) were conducted and there were no significant differences in the themes according to nationality. Recognizing that the small sample sizes limit the meaningfulness of these statistics, details of this information were not included in the study.

## Procedures and Measures

Interview questions covered international selection systems, perceived opportunities to participate in an international assignment, perceived line/senior managers attitudes, perceptions of culturally different countries, perceptions of suitable selection attributes, perceived HR manager's support, major reasons to participate, and doubts and concerns about participating in an international assignment. For Study 1 demographic questions were also asked to identify personal characteristics. In both Studies 1 and 2, secondary information such as company annual reports and Dun and Bradstreet's "Business' Who's Who" were used to classify the participant's organisations.

## Data Analysis

To analyse the interview content, a quasi-statistical research method was employed, in which content analysis was used to find themes, and those themes were counted to determine which were the most commonly reported was used. First, interview transcripts were entered into Nvivo® software (Bazeley & Richards, 2000). For Study 1, a codebook was developed from the transcripts. For Study 2, a codebook was developed from themes identified in Study 1; therefore the entire study (Study 1 and 2) takes a generative approach. That is, the findings from Study 1 informed the nature of questions asked in Study 2 and the codebook. For both studies, the codebook was applied to the data, and the data were content-coded, by highlighting phrases, sentences, and paragraphs and recording each as a theme in Nvivo®. Once all coding was completed, frequency counts of each theme were calculated to assess the relative importance of each theme. Inter-rater reliability was conducted, following the process advocated by Goodwin and Goodwin (1985); a research assistant was employed to code the data, and agree or disagree on the themes developed by the first researcher. Goodwin and Goodwin (1985) suggest that a satisfactory level of agreement between raters is 0.90 or greater. For Study 1, the initial reliability was 0.88, and for Study 2, 0.85. This level was considered to be unsatisfactory and the raters met to discuss the discrepancies. This process was conducted until the agreement percentage rose to 1.00.

## MAJOR FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The major findings of Studies 1 and 2 are provided in Table 3; these findings constitute themes that scored over 40% in Study 1, and 65% in Study 2. Therefore, the major findings are considered to represent the most important themes relevant to women's participation in international assignments.

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Table 3 about here  
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From the major findings of Study 1 and 2, we developed a comprehensive framework of the factors found related to women's participation in international assignments (see Figure 2).

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Figure 2 about here  
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## Organisational Environment

To answer the first research question of the study, in terms of international assignment selection systems, overall, the study identified that these were often *informal*, although women still obtained positions. A number of processes used to select female international assignees were identified over the two studies (see Table 3). The logic in presenting these findings is based on providing the

most highly rated themes first, rather than how the actual selection process would occur. Self-initiation was found to be a factor across the two studies, which supports past research on the topic (Linehan, 2002), and suggests that females should take a proactive approach in pursuing opportunities, as they have to manage their own careers, consistent with boundaryless career concepts (Rousseau & Arthur, 1999). It was not evident whether having to manage one's own career had different impacts on men and women, however, this would be an area for future researchers to explore.

In Study 1 it was found that women participated when they used "networks and contacts", and had *informal* interviews. Studies 1 and 2 found there was "no proper selection process", which supports past research in the field (Linehan & Scullion, 2000). Harris and Brewster (1999) suggest *informal* processes are likely to have negative impacts on women; however, as demonstrated women still obtained positions in this way. The findings were counter-intuitive, as it was assumed that women would be excluded from processes that were located in the *informal* quadrants of the typology. The finding implies that women could discuss obtaining opportunities with managers informally and develop strong networks.

However, contra to the results above, both studies revealed that female international assignees had some sort of interview, which supports prior research in the field (Smith & Still, 1996). In terms of the implication for organisations, it is important that *formal* interview processes are used to adequately assess men and women against the same criteria, so that the best person for the job is chosen. The study found that nomination processes were used to select female assignees. We suggest that nomination processes will discriminate against women because selecting managers will think that males suit the general expatriate population more than what females do (i.e. a tenet of Harris and Brewster's (1999) typology). However, HR managers still reported that women were nominated for positions. HR managers and female international assignees reported that the performance appraisal system was used as a process to select female international assignees, which is similar to past research (Harris & Brewster, 1999; Smith & Still, 1996) that found management development programs are used to determine people's willingness to participate in international assignments. This suggests that women (and men) should indicate their willingness via these processes.

The next finding to rate highly in Study 2 was that the HR managers reported that female international assignees were "asked to take on positions", which is viewed as a closed process under the Harris & Brewster (1999) typology. Harris and Brewster (1999) assert that men are asked to take on positions through a "coffee-machine system", where managers *informally* select males they know of. However, our finding does not support the principles of the Harris and Brewster (1999) typology. In Study 2 it was reported by HR managers that line managers in the host country have the final say in making selection decisions, supporting past research (Harris & Brewster, 1999), and suggesting that these managers should be included in future research. Perhaps women need to direct their networking attention to those selecting managers located in the host country, or at least the managers in the home country that know these individuals. The HR managers (Study 2) reported that their organisations advertised positions for international assignments. This supports previous research (Harris & Brewster, 1999; Smith & Still, 1996) that found organisations *formally* advertise their positions, as in the Harris & Brewster (1999) international manager selection typology. However, it should be noted that not all women's and men's positions were advertised. So, in conclusion, women were selected through *informal* processes, although these *informal* processes may not benefit women who do not have access to such networks.

With regard to perceptions of women's opportunities, participants from Studies 1 and 2 perceived that women did not have an opportunity to participate in international assignments if they were employed in male-dominated organisations, which supports Kanter's (1977) arguments. In contrast, both female and male international assignees in Study 1 reported that, where their profession, industry and organisation were gender balanced, they perceived women had the same opportunity to participate in international assignments as did men. The finding supports Kanter's

(1977) view that suggests women have more opportunities for advancement and promotion in organisations that are *balanced* as opposed to organisations that are *tilted* or *skewed*. The findings suggest that, until organisations address gender issues on a domestic front, opportunities for women to obtain international assignment will remain limited. We also found that participants perceived that opportunities to participate in international assignments were negatively affected by family, marital and dual-career commitments, which is similar to prior research findings (Linehan & Walsh, 1999; Stroh et al., 2000). In summary, we found that, for both international assignees and for HR managers, the organisational environment was a factor influencing the participation of women in international assignments.

### **Interpersonal Factors and Support**

The main finding with regard to interpersonal factors and support was that managers offered supportive attitudes to women participating, which was evident in both studies (see Table 3). The finding does not support the principles of similarity-attraction theory (Byrne, 1971), as it would be predicted that senior/line managers, who are assumed to be male (Stroh et al., 2000), would not support women for positions. Our finding is, however, similar to those of Fischlmayr (2002), who found women had to elicit support from senior management to obtain positions. Overall, our research did not find that managers were reluctant to send women on international assignments (Paik & Vance, 2002; Stroh et al., 2000). This may suggest that managers are more accepting of women's participation. Alternatively, it may be possible that research with women who are not successful in applying for international assignments might uncover less positive attitudes.

In terms of culturally different countries, the HR managers perceived that it should be an individual's own willingness to participate in a culturally different country, which contradicts findings by other researchers in the field (Forster, 1999; Stroh et al., 2000), who found that managers would not send women to culturally different countries.

In regards to the perceptions of suitable selection criteria, both Studies 1 and 2 found that women were selected based on previous experience, which supports past studies in the area (Linehan & Walsh, 1999). This criterion may be difficult to meet if women have been excluded from attaining the necessary experience because of male-dominated hierarchies, or because of child-rearing and caring responsibilities. The next factor rated highly (in Study 1) was the candidate's ability to do the job, which was also found by Smith and Still (1996) to be important. In addition, domestic performance was perceived to be a suitable selection criteria (Study 1 and 2), as was reported by (Harris & Brewster, 1999). The factor "cross-cultural adaptation" (Forster, 1999; Harris & Brewster, 1999) rated highly in both Study 1 and 2, emphasizing that assignees are selected on their flexibility and willingness to adapt. The next factor that was found to be a suitable selection criterion was technical skills, which supports previous studies (Smith & Still, 1996). Overall, these findings suggest women need to meet these baseline criteria to obtain positions.

In Study 1 it was reported by international assignees (male and female) that HR managers were supportive of female international assignees. The finding somewhat concurs with previous findings that supportive and encouraging HR policies aid in the participation of women in international assignments (Adler, 1995). However, the international assignees perceived HR support to be mainly administrative and logistical (Culpan and Wright, (2002), which raises a challenge for HR professionals to develop a strategic role in order to influence the views of senior and line managers. In summary, the main finding for the second research question was that interpersonal factors and support, where positive for women, will influence women's participation in international assignments.

### **Individual Attitudes**

Individual attitudes of international assignees were examined in Study 1 only. Female international assignees reported that international assignments would help to develop their careers (Linehan et al., 2001; Van der Velde et al., in press), and they would develop professionally while on assignment (Fischlmayr, 2002; Hill & Tillery, 1992). In terms of personal reasons, women were

motivated to participate in international assignments because they perceived it would be positive for their lifestyle, which supports Hill and Tillery's work (1992). In terms of doubts and concerns, female assignees reported fear of the unknown and uncertainty. Overall, women and men in Study 1 reported similar levels of doubts and concerns, indicating that their efficacy for international assignments were similar, as found by Forster (1999). This finding is different to past research as most research suggests women reject assignments because of family or dual-career reasons. If this finding is related to boundaryless career concepts, it is interesting to note that if women take on assignments to develop their careers, but are not exactly sure whether it will have any affect, this anxiety may serve to keep participation rates of women low.

## **LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND PRACTICE**

There were a number of methodological limitations for this research. In terms of the participants, a limitation was that we only interviewed men and women who obtained positions and HR managers responsible for international staffing. Future research could interview individual women who have applied for positions but not been successful. Selecting managers of the international assignees could also be interviewed for complete triangulation; although this was not possible for our study, the use of two data sources satisfy the requirements of Denzin's (1978) data source triangulation. It might also be valuable in future research to interview male spouses of women who have not taken international assignments or male spouses of women who were unsuccessful in applying for international assignments to ascertain whether their attitudes have impacts on willingness to undertake an international posting.

In terms of future research, the next step after developing a conceptual framework is often to develop hypotheses to test through appropriate statistical analyses (Sekaran, 1999). While a qualitative approach was appropriate for this exploratory study, it does not enable us to test the relationships between variables. Therefore, future research could develop hypotheses from the framework presented here and investigate the relative importance of factors influencing women's participation, by developing quantitative scales from the themes identified in this research in a quantitative survey that could be used with larger, geographically dispersed, samples. A survey could include the following groups: international assignees, individuals who have pursued positions but have been unsuccessful, HR managers or selecting line managers. Finally, the study has the potential to be conducted much more broadly, and ideally, across countries to determine the relevancy of the framework across different country contexts.

In terms of practical implications of the research, one suggestion is that women should be proactive and self-initiate assignments, based on the finding that selection is often an *informal* process organisations are challenged to make their systems *formal* and *open*. Of course, the implication for employers and managers is that a positive organizational context is required: to enhance perceptions of women's opportunities, HR strategies to encourage gender balance in organisations, and to provide opportunities for women to develop positive working relationships with line and senior managers who are likely to offer support. Opportunities for women to speak to other women who have participated in international assignments could also help to reduce doubts and concerns about participating. This may include strategies such as the provision of networking, mentoring and coaching programs. Recognising the potential for international assignments to help develop women's career and professional skills (Hill & Tillery, 1992), innovative organizational strategies and changing attitudes are likely to be needed to address barriers such as dual-career commitments.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this research aimed to understand the factors related to women's participation in international assignments. We have contributed to knowledge in this area by developing a comprehensive framework in a research field that has been fragmented. We found that women

obtained international assignments through *informal systems*, and they perceived that they had more opportunities to participate when the organisation had a gender balance. In terms of interpersonal factors and support, it was found that managers were supportive of women's participation. In terms of individual attitudes, the main reasons why women participated in international assignments were career development, professional development and lifestyle reasons. Overall women and men had similar levels of doubt and concerns. It is anticipated that this research has implications that will assist women, HR managers and the HR function to develop selection systems, environments and attitudes that are supportive of women participating in international assignments in MNEs.

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**Table 1: Sample Characteristics of International Assignees (Study 1)**

<i>Variable</i>		<i>Women (n)</i>	<i>% of Women</i>	<i>Men (n)</i>	<i>% of Men</i>
<i>Gender</i>					
	Female	17	100	-	-
	Male		-	16	100
<i>Marital Status</i>					
	Married/Defacto	10	58.8	10	62.5
	Single/Divorced	7	41.2	6	37.5
<i>Dual Career Status</i>					
	Yes	5	35.3	6	31.3
	No	6	35.3	5	31.3
	Not Applicable	6	29.4	5	37.5
<i>Number of Children</i>					
	0 Children	13	76.5	12	75
	1+ Children	4	23.5	4	25
<i>Educational Qualifications</i>					
	High School	1	5.9	0	0
	Undergraduate	9	52.9	9	56.3
	Postgraduate	7	41.2	7	43.8
<i>Managerial Level</i>					
	Junior Management	7	41.2	2	12.5
	Middle Management	4	23.5	9	56.3
	Senior Management	6	35.3	5	31.3
<i>Number of Subordinates</i>					
	0 – 10	11	64.7	5	62.6
	11 – 20	0	0	3	18.8
	21 – 50	2	11.8	2	12.5
	51 +	4	23.5	1	6.3
<i>Functional Area</i>					
	Human Resource Mgt	1	5.9	1	6.3
	Operations	2	11.8	6	37.5
	Customer Service	2	11.8	0	0
	Accounting and Finance	9	52.9	5	31.3
	Information Technology	0	0	1	6.3
	Business Consulting	2	11.8	0	0
	Agriculture	1	5.9	0	0
	General Management	0	0	3	18.8
<i>Country of Assignment</i>					
	Australia	13	76.5	11	68.8
	Mozambique	1	5.9	0	0
	Kosovo	0	0	1	6.3
	Azerbaijan	0	0	1	6.3
	Papua New Guinea	2	11.8	1	6.3
	Fiji	0	0	1	6.3
	Tonga	0	0	1	6.3
	Montenegro	1	5.9	0	0

**Table 2: Sample Characteristics of HR Managers (Study 2)**

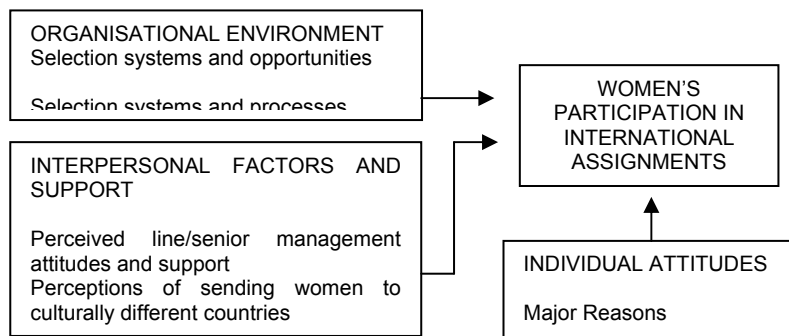
<i>Company Information</i>	<i>Respondents (n)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
<i>Headquarters</i>		
United States of America	9	45
United Kingdom	1	5
The Netherlands	1	5
Switzerland	1	5
Japan	1	5
Germany	1	5
France	2	10
Australia	4	20
<i>Number of Employees</i>		
Fewer than 50,000	7	35
50,001 - 100,000	5	25
100,001 - 150,000	2	10
150,001 - 200,000	1	5
200,001 - 250,000	2	10
300,001+	3	15
<i>Organisational Age</i>		
1 - 50 years	3	15
51 - 100 years	6	30
101 - 150 years	9	40
151 - 200 years	2	10
201 years +	1	5
<i>Annual Revenue (AUD)</i>		
Less than 10 Billion	6	30
11 – 25 Billion	5	25
26 – 50 Billion	1	10
51 – 75 Billion	1	5
76 + Billion	5	25
<i>Industry</i>		
Manufacturing	7	35
Health and Community Services	3	15
Electricity, Gas and Water	1	5
Education	1	5
Business and Property Services	8	40
<i>Foreign Operations</i>		
1 – 25 countries	2	10
26 – 50 countries	5	25
51 – 75 countries	4	20
76 – 100 countries	3	15
126 – 150 countries	5	25
151 countries +	1	5
<i>Regions</i>		
Africa	18	85
Asia and Pacific	21	100
Europe	21	100
Middle East	16	75
North America	18	85
South America	17	80

Note: The information for the table was collected from 2002 company reports, company web pages, and Dun & Bradstreet's "Business Who's Who". Information for annual revenue was converted from their respective currencies to Australian dollars.

**Table 3: Major Findings from Study 1 and 2**

Themes	Study 1				Study 2	
	Female IAs	% of Female	Male IAs	% of Males	HRMs	% of HRMs
<b>ORGANISATIONAL ENVIRONMENT</b>						
Selection Processes						
1. Self-initiated	13	77	13	81	15	75
2. Networks and contacts	12	71	12	75	-	-
3. Informal interviews	9	53	10	63	-	-
4. No proper selection process	9	53	6	38	-	-
5. Interviewed	8	47	7	44	14	70
6. Nominations	-	-	-	-	18	90
7. Indicate willingness in performance appraisal	-	-	-	-	18	90
8. Asked to take on a position	-	-	-	-	14	70
9. Line manager overseas has final say	-	-	-	-	16	80
10. Advertised	-	-	-	-	13	65
Perceptions of women's opportunities						
1. Profession, industry and organisation (male-dominated)	7	41	5	31	13	65
2. Profession, industry and organisation (gender balance)	7	41	10	63	-	-
3. Family, marital and dual-career barriers	8	50	5	31	-	-
<b>INTERPERSONAL FACTORS AND SUPPORT</b>						
Perceived line/senior manager's attitudes						
1. Supportive attitudes	12	71	13	81	15	75
Perceptions of sending women to culturally different countries						
1. Individual's own willingness to go to a culturally different country	-	-	-	-	15	75
Perceptions of suitable selection criteria						
1. Experience	9	53	9	56	13	65
2. Ability to do the job	10	59	8	50	-	-
3. Domestic performance	8	47	10	63	-	-
4. Cross-cultural adaptation	7	41	9	56	-	-
5. Technical skills	-	-	-	-	13	65
Perceived attitudes of HR managers						
1. HR are supportive	11	65	11	69	-	-
2. HR support is administrative and logistical	8	47	10	63	-	-
<b>INDIVIDUAL ATTITUDES</b>						
Major reasons						
1. Lifestyle reasons	11	65	11	69	-	-
2. Career development	10	59	7	44	-	-
3. Professional development	8	47	7	44	-	-
4. Health, fun, enjoyment, excitement	5	29	7	44	-	-
Doubts and concerns						
1. Fear of the unknown/uncertainty	8	47	1	6	-	-

**Figure 1: Initial framework of the factors relating to the participation of women in international assignments**



**Figure 2: Empirical framework of factors relating to the participation of women in international assignments**

