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### **CROSSING CULTURAL BORDERS: ANALYZING EXPERIENCES OF THE NZ RETURN MIGRANTS FROM THE EU**

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## **ABSTRACT**

While there is growing scholarly interest in returned and cyclical migration, there is still a lack of systematic empirical insights into how the experiences of the migrants abroad, and after their return, are mediated by their exposure to different cultural environments. Addressing this conceptual and empirical gap, the paper analyses the experiences of New Zealand return migrants who lived and worked in EU countries (other than the UK) for more than one year and compares them with the experiences of NZ returnees from the UK. Drawing on 20 'non-UK' and 22 'UK' in-depth interviews, the paper uses Rhinesmith's (1985) ten-stage model of cross-cultural adjustment to assess their experiences throughout the migration cycle.

## **KEYWORDS**

Return migration    Culture    Cultural adjustment    New Zealand    Europe

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

In early 2008 the Institute for Public Policy Research (London) co-ordinated a major comparative study of returned migration from the UK. As part of this project, IPPR commissioned the National Centre for Research on Europe (NCRE) at the University of Canterbury to undertake a case study of returnees to New Zealand. Independently of this, NCRE also undertook a study of returnees from continental Europe, in collaboration with ISET. We are pleased to acknowledge the ways in which the two studies, which are the focus of this paper, were mutually informing.

## INTRODUCTION

Emigration is an important feature of New Zealand culture and, in the case of the European Union (EU), this has been facilitated by the Working Holiday Schemes which provides visa-free entry of its citizens under the age of 30 and the right to a Work Permit to enable them to earn a living while 'on holiday'. To date, the following EU Member States have signed reciprocal Working Holiday Schemes with New Zealand: France, Germany, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, Sweden, UK, Poland, Estonia and Latvia (NZ MFAT, 2008). NZ also has a Working Holiday Agreement with Norway). Given that much of this migration is intended to be, and actually is relatively short term, the resulting return migration also represents an opportunity for New Zealand to benefit from the economic and cultural experiences of these workers. However, the experiences of the migrants abroad, and after their return, is mediated by their inter-cultural adjustments, and the varied cultural environments within the EU mean that their experiences are very varied, particularly in terms of language.

According to the OECD (2007, 106) there are four types of return migration. The first type is return that is planned at the outset. The second involves a change in circumstances leading to voluntary return. The third type of return is induced by policy changes, and finally, the fourth type of return migration involves "those who are disappointed or fail to realise their ambitions in the host country" (Ibid.). A large proportion of New Zealand's migrants to the EU fall into the first category, that is of intended return from the onset. They are also temporary migrants. Temporary migration is the departure of nationals leading to their eventual return over a finite period of time (Abella 2006, 4). Any definition of the minimum or maximum duration of such migration is necessarily arbitrary, but a widely used definition is that temporary migration corresponds to time spent overseas lasting a year, and anything less is

referred to as “seasonal” (OECD 2007, 108). In host countries, laws and regulations define temporary migration as the admission of foreign nationals for a definite and limited period. Included in the list of types of temporary migration are: Working Holiday Makers, Students and Au Pairs. TMPs (temporary migration programmes) take on a variety of forms and policy structures. They involve the mechanisms for admitting migrants, as well as including bilateral agreements with sending countries (Ruhs 2005, 3).

While there is growing interest in returned and cyclical migration, there is still a lack of systematic empirical investigation in this field, due in part to the difficulties of obtaining reliable secondary data sets. New Zealand emigrants, and to a lesser extent returned migrants, have attracted increased research attention in recent years, but this has largely focused on the UK and Australia (Wilson et al 2009; Conradson & Latham 2005; Lidgard & Gibson 2002). While these are the major destinations, these represent circulations between countries with shared languages and, to a considerable degree, cultural histories. In contrast, there is far less research on returnees from non-English speaking countries, such as that on, for example, returnees to Slovakia or Poland from the UK (Williams & Baláž 2005; Pollard et al 2008), where language and culture provide different types of challenges and resources for migrants.

The paper analyses the experiences of New Zealand return migrants who lived and worked in EU countries (other than the UK) for more than one year and compares them with the experiences of the NZ returnees from the UK. It draws mainly on 42 in-depth interviews (20 in the ‘non-UK’ sample and 22 in the ‘UK’ sample). Rhinesmith’s (1985) ten-stage model of cross-cultural, or intercultural, adjustment (i.e., initial anxiety, fascination, initial culture shock, surface adjustment, mental isolation, integration/acceptance, return anxiety, return elation, re-entry shock and reintegration) provides a framework for assessing their experiences throughout the migration cycle. Rhinesmith’s

model is a widely used conceptual framework in the studies of intercultural adjustment. However, while most of the relevant research within this framework has focused on exchange students and business expatriates, migration research in general (and return migration research in particular) has paid only limited attention to the model. Moreover, NZ migration remains largely neglected in studies on intercultural adjustment. To address these scholarly gaps, this paper analyzes NZ return migrants' experiences focusing on all ten stages of Rhinesmith's model. In addition, it introduces a comparative element contrasting the cycle of adjustment of the NZ returnees from the UK and non-UK EU countries. Both aspects are novel contributions to 'mainstream' migration research

We argue that irrespective of the 'validation' of the overseas and re-entry experiences, a close encounter with a very different culture (or in this case, cultures) presents a significant contribution to the globalizing nature of modern NZ society and its increasingly multicultural workforce. However, there are question marks as to the extent to which these skills and experiences of 'other-than-Britain' Europe are acknowledged, targeted and utilized in New Zealand, whether by the public or private sectors, or by government.

The paper starts with a brief description of the New Zealand migration scene and proceeds to discuss some of the key issues relating to the conceptualization of return migration. The paper then uses Rhinesmith's model of intercultural adjustment to explore the different motivations and experiences of the 'UK' and 'non-UK' returnees in their host and home countries, including the decisions to emigrate and to return. This leads to an assessment of the skills-and-knowledge gains as perceived by the returnees, followed by a discussion of the policy implications in terms of how intercultural adjustment mediates these human capital transfers. Arguably, this represents brain gain, or brain circulation for New Zealand, rather than brain

drain. The conclusions seek to place the New Zealand experience in broader context, while also setting out priorities for future research.

## **EMIGRATION AND RETURN MIGRATION: NEW ZEALAND AND THE EU**

Traditionally a country of immigration, New Zealand is now “a sending state with one of the world’s largest per capita diasporas” (Gamlen 2005, 14). New Zealand’s long history of immigration has been matched in recent years by an unusually high propensity of its citizens to emigrate. This has generated intense debates from the late 1980s to early 1990s, focussing on the relatively high levels of skills and, or tertiary education amongst these emigrants. In 2005, the OECD reported that 24% of New Zealanders with tertiary education qualifications were living overseas. This was viewed either pessimistically as classic “brain drain”, with emigration being both a cause and symptom of social, economic and political problems requiring urgent government intervention, or “optimistically” as an important element amongst the causes and symptoms of New Zealand’s competitiveness in a globalising world (Ibid, 5).

New Zealand’s emigrants have a relatively young profile. Indeed, the tradition of going on an “OE” or overseas experience, whether temporary or long-term, remains a prominent feature of “Kiwi culture”. The concern in this case is centred on the question of whether or not the significant numbers of young New Zealanders overseas will ever return during their working lives. Although the secondary data are problematic, most of the evidence suggests that there are relatively high rates of return.

In a study of “brain return” in the late 1970s, Glaser (1978, cited in Lidgard and Gilson 2002, 100) demonstrated that, despite the length of time spent

overseas, the commitment to return to their country of birth is very strong among highly skilled or well educated individuals working or studying abroad. Most Big OE migrants do intend to return (Inkson & Myers 2003). For example, a study of nurses in the UK found that the majority of those who were from Australia, the USA and New Zealand planned to stay for at least five years, while a quarter were planning to stay between two and five years. Similarly, a survey by Lidgard (1993) found that 76% of New Zealanders migrating to the UK intended to be away for less than 2 years, compared to only 40 per cent of those going to Australia. We do not have reliable survey evidence for migrants to Europe, other than the UK.

The two most popular destinations for New Zealanders travelling overseas are Australia and the UK. Migration to the EU is only considered to be third on the list of the three major streams within the return migration flows to New Zealand as identified by Lidgard & Gilson (2002, 120). The first is the proximate stream “shuttling” back and forth across the Tasman. The second is the stream originating in colonial ties with the UK, and now driven by and informing family ties in the UK. The third stream, the “EU stream”, is more diffuse and much smaller in scale than the first two streams, making primary data collection for this particular stream more challenging.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Return migration can be conceptualized in a number of ways, some of which can be traced back to the 1960s and 1970s (notably Cerase 1974). However, it was not until the 1980s that there was a significant body of research on return migration (e.g. King 1986), and this has gained momentum in recent years with the growth of temporary and circular migration (Cassarino 2004). Research in this field was also stimulated by concerns over co-development, voluntary return of third country nationals, and the emergence and implementation of bilateral readmission agreements between host and home

states. In this context, it is important to reiterate the specificity of NZ return migration being relatively short term, and age and visa specific.

As mentioned above, due to cultural, historical, linguistic and demographic reasons taken separately or in combination, the UK has been one of the two major destinations for NZ migrants. Yet, a substantial number of NZ migrants are choosing continental Europe as their final destination despite (or perhaps because of) obvious cultural and linguistic differences. The latter are generally more likely to be exposed to the unknown and unfamiliar – due to differences in language, general social environment, interpersonal etiquette, values, norms and attitudes. According to Berry and Sam's classification (cited in Matsumoto *et al.* 2001, 484), return migrants, or sojourners, could be described as temporary migrants, who entered the intercultural contact voluntarily. Nevertheless, even though the initial entry was unforced, the constant contact with unfamiliar cultural realities (sometimes obvious and manifested and sometimes hidden and intuitive) can result in a strong emotional reaction (typically negative). This "psychological reaction to unfamiliar events" (Funrham & Bochner 1986) is known as culture shock. Introduced by Oberg (1960), the notion of culture shock has become prominent in studies exploring the crossing of borders between cultures.

Even though the term 'culture shock' might strike some non-specialists as rather strong, it is argued to encompass a set of universal responses to the unfamiliar, including behavioral, emotional, mental and physical (Rhinesmith 1985, Winkelman 1994) and to accompany a range of inter-cultural encounters, often of an unexpected nature and timing. Indeed, culture shock could occur when an individual crosses cultural borders between different countries which are either very different, e.g., Somali migrants to the UK, or NZ migrants to India, or very similar, e.g. UK migrants to NZ, or Canadian migrants to Australia. Culture shock may also take place when an individual crosses the borders between sub-cultures within a national state (e.g. marrying into the family of a different socio-economic status or religious

affiliation, moving from village to town, changing professional field, etc.). According to Furnham (2003, cited in Fabrizio & Neill 2005), culture shock -- a predictable human reaction to unknown surroundings -- is treated nowadays as a “temporary stress reaction in response to salient psychological and physical rewards not being readily available and therefore being difficult to control and predict”.

Arguably, when it comes specifically to crossing cultural borders between nations (either between similar or dissimilar ones), one aspect of globalization is the intensification of the flows of information about migrants' destinations. As a result, it might be expected that migrants have become less susceptible to cultural shock, but in fact the virtual transmission of knowledge is very partial as there are many types of knowledge, e.g. encultured, or embodied, that can not easily be transmitted at a distance (Williams 2007). Physical or corporeal presence is required in order to experience these, and that is why inter-cultural adjustment remains a significant challenge, and cultural shock remains an useful term.

In analysing the experiences of NZ UK and non-UK European sojourners, this paper sought an analytical framework that would incorporate insights into the repatriates' psychological reactions to the “culture toughness” (Medenhall & Oddou 1985) and “cultural distance” (Babiker *et al.* 1980, Church 1982)) associated with foreign environments. It was assumed that intercultural encounters may lead to “negative experiences, frustration, stereotypes, attitudes...” (Matsumoto *et al.* 2001, 485), that may influence returnees' self-assessment of the gains of their sojourn. To provide a better understanding of the NZ return migration from non-UK European countries, this study incorporates a comparative element contrasting accounts for adjustment and re-entry between the NZ repatriates from the UK and non-UK locations. However, it is important to emphasize that while we think there may well be a continental Europe vs. UK difference, based on language/culture/history, we would also expect there to be differences within these cohorts. Not all

migrants to the UK necessarily have strong family links or shared histories. Migrants to Ireland do not face the same language barriers as say to France.<sup>1</sup>

In contrast to mainstream migration studies, which typically under-address the psychological component in the intercultural adjustment of migrants, the intercultural studies field has generated numerous theories, conceptual frameworks and analytical models for assessing the emotional elements in cross-cultural adaptation. However, there are several important limitations in applying this theoretical corpus in this case study. Firstly, the main groups of expatriates that attracted scholarly attention (mainly from psychological and business management/HR fields) included business executives and managers (e.g. Baker and Ivancevich 1971; Black et al 1992; Black 1988; Korn-Ferry International 1981), exchange students (e.g. Lysgaard 1955; Charles & Stewart 1991; Das *et. al.* 1986; Day & Hajj 1986; Furnham & Bochner 1986; Klineberg & Hull 1979; Schram & Lauver 1988; Searle & Ward, 1990) and intercultural training schemes (e.g. Zakaria 2000, Caligiuri *et. al.* 2001, Brewster & Pickard 1994; Eschbach *et al.* 2001). Importantly, for our investigation, Chang (1997, 150-151) claimed that “research in the area of cross-cultural adjustment concentrating on such diverse groups as immigrants, refugees and sojourners, has flourished”. However, in the majority of research cases the phenomenon of return migration remains beyond the scope of analysis.

Secondly, the field was long dominated by studies of the intercultural adjustment of US expatriates (Church 1982) as well as of the foreigners in the US. Encouragingly, the geography of the inquiry has broadened significantly in recent years. Yet, attention to NZ sojourners, especially in their experiences of Europe, remains limited. Among several studies that addressed NZ expatriates, there are Daly’s (2007) study of outbound student exchange at Australian and New Zealand Universities and Selvarajah’s 2009 study of NZ

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<sup>1</sup> Yet, presence of the second official language in Ireland – Gaelic – was recognized as an essential feature of the linguistic diversity the NZ migrants to Ireland have to face. Moreover, the absence of colonial ties typical of NZ-UK history differs Ireland as a destination for NZ migration from the UK even more

expatriate managers. Two other studies specifically focused on the re-entry adjustment of the NZ sojourners: Chamove and Sotrik (2006) investigated return of NZ high school students participating in the American Field Service programme, and Walter (2006) studied returnees after the NZ Overseas Experience (OE). Our work is different since it addresses not one particular cohort (as the first three NZ studies did), but instead involves representatives of various migrant strata, including both students and professionals. Similarly to the last two studies cited, our study focuses on return migration, yet in contrast it does not zoom in exclusively on re-entry shock, but considers various stages in the cycle of intercultural adjustment. Finally, our study closely explores the 'European' strand in NZ migration through a comparative perspective (i.e. the UK vs. non-UK returnees). None of the works cited above have elaborated these two angles.

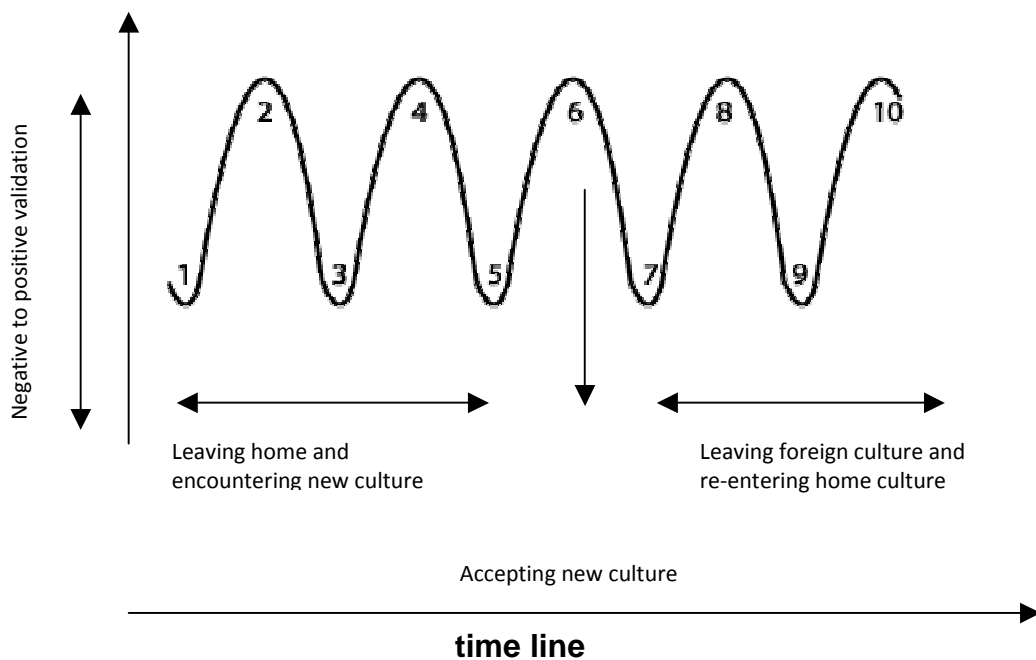
The field of cross-cultural adjustment studies features a considerable number of models which may be utilized to analyse the experiences of those who cross cultural borders. In our case, the model should allow an investigation and comparison of the NZ 'European' returnees' experiences, explicitly incorporating an emotional component when explaining the processes of intercultural adjustments and re-adjustment, which are presumed to be magnified in the case of the non-UK NZ returnees. We initially focused on one of the most popular theories in the cross-cultural research – Lysgaard's (1955) so-called U-Curve Theory of Adjustment (UCT). The lowest point on the U-curve represents the most intense culture shock, and the two highest points indicate firstly positive predispositions at the beginning of the foreign sojourn and secondly improved emotions after overcoming the shock and coping successfully with a new environment. However, Chang (1997 152) noted that "the U-curve hypothesis has received surprisingly little empirical support". Moreover, Gullahorn & Gullahorn (1966, cited by Caligiuri *et. al.* 2001) claimed that "no in-depth and comprehensive reviews of the empirical literature related to UCT exist". In our case, the major limitation of the U-curve theory is its focus on cross-cultural adjustment within the host culture, neglecting re-adjustment to the home culture upon return.

A logical extension to the 'U-curve' hypothesis was proposed by Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) in the form of the 'W-curve' model, which allowed the incorporation of returned migration. This was used by Walter (2006) in her analysis of NZ OE experiences amongst returnees. Walter (2006) mentioned that the usefulness of the W-curve theory is doubted by some scholars, quoting Martin (1984, 119) who stated that "while sojourners can usually identify points in their adjustment as highs and lows of the curve, it is not clear whether the model accurately represents most sojourners experience". Church (1982 cited in Ting-Toomey 1999, 251) also argued that by overlooking interactions between migrants and locals, the W-curve model is not specific enough. Nevertheless, according to Chang (1997, 153), the W-curve model provides a "more comprehensive description of the adjustment process" by representing the intercultural adaptation "along a temporal dimension". This views sojourners as going through emotional 'rollercoaster'. They first hit a low point after initial exposure to a new unfamiliar foreign environment. This phase is usually followed by increasing positive feelings accompanying an on-going adjustment. Yet, after return home, adjustment declines one more time when sojourners re-adapt to the home culture. This development is further followed by a growth in positive emotions as adjustment progresses along the time line.

For the purposes of this study, we used one of the incarnations of the W-curve model, namely the Rhinesmith curve (Rhinesmith 1985). It represents several waves of mental and physical adjustment and features multiple cultural shocks. Rhinesmith's modification of the W-curve model profiles ten 'waves' in the intercultural adjustment cycle (see Figure 1) -- (1) initial anxiety; (2) initial elation/fascination; (3) initial culture shock; (4) superficial adjustment; (5) mental isolation/depression/frustration; (6) integration/acceptance of host culture; (7) return anxiety; (8) return elation; (9) re-entry shock and (10) reintegration (outlined in detail in the 'Findings' section below). According to Ting-Toomey (1999, 251), each stage could be experienced at varying degrees of severity or length, depending on the duration of stay in a different

culture, level of support (e.g. sojourn with families or without), competencies in communication (including linguistic ones), previous migration experiences to the host country, degree of adaptation commitment and setting realistic (vs. unrealistic) goals. Moreover, some individuals may not reach certain stages, and 'get stuck' in one wave or even reverse their progress through the cycle. This model is seen to be especially beneficial as a descriptive framework for the study of the return sojourn – four out of ten stages in the Rhinesmith model deal with re-adjustment upon coming back. While the actual model is, in some ways, poorly theorized, and is not based on empirical findings, it does provide a useful organizational framework for the purposes of this study.

**Figure 1: Rhinesmith's Ten Stages of Adjustment**



Adapted from: Fullbright/Amideast Programme, 'Culture Shock'

Daly's research on NZ outbound exchange students called for "future studies examining the processes of intercultural sojourn considering more detailed qualitative analysis of ... in-country experiences to gain a deeper understanding of the time abroad and how it may cause changes within the

individual.” (2007, on line). Rhinesmith’s model provides a basis for such detailed analysis, allowing for a fine-grained account for NZ sojourners’ experiences and emotions. Rhinesmith’s model also offers an inclusive frame to account for the returnees’ multiple emotional ‘peaks and dips’ and the influences these numerous ‘culture shocks’ have on the summary of the sojourners’ experience after returning home. It is seen as a much more comprehensive approach than Walter’s (2006) and Chamove & Sotriek’s (2006) almost exclusive focus on the return culture shock, based on Gullahorn and Gullahorn’s (1963) classical but simplistic W-curve.

Rhinesmith’s model also provides a functional framework for unifying research across the migration cycle. Firstly, it is a useful tool for identifying and reporting psychological and sociocultural elements in the return migrants’ stories (the two categories in the intercultural adjustment suggested by Ward (1990 cited in Mitsumoto *et al.* 2001, 484)). The former stands for “the feeling is well-being and satisfaction” (Chang 1997, 149) and the latter one is “the ability to ‘fit in’ and negotiate interactive aspects of the new cultures” (Ibid). Secondly, this model allows accounting for the three facets of intercultural adjustment developed by Black and Stephens (1989) and Black (1990a, 1990b), namely adjustment to the general (non-work) environment (such as food, housing, shopping, and health care), to work situations, and to interaction and interpersonal relations with the host nationals. Each of these types of adjustments has various degree of difficulty and features a particular set of challenges.

Job adjustment is sometimes argued to be the “easiest of the three dimensions of adjustment” (Chang 1997, 151 elaborating Black *et al.* 1992), assuming that a migrant entered the same professional field s/he mastered at home. In this situation, the work-related tasks and procedures are not expected to be dramatically different, and this familiarity adds to the feeling of psychological comfort while abroad. However, individual organizational cultures could vary in the same professional field. Moreover, cultural and

national specificities could significantly alter the accustomed ways of doing business. In these cases, the encounter with a different professional culture may result in escalation of stress while being abroad. The level of stress is likely to be even more drastic when a migrant changes professions.

The second dimension is argued to be adjustment to the general non-work environment (*Ibid.*). A different way of life – an unusual cuisine, dissimilar ways of shopping, commuting, arranging housing, organizing banking, undergoing health treatment, etc. – adds to the everyday stress of surviving in a foreign environment. While the element of novelty and surprise in the everyday routine may have a positive effect on a sojourner, it also may lead to exhaustion and irritation in the long run.

Adjustment to interaction is recognized as the most difficult dimension (*Ibid.*), depending on the circumstance of the sojourn (e.g. time of stay in a foreign location or intensity of interaction with the locals). In this type of adjustment, the migrants have to exercise various cognitive and emotional skills in order to observe and make sense of divergent values, assumptions, beliefs, and behaviour which predominate in the host society, to navigate this environment in a productive non-conflictual way, to establish meaningful relationships and to preserve their own identity. Unsurprisingly, this process is ripe with miscommunications, misunderstandings and misperceptions, which could ultimately lead to very negative emotions and frustration.

## **METHODOLOGY**

In the absence of reliable lists of returned migrants, purposive sampling was used to select interviewees. Between February and June 2008, 42 in-depth interviews, each lasting approximately 90 minutes, were conducted in the three main cities of Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch: 22 with returnees

from the UK, and 20 from the other EU Member States. Although this means that rural areas and smaller cities and towns were excluded, the main cities do account for almost one half of the population of New Zealand. The respondents were chosen on the basis of the duration of their stay in the UK or the EU being 12 months or more, and were contacted through professional and personal associations. The interviews were semi-structured, and were conducted in person or by telephone, and were recorded and fully transcribed.

It is important to state some caveats about the findings at this point. First, as we have already emphasized, the parameters of the total population of NZ returnees from the EU are not known, and we have therefore relied on purposive sampling. Moreover, the total number of interviews is relatively small, given that identifying, accessing and interviewing returnees is resource intensive. Therefore it is important to emphasise that we make no claims as to these findings being representative, and instead they constitute insights into the different experiences of two group of returnees. The respondents may also have an imperfect recall of some of their experiences, particularly those who were abroad or returned several years earlier; this is compounded by the possibilities of post-rationalization.

Before proceeding to discuss the interviews in terms of the model of cross-cultural adjustment, we first outline the socio-economic profile of the interviewees. The majority of respondents (93%) had been born in NZ, with two of the UK and one other EU returnee having migrated to New Zealand as children. All returnees were New Zealand citizens but four of the UK and three of the other EU group had dual nationality. Only three of the other EU group had all their family living in New Zealand, while one half of the UK group had all or virtually all of their family living in New Zealand. These data reflect not only the high levels of mobility among contemporary New Zealanders, and even of a culture of mobility (Carr et al, 2005; Conradson & Latham, 2005) but also indicates the motivational effect of Kiwis looking to replicate family travel experiences, or sustain family networks.

Numerous studies have reported that return migrants to New Zealand are clustered around the age of 30 (Lidgard & Gilson 2002, 106, citing Appleyard 1962; Campbell and Johnson 1976; Richmond 1968). Of the 22 returnees from the UK, 86% were aged 20-40 when interviewed, compared to 80% of the other EU group. Most had left NZ in their 20s or even younger in the case of a small number of interviewees who been to continental Europe on high school exchanges. In other words, both samples fitted the typical OE model in which young New Zealanders seek to broaden their life experience on the European stage. There were however small numbers who migrated in later life, including three who had done so aged 50-60, indicative of an older, smaller group of New Zealanders who, having missed out on their OE experience in their youth, may be activating a latent desire to live and work overseas in later life.

The respondents were well educated, the majority either being graduates or already in higher education at the time that they emigrated. Those who had been to other EU countries were more likely to have gone abroad for study purposes, including four high school students and three university students, compared to just two of the UK sample. All the UK sample had full time jobs during of their overseas sojourn (except one who had worked part time in the paid labour force, having combined this with working at home, caring for young children). In contrast, only 12 of the other EU returnees had worked full time abroad, the others being in full time education, and one who had migrated to Italy with her daughter to get married and who worked part-time teaching English in Salo, whilst living with her husband in the family home.

Amongst the other EU sample, France was the most popular choice, with almost half (9) of the interviewees studying or working there. Ireland (4) was the next most popular, due in part to it being an English speaking country and in part because of visa provisions. Three of the respondents chose Germany, two the Netherlands and one each chose Italy and Belgium. Several of the

respondents were not first time movers, which is consistent with the notion that prior mobility enhances the probability of further mobility, that is the self-perpetuating nature of migration (Vertovec 2007, 5).

The high-school exchange students were allocated host families to live with, to complete their cultural and language experiences. By contrast, the university exchange students lived in student hostels or halls of residence with other international students. Of those working, four rented their own apartments, four shared apartments, and five were provided with live-in accommodation by their employers. Most lived in small villages or rural towns away from the bigger industrial cities with only one living in Dublin and one in Munich. This style of living contrasts strongly to the experiences of young New Zealanders doing their OE in the UK, a high proportion of whom lived in London, often in small shared flats in areas where large numbers of other immigrants resided. .

Typically, the classical 'OE' is characterised by a brief period of international travel constrained by the one or two-year Working Holiday Visa for people under 28. In our other EU sample, 55% (11) fell into this category, being away from New Zealand for the first and only time for 1-2 years. Of the other 45% (9), two had worked in the UK for a year prior to moving to another EU country, one had worked for a few months in the UK either-side of their Continental experience and three had re-migrated after their initial OE experience. The remaining three respondents extended their visas and worked in one or more EU countries, including the UK, for a period from six to ten years each. For most returnees from the UK, their sojourn to the UK fitted the classical Big OE model. This had been their only period of international migration (as opposed to overseas holiday visits) and it was of relatively short duration. Some two thirds (14) had only ever migrated once to the UK, while a further five had made two separate migrations to Britain, and the remaining three had also lived in either Australia or Ireland. Of the five who had migrated twice to the

UK – defined as those who had returned to New Zealand for at least three months between these sojourns – most had returned relatively quickly

Most of the UK returnees (19) had returned after 2000, which meant that most had also left the country at some point from the late 1990s onwards. Of the twenty other EU returnees, 18 had returned from the EU after 2001, meaning that our sample reflects a bias towards recent migrant narratives. Regarding the other two, one (Kate) returned in 1993 and the other (Carol) returned in 1996, a full decade before the majority of our returning migrants. However, their motivations and experiences are remarkably similar to those of later migrants suggesting that, for young New Zealanders, the “Big Overseas Experience” continues to be a “rite of passage, a symbol of adulthood, a social norm, a source of pride” (McCarter 2001).

## **FINDINGS**

When a NZ migrant chooses non-UK as his/her final destination, this presents both shared and different challenges to those faced by migrants to the UK. Obvious challenges for somebody who wants to function meaningfully in a new society are constituted by different languages and dissimilar cultures with unfamiliar rituals, everyday behavior, habits, superstitions, and mass culture (a visible part of the “cultural iceberg” (Weaver 1986, 1998, Kohls 1996)) and ideas, attitudes, thought patterns and myths (an invisible part of the ‘culture iceberg’ (*Ibid.*)). Indeed, to survive not only will NZ migrants to Europe have to succeed economically (or educationally), but (for the continental sojourners) learn and master a different language. NZ migrants to both the UK and non-UK countries will have to navigate between disparate frames of references, practice constant reflection on various foreign discourses and develop communication competencies beyond linguistics ones.

Although the majority of NZ migrants to Europe wend their way to the UK because of familiarity with culture, language, familial ties and access to ancestry visas, a smaller percentage sought or accepted the challenge of immersing themselves in a very different culture. As one respondent says about Ireland, *'[I] really wanted to go to a place where I didn't know anyone and didn't have any contacts or job or anything lined up and just rock on up'* (LR. Female, aged 20-30, Legal Secretary, Ireland). Those embarking on their OE to the UK are often motivated by the desire to join friends and family, or are prompted by a sense of connection if they are children of immigrants from the UK. For those choosing to move a little further out of their comfort zones to other EU countries, however, their motivation is more about increasing their language skills and pushing their personal boundaries:

*It was to further my French and Political Science studies but also, I'm the kind of person who thrives off a challenge, so it was good for me to go outside my comfort zone and live in a different culture.*  
(Daria. Female, aged 20-30, University Student, France).

Education was a pivotal motivating factor for 35% (7) of the other EU interviewees. Some were motivated by family, *'my parents said if you are going to do something like this and we are going to fund you...you should go [to] a totally different culture'* (CW. Female, aged 20-30, High-school Student 2001, France). Others went *'Because NZ is so small and far away from everything...[and] I can't remember why but I always wanted to learn French from when I was quite young'* (AR. Male, aged 20-30, High-school Student 2002, France). Yet another student was drawn by the international regard for the *baccalaureate*. *'...the baccalaureate was something I wanted to work towards because I'd heard so much about it. So France was my first choice of places to go'* (Sally. Female, aged 20-30, High-school Student, 2006, France).

Two other EU interviewees migrated for personal reasons, DD to marry her fiancé in Italy (aged 30-40, English Teacher, Italy) and Carol who went to Germany to be with her partner who was at law school (Carol aged 40-50,

spent five years in Germany teaching English). Others, like Sarah, had always planned to travel. Initially she went to the UK but then *'just kind of felt I wanted to do something different'* and moved to a job in the Netherlands (aged 20-30, worked for diplomat). One respondent who worked as an *au pair* for a NZ diplomat in France went because the job was organised in New Zealand before she left (Kate, aged 30-40, 1993, France). For a husband and wife team their motivation was a combination of personal reasons, along with disillusionment with the economic state of New Zealand's farming sector, and a long held desire to work in Ireland.

The motives of the UK migrants were rather different. The most frequently articulated motivation (10) for migration was to travel, and to see Europe, and the corollary of this were a few comments about being bored and wanting adventure. However, almost equally as important (9 interviewees) was an identification with, or a desire to accompany, friends who were about to leave or were already abroad. Alison (aged 50-60, housewife, Wellington) went because *'Everyone else was going'*, while Sally (aged 20-30, legal secretary, Christchurch) left because *'my best friend was there and she was with people I could trust'*. Family connections were also important for some (5), either their own immediate family, often siblings, or to meet more distant relatives, reflecting the fact that many were the children of immigrants from the UK. In addition, some (3) had been specifically motivated to earn money, particularly to pay off their student loan debt, while one – a research scientist – had been driven by poor job prospects in New Zealand universities in the 1990s.

Asked why they had specifically chosen the UK as a destination, most responses emphasised that it was easy, whether for language and cultural reasons, or because they had friends and family there. There was also strong element of path dependency, expressed in terms of *'that's where everyone went'*, and combining the new with the familiar. As Pete (aged 20-30, film production, Auckland) said: *'a lot of the reason that New Zealanders go to the*

*UK is that it's not a complete culture shock, it's very similar to the way we live our lives here'.*

All twenty of the other-EU-countries group had intended to return to New Zealand at some time, with 11 returning as per their original plan. One stayed for three years, one returned earlier than planned because they found it difficult to adjust to life in Italy, three stayed longer for either economic or personal reasons and four re-migrated, after a period of 2-3 years back in New Zealand. In the UK sample, only one had intended to leave permanently, and one other had been uncertain about this.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, 19 had intended to go the UK for three years or less, with 2 years – reflecting the maximum length of the working holiday visa – being the most common duration. Just over one half had stayed for the intended duration, returning when their visas expired, while 2 had returned before they had originally planned, and 7 had stayed longer – usually by between six months and a couple of years longer. Those who stayed for longer did so for a mixture of economic and social reasons.

## **STAGES OF INTER-CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT THROUGH THE EYES OF NZ RETURN MIGRANTS**

### ***Initial Anxiety***

According to Rhinesmith, a cycle of intercultural adjustment starts much earlier than an actual relocation to a different culture. While making their decisions to leave home country, sojourners usually face a set of anxieties about how they will cope with new opportunities, both exciting and challenging. Unsurprisingly both positive and negative feelings 'peak' during this phase of intercultural cycle of adjustment. At this stage, cultural challenges are

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<sup>2</sup> One interviewee did not express an opinion about this

naturally assumed and expected, yet the sojourners are usually unaware of the emotional 'rollercoaster' expecting them in a new country of residence.

Previous research indicated that pre-departure cross-cultural orientation programmes and/or active individual search for information (especially electronically available) about a new place can significantly reduce the level of anxiety (Zakaria 2000). Some high positive pre-migration expectations are built on such information. Most of the UK sample had been able to draw on a range of sources of advice and information either before leaving New Zealand -- from those still abroad and returnees. More than one half mentioned family and friends, while more recent migrants also emphasised the usefulness of the internet. Two had also had prior contacts with recruitment agencies in the UK (both were teachers). Tara summarised the dense network of formal, and above all informal, networks and contact points which made emigration to, and settling into the UK, relatively easy for most New Zealanders:

*'There are a lot of NZ organisations over there that are set up ... but there is also a lot of advice from here as well before you go. Previous friends, you get a pretty good picture before you go'* (Tara, aged 20-30, project manager, Christchurch).

Some had made previous visits, particularly those who had family connections. Carla, for example, explained that *'I'd always kept in contact with relatives so I knew what it was like and I had friends who had been there and told me'*. Others commented on the images that they had accumulated from television programmes or from school. Interestingly, the small number of interviewees who had migrated to the UK before the 2000s felt that they had particularly strong images of the country. Olivia, for example, commented that:

*in the generation where we grew up ... everything that you talked about in New Zealand was always referenced back to England. Like literature, you always read English literature, and any New Zealand literature was always compared with English literature. .... All our*

*food, recipes, and what you call it, you know your whole food, “cuisine”, was all British based (Olivia, aged 40-50, casual work, Auckland).*

The UK sample had relatively strong preconceptions about the UK. Their specific preconceptions included a few positive ones about ‘good people’, ‘a great place for travel or for partying’, the anticipated historical legacy and even the countryside of the UK. Peter (aged 20-30, film production, Auckland), for example, was looking forward *‘to seeing country meadows and hedgerows, villages and I think, yeah, the countryside, you know the English country gardens and all that kind of stuff was what interests me. And just the history!* There were, however, rather more negative preconceptions and these included unflattering comments about a weak work ethic, football hooligans, drinking, drugs, the weather and conservative attitudes. Nina (aged 20-30, hotel manager, Christchurch), for example, had received letters and emails from a sister living in Slough which had conveyed the impression of *‘how much bigger it is, and how many more people there are, and how crazy the driving is, and it was all true! And the smog and grey and not having a backyard to do a barbie in’.*

Similarly, the other EU respondents reported the help and advice they received from friends and family before they left. Others, accessed travel expos and websites, while for some the enthusiasm of youth was enough:

*at the time I didn’t think there was anything I needed to know...but I’m older now and if I did that again I’d want to know how I can get a phone card, a bank account, where I’m going to live (Pascale, Hotel Staff, France).*

As would be expected, none of the returnees went through a formal pre-departure orientation programme, which is a feature of many inter-cultural exchange programmes.

### ***Arrival Fascination***

Christened by some cross-cultural scholars (Gullahorn & Gullahorn 1963)) as a “honeymoon stage”, this period in the intercultural adjustment cycle is usually associated with a high level of positive (if not elated) emotions. As Rhinesmith described, this exultant mood could ‘peak’ right before the departure (sometimes clouded by the anxieties) and return immediately during the actual trip and upon arrival. Sojourners’ expectations remain high and they are often supported by an unusual level of initial attention they receive from host country nationals. However, Ting-Toomey (1999, 252) cited research by Kealy 1989, Osland 1995, Rohrllich & Martin 1991 who found that a ‘honeymoon’ stage is often a fleeting one and usually is accompanied by an early “severe identity shock” (*Ibid.*), which potentially, but not necessarily, makes the sojourners more “resourceful and resilient” in coping with a new unfamiliar environment.

For many respondents in our study a novelty of being a New Zealander based in non-UK EU countries was a leading memory of their ‘honeymoon’ stage. In our sample, many found that being a ‘Kiwi’ was an advantage: *‘they really responded well to me being Kiwi and, you know, that was a novelty that they really enjoyed’* (Trudie, Hotel Staff, France). For Myli (University Student, Germany), being a New Zealander was also a big plus, *‘I was treated differently you see because of being a New Zealander, in Germany anyway. In a lot of the Continent, there’s this perception of New Zealanders being exotic’*. The status of a New Zealander so far from home was indeed very special: *‘Every one loves Kiwis, which was really nice’* and *‘I was the only New Zealander in about 100 square miles so I was very, very unique...’*.

While Europeans appeared in the answers to be free of pre-conceptions and open-minded about the New Zealanders, the interviewed Kiwis displayed a high level of stereotyping of their host cultures -- stereotypical images as seen in movies, on television or in magazines did colour their initial preconceptions.

AR (High-school Student, France) speaks of images of French people who, *'all wear stripy shirts and bike around with baguettes on their backs'*, discovering that to be untrue *'except they do eat baguettes'*. Some found that warnings about the slowness of French bureaucracy were true, and others had heard that, *'they didn't like to speak to you unless you speak in French first, which is true, so no illusions there'* (Pascale, Hotel Staff, France). Preconceptions of Germany ranged from cute Bavarian villages with *'lovely houses and cobbled streets'* (Serena, High-school Student, Germany) to a less than friendly population, *'They are not overfriendly people and I already knew that anyway and not all that generous either'* (Carol, English Teacher, Germany). Images of the Netherlands were of a country, *'very kind of green and that they were into the environment and the outdoors and very liberal'* (Sarah, worked for a diplomat), and also of a country that, is a *'very clean, very organised, very civilised place to live and the Dutch are a very civilised people'* (Jon-Paul, Research Scientist). Perceptions of Ireland were of a *'really jubilant culture'* with a beautiful countryside. *'I guess landscape wise it lived up to my expectation. Just very green once you were out of the cities, really gorgeous'* (LR, Legal Secretary, Ireland). Other migrants to Ireland were *'surprised about how advanced Ireland actually was. It wasn't a land of little old stone cottages...There were huge subdivisions, you know, huge road networks. A lot of EU money was poured into the place'* (Marilyn, Farm Worker, Ireland).

As expected, preconceptions also informed the initial impressions of the UK among those who migrated there, often reinforcing but sometimes challenging these. The two most common initial impressions were about the weather and the enormous differences between the world they had left in New Zealand and the one they found in the UK. The latter was particularly marked amongst those who had travelled more or less directly to the UK, compared to those who had travelled extensively en route. Comments about the weather were more likely to be negative than positive, but did depend on which season they arrived in, as well as the daily weather variations. However, not all were shocked by the differences. Some found the UK reassuringly familiar, perhaps

because they had visited previously, while Mike (aged 30-40, urban designer, Auckland) had found that it matched his preconceptions based on *'movies and TV, history and education in school. I remember arriving on a train from Heathrow and just thinking this looks very familiar. It didn't look strange or different at all'*.

If the comments about the weather are put to one side, then there were relatively more positive than negative initial impressions. The most common positive first impression was about their sheer excitement, and the buzz of the UK, and of London in particular. Alison (aged 50-60, housewife, Wellington) felt it was *'wonderful. Just great. A multicultural country, roads full of people, it was just so exciting'*, and Helen had felt *'at the hub of things'*. Other positive individual initial impressions included it being less crowded than anticipated (Olivia, who tellingly had lived in Maidstone, rather than in London), or on the people being friendly and welcoming (Tara, who had lived in various places in inner London). There was, also, a measure of serendipity in first impressions, with Vicky (aged 30-40, receptionist, Christchurch) arriving in London during a heat wave: *'I had been expecting this drizzly London but it was beautiful, hot as anything and I just loved that whole feeling of belonging and that lovely rich culture, centuries old stuff that we don't have here'*.

### ***Initial Culture Shock***

Mestenhauser (1991, 1) noted that "intercultural experiences are difficult to absorb. They come rapidly, are not well-organized, [and] do not always fit well into pre-existing frames of reference and thought". While some sojourners may enjoy a prolonged 'honeymoon' stage (depending on the circumstances of stay in the host country), sooner or later the novelty of the place starts fading away. This is especially true for those who plan to stay in a host country for a lengthy period of time (more than six months). A continuing need to function in a different language; pressures to survive in a place with different food, habits, climate, etc.; and possible lack of access to their

accustomed support network for reflecting on their positive and negative experiences usually leads to an emotional decline, known in the literature as 'initial culture shock'. To aggravate the situation, this emotional downfall could be accompanied by physical dysfunctions (such as upset sleep patterns, physiological problems, etc.), as well as psychological disorientation (e.g., inability to establish meaningful contacts both at work and at home). Some may interrupt their sojourn at this stage and return home earlier, some opt to cope with the differences despite stress and frustration often developing hostile attitude towards the host culture -- in contrast with the "honeymoon stage", this stage is sometimes called the "hostility stage" (Gullahorn & Gullahorn 1963).

Our study revealed that all our respondents in the other EU sample had gone through the 'initial culture shock', and their experiences could be grouped into several categories.

The first sizable group of non-UK responses had to do with continental Europe's bureaucracy in arranging visas. Whilst all but one of the interviewees experienced few difficulties in obtaining visas in New Zealand (a very fast track to morph initial anxieties into initial culture shock!), several expressed frustration at the complexity of the bureaucratic processes they encountered abroad. Carol applied for a one-year student visa from the German Embassy in New Zealand and was issued with only a three-month visa, which then had to be changed in Germany to a six-month visa. Subsequently, this had to be renewed every six months for a period of five years, at considerable cost and inconvenience:

*It was quite expensive to have my visa renewed all the time and it was quite a hassle. I had to queue and you had to take a number and you used to sit there for hours...I never found them very helpful at all.*

Several commented on the difficulty of adjusting to different systems of issuing the official documents. As one student comments, in France the study visa is initially only for 3 months and to get clearance for the year: *'I had to go down to Marseilles to this random suburban health place where they weighed me, checked my height, tested my eyesight and did lung x-rays to check if I had TB'* (Daria, University Student, France). David also commented on his experience of trying to get a *titre de sejour* (a living residence) on his first trip to France: *'the bureaucracy is ridiculously slow and poorly organised...and it [titre de sejour] was offered to be available to me I think about a week before I left'*.

Though LR had an Irish ancestry visa she discovered that there are different rules for NZ immigrants compared to Australian immigrants:

*Every time I wrote to the immigration department they couldn't distinguish that I wasn't an Australian citizen...and I kept saying, no I'm a New Zealander, I've got my visa in front of me, that's not the rule* (LR, Legal Secretary, Dublin).

Ireland proved challenging for some: *'The one thing we had to do when we got there was get a police clearance and that was actually a bit daunting'* (Marilyn and Robert, Farm Workers, Ireland).

We should however emphasise that most respondents, upon reflection, were pragmatic about their encounters with different bureaucracies.

While the thousands of New Zealanders who go to the UK are often joining friends or family, migrants who choose to go to other EU countries do not have the same support networks. Social networks are a key mediator of New Zealanders' experiences of the UK -- there, migrants can often rely on friends to show them the ropes, how to set up bank accounts and get National Insurance numbers. Often new migrants gravitate to a ready made bunch of

friends in the form of other Antipodeans (Kiwis, Australians and South Africans). We discovered that many UK respondents indeed relied on friends and family for somewhere to live initially, and for help in obtaining jobs and their own accommodation, as well as for understanding UK practices in areas such as the tax and health systems, or banks and telephone companies. For example, on arriving in London, Kylie moved in with two of her best friends from school who were already living there, and they eased the transition for her. In the non-UK EU countries, however, Kiwis, generally, immediately face the unfamiliar. Unsurprisingly, one of the most frequently reported challenges of immersing themselves in a new and exciting location was sharply perceived differences in doing every-day things.

For LR (Legal Secretary) who really enjoyed the diversity of people in Ireland, it was the problem of homelessness that was most distressing:

*Living in the central city and not in a particularly wealthy area you had homeless people urinating on your front door, syringes stabbed into the main part of the apartment block so you think this is a really gross place.*

The main negative listed by six migrants was bureaucracy or inefficiency *'I stayed at home for someone to come and fix our phone for three days...and they never came'* (Fiona, NGO Volunteer, Belgium).

While one University student loved her studies and her friends, she found the hostel less than satisfactory:

*The kitchen facilities were revolting and the toilets and showers were just foul. Towards the end of my stay, there were also a couple of incidents of girls being attacked in the shower, and they wouldn't do anything about it. So, in true French style we held a protest and they got in security guards for us.* (Daria, University Student, France).

High school students in France found the education system *'really tough'* with strong competition for tertiary institutions, which meant that the focus was on streaming at a young age with little time *'to engage in extracurricular activities, which I think is important as well'* (CW, France). For one, studying for the *baccalaureate* in France was a challenge *'I like learning and doing things in completely different perspectives'* though she struggled with cultural stereotypes finding that her English approach to philosophy clashed sometimes with the French style (Sally, France).

The experiences of high school students depended largely on their host families, and while the parents were very supportive, a couple of the students had minor issues with their host 'siblings':

*there were definite ups and downs...a bit of a personality clash' and 'my whole family was awesome except my host brother who...hated me and did every little he could to blame me for everything.*

Yet one of the most important contributors to the initial culture shock was a lack of sufficient language skills.

*'I was really excited, but when I arrived and met my family I sort of thought 'oh my gosh, what have I done' because I couldn't understand anything, it really just sounds like Chinese (CW, High-school Student, France).*

Considering that, in the majority of the EU countries, English is not the primary language, the barrier of language can be difficult to surmount, especially in the beginning of a stay.

Amongst the UK sample, there had not been the same level of problems encountered with respect to either visas/immigration or bureaucracy more

generally. Probably reflecting their nationality, and the use of a well-established immigration regime, none of the interviewees reported any difficulties in acquiring visas, or in dealing with the UK immigration authorities. However, two interviewees had experienced some difficulties in changing or extending their visas, with Helen (aged 30-40, manager, Wellington) considering that her experiences had been '*absolutely appalling*'. It is notable that this is similar to the number who complained about the slow and expensive process of dealing with the New Zealand authorities when returning with foreign spouses. Most had few complaints about dealing with other British public bodies after arriving in the UK, although two complained about difficulties in registering with the health authorities, and two complained about the long process of getting a National Insurance number. Only one, Graham (20-30, administrator, Wellington), complained about difficulties over the recognition of qualifications: '*The British Psychological Society required a lot of certification that my university wouldn't provide and that I didn't have. So I couldn't get registered as a graduate psychologist so I couldn't get any graduate roles*'. There were also a few complaints (3) about the difficulties involved in setting up bank accounts in the UK, a process that many had been rightly advised was more easily arranged from New Zealand.

The more negative first impressions were often coloured by a feeling of being overwhelmed by the sheer scale of London, as typified by Andrea (aged 20-30, administrator, Christchurch) who asked herself '*What have I done*'. Other negative comments included that it was '*disgusting and horrible*', that the buildings in Glasgow were ugly, that the people on the tube '*looked so shitty*', and above all about the relentless pace of life; Sally had felt:

*Intimidated, I'm not a big crowds person and I did struggle at first, in London especially. Just the pace of life, the number of people, also the level of diminished social responsibility. People just don't care. The tube just seemed really scary and everything just seemed really full on* (Sally, aged 20-30, legal secretary, Christchurch).

### **Surface Adjustment**

The next 'up' on the curve of intercultural adjustment happens when a sojourner overcomes initial shock and starts developing patterns of meaningful functioning in a host society. In Rhinesmith's view, this growing functional stability is usually accompanied by improvement in language skills and establishment of a small circle of friends and associates.

In our study, amongst the non-UK cohort, both relationships to a small group of local friends and facilitated language skill were mentioned. In the former, an interviewee noticed that *'...the women in the offices were really neat. You know, we'd go out for lunch or we might go to a movie or go shopping together...'* (Marilyn, Farm Worker, Ireland). In the latter example, the second experience of French bureaucracy proved less stressful for David (University Student, France) in France because by then he could speak fluent French and he *'knew all the steps...exactly where to go and what to do. I actually basically did it on the first day'*. He also listed other benefits from being a French speaker: *'I felt part of the French community because I speak French and could go to different places and just order whatever'*

For many respondents, positive emotions accompanying surface adjustment were generated by the fact that they could travel easily to many European destinations (inside and outside their host country) and enjoy unique culture and art:

*I liked most the scenery, culture, cultural heritage, richness of everyday life, excitement of being in the heart of Europe and the ability to travel within a few hours to all the other European destinations'* (DD, English Teacher, Italy).

In the Netherlands, the attraction was the culture and *'being able to bike everywhere. That was awesome, and also to pop on a train and to be in Amsterdam in like an hour and the art galleries'* (Sarah, worked for diplomat,

Netherlands). Myli (University Student, Germany) particularly loved the accessibility to *'major acts from all around the world...like I saw Massive Attack and I saw Cold Play'*. Myli also enjoyed the well-organised side of German life comparing it to NZ in this way, *'The public transport system in New Zealand is abysmal compared to that of Germany...its very easy to get anywhere in Germany...and beer in Germany it's very cheap'*.

NZ University students presented a unique case here. Very often they were not pushed by circumstances to communicate intensively with the locals and enjoyed a (in some ways, a somewhat superficial) multicultural university environment in which there was apparent equality – no one had to conform to the host culture values (and English was more likely to be a language of communication). David (University student, France) explained that he enjoyed the multi-cultural environment in the halls of residence, which included Italians, Columbians, Spanish, Germans, Austrians, Polish, Americans as well as English, and the fact that *'there wasn't a single Kiwi'*. The interviewed university students predominantly lived in student halls often with a very divers group of international students. This multicultural environment contributed to the richness of their experiences *'making friends was very, very easy...a lot of dinners, nights out, social events'*. Interestingly, that University environment added to the feeling of being more empowered *'Konstanz is a university city so it is almost owned by the students who come...to take over the place'* (Myli, University Student, Germany). Arguably, a superficial adjustment for this group of sojourners could be achieved relatively faster, compared with the migrants who had to fully immerse themselves into the host culture. However, achieving 'full' integration (discussed below) could be more problematic for this group of migrants. Some students like Daria (University Student, France), who lived with other international students in a hostel, subsequently felt *'like a foreigner. Maybe if I had been living in an apartment in the town or a house I'd feel more of a local'*.

Amongst the UK cohort, there were broadly similar experiences of ‘superficial adjustment’. One aspect of this was the excitement and pace of life, viewed negatively by a few, was commented on positively by seven individuals. Pete (aged 20-30, film production, Auckland) expressed this in the strongest terms: ‘You can *get out and about every day of the week if you want to and do things. You know, NZ, coming back it sort of feels a little bit more like a retirement village at times*’. The other more commonly commented on positive feature was the ease of travel from London, particularly around continental Europe rather than the UK, much of which seems to have remained little explored territory for many interviewees. Helen (aged 30-40, manager, Wellington) typifies this viewpoint: ‘*I liked the connectedness in terms of being on a plane and being in Spain in a couple of hours. I can get on a train and be in Brussels.*’ Other positive features, commented on by 4-5 individuals in each case, were making new friends, a sense of history and the cultural diversity. Finally, there were also a small number of positive comments about shopping, the availability of public transport in London, higher earnings and valuable work experiences.

### ***Mental Isolation***

An emotional uprise associated with the stage of ‘superficial adjustment’ is argued by Rhinesmith to further morph into a more negatively colored stage of ‘mental isolation’. This new stage is usually marked by feelings of lost novelty of the place and people, yet a pervading sense of old and new challenges and pressures being still in place. A set of continuing problems (and a deeper understanding of them) can make some loose motivation and/or become bored. Interpersonal conflicts and persisting linguistic difficulties can add to this negative spiral in intercultural cycle of adjustment.

In the case of NZ returnees from non-UK EU countries, many of the recollections that could be grouped under the umbrella of ‘mental isolation’ revisited the issues discussed in the section of ‘initial culture shock’ in this paper,

yet this time the depth and perception of the similar issues was much darker and more pessimistic.

Different ways of doing things was again high on the list. After staying at high school for some time, four (mainly high school students) reported homesickness or distance from home as a negative. Others still found it difficult to adapt to the more formal teacher pupil relationship:

*they still call their teachers Master which we stopped a hundred years ago because they are not your master. I never realised how amicable the relationship is between students and teachers in New Zealand until I went overseas (AR, High-school Student, France).*

For those who entered the workforce, experiences highlighted some negative impressions. LR (Legal Secretary, Ireland) felt that *'the Irish work ethic is quite slack...I was resentful that I was doing heaps more work and not getting enough recognition and they were resentful that my doing a lot of work would show [them up]'*. Marilyn (Farm Worker Ireland) commented on the working conditions in Ireland compared to New Zealand *'you wouldn't expect people to work twelve hours a day, seven days a week without a break, week after week for ...some appallingly low pay because they said...we were kept'*.

Predictably, insufficient language skills were mentioned again. Language was the key for Pascale (Hotel Staff, France) who felt *'it is all about language because once you get the language, you really know people'*. Three respondents found they struggled with having to speak a foreign language all the time *'Nobody would speak to me in English, not even sort of friends from my English class'* (Serena. High-school Student, Germany). This is echoed by Myli (University Student, Germany), who found that:

*you've been speaking German all day in class, maybe gone to some party after uni and you've been speaking German there...and you just*

*get home and you feel like you've hit a brick wall, and there's no one to speak English to.*

Kate (Au Pair, France) describes her attempts to make French friends:

*It is actually very difficult to meet French people. Probably the archery club was the best way that I met French people and despite my best efforts the only interaction I had with them would be at the club...They were quite stand-offish when it came to interacting with a foreigner and I always wondered whether it was because my French was really bad.*

When asked whether they felt that they belonged to their neighbourhoods 65% (13) of the respondents answered in the affirmative though like Kate, three others felt that their language skills held them back. Pascale (Hotel Staff, France) *'felt like an outsider'* until she spoke French really fast one day. *'I was invited to things once they knew I could understand them, because before then you are struggling all the time and I think, they think it is a chore to help you understand'*. Trudie (Hotel Staff, France) felt part of the community, because *'it was such a small village, but less so because I couldn't really speak the language'*. Jon-Paul (Research Scientist, the Netherlands) also felt that the language barrier was restrictive *'Certainly you could say I made friends through work, including Dutch friends but it is a lot more restrictive if you don't speak Dutch obviously'*. As one respondent summed it up, *'Language is a key and if you don't have this key or your key doesn't really fit, you are a lesser human being. You are simple not taken seriously'*

Less typical answers featured negative awareness of the climate, of physical differences with the locals and even a new 'non-exotic' status of Kiwis. For a couple of respondents, the weather was a negative *'I always found the winter quiet harsh, living in Munich its just snow covered for a lot of the winter. It's a harsh climate but the summers are fantastic [and] people just relax a bit more'* (Carol, English Teacher, Germany). GB (Civil Technician, Ireland) found that the wet Irish weather finally became a push factor *'That was one of the*

*reasons for leaving Ireland eventually. Just last summer before we left, Ireland had 60 straight days of rain, the Bible had 40 days of rain and that was the Great Flood.'*

For some, a not-so-welcome experience was linked to physical differences with the locals. As Daria (High-school Student, Aix en Provence) explains,

*...in the South of France where people are usually quite dark skinned and dark haired...as a pale skinned blonde female I really stood out...I got harassed coming along the street and that was the start of a constant theme of male sexual harassment*

For some, disillusionment came with realization that 'Kiwis' are no longer exotic for some European nations. While initially GM (Civil Technician) felt that Kiwis were popular in Ireland, he noticed a change during his six years, which he attributed to Ireland joining the EU:

*Yeah, I thought the Irish did change...it is still one of the most friendly places you'll go, but as they became more and more affluent, people had less time...when I first got there Kiwis were still relatively unusual... then a lot of us arrived and...there were also massive influxes of Eastern European people...people were beginning to get more money-orientated...*

Of the one third (7) who did not feel part of their neighbourhood, their feelings were in part due to the type of accommodation they lived in 'We were in this weird apartment block that was attached to a bank and we were pretty much the only residential like building in the area' (Fiona, NGO worker, Belgium). Others like LR found there wasn't a 'sense of neighbourhood. Particularly in Dublin...because it was central city you didn't really know your neighbours' (Legal Secretary, Ireland). Whilst a lack of community can often be attributed to living in a big city, some found that they did not feel a sense of community even in a tiny village of 350 people. 'I would have thought village life would

*have been a bit more of a community...but maybe that had something to do with my host parents because they both worked so hard...*' (CW, High-school Student, France).

Many respondents shared a couple of strategies that helped them to survive while experiencing the next negative slump. Apart from their friendships in their EU host countries, the interviewees were often in touch with friends and family back home, and several had family visit them during their sojourn in the Continent. Earlier migrants kept in touch by occasional phone-calls, postcards and letters while the most recent migrants availed themselves of email facilities, cell phones, texting and a few used the new web based software Skype allowing for face to face conversations. A couple kept family and friends back home up to date with their experiences through travel blogs and several migrants accessed news from home either through NZ papers or through web sites

Given there is a large community of New Zealanders in London, and that many had family and friends already living in the UK, it is unsurprising that a large proportion of their closest social contacts were fellow Kiwis. This tendency was reinforced by the fact that many of the British people they worked with tended to live in outer London or beyond, so that socializing outside work was relatively difficult.

For some interviewees, having a group of friends with shared experiences of being a migrant in the UK was a source of comfort and fun, but a few regretted having got to know relatively few British people. Edward reflected many of these experiences in relation to his friends in the UK:

*'in a sad sense most were Antipodeans of some sort so either South Africans, Australians or New Zealanders, and probably more Aussies and New Zealanders more than anyone else because we are so similar in our expectations and mindset. You sort of gravitate towards likeminded people. I think the other reason I didn't have so many*

*British friends, was mainly because the ones I worked with didn't live in London, they lived further out. (Edward, aged 30-40, engineer, Wellington)*

Pete provided a particularly insightful comment into how the experiences of New Zealanders as migrants necessarily differentiated themselves from the indigenous population:

*'they're living in their own country therefore they have their little life and it's safe and they know it, and so whereas when New Zealanders go over there and they're not in their own little life, they're not in their safe little bubble. .... it's like whenever you go to a foreign city you kind of feel a little bit alive because there's a sense of no one knowing you, a sense of adventure yeah. I can possibly do anything now and no one would care. Nobody knows me'. (Pete, aged 20-30, film production, Auckland)*

The interviews also explored the extent to which individuals had felt that they belonged to their neighbourhood in the UK. Perceptions of fitting into neighbourhoods are complex, and dependent on individual attitudes, and the social composition of the local population. Experiences varied within London, and between London and other areas. Although some found it difficult to pin down the idea of belonging, seven (a third of the 'UK' sample) felt they did not belong to their neighbourhoods. The comments of those who did not feel that they had belonged to their neighbourhoods were diverse. Given their relatively short and working holiday nature of their sojourns in the UK, and frequent residential changes in some cases, some interviewees did not want to belong to their neighbourhood: *'I didn't necessarily want to belong. You know, I was a visitor (Mike, aged 30-40, urban design, Auckland)*). Some felt the high rates of population turnover in areas of multi-occupation also militated against developing a sense of belonging or community involvement. Only one respondent commented on perceived high levels of crime in context of discussing feelings of belonging to a neighbourhood.

Finally, several 'UK' respondents were less generous in explaining the difficulties of making friends with British people, finding them 'stand-offish' or cold. There were also a few (4) comments about people being '*rude and arrogant*', London being '*a heartless city*', and '*making friends with British people was hard*'. Jeff, who was generally very positive about the UK, expressed this in particularly strong terms:

*'no one's got any time for anyone else. Like I, we witnessed, someone on the train fall over and collapsed and no one helped them. I witnessed fights when no one would get involved. With that type of thing it would not work for New Zealand (aged 30-40, builder, Auckland).*

### ***Integration / Acceptance***

The next stage of 'integration/acceptance' features a deeper and more meaningful integration into the host society. This is argued to happen via improvements in a sojourner's language mastery, feeling comfortable at work/school/university, expanding his/her circles of friends and colleagues, and observing and examining a host culture from many different angles and perspectives. This stage is also characterized by an ability of a visitor to understand and accept (rather than deny or resent) the differences and to relax and enjoy the host society despite those differences.

In this study, all respondents entered professional or educational establishments on a par with the locals – that, is did not face any explicitly discriminatory obstacles.<sup>3</sup> Many of the respondents believed that immersion in

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<sup>3</sup> In particular, 7 (35%) of the interviewees went to the Continent as students and did not work at all. Of the remaining 65% (13), all worked full time except for one part-time language teacher in Italy. Nine of the thirteen employed, worked mainly to fund their sojourn and travel in Europe, with only three migrants working for more than 2 years to further their careers and to bring finances home to New Zealand. Migrants obtained work through a

day-to-day activities facilitated their feelings of identification with the culture of their host societies. For example, having a pint of Guinness on Sunday afternoons symbolized for Robert (Farm Worker, Ireland) a strong sense of Irishness. For Serena, it was the total cultural immersion that led to her feeling German:

*“I think because I was accepted into, you know, I had German friends and Germany family, and they accepted me and they felt very German, so I guess by default took on their identity, and speaking the language and conducting the traditions and things like that.”* (Serena, High-school Student, Germany)

When asked what they liked most about their host country over one half (11) enjoyed the friendliness and diversity of the people. Some reported that after an initial coolness people were very open *‘Once you’re a mate with someone you are a mate for life and then they share everything’* (AR, High-school Student, France). Another found that Germans were surprisingly friendly:

*They’re very warm and welcoming and they were a lot more physical than people in New Zealand. In New Zealand, you know, you’ve got your ‘space’ whereas in Germany you’d hold hands with your girlfriend and host mum* (Serena, High-school Student, Germany)

New opportunities presented themselves which some were quick to take advantage of:

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variety of methods; almost half of those who worked, pre-arranged their jobs in New Zealand before travel commenced and others found jobs through friends, newspapers, websites and notice boards. A total of six migrants had jobs pre-arranged before they left New Zealand. A married couple (farmers) went to Ireland through an agency (Farm Relief Service) to work on farms and one went as an au pair for a New Zealand diplomat stationed at the French Embassy in Paris. One went to teach English in France, one arranged to work as a volunteer for an NGO in Belgium (Pax Christi) and the other one arranged a job as an English teacher in France through an assistantship scheme. Another, who had been working in the UK prior to going to the Continent, was contracted by a British government department to work as a Senior UK Facility Research Scientist in the Netherlands. The remaining seven did not have any difficulty in gaining employment. One found a part-time job teaching English in Italy through her sister-in-law, two found jobs through friends (one as a Civil Technician in Ireland, and the other as a kitchen hand in France) and another one was taken on in a trial position in Ireland, which led to a permanent job as a legal secretary. One found English teaching work posted on a university notice board in Germany, one found a job on a UK website called Gumtree, which is popular with Australians and New Zealanders, and one found her Embassy job in the Netherlands advertised in a London magazine.v

*The cathedral just blew me away so much that I joined the Cathedral chorale. I'm not religious as all but I just wanted to go and sing in there [the Cathedral]. The Catholic people sent me off to this monastery with this chorale out in the Voge Mountains, which is surrounded by this forest and castle and chateau and what an experience! It was amazing, it really was. (David, University Student, France)*

The feeling of Frenchness did not come until later due to the language barrier, when one respondent began to “*understand and feel more involved with the community and the people*” that they were living with (Sally, High-school Student, France). However, for some, feeling a sense of identification with the host country depended to a large extent on where the respondent was living. Trudie (Hotel Staff, France) felt like part of the community in France because she was living in a small village:

*... Paris isn't really French. It's very much an international city. Even the French people living there don't seem to be French.*

For some, integration and acceptance of the host culture were associated with establishing families in the new places of residence. Four interviewees were married while overseas, one went to marry her fiancé in Italy and three of the longer staying migrants met and married their wives during their time in Europe, one subsequently having a child.

In terms of identification with their host societies, respondent felt he had an Irish identity (GB, Civil Technician, Ireland). This was due both to his Irish ancestry and the length of time he has spent in Ireland, which is much longer than most of the other respondents, whose time in the EU was within the restrictions of the Working Holiday Visa or a Student Visa. One respondent stated a preference for feeling French (Carol, English Teacher, Germany) but was in a relationship with a German national and had never lived in France. One respondent also discussed ‘the voluntary nature’ of feeling French as being due to wanting to fit in as much as possible. Finally, a respondent who

lived in Belgium (Fiona, NGO Volunteer, Belgium) pointed out that it was not possible for her to feel Belgian as Belgians themselves do not feel “Belgian”. This is in reference to the linguistic and cultural division between the French-speaking Walloons and Dutch-speaking Flanders.

Nevertheless, this study observed an explicit feeling of “affinity or loyalty” (Fiona, NGO Volunteer, Belgium) to host country. Myli, (University Student, Germany) felt a certain degree of loyalty to Germany, and finds it problematic that, in New Zealand, academic interest in Germany is limited to its role in the war. One respondent, based in Germany, did not feel German until after her return to New Zealand, and this feeling of being “German” was manifested in mannerisms she was not aware she had developed:

*“...You take on a whole lot of mannerisms of the locals without meaning to. I think you become more German than the Germans, I think you become more German without realising it.” (Carol, English Teacher, Germany)*

One respondent described the feeling of loyalty to the host country as a kind of “secondary allegiance”:

*“I had more pride in my country just because I hadn’t really thought about things like that before I went over. ... But I did have second loyalty to France in that my primary loyalty would be to New Zealand and still now my second loyalty would be to France. ... and I do feel a lot of pride when I hear the French anthem. So it’s like a secondary allegiance.”*

When asked to explore the extent to which individuals had felt that they belonged to their neighbourhood in the UK, six respondents (a third of the ‘UK’ sample) felt strongly that they belonged to their neighbourhoods. Participating in sport locally, or going regularly to the same pub or shop, could

help to generate a sense of belonging. Alison was one of those who felt at home in her neighbourhood:

*Yeah, we fitted quite well into our neighbourhood. The woman next door and the Irish couple on the other side both were quite chatty. The lady next door would always laugh at Mike [her husband] when he would go out in winter in just his sandals as he wouldn't put his work boots on until he got to the work site (Alison, aged 50-60, housewife, Wellington).*

Feeling at home in a neighbourhood, and knowing their neighbours, did not necessarily mean that they were well integrated with British (born) people. Indeed, Graham, who lived in Acton in London, considered that the presence of migrants made it easier to fit into his neighbourhood;

*I lived in Acton town which ... has a huge number of immigrants. So it is more common there to hear a different accent than an English one, whether it is African or New Zealand, South African, Australian or German. There were not actually a lot of Brits in that area so I felt very at home. (Graham, aged 20-30, administrator, Wellington)*

Helen, however, believed she had been well integrated in her neighbourhood and had frequent contacts with British residents:

*It used to intrigue me that there were a couple of older people in the street who would ask where we'd been if we had been overseas for a couple of weeks. I knew I'd been there far too long when the guy who walked his dog knew my movements. (Helen, aged 30-40, manager, Wellington)*

Relationships with fellow workers were an important element of the work experience. Inevitably, these were relatively mixed, depending on the particular organization, the individuals they worked closely with, and the length of time they stayed in a particular post. As noted earlier, there were several comments about the lack of friendliness amongst fellow workers, and

the difficulties of socialising with British workers, even in their own age group. However, these were by no means universal, and there were also comments about the good friends they had made through work. Vicky, for example, worked in an administrative role in a legal practice, where she:

*'started working with a group of people who were my age. They were a lot of fun and I used to go out with them and I made some really good friends and so that made me enjoy it a lot. A lot of those people are my friends now and I'd like to go back and see those people. (Vicky, aged 30-40, receptionist, Christchurch)*

Most New Zealanders moved to the UK for relatively short periods, typically for no more than 3 years, with the intention of returning to their home country at the end of this time. Many shared flats with other New Zealanders, and lived in areas of transient populations and multiple occupation in London. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that most did not feel any sense of British identity during their sojourns to the UK. In fact, five of those interviewed commented that being abroad had, in fact, reinforced their New Zealand identities. Graham (aged 20-30, administrator, Wellington), for example, *'felt more like a Kiwi and more proud to be a New Zealander over there than I did here'*. And others commented on how they deliberately wore clothing associated with New Zealand as an assertion of their identities. For example, Tara (aged 20-30, project manager, Christchurch) *'wore black more in the UK than I did here, celebrated Waitangi day more than I did, so I think in some ways it actually makes you more proud of NZ'*. Only two had voted in local elections in the UK, and none had voted in national elections – further evidence of lack of identification with the UK, although there were also issues of eligibility for relatively short-term migrants.

However, there were also several (7) interviewees who expressed some form of affinity with the UK. At its weakest level, this was a feeling of familiarity, expressed by Olivia (aged 40-50, casual worker, Auckland) in terms of *'Somehow you knew it and you felt like it was home too, like I really felt that I*

*had a foot in both countries. Maybe it's because I loved the place.* For two of those interviewed, this affinity was more with Scotland – where they had family connections – than with the UK as a whole. Indeed, it was generally having family connections, or a British passport, which was most likely to generate a sense of British identity. Pete (aged 20-30, film production, Auckland), for example, had a British passport and while in the UK he had felt a strong connection with London because *'My grandfather who I was extremely close to grew up in London, and so I think I probably have more of a connection to Britain than a lot of other Kiwis'*. However, overlying this was his stronger sense of New Zealand identity, and this reasserted itself once he returned to his home country. Perhaps the real exception was Helen (aged 30-40, manager, Wellington), who had spent longer than most of the migrants in the UK and who considered that I *'probably feel more British than I do NZ ... in terms of values and culture'*, to the extent that back in New Zealand she felt like *'some kind of stateless person'*. However, most of those interviewed had no, or only a temporary, sense of British identity.

### ***Return Anxieties***

With all respondents in our study, the decision to return to NZ generated a flurry of emotions and anxieties. Similarly to the initial anxieties discussed earlier, sojourners are now excited about their return home, reunion with the family and friends they left behind, and opportunities opened for them at home by their new skills and experiences. Yet, they also realize that they will lose new friends and associates, and they are concerned that people at home will not understand how different they became. Rhinesmith labels this the 'return anxiety' stage.

For some respondents in our study leaving was difficult even though they felt it was time to go: *'leaving my friends...was the most, sort of, traumatic experience. Like they had really grown to become my family...[and] my*

*surrogate parents'* (Trudie, Hotel Staff, France). Although the main reason for the majority of migrants returning home was the expiry of their visas, 90% were ready to head home for various other reasons. Although all were leaving friends (and high school students were leaving their host families), most were keen to see their families and friends back in New Zealand. Two had planned to return for family weddings, six were returning to continue their education, one returned (along with her husband) for a knee operation. Four had married while away and brought their wives/husband to New Zealand to settle and two cited homesickness as a reason for returning. Five, including the two who wanted to stay, mentioned a lack of money as the reason for their return.

Many cited being ready to come back to what they considered to be a more traditional life style. Jon-Paul was away for a total of 9 years beginning with 2 years in Glasgow, followed by 3 years in the Netherlands, followed by another 4 years in Sheffield. He returned home with his wife and their young daughter to provide more space for his family *'I grew up in the country in New Zealand and having no land space around my house was just driving me crazy'*. Carol stayed in Germany, teaching English to be with her partner, and only returned to New Zealand after 10 years away when the relationship ended and she missed *'the kiwi lifestyle and not being near the beach and not having space, our apartment was really small, no garden, no garage'*.

As noted earlier, just over one half of the sample had been in the UK for the time that they had originally intended. This was related in large part to the two-year maximum stay allowed under the working holiday visa. They often left at the same time as a spouse, or close friends, which in the case of the former sometimes generated tensions with one partner being more reluctant to leave than the other. Some also expressed regrets about leaving behind family or close friends, whether those they had travelled with or new friends made in the UK. Carol felt this particularly acutely:

*Yeah, I left a lot of people there. Because the lady I worked with was mum's age and her daughter they sort of became a second family and*

*then Y's [her partner's] boss was older than us but we still got on really well with him. So it was really upsetting leaving those people. (Carol, aged 20-30, graphic designer, Wellington)*

The main reason for leaving was visa expiry, and because they had reached the end of their planned stay. For some, such as Alison, this was long enough anyway, and they were ready to go home, but a few individuals, such as Sally, considered that they might have stayed longer – usually for a matter of some months or another year – if it had not been for the visa constraint. The second most cited reason for leaving (7) was the pull of home which, for most, was about family and lifestyle considerations. Helen, for example, had considered applying for a highly skilled migrant visa, but the attraction of the New Zealand lifestyle had been stronger. Frank (aged 30-40, local authority administrator, Christchurch) explained how his attitudes had changed over time: *'it was a good experience from the start up until the last 3 months probably when I got sick of the cars, the busyness, the concrete, you had no lawn at your house and after a while you start to miss what NZ has to offer'*. Graham and Larry also commented that they had started to feel homesick near the end, although they had mostly enjoyed their time in the UK. To some extent, these comments reflect the comparison between their often transient life styles and accommodation in the UK, with what they had left behind or anticipated returning to in New Zealand, as they moved on to home making and career development in the next stage of the life cycle. This was recognized by Tara (aged 20-30, project manager, Christchurch) who explained that in order to have stayed on in the UK, she *'probably would have needed to move out of London I think. Would have needed to have bought a house. A bit more of a settled lifestyle, not living with other people. A bit less transient probably, not living out of a suitcase.*

There was also a smaller group (4) who decided to return to New Zealand to set up their own businesses, or because they considered they could develop their careers better there – although this has to be balanced against a larger

number of interviewees who told us, at other points in the interview, that job and career opportunities were, or potentially were, better in the UK. Finally one individual decided to go home to study.

In addition to these general considerations, highly personal events could also influence the decision to leave, and especially, exactly when to leave the UK (5). Such events were diverse but included deaths in the family in New Zealand, pregnancy, to get married, or – in Mike’s case (aged 30-40, urban design, Auckland) – because of a break up in a personal relationship: *‘to be honest leaving was a massive relief as I had broken up with my girlfriend’*.

Disengaging from their lives in the UK was relatively easy for most interviewees, although four individuals had difficulties in closing down bank accounts, dealing with their tax position and, or cancelling contracts with utilities or internet providers. Some sought advice from friends about how to deal with such matters but none had sought advice on these or other issues from UK authorities, or bodies such as the Citizens Advice Bureau. Similarly, none had sought assistance from the New Zealand authorities, either in London or their home country, although one individual had qualified for a relocation grant offered to returning New Zealand teachers. The most negative comments about leaving related to the obstacles encountered by two interviewees who returned to New Zealand with foreign spouses. They criticised the New Zealand immigration authorities for the slow, irritating and expensive process involved in obtaining permanent residence status for them. Bill (aged 30-40, academic, Christchurch) was particularly vitriolic: *‘It was just criminal and actually if you compare it to what it costs to do the same thing to go to the UK you’re talking a total cost of a few hundred bucks. In NZ it’s just a money making scheme’*.

### ***Re-entry elation/ Re-entry Shock***

Surprisingly, return home after a lengthy time spent in a very different culture could trigger yet another distress – the so-called ‘reintegration shock’. After initial welcome and wave positive emotions, returnees often discover that their friends and family are not that interested in their new experiences. Moreover, the returnees are often frustrated at themselves for not being able to communicate the uniqueness of their time in a different culture. The status of being an ‘unusual’, ‘foreign’ and ‘unique’ individual they had while living overseas has also been lost – they are now ‘regular’ members of the society. In addition, old associates might not be accepting or understanding of personal changes and the new ways of behavior of newly returned. Readjustment to old friends and family may cause difficulties at the same time as they feel they are missing new friends overseas. In the view of Ting-Toomey (1999, 250), because shock upon return is usually not anticipated, it often has a deeper negative emotional effect on the sojourner than the initial culture shock.

While the majority of the returnees from other EU countries in our study found the transition back to New Zealand to be relatively smooth in bureaucratic terms, 65% found it difficult to make the correlative psychological adjustment. For 70% (14) of the returnees, the best thing about being home was the welcome from family and friends, summed up by Pascale (Hotel Staff, France), ‘*everyone is so excited to see you and they want to hear your story, see your photographs so you’re kind of like a celebrity for a while*’. Although many were pleased to be reunited with family and friends, some like Trudie (Hotel Staff, France) found the transition rather stressful:

*I’d literally left the slopes in France and flown straight back and started work...the day after I’d arrived back... having just said goodbye to friends and family...I was really quite upset and I think it was just really helpful that the company could go “hey, you’re jet lagged, don’t worry”.*

Other migrants also experienced 'repatriation distress' on their return, commenting on '*reverse culture shock*'. AR (High-school Student, France) found that he '*would always go to shake someone's hand or kiss someone which you'd never do here*'. Myli (University Student, Germany) also experienced a form of reverse culture shock because he brought his German wife with him and '*she had to learn English and I had to support her, going through immigration, getting jobs, and aiding her to be able to learn English...it was quite a struggle for a long time*'. Carol (English Teacher, Germany) who had been away for ten years, discovered that it was '*almost as if you have been in a time warp because...you just don't have the reference that people talk about so you feel like a foreigner in your own country*'. GB (Civil Technician, Ireland) who had also been away for several years commented '*I felt like a guest star in someone else's TV show. It didn't feel quite right*'. Similarly, although the high school students had just been away for one year, the majority felt they had matured and felt '*a bit alienated*' from some of their friends. Serena (High school Student, Germany) commented on the student culture in New Zealand:

*I took up the whole studious attitude that Germans have and my friends were still very much into drinking a lot and like the whole segregation between the boys and the girls, it just wouldn't happen in Germany.*

Initial negative impressions, apart from reverse culture shock, had to do with '*itchy feet*' and the feeling that the adventure had ended and '*you couldn't just up and travel somewhere as easily on the weekend, go off to Spain...*'. Forty per cent (8) of the migrants missed the lack of opportunities for international travel due to the isolation of NZ, especially from Europe. Carol (English Teacher, Germany) commented that she missed the '*world class exhibitions and the museums, art galleries*'. A couple of the migrants also mentioned the way costs had increased in New Zealand in recent years '*the tax rate and just the costs of everything like food and petrol have all gone up...so that's made the transition difficult*' (GB, Civil Technician, Ireland). One respondent noticed a marked contrast between the warmth of the French people and the

coldness of New Zealanders, between *“the interest and the passion and the friendliness and the ugliness”*.

When exploring the lives of those who had returned from the UK, we initially asked about their first impressions. Many chose to answer by comparing these to their first impressions of arriving in the UK. Not surprisingly, most found it to be a much easier transition, particularly because the majority had been abroad for only three years or less. Larry (aged 20-30, lighting engineer, Auckland), for example, said that it was *‘more comforting because you know what to expect, people-wise and surroundings-wise whereas in the UK it was all new territory’*. There were also family and friends and at least short term accommodation waiting for them in New Zealand, and often prearranged jobs as well. This was Nina’s (aged 20-30, hotel manager, Christchurch) impression: *‘it was a relief, fantastic, just coming off the plane and going home, and knowing that we’ve got a place to live ... knowing exactly where it is’*.

The ease of returning was coupled with other strong positive impressions about how easy it was to get around and a lack of traffic (Alison,) and just the sheer joy of being home (Graham), and *‘because you know the boundaries’* (Carol, aged 20-30, graphic designer, Wellington). Being away had also reconciled some to what they had previously disliked about life in New Zealand (such as its remoteness and quietness), and none expressed this more powerfully than Alison (aged 50-60, housewife, Wellington): *‘I hated it before I left because I was bored and when I came back I just absolutely loved it’*.

Despite the ease of returning, just over one half of the interviewees (13) also expressed some negative initial impressions. The most frequently mentioned (6) of these was to do with friends – either the sense of loss about the friends left behind, or that their old friends in New Zealand had ‘moved on’ in some way. David considered that all his real friends were still in the UK, while Tara

(aged 20-30, project manager, Christchurch) *'found it hard to relate to my friends. They just seemed to be on a different level or just at different stages in their lives. I couldn't figure out where a lot of them were coming from'*. Carla (aged 50-60, guesthouse manager, Christchurch) had similar experiences: *'friends you know had all sort of wafted off and you had to gather them back in'*. The loss of friends was particularly acute for those who returned to live in different parts of New Zealand. Edward, for example had previously lived in Invercargill but had moved to the much larger city of Christchurch when he returned, a place where he had few friends.

The second most frequently mentioned negative impression (3) was that the cost of living was higher than they had expected or remembered. This was particularly marked amongst those who had been away for longer periods, or who had returned in recent years, at a time of sharp annual rises in house prices. Tara (aged 20-30, project manager, Christchurch), for example, had the impressions that *'Buying houses has been very expensive and the cost of living in NZ is very expensive. We've noticed that even in the two years, two and a half years that we have been away. Just the cost of getting out, food, housing'*. There were also 2 negative impressions about the dullness of being home, especially in contrast with active life styles in the UK, in London in particular. Frank expressed this:

*'It was quite difficult believe it or not. Because you'd been used to the fast and frantic lifestyle and the busy nature of every night being out doing something or meeting friends in central London. It was a very busy lifestyle. Coming back to NZ it was just dead'*. (Frank, aged 30-40, local authority administrator, Christchurch)

Others reflected that they had realised that the lives they returned to would inevitably be different to those they had previously left behind in New Zealand, because of the different stages these represented in their life and career cycles. Mike summed up these feelings:

*'I'm ten years older now. I left with a girlfriend and came back with a wife. I guess [I left] with very little belongings, the minimum of money, and no job set up and that sort of thing. I came back with a job organised, a house organised before I even landed. But I'd say that I was more nervous coming back here than going over there. Yeah, I think so.....For many people it seems like the end of the adventure, you know. You've got to come back and take life seriously'. (Mike, aged 30-40, urban design, Auckland)*

### **Reintegration**

Resolution of 'reintegration shock' happens when the latter element – 'shock' – is either by passed or declines, and the returnees reintegrate into their home culture by being involved in new activities, by initiating future plans, by meeting new people, and by understanding their own society from a deeper and more sophisticated perspective. According to Ting-Toomey (1999, 250, some the returnees will resocialise into 'old' habits and patterns and intentionally stay away from differentiating themselves from those who did not have similar migration experiences. Some will alienate themselves and claim that they will never belong again to the home culture. They are more likely to migrate again and even accept a nomadic lifestyle. Some will become 'agents of change' (Ibid) infusing new knowledge, experiences and skills into their life back home. All three groups were observed in our sample.

Many non-UK EU countries respondents reported that they slipped easily back into the New Zealand lifestyle appreciating the *'space, being able to have a garden'* or enjoying *'quite a big house with a big section'*. While initially many of the migrants stayed with family on their return, they soon found their own accommodation, enjoying having the space NZ sections afford. *'I've got my own little fruit orchard happening...we grow our own lettuces...tomatoes, basil...It's nice to have something that's yours'* (Myli, University Student, Germany).

Jon-Paul (Research Scientist, Netherlands) was also pleasantly surprised to find that *'things have changed in NZ academia in many ways for the better...and the funding situation is certainly better'*. DD (English Teacher, Italy) was pleased to be back in New Zealand to *'continue post-graduate studies and...to build up blocks which will hopefully lead me to where I want to be professionally'*. A total of half (10) of the 'non-UK' sample -- three working migrants along with all seven students -- returned to NZ to attend universities where they completed their degrees. Only one of the respondents had not acquired some tertiary training. This finding supports previous studies, which claims that OE seekers tend to be more highly educated proportionately than "the New Zealand population as a whole" (Lidgard 1992:100, cited in Lidgard and Gilson, 2002, p, 113).

The initial impressions of the 'UK' returnees often changed as they settled back into life in New Zealand. One of the keys to this was findings jobs. Some started work almost immediately, but some felt in need of a rest, or 'a breather', before they fully reinserted themselves into life in New Zealand. When they were ready to work, most had found it relatively easy to secure jobs. A few had moved in with family when they first returned, but almost all the interviewees had subsequently found their own accommodation, with several buying properties as they started families and put down roots. In short, most had settled back into life in New Zealand relatively quickly and seemingly permanently. Larry (aged 20-30, lighting engineer, Auckland), for example commented that: *'it's as though you haven't really left, you haven't been away as long as you have from New Zealand. You slip back into the life that you had previously quite easily, which can be a bit disturbing'*. However, not all the returnees slipped back into their old lives in this seamless manner.

When asked to comment on the overall positive and negative aspects of returning to New Zealand, as opposed to first impressions, there was an approximate balance between the numbers of comments on the advantages

and the disadvantages of life in their home countries, although these have to be seen against an overall contentment with being home. In terms of the positive aspects, as might be expected, proximity to family and friends were mentioned most frequently (9), and getting good jobs and developing careers were also highly valued (5). There were also several (8) comments about the environment. These ranged from the weather, to lack of traffic and congestion, and the outdoor recreational opportunities. Jeff (aged 30-40, builder, Auckland), for example, commented on how having been abroad had showed him that *'You take things for granted when you live here, even just walking down the beach.* Other comments mentioned better housing, lifestyles, and *'a great place for children to grow up in'.*

As with the positive aspects, comments on the negative aspects were also largely predictable. The two most cited disadvantages (by 9 respondents in each case) were lower wages/material living standards, and the quietness of life. In the case of wages, working abroad had opened their eyes to the alternatives, as summarised by Mike: *'we really thought we would be getting a better lifestyle here in terms of salary as opposed to house prices and things like that. We were completely wrong'* (aged 30-40, urban design, Auckland). The dullness of life was expressed either in general terms relating to lack of social and cultural opportunities and excitement, or to particular features such as the history of Europe, or the lack of opportunities for international travel. Helen (aged 30-40, manager, Wellington) expressed this in terms of *'I can do a loop round Wellington in a morning. Whereas when you are in London there is always something to do, or somewhere to go, or a gallery to look at, or a museum or show to go to'.* There were also a few comments about the poor public transport in the larger New Zealand cities, and the friends and family left behind in the UK. It has to be emphasized, of course, that these comparisons are time and place specific. Many are comparing their lives in inner London, in an adventure seeking stage of their lives, with their more settled working and family lives after returning to New Zealand.

In practice, their impressions tend to be mixed and shift over time, with comparisons being made to particular aspects of their lives at different times. As Jeff (aged 30-40, builder, Auckland) explained this: *'It's nice to be home, but you do miss it as well. You go through phases when you've got a bit of hard time going on, you think [back] and there's no responsibility'*.

Sixty per cent (12) of the other EU countries migrants were involved in some way in their communities and felt that they belonged in their neighbourhood. In terms of feeling a sense of belonging in New Zealand, five of the respondents replied in the affirmative. However, for one respondent (Daria, High-school Student, France), the feeling of belonging is more directed at the city where she lives rather than the country as a whole. Serena (High-school Student, Germany) feels her sense of belonging in New Zealand is more with her family and friends, while for Sally (*Baccalaureate* Student, France) this feeling of belonging in New Zealand may only be "for now", as she plans to return to France in the near future. However, Kate (Au Pair, France) felt more patriotic when she returned to New Zealand as she had "more of a sense of what patriotism meant having lived somewhere else." For Fiona (NGO Volunteer, Belgium), the sense of belonging in New Zealand is more to do with her work in a government department rather than her experience of being overseas. Two of the respondents felt more "Kiwi" while living overseas. Jon-Paul (Research Scientist, Netherlands) sums up the experience, as follows:

*"When you're overseas you somehow switch into this mode where you support the All Blacks even if you didn't before. It's kind of an odd thing. Whereas once you come back to this place and you go oh god the rugby's on again."*

Myli (University Student, Germany) also adds that:

*"I don't think I appreciated New Zealand as much when I hadn't been away from New Zealand"* (Myli, University Student, Germany).

While the UK returnees had relatively mixed impressions about the positive and negative aspects of their lives back in New Zealand, they had stronger and more positive impressions about their sense of belonging to their neighbourhoods. A majority (14) considered that they belonged to their neighbourhood, either strongly or modestly so, while only four had no such feelings. This was a far more positive balance than in the UK. This was hardly surprising because some, such as Irene and Jeff, had moved back to the areas that they had grown up in. But most felt that they knew some of their neighbours sufficiently at least to greet them in the street. Carol, for example, had now lived for three years in the same area and explained that:

*I walk to work everyday the same way for the past three years, the same route so I see people I know everyday. There is one woman with a dog who sits outside the coffee shop every single day, you know, that sort of thing. I know my neighbours, I talk to my neighbours here, not hard out, but still I do. (Carol, aged 20-30, graphic designer, Wellington)*

The place specific nature of the experiences of migration and return are further borne out in that, of the four who did not feel a sense of belonging, two commented that this was due to living in the same types of areas as they had in London: *'I'm in quite a transient sort of area where I live, it doesn't have much of a neighbourhood to it'* (Frank, aged 30-40, local authority, Christchurch). The fact that a few had children (compared to only one in London) also contributed to this greater sense of belonging. It is also notable that, when asked whether they would trust their neighbours sufficiently to leave a key with them, the response was generally far more positive in New Zealand. Again, to some extent this may reflect the difference between living in areas of transient population and multi-occupation in London, and living in more stable and family-oriented neighbourhoods in New Zealand – rather than necessarily reflecting national differences.

Reintegration could be argued to be complete when the returnees start fully functioning in the home society and are actively initiating links with their host

countries. In particular, it was identified that all 'non-UK' respondents continue to have links with host countries through continued correspondence with friends, employers and host families. The preferred modes of correspondence are email, telephone, and Facebook. Two of the respondents who were students in France continue their links with France through studying French at university, and have joined the local Alliance *Française*. Others take advantage of the availability of European news channels in New Zealand such as *Deutsche Welle* and access to news websites such as *Le Monde Online* to keep up to date with events in their former host societies.

For the younger respondents, maintaining social links with others who had similar 'non-UK' migration experiences is an important part of their daily lives back in New Zealand. Pascale (Hotel Staff, France) and Sally (*Baccalaureate* Student, France) meet with ex-France residents socially. The importance of such social connections was explained by Sally as follows:

*"I think even with the people that I go to university with who have spent a year or more in France, a significant time, it was good to know that people understand... and also because I'm quite young, it's hard to, there's not always anyone there that would understand or who had similar experiences."*

By the time that we interviewed the UK returnees them – which could vary between months and decades after their returns – most had relatively few contacts with the UK, except sending cards or emails to their old friends who lived there, and an occasional holiday trip. Ten still had bank accounts in Britain, which had been kept to facilitate such return visits, and exceptionally one still owned a house there. Although some caution is necessary in understanding how migration has changed individual lives, in one aspect – the making of new friends – the evidence is clearer. Almost everyone interviewed in the 'UK' sample had made friends while in Britain, with whom they maintained contacts – although of varying levels of significance and frequency. Some of those friends were New Zealanders who had also

returned to their home country, but others were British and other nationals whom they stayed in touch with via emails and cards. They often felt a particular bond with other New Zealanders who had lived abroad. In part this was because they did not have the same shared experiences with those who had stayed at home. Frank expressed this in terms of a different outlook as well as the bonding nature of their experiences:

*'they [non migrants] don't really want to know, mainly because they haven't experienced, so they can't relate to what you are talking about. A lot of the people who didn't go overseas are more focused on painting their fence and having kids, which is cool, I'll probably end up that way myself at some point. ...You have a special bond. I think it's only because you had those times together. (Frank, aged 30-40, local authority administrator, Christchurch)*

Others expressed this bonding in terms of being *'good to share things with people you'd been away and gone through similar experiences with'* (Larry, aged 20-30, lighting engineer, Auckland), and that it was just *'good to reminisce'* (Andrea, aged 20-30, administrator, Christchurch). However, a minority did not consider that that they were any closer or had more in common with other migrants than with non migrants. Richard (aged 20-30, company lawyer, Christchurch) explained that for him the key to this had been his wife's pregnancy which meant that *'our circle of friends is changing a little bit because of the baby coming. Obviously we're meeting and dealing with other people with young families more'*. In practice, we can speculate that over time others may also experience a similar weakening in their feelings of shared identities and bonding with other migrants.

Since their return, most of those interviewed had had contacts with the UK, but only at the level of networks of friends and family. None had direct business or employment links, except that one worked for a company that also had a branch in the UK. Most would be happy to have more contacts with

the UK, but essentially at the level of tourism and visiting family and friends – and, indeed, more than a third had retained bank accounts to facilitate this.

### **Perceived Gains**

For 85% of the non-UK returnees, the time spent abroad was reflective of the Big OE, constrained by either a one-year student visa or the two-year working holiday visa. The other three migrants stayed away for a combination of personal and career/study reasons. GB worked in Ireland for 4 years after an initial two years in England and returned home with his wife after a total of 6 years abroad. Only three of the migrants considered moving to another country rather than returning to New Zealand but could not find jobs that suited them. The other 85% were happy to return and pick up their lives in New Zealand at that time.

While only some returnees could be considered to be bi-cultural (people who are at home in more than only one culture) upon their return to the country of residence, most of the returnees variously reported experiencing a degree of acculturation (sometime resulting in negative and sometime and positive reactions towards the hosting culture). Analysing responses of 42 in-depth interviews using Rhinesmith's ten-member model of intercultural adjustment presented a compelling story of NZ sojourners experiencing the UK and non-UK Europe in all the richness and controversy of emotions. Our initial assumption was supported – NZ migrants staying in Europe for more than 1 year underwent a typical 'W curve' in their cross-cultural adjustment (be they stationed in a non-UK country or in the UK). However importantly, this study discovered a very positive validation of all the 'ups' and 'downs' in terms of personal gains from these experiences. The majority of the returnees enjoyed their experiences in non-UK EU countries determined to make the most of the opportunities presented. For most, the positives far outweighed the negatives *'I mean I loved the whole time there. I got mugged twice and in hindsight I am glad, which is to say that some rubbish happened but I'm glad I did it all (AR,*

High-school Student, France). Robert (Farm Worker, Ireland) loved the challenge of meeting different people and the variety of work: *'you realised you were over in Ireland and you just had to get on and do your job and be open-minded and move on'*.

When asked about the impact of their experiences 90% (18) of the non-UK respondents considered their OE to be a life-changing event. Comments range from *'I feel really lucky that I was able to do that because it has changed the way I look at things, do things and appreciate things'* to it being a chance to *'learn from everything and develop and mature as an adult'*. Serena (High-school Student, Germany) felt that her time in Germany had shaped her subsequent career choices and the opportunity of *'taking up the challenges and having the courage to step outside of your comfort zone'* was invaluable. Another returnee, who has Irish ancestors, said, *'I feel I understand myself a little bit really. I understand my culture and where I came from'* (GB, Civil Technician, Ireland). Whilst some of the high school students at times missed their families and friends, they all agreed that their education experience in the EU was a pivotal point in their lives *'it definitely had a huge impact on what I'm doing now and who I am'* (AR, France).

In the case of the 'UK' sample, responses to a question about how their lives would have been different if they had not migrated to the UK, indicated that the sojourners felt that their lives had changed as a result of these experiences (with only one exception). The main set of comments centered on changes to their personality, emphasizing both being more self-confident and having a more cosmopolitan outlook. Tara was one of those who thought that she was now more open in her opinions about other people and cultures:

*You do see how narrow minded New Zealanders can be in their opinions and things when you have been away and been exposed to lots of different cultures, and you do realise that we are very set in our ways in some ways* (Tara, aged 20-30, project manager, Christchurch)

Pete (aged 20-30, film production, Auckland) eloquently expressed the changes in self confidence that were experienced by several respondents: *'I think I wouldn't be as confident, I wouldn't be as outgoing, as comfortable in my own skin as I am now having experienced what I experienced'*. Migration therefore does seem to have been a life-changing event for many but by no means all of those interviewed. It is of course difficult to know how their lives really would have changed if they had not migrated, because they can not predict how other events may have significantly influenced their lives. This was expressed in Edward's (aged 30-40, engineer, Wellington) reflective comment that: *'it's like everything, it's like sliding doors, one door would lead you another way. So I mean it would be different but I can't say it would be better or worse'*.

Seven of the non-UK migrants mentioned that their work experiences in Europe had increased their skills by exposing them to opportunities that were not available back home. Jon-Paul (Research Scientist, Netherlands) interacted with *'the top British scientists from twenty different universities. It was basically a dream'*. Fiona (NGO Volunteer, Belgian) who studied and learnt to read French as part of her employment went to a human rights meeting at the UN in Geneva *'I was the NGO representative and I got to sit there for a week, just to observe'*. A couple of the migrants found that their jobs evolved as they took on more and more responsibility, receiving pay increases. Four of the thirteen managed people and/or were promoted. Some like Pascale (Hotel Staff, France) took the opportunity to learn skills that she would not have acquired easily back in New Zealand *'being able to come back here [NZ] and say I can cook French cuisine. Gosh, it was great'*. These skills enabled her to get work as a *'chef rather than a waitress...even though I didn't have any qualifications'* on her return to New Zealand. Sarah also felt that her opportunity to move from a housekeeping position in the Embassy in the Netherlands to one of event management provided her with skills that were *'instrumental for getting the job back here'*.

All of the non-UK migrants found that the negative aspects of their jobs were balanced by positive aspects and several of the migrants felt that their positions provided them with *'a real challenge'*. For Jon-Paul, a research scientist, the job provided an opportunity to use equipment worth over ten million dollars that was *very cutting edge...and the infrastructure and resources one had available was basically without parallel, pretty much anywhere in the world'*. Others loved the travel involved in their job, while some loved *'access to a world you'd never really see behind the scenes [of Embassy life]'*, while for others, it was the excitement of living in Paris or practising the language. Only two of the thirteen mentioned their co-workers or job situation in a negative light.

The two most frequently expressed opinions in the UK sample (by six respondents in each case) were that they would be doing different jobs and that their personalities had changed in some ways. Comments about differences in their employment relate both to the experience they obtained abroad, and to changes in perceptions about the type of jobs that they wanted back in New Zealand. Graham (aged 20-30, administrator, Wellington), who now worked in police administration, considered that he had only got his job as a result of his international experience, from which he *'learnt a lot, saw a lot and experienced a lot of cultures. Expanded my horizons as well.'* There were also some comments about how individuals performed their jobs, rather than the type of job that they now did. For example, Helen (aged 30-40, manager, Wellington) believed that *'I think it's been hugely beneficial in terms of knowing the kind of opportunities that are out there, giving a different perspective on how you do your work'*. Bill, a research scientist, also felt that he was able to perform his role far more effectively as a result of having worked in a British university. Comparing himself to those who had not worked abroad, he considered that he had far more contacts and publications but also the benefit of the reflexive knowledge obtained from working in a different system:

*'the fact that you have worked in a different academic system or several academic systems and several different funding systems just*

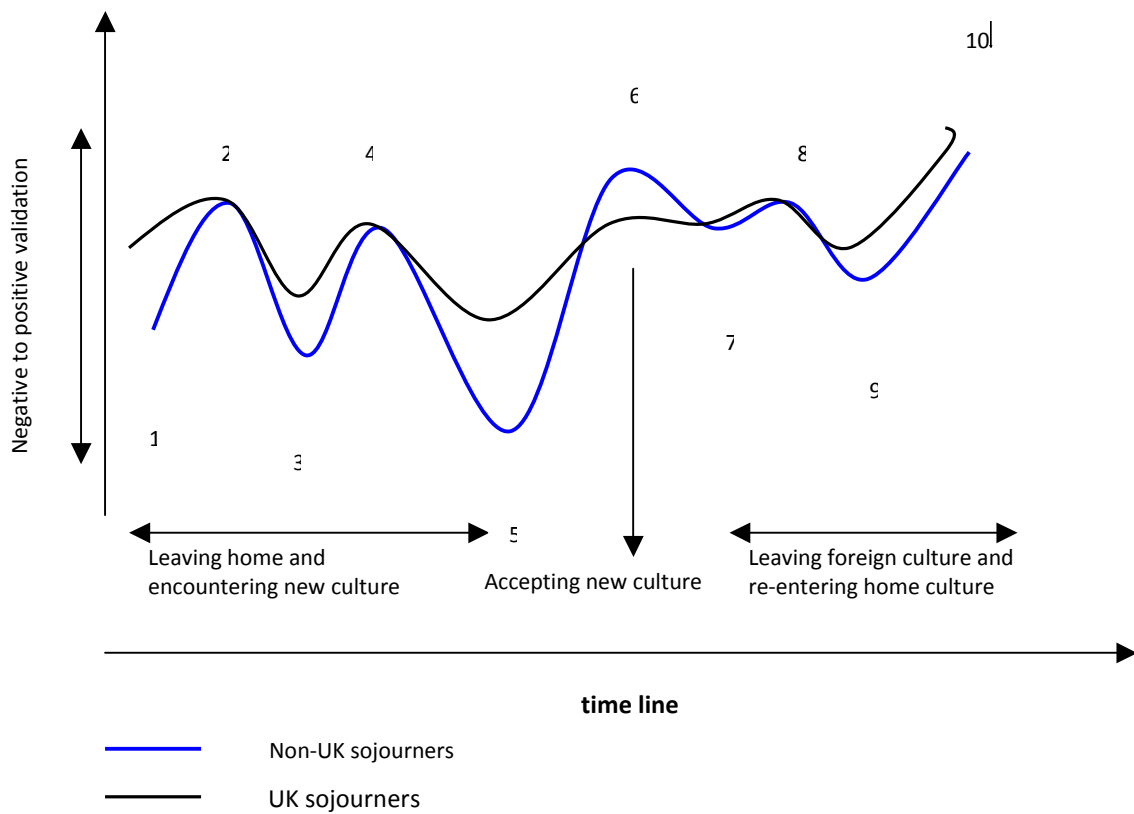
*gives you an inherent advantage because so many of the things that happen overseas tend to trickle or slowly make their way to New Zealand*'. (Bill, aged 30-40, academic, Christchurch)

All returnees in our study agreed that their study and experiences enriched their lives and opened their eyes to the possibilities of further study or work opportunities either, at home in New Zealand, or abroad in the future. Due to this increased confidence, it is not surprising that many reported that they may leave the country again. Only three of the non-UK respondents felt that they were back to stay permanently, while another was unsure. Overall, 80% of those interviewed said they would like to travel again and did not necessarily believe they would be staying in New Zealand permanently. Several thought that they might go and live in Australia at some stage, while others felt certain that they would return to Europe *'I definitely want to move overseas. I want to do my Masters overseas for the psycho-social challenge'* (Daria, University Student, France).

## **DISCUSSION**

Even though sojourner's intercultural adjustment happens at differing speeds, the Rhinesmith model does provide an useful descriptive framework for analysing changes through the migration cycle – in this case, as recounted by returned migrants. According to Ting-Toomey (1999, 252), the W-curve models of intercultural adjustment (and the Rhinesmith model is one example of this family of models) help to “contribute to the holistic understanding of the psychological, affective, and identity changes in the new arrivals” and stress the “importance of understanding the role of ‘re-entry culture shock’”. Our findings supported our two initial arguments. Firstly, in their intercultural adjustment, both UK and non-UK sojourners underwent broadly similar emotional ‘rollercoasters’ (even though one group moved across very similar cultures – i.e. from a developed English-speaking country (NZ) to a developed

English-speaking country (UK)). Secondly, the non-UK group of returnees reported deeper 'dips' and higher 'peaks' on this intercultural 'ride' in comparison to the UK respondents. Predictably, the former group's exposure to the unfamiliar was more intense. By way of illustrating the differences, we plot contrasting, idealised W-curves to show the differences between NZ migrants to non-UK countries vs. the UK (Figure 2).



The first 'valley' – *initial anxiety* (1 on Figure 2) – was plotted lower for the non-UK respondents. NZ migrants to the UK reported less negative feelings at this stage due to the substantial pre-departure information they had obtained about their overseas destination from those who had previously, or were currently living in the UK. In contrast, information on life in the non-UK locations was relatively limited – respondents communicated with smaller numbers with experiences of living in these destinations. Interestingly, a significant amount of pre-departure orientation for this group came from other, non-personal sources (books, movies, e-resources, etc.).

While both groups reported a surge of positive emotions in the beginning of their sojourn (*initial elation* (2) which was marked on the Figure on the same level), the following 'dip' of *initial culture shock* (3) was again generally deeper for the non-UK group. Arguably, the adjustment to the everyday general environment involved a higher degree of intensity and difficulty for non-UK migrants. This was aggravated by linguistic differences for sojourners to European continental countries. In contrast, the UK sample reported a supportive extended network of friends, relatives and other NZ migrants on the ground who assisted new arrivals in overcoming the challenges of their initial adjustment to a new environment. Predictably, linguistic competence contributed to a reduced initial shock.

For both groups of NZ migrants, the *superficial adjustment* (4) stage was coloured by positive emotions (yet not as intensely positive as they had been during the initial 'honeymoon stage'). Their arrival at this stage was linked to the formation of close circles of friends but, most importantly, to the fact that the sojourners had opportunities to explore the rich history and culture of Europe and travel easily around the Continent. This corresponded to the initial goal of many of the NZ migrants in our sample -- to discover Europe's civilisation and culture directly. Meeting this realistic goal resulted in positive valuation of their 'European' experience in both groups, and they are therefore positioned at approximately similar 'peaks' at this stage.

The downward curve in the *mental isolation* stage (5) was again deeper for the non-UK group of migrants in our sample. Challenges in job adjustment and adjustment to interaction were reported as the most intense experiences at this stage, and these difficulties contributed to the stronger negative perceptions. Many non-UK migrants recognized that they still had difficulties in fully adjusting to their professional environments (whether in the office or classroom) and that their language skills were still not adequate to strike meaningful relationships with the host nationals. In contrast, the UK migrants registered a much milder 'dip', mostly due to their reporting that other migrants (usually from NZ, or even Australia or South Africa – all English-speaking, and with broadly similar experiences as young migrants to the UK) as the first immediate refuge to avoid isolation. This resulted in a peculiar situation where diaspora ties served as a 'safety net' to smoothen the severity of the cultural shock at this phase of intercultural adjustment, yet simultaneously contributed to a further isolation from the host community, thereby weakening their engagement with the local culture and interactions with the host nationals in the future.

We suggest that the absence of such a Diasporic 'safety net' for the non-UK sojourners led to a stronger culture shock which, in turn, triggered a more resilient and creative reaction among the migrants to survival in their professional and personal worlds. This was often accompanied by a feeling of pride in mastering a local language and having an opportunity to communicate meaningfully with locals. This ultimately resulted in a more positive validation of the next stage – *integration* (6) – by the non-UK respondents, compared to their UK counterparts. Illustratively, many non-UK respondents reported a pronounced feeling of loyalty and affinity to their host countries, while a corresponding feeling of 'Britishness' was not registered in the majority of the UK sample. The UK responses were specifically marked by the feeling of being transient in British society from the onset of this sojourn.

Both groups experienced a *return anxiety* stage (7), yet for both groups it was a rather shallow 'valley'. Both the UK and non-UK sojourners commented on a strong 'pull home' and reflected largely positive predispositions before returning to NZ. This stage was plotted at a similar level for both groups.

For most returnees, the *re-entry elation* stage (8) was a fleeting experience morphing almost immediately into *re-entry shock* (9). The latter was not found in their job adjustment cycle -- the majority of respondents reported that they did not have problems securing jobs at home and that their new skills let them propel their career in NZ. Interpersonal interactions were also not a very strong factor -- most reported a warm welcome from friends and family, although some found their previous networks somehow changed or unappreciative of the sojourners' new experiences. The biggest factor contributing to the re-entry culture shock was reported in terms of adjustment to the everyday environment. More specifically, the respondents from both groups were re-learning how to deal with the geographic isolation of NZ (no more 2-hour flights or even a relatively short drive to another very different country!). Some had to re-adjust to living in smaller communities (if they happened to live in a large metropolis in Europe, more specifically in London). Some reported lacking a feeling of adventure and discovery which accompanied their time in Europe. Due to the many similarities between the UK and non-UK reports, the re-entry shock stage was plotted at the same level for both groups in our study.

The *reintegration* stage (10) was illustrated by the responses of three types in both group: first, those who re-entered the old routines and roles 'putting on the shelf' their overseas experiences (the minority of the respondents); second, those who feel they cannot 'fit in' the life in NZ and plan to migrate further (a relatively large group, although a minority, in both UK and non-UK samples), and finally, those who managed to integrate positive experiences and valuable skills they had acquired in Europe into their personal and professional life in NZ (the majority of the respondents in our two samples).

The latter group of migrants is argued to be central to the argument that skilled migration and return to Europe contributes to NZ's eventual 'brain gain', rather than brain drain. The major difference between the two cohorts in our study was a stronger feeling of affinity and loyalty to their host countries developed by the other-EU-countries migrants. It notably marked their reintegration and their attempt to keep touch with the host communities on both personal and professional levels.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

There is a need for a more inclusive discourse concerning the causes and dimensions of outward and return migrations, which deviate from the usual focus on Australia or the UK, the two most popular destinations for travelling New Zealanders. As Cassarino argues (2004, 270):

[...] the growing diversity inherent in international migration flows [...] suggests that the analytical and interpretative framework of return migration needs to be broadened. This should not only refer to labour migrants, whether skilled or unskilled, but also to migrant students, asylum seekers and refugees.

The information gathered from the interviews suggests several avenues for future studies of return migration in general, and in NZ specifically. Firstly, New Zealand migration to the EU countries was distinctively temporary and fixed in nature for most of the respondents in this study. Returning home to New Zealand was planned at the outset, and most migrants return home at their specified time partly because much of this mobility has been regulated by the two year working holiday visa arrangements between New Zealand and an EU country. Although the migrations studied in this paper were mostly relatively short term, they were considered to have had a strong impact on the

sojourners' lives. There is some evidence of acquiring new skills on the job, and very little of obtaining formal qualifications, or pension rights. However, most of the migrants we interviewed emphasised how they had benefited in other ways from their sojourns to Europe: becoming more self confident, making new friends, developing a more cosmopolitan outlook. In a few instances, they compared their current lives in the UK and non-UK EU countries unfavourably to their lives after return – missing the travel, the cultural diversity, and the historical legacy and the sheer excitement of life abroad.

Secondly, the information gathered from the interviews suggests that economic factors are only one of a long list of considerations for New Zealanders in their decision to travel to the EU and live in one of the Member States. The most commonly cited reasons for the outward migration to the non-UK countries included the opportunity to experience different cultures, learn a new language, study and the challenge of living outside of one's comfort zone in a country where the first language is not English. Employment, personal relationships and family reunification were also cited as motivational factors in both UK and non-UK samples. However, the most common reason among the respondents for their travel to the EU was cultural. As suggested by Inkson and Carr (2004, 30), in considering the "brain drain" issue, it is important to look "beyond the crude calculus of financial gain". The respondents' desire for cultural exploration, adventure and self-development indeed describes the "Big OE" experience that has become an important tradition for New Zealanders (Chadee & Cutler, 1996). Although some of the migration resembles more conventional labour migration, much of it is constituted of the 'Big OE' with young migrants being motivated more by adventure, travel, and visiting or accompanying family and friends, than by economic motives. In this vein, the economic approaches to understanding the phenomenon of return migration do not adequately account for the general non-economic nature of the respondents' motivation to emigrate to the EU.

Finally, migrants' impressions of life in the UK and non-UK EU countries were very much shaped by where they lived (e.g. for many respondents in the UK-sample it was in areas of multiple occupation in parts of inner London with a strong presence of other international migrants, particularly but not only other 'Antipodeans'). The different levels of "success" experienced by the respondents. All agreed that their study and employment experiences enriched their lives and opened their eyes to the possibilities of further study or work opportunities at home in New Zealand. Some mentioned that their work experiences had increased their skills by exposing them to opportunities that were not available in New Zealand. A large number also stated that the skills and qualifications acquired overseas had enabled them to advance either academically or in the field of employment at home. Those respondents who had extended their stay overseas did so in order to save as much money as possible prior to returning home. Although the returnees strongly value their experiences of living and working in the EU, this is mostly seen as a discrete chapter in their lives which is now closed, as very few consider further migration to any country including their previous countries of sojourn. Instead, they entering new stages of the life cycle, as they focus on their careers and, in many cases, settle down with partners, and start families. They would strongly recommend that others repeat their experiences, but – despite some wishful longings, and fond memories – have no plans to re-migrate to Europe.

To conclude, further research is necessary in order to ascertain exactly how NZ can best utilise the experiences and knowledge of the returnees, and the connections formed by these circular migrants. Lidgard & Gilson (2002, p.101) argue that:

The significance of studying return migration lies in the fact that skilled emigrants bring back not only their specialist skills acquired from their education in New Zealand but also their additional skills and experience acquired while living overseas. In addition, they also help to establish and intensify networks connecting New

Zealand and New Zealanders to their previous countries of residence.

Emigrants are not only a valuable resource in terms of career capital. As the Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Study (1998-1999) reported there are:

marked difference between [returned] emigrants and non-emigrants in terms of their skills, health and personality. Emigrants were better qualified, more intelligent and from more advantaged backgrounds, they were leaner and fitter; and they were happier, less stress-prone, less volatile and more thrill-seeking (Milne 2001, 451).

The difficulty in identifying and indeed developing a model of return migration in the New Zealand context can indeed be attributed to the intrinsic link between migration, culture and identity among New Zealanders. New Zealand's isolation is both a benefit and a hindrance for many of its well-educated youth. Its isolation coupled with its colonial history shapes a sense of curiosity concerning the rest of the world along with a fierce pride in New Zealand's independence and point of difference. As described by one respondent:

*To me that is kind of kiwiana anyway. We all want to travel and see the world and yet still want to come back and say I'm kiwi and I'll support NZ and I'm proud of that.*

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