East-West Expatriate Employment Relationship: A Multi-Foci Perspective of the Psychological Contract

Wang Xiao

A Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Adam Smith Business School

College of Social Science

University of Glasgow

September 2019

Abstract

The research into expatriation has made great contribution to the understanding of issues surrounding international human resource management. However, the academic discussion around the subject of expatriate management remains Western-centred, neglecting the use of expatriates staffing in multinational corporations (MNCs) from Eastern countries. Accordingly, existing expatriate research has been demonstrated to be approached and analysed from two independent perspectives: the organization (e.g. studies into expatriate selection and training) or the expatriates themselves (e.g. expatriate adjustment), there is a scarcity of literature examining the interactions between expatriates and organization, along with restricted theoretical perspectives adopted (e.g. dyadic employee-supervisor relationship). As a response, this thesis advances a multi-foci perspective of psychological contract to depict the social context arising in the course of interactions between expatriates and different organizational units and/or agents.

By adopting a multi-foci perspective to the psychological contract, the overall objective of this thesis is to explore how the content of Eastern expatriates' psychological contracts changes over the tenure of the international assignment in Western locations. With an overall study sampling frame of 35 expatriates, a qualitative single-embedded case study research design based on a Chinese multinational corporation is utilized in order to capture the change process of contract content. The thesis provides evidence demonstrating that individuals have simultaneous multiple psychological contracts, each with a different focus. The contracts held by the Chinese expatriates in this sample contained predominately balanced contract beliefs, which contrasted sharply to what the other authors found to be salient beliefs (e.g. transactional contract beliefs) for expatriates based on Western samples. With regards to the change of expatriates' psychological contract, this thesis found that the perceptions of employees regarding the obligations of their employers changed differentially over each stage of the international assignment, rather than in a linear form as suggested by the Western literature. Overall, the findings showed that expatriates described the psychological contracts which, at the pre-departure stage, started with highly balanced beliefs regarding employer obligations and relatively low relational and transactional contract beliefs. Then there was a reduction in balanced and an increase in relational contract beliefs after initial entry, followed by an increase in balanced contract beliefs, a slightly increase in beliefs about

transactional obligations and a decrease in relational contract beliefs at the subsequent stage, which was further followed by an increase in balanced employer obligations at the repatriation stage. In contrast, perceived employee obligations exhibited non-change patterns generally. With regard to contract makers, the findings showed that expatriates were psychological contracting with a wide range of organizational agents at each stage of the international assignment cycle, with the exception of the host-unit line managers during the initial and subsequent assignment stage of the international assignment cycle, there were no signs on the succession of organizational agents. Further, while perceived employer obligations were found to be foci-specific, employee obligations were foci-ambiguous.

The findings from this thesis provide insights for both academic research and managerial practices in the following ways; first, this research contributes to the understanding of linking two separate literatures (expatriate and psychological contract), yielding important insights into complex managerial problems. Second, the benefits to expatriate literature are that it provides insights into the field of expatriates' employment relationship that have received limited attention in literature. Third, by employing expatriates assigned from Eastern national contexts operating in Western countries, this research could not only contribute to the understanding of the expatriation process in these regions, but also to the psychological contract development in the context of Eastern-Western engagement.

Contents

List of Tables

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisors: Dr. Sarah Robinson and Prof. Robert Paton for the continuous support of my PhD study and my life. Together they have done for me what I believe all good supervisors could: extended my thinking and offered encouragement. Their immense knowledge and patience have truly helped me in all the time of research and writing of this thesis. Dr. Sarah Robinson, as my Principal Supervisor, I have to say special thanks for your generosity in sharing your knowledge and time with me, I would not get to this final point if it weren't for your help and patience-thank you. To my very first supervisor who started me on this PhD journey, Dr. Judy Pate, thank you for guiding me into the world of academia and helping me shape what this PhD has since become.

I would also like to thank my family, my lovely Mum and Dad. Thank you for your support, for always having confidence in me. Without your precious support, it would not be possible to progress this research.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to my wife, Chen Ruihua. Thank you for providing endless love, personal support, encouragement, motivation and inspiration throughout these years.

Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Printed Name: __Xiao Wang______

Signature: ____   ___

Abbreviations

MNCs: Multinational corporations

HRM: Human Resource Management

IRHM: International Human Resource Management

POS: Perceived Organizational Support

LMX: Leader-Member Exchange

TMX: Team-Member Exchange

EOR: Employee-Organization Relationships

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The twenty-first century has witnessed the extraordinary ascent of global trade and investment, with an estimated figure of US$ 1.2 trillion in 2018 (UNCTAD, 2018). Predicting this growth, global foreign direct investment (FDI) remained a key contributor in most regions (UNCTAD, 2018). In this context, global investment is frequently observed in the event of corporations expanding from a home country to other countries and *vice versa* (Castles, 2013); this is particularly the case for investment that involves long-term resources commitment in a foreign location, which points towards the use of international assignments or expatriation (Clarke *et al*., 2017). Expatriation is broadly situated within the field of international human resource management (IRHM); it involves the relocation of expatriates to a subsidiary located in foreign environment for a pre-determined time (often more than one year in one term) to achieve specific organizational objectives and then to repatriate back to home country (Shaffer *et al.,* 2012; Kraimer *et al*., 2016). The implication of this activity is twofold: from the organization's perspective, international assignments are facilitated for a varied range of strategic purposes such as fostering innovative capabilities (Jimenéz-Jimenéz *et al*., 2014), transferring corporate philosophy (Scullion and Paauwe, 2005), controlling and aligning the operations of subsidiaries with those of headquarters (Paik and Sohn, 2004). It becomes a recognized prerequisite step, in the employees' view, to advance career prospects (Kraimer *et al*., 2016).

However, challenges remain as to the effective management of international assignment. Notably, research has identified issues of international managers' retention where expatriates tend to return early from the assignment or quit the parent company while on the assignment, as well as the difficulties relating to expatriates' adjustment to work and life overseas (Collings *et al.,* 2007; Reiche and Harzing, 2010). These issues, when compounded with international business competition as well as the challenges associated with the cultural and economic distances between home and host country, have the potential to lead to considerable cost to organizations in both economic and strategic terms (e.g. failure of expatriation: Collings *et al*., 2007). With this recognition, it is perhaps not surprising that the multifaceted aspects of international assignment have been one of the highly researched topics for scholars in the fields of human resource management (HRM) and organizational behaviour (Kraimer *et al*., 2016; Hocking *et al.*, 2004; Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.*, 2005).

1.2 Expatriation-current research and limitations

The academic literature around this subject generally follows the international assignment cycle, with studies focused on pre-departure selection and training (Tung, 1981; Mendenhall and Oddou, 1988; Ang *et al.,* 2007; Morris and Robie, 2001; Littrell *et al.*, 2006), followed by a focus of later studies on cross-culture adjustment (Black and Gregersen, 1991; Hechanova *et al.*, 2003; Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.*, 2005), leading through to more recent attention to issues around repatriation (Bossard and Peterson 2005; Lee and Liu, 2006; Reiche and Harzing, 2010; Cho *et al.,* 2013). However, despite of 40 years of academic contribution, a number of authors argue that the social interactions surrounding expatriates remains underdeveloped and its implications for examining the various issues of the international assignment cycle have been not fully investigated (Harrison, 2004; Takeuchi *et al.,* 2010; Kraimer *et al.,* 2016). More specifically, much of expatriate research into the aforementioned fields have adopted a dual-track interest: firstly, in the practices organizations use for expatriate management; and secondly, in expatriates themselves.

In the first track, expatriate research has largely focused on the HRM activities that organizations use to promote cross-national effectiveness of assignees (Tung, 1982; Collings *et al.,* 2009; Ang *et al.,* 2007; Lee and Liu, 2006), so an organizational perspective guided previous research. The research on expatriation had assumed that adjustment was key to effectiveness of international assignments and that selection and training programs should be designed to facilitate adjustment (Tung, 1982; Mendenhall *et al.*, 1987). This notion significantly influenced the research agenda of global staffing, emphasizing key issues of those HRM practices in this field where selection and training were essential means to achieve the purpose of improved expatriate performance (Collings *et al.,* 2009). In the second track, expatriate research looked at the expatriates themselves. This line of research has centred on the concept of cross-culture adjustment and shared "an exclusive focus on expatriates themselves and variables associated with them" (Takeuchi, 2010: 1043) such as previous international experience (Caligiuri *et al.*, 2009), personality traits (Peltokorpi, 2008), organizational commitment (Takeuchi *et al.,* 2009) and task performance (Kraimer and Wayne, 2004). Therefore, much of the expatriate research to date has considered expatriates from either an organizational or employee perspective; and relatedly, the theoretical lens that addressed the previously mentioned areas was often limited to a stress perspective (Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.,* 2005), that is, the uncertainties associated with the international assignments (e.g. role ambiguity) were considered as stressors, causing a lack of adjustment. This, in turn, led to negative consequences such as job dissatisfaction and poor performance (Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.,* 2005). As a result of this focus, and of particular importance to this thesis, there is limited theoretical and empirical attention devoted to the examination of how these two perspectives interact namely: the interplay between the employee and the organization, along with a restricted focus for depicting a comprehensive picture of the expatriate's social interactions with potentially diversified stakeholders (e.g. host country nationals and the headquarter) and its role on expatriates' outcomes.

Research into the interactions between expatriates and organization is typically restricted to either different forms of organizational support or dyadic employee-supervisor relationships. For example, studies have looked at the supporting practices provided by the organizations, such as logistical support (Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.*, 2005) and firm-level practices (e.g. career support programs: Bonache *et al.*, 2001). Others have found the positive role of perceived social networks on expatriate effectiveness such as those represented by perceived organizational support (POS: an indication of perception of resource and support actually received from the organization: Chen, 2010) and leader-member exchange (LMX: the quality of relationships formed with immediate managers: Kraimer *et al*., 2001). Although offering a fresh perspective on understanding expatriate outcomes, these studies into the relationship between expatriates and organizations tended to restrict their focus on either different forms of organizational support or dyadic employee-supervisor relationships (Takeuchi, 2010; Perera *et al.*, 2017), thus neglecting other stakeholders in their social circumstances, such as "spouse/family members, parent company, and host country nationals" (Takeuchi, 2010: 1041). As such, while acknowledging the role of social exchange perspectives in furthering expatriate research (Takeuchi *et al.,* 2009; Takeuchi, 2010), some studies have highlighted the need to examine constructs beyond the perceived organizational support and leader-member exchange to conduct an in-depth examination of the expatriate's interactions with their key stakeholders and its role on expatriates' outcomes (Henderson *et al.*, 2008; Takeuchi, 2010).

There are a handful of studies that have recognized the construct of the psychological contract as a valuable framework in examining the relationships between expatriates and organizations in predicting expatriate outcomes (Yan *et al.*, 2005; Halsberger and Brewster 2009; Ruiter *et al.,* 2016). In definition, the psychological contract referred to "an individual's beliefs regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between the focal person and another party" (Rousseau, 1989: 123). The notion of the psychological contract is a micro concept of employment relationship using social exchange as theoretical basis; it has been put forward as a framework for understanding employee-employer exchange relationship (Coyle-Shapiro *et al.,* 2008). Given this line of research is situated at the intersection of expatriation research and psychological contract theory, it is first necessary to briefly present the general background and to clarify the key terms regarding the psychological contract. Academic interests in the origin of psychological contract can be traced back to the work of Argyris (1960), Levinson *et al*., (1962) and Schein (1965), in which this construct was introduced and assessed in the domain of the employment relationship (Conway and Briner, 2005). It was the work of Rousseau (1989) that re-conceptualized the notion of the psychological contract, which had directed the contemporary contract research (Taylor and Tekleab, 2004). According to Rousseau (1989), the psychological contract is defined as “an individual’s belief regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between the focal person and another party” (Rousseau, 1989: 123). In an organizational context, this pointed towards an individual employee’s perceived current and future reciprocal obligations with an employer (Rousseau, 1995). In her conceptualization, the employer was also referred to as the contract maker “who conveys some form of future commitment” to an employee (Rousseau, 1995: 60); this individual is usually represented by organizational agents such as an employee’s immediate manager (Lewis and Taylor, 2001; Tekleab and Taylor, 2003). Moreover, the nature of individual employee’s reciprocal obligations with an employer is captured by the content of the psychological contract. This depicts the inducements that an individual believes his/ her employer has promised and is obligated to provide (e.g., performance support: Rousseau and Tijoriwala, 1998) and the contributions that an individual believes he/ she has promised and is obligated to perform in return (e.g. loyalty: Rousseau and Tijoriwala, 1998). Breach of contract occurs when the employee perceives that the employer has failed to deliver such inducements (Rousseau, 1995). This is the area that generated the most empirical attention in the field of the psychological contract (Rousseau, 1990; Conway and Briner, 2005).

There is a general recognition that using the psychological contract in furthering the expatriate research represents a promising direction (Sherman and Morley, 2016; Ruiter *et al,* 2016). For example, in comparison to POS and LMX, psychological contract depicted an individual employee’s perceived resource exchange between the focal person and another party in a social exchange relationship (Rousseau, 1989), and in this way, overlapping with LMX and POS (Shore *et al*., 2004). However, as it is possible for individuals to form multiple social exchange relationships with various organizational agents differing in hierarchy of authority in organizations, they may develop corresponding psychological contracts pertaining to each of these exchange partners (Marks, 2001; Conway and Briner, 2005). In this regard, the construct of the psychological contract may allow for the emergence of complex interactions surrounding an individual (e.g. an expatriate) by outlining the expected reciprocal obligations for each of the exchange partners. However, much of expatriate research utilizing the psychological contract lens adopted a perspective that each expatriate establishes one psychological contract with the organization, and showed a strong focus on the immediate outcomes of expatriates' perceptions of contract fulfilment/breach events, where individuals believe the organization has met or failed to meet its perceived obligations (Ruiter *et al.,* 2016; Chen and Chiu, 2007; Chen, 2010). As a result of this focus, and of particular importance to this thesis, there is a scarcity of research looking at how expatriates' psychological contracts form and change over the tenure of international assignments through a multi-foci perspective of the psychological contract (the involvement of multiple parties in an expatriate' psychological contact).

The extent of research into expatriates' psychological contract is limited in three main ways. First, reviewed literature in this field mainly places attention on how expatriates respond to the evaluation of their psychological contract state (contract breach/fulfilment), mainly being addressed through a quantitative perspective. It has been found that the contract fulfilment is positively related to a range of expatriates' outcomes including expatriate adjustment (Guzzo *et al.*, 1994; Chen and Chiu, 2007; Chen, 2010), organizational commitment and turnover intention (Chi and Chen, 2007), performance (Lee and Sukoco, 2010) and intrinsic career success (Ruiter *et al.,* 2016). Furthermore, several studies developed conceptual work incorporating the psychological contract to explain aspects of the international assignment cycle (Yan *et al.*, 2005; Halsberger and Brewster 2009). Overall, the research into this strand adopted typically a variance theory perspective of the psychological contract, restricting itself largely to looking at correlations between groups of independent and dependent variables (e.g. expatriate adjustment). However, the psychological contract is dynamic and constantly renegotiated, meaning that the content of an individual's psychological contract changes over time (Robinson *et al.,* 1994; De Vos *et al.,* 2003, 2005). As such, these simplified causal relationships grounded on the variance theory perspective fail to consider psychological contracts as an ongoing process where an individual's psychological contract are formed and adjusted through multiple episodes (Hodgkinson and Ford, 2009: 118). Consequently, how expatriates' psychological contracts form and change throughout the international assignment cycle remains largely unknown.

The second limitation relates more to the research context; expatriation research has been criticized for showing an exclusive focus on expatriates from Western organizations operating in developing countries (Bonache and Brewster, 2001; Minbaeva and Michailova, 2004; Wang and Kanungo, 2004; Selmer, 2006). In particular, the majority of research on expatriate management remains Western-centred and the academic discussion is often limited to North America (Black *et al.,* 1991). Compared with a rich stream of research on multinational organizations from developed countries managing international human resource, there is a particular lack of direct discussion on the use of expatriates staffing from developing economies (Wang *et al.,* 2014; Clarke *et al.,* 2017). This has been described as a neglected phenomenon given the rapid rise of multinational organizations from developing markets (Wang *et al.,* 2014). The research context also has particular implications for expatriate studies using the psychological contract lens. To clarify, the psychological contract is a cultural phenomenon, and the cultural profile of a society, with elements such as values, attitudes, norms, and beliefs, may influence employment expectations (Hui *et al.*, 2004). Cognitive as well as motivational differences across cultures may also affect reactions to fulfilled/ unfulfilled expectations (Conway and Briner, 2002). The psychological contract, then, can be interpreted and constructed differently depending on the social context where the employment relationship is embedded (Rousseau and Schalk, 2000). Thus, in the view of differences between Western and Eastern societies and "their possible implication for reactions to psychological contract breach and the psychological contract process in general" (Rousseau and Schalke, 2000: 23), it is useful to ascertain the generalizability of findings in the extant literature to Eastern context.

Finally, the extant research on expatriates' psychological contract works from the viewpoint that each expatriate establishes one psychological contract with the organization (Chen and Chiu, 2009; Chen, 2010; Lee *et al.*, 2014; Sherman and Morley, 2016); accordingly, the organization as a whole is assumed to be the other party to the psychological contract of an expatriate (Marks, 2001; Lavelle *et al.*, 2007; Coyle-Shapiro and Parzefall, 2008). With reference to psychological contract literature, there is a scarcity of research attempting to explore who or what employees perceived to be employer perspective of the contract (Coyle-Shapiro and Parzefall, 2008). To date, research has yet to build theory around this point, and has tended to adopt an approach that examines an individual's perceived promise of exchange with a single "employer". However, organizations are large social groups in which the leadership, hierarchy and role differentiation are formally defined; individuals can experience role conflict as well as develop dual allegiance when interacting with two or more intra-organizational groups (Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006). There could be further complexity in the case of expatriates, since expatriates work across multinational corporations and could view many agents of the wider organization as the potential exchange partners (Sherman and Morley, 2016; Pate and Scullion, 2018). Therefore, the approach of viewing an organization as a single contract maker tends to overlook the social context arising in the course of interactions between expatriates and different organizational units and/or agents (Conway and Briner, 2005; Perera *et al.*, 2017).

1.3 Research objectives and thesis outline

Given the limitations outlined above, the overall objective of this thesis is to explore how East-West expatriates develop multiple psychological contracts through the cycle of international assignment, namely: pre-departure stage, initial entry, subsequent assignment stage and repatriation. In addressing this research objective, the content of the psychological contract beliefs of individual expatriates at pre-departure stage first need to be identified to offer a start point. On this base, this thesis will address how does this content of expatriates' psychological contracts change over the remaining stages of international assignment cycle (This will be specifically justified in literature review chapter section). The corresponding research questions are developed as follows:

Research question 1

What is the content of the psychological contract beliefs of individual expatriates at pre-departure stage?

(a) What are the other parties with which expatriates create psychological contracts at pre-departure stage?

(b) How does the presence of multiple parties influence the content of the psychological contract beliefs of expatriates at pre-departure stage?

Research question 2

How does individual expatriates' psychological contracts change across perceived employee and employer obligations over the stages following pre-departure? (initial entry, subsequent and repatriation). Specifically,

(a) How do the other parties to which expatriates create psychological contracts (contract-makers) change over the stages following pre-departure?

(b) How do the expatriates' psychological contract change across perceived employee and employer obligations over the stages following pre-departure and what is the role of the presence of multiple parties in this change?

The remainder of this chapter outlines the overall structure of the thesis. Chapter 2 (the literature review) provides an analysis of expatriation and the psychological contract literature to provide the foundation for the overall research objective and research questions of this thesis. Specifically, the use of assigned expatriates (AEs) as the target research population will be firstly justified and this is followed by a brief discussion on the definition of the expatriates in order to offer some clarity in the terminology used in this thesis. The review of expatriate research covers four predominate themes which included expatriate selection and training, expatriate adjustment, repatriation issues and strategic role of expatriates, which are discussed in the most influential articles throughout 1980s into the current decade. Then, it will be shown that the existing research has been approached and analysed from two independent perspectives: the organization or expatriate themselves; however, there is a scarcity of literature examining how the two perspectives: organization and expatriates, interact. Social exchange theory that sheds light on how employment relationships come to be used in examining expatriate-organization interactions will be discussed, through which the use of the psychological contract as a relevant and useful framework in addressing the complex interactions surrounding the expatriates will be justified.

The review will then proceed to the main theoretical framework utilized in this thesis: the psychological contract, with the purpose of establishing the theoretical foundation for the use of psychological contract within this thesis. The historical development of the contract will be briefly outlined; Rousseau's (1989) seminal work will be discussed in detail and where the contemporary claims contrasted with historical views, these were highlighted in order to clarify the conceptual basis for the contract's examination in this thesis. This is followed by the discussion on the model of contract content; Rousseau's (2000) transactional, relational and balanced typology will be described and justified to examine the contract content in this thesis. After setting the conceptual foundation for this thesis, the research into the psychological contracts of expatriates will be discussed. In particular, these discussions lead to the identification of the opportunities for further research in this thesis, that is, taking account of the multi-foci perspective of the psychological contract, the content of the psychological contract beliefs of individual expatriates at pre-departure stage first need to be identified to offer a start point (research question 1 and 1 (a-b)); and how does the content of expatriates' psychological contracts change over the remaining stages of international assignment cycle (the initial entry stage, the subsequent assignment stage and the repatriation stage, research question 2 and 2(a-b))

Chapter 3 (Research Methodology) describes the overall research methodology to be employed in this thesis including the ontological, epistemological and methodological approach and how this approach addresses the research questions developed through the literature review chapter. Specifically, a two-study, qualitative methods design, with an overall study sampling frame of 35 expatriates, is used in order to explore the process of contract change. Study One focuses upon understanding the content of expatriates' reciprocal contract beliefs around the time of pre-departure; this offers a starting point to then assess the change in these beliefs. Building on this basis, Study Two then focuses upon gaining understanding of how participants' psychological contracts change over the remaining stages of the international assignment (the initial entry stage, the subsequent assignment stage and the repatriation stage). Within this chapter, the relativism philosophical position underpinning this thesis is firstly detailed, the overall categorization of the research strand, the study sampling frame and data collection source across the two studies are also described and explained in this chapter.

Chapter 4 presents the results and discussion of Study One, which address research questions 1 and 1(a-b). Study One utilizes semi-structured interviews to explore the initial content individual expatriate's psychological contract beliefs at pre-departure stage (research question 1). By applying an underlying multi-foci perspective to psychological contract, the respective organizational parties involved in expatriates' psychological contracts are to be specified (research question 1 (a)); this is followed by exploring the content of the obligations that expatriates believe their particular exchange partners are obligated to provide and the content of what they believe they are obligated to provide to respective exchange partners in return (research question 1 (b)). This chapter concludes by discussing the implication of findings of Study One.

Chapter 5 presents the results and discussion of Study Two, which address research question 2 and 2 (a-b). In order to explore how the initial contract beliefs identified in Study One change over the tenure of international assignments, Study Two conducts semi-structured interviews for expatriates respectively at the initial entry stage, the subsequent assignment and the repatriation phase. For each particular stage of international assignments, the respective organizational parties involved and expatriates' reciprocal contract beliefs are to be identified. In order to assume a full picture of psychological contract creation and change over the international assignment cycle, a joint discussion of the findings from expatriates at each particular stage of international assignments will be conducted in this chapter. For example, the results from expatriates' pre-departure experience (Study One) will be contrasted with the findings from expatriates at initial entry stage (Study Two), cross-comparisons between the results for expatriates within Study Two will also be conducted.

Chapter 6 draws together on the findings from both Study One and Study Two to present the overall discussion of this thesis. The aim is to identify the basis upon which expatriates distinguish among a varied range of organizational parties; and to highlight the implications of having multiple parties involved in expatriates' psychological contracts on the contract content and change. The key limitations of this thesis are also outlined and potential areas for future research are then presented.

Research contribution

This thesis contributes to the literature on international human resource management (IHRM) and the psychological contract theory in the following ways: first, this thesis contributes to the understanding of linking two separate literatures (expatriation and the psychological contract literature), yielding important insights into complex managerial problems (Pate and Scullion, 2009). In doing so, this thesis responds to calls for furthering expatriate research through the social exchange perspective (Henderson *et al.*, 2008; Takeuchi *et al.,* 2009; Takeuchi, 2010). At the same time, by applying the psychological contract in international settings, this research responds to calls in the psychological contract literature for exploring the role of context in the development of contract perceptions (Pate and Scullion, 2009; O'Donohue *et al,* 2015), thus contributing to the psychological contract literature where there was a large body of research in domestic setting (Sparrow and Cooper, 2003; Conway and Briner, 2005; Coyle-Shapiro and Parzefall, 2008).

Second, the benefits to expatriate literature are that it provides insights into the field of expatriates' employment relationship that have received limited attention in literature. Existing expatriate research on expatriate-organization interaction have restricted focus on either different forms of organizational support or dyadic employee-supervisor relationship (Takeuchi, 2010; Perera *et al.*, 2017), by applying the multi-foci perspective of the psychological contract, this thesis provided evidence demonstrating that expatriates had simultaneous multiple psychological contracts, each with a different focus. In this way, this thesis not only gains insights into the content and characteristics of expatriate's employment relationship (Pate and Sculllion, 2019), but captures the social context arising through expatriates' interactions with different organizational agents (Henderson *et al.*, 2008). Relatedly, this thesis found that the expatriates were able to recognize the distinctions among various types of organizational agents on the basis of organizational hierarchy and form of support, and these contract makers were subject to change during the tenure of the international assignment. In this way, this thesis responds to calls in the psychological contract literature for providing a clearer description of with whom an individual holds a psychological contract (Coyle-Shapiro and Briner, 2005)

Third, this thesis contributes towards addressing the scarcity of research into MNCs from developing countries operating in Western countries. Relatedly, a considerable body of studies on the psychological contract has been conducted using Western samples, revealing a dearth of studies in the non-Western contexts (Lo and Aryee, 2003; Katou and Budhwar, 2012; Agarwal and Bhargava, 2014). Therefore, by employing expatriates assigned from Non-Western national contexts operating in Western countries could not only contribute to the generalization of the findings of the expatriation literature, but also to the understanding of the expatriation process in these regions (Khedr, 2011). In assessing the content of Chinese expatriates' psychological contract, this thesis found that the contracts held by the Chinese expatriates in this sample contained predominately balanced contract beliefs, which contrasted sharply to what the other authors found to be salient beliefs (e.g. transactional contract beliefs) for expatriates based on Western samples. In addition, this thesis also offered evidence demonstrating the cultural assimilation of Western cultural values by Eastern expatriates during the tenure of the international assignment, thereby contributing not only to the understanding of the nature of psychological contract developed from a different cultural, but also to the psychological contract development in the context of Eastern-Western engagement.

Fourthly, this research responds to calls in PC literature for providing a clearer description of with whom or with what an individual holds a psychological contract, better reflecting the complexity of MNCs. To clarify, most prior PC research has maintained that an individual hold one PC with a unitary "employer" that is represented either by a unique person (immediate manager, HR unit or senior manager) or organization in itself (Coyle-Shapiro and Briner, 2005; King and Bu, 2005; Raja *et al*, 2004; Rousseau, 2000; Rousseau, 2004; Sels *et al.*, 2004). However, organizations are systems of interconnected sub-groups whose boundaries are defined through the division of labor, an authority hierarchy, and formalized rules and procedures (Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006). While an individual may be exposed to and participate in group-oriented political behavior (Welbourne and Trevor, 2000), he/she could experience role conflict or develop dual allegiances when interacting with two or more intra-organizational groups (Kim and Rowley, 2006; Michailova *et al*, 2016). A multi-foci perspective of the psychological contract may enable better reflection on the complexity of these interrelations.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In order to investigate the dynamics of expatriates' psychological contracts over the tenure of international assignment cycle, two partial objectives are set within this thesis: firstly, to identify the initial content of Eastern expatriates' contract beliefs created at the pre-departure stage and how these contract beliefs change as the assignments proceed in a Western context; and secondly, to explore the role of having multiple organizational agents involved in a contract in shaping the contract content over the whole cycle. In order to provide the foundation for the overall research objective and research questions in this thesis, three main arguments are constructed in this chapter. First, different forms of international assignment are outlined to offer some context for understanding expatriation activities, through which the target expatriate group in this thesis (assigned expatriates) will be justified (section 2.2). Then, it will be argued that the existing research on this particular population has been approached and analysed from two independent perspectives: the organization and expatriate themselves; however, there is a scarcity of literature examining how the two perspectives: organization and expatriates, interact (section 2.3). This argument is developed as the predominate themes within expatriate research including expatriate selection and training, expatriate adjustment, repatriation and the role of expatriates is reviewed (section 2.3.1-2.3.4). Then, the notion that either the organization or expatriate perspective directs the existing expatriate research will be established, and the use of the psychological contract as a relevant and useful framework for linking these two perspectives in addressing the complex interactions surrounding the expatriates will be justified (section 2.3.5)

The remaining two arguments to be constructed focus on demonstrating that the dynamics of expatriates' psychological contracts (contract creation and change) and the existence of multiple psychological contracts remain underexplored. In order to construct these arguments, the main theoretical framework utilized in this thesis (the psychological contract) will first be reviewed (section 2.4). This section will first offer a brief overview of the historical development of the contract to offer conceptual context (section 2.4.1). Then, Rousseau's (1989) seminal work on the psychological contract will be discussed in detail and this will provide the theoretical foundation for the use of the psychological contract within this thesis (2.4.2). The main "contract content" models in the literature are then briefly reviewed and the use of Rousseau's (2000) typology will be justified (2.4.3).

The second main argument focuses on demonstrating that there is a scarcity of research on how expatriates' psychological contracts form and change throughout the whole international assignment. This is done by specifically critiquing the restricted focus of the existing research into expatriates' psychological contracts and identifying that the dynamic of expatriate's psychological contract remains relatively under-developed. This discussion lead to the identification of the first main research interest, that is, examining the initial content of expatriates' contract beliefs created at pre-departure stage and how the process of change unfolds as the assignments proceed. The third argument developed in this chapter focuses specifically on the existence of employees simultaneously holding multiple psychological contracts with different organizational constituencies (the multi-foci perspective of the psychological contract (section 2.5)). It will be argued that while there has been supporting theoretical evidence about the multi-foci perspective of the psychological contract, limited research has been done to empirically explore these issues; this is particularly the case in an international context. Within this thesis, this recognition leads to second main research interest: the application of the psychological contract through a multi-foci perspective. Then, incorporating this theoretical perspective into the examination on the dynamics of expatriate's psychological contract, the reminder of this chapter outlines the two sets of research questions: taking account of the multi-foci perspective of the psychological contract, the content of the psychological contract beliefs of individual expatriates at pre-departure stage first need to be identified to offer a starting point (research question 1 and 1 (a-b)); and how does the content of expatriates' psychological contracts change over the remaining stages of international assignment cycle (initial entry, subsequent and repatriation, research question 2 and 2(a-b)). Finally, in address the research interest, the use of Chinese expatriates in this thesis is then justified.

2.2 International assignment

Traditional international assignments involved the relocation of an individual to a subsidiary located in foreign environment for a pre-determined period of time (Collings *et al.,* 2007); there were many challenges associated with this process such as, issues in recruiting international managers and the high cost associated with the international assignment (Collings *et al.,* 2007; Reiche and Harzing, 2010); notably, the most prominent issue was the "overseas adjustment of the family and expatriate manager" (Harvey and Moeller, 2009: 280). These challenges were compounded by the trend of multinational organizations expanding into emerging economies with greater cultural and economic distance, potentially leading to a higher failure rate (Harvey and Moeller, 2009; Collings *et al.,* 2007; 2009). Driven by the issues discussed above, multinational organizations were seeking alternatives to traditional international assignments that allow individuals to be involved in subsidiaries without necessarily relocating abroad (Collings *et al.,* 2007). The implication of this for understanding expatriates is that instead of considering expatriates as a homogenous group sent from the employing organizations, the concept of expatriate is extended to include individuals engaging in different forms of international experience; among them: self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) (Shaffer *et al.,* 2012), international business travelers (Mayrhofer *et al.,* 2012), virtual assignment/virtual global employees (Scullion and Collions, 2006; Baruch *et al.,* 2013), short term assignments and international commuters (Collings *et al.,* 2007). In contrast to traditional expatriation, these groups are classified under the term of "alternative international assignment" (Collings *et al.,* 2007: 210) or "non-standard international assignment" (Suutari *et al.,* 2013: 119). While it is not the interest of this thesis to address this expatriate group, it is described here in order to offer some context for understanding expatriation activities. The description of this category is provided in the following table (Table 2-1).

Table 2-1 Descriptions of alternative international assignment/non-standard international assignment

Forms of alternative expatriation	**Description**
Self-initiated expatriate (SIE)	Individuals who initiate and usually finance their own expatriation and are not transferred by organizations. They relocate to a country of their choice to pursue cultural, personal, and career development experiences, often with no definite time frame in mind (Shaffer *et al.,* 2012: 1286)
International business traveler	Where travel is an essential component of their work (Tahvanainen *et al.,* 2006: 284).
Virtual assignment	Staff do not relocate to a host location but have a responsibility to manage international staff from a home base (Scullion and Collions, 2006: 160)

Short-term assignment	Temporary internal transfer to a foreign subsidiary of between one and twelve months duration (Collinggs *et al.,* 2007：205)
International commuter	An employee who commutes from the home base to a post in another country, generally on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. This does not involve family relocation (Scullion and Collings, 2006: 160)

Within this group of alternative international assignment, SIEs received predominate academic attention due to its increasing presence in response to the complex nature of international work (e.g. developing talent; transfer best practice: Cerdin and Selmer, 2014), whilst the dynamics associated with this type of expatriates were deemed to be worth exploring in working towards a comprehensive picture of expatriate activities (Doherty *et al.,* 2013). The concept of SIE is considered to be an expansion on the established term of "assigned expatriate" (AE) whereas it is distinct and separated from AE (Doherty *et al.,* 2013). For example, SIEs were primarily distinguished from AEs in terms of "initiation of relocation": SIEs were not sent or assigned by employing organization, rather, their source of motives for expatriation was located within the respective individuals (Doherty *et al.,* 2013: 104). Other differential characteristics between AEs and SIEs were also captured by extant studies including, individual background variables (e.g. age and educational background: Peiperl *et al.,* 2014), employer and task variables (e.g. employed by a home country organization or a new organization: Froese and Peltokorpi, 2013), as well as capital development (e.g. network and career development: Jokinen, *et al.,* 2008). Thus, the conceptualization of expatriates in the literature now positions them according to two distinct streams: assigned expatriates (AEs) and self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) (Jokinen *et al.,* 2008; Peltokorpi and Froese, 2009; Biemann and Andresen, 2010; Shaffer *et al.,* 2012; Doherty *et al.,* 2011; 2013; Andresen *et al.,* 2014).

As a starting point, this section provides an overview of different types of international assignments and narrows down the analysis to SIEs and AEs. The following paragraphs will now turn to the justification for the target expatriate group within this thesis. Specifically, this thesis adopts the assigned expatriates (AEs) as the research focus rather than self-initiated expatriates (SIEs). This decision is based on that there are significant variations in the patterns of mobility between these two different groups, which are likely to result in the differences in terms of the nature of employment relationship embedded in these distinct forms of expatriation (Sherman and Morley, 2016). Accordingly, it is argued that the rationale for and the constrains associated with the mobility pattern of AEs present itself as a more suitable context for examining the topic of employee-organization relationships. To clarify, research indicated that AEs were primarily sent for achieving the organizational objectives such as, controlling and aligning the operations of subsidiaries with those of headquarters (Harzing, 2001); their presence was also observed in transferring corporate philosophy (Scullion and Paauwe, 2005) as well as knowledge transferring (Reiche *et al.,* 2009). In contrast, SIEs were self-initiated to move abroad more by "curiosity and perceived adventure tourism, traveling, backpacking" (McNulty and Brewster, 2016: 27), therefore the achievement of specific organizational objective was not their primary concern (Peltokorpi and Froese, 2009). Also, unlike AEs, for whom careful organizational practices (e.g. training programs and compensation packages) were facilitated for undertaking international adjustment and supporting their work/personal life in the host units (Ang *et al.,* 2007; Chen e*t al.,* 2011), the sponsorship and adjustment challenges related to the relocation of SIEs were often their own responsibilities (Peltokorpi and Froese, 2009; Shaffer *et al.,* 2012). Most notably, the SIEs were highly mobile individuals whose employment was uninhibited by organizational and occupational constrains (McNulty and Brewster, 2016). Therefore, the SIEs were likely to apply for new organizations (other than their home country employers) in the host countries to initiate the relocation and they are not expected to repatriate to home country in most cases (Anderson e*t al.,* 2014).

In light of the differences between AEs and SIEs in terms of relocation initiatives, organizational resources and career path, SIEs reflected a mobility pattern of independence in initiating and proceeding the expatriation, whilst their career path favoured flexibility and autonomy as opposed to organizational control (Peltokorpi and Froese, 2009; Shaffer *et al.,* 2012; McNulty and Brewster, 2016). These defining features will collectively shape the employment relationship of SIEs, such that their need to maintain an attachment to their employing organizations tended to be volatile as a variation of their personal or professional interests (Sherman and Morley, 2016). Conversely, in the scenario of a traditional international assignment where the sending organization operated as a channel for AEs, the objectives related to and the resources devoted to an assignment were carefully designed and regulated by the organization (Ang *et al.,* 2007; Morris and Robie, 2001); the career opportunities of AEs subsequent to repatriation were also arranged largely by the employing organization (Jokinen *et al.,* 2008). The implications being that the AEs are more likely to maintain interdependent interactions with the organization during the whole process of the international assignment. This offers a stable context for examining their employment relationships. Therefore, this thesis focuses on AEs as the target expatriate group and will refer to AEs when using the term expatriates.

The reminder of this section aims to discuss the definition of the expatriates in order to offer some clarity in the terminology used in this thesis. From the methodological perspective, this will also help to inform the criteria used for selecting the expatriate participants (see Chapter 3). The notion of AEs is well established in the literature and although a universally accepted definition has not been reached, it commonly refers to employees who are sent by organizations for employment abroad for a pre-determined period of time. The crucial part of this definition is that their employers send them, as it should be noted that the intended length of time abroad for AEs is subject to various interpretations in the expatriate literature. For example, expatriates working on assigned international assignments were considered to relocate for either a duration of one year (Harris, 2002), three years (Minbaeva and Michailova, 2004) or three to five years (Baruch *et al.,* 2013). Perhaps this lack of agreement in terms of the duration of assignments was due to methodological reasons, where the duration of assignment was, in effect, determined by the particular organization subject to study (McNulty and Brewster, 2016). Moreover, some confusion has arisen from the terminology used; for example, the terms such as “company-backed expatriates” (Doherty *et al.,* 2011), “long-term expatriates” (McKenna and Richard, 2007) and “traditional expatriates” (Collings *et al.,* 2007) have been used interchangeably with assigned expatriate (AEs).

Despite of the varied range of terminology applied, the crucial part of the definition remains unchanged and enough similarities has emerged to identify three key characteristics of AEs. First, rather than externally recruited, an expatriate had already been employed under a global organization in a professional role as part of their organizational career (McNulty and Brewster, 2016); second, the expatriation process was typically initiated by the employing organization (Aycan and Kanungo, 1977). Third, the concept of the expatriate occurred within the business environment, which was applied to “organizational context of working abroad” (Andresen *et al.,* 2014: 2303) and was based on the expectation that expatriates served for meeting organizational goals (Edstrom and Galbraith, 1977), therefore excluding those for non-business purposes such as "tourists, immigrants, refugees, entrepreneurs and students" (McNulty and Brewster, 2016: 14). These characteristics are well summarized in the definition of AEs provided by Aycan and Kanungo (1977) which will be adhered to by this thesis:

"Employees of business or government organizations who are sent by their organization to a related unit in a country which is different from their own, to accomplish a job or organization-related goal for a pre-designated temporary time period of usually more than six months and less than five years in one term" (p. 250)

2.3 A review of research on expatriates

These expatriates primarily consist of parent-country-nationals (PCNs), who are "citizens of the headquarters country location from which they are sent to an international subsidiary" (McNulty and Brewster, 2016: 24). Centred on this population, academic literature has developed a strong interest in a variety of areas. These are as follows: why organizations utilizes expatriates (Edstrom and Galbraith, 1977; Harzing 2001; Hocking *et al.,* 2004; Minbaeva and Michilove, 2004; Paik and Sohn, 2004; Tahvanainen *et al.,* 2005), expatriate selection (Tung, 1981; Mendenhall *et al.,* 1987; Graf, 2004), training and development practices (Earley and Ang, 2003; Ang *et al.,* 2007), compensation packages (Chen *et al.,* 2011), performance evaluation (Shih *et al.,* 2005), repatriation concerns (Bossard and Peterson 2005; Lee and Liu, 2006; Vidal *et al.,* 2007; Cho *et al.,* 2013), expatriate adjustment (Caligiuri, 2000; Shaffer *et al.,* 2006; Mol *et al.,* 2005; Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.,* 2005), reasons for accepting international assignment (Tung, 1988) and gender issues (Salamin and Hanappi, 2014).

Among the varied range of academic attention, the predominate research interests follow the international assignment cycle, with early studies focusing on pre-departure selection and training (Tung, 1981; Mendenhall and Oddou, 1988; Morris and Robie, 2001; Littrell *et al.,* 2006), followed by a focus of later studies on cross-culture adjustment (Black *et al.,* 1991; Hechanova *et al.,* 2003; Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.,* 2005), leading through to a more recent attention on issues around repatriation (Bossard and Peterson 2005; Lee and Liu, 2006; Reiche and Harzing, 2010; Cho *et al.,* 2013). Building on this literature, the overall argument proposed here is that the research into above fields has been approached and analysed from two independent perspectives: the organization and expatriate themselves; however, there is a scarcity of literature examining how the two perspectives: organization and expatriates, interact, along with a restricted theoretical perspective adopted in addressing this interaction. This argument will be developed by firstly reviewing expatriate research into selection and training, expatriate adjustment, repatriation and the role of expatriates (section 2.3.1-2.3.4) and it will be demonstrated that there is a sole focus on either organizational practice or expatriate themselves within expatriate literature. Social exchange theory including perceived organizational support and leader-member exchange, which offers some theorizing on the notion of expatriate-organization interaction, is then drawn upon to provide a reference point through which to examine how the concept of exchange relationship comes to be used in the expatriate literature. Finally, it will be shown that existing research poses too restrictive a theoretical basis for a comprehensive understanding of the expatriate's social context and its role on expatriates' outcomes; leading to a proposition that an additional theoretical perspective-the psychological contract is helpful in unpacking complex social interactions associated with expatriates (section 2.3.5)

In order to critique the sole focus of existing research on either the organizational practices or expatriate themselves within literature, it is first necessary to offer clear evidence that this focus does indeed exist. Much of the research on expatriates is prompted by what is now one of the most highly cited studies: Rosalie Tung's (1981) article on expatriate selection criteria and training program of U.S firms. This study indicated a high rate of expatriate failure ranging from 10% to 40%; expatriate failure was defined in Tung's (1981) as "expatriates who have to be recalled or dismissed because of the inability to function effectively in a foreign assignment" (Tung, 1981: 77). The author noted that the observed expatriate failing could arise as a result of the inability of expatriate managers and their spouses in "adjusting to a different physical or cultural environment" (Tung, 1981:76). Although there were few studies that have since corroborated the high expatriate failure rates (Mendenhall *et al.,* 1987), Tung's findings nonetheless prompted a large body of research on expatriate selection and training, expatriate adjustment and repatriation issues (Kraimer *et al.,* 2016). Another frequently examined topic was promoted by the seminal article of Edstrom and Galbraith (1977) on the strategic role of expatriates. These fours themes are reflected in the most influential articles throughout 1980s into the current decade (Kraimer *et al.,* 2016) and will be reviewed respectively in order to offer a starting point for a critical assessment of the existing expatriate research.

2.3.1 Expatriate selection and training

Research into the selection of expatriates focuses on the criteria used in selection decisions for better informing the selection process, and broadly, it tends to be grouped with training instead of being identified as a separate set of expatriate management activities (Tung, 1981; Mendenhall *et al.,* 1987; Bonache *et al.,* 2001). Early research into expatriate selection and training had recognized the lack of comprehensive selection criteria and training practice. For example, Tung (1981) looked at the expatriate selection criteria and training program of U.S firms. Based on the survey of 80 executives from foreign operations, this study highlighted a high rate of expatriate failure fluctuating from 10% to 40%. The author reasoned that the observed expatriate failing was due to the inability of expatriate managers and their spouses in "adjusting to a different physical or cultural environment" (Tung, 1981:76), which was further argued to be attributed to the unitary approach adopted by U.S firm in selecting expatriates (Tung, 1981). The study by Mendenhall *et al.,* (1987) elaborated on this notion and suggested that organizations seemed to be focused solely on the criteria of "technical competence" (e.g. technical skills and expertise of candidates) in the selection of expatriates, and offered limited training program (Mendenhall *et al.,* 1987: 332). These authors raised concerns that relying on technical competence as the only criteria for decision-making may not ensure the successful transfer of domestic managers to an international context, since technical competence was considered to be irrelevant to "one's ability to adapt to a new environment, deal effectively with foreign co-workers, or perceive and if necessary imitate the foreign behavioural norms" (Mendenhall and Oddou, 1988: 82). This means that the adaption abilities of expatriates are deemed to have a role to play in promoting the effectiveness of oversea assignments. However, this receives limited academic attention and is largely overlooked in the selection criteria used by organizations in practice (Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985). Relatedly, training program was considered not comprehensive in nature. For example, the pre-departure training practice were typically classified into two main dimensions: "information giving" (provision of host country-relevant information in terms of living condition and culture, e.g. reading country report) and "experiential learning activities" (e.g. simulation of critical incidents overseas: Kealey and Protheroe, 1996: 147). Despite of varied forms through which the training materials were delivered (e.g. audio-visuals, seminars and simulation games), the content of training was limited to "some language training, basic cultural orientation and environmental briefing" (Mendenhall *et al.,* 1987: 335). In consideration of the heavy emphasize on the technical competence and limited scope of training program, it was agreed that the identification of more comprehensive program in both cases was needed when staffing expatriate assignment (Mendenhall *et al.,* 1987; Tung, 1981).

Responding to this point, Tung's (1982) subsequent work compared the selection criteria and training programs of U.S operations with those of Japanese and European operations that had lower expatriate failure rate. The results showed that while the criteria of "adaptability", "flexibility" and "technical knowledge of business" were similarly valued by all Western and Japanese respondents (Tung, 1982: 63), Japanese firms considered a broader range of criteria such as "relational ability" of candidates (Tung, 1982: 64) and placed more attention on rigorous training program to cultivate such abilities. Based on this observation, Tung (1982) pointed out the lack of assessment on expatriates' relational ability by U.S organizations and suggested that "there certainly appears to be room for improvement in this area" (Tung, 1982: 64). A theoretical advancement in this line of research was made by the work of Mendenhall and Oddou (1985), with a conceptual model incorporating factors that influenced the adjustment of the expatriate to the host country context; the rationale being that a clear understanding of the key factors contributing to the smooth adjustment process would inform the selection instruments and the design of training program (Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985; Tung, 1982). Specifically, the authors highlighted the importance of expatriates' attributes on "self-orientation" (one's self-esteem and confidence), "others-orientation" (the ability to interact with host nationals), and "perceptual orientation" (the ability to understand why foreigners behave the way they do) (Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985: 40-42). Aligning with this model, theoretical and practical recommendations were made for directing expatriate selection and training programs (Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985).

The reviewed literature so far has identified the critical issues related to expatriate selection (e.g. technical competence-focused) and training (e.g. limited scope of training programs). Relatedly, the assumption underlying these HRM practices (e.g. "domestic (performance) equals oversea performance") had been criticized for a lack of systematic understanding on the social-psychological implications of working overseas (Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985: 39). As such, there was increasing recognition among researchers to broaden selection criteria and to identify effective training content (Mendenhall *et al.,* 1985; Tung, 1982), and this was directed to be achieved through developing a "multi-dimensional make-up" to account for the multi-dimensional nature of expatriate adjustment (Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985: 44). Although it is not until the studies of Black (1988) and Black *et al.,* (1991) that the notion of expatriate adjustment comes to be understood as a multifaceted concept including work adjustment, general adjustment (Black, 1988) and later, interaction adjustment (Black *et al.,* 1991) (the expatriate adjustment will be discussed in detail in section 2.3.2). It appears that this school of thought has significantly shaped the research agenda of expatriate selection and training, with the identification of selection criteria and the design of training program aiming towards facilitating adjustment.

With regard to expatriate selection, much of research began to place attention on criteria regarding adaptability of spouse/family (Arthur and Bennett, 1995; Mendenhall and Oddou, 1987), foreign language ability (Zeira and Banai, 1985); and importantly, as a response to the previous call from Tung (1982), relational ability emerged as a frequently examined selection criteria (Mendenhall and Oddou, 1988; Graf, 2004). Initially, the capabilities and skills under the term of relational ability emphasized the element of "flexibility" in coping with macro-environment (Howard, 1974: 143), communication skills (Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985) and skills of building long-term relationship with supervisors and peers (Tung, 1981; Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985). Later studies extended this line of research by taking contextual features into consideration, and this resulted in an integration of additional cognitive and behavioural competences into the term of relational abilities, such as inter-cultural sensitivity (e.g. respect for cultural differences: Fritz and Chen, 2002), emotional intelligence (e.g. the ability to accurately perceive feelings and emotions: Mayerhofer *et al.,* 2004), cultural intelligence (e.g. specific knowledge of other cultures; how individuals conduct themselves in other cultures: Earley and Ang, 2003; Ang *et al.,* 2007). In general, these cross-cultural skills were argued to be positively related to several outcomes, such as cultural adaption, decision-making and task performance, which were vital to the success of expatriate assignment (Ang *et al.,* 2007).

With the above research contributions, relational abilities are now positioned to be of importance as an expatriate selection criteria in addition to technical competence (Ang *et al.,* 2007). While it arguably has implications for improving expatriate effectiveness, organizational HRM practices and strategies (e.g. selection and training) broadly respond in divergent ways. In relation to expatriate selection, regardless of the academic contribution, a number of studies found that a majority of multinational corporations failed to assess the candidates' relational ability in practice (Tung, 1981; Graf, 2004; Sparrow *et al.,* 2004, Ang *et al.,* 2007; Reiche and Harzing, 2009; Harvey and Moellor, 2009). The study by Graf (2004) explained that the characteristics of relational abilities were difficult to be identified within the potential candidates and recommended that companies should "develop specific assessment tools" (Graf, 2004: 1142). Similarly, other studies attributed this difficulty of measuring expatriate abilities to the "ambiguous construct definitions and poor integration" (Ang *et al.,* 2007: 340). As a result, organizations continued to focus on more measurable abilities; as observed by Sparrow *et al* (2004), "the key selection criterion for most expatriate assignments is technical competence" (Sparrow *et al.,* 2004: 146). The inconsistency between theory and practice in selection criteria was also observed in the selection process of expatriates; organizations had rarely implemented formal expatriate selection assessment program in practice (Tung, 1982) and reasoned that "the lack of reliability and validity of assessment tools" was the major obstacle (Harvey and Moeller, 2009: 279).

On the other hand, the recognition of the importance of expatriates' capability in interacting with culturally different individuals stimulated expatriate training research. For example, studies guided by social learning theory (e.g. learning through observation) began to emerge and emphasized the necessity of incorporating learning experience into training program (Black and Mendenhall, 1989; Kraimer *et al.,* 2016), others had attempted to address the influences and likely effectiveness of cross-cultural training (Morris and Robie, 2001). Importantly, moving forward from preparing expatriate for overseas assignments, cross-cultural training was directed at improving the cultural awareness of expatriates in the hopes of improving their ability to interact with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds (Littrell *et al.,* 2006). Specifically, according to the differences on content and method of delivery, the categorization of training programs was further developed including "language attribution, culture awareness, cognitive-behaviour modification, interaction, didactic, and experiential training" (Littrell *et al.,* 2006: 369). Although varying in forms, these approaches of cross-cultural training shared a similar purpose on equipping expatriates with the required knowledge and skills for effectively discharging their responsibilities in cross-cultural context (Morris and Robie, 2001; Littrell *et al.,* 2006). Thus, this line of research on expatriate training has contributed to a better understating of the goal, various content and delivery methods of cross-cultural training, and to an understanding of the theoretical frameworks underlying training practice. Further, there were also a few studies debating on the effectiveness of cross-cultural training on expatriate assignment success. For example, advocators of cross-cultural training argued that training allowed for a smoother adaption to the new culture, enabling the expatriates to focus on the new professional responsibilities and becoming effective in their new work role (Tung, 1982; Morris and Robie, 2001). Similarly, training was believed to be significant in reducing the probability of culture shock (Sims and Schraeder, 2004) and was positively related to expatriate adjustment (Mendenhall *et al.,* 2004; Min *et al.,* 2013; Feitosa *et al.,* 2014). Conversely, the meta-analysis study by Morris and Robie (2001) found that the effectiveness of cross-cultural training on expatriate adjustment and performance was "somewhat weaker than expected" (Morris and Robie, 2001: 120). As such, no consensus had been achieved on the effectiveness of such training on expatriate outcomes; however, researchers expected stronger effects if cross-cultural training would take an experiential-based approach and was implemented in a more rigorous manner (Kraimer *et al.,* 2016).

From 2000s onwards, while technical expertise still remained a critical selection criteria, attributes identified early in literature such as spouse/family situation, language ability and previous international experience were studied (Tung, 1981; Arthur and Bennett, 1995; Mol *et al.,* 2005; Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.,* 2005; Harvey and Moeller, 2009). Research also expanded the expatriate selection criteria to attributes unconsidered before, such as personality characteristics (please see section 2.3.2 for details: Caligiuri, 2000; Huang, *et al.,* 2005; Mol *et al.,* 2005; Shaffer *et al.,* 2006). Beyond personality characteristics, the criteria of cultural intelligence (a sub-skill of relational abilities) received increasing attention (Thomas *et al.,* 2015). Cultural intelligence was defined as "individual's capability to function and manage effectively in culturally diverse settings" (Ang *et al.,* 2007: 336). Research further developed the constituents of cultural intelligence (Bird *et al.,* 2010) and its measurement (Thomas *et al.,* 2015). Towards facilitating expatriate adjustment, this line of research examined the role of cultural intelligence as predictor of expatriate performance, whilst considered the constructs of the psychological contract (Lee *et al.,* 2014), expatriates' previous international experiences (Lee and Sukoco, 2010) and organizational support (Chen *et al.,* 2010) as potential moderators.

Overall, the research into the area of expatriate selection is heavily influenced by Rosalie Tung's (1981; 1982) articles on expatriate selection criteria and training program used by U.S firms. Her in-depth case studies laid the groundwork for researchers to develop theoretical models of cross-cultural competences and expatriate selection criteria for improving expatriate success (Kraimer *et al.,* 2016). In general, this area of literature supports for the criterion-related selection method that correlated highly with expatriate performance; despite of a varied range of abilities proposed (e.g. technical competence; language abilities), the recurring theme in the academic literature was the importance of relational abilities (e.g. cultural intelligence; emotional intelligence) and personality characteristics (Shaffer *et al.,* 2006). However, this was not supported by the evidence from the criteria used by organizations in the actual expatriate selection decisions; it was highlighted that "the key selection criterion for most expatriate assignments was technical competence" (Sparrow *et al.,* 2004: 146), with relational abilities and personality traits ranking lower (Sparrow *et al.,* 2004; Reiche and Harzing, 2010; Harvey and Moellor, 2009).

2.3.2 Expatriate adjustment

Subsequent to selection and training, expatriates will enter a novel host-environment; the exposure to a foreign culture will involve high levels of stress and uncertainty; this phenomenon has been commonly referred to as culture shock (Reiche and Harzing, 2010). Accordingly, much research has centred on analysing the process of adjustment to a new environment during the assignment. Some early research examined the adjustment process from the perspective of socialization, focusing on how expatriates understood and behaved towards local personnel (Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985); alternatively, from the perspective of work role transition, others viewed it as the process of expatriates altering their own attitudes and behaviors to "match better the role expectation" (Black, 1988: 278). The key advancement in this field was made by the work of Black (1988), where two facets of expatriate adjustment including "work adjustment" and "general adjustment" were identified (Black, 1988: 279). This model was further refined by Black *et al.,* (1991) by integrating elements of international adjustment with those of domestic adjustment in order to capture a "comprehensive picture" of international sociocultural adjustment (Kraimer *et al.,* 2016: 92). Expatriate adjustment was then understood as a multifaceted phenomenon including three dimensions: the general adjustment (the degree of psychological comfort with the host culture environment), the work adjustment (the degree of psychological comfort with the new work roles in the foreign country), and the interaction adjustment (the degree of psychological comfort when interacting with host country nationals) (Black and Stephens, 1989; Black *et al*., 1991; Black and Gregersen, 1991). This theoretical framework of sociocultural adjustment was generally accepted after being strengthened by subsequent empirical studies that proved its validity (Black and Stephens, 1989; Black and Gregersen, 1991; Shaffer *et al*., 1999; Takeuchi *et al.,* 2002; Hechanova *et al.*, 2003; Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.*, 2005).

Building on the work of Black *et al.,* (1991), this area of literature generated an abundant research that tested one particular facet or multiple facets of this model (kraimer *et al.,* 2001; Shaffer *et al.,* 1999; Takeuchi *et al.,* 2005). On this basis, two meta-analysis studies (e.g. Hechanova *et al.,* 2003; Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.,* 2005) were able to provide comprehensive reviews on the results of expatriate adjustment literature. Given the extensive scope of research and the results of meta-analysis obtained in this area, this part of literature review does not intend to go into too much details, but instead to highlight the key factors identified to predict all three adjustment facets in the literature (please see details in the Table 2-2). In addition, with regards to the consequences of expatriate adjustment, the general adjustment was negatively related to expatriates' withdrawal cognitions and positively related to job performance; both of the work adjustment and the interaction adjustment positively influenced job performance and job satisfaction (Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.,* 2005). In interpreting this result, it should be noted that the meta-analysis conducted by Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.,* (2005) identified less than a dozen articles that looked at the consequences of expatriate adjustment. This limited attention placed on the consequences of expatriate adjustment perhaps was due to the difficulty of "obtaining additional rating sources who can evaluate expatriate outcomes" (Takeuchi, 2010: 1043), considering that getting access to expatriate population was already very difficult (Harrison *et al.,* 2004). As such, rather than outcomes, the expatriate adjustment research shared "an exclusive focus on expatriates themselves and variables associated with them" (Takeuchi, 2010: 1043).

Table 2-2 Summary of key antecedents predicting expatriate adjustment

Key antecedents identified to influence expatriate adjustment	**Summary of key findings**

Previous international experience	The empirical testing on the relationships between previous international experience and expatriate adjustment generated divergent results. Some researchers found a positive correlation (Shaffer *et al.,* 1999), others reported a negative relationship (Selmer, 2002) whereas there was also evidence suggesting a non-significant correlation relationship (Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.,* 2005). Several reasons had been put forward for explaining the inconsistence of results obtained including, the similarity of prior experiences in cultural terms (Takeuchi *et al.,* 2005), the quality and depth of prior experience (Bell and Harrisons, 1996)
Organizational practice	A significant number of studies showed an exclusive focus on the mediating role of pre-departure or post-arrival training on expatriate adjustment. The purpose of cross cultural training was to address the expatriates' knowledge capacity in effectively discharging their responsibilities in cross-cultural context (Morris and Robie, 2001; Littrell *et al.,* 2006). However, as discussed previously in section 2.3.1, the empirical results regarding the effectiveness of cross-cultural training on accelerating the expatriates' adjustment were not conclusive (Morris and Robie, 2001)
Personality traits	In this stream of research, the personality traits examined were termed as the Big

	Five personality characteristics including "extraversion (e.g. willingness to communicate), emotional stability (e.g. ability to deal with stress), agreeableness (e.g. display of respect and kindness), conscientiousness (e.g. job knowledge and motivation) and openness" (e.g. social problem-solving skills and social judgment capacity) (Caligiuri, 2000: 70). In particular, studies had examined the role of the Big Five as the predictor of job performance (Mol *et al.,* 2005; Shaffer *et al.,* 2006), expatriate adjustment (Shaffer *et al.,* 2006), and intention to remain at assignment (Caligiuri, 2000). Overall, despite the fact that mixed results been found on the relationship between openness and work adjustment and performance (Caligiuri, 2000; Shaffer *et al.,* 2006), the evidence suggested that the remaining four dimensions of Big Five had positive effects on expatriate adjustment.
Organizational support	In this line of research, different forms of support provided by the headquarters or subsidiaries were discussed and argued to be of importance to facilitate expatriate adjustment process. The organizational support that had been examined included, social support operationalized through relationships built with supervisors and colleagues (Guzzo *et al.,* 1994); logistical and general support (e.g. housing, healthcare facilities or legal requirements for entry such as visa or work permits: Guzzo *et al.,* 1994; Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.,* 2005); the perceived organizational support (an indication on perception of resource and support actually received

	from the organization: Kraimer *et al.,* 2001; Kraimer and Wayne, 2004)
Non-work factors (e.g. cultural differences)	The assumption underlying this line of research was that expatriates will experience adjustment difficulties due to the cultural differences between expatriates' home and host country (Black *et al.,* 1999). These cultural differences were likely to disrupt expatriates known routines; as the level of disruption increased, the feeling of frustration and anxiety would result (Black *et al.,* 1999). The empirical relationship between cultural differences and expatriate adjustment showed mixed results. For example, the meta-analysis of Hechanova *et al.,* (2003) suggested that cultural novelty was negatively linked to expatriate adjustment. However, Takeuchi *et al.,* (2002) found no significant correlation between cultural novelty and any of the three adjustment facets (general adjustment, the work adjustment and the interaction adjustment). The authors recognized the inconsistency of results obtained with the literature and suggested the reasons for inconsistent results could be attributed to the varied ways of conceptualizing and measuring cultural difference. On this basis, it was argued that "the items used to assess cultural novelty appear to be deficient in capturing this multidimensionality (of culture). Perhaps future research can develop a new and improved scale that assesses the multidimensional aspect of culture novelty" (Takeuchi *et al.,* 2002: 1239)

Overall, the Black's *et al.,* (1991) model directed the expatriate adjustment research by presenting a highly testable theoretical model (Kraimer *et al.,* 2016), with the subsequent research confirming its validity and offering an accumulated knowledge in the understanding of the antecedents and outcomes of expatriate adjustment (Takeuchi *et al.,* 2002; Shaffer *et al.,* 2006; Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.,* 2005; Takeuchi, 2010). However, criticisms had been raised in this area of research that it had been predominately expatriate-centric, neglecting other stakeholders, such as "spouse/family members, parent company, and host country nationals" (Takeuchi, 2010: 1041). Relatedly, the theoretical lens that addressed the expatriate adjustment was often limited to a stress perspective, that is, the uncertainties associated with international assignment (e.g. role ambiguity) were considered as stressors, causing the lack of adjustment. This, in turn, led to negative consequences such as job dissatisfaction and poor performance (Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.,* 2005). As such, there were calls for introducing additional theoretical perspectives to examine the various issues of the expatriate adjustment process that had been not fully investigated (Harrison, 2004; Takeuchi, 2010; Kraimer *et al.,* 2016). Towards addressing this need, the psychological contract theory is to be utilized in this thesis to understand the complex aspects of international assignments and this will be specifically justified in the section 2.3.5.

2.3.3 Repatriation

Although the focus of research on expatriation processes has consistently been on expatriate selection, training and adjustment activities; in the consideration of that "expatriation assignments should be effectively managed as a whole" (Vidal *et al.,* 2007: 1397), it is observed that increasing research places attention on the last phase of international assignment: repatriation (Bossard and Peterson 2005; Lee and Liu, 2006; Reiche and Harzing, 2010; Cho *et al.,* 2013). Research in the subject of repatriation investigated the problems associated with the process of repatriation and were descriptive in general (Adler, 1981; Mendenhall *et al.,* 1987; Harvey, 1989; Tung, 1998). According to Adler (1981), expatriates returning home country often reported that their "oversea experience" and "managerial skills gained" were not valued by their organizations (Adler, 1981: 342), this was often accompanied by the feeling of "discontinuity and lack of momentum" in career growth (Adler, 1981: 346). Similar observation was made by Mendenhall *et al.,* (1987) and Tung (1998) that expatriates were dissatisfied with repatriation for "inadequate advancement opportunities", "reverse cultural shock upon return" (Tung, 1998: 138) as well as "devaluation of knowledge and expertise" (Mendenhall *et al.,* 1987: 337). Given the accumulating evidence, academic attention had either been placed on providing practical recommendations for organizations to effectively manage the process of repatriation (Mendenhall *et al.,* 1987) or investigating to what extent the organizations initiated formalized repatriation-training programs (Harvey, 1989). However, it was not until "the 1990s that the research on repatriation became theoretically driven rather than descriptive and practical" (Kraimer *et al.,* 2016: 94).

Most notably, in the recognition that expatriates returning home country after long-time staying abroad could be subject to similar adjustment challenges as the initial transfers, Black *et al.,* (1992) proposed a theoretical model of repatriation adjustment. Specifically, their model focused on the individual, job, organizational, and non-work variables that affected anticipatory repatriation adjustment; the authors suggested that the clarity of job description, supporting organizational practice (after-assignment training and orientation) and social status were related to all three dimension of repatriation adjustment (work, interaction and general) (Black *et al.,* 1992). Building on this model, there was a large body of studies focusing on the adjustment process of repatriates, with the turnover intention of repatriates emerging as a frequently examined issue (Lazarova and Caligiuri, 2001; Bossard and Peterson 2005; Lee and Liu, 2006; Vidal *et al.,* 2007; Cho *et al.,* 2013). Their results suggested that the main reasons for repatriates to leave their organization were: lack of organizational support (Cho *et al.,* 2013), ambiguity and absence of career advancement (Reiche *et al.,* 2010) and lack of global organizational culture (Vidal *et al.,* 2007). This led to a track of repatriation research into the HRM practices that may provide more successful repatriate outcomes (Bonache *et al.,* 2001). Overall, this line of research recognizes the crucial position of repatriation for the success of overall international operations; building on the aforementioned studies, this thesis is aware that the repatriation process is often associated with the perceptions of being undervalued and lack of career growth; these sources of dissatisfaction have been suggested to give rise to high turnover intention of expatriates. As responses to these issues, research on repatriation shares a heavy focus on how the organizational activities should adapt towards individual expectations in order to prevent underutilization of knowledge and personnel turnover (Mendenhall *et al.,* 1987; Harvey, 1989).

2.3.4 The role of assigned expatriates

Taking a more macro view, another strand of research considers expatriate assignment from "a strategic staffing perspective" to understand the purpose and role of expatriates (Kraimer *et al.,* 2016: 96). The seminal article of Edstrom and Galbraith (1977) on this topic proposed three general motives for assigning expatriates; namely, "position filling", "developing managers for position of responsibility" and "organizational development" (Edstrom and Galbraith, 1977: 252). According to Edstrom and Galbraith's (1977) description, position filling was when expatriates exercised a functional management in host locations where local staffing was not available or eligible to undertake; whereas the role of management development referred to as developing the competence and enhancing the international experience of individual managers. Then, expatriates can also serve as a vital role on aspects of control and socialization for the purpose of "organizational development" (Edstrom and Galbraith, 1977: 253). To clarify, this third role consisted of the processes of socializing expatriates and local managers into a shared corporate culture and the creation of verbal information system that linked subsidiaries to headquarters (Edstrom and Galbraith, 1977). These activities were argued to allow for better control over host units and strengthen the coordination between the two entities, therefore contributing to the development of organizations in a manner of "modifying and sustaining its structure and decision processes" (Edstrom and Galbraith, 1977: 253).

Research into the area of expatriates' roles is heavily influenced by Edstrom and Galbraith's (1977) propositions. This research has been extensively in the literature (Harzing 2001; Hocking *et al.,* 2004; Minbaeva and Michilove, 2004; Paik and Sohn, 2004; Tahvanainen *et al.,* 2005; Scullion and Collings, 2006; Collings *et al.,* 2007; Reiche *et al.,* 2009; Reiche and Harzing, 2010). Accordingly, their categorization on the role of expatriates stimulates research on the ways in which expatriates serve a function of organizational development (e.g. control and socialization). For example, Kobrin (1988) found that, at individual level, expatriates served as key conduit for home-country managers to acquire knowledge of specific foreign operations and to develop "informal links" across the corporations (Kobrin, 1988: 71); whilst at the organizational level, expatriates helped to spread the corporate culture and provide strategic control across subsidiaries (Kobrin 1988). This combination of knowledge flows between two entities and control over subsidiaries contributed towards an "integrative global strategy" (Kobrin 1988: 74). In light of Kobrin's (1988) discussion on using expatriates as a control strategy, other studies started to unpack the mechanisms underlying the use of expatriates for control purposes (Boyacigiller, 1990; Harzing, 2001; Gong, 2003; Björkman *et al.,* 2004).

There were studies emerging to look at the factors predicting the use of expatriates for controlling the operation of subsidiaries (e.g. Boyacigiller, 1990; Gong; 2003). For example, Boyacigiller (1990) found a higher proportion of US expatriates in the management position of subsidiaries where the host countries were characterized by higher levels of cultural distance and political risk. As argued by Boyacigiller (1990), the increase on perceived "uncertainty" in institutional environment may lead to the increase on the implementation of coordination and control mechanism (Boyacigiller, 1990: 359). Through this way, this study indirectly provided support for the control function of expatriates (e.g. Edstron and Galbraith, 1977). Following this line and drawing on the agency theory, Gong (2003) further looked at the issue of cultural distance between Japanese organizations and its 695 foreign operations. One of the main conclusions made by this study was that expatriate staffing was a governance strategy that served for the management of uncertainty attributed to the cultural distance (Gong, 2003). Overall, this line of research agreed that the control function of expatriates was more demanding when there were great uncertainties arising from the "complexity inherent in business" (Boyacigiller, 1990: 370), "cultural distance or varied institutional environment" (Gong, 2003: 730).

The organizational development role of expatriate was explored in depth by the work of Harzing (2001), where three methods of assigned expatriate facilitating control over subsidiaries were proposed. The "bear" control strategy was where expatriates exercised control in both explicit and implicit manners via replacing or complementing the headquarters' "centralization of decision-making", whilst offering "direct surveillance" over subsidiary operations (Harzing, 2001: 369). The "bumble-bee" and "spider" strategies were implicit means of control, with their focus being placed respectively on socializing local employees into shared corporate cultural norms and the creation of informal information network (Harzing, 2001). Overall, this stream of research (e.g. Kobrin, 1988; Boyacigiller, 1990; Harzing, 2001) argued that the formal output-based control system (e.g. regulations and formal performance-related compensation) presented managerial limitations for headquarters to respond to the diversities of subsidiaries in terms of "culture and government regulations" (Paik and Sohn, 2004: 63). Therefore, the need to maintain an "informal and subtle control mechanism" became more important for multinational organizations and expatriates played a key role in this regard (Collings *et al.,* 2009: 1256). It was elaborated that expatriates generally had better understandings of corporate culture and great acceptance of parent company-determined policies (Kobrin, 1988), they were effective in replicating headquarters' "operating procedures and organizational specificities" in local units (Paik and Sohn, 2004: 63) as well as in coordinating between subsidiaries and headquarters (Gong, 2003). Based on this recognition, these studies argued that assigning expatriate to subsidiary operations would influence the goals and values of subsidiaries to reflect those desired by headquarters. This strengthened the ability of headquarters in enforcing local units to act according to its corporate policies in a "systemic and coherent manner", ultimately increasing headquarters' control across oversea units (Paik and Sohn, 2004: 61).

In addition to the role of control and coordination, expatriates as agents of knowledge transfer have emerged as the focus of more recent research (Minbaeva and Michailova, 2004; Chang *et al.,* 2012; Fang *et al.,* 2013; Peltokorpi and Vaara, 2014). This was mainly due to the growing attempts of organizations in developing economies to seek knowledge and its transfer from developed ones (Clarke *et al.,* 2017). As noted by Chaminade (2015), the global technology-driven FDI flows made from developing economies to developed ones was increasing, with specific objectives of acquiring technological capabilities. To achieve these objectives, organizations had been integrating the professionals from geographically dispersed locations with diverse expertise that was not readily available at headquarters (Clarke *et al.,* 2017). While it was expected that in this case, expatriates were prepared to learn from their highly skilled colleagues in the subsidiaries, the reverse was also true (Clarke *et al.,* 2017). In this context of knowledge transfer, research had examined a range of issues such as: to what extent expatriates served as knowledge agents (Riusala and Suutari, 2004), the type of knowledge being transferred (Lam, 2003), barriers to knowledge sharing (Antal, 2000). Others had attempted to address the likely attributes that an effective knowledge transfer may rely on, and in this regard, an attention was placed on expatriates' individual characteristics including, motivation and ability (Mitton, *et al.,* 2008), feedback seeking behaviour (Burmeister, 2017), as well as the ability and willingness of expatriates in knowledge sharing (Minbaeva and Michailova, 2004). Overall, these studies provided ample evidence that expatiates can promote the knowledge transfer between headquarters and subsidiaries, and the development of the international thinking within the organizations (Minbaeva and Michailova, 2004; Chang *et al.,* 2012; Clarke *et al.,* 2017).

From the perspective of knowledge flows, research also considered the different directions in which expatriates transferred knowledge. For example, one stream of studies covered the knowledge outflow from subsidiaries and expatriates' knowledge acquisition role in this regard (Reiche and Harzing, 2010). It has been argued that international assignments expose expatriates to opportunities of learning in terms of subsidiaries' "business practices, foreign cultures and market" (Collings, 2009: 1261). In this case, the most common types of knowledge being transferred from subsidiaries to headquarters included "management issues, cultural information, sales and marketing…and accounting/finance" (Kraimer *et al.,* 2016: 97). These types of knowledge were thought to benefit the expatriates' own professional development (Reiche and Harzing, 2010), and then can be diffused to headquarters on repatriation (Burmeister, 2017). Alternatively, another stream of studies looked at the knowledge inflows to subsidiaries and expatriates' knowledge creation role in this aspect (Minbaeva and Michailova; Riusala and Suutari, 2004; Chang *et al.,* 2012). This line of research was often situated on the premise that headquarters had "greater proprietary knowledge" (e.g. technology asset: Delio and Bjorkman, 2000: 281), and the diffusion of such knowledge to the subsidiaries was argued to be best facilitated by associated personnel transfers (Hocking *et al.,* 2004). Accordingly, the reviewed literature in this area mainly focused on organizations from developed economies such as, Japan (Delios and Bjorkman, 2000; Fang *et al.,* 2010), Europe (Pérez and Brewster, 2001; Minbaeva and Michailova, 2004; Riusala and Suutari, 2004;) and Australia (Hocking *et al.,* 2004). The knowledge-related functions of these expatriates related mainly to developing local staff and transferring supporting skills, such as "training local employees… improve their individual and team skills, implementing knowledge practices, developing international leadership" (Minbaeva and Michailova, 2004: 664) and transferring "corporate culture and management practices" (Chang *et al.,* 2012: 928). Notably, the research into the knowledge transfer function of expatriates, regardless of its directions, recognized individual expatriates as knowledge carriers, thus applying a perspective of viewing expatriate movement as a key transmission channel to examine the knowledge flows within the multinational organizations (Reiche *et al.,* 2009).

The main conclusion to be drawn from this area of research is that, the primary strategic function of expatriates is to facilitate control and coordination. For example, by transferring expatriates abroad, organizations were able to align the strategic intention of subsidiaries with that of headquarters, thus achieving consistence in its corporate policies (Kobrin 1988; Harzing, 2001; Paik and Sohn, 2004; Collings *et al.,* 2009). This control can be explicit via expatriates facilitating a formal bureaucratic control mechanism (Harzing, 2001), but also implicit in socializing the local nationals to shared cultural values and business norms (Kobrin 1988; Harzing, 2001; Kraimer *et al.,* 2016). In addition to the recognition of expatriation as control mechanisms, expatriates were used to promote the knowledge transfer between headquarters and subsidiaries via undertaking a knowledge acquisition and/or creation role (Reiche and Harzing, 2010; Minbaeva and Michailova, 2004). As such, the practices of sending expatriates abroad could be viewed as a strategic attempt for multinational organizations to increase the international experience and knowledge base across its units.

2.3.5 Limitations of expatriation research-proposing a psychological contract perspective

This chapter has so far reviewed four predominate research interests within the expatriate literature. In order to build upon these and advance the argument that existing research has been approached and analysed from the perspective of either the organization or the expatriate themselves, this thesis will now take a holistic view and establish that expatriate research has a dual-track interest firstly, in the practices organizations use for expatriate management and secondly, an interest in expatriates themselves.

In the first track, expatriate research has heavily focused on the human resource management (HRM) activities that organizations use to promote cross-national effectiveness of assignees; so, an organizational perspective guides the existing research. Research on expatriation have assumed that adjustment is the key to effectiveness of international assignment and the selection and training program should be designed to facilitate adjustment (Tung, 1982; Mendenhall *et al.,* 1987). This notion significantly influences the research agenda of global staffing (Collings *et al.,* 2009), emphasizing key issues of those HRM practices in this field where selection and training are essential means and expatriate performance appears to be the goal (Dabic *et al.,* 2015). More specifically, research has respectively discussed individual-level traits (such as cultural intelligence and personality) and process issues (such as selection and training programs) that positively influence expatriate adjustment and task performance (Ang *et al.,* 2007; Littrell *et al.,* 2006; McEvoy and Buller, 2013). Suggestions are provided for selecting assignees (Caligiuri, 2000), conducting cross-cultural trainings (Morris and Robie, 2001), and designing repatriation programs (Vidal *et al.,* 2007). In order to lend more support for the organization-centred perspective, it is useful to mention that in addition to the main interests outline above, research also pays attention to a range of other activities from HRM perspectives. For example, studies have been conducted on the design of compensation package (Chen *et al.,* 2011), performance management (Shih *et al.,* 2005) and global leadership development (Stahl and Bjokman, 2006).

In the second track, expatriate research looks at the expatriates, themselves. This has centred on the concept of cross-culture adjustment, sharing "an exclusive focus on expatriates themselves and variables associated with them" (Takeuchi, 2010: 1043), such as previous international experience (Caligiuri *et al.,* 2009), personality traits (Peltokorpi, 2008), organizational commitment (Takeuchi *et al.,* 2009) and task performance (Kraimer and Wayne, 2004). Another steam within this track explores the role of expatriates (Hocking *et al.,* 2004; Reiche and Harzing, 2010), addressing the strategic function of expatriates in terms of facilitating control, coordination (Harzing, 2001) and knowledge transfer (Reiche and Harzing, 2010). Alongside the main research interest, others examine the implication of international experience on expatriates' career outcomes (Jokinen *et al.,* 2008), reasons for accepting international assignment (Tung, 1988), and how female expatriates experience international assignments (Salamin and Hanappi, 2014). Overall, existing expatriate research has been demonstrated to be approached and analysed from two independent perspectives: the organization or the expatriates themselves. In order to develop the argument that there is a scarcity of literature examining the interactions between expatriates and organization, along with restricted theoretical perspectives adopted, the research approaching the expatriate-organization interactions will be assessed and the notion of exchange relationships will be detailed. This is important because in identifying the scope of this research, it will be shown that current research poses too restrictive a theoretical basis for a comprehensive understanding of the expatriates' social context and its role on expatriates' outcomes.

Research into the interaction between expatriates and organization is typically restricted. Studies in this context mainly looked at the supporting practices provided by the organizations such as logistical and general support (e.g. housing, healthcare facilities or legal requirements for entry such as visa or work permits: Guzzo *et al.,* 1994; Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.,* 2005). This also includes firm-level practices such as career support programs (Pérez *et al.,* 2001) and mentoring (Carraher *et al.,* 2008). There were few studies approaching the employee-organization interactions via expatriates' employment relationships, and an underlying social exchange perspective guided this line of research. Although different views emerged, theorists agreed that social exchange involved interdependent interactions where each party's actions were contingent on the other (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). These series of social interactions were guided by a general reciprocal norm to transfer mutual obligations and such obligations were not explicitly identified, meaning that when one individual "does another a favour ... while there is a general expectation of some future return, its exact nature is definitely not stipulated in advance" (Blau, 1964: 93). Consequently, the social exchange relationships developed following the creation of the future obligations for each party to reciprocally give and receive inducements (Blau, 1964).

With regard to expatriate research, social exchange theory is operationalized through the perceived social support networks, such as those represented by perceived organizational support (POS: an indication on perception of resource and support actually received from the organization) and it have been associated with enhanced expatriate effectiveness (Chen, 2010). Similarly, previous research also demonstrated the influence of leader-member exchange (LMX: the quality of relationships formed with immediate managers) on expatriate adjustment (Kraimer *et al*., 2001). Although offering a fresh perspective on understanding expatriate outcomes, these studies into the relationship between expatriates and organizations appear to restrict their focus on either different form of organizational support or dyadic employee-supervisor relationship, neglecting other stakeholders, such as spouse/family members, parent company and host country nationals (Takeuchi, 2010; Perera *et al.,* 2017). As such, while acknowledging the role of social exchange perspectives in furthering expatriate research (Takeuchi *et al.,* 2009; Takeuchi, 2010), studies have highlighted the need to examine constructs beyond perceived organizational support and leader-member exchange to capture an in-depth examination of the expatriate's social context and its role on expatriates' outcomes (Henderson *et al.,* 2009; Bordia *et al.,* 2010)

Responding to this point, there are emerging studies that utilize the construct of psychological contract to examine the role of relationships between expatriates and organizations in predicting expatriate outcomes. The notion of psychological contract is a micro concept of employment relationship using social exchange as theoretical basis; it has been put forward as a framework for understanding employee-employer exchange relationships (Coyle-Shapiro *et al.,* 2008). In comparison to POS and LMX, psychological contract depicted an individual employee's perceived resource exchange between the focal person and another party in a social exchange relationship (Rousseau, 1989), and in this way, overlapping with LMX and POS (Shore *et al.*, 2004). However, as it is possible for individuals to form multiple social exchange relationships with various organizational agents differing in hierarchy of authority in organizations, they may develop corresponding psychological contracts pertaining to each of these exchange partners (Marks, 2001; Conway and Briner, 2005). In this regard, the construct of psychological contract may allow for the emergence of complex interactions surrounding an individual (e.g. an expatriate) by outlining the expected reciprocal obligations for each of the exchange partners (please see section 2.5 for details). Despite few studies in this area, there is a growing argument that using the psychological contract in furthering the expatriate research represented a promising direction (Pate and Scullion, 2009; Sherman and Morley, 2016; Ruiter *et al.,* 2016; Aldossari and Robertson, 2016). Given this recognition, the proceeding section will now review the main theoretical framework, namely: the psychological contract, in order to set the theoretical basis for this thesis. Then with reference to the literature utilizing the concept of psychological contract to approach expatriate employment relationships, the key limitations will be highlighted and the specific research questions derived from these discussions will be outlined.

2.4 The Psychological Contract

This section presents the conceptual context for the main theoretical framework in this research namely: the psychological contract. The notion of the psychological contract has been utilized as a key framework for understanding employment relationships as well as related behaviours and attitudes (Kiazad, 2010). Given the consistent academic interest in this concept and its applications, it is considered to be useful in tracing the major trends in the development of this construct that shapes the psychological contract research over the last 25 years (O'Donohue *et al.,* 2015). Contrasting the historical and contemporary perspectives will also lead to more detailed discussion about the conceptual foundation on which this thesis will be based. This section will firstly provide an overview of the historical development of the contract to offer some conceptual context (section 2.4.1) and clarify the basis for contract's examination in this thesis (section 2.4.2). Then the contract content models available in the literature are then briefly reviewed and the use of Rousseau's (2000) typology will be justified (2.4.3).

2.4.1 Psychological contract-a historical overview

Academic interests in the origin of psychological contract can be traced back to the work of Argyris (1960), Levinson *et al.,* (1962), Schein (1965), in which this construct was first introduced and assessed in the domain of the employment relationship (Conway and Briner, 2005). Despite some conceptual distinctions among the early contributors, enough similarities emerge to identify four components of pre-Rousseau period's conceptualization of the psychological contract. First, pre-Rousseau authors viewed the psychological contract as involving two parties, the employees and the employing organization (Barnard, 1938; March and Simon, 1958; Levinson *et al.,* 1962). The organization perspective was represented by an appropriate agent from management, such as the foreman (Argyris, 1960) and line manager (Levinson *et al.,* 1962). Second, the psychological contract consisted of mutual expectations held by both employees and organizations, which were largely characterized as implicit with obligatory or compelling qualities (Conway and Briner, 2005; 2009). These expectations were held to be formed either in a conscious or unconscious manner prior to entering employment relationships (Levinson *et al.,* 1962; Schein, 1965). While individual employees' expectations are derived from multiple sources including "inner needs, operating culture norms, their own past experiences and a host of other sources" (Schein, 1988: 99), the expectations of organizations are forged from organizations' policies and practices, organizational objectives and values as well as its history and business environment (Levinson *et al.,* 1962).

Third, these formed expectations of each party, hence the psychological contract, is operating through the principal of reciprocity. Levinson *et al.,* (1962) defines the term reciprocation as a process of "fulfilling a contractual relationship in which both parties seek continuously to meet their respective needs" (Levinson *et al.,* 1962: 38). Accordingly, through the process of reciprocation, the psychological contract unfolds and is enacted from day to day (Taylor and Tekleab, 2004). When the employees and organizations' expectations match, there was the occurrence of psychological contract fulfilment (Conway and Bringer, 2005; Coyle-

Shapiro and Parzefall, 2008). The noted benefits include increased employees' loyalty, commitment and effective work performance (Schein, 1965) and reduced turnover intention (Kotter, 1973). Conversely, the mismatch between expectations of each party or "violations of expectations" (Schein, 1965: 54) is detrimentally related to employees' sense of self-worth, thus provoking a range of negative behaviours and emotions (Schein, 1965; Levinson *et al.,* 1962). Fourthly, pre-Rousseau period views psychological contract as being dynamic and constantly renegotiated. Schein (1965) attributed this dynamic to the changes on the sources where the expectations constituting the psychological contract arise from; such as the inner needs (Schein, 1965); such that, individuals are driven to form and alter the psychological contract for the satisfaction of changing needs (Schein, 1965; Levinson *et al.,* 1962).

2.4.2 Psychological contract-contemporary conceptualization

Denise M. Rousseau is credited as having greatest contribution to the conceptual development of psychological contract literature since Schein's work (Roehling, 1997; Taylor and Tekleab, 2004), and being instrumental to the renaissance of psychological contract (Cullinane and Dundon, 2006). Accordingly, Rousseau's earlier work (e.g. Rousseau, 1989; Rousseau, 1995) remains highly cited by contract researchers as the basis for their contemporary research (e.g. Conway and Briner, 2005; Coyle-shapiro and Parzefall, 2008). Therefore, it was important to describe and understand Rousseau's work to identify the conceptual base for the examination of the psychological contract in this thesis. According to Rousseau (1989), the psychological contract referred to:

"An individual's beliefs regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between the focal person and another party. The key issues here are the belief that a promise has been made and a consideration offered in exchange for it, binding the parties to some set of reciprocal obligations" (P. 123)

Four key points can be made in interpreting the Rousseau's conceptualization. First, as regards Rousseau's account of psychological contract, the parties in the contract are the individual employee and the organization, with the organization perspective being often operationalized through its agents (e.g. line manager: Lewis and Taylor, 2001). To offer more clarification on the parties in the contract, Rousseau (1995) introduced the concept of contract maker, referring to “any person who conveys some form of future commitment to another person” (Rousseau, 1995: 60). On this basis, “organizations became party to the contract as principals (principal contract makers) who directly express their own terms or through agents who represent them” (Rousseau, 1995: 60). Within the contemporary contract research, this account was subject to two alternative interpretations. To begin with, the organization, as an abstract entity, can hold a psychological contract with its employees. This perspective was grounded on the notion that the messages containing future commitment were potentially conveyed from a varied range of parties (hence the contract makers) situated within an organization (e.g. line managers, department managers and human resource policies: Rousseau, 1995); in this case, it was likely for individual employees to reduce this vast range of contract makers and the associated array of information into a unified other party in the psychological contract (the organization here served as a principal contract maker: Conway and Briner, 2005). This process was informed by the concept of anthropomorphizing where the employees had a tendency to treat actions by agents of organization as the actions by the organization itself (Conway and Briner, 2005).

Alternatively, it was noted that employees seldom constructed contracts with an abstract entity, but rather managers acting as organization’s agents (Rousseau, 1995); in this case, the organizations were argued to provide the context for contracts creation between individual employees and their managers (Rousseau, 1989). Overall, these two alternative views continued to be assumed by the contemporary contract research, with the organization perspective being operationalized either through organization in itself (King and Bu, 2005; Rousseau, 2000; 2004; Sels *et al.*, 2004) or a unique person (line manager, HR unit or senior manager: Lewis and Taylor, 2001; Tekleab and Taylor, 2003). However, when organization itself is used to represent the organization perspective, there is usually no explanation provided regarding the underlying the assumption (e.g. the concept of anthropomorphizing); this is particular the case for research using surveys as data collection tool (Chi and Chen, 2007; Chen and Chiu 2009; Chen, 2010). Moreover, for research operationalizing the organization perspective through its agents, the lack of consensus is apparent regarding the type of agent who is in the best position to capture the view of organization (e.g. line managers or senior managers: Tekleab and Taylor, 2003; Conway and Briner, 2005; Coyle-Shapiro and Parzefall, 2008); relatedly, these issues are compounded by the ambiguity of the circumstances under which the organization served as a principal contract maker or context provider. Given this recognition, there is increasing acknowledgement that more empirical work is warranted in the investigation of organization perspective of the contract (Tekleab and Taylor, 2003; Conway and Briner, 2005; Coyle-Shapiro and Parzefall, 2008).

Second, the beliefs constituting the psychological contract encompassed sets of perceived reciprocal obligations, to which both parties were believed to have committed themselves (Rousseau, 1989, 1998). These reciprocal obligations resulted when promises were exchanged between both parties (Rousseau, 1990, 1998). Having set the conceptual foundation for the building block in Rousseau's account of contract beliefs, there is a necessity to further draw on the comparison with pre-Rousseau authors in order to offer more conceptual clarity. For example, Rousseau and Tijoriwala (1998) differentiated the contract beliefs (obligations) from the concept of expectations that were utilized by the pre-Rousseau authors (e.g. Levinson *et al.,* 1962; Schein, 1965; 1988). The key argument put forward here was that the expectation was too broad a belief to be relevant to the psychological contract. More specifically, expectations also broadly entailed beliefs arising from "causal reasoning such as… hard work leads to high returns" or "descriptive beliefs…such as my organization is characterized by high levels of…leadership, reward, support, etc." (Rousseau and Tijoriwala 1998: 680). These sets of beliefs, however, it has been argued, fail to deliver a sense of mutuality and reciprocity, thus bearing no relevance to the psychological contract beliefs (Rousseau and Tijoriwala 1998; Rousseau, 1990).

This point can be better appreciated with reference to the underlying theoretical root of the psychological contract: social exchange theory. Social exchange involved interdependent interactions that were directed by the rule of reciprocity where, each party's actions were contingent on the other (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). The psychological contract constituted a form of social exchange in workplace where the employment relationship began by one party (usually the organization) making a move first, triggering the actions of the other party (the employees) to reciprocate (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). For example, company policies stating that new recruits who successfully passed through the trial period were to become permanent employees (Rousseau, 1990). With reference to the psychological contract, it was the "reciprocity in exchange" (e.g. job security in exchange for satisfactory performance as new recruits) that constituted the basis of contract (Rousseau, 1990: 390). Building on this, only beliefs that possessed obligatory qualities for the other party to reciprocate were deemed to be in the domain of psychological contract (Rousseau, 1989; Rousseau and Tijoriwala, 1998; Rousseau, 1995). In this regard, obligations are preferred over the broader notion of expectations in assessing a psychological contract (Rousseau and Tijoriwala 1998).

Third, while Rousseau's conceptualization differed from the pre-Rousseau authors in defining the scope of contract-related beliefs, both sets of authors arrived at an alignment in that the contract beliefs had an underlying "normative" basis (Rousseau, 1989: 127). However, it was the source of normativity that differed across both sets of authors; pre-Rousseau authors deemed that this normativity arose from individual's needs (Schein, 1988) and workplace culture and norms (Argyris, 1960) whereas it was the perceived promises in Rousseau's account (Rousseau, 1989; 1990). More specifically, the contract-relevant beliefs (obligations) often arose as a result of one party (the organization) conveying promises to the other (the employee). Such promises can be conveyed either in explicit or implicit forms; explicit promises referred to those conveyed through "words, whether spoken or written" whereas implicit promises referred to those that were derived from "interpretation of actions, including discrete behaviours and repeated practices" (Rousseau, 2001: 525). In both cases, the exchange of perceived promises lead to the existence of contract beliefs (obligations). For the sake of this argument, the example in the previous paragraph was also used here. Specifically, the company made an explicit promise (written company policy) that new recruits who successfully passed through the trial period were to become permanent employees (Rousseau, 1990). This promise gave rise to the reciprocal obligations in the sense that the company was perceived to be obligated to offer job security whilst the employee perceived to be obligated to provide satisfactory performance in return, thus binding each other to a psychological contract (Rousseau, 1990)

Fourthly, another significant contribution for Rousseau is to establish contract violation as the main mechanism for explaining various employee outcomes. Contract violation was defined as the "failure of organizations or other parties to respond to an employee's contribution in ways the individual believes they are obligated to do so" (Rousseau, 1989: 128). Consequently, violated psychological contacts can lead to employees' responses including "anger, resentment, a sense of injustice, and wrongful harm" (Rousseau, 1989: 129). The work of pre-Rousseau authors acknowledged similar emotional responses such as frustration (Schein, 1970), conflict and stress (Levinson *et al.,* 1962). Again, at this point, there emerged an increasing consensus between pre-Rousseau and Rousseau's contract conceptualization. Another implication from the contract violation points towards the perceptual nature of the psychological contract; to start this part of discussion, it is useful to trace back to the work of pre-Rousseau authors to facilitate a comparison on this matter. For example, early conceptualizations viewed the psychological contract as one involving both the perspectives of two interconnected parties (employee and organization), and each party in fact shared a degree of common understanding on the contract terms regarding their respective obligations (Schein, 1970). In contrast, Rousseau's account of the contract stressed that the employee was the sole creator of psychological contract (Rousseau and Tijoriwala, 1998), meaning that individuals can have unique beliefs "regarding his or her own obligations as well as beliefs regarding reciprocal obligations owed by another" (Rousseau and Tijoriwala, 1998: 680). These beliefs could diverge from the interpretations of the other party. As such, it was not necessary for both parties of a psychological contract to have an agreement regarding the contract terms, rather, it was "the perception of mutuality, not mutuality in fact" that characterized the psychological contract (Rousseau and Tijoriwala, 1998: 680). In this line of reasoning, it was also the violation of perceived mutuality that caused the psychological contract violation (Rousseau, 1989).

In summary, it is the study of Rousseau (1989) that marks the contemporary conceptualization of psychological contract, which has considerably shaped the ways in which existing research appreciate and empirically examine this construct. The psychological contract consisted of perceived reciprocal obligations between the focal individual (e.g. an employee) and another party (e.g. the organization or its agents) (Rousseau, 1989). Such obligations arose through the implicit interpretation of organizational actions (e.g. repeated organizational policies) or were derived from explicit written documents and verbal statements (Rousseau, 1989). The social norms and past employment experiences, on the other hand, were not included in the domain of psychological contract (Rousseau, 1989). Apart from its conceptual basis; the psychological contract is believed to be highly perceptual and unique. The obligations that underpinned the psychological contract was firmly at individual-level, which may not be shared by organizations or other parties, implying that it was the perceived obligations, rather than the obligations in fact, constituted the psychological contract (Rousseau and Tijoriwala 1998; Rousseau, 1990). In accordance with Rousseau's conceptualization, the focal contract beliefs examined in this thesis therefore are perceived obligations; throughout the qualitative methodology design adopted in Chapter 3 (Methodology), these contract beliefs will be investigated by querying the perceptions of expatriates regarding what their organization are obligated to provide to them in the employment exchange. Furthermore, organizations that failed to deliver the responsibilities in the manner that employees believed they were obligated to, were highly likely to trigger the violation of psychological contract (Rousseau, 1989). It was noted that this mechanism was the main explanatory framework that linked employment relationship to subsequent employees' attitudinal and behavioural outcomes (Conway and Briner, 2005; Coyle-Shapiro and Parzefall, 2008).

2.4.3 Examining the psychological contract-model of contract content

The previous section has described and discussed Rousseau's work to set the main conceptual foundation for the contract examination in this thesis, this section will briefly detail how various components of the contract's content were modelled (which will comprise the main focus of this thesis). Again, this will be approached in accordance with Rousseau's typology (e.g. Rousseau, 1990; 2000), which has dominated the contract literature. Contract content relates to the terms and reciprocal obligations that characterized an individual's psychological contract (Rousseau and Tijoriwala, 1998). Overall, there is consensus in the literature that the psychological contract is multi-dimensional (Freese and Schalk, 2008) and this can be characterized as transactional and relational (Rousseau, 1990), and later balanced contract (Rousseau, 2000). Transactional contracts contained items (obligations) that were tangible and economic in focus (e.g., promotion and high pay in exchange for hard work: Rousseau, 2004). The time frame characterized this type of exchange relationships was often limited, with "static terms and conditions" (Coyle-shapiro and Parzefall, 2008:13). Moreover, the scope of the contracts is narrow, suggesting a limited involvement of both parties (Dabos and Rousseau, 2004). In this recognition, the study of Dabos and Rousseau (2004) categorized the transactional contract into two dimensions: 1) being "narrow", depicting the extent of involvement for both parties in an exchange relationships; 2) "short-term", indicating the limited time duration of that exchange relationship. (Dabos and Rousseau, 2004: 56). For example, for an employment relationship categorized as transactional, an individual employee perceived that they were obligated to "perform only a limited set of duties" and they believed their employer were obligated to offer "limited involvement in the organization, little or no training or other employee development"

(Rousseau, 2000: 4).

In contrast, the characteristics that distinguished relational contracts from the transactional contracts included “open end collaborations, dynamic terms” (Coyle-shapiro and Parzefall, 2008: 13); broad scope of involvement in an individual’s work and life (Taylor and Tekleab, 2004). As such, the relational contracts emphasized long-term and socio-emotional obligations, such as commitment and loyalty (Rousseau, 2000). The relational contract was further comprised of two dimensions: 1) Loyalty and 2) stability dimensions. For example, for an employment relationship categorized as relational, an individual employee was obligated to “remain with the firm, manifest loyalty and commitment to the organization’s needs and interests” and the employer were obligated to commit to “supporting the well-being and interests of employees and their families” (Rousseau, 2000: 4). While the transactional-relational typology dominated the psychological contract literature (Rousseau, 1990, 1995; Robinson and Rousseau, 1994), there emerged issues of crossover of items; for example, training has been considered as a transactional item for its limited duration (Rousseau, 1990) and a relational item due to it representing the employer’ support on the interest of employees (Robinson *et al.,* 1994).

As a response, Rousseau (2000) extended the transactional-relational typology to include the balanced contract for accurately capturing both employee and employer obligations. The balanced contract was comprised of features of both transactional and relational contracts. Specifically, the balanced contracts were constituted by three dimensions:1) “external employability” (developing marketable skills as employee obligations and enhancing employees’ long-term employability as employer obligations); 2) “internal advancement” (develop professional skills as employee obligations and create development opportunities as employer obligations); 3) “dynamic performance” (perform new and demanding goals as employee obligations and promote continuous learning and provide performance support as employer obligations) ((Rousseau, 2000: 5). For example, for an employment relationship categorized as a balanced contract, an individual employee was obligated to develop skills valued by both the organization and the external market and the employer was obligated to provide a range of career development opportunities and long-term stabilities in the organization (Rousseau, 2000). After being strengthened by subsequent empirical studies that proved its validity (Robinson *et al.,* 1994), the typology of content distinction among transactional, relational and balanced contract was widely used in the literature for operationalizing the psychological contract (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler, 2000; Dabos and Rousseau, 2004). Given its well-established theoretical bases, this typology is utilized to understand and describe the contract content in this thesis.

Having reviewed the literature to this point, the psychological contract within this thesis is taken to refer to individual employee's perceptions of the reciprocal obligations between himself/herself and the employer (e.g. the organization itself or its agents) in an employment relationship. It should be emphasized here that the focal contract beliefs under examination are obligations, and in accordance with its perceptual nature, employee's perceptions regarding both his/her own and the reciprocal employer's obligations are to be examined. These perceived obligations, hence the content of the psychological contract, will be described and categorized according to Rousseau's (2000) transactional, relational and balanced typology.

2.5 A psychological contract approach to expatriate research

As mentioned earlier in section 2.4, there is accumulated evidence now lending weight to the argument that the psychological contract is a relevant and useful framework in investigating various expatiation-related issues (Pate and Scullion, 2009; Sherman and Morley, 2016; Ruiter *et al.,* 2016; Aldossari and Robertson, 2016), this section will therefore now turn to the research into the psychological contract of expatriates. The aim is to discuss the key limitations inherent in this research steam, thereby highlighting the main research area to be focused upon, from which the specific research questions of interest will be derived. To do this, two main arguments will be constructed; first, it will be shown that the main focus of existing expatriate's psychological contract research is on how psychological contract fulfilment/violation related to expatriate outcomes (e.g. expatriate adjustment). However, there remains little understanding about how an expatriate's psychological contract forms and changes throughout the whole international assignment (Sherman and Morley, 2016; Conway and Briner, 2005). Second, it will be shown that there has been limited investigation on the existence of employees simultaneously holding multiple psychological contracts with different organizational constituencies (the multi-foci perspective of the psychological contract). These arguments will be developed as the current literature (e.g. contract creation and change; contract maker) is reviewed and applied to the context of international assignment. This will facilitate the discussion of the two sets of research questions in this thesis. That is, taking account of the notion of multi-foci perspective of the psychological contract, the content of expatriates' reciprocal psychological contract beliefs at the pre-departure stage first need to be identified (research question 1 and 1 (a-b)); then, how expatriates' contract content changes over the reminder of international assignment cycle will be explored (initial entry stage, subsequent assignment and repatriation phase: research question 2 and 2(a-b)).

Existing studies looking at the expatriates through a psychological contract lens (Table 2-3) are scarce in comparison to other expatriate issues previously discussed (e.g. selection and training, expatriate adjustment-section 2.3), the reviewed literature in this field especially placed an attention on how expatriates responded to the evaluation of their psychological contract state (e.g. contract violation/fulfilment), in particular, studies have examined the role of contract perceptions in expatriates' outcomes including adjustment (Chen and Chiu, 2009; Chen, 2010; Lee *et al.,* 2014), organizational commitment, turnover intention (Guzzo *et al.,* 1994; Chi and Chen, 2007) and intrinsic career success (Ruiter *et al.,* 2016). These studies were often addressed through a quantitative perspective. In addition, studies also looked at the notion of a shift of expatriates' psychological contract from relational to transactional (Pate and Scullion, 2009); and the role of organizational cultural in the perception of a psychological contract breach (Aldossari and Robertson, 2016). Furthermore, several studies developed conceptual work incorporating psychological contract to explain aspects of international assignment cycle (Yan *et al.,* 2002; Halsberger and Brewster 2009). Overall, research has largely focused on how evaluation of psychological contract state influenced expatriate outcomes (Chi and Chen, 2007; Chen and Chiu 2009; Guzzo *et al.,*1994; Chen, 2010; Lee *et al.,* 2014; Ruiter *et al.,* 2016), mainly being addressed through a quantitative perspective. Consequently, the creation and change of psychological contract remained relatively underexplored, a concern which also had been raised in contract research conducted in domestic context (Rousseau, 1990; Sparrow and Cooper, 2003; Conway and Briner, 2005; Coyle-Shapiro and Parzefall, 2008).

Table 2-3: Summary of research into expatriates' psychological contracts

Authors/type of paper	Issues of expatriates' psychological contract	Summary
Guzzo *et al.,* (1994) Practical	psychological contract fulfilment, organizational commitment, intention to quit, intention to return	Investigates the relationship between HR practices and expatriates' retention-related outcomes including organizational commitment, intention to quit and intention to return. The psychological contract is examined as mediator of this relationship. The authors find that the positive relationship between HR practices and perceived organizational support (POS) is mediated by the psychological contract. This positive relationship further related to increased organizational commitment which in turn positively influence the expatriates' intention to quit.
Chen and Chiu (2009) Quantitative	Psychological contract fulfilment, expatriate adjustment, organizational commitment	Investigate the influence of psychological contract fulfilment on the expatriates' adjustment and organizational commitment; the authors found the positive relationships between perceived psychological contract fulfilment and the other two expatriate outcomes. They also find expatriates' adjustment is negatively influenced by psychological barriers (individual's willingness to understand, accept or adopt foreign cultural norms)
Chen (2010)	Psychological contract fulfilment, social	Examine the relationships among expatriates' perceptions of organizational justice, social

Quantitative	exchange, organizational justice	exchange, psychological contract fulfilment and expatriates' adjustment. The author finds that expatriates' perception of organizational justice relates positively to social exchange perceptions and psychological contract fulfilment, whilst expatriates' social exchange perceptions has positive influences on perceived psychological contract fulfilment.
Chi and Chen (2007) Quantitative	Psychological contract fulfilment, counterfactual thinking, organizational commitment	Their results show that the repatriates' perceived psychological contract fulfilment positively relates organizational commitment and upward counterfactual thinking, but negatively relates to turnover intention.
Lee *et al.,* (2014) Quantitative	Psychological contract, emotional intelligence, cultural intelligence, expatriate adjustment	The authors find the positive influences of emotional intelligence and cultural intelligence on the effectiveness of expatriate adjustment, whilst the moderating effects of psychological contract are partly confirmed
Ruiter *et al.,* (2016) Quantitative	Psychological contract fulfilment, intrinsic career success, organizational identification	The authors find that the expatriates' psychological contract fulfilment positively influences the expatriates' intrinsic career success measured by job and career satisfaction. Their results also show that the expatriates' identification with the multinational organization mediates both of these positive relationships
Pate and Scullion (2009)	Changing nature of expatriates'	The authors find that the psychological contract of expatriates

Qualitative	psychological contract, employability	is predominately transactional in nature. It is argued that as a response to the tight organizational practice in a competitive international environment, expatriates move their psychological contract towards a transactional overtone by reducing their dependence on a single organization, negotiating better compensation package before international assignment, with an individualistic and calculating interpretation of the employment relationship.
Yan *et al.,* (2002) Theoretical	Agency relationship, career building	Present a theoretical model that examine the alignment or non-alignment of the organization's and individual's expectations of international assignments and its effects on the assignment success. Four configurations are included in their model including mutual loyalty, mutual transaction, agent opportunism, and principal opportunism. Building on this, the authors present an organization-individual alignment matrix to predict changes in employment contract over time.
Halsberger and Brewster (2009) Theoretical	Expatriate adjustment, career capital	Discuss the implications of the psychological contract on expatriate adjustment as well as exploring the effects of adjustment on the development of expatriates' career capital during and after the assignment. The authors present a model incorporating career

		development, adjustment and the psychological contract.

Indeed, it was agreed that psychological contract was dynamic and constantly renegotiated (Schein, 1965; Levinson *et al.,* 1962; Rousseau, 1989); while there has been theoretical and empirical evidence that the content of an individual's psychological contract changes over time (Robinson *et al.,* 1994; De Vos *et al.,* 2003, 2005), there is a scarcity of research in this area (Rousseau, 2001; Coyle-Shapiro and Parzefall, 2008). Recognizing the relatively underdeveloped nature of this line of enquiry, recent academic effort has made attempts to address this imbalance (Sherman and Morley, 2016). For example, studies have found the shaping force of organizational communication in helping employees form realistic psychological contracts (Bauer and Erdogan, 2016; Sherman and Morley, 2016). More specifically, the information shared around the time point of organizational entry held great influence as contract-relevant source for newcomers to make sense of their work environment (Bauer and Erdogan, 2016). Similarly, as the organizational tenure proceeded, human resource activities (e.g. training, performance evaluation) were influential as message senders to shape the content of individual employees' contracts (Sherman and Morley, 2016). Thus, during specific episodes of employment relationships, information was communicated to individuals such that, overtime, the employees' psychological contracts were created and reconstructed episodically with the acquisition of new information and through new experience (Sherman and Morley, 2016; Rousseau, 1990). As this dynamic process unfolded, it remained that the understanding of how the psychological contract was created in the first instance had fundamental implications for exploring how the contract changed overtime (Rousseau, 1990; 1995).

To further this discussion, the use of terms contract creation and change will be clarified in this thesis. Contract researchers agreed that the psychological contracting was a dynamic process that started prior to employment and unfolded from pre-employment stage onwards (Thomas and Anderson, 1996; Conway and Briner, 2005). Therefore, within the literature, the contract creation often referred to the content of individual's contract beliefs (perceived obligations) that existed before the beginning of prospect employment relationship, whereas the contract change was taken to describe the adjustments made in these beliefs over remaining organizational tenure (Thomas and Anderson, 1996; De Vos *et al.,* 2003; 2005).

Therefore, in line with Rousseau's (1990; 1995) assertion, the contract creation was often investigated as a prerequisite for a broader examination on the topic of psychological contract change. That is, the understanding of the content of individuals' contract beliefs at pre-employment stage offers a starting point to then assess the changes in these beliefs over time. Therefore, the creation of psychological contract and the changes proceeding this will be examined together in this thesis. In particular, the literature used the term anticipatory psychological contract to describe the type of psychological contract that existed prior to the beginning of employment relationship (Tomas and Anderson, 1996). It was created when a prospective employee accepted a position but had not joined the organization yet (Tomas and Anderson, 1996), and this type of contract referred to as an individual's beliefs about the reciprocal obligations in the future employment between him/her and the future employers (De Hauw and De Vos, 2010). For contract research within the domestic context, several studies have noted the informative nature of the pre-employment stage on the development of relationship within the organization. For example, the messages conveyed from the labour market and organizations (e.g. employment law, practice and policy, cultural value) played as key contract-relevant information sources for the prospect employees to derive meanings about the reciprocal obligations within that relationships, with the created psychological contracts at this stage serving as the benchmark for understanding future employment relationships (De Hauw and De Vos, 2010)

Apply this line of thinking to the international context, the creation of psychological contracts pointed to the contract beliefs (perceived obligations) anticipated by the expatriates at the pre-departure stage regarding their role in the impending international assignment (Sherman and Morley, 2016). Hence, within this thesis, the contract beliefs held by the pre-departure expatriates represent a starting point against which, the revision or adjustment on these contract beliefs (contract change) over the remaining stages of international assignment (the initial entry stage, the subsequent assignment and the repatriation phase) can be examined. For example, beyond the pre-departure stage, the cross-cultural transition to the host country environment (e.g. initial entry stage) marked a transitionary point where the expatriates can assess the anticipatory psychological contract created during the pre-departure stage against the realities of the assignment (De Hauw and De Vos, 2010). This process and how it unfolded were likely to reconstruct the psychological contract created at the first instance (Sherman and Morley, 2016). Extending this line of reasoning, the information signalled by organizations in the latter stages of international assignments (e.g.

subsequent and repatriation) may also differentially shape the expatriates' psychological contract over time via the salient organization practices and policies at each particular stage (e.g. performance evaluation and opportunities of career advancement: Rousseau, 1990; Vidal *et al.,* 2007; Cho *et al.,* 2013). Overall, the preceding section has discussed the dynamic nature of psychological contract and its implications for the international assignment cycle. Of particular importance to this thesis is that expatriates are likely to create the initial contract beliefs regarding their impending assignment at the time of pre-departure stage and it is possible that these contract beliefs are subject to adjustments over the remaining stages of assignments. This discussion facilitates the development of the first argument that the existing research into the expatriate' psychological contract focusses mainly on contract violation/fulfilment-related expatriate outcomes, thus offering limited guidance on how expatriate's psychological contract forms and changes throughout the whole international assignment. This now leads to the first main research area of interest, that is, examining the initial content of expatriates' contract beliefs created at pre-departure stage and how the process of changes unfolds as the assignments proceed.

The second argument to be constructed concerns with the simultaneous existence of multiple psychological contracts. Existing research on expatriates' psychological contract appears to work from the viewpoint that each expatriate establishes one psychological contract with the organization (Chen and Chiu, 2009; Chen, 2010; Lee *et al.,* 2014; Sherman and Morley, 2016); accordingly, the organization as a whole is assumed to be the other party to the psychological contract of an expatriate (Marks, 2001; Lavelle *et al.,* 2007; Coyle-Shapiro and Shore, 2007). With reference to psychological contract literature, there is a scarcity of research attempting to explore who or what employees perceived to be the employer perspective of the contract (Coyle-Shapiro and Parzefall, 2008). To date, research has yet to build theory around this point, and has tended to adopt an approach that examined an individual's perceived exchange with a single "employer". Accordingly, the party that embodies the employer's perspective can vary. For example, employees may attribute the organization with humanlike qualities through process of "anthropomorphization", thus treating the organization itself as a party to the psychological contract (Coyle-Shapiro and Shore, 2007: 171; Lavelle *et al.,* 2007). In addition, contract literature has suggested that employees perceive various organizational agents differing in hierarchy of authority to be the exchange partners in the psychological contracting process (Conway and Briner, 2005) including, employee's immediate manager (Lewis and Taylor, 2001; Tekleab and Taylor, 2003), HR managers (Conway and Briner, 2005) and senior manager (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler, 2002). Therefore, most prior contract research has maintained that an individual holds one psychological contract with a unitary "employer" that is represented either by a unique person (immediate manager, HR unit or senior manager) or organization in itself (Coyle-Shapiro and Parzefall, 2008; King and Bu, 2005; Rousseau, 2000; 2004; Sels *et al.*, 2004). However, organizations are large social groups in which the leadership, hierarchy and role differentiation are formally defined; an individual can experience role conflict as well as develop dual allegiance when interacting with two or more intra-organizational groups (Argyle, 1969). Therefore, the approach of viewing an organization as a single contract maker tends to overlook the social context arising in the course of interactions between expatriates and different organizational units and/or agents (Conway and Briner, 2005; Perera *et al.,* 2017). To further this discussion, the following paragraph will draw on social exchange literature to shed light on the interactions between individual and organization.

It is recognized in the social exchange literature that employees differentiate and react to the level of social exchange they perceived themselves having with multiple parties such as the organization as a whole, supervisors and peers (Reicher, 1985; Shore *et al.,* 2004; Lavelle *et al.,* 2007; Cropanzano and Rupp, 2008; Tekleab and Chiaburu, 2011). For example, Reichers' (1985) theoretical work argued that an individual was likely to have different commitments to the goals and values of multiple groups existing within the organizational context, and subsequent empirical research supported this conclusion (e.g. Becker, 1992). Further, it was noted that individuals often behave in a manner that reflected the distinctions between and among organizations and organizational constituencies (Tekleab and Chiaburu, 2011). Thus, past research has provided evidence that an organizational member is not only likely to recognize the distinctions between and among organizations and organizational constituencies, but he/she is also likely to have varying attitudes and change his/her behaviour and attitudes based on these kinds of distinctions. These studies highlight the multi-foci nature of social exchange relationship where employees can simultaneously hold distinct perceptions towards organizations and each of various constituencies contained with them (Reicher 1985; Marks, 2001; Lavelle *et al.,* 2007). As such, it appeared to be plausible that employees may simultaneously perceive an exchange relationship with the organization itself and any or all of these constituencies (Marks, 2001; Conway and Briner, 2005; Lavelle *et al.,* 2007). The implication for operationalizing the psychological contract is that, rather than treating an organization as a unitary contract maker, it seems reasonable to expect that employees can simultaneously hold distinct psychological contracts with the organization itself and with each of the different agents: a multi-foci perspective of the psychological contract (Marks, 2001; Lavelle *et al.,* 2007; Conway and Briner, 2005)

There could be further complexity in the case of expatriates, since expatriates work across multinational corporations and could view many agents of the wider organization as the potential exchange partners (Sherman and Morley, 2016; Pate and Scullion, 2018). The recent conceptual work of Perera *et al* (2017) may shed some light in the notion of multiple psychological contract in the case of expatriates. The authors proposed the notion of dual-foci psychological contract of assigned expatriates. They maintained that in addition to parent company, expatriates developed a psychological contract with host company including host-company inducements of social support, language training and expatriate contributions of training and developing local co-worker (Perera *et al.,* 2017). The authors backed their argument with propositions and findings from research on expatriates perceived organizational support (POS), indicating that expatriates differentiated and hold distinct perceptions of organizational support towards parent company and subsidiary (Kraimer *et al.,* 2001; Kraimer and Wayne, 2004; Liu, 2009; Liu and Ipe, 2010). In this light, the authors argued that expatriates held a separate psychological contract with the subsidiary in addition to the one held with the parent company.

Although the conceptual work of Perera *et al* (2017) has advanced the understanding on the existence of simultaneous and distinct exchange relationships expatriates hold with the parent and host company, it shared similar limitations with previous expatriate' psychological contract studies in overlooking the potential exchange relationships between expatriates and a range of organizational agents of wider multinational corporations. However, the authors do highlight the necessity of separating the party to an individual's contract perception in further empirical examination (Perera *et al.,* 2017). Similarly, Sherman and Morley (2016) suggest that the "senior manager in the home site, the manager of the host unit on site, and the HR director of the home unit" could all be potentially perceived as the other party in an exchange relationship (Sherman and Morley, 2016: 17). Given the diverse roles they play as agents of the organization, it is important then to recognize that the "psychological contract creation process was likely to be different for each expatriate depending on the specific interaction" (Sherman and Morley, 2016: 17). As such, both studies have suggested that in-depth examination on the foci of expatriates' psychological contract is warranted (Perera *et al.,* 2017; Sherman and Morley, 2016). Within this thesis, this recognition leads to a second research interest in this thesis: the application of the psychological contract through a multi-foci perspective, that is, employees simultaneously hold multiple psychological contracts with various organizational agents across the multinational corporations.

While the aforementioned studies have offered evidence that employees differentiate the level of social exchange they perceive themselves having with multiple parties, and there have been theoretical propositions about the multi-foci perspective of the psychological contract (Marks, 2001; Lavelle *et al.,* 2007), limited research has been done to empirically explore these issues; this is particularly the case in an international context. However, prior research (e.g. Conway and Briner, 2005) implied that given the likely differential interactions between employees and organizational agents of a diverse nature, it was possible that different agents were responsible for establishing and maintain different aspects of the contract content. Similarly, as the content of individuals' psychological contracts changes over time (Robinson *et al.,* 1994; De Vos *et al.,* 2003, 2005), there are opportunities to explore the implications of having multiple organizational agents involved in a contract on its dynamics over the international assignment cycle. As discussed in the first argument constructed in this section, the first main research interest is to examine the initial content of expatriates' contract beliefs created at pre-departure stage and how these contract beliefs change as the assignments proceed, incorporating a multi-foci perspective of the psychological contract, this chapter presents the two sets of research questions and its components.

Research question 1:

What is the content of the psychological contract beliefs of expatriates at pre-departure stage?

(a) Who are the other parties with which pre-departure expatriates perceive to be the exchange partners?

(b) How does the presence of multiple parties influence the content of the psychological contract beliefs of expatriates at pre-departure stage?

Research question 2:

How does an individual expatriate's psychological contract change across perceived employee and employer obligations over the stages following pre-departure? (including initial entry, subsequent assignment and repatriation). Specifically,

(a) How do the other parties with which an expatriate creates psychological contracts (contract-makers) change over the stages following pre-departure?

(b) How do the expatriates' psychological contract change across perceived employee and employer obligations over the stages following pre-departure and what is the role of the presence of multiple parties in this change?

Having set the research questions, the use of Chinese expatriates in this thesis in addressing the above research questions is then justified. Specifically, the current body of research has shown an exclusive focus on expatriates from developed economies moving to other developed or developing economies (Bonache and Brewster, 2001; Minbaeva and Michailova, 2004; Riusala and Suutari, 2004), little research has been conducted on expatriates of organizations from emerging economies operating in developed countries (Chang *et al.,* 2009; Wang *et al.,* 2014; Briscoe, 2014; Clarke *et al.,* 2017). This has been described as a neglected phenomenon given the rapid rise of multinational corporations (MNCs) from developing markets (Gao, *et al.,* 2013; Wang *et al.,* 2017). For example, in economic terms, foreign direct investment (FDI) from developing countries has grown dramatically (Wang *et al.,* 2017; Clarke *et al.,* 2017). In 2016, the FDI outflows from developing and transition economies arrives at a record level of 35 percent of the world total at US$378 billion (UNCTAD, 2016). These figures highlight the growing importance of developing countries as a source of investment around the world. Further, emerging countries "has already leapfrogged ahead developed countries" in terms of innovation and implementation of innovative business approaches (Wooldridge, 2010: 2). Their innovative strategies are making inroads into industries such as automotive, health care and telecommunications, redesigning business processes to outperform their counterparts in Western countries (UNCTAD, 2016). Overall, these developments suggest that more enterprises from developing economies are trading with developed countries, which in turn, means an increase in the expatriate outflow from developing to developed countries (Clarke *et al.,* 2017).

An improved understanding of expatriate management in MNCs of developing economies is also practical and theoretically relevant given the potential differences between expatriate experiences in developed and developing economies (Shin *et al.,* 2007; Chang *et al.,* 2012; Chiu *et al.,* 2009; Kim and Tung, 2013). For instance, in a societal level which revolves around the cultural characteristics, the study by Shin *et al.,* (2007) observed that expatriates working in countries high in collectivism (high in the extent of preference for following group norms) need to perform more relationship-oriented behaviour than those in countries high in individualism. In addition to cultural environment, at an organization level, research has looked at a range of unique features associated with MNCs from developing economies. It was reported that MNCs of developing economies exhibited characteristics (risk-taking entry modes), motivations (preference for asset-seeking) and internationalization paths (radical in investment size) that varied from those of MNCs from developed economies (Luo and Tung, 2007). These key features in turn had implications for MNCs from developing economies in undertaking their HRM process, which was centred on the issue of localizing or transfer HRM strategies and practices (Harzing and Sorge, 2003; Chang *et al.,* 2009). Further at an individual level analysis, research showed a focus on the cross-cultural competences and personality traits of expatriates from developing economies (Chang *et al.,* 2012; Chiu *et al.,* 2009; Kim and Tung, 2013). The evidence suggested that expatriates from developing economies may not necessarily need to develop equally each of the four sets of cross-cultural skills (stress-management skills, interpersonal skills, perceptual skills, and communication skills) to be effective in certain countries, as identified in the Western literature (Chang *et al.,* 2012; Chiu *et al.,* 2009; Kim and Tung, 2013). Given the multifaceted level of differences between MNCs from developing and developed economies (e.g. cultural, organizational and individual) and its implications for management of expatriates, the disproportionate representation of Western expatriates in the literature only provides partial understanding about expatriate management (Briscoe, 2014; Clarke *et al.,* 2017).

In addressing the paucity of literature on expatriates from developing economies, this thesis focusses on China as the research context for the following three reasons. First, China is the largest emerging market with surging outward FDI, which represents a growing population of expatriates accompanying Chinese companies' overseas expansion (Wang *et al.,* 2017).

In economic terms, following the recent launch of "Belt and Road" in 2016 (a significant development strategy launched by the Chinese government with the intention of promoting economic cooperation covering more than 60 countries and regions from Asia to Europe), China has made a direct non-financial investment of RMB1.12992 trillion (equivalent to US$170.11 billion, an increase of 44.1% than last year) in 7,961 enterprises overseas over 164 countries and regions (MOFCOM, 2017). Driven by the government initiatives, Chinese enterprises were forecasted to increase overseas investment, and therefore, a double-digit growth rate in China's outward FDI is expected in the next few years (Ernst and Young, 2016). Along with outward FDI, Chinese expatriate outflow has increased significantly in the last 10 years. The Chinese expatriate outflow stock was 812,000 at the end of 2015, an increase of 322,000 people since the end of 2005 (MOFCOM, 2017). Therefore, selecting China as the focus of an analysis regarding its expatriate workforce is a logical step.

Second, Chinese MNCs presents an ideal context for studying its employment relationships. The Chinese context has been argued to be very different from mainstream Western countries (the US, UK, and Europe) due to its socialism political regime (e.g. collectivist culture, high power-distance and high-context communication) (Chen and Miller, 2010; Lyles *et al.,* 2014). These key characteristics collectively shaped the employment relationships in China, emphasizing the importance of networks or personal inter-relationships in enhancing both career satisfaction and achievement among Chinese employees (Zhang and Fan, 2014). Moreover, personal relationships and networks were valuable sources in forming the basis of the internationalization of Chinese firms (Lau *et al.,* 2010); the values and beliefs comprising the "spirit of Chinese capitalism" also underpinned the way Chinese business and cross-border operations are conducted (Redding and Hsiao, 1990; Yeung and Old, 2000). Therefore, the internationalization of Chinese MNCs reflects both their institutional and cultural contextual embeddedness (Lyles *et al.,* 2014) where it is plausible that employment relationship could be given heightened importance.

Third, China has a long history of population migration, which is unique in exploring the attitudes of Chinese population towards leaving their hometown. Internal migration in the China is one of the most extensive in the world. According to research by Miao and Wang (2017), In the 30 years since 1979, China's urban population has experienced an increase of 440 million, arriving at 622 million, and the net migration accounted for 340 million out of this increase in urban population. It was suggested that the volume of rural-urban migration in such a short period was likely the largest in human history (Miao and Wang, 2010). Migrants in China were commonly members of a floating population, which referred primarily to migrants in China without local household registration status (Fang, 2001). The frequently cited reasons for migration are employment, education and higher standard of living (Miao and Wang, 2010). Therefore, it appears that Chinese actively sought for migration opportunities as ways of improving working and living experiences. In the case of expatriates, the implication being that the opportunities of taking on an international assignment and associated the career prospect may be given heightened importance by the Chinese expatriates, which in turn, may place demands on expatriates when managing their employment relationships with the organizations.

2.6 Summary on literature review

The main purpose of this thesis is to investigate the dynamics of expatriates' psychological contracts over the tenure of international assignment cycle, that is the initial content of expatriates' contract beliefs created at pre-departure stage, how these contract beliefs change as the assignments proceed, and particularly to explore the role of having multiple organizational agents involved in a contract in shaping the contract content over the whole cycle. To elaborate on this research objective, the literature review has covered three main areas. First, four predominate themes within expatriate literature (expatriate selection and training, expatriate adjustment, repatriation issues and strategic role of expatriates) were reviewed. This offered the foundation for putting forward the argument that there was a scarcity of literature examining the interactions between expatriates and organizations, through which the utilization of the psychological contract as a relevant and useful framework in exploring this line of research has been justified. Second, the literature regarding the main theoretical framework in this thesis (the psychological contract) was then reviewed. Rousseau's (1989) seminal work was discussed in detail and where the contemporary claims contrasted with historical views, these were highlighted in order to establish the conceptual basis for the contract's examination in this thesis. This was followed by the discussion on the model of contract content; Rousseau's (2000) transactional, relational and balanced typology were described and justified to examine the contract content in this thesis. Third, the research into the psychological contract of expatriates were critiqued as follows: 1) there was a scarcity of research on how expatriate's psychological contract forms and changes throughout the whole international assignment; and 2) there has been limited exploration on the existence of employees simultaneously holding multiple psychological contracts with different organizational constituencies (the multi-foci perspective of the psychological contract). These discussions lead to the identification of the opportunities for further research. In address the research interest, the use of Chinese expatriates in this thesis is then justified. The following chapter will describe and justify the methodology utilized in this thesis to address the research questions outlined.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by outlining and justifying the philosophical basis (section 3.2) and overall research design utilized in this research (section 3.3-3.4) to address the research questions. The overall data collection strategy, sampling frame and data collection sources will also be described and explained in this chapter (section 3.5). Finally, the general data analysis procedures are described (section 3.6). Building on the notion of the multi-foci perspective of the psychological contract, the overall objective of this thesis is to examine the dynamics of expatriates' psychological contract over the international assignment cycle, including the pre-departure stage, initial entry stage, subsequent assignment and repatriation phase. To this end, the design of this thesis focuses on three partial objectives; first, identifying the content of expatriates' reciprocal psychological contract beliefs at the pre-departure stage; second, building on this basis, identifying the change in expatriates' contract content over the reminder of the international assignment cycle (initial entry stage, subsequent assignment and repatriation phase); third, investigating the role of multiple contract makers in influencing the above two phenomenon. Before detailing the specific research design, the philosophical assumptions that underpin this thesis are explicated.

3.2 Philosophical assumptions

Research methods are based upon a particular paradigm, a patterned set of assumptions concerning reality (ontology), knowledge of that reality (epistemology), and the particular ways of knowing that reality (methodology) (Guba, 1990). As this thesis seeks to understand psychological contracts from the expatriates' point of view and to further explore the ways in which psychological contracts change through the course of international assignments, a relativism ontological stance and social constructionism epistemological position have been adopted in this thesis. As a recognition of the perceptual and dynamic nature of the psychological contract (Rousseau and Tijoriwala, 1998), these philosophical assumptions are deemed to be able to allow individuals' subjective understanding of their reality and situation to be researched (e.g. employment relationship), and to explore the meaning of such individuals' experiences (Robson, 2002).

First, ontology relates to the study of "the nature of existence and the assumptions we make about it" (Stokes, 2011: 90). A relativism ontological stance denies the existence of absolute truth, instead, maintains that there is no reality existing independent of human consciousness. As such, there are only "different sets of meanings and classifications which people attached to the world" (Robson, 2002: 22). The research interest under examination is concerned with expatriates' psychological contracts and this is centred on the interpretation of individual's perceived reciprocal obligations between his/her and the organization (Rousseau, 1989). As an individual's contract beliefs are highly perceptual and the resulting psychological contract itself is also dynamic and constantly renegotiated (Conway and Briner, 2009). This is likely to give rise to unique whilst constantly changing perceptions when expatriates make sense of their employment relationships. More specifically, in clarifying the uniqueness of each individual's psychological contract, the existing contract literature explains that individuals can have subjective beliefs "regarding his or her own obligations as well as beliefs regarding reciprocal obligations owed by another" (Rousseau and Tijoriwala, 1998: 680), meaning that these beliefs are firmly at individual level and may diverge from the interpretation by other parties. Importantly, it should be emphasized that these perceived obligations have "no universal or objective meaning", rather, they were constructed according to "the values in a particular time and space" (Pate and Scullion, 2009: 59). As such, the interpretation of expatriates' psychological contracts should recognize individuals' own definition and understanding of their employment relationships. The psychological contract, as a manifestation of employee-organization relationship, therefore is a reality that varies according to the individuals subject to study. Consequently, the form of reality that this thesis can access resides within the field of relativism where the reality is constructed differentially by individual expatriates.

Then, grounded in a relativist ontology that rejects the existence of any possible correct reality, social constructionism as an epistemological standpoint, is then taken throughout the course of this thesis. Epistemology refers to "the nature of knowledge and approaches of enquiring into the "physical and social world" (Easterby Smith *et al.,* 2002: 51). As opposed to the positivist stance that knowledge can be gained through "observation and experiment" (Henning *et al.,* 2004: 294), social constructionism takes a position that the nature of knowledge is subjective (Saunders *et al.,* 2012) such that, "knowledge is a process of actively interpreting and constructing individual knowledge representations" (Jonassen, 1991: 5). Building on this understanding, advocates of social constructionism believe that the construction of knowledge is subject to individual interpretation in a context where there are interactions with other parties (Guba and Lincoln, 1998). In addition, the knowledge of the world is not fixed, but rather, subject to continuous revision and adjustment as individuals interact with the world. Therefore, the various social-cultural features embedded in the context and its influences on the interpretations made by different individuals should be recognized (Guba and Lincoln, 1998).

Psychological contracts are based on subjective perceptions of complex work relationships, meaning that the knowledge assessed by this thesis is deemed to be subjectively rooted in each individual's mind. In this sense, a social constructionism position is clearly a suitable approach that can be adopted (Guba and Lincoln, 1998). Moreover, previous research into the dynamics of psychological contracts provided evidence that the content of employees' contract beliefs may be redefined or adjusted over time as "organizational economic conditions, job situations, supportive relationships and organizational agents" changed (Conway and Briner, 2009; Conway and Coyle-Shapiro, 2012). The main mechanism proposed to drive such change is information-seeking and acquisition, that is, employees derive meanings from the messages sent from a range of sources (such as agents of organization, practice and policy, cultural value). In line with this information, individuals, over time, came to better understand their employment relationships and so altered or adjusted their contract beliefs (De Vos *et al.,* 2003; 2005). In this regard, a social constructionist approach will allow the presence of the complexity associated with human sense-making as the context surrounding individuals varies (David and Sutton, 2004). Accordingly, it should be noted that the context of Eastern expatriates moving to Western operations within this thesis heightens the implications of contextual features on expatriates' interpretation of their employment relationships. As the psychological contract is a cultural phenomenon; the engagement between the Eastern expatriates and Western cultural contexts is likely to shape the perceived obligations that constitute the psychological contracts of expatriates (please see section 3.3 for details) (Conway and Briner, 2002). Therefore, in line with the claims of social constructionism, it is important to recognize the social-cultural features embedded in the context of this thesis that could influence the interpretations made by different expatriates within this sample.

Finally, from the methodological perspective, the ultimate goal of social constructionist research is not to identify generalizable laws to explain behaviours (positivism); rather, it is to identify the different "constructions and meanings" social actors place on their experiences (Easterby Smith, 2012: 54). To this end, a qualitative methodology is used to better access expatriates' perceptions of their differential relationships with multiple parties, which are unlikely to be captured by pre-determined response categories or standardized quantitative measures (McEvoy and Richards, 2006). Importantly, qualitative methodologies seek to capture individuals' unfiltered perspectives (e.g. meanings, attitudes, opinions: Rousseau and Tijoriwala, 1998) and allow a details analysis on the "how" of the phenomenon (Denzin and Lincoln, 2009). In order to understand the "constructions and meaning" that expatriates place on their employment relationships (the psychological contract) and how the associated dynamics unfold throughout the tenure of international assignment cycle, a primarily qualitative paradigm, therefore, seems to be the most appropriate. Furthermore, in assessing the literature on psychological contracts, the empirical research in the field has been dominated by cross-sectional questionnaire surveys, which measured the content of the psychological contract (Guest, 2000, Guzzo *et al.,* 1994), and the breach and violation of the psychological contract and associated employee outcomes (Rousseau, 1990; Sparrow and Cooper, 1998; Conway and Briner, 2005). While these studies provided a considerable contribution to the field, Conway and Briner (2005) argued that the use of surveys may not allow a sufficient understanding on the complex aspects associated with the reciprocal exchange of the psychological contract. An over-reliance on surveys led Taylor and Tekleab (2004: 279) to state, "psychological contract research has fallen into a methodological rut". Consequently, in order to offer more convincing and reliable results, there has been a call for adopting different research methods (Conway and Briner, 2005).

The lack of qualitative exploration is particularly the case for research into expatriates' psychological contract. As discussed earlier in the literature review chapter of this thesis (Chapter 2-section 2.5), the research in this field has largely focused on how evaluation of psychological contract state (e.g. contract fulfilment/violation) influenced expatriate outcomes (Chi and Chen, 2007; Chen and Chiu 2009; Guzzo *et al.,*1994; Chen, 2010; Lee *et al.,* 2014; Ruiter *et al.,* 2016). This line of research is addressed mainly through a quantitative perspective using cross-sectional questionnaire surveys as data collection tools, with the exception of Pate and Scullion (2009). In their qualitative research, the authors looked at the contract content from both the employee and employer perspectives; drawing on the findings from three organizational case studies in varied geographical locations (two multinational corporations in Europe and one in North American), the authors argued that as a response to the tight organizational practice in a competitive international environment, expatriates moved their psychological contracts towards a transactional overtone, with an individualistic and calculating interpretation of the employment relationship (Pate and Scullion, 2009). Of particular importance to this thesis is that the position adopted by the authors views the psychological contract as idiosyncratic and context-dependent, therefore highlighting the importance of qualitative methodologies for future research in this area. As a response to the need for more in-depth examination of psychological contracts that proposed by such authors (e.g. Pate and Scullion, 2009), the dynamics of expatriates' psychological contracts over the tenure of international assignment is investigated through a qualitative research approach in this thesis. Particularly, the content of the psychological contract, will be described and categorized according to Rousseau's (2000) transactional, relational and balanced typology. Having established the relationships between philosophical assumptions and methodological approach, the use of case study as the research strategy within this thesis is now discussed and justified.

3.3 Research strategy and design

This thesis utilizes an explorative single-case study approach to address the research objective (Yin, 2009). Case study is described as a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher makes an intensive investigation on a program, event, activity, process or one or more individuals (Stake, 2005). Notably, this strategy is appropriate in instances where the contextual situations surrounding the phenomenon are believed to be pertinent to understanding it (Yin, 2009). Expatriate research using case study as the research strategy has particular strength in capturing the influences of expatriates' real-life context on the examination of expatriation as a broader research topic (Yang *et al.,* 2016; Easterby Smith, 2012). For example, Shortland (2011) sought to understand female expatriates' experiences of network programs initiated by management in an energy company (e.g. oil and gas), the rationale for a case study approach being that the organization where these networks are embedded are likely to have contextual influences on women's perceptions. Likewise, in a study of expatriates' social and professional networks, Richardson and McKenna (2014) conducted an in-depth exploration of expatriate management using a professional service firm as the case organization. This will allow for an appreciation of organization's support system from expatriates' point of view; whilst the interviews with senior HR managers provided further insights on the informal policies and organizational expectations that were likely to influence expatriate management. In line with this, the study of Johnson and

Duxbury (2010) specifically pointed out the centrality of case study strategy in their study. The authors noted that "context was germane in this research (the boundary-spanning role of expatriates), where the basis for conceptualizing the boundary role was to examine the expatriate's interactions with agents external to the organization" (Johnson and Duxbury, 2010: 32). As discussed above, a key rationale for an expatriate case study research is that the contextual influences impacting expatriates' experiences of different dimensions of expatriation (e.g. adjustment and professional networking) should be acknowledged, thus it is neither possible nor desirable to separate the expatriates from their real-life context (Richardson, 2016),

In this thesis, it is argued that the context is central to interpreting the employment relationships of expatriates moving from Eastern headquarters to Western subsidiary operations. To clarify, psychological contracts were belief systems of individual employees and employers regarding their mutual obligations, the development of these contract beliefs depended on the promises made as employment arrangements (Hui *et al.,* 2004). The society, within which the employment was embedded, shaped how these promises were conveyed and interpreted, hence the construction of employees' psychological contracts (Rousseau and Schalk, 2000). Cognitive as well as motivational differences across cultures may also affect reactions to fulfilled/unfulfilled expectations (Conway and Briner, 2002). The psychological contract, then, can be interpreted and constructed differently depending on the social context where the employment relationship was embedded (Rousseau and Schalk, 2000). Within this thesis, the importance of the context of Eastern expatriates working in Western host units in investigating the psychological contract are threefold: first, a considerable body of studies on the psychological contract has been conducted using Western samples, revealing a dearth of studies in the non-Western contexts (Lo and Aryee, 2003; Katou and Budhwar, 2012; Agarwal and Bhargava, 2014). In the view of differences between Western and Eastern societies and "their possible implication for reactions to psychological contract breach and the psychological contract process in general" (Rousseau and Schalke, 2000: 23), it will be useful to apply the psychological contract theory guided by a Western perspective to Eastern samples.

Second, apart from Eastern expatriates offering the scope of exploring psychological contracts developed from a different cultural, the international engagement with Western environment constitutes an additional complexity for psychological contract perceptions

(Westwood, 2001). As such, the need for incorporating the research context into examining the psychological contract is particularly salient in this thesis. Third, the notion of multi-foci psychological contract requires this thesis to look at expatriates' interactions with a range of organizational agents such as "senior manager in the home site, the manager of the host unit, and the HR director of the home unit" (Sherman and Morley, 2016: 17). These personnel are based on different cultural context and depend on the decision-making capacity of each agent, these interactions are expected to be variable and require an approach sensitive to the context where they are embedded (Conway and Briner, 2005; Johnson and Duxbury, 2010). Therefore, this thesis adopts case study as a response to the sensitivity of context, allowing for more detailed and contextually sensitive descriptions that are capable of capturing how Eastern expatriates working in the Western host units interpret their employment relationships.

Further, this thesis is positioned as a single-embedded case study. Yin's (2009) seminal work categorizes the design of case study along two discrete dimensions: the number of cases and the unit of analysis, the following table (Table 3-1) illustrates the types of design for a case study.

Table 3-1: Types of design for case study

	Single-case design	**Multiple-case design**
Holistic (single unit of analysis)	Type 1	Type 3
Embedded (multiple units of analysis)	Type 2	Type 4

Source: Yin (2009: 46)

First, the number of cases (single case versus multiple cases) to be utilized in the research design must be identified. For this thesis, a single-case study is applied. The major rationale for selecting a single-case study was that the research interests related to the aspect of "how certain conditions and their underlying processes change over time" (Yin, 2009: 89). In this sense, a single-case study is deemed to be appropriate as the research interest under examination concerns the changes in psychological contract beliefs of expatriates over the cycle of an international assignment. Moreover, there is strong agreement across the literature that psychological contract concerns with individual subjective perception regarding the reciprocal exchanges (Rousseau, 1989). The subjective nature of psychological contract means that individuals may generate unique beliefs regarding the exchange relationships with an employer, which may not be shared by other individuals (Rousseau and Tijoriwala, 1998). Given the uniqueness of each individual's psychological contract, the interest of this thesis is not in predicting similar or contrasting results through replication procedures, which is the underlying logic for multiple-case studies. However, it was noteworthy that as a case study proceeds, a limitation of single-case design may arise in that, there is a risk of shift in the entire nature of case study and this problem was often referred to as an "unsuspected slippage" where different research orientation emerged as the case study proceeded, and evidence began to address different research questions (Yin, 2009: 91). As a response to this limitation, the research design of this thesis attempts to increase the sensitivity to such slippage by using an embedded unit of analysis approach that compares sub-units within a particular case. To clarify, an embedded unit of analysis approach involved different but related work groups within a single organization (Saunders *et al.,* 2012). Towards addressing the limitation mentioned above, the use of embedded units of analysis will allow to concentrate on the case study inquiry and enable the complex nature of the research framework to be analysed (Yin, 2009). In addition, comparing sub-units of a particular case may add opportunities for extensive analysis of the research aims (e.g. the dynamic of expatriates' psychological contracts) which enhances the insight of the single-case design. The detailed analysis of embedded units and how this method is applied to research design will be specified in section 3.4 (implementation of research design).

3.3.1 Case study sampling

The research design employs a purposeful sampling technique to extract rich, in-depth information. Purposeful sampling is defined by Daymon and Holloway (2011) as the selection of participants which is guided by the purpose of the study. The goal of purposive sampling is to generalize from the observations at hand to an underlying concept or theory (an analytic generalization), rather than to a broader population (a statistical generalization: Yin, 2009). Although the specific findings obtained from purposive sampling cannot be generalized to other populations, the conceptual models that emerge from examination of a particular case, that is, the multi-foci perspective of the psychological contract in this thesis can be applied in other populations. With regard to organizational setting, the purposive sampling seeks to identify cases that are extreme in terms of the phenomenon of interest as this increases the likelihood of accessing information-rich data (Patton, 2002). In this thesis, the underlying concept of interest is the psychological contract of expatriates. Accordingly, the research design sought to locate, not a wide variety of organizations, but a single organization which regularly sends employees on international assignments.

The chosen setting is a state-owned automobile producer in China and it will remain anonymous in line with the ethical clearance agreement. The organization that participated in this thesis was therefore referred to as "Automobile Co." throughout this thesis. The reminder of this section provides the background context of the case study organization. Automobile Co.'s headquarters are located in Beijing; its subsidiaries are located through China (e.g. Chongqing Automobile Co. limited) and around the world in the United states, the United Kingdom, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Ukraine, Iran, Pakistan, Malaysia. Initially, Automobile Co. belonged to a Chinese ordnance equipment company, after fourteen years' integration and optimization, Automobile Co separated from its previous owner as an independent enterprise and now positioned itself as one of the four largest automobile groups in China. Throughout the history of Automobile Co., there has been strong emphasis on strategic collaborations on an international scale. In the area of automobile manufacturing, it has carried out extensive cooperation with internationally renowned automobile manufacturers (e.g. Ford and Mazda), bringing numerous classic automobile products to the Chinese market. In relation to automobile research and development (R&D) activities, its R&D centers had been well established across Europe ((Italy); Turin,), the United Kingdom (Birmingham and Nottingham), the United states (Detroit), Belgium (Ghent) and Japan (Kanagawa) (The details of the overseas R&D centres are attached in Appendix 1). These global investments cover its key business sectors including automobile manufacturing, components and parts, powertrain technologies and commercial services, enabling Automobile Co.' a strong vehicle manufacturing and parts supply capacity. Importantly, in the course of expanding its global networks, Automobile Co. invested heavily in training and developing employees through exposing them to global practices and diverse technologies. As such, international assignments are often deployed in order to develop leadership and technical skills within the group; the duration of these assignments varies between three and five years.

As indicated by the organization's documentations for international assignment design and planning, there are two types of international assignments in Automobile Co, namely special project assignment and higher education assignment. The first type of assignment involves sending 5-10 assignees from Automobile Co abroad to work with its subsidiaries located across Europe (e.g. Italy) and the USA to achieve specific organizational objectives. These objectives include car model design/modelling research, engineering design, power system research and development and manufacturing process research. The assignees work under the supervision of corresponding subsidiary units during the course of special project assignments, and afterwards, they transfer the data output (e.g. engine model) and/or plant back to China. The second type of assignment involves sponsoring engineers and high-potential individuals at top-tier universities around the world for a master's degree, PhD or both. This thesis focuses on the expatriates in the special project assignments for its relevance to examine the employment relationships in a business context. Accordingly, Automobile Co also pays particular attention to their employees gaining skills and experience through this type of international assignments and for which, Automobile Co developed a formal blueprint structure including training/coaching activities, financial compensation, and the repatriation process. These elements are linked by explicit goals and policies for developing a pool of national talent.

In relation to Automobile Co.'s expatriate selection practice, the formal policy for nominating employees for international assignments are precise and the examples of criteria are presented as follows:

- Employees' minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) must be 2.5.
- Employees' minimum major GPA must be 3.0.
- Employees should have a minimum of one years' experience in the company or a subsidiary company.

Consistent to the criteria, expatriates are selected for undertaking the international assignments. Automobile Co also offers cross-cultural training which aims at introducing their expatriates to the host country's appropriate norms and behaviors. Cooperating with Automobile Co.'s global training providers, the training programs are offered to expatriate upon their arrival in foreign countries. These programs focus on the specific region or country to which the individual will be sent. Over the course of the program, the trainee is introduced to realistic information about the host country. The objective is to familiarize the employees with the work environment and the lifestyle in the host country. In relation to the process of repatriation, repatriation stage commenced in at around four to six months prior to departure to home country (China); during this process, line managers and HR department of headquarter will work collectively taking responsibilities for departure preparation such as informing expatriates about moving process, collaborating with "automobile Co" logistics, undertaking post-assignment career planning, preparing entry clearance documentation as well as general administrative issues (e.g. insurance). After re-entry, the repatriates will report to headquarter international assignment management committee going through further administrative procedures.

3.4 Implementation of research design

The above discussion has led to the identification of the research methodology as a qualitative single-embedded case study design (section 3.3), this section aims to address the process of how this research is implemented. To provide a foundation for the overall research implementation, the research questions for this thesis are outlined below. These have been developed from literature review chapter in section 2.5.

1. What is the content of the psychological contract beliefs of individual expatriates at pre-departure stage?

(a) What are the other parties with which expatriates create psychological contracts at pre-departure stage?

(b) How does the presence of multiple parties influence the content of the psychological contract beliefs of expatriates at pre-departure stage?

2. How does individual expatriates' psychological contracts change across perceived employee and employer obligations over the stages following pre-departure? (initial entry, subsequent and repatriation). Specifically,

(a) How do the other parties to which expatriates create psychological contracts (contract-makers) change over the stages following pre-departure?

(b) How do the expatriates' psychological contract change across perceived employee and employer obligations over the stages following pre-departure and what is the role of the presence of multiple parties in this change?

Although this thesis acknowledges that a longitudinal research design could perhaps better capture the process of ongoing contract change, it was decided that a cross-sectional research design was necessary due to practical considerations. To clarify, an international assignment normally lasts for "three to five years" (McKenna and Richard, 2007: 307), making it difficult follow a given cohort due to the time constrains of doctoral work. To mitigate this weakness, this research design attempts to capture the psychological contracts of expatriates at the key transition stages of the whole international assignment namely: pre-departure stage, initial entry stage, subsequent assignment and repatriation phase, and through comparison between the contract beliefs at each stage to assume a full picture of psychological contract development over the international assignment cycle.

However, with the exception of the other expatriate groups (expatriates at initial entry stage, subsequent assignment and repatriation phase), it is difficult to directly collect data from expatriates at pre-departure stage due to practical constrains. In particular, at the time of research, there were not sufficient expatriates at the pre-departure stage in the Automobile Co. This was due to the company's own international assignment planning and current operational needs of subsidiaries, which was beyond the researcher's control. For the purpose of accessing expatriates' pre-departure experiences, an adaptation of retrospective reports is used, an approach which has proved useful in previous research into the dynamics of the psychological contract (Robinson *et al.,* 1994; Thomas and Anderson, 1998; De Vos *et al.,* 2003). In these studies, retrospective reports from newly recruited employees were collected to explore the perceptions of contract beliefs around the time point of organizational entry, with some reports covering lengthy periods. For example, in the study by De Vos *et al.,* (2003), the participants provided retrospective reports at four points in time after organizational entry (four waves: first month, third month, sixth month and 12th month). Similarly, such reports were collected in other studies at two waves: first year, second year (Robinson *et al.,* 1994); and two waves: first day and after eight weeks (Thomas and Anderson, 1998). Although retrospection over lengthy periods does not necessarily result in biased reports (Tomprou and Nikolaou, 2010), the validity of such reports is argued to be prone to various issues, particularly, to the accuracy of memory (Reis and Gable, 2000). As such, with the attempt to limit the threat to validity of such reports arising from memory fade to the minimum, retrospective reports from expatriates at initial entry stage was used to understand the perceptions of contract belief at time point of pre-departure.

Given this consideration, the research design selects three embedded units of analysis: embedded unit of analysis 1 (expatriates at initial entry stage), embedded unit of analysis 2 (expatriates at subsequent assignment) and embedded unit of analysis 3 (expatriates at repatriation). The categorization of embedded unit of analysis is illustrated in the following table (Table 3-2).

Table 3-2: Categorization of embedded unit of analysis

Stage of international assignment	Pre-departure	Initial entry	Subsequent assignment	Repatriation
Embedded unit of analysis	N/A	Embedded unit of analysis 1	Embedded unit of analysis 2	Embedded unit of analysis 3

Then, the overall research is further categorized into two strands described as Study One and Study Two, where different embedded units of analysis are allocated. Study One focuses upon understanding the content of individual expatriates' reciprocal contract beliefs around the time of pre-departure (using retrospective reports from embedded unit of analysis 1) and identifying the organizational parties involved in contract creation (Table 3-3). As discussed earlier (section 2.5), the understanding on the content of expatriates' contract beliefs at the initial entry stage offers a starting point to then assess the change in these beliefs over the remaining stages of international assignment cycle. Semi-structured interviews are used because they allow for the exploration of individuals' front-of-mind contract beliefs. Further, the flexibility of a semi-structured process, including the ability to access techniques such as probing and paraphrasing throughout the interviews (Easterby Smith *et al.,* 2002), is viewed as particularly important in assisting the initial-entry stage expatriates to recall their pre-departure experiences regarding contract beliefs (e.g. organizational obligations).

Table 3-3: Study One-purpose and allocation of units of analysis

Strand of study	Purpose	Allocation of units of analysis
Study One	To understand the initial content of of participants' contract beliefs at pre-departure stage of an international assignment	N/A (embedded unit 1 was interviewed to retrospectively reflect on their contract beliefs at the time point of pre-departure)

Study Two focuses upon gaining understanding of how participants' psychological contracts change over the remaining stages of the international assignment (Table 3-4). The use of semi-structured interviews (as in Study One) is particularly important for Study Two for two reasons: first, the focus is on understanding in participants' own experience about the antecedents and consequences of changes in their psychological contracts. Second, in light of different social-cultural norms between Eastern and Western settings, it is expected that radical shifts in the expatriates' employment relationships will occur in terms of expatriation and subsequent repatriation. Therefore, techniques such as closed questioning and probing is required to identify potentially challenging experiences from the view of expatriates at these particular stages.

Table 3-4: Study two-purpose and allocation of units of analysis

Strand of study	purpose	Allocation of unit of analysis

Study Two	To understand how participants' psychological contract change over the remaining stages of an international assignment	. Embedded unit of analysis 1: expatriates at initial entry stage (their current contract beliefs as at initial entry stage will be explored) . Embedded unit of analysis 2: expatriates at subsequent assignment . Embedded unit of analysis 3: expatriates at repatriation

Overall, the individual interviews will be implemented according to the sequence of embedded units (Table 3-5). To clarify, two semi-structure interviews were conducted for embedded unit of analysis 1 to respectively identify their pre-departure contract beliefs and current beliefs as at the initial entry stage; the remaining embedded units of analysis namely: embedded unit of analysis 2 and embedded unit of analysis 3 were interviewed in line with their respective stage of an international assignment; therefore, a total of four interviews were conducted in the research design. In order to form a holistic view on the process of psychological contract creation and change over the international assignment cycle, a joint discussion of the findings from these interviews will be conducted. For example, while the results of the first-wave interview in Study One will be contrasted with the second-wave interview in Study Two, cross-comparisons between the three-waves of semi-structured interviews within Study Two will be conducted (e.g. the send wave versus the third wave).

Table 3-5: Overview of research design implementation

Strand of study	Study One	Study Two

Purpose of study	To understand the initial content of of participants' contract beliefs at pre-departure stage of an international assignment	To understand how participants' psychological contract change over the remaining stages of an international assignment		
Stage of international assignment	Pre-departure	Initial entry	Subsequent assignment	Repatriation
Allocation of embedded units of analysis	N/A	Embedded units of analysis 1	Embedded unit of analysis 2	Embedded unit of analysis 3
Waves of interviews	The first wave[a]	The second wave[b]	The third wave	The fourth wave

[a] Embedded unit 1 was interviewed to retrospectively reflect on their contract beliefs at the time point of pre-departure

[b] Embedded unit 1 was interviewed about their current contract beliefs as at the initial entry stage

3.5 Overall sampling frame and characteristics

The sampling strategy for addressing research participants for this thesis will now be discussed. Overall, this research categorizes expatriates according to key transition stages at the whole international assignment cycle. Considering that the perceptions of contract belief at time point of pre-departure is retrieved via retrospective reports, there are three specific groups of expatriates who should be respectively identified at the initial entry stage, the subsequent assignment stage and the repatriation phase. The reminder of this section focusses on clarifying the boundary conditions for categorizing each expatriate group. In classifying expatriates at repatriation phase, the expatriate literature is relatively explicit in that repatriates refer to individuals who have already returned to one's home country after extended periods of time in another country (Lazarova and Cerdin, 2007). As such, the sampling frame will categorize and get access to this group of expatriates in line with these guidelines.

In contrast, the categorization of expatriates at initial entry and subsequent assignments are often ambiguously stated (Bossard and Peterson 2005; Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985; Min *et al.,* 2013). In particular, a large body of literature focusing on expatriates' adjustment on international assignment does not make a clear distinction between the time period during which an expatriate is classified as initial entry or a subsequent assignment (Harris, 2002; Harzing, 2001; Peltokorpi and Vaara, 2014). The exception is made by the work of Feitosa *et al.,* (2014) in the examination of expatriate work adjustment at the early phase of international assignment based on a 4 months period of the assignment, which may provide a reference point for the current study. Moreover, with reference to psychological contract literature, previous research does not provide a clear and universal guidance on timeframes for investigating change (Robinson *et al.,* 1994). However, there was an agreement that contract beliefs may adjust quite quickly following organizational commencement (Rousseau, 1995). In this regard, the socialization literature provides some timing guidance, suggesting that 3, 6 and 12 months are meaningful intervals in the socialization process (De Vos *et al.*, 2003), which may then coincide with appropriate timeframes for studying psychological contract change. In line with the literature discussed, this research will categorize expatriates at the initial entry stage as those who has been transferred to host unit for around 3 to 4 months; by extension, expatriates on subsequent assignments could be classified as those who have been transferred to host unit for more than 4 months.

Having setting the boundary conditions for classifying expatriates at respective stages of the international assignment cycle, the overall sampling frame under study is now outlined. With reference to expatriate research implementing a single case-study approach, there is a wide variety on the determination of simple size and research often shows a lack of transparency regarding the underlying arguments for these (O'Sullivan and O'Sullivan, 2008; Johnson and Duxbury, 2010; McKenna, 2010; Shortland, 2011). Theoretically, when determining the sample size for qualitative research, the data collection process should continue until "saturation": a point that is reached when the sample size is "sufficiently large and varied to elucidate the aims of the study" (Malterud *et al.,* 2016: 1753). However, it is difficult to strictly follow this process within this thesis, as the researcher is required to gain access to expatriates through designated organizational representatives. Table 3-6 and Table 3-7 provide an overview of the demographic characteristics for the overall study sample (35 expatriates in total). These tables show that each expatriate group has similar characteristics. For example, the gender split (predominately males), average age (24-28 years), employment tenure (the majority were over 2 years prior to assignment) and previously international experience (the majority had no previous international experience). In addition, expatriates' work related mainly to research and development activities, with few working in other departments (e.g. accounting and production line).

Table 3-6: An overview of the demographic characteristics (a)

Stage of international assignment	**No. of respondents**	**Location**	**Gender**	**Age (average)**
Initial entry	2	Detroit(USA)	Male	27
	3	Turin (Italy)		
	6	Ghent (Belgium)		
	Total size: 11			
Subsequent assignment	9	Birmingham (UK)	Male-79% Female-21%	24
	5	Nottingham (UK)		
	5	Turin (Italy)		
	Total size: 19			
Repatriation	5	China	Male	28

Table 3-7: An overview of the demographic characteristics (b)

Stage of international assignment	Department	Employment tenure prior to assignment (average)	Employment tenure post-assignment (average)	Previous international experience
Initial entry	Powertrain research and development (R&D); Transmission technology Accounting	4.8 years	3.8 months	No
Subsequent assignment	Powertrain R&D; Transmission technology; Thermos management; Model design; production line.	2 years	2.3 years	11% Yes 89% No
Repatriation	Powertrain R&D	2 years	10 months	No

The researcher began negotiating access around the second year on the doctoral study, after the research topic was narrowed down from the broad area of the psychological contract to the creation and change of expatriates' psychological contracts. Personal connections play a major role in gaining access to organizations (Zahra, 2011). In gaining direct access to samples, the human resource (HR) department made initial contact with the potential candidates to invite their voluntary participation. This is followed by the researcher supplying comprehensive information concerning this thesis (including plain language statement and consent forms) to the participants. After the confirmation of participation was obtained, the researcher contacted each individual participant to arrange a mutually agreeable time to conduct the interview. The participants in Study One and Study Two (with the exception of repatriates in China) are located in research and development centres of Automobile Co. across the USA, the UK, Italy and Belgium; given the geographical spread and location of the expatriates, interviews were conducted via Skype or telephone and the mode of communication was discussed with participants prior to conducting the interviews; the repatriates were interviewed via face-to-face in China. The interview for each participant will last for approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour.

3.6 Data collection method

Data will be collected via semi-structured interviews using an interview schedule, with specific themes and questions (e.g. organizational obligations prior to assignment) as prompts. The advantages of utilizing semi-structured interviews has been described for Study One and Study Two respectively (section 3.4), so the key arguments are briefly re-described here. The approach of semi-structure interview will allow for the understanding of the psychological contract from the perspectives of the participants as well as to develop the inherent meaning in their experiences (Robson, 2002). Further, the flexibility of a semi-structured process, including the ability to access techniques such as probing and paraphrasing throughout the interviews is important in the interactions with participants (Robson, 2002). In addition, documentation as a data source will be used to complement the primary method of data collection (semi-structured interview). In a case study, it is important to converge sources of data, known as triangulation, as an approach to ensure comprehensive results that reflect the participants' understandings as accurately as possible (Green *et al.,* 2015). In this thesis, organizational documents (internal and publicly available documents) were used to help the researcher to gain better insights into the organization's profile, its nature, its developmental background, expatriation activity and policy. Understanding these aspects helps the researcher make sense of the decisions made about involving expatriation planning and implementation, and the influence of management approaches to the expatriate workforce.

In the light of this discussion, the following considerations are given when deciding what types of documents to study and to what extent:

(a) The document could provide an overview of the nature of organization

(b) The document is related to expatriation policies and practices, and

(c) The document is related to expatriates' reporting system

Therefore, this research design will seek access to company documents pertaining to the case organization's internationalization strategy and particularly, the procedures and practices of its expatriation programs (e.g. expatriate selection and training). In achieving this purpose, the Automobile Co.'s internal materials were accessed and these included its current expatriates' profiles, procedures and policies for initiating international assignments and organizational practices for supporting the expatriates' oversea activities, and later, their repatriation process. In addition, the publicly available documents were also used to build a description of the case organization in terms of its corporate governance and business structures. These background documents included recently published annual reports, mission statements, reports for shareholders, press releases and public relations materials. Such documentation provided an important source of secondary data to supplement the understanding on the Automobile Co.'s formal international assignment policies.

3.7 Data analysis process

The key objectives of data analysis for qualitative research is to interpret the various meanings derived from what is perceived and described by the participants (Easterby Smith *et al.,* 2002). As Bogdan and Biklen (2007: 159) described, qualitative data analysis concerns with "working with the data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, coding them, synthesizing them, and searching for patterns". Broadly, qualitative approaches to data analysis can be categorized into inductive and deductive processes. To specify, inductive approach focuses on the collective data surrounding a particular subject, and allows for the emergence of meaning (Silverman, 2000). According to the social constructionism stance that underpins this research, "inductive analysis means that the patterns, themes, and categories of analysis that come from the data; they emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis" (Patton, 2002: 437). Conversely, deductive approach to data analysist is directed by the existing theoretical framework, and thus are theoretically driven (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007).

In this thesis, the underlying theoretical interest is the psychological contract; the existing literature has provided well-established framework for categorizing the content of the psychological contract (Rousseau, 1995; 2000), which will comprise the main focus of this thesis. In this regard, a deductive approach that incorporates a theoretical perspective can benefit this thesis in establishing links to the existing body of knowledge and providing an initial analytical framework (Saunders *et al.,* 2012). However, there are concerns about the application of the deductive approach in qualitative analysis as summarized by Bryman (1988)

"The prior specification of a theory tends to be disfavored because of the possibility of introducing a premature closure on the issues to be investigated, as well as the possibility of the theoretical constructs departing excessively from the view of participants in a social setting" (p. 81)

The implication of this for deciding the data analysis approach in this thesis is discussed as follows. Existing contract research works from the viewpoint that each employee establishes one psychological contract with the organization. On this basis, the content of the psychological contract is then assessed and can be categorized as either transactional, relational or balanced contract (Rousseau, 1999; 2000). However, when incorporating the theoretical propositions about the multi-foci perspective of the psychological contract (Marks, 2001; Lavelle *et al.,* 2007), it was possible that different agents were responsible for establishing and maintaining different aspects of contract content (Conway and Briner, 2005), which further pointed towards the possibility of simultaneous existence of different types of contract content. Given this recognition, a strict application of deductive data analysis approach tends to limited the investigation of the multi-foci nature of social relationships between the expatriates and many agents of the wider organization. This thesis attempts to mitigate this inherent limitation by applying a hybrid approach of inductive and deductive. To this end, a thematic analysis method is preferable in the research design for "identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 79). To clarify, thematic analysis of text is conducted through the use of templates. King (2004) explains that the essence of such a method is,

"That the researcher produces a list of codes (template) representing themes identified in their textual data. Some of these will usually be defined a priori, but they will be modified and added to as the researcher reads and interprets the text" (p. 256)

As Saunders *et al.,* (2012: 572) suggests that template analysis combines a deductive and an inductive approach to qualitative analysis in the sense that "codes can be pre-determined and then amended or added to as data are collected and analysed". In this respect, Easterby Smith *et al.,* (2002) argues that template analysis is located at the interference between the deductive and inductive approach to data analysis. In particular relation to this thesis, a coding frame is defined based upon a set of pre-conceived categories derived from the literature review (Chapter 2-section 2.4.3), taking the interview schedule as a guide. However, some flexibility is built into this process as new or emergent codes develops following the completion of data analysis and subsequent interpretation (King, 2004). The data analysis processes and coding framework are detailed in the following section.

3.7.1 Procedures for data analysis

Following Maxwell (1992), this thesis chose the analysis procedure as follows: 1) transcribing and listening, 2) organizing the data, and 3) coding. The transcribing and listening of the semi-structured interviews conducted in this thesis began after the completion of the first interview and continued through the data collection stage. The second stage of data analysis is organizing the data. Within this stage, labels of data sources and descriptions of settings and situations were grouped using the embedded unit of analysis identified previously (section 3.4), namely: embedded unit of analysis 1 (expatriates at initial entry stage), embedded unit of analysis 2 (expatriates at subsequent assignment) and embedded unit of analysis 3 (expatriates at repatriation). However, it was important to mention that two semi-structure interviews were conducted for embedded unit of analysis 1 to respectively identify their pre-departure psychological contract beliefs and current beliefs as at the initial entry stage. Therefore, a total of four data groups were identified which were then coded for deriving the expatriates' psychological contract beliefs. The reminder of this section outlines the coding framework.

Across the interviews with expatriates, the content of the psychological contracts was described and categorized according to Rousseau's (2000) transactional, relational and balanced typology. The contract types (e.g. transactional contract) and its dimensions (e.g. narrow) respectively provided the higher-order and lower-order coding framework. Because Rousseau's (2000) categorization is utilized throughout this chapter, the contract types and dimensions are described here. Transactional contracts contained items (obligations) that were tangible and economic in focus (Rousseau, 2004). Transactional contracts are constituted by two dimensions: 1) being "narrow", depicting the extent of involvement for both parties in an exchange relationships; 2) "short-term", indicating the limited time duration of that exchange relationship. (Dabos and Rousseau, 2004: 56). For example, for an employment relationship categorized as transactional, an individual employee perceived that they were obligated to “perform only a limited set of duties” and they believed their employer were obligated to offer “limited involvement in the organization, little or no training or other employee development” (Rousseau, 2000: 4).

Relational contracts emphasize “open end collaborations, dynamic terms and broad scope of involvement (Taylor and Tekleab, 2004). As such, the relational contracts emphasized long-term and socio-emotional obligations, such as commitment and loyalty (Petersitzke, 2009: 30). Relational contracts are further comprised of two dimensions: 1) loyalty and 2) stability dimensions. For example, for an employment relationship categorized as relational, an individual employee was obligated to “remain with the firm, manifest loyalty and commitment to the organization’s needs and interests” and the employer were obligated to commit to “supporting the well-being and interests of employees and their families” (Rousseau, 2000: 4).

Balanced contract was comprised of features of both transactional and relational contracts. Specifically, the balanced contracts were constituted by three dimensions:1) “external employability” (developing marketable skills as employee obligations and enhancing employees’ long-term employability as employer obligations); 2) “internal advancement” (develop professional skills as employee obligations and create development opportunities as employer obligations); 3) “dynamic performance” (perform new and demanding goals as employee obligations and promote continuous learning and provide performance support as employer obligations) ((Rousseau, 2000: 5). For example, for an employment relationship categorized as a balanced contract, an individual employee was obligated to develop skills valued by both the organization and external market and employer were obligated to provide a range of career development opportunities and long-term stabilities in the organization (Rousseau, 2000).

According to the theoretically-derived coding framework outlined above, the expatriates’ responses regarding the content of the psychological contract (the reciprocal obligations between him/her and the employer) were first directly coded to into the pre-determined contract dimension categories and subsequently to the related contract type. There are instances where some expatriates’ responses across more than one contract dimension within the one statement and were thus categorized accordingly as obligations across two dimensions. To illustrate, when expatriates were queried about the organizational obligations, an example of expatriate response was *"At that time, I did expect him (line manager) to be clearer about the project I will be doing… the objective and timing for each stage should be carefully designed and communicated. But it should be more than this, when I am unclear about something in the impending work I would know where to find help (Interviewee 10, pre-departure experiences, 26 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Ghent (Belgium))".* In this case, this response was coded into both the performance support dimension of the balanced contract due to the focus on providing professional support, but also the loyalty dimension of the relational contract due to the focus on the employer being social-emotionally supportive when employees have personal concerns.

3.8 Ethical consideration

There are a number of ethical issues that need to be considered in conducting research in the area of business and management. For example, the issue of confidentiality: protecting interviewees from any repercussions of their comments being reported should be a concern for researchers (Robson, 2002). This research adopts several measures to address such issues and to ensure that this research is conducted in an ethical manner. The research is conducted in line with University of Glasgow ethical guidelines. The research receives ethical approval from the College Ethics Committee (University of Glasgow). This involved the Plain Language Information Sheet to be presented to each interviewee prior to their interview, and the Interview Consent Form that each interviewee was required to sign before their interview (Copies of these documents can be found at Appendix 2). Interviewees were subsequently provided with a copy of the Interview Consent Form to retain for their records.

Confidentiality of all participants' contributions is ensured in all aspects of this research. First, the researcher will anonymize all the collected data related to participants' details along with the name of participating organization, and record participants' names and contact details in separate files in the researcher's password-protected personal laptop. In addition, the researcher will assign a pseudonym to each participant; no real names or personal details will appear in the final report and other paperwork. Second, data related to participants' details will be processed where the identifiable features will be replaced by a code, with no record retained of how the code relates to the identifiable features. It is then impossible to identify the individual to whom the sample of information relates. In the final report as well as any possible future publications arising from this research, all participants as well as the name of organization will be referred to by pseudonyms. Third, prior to beginning the interviews, the participants will be fully informed about the research as stated in the plain language statement and their right to withdraw at any stage or to withdraw any unprocessed data they have supplied.

3.9 Summary

This chapter has outlined the research philosophical and methodological approach of this thesis. The chapter began by describing the ontological, epistemological and methodological influences on this thesis, underpinned by a relativism ontological stance and social constructionism epistemological position, a qualitative approach, notably adopting a case study with semi-structured in-depth interviews, was chosen as key research strategy. Finally, study sampling frame, data collection methods and analysis procedures were described.

Chapter 4 Study One-Results and Discussion

The previous chapter described the methodological strategy of this thesis namely: the qualitative methods used, the single-embedded case study adopted, and two-study approach employed in order to address the research questions of this thesis. This chapter begins by outlining the overall objectives of Study One and research questions to be answered (section 4.1). Then the interview protocols are explained in section 4.2. Finally, the results of the interviews with pre-departure stage expatriates (section 4.3) are presented and the implication of findings are discussed (section 4.4).

4.1 Objectives

Study One aims to understand the content of individual expatriate's psychological contract beliefs at pre-departure stage. By applying a multi-foci perspective to the psychological contract, the content of expatriates' reciprocal contract beliefs is to be specified according to the respective organizational parties involved. Specifically, the objective of this study is to answer research question 1 through addressing its components ((a)- (b)).

1. What is the content of the psychological contract beliefs of expatriates at pre-departure stage?

(a) Who are the other parties with which pre-departure expatriates perceive to be the exchange partners?

(b) How does the presence of multiple parties influence the content of the psychological contract beliefs of expatriates at pre-departure stage?

4.2 Interview protocols

Semi-structured interviews are used in Study One for four reasons. First, as this thesis is grounded in the multi-foci conceptualization of psychological contract, some structured questioning offers a framework for directing interview process and clarifying the organizational representatives to which an expatriate perceives to be the contract makers. Second, the flexibility of a semi-structured process allows for the emergence of potentially-diversified contract-makers and enhances the degree of specificity in describing the related contract beliefs. Third, in achieving the objective of Study One in understanding the content of individuals' contract beliefs, structured questions help to align with the contract types and dimensions that has well-established theoretical root in the literature. Fourth, as discussed previously (Chapter 3-section 3.4), retrospective reports from expatriates at the initial entry stage are to be used to understand the perceptions of contract belief at time point of pre-departure, the techniques such as probing and paraphrasing throughout the interviews, are viewed as particularly important in assisting the initial-entry stage expatriates to recall their pre-departure experiences regarding contract beliefs (e.g. organizational obligations).

The protocol of interviews for accessing the pre-departure experiences is structured around two areas.

1.The first area of inquiry focuses on which organizational parties (contract-makers) are particularly salient in shaping individuals' employment experiences and contract beliefs (responding to research question 1(a))

2.Then referring to the key parties the interviewee has mentioned in the first area of enquiry, the second area targets at the content of expatriates' psychological contract with particular attention to the differential influences of multiple contract-makers (responding to research question 1 and 1(b)). Specifically, this area will look at

- the differences of expatriates' perceptions regarding what the other parties are obligated to provide
- the differences of what the expatriates believe they are obligated to provide in return

In addressing this area of enquiry, a table will be provided for directing the interview process and organizing the responses from the participants (Table 4-1). The full interview schedule for Study One is provided in Appendix 3.

Table 4-1: Example of an interview table

	Contract makers	**Expatriates' perceptions regarding what the other parties are obligated to provide**	**Expatriates' perceptions regarding what they are obligated to provide in return**

An individual expatriate			
	A (e.g. headquarter supervisor)		
	B (e.g. HR manager		
	C (e.g. host unit supervisor)		
	….		

4.3 Results: the content of expatriates' psychological contracts at pre-departure stage

This set of findings is structured to present the results for research question 1 and 1(a)-1(b). Respectively, these questions relate to the exchange partners identified by expatriates (section 4.3.1), the content of the obligations that expatriates believe their particular exchange partners are obligated to provide (section 4.3.2) and the content of what they believe they are obligated to provide to the respective exchange partners in return (section 4.3.3). Each of these respective results sections includes a table (from Table 4-2 to 4-8) which describes the emergent themes from the interview data, the number of expatriates citing the theme and example quotes. It should be noted that, within these tables, even if an expatriate cited a theme more than once in the interview, the theme is still only counted as being cited once by the expatriate. In addition, under the multi-foci perspective of the psychological contract, an expatriate may cite more than one exchange partners in his/her employment relationships; in this case, all of these organizational agents are counted as being cited.

4.3.1 Expatriates' perceived exchange partners

Overall, the majority of interviewed expatriates listed more than one individual who are perceived as exchange partners prior to departure including, headquarter-line managers, headquarter-department managers and subsidiary operations. Table 4-2 provides the type of organizational agents identified as expatriates are questioned about the important individuals on shaping their working experiences.

Table 4-2: Perceived exchange partners at pre-departure stages

Type of organizational agents	No. (%) of expatriates citing the organizational agents	Example quotes on reasons for citing the organizational agents
Headquarter-line manager	11 (100%)	"*We worked with him (headquarter line manager) on daily basis, if there were any problems or obstacles during work, he will be the first person who I will ask for help*"
Headquarter-department manager	5(45%)	"*Both of my department manager and line manager sometimes had a chat with me, mainly about my recent performance and they will encourage me if I had some ideas to further my career. So, I thought both of them were influential for my work*"
Subsidiary operation	3 (27%)	*"As I recall during that time, it was hard to see who will be the important one for me. What I mean is that at there (the headquarter), my line manager and department manager were definitely influential because of their decision-making power. I know so, because we had been working together for several years. But this was not the case for subsidiary; the subsidiary was a different place… they were in a different country, the way they managed staff may be different. So, before I came here, it was not easy to tell"*

Headquarter-line managers

It was identified that the key exchange partners cited by expatriates were line managers in the headquarter. The expatriates described that their line managers had a frequent and direct involvement in their routine work. For example, the type of task, working schedule as well as the allocation of resources necessary to complete the task were all under the authority of their line managers. Several examples of the expatriates' comments were as follows:

"My line manager must be included because most of (my)work requirements and which part (of that work) need more attention were determined by him. This was particularly the case if we will conduct our work with other teams from associating departments such as engineering or others from production lines. In these cases, the responsibilities of our team members will be specified by him, this included which part of area you will be responsible for, when he (line manager) would like to see the work progress report and when he will give feedback. In most cases, these were just following our standard working procedures. If there was anything else, I would say there were performance supports (from him)". (Interviewee 3, pre-departure experiences, 25 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Turin (Italy)".

"I would say my line manager was quite important for my work. This was because we worked with him on a daily basis and the majority of work decisions were made by my line manager. We normally would not proceed our work without line managers making arrangement first. But there was certainly a level of flexibility in everyone's work I guess. For my work, some technical parameters were decided by myself, he won't' pay much attention to this aspect of work, but these must be sent to him for a review to ensure he was ok with it… to say more about our daily work, we sometime will work overtime on his (line manager) instructions, I am not an advocate of overtime working, but sometimes we did start early and finish very late, I consider it is, at least to some extent, embedded in the everyone's work role". (Interviewee 5, pre-departure experiences, 27 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Turin (Italy)).

Apart from being influential on how work was arranged and progressed, expatriates commented that their own performance evaluation was decisively dependent upon their line managers as well, making them the first priority in shaping the expatriates' working experiences during pre-departure stage. As one expatriate commented:

"The performance evaluations, this was the reason why I thought my line manager was important there (the headquarter). We worked on a daily basis with my line managers, so it was not a surprise that he had a general idea of how much work I had completed, say, in this quarter and whether it was conducted according to industrial standards and our own quality policies. Also, we had performance review events where my line manager and department manager were there. The performance review was conducted according to my key performance indicators allocated early at the beginning of every year, these were quantified measures such as the prototype performance in each test run… but my line managers will also pay attention to the areas where I had made improvement and he will point it out, saying that this was the area you were doing well. Of course, there were also areas where he would like to see more effort from me…mostly he was the one taking charge of these things (Interviewee 11, pre-departure experiences, 31years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Ghent (Belgium)

Headquarter-department managers

Expatriates also cited their department managers as critical exchange partners. While admitting that the interactions with their department managers during workplace was not frequent in comparison to their line managers, expatriates recognized their higher hierarchical position and significant influences in relation to the design and facilitation of organization policy and practice (e.g. quality standard and training). Several examples of the expatriates' comments were illustrated as follows:

"The department manager was pretty important as well, he was in a higher level, we did not normally work with him directly, but when there was a new project… or sometimes a new policy, like a new quality standard adopted to evaluate our product or initiatives on technical development such as hybrid power, it was him who communicated and commented on these things in a meeting, normally some of my co-workers and our immediate managers will be there as well" (Interviewee 3, pre-departure experiences, 25 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Turin (Italy))

"From my perspective, he (department manager) had influence on facilitating some organizational practices. Well… this is my personal experience long before my expatriation from the headquarter, but I think it will help to prove my point. I was transferred from a division on X Automobile Co. (a subsidiary of Automobile Co. in China) to the headquarter in Beijing; that is when I realized that there were so many differences between our divisions even in the domestic context. I got so confused about the how work was arranged and conducted here. I meant there were procedures in directing work, but people there had their own preference to do things, I had to adjust to their ways of working. Because I was new there, it became understandable that my salary, general treatment along with other things was not as good as their own staff, but the work requirements allocated to me was the same in general, so you can see how much pressure I had suffered. But then I was instructed to receive some training to help me cope with these issues, along with several people who were in a similar situation to me. This was my department manager's decisions, so I believed he had authority in this aspect of my work experience". (Interviewee 4, pre-departure experiences, 28 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Turin (Italy)

Further, some crucial work-specific decision making was made by the department managers, as one expatriate commented:

"*My job involved some engineering work where we used some modelling techniques, he (department manager) often participated in some major work-related decisions that influenced the direction of our work…like deciding the fundamental models for simulation; I also sought advice from him in some critical parameters in this regard …. I think personnel appointments normally may not proceed without his counsel" (Interviewee 2, pre-departure experiences, 26 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Detroit (USA)*

The authority of department managers in making personnel appointment was also the focus of the expatriates' comments. These was a general agreement among these expatriates that although there were standard organizational policies in the area of promotion, these were considered as guidelines only. In practice, the department managers held a determinant role in the decision of promotion opportunity. As one expatriate commented:

"I would say that he (the department manager) was definitely important in deciding who should be promoted. The company had its rules and systems for promotion and I would not say it is unclear…there policies had covered performance measures (equivalent to GPA), the yeas of tenure alongside other criteria. But in practice, eventually it will depend on your department manager, whether he considered you worth a promotion. I had seen that several people had stayed in the company for enough years to qualify for the tenure requirement, they were also good at their work, but they had not been promoted yet". (Interviewee 10, pre-departure experiences, 26 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Ghent (Belgium))

Another expatriate said:

"I don't consider the system of promotion clear and it (promotion policy) does not work like that. The policies stated that if you were performing above average in terms of appraisal categories, then you were eligible for a promotion, but it did not say that you will be promoted. If you thought it over, it was up to your department to nominate you, so basically your department managers were the decision makers and it was actual the case; I had heard from a HR manager that it was up to the department managers even if you qualified for promotion in terms of performance criteria, they may disagree and reason that this was due to the lack of your experiences…this was totally objective comment. But for other managers, depend on which department you were in, may just approve it. I had got quite used to it, because this was not just a case in my company, a lot of friends in other industries had similar experience". (Interviewee 1, pre-departure experiences, 25 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Detroit (USA))

Further, there were also complexities in the route of promotion for managerial and technical positions. In comparison to a managerial position, many expatriates stated that the promotion opportunities were relatively limited for technical positions where the majority of expatriates in this sample fell within. This was believed to further increased the importance of department managers in this matter. Several expatriates' comments were presented below:

"In this company, there are different routes for promoting an employee from the managerial department and those from technical departments, like us. In general, employees in managerial positions were more likely to be promoted. You can understand it like this… when I was in headquarter, there were different levels of position in the role of engineer. I was in a middle position of engineer, there were those below me as junior engineers, whilst there were higher positions as lead engineers, the chief engineers and so on. But, I found it quite difficult to climb up this ladder. Because getting promoted in technical department needs hard proof of your achievements on technical matters; you had to convince the experts in your company and the experts in some associations this company worked with, that your accomplishment had made improvements in this area, contributing to the company's objective and competitiveness. But in my view, all our works at least generally had achieved these. So, it was not clear here. Eventually this (promotion opportunity) depended on your department managers. If he could put some effort or pull some strings when dealing with relevant parties, it will be not difficult for you". (Interviewee 9, pre-departure experiences, 26 years old, powertrain research and

development, expatriated to Ghent (Belgium))

"There were also issues with the type of department where you worked. while I belonged to the technical department, I had a friend in managerial departments who had been promoted two times already in 3 years. Both of our departments use performance criteria and years of service as a basis, but our opportunities for a promotion was quite different…first there will be requirements in terms of your academic achievement, the academic degrees and awards, and mostly, the certificate. It was very hard to concentrate on getting a certificate once you started working, it is still very difficult if you can continue focusing on it. Also, there were requirements for your contribution to the departments, this included some special projects you had participated…and your technical expertise, still, you had to use certificate to demonstrate your expertise. Let's say you had met these criteria, there were still further procedures to go such as presenting your work to the industrial experts, they will have a discussion and then decide whether there were opportunities here for you. But if you had a good relationship with your department manager, it will be smoother". (Interviewee 1, pre-departure experiences, 25 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Detroit (USA))

Subsidiary unit

Further, many expatriates identified the subsidiary unit itself as an exchange partner due to its potential influences on their impending work. It was noteworthy that expatriates found it difficult to specifically outline agents or departments of subsidiary units as influential, with some explaining that without sufficient knowledge of the subsidiary during pre-departure stage, they assumed that the number of people who would provide support or make decisions influencing their work progression would be quite large. In such cases, there was an opportunity to interpret this response with reference to psychological contract literature, particularly, the concept of anthropomorphizing (as briefly discussed earlier in Chapter 2-section 2.4.2). This line of thinking corresponded to the result that the expatriates perceived the subsidiary operation constituted of a collective of individuals and subgroups being powerful in making influential decisions, hence treating the entity itself (the subsidiary units) as another party to their psychological contracts. This was illustrated in the following expatriates' comments.

"I would also like to refer to the subsidiary side, because we need their resources such as technology, professionals or even production plants they operated. So, you can see now that although we belong to one group (the "Automobile Co"), there was a certain gap between us in terms of the things I just mentioned. But it was hard to see who or what will be important at that time, but we certainly expected support from them as this was a cooperation between both companies" (Interviewee 9, pre-departure experiences, 26 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Ghent (Belgium)

"I guess it depended on a lot people, like in there (the headquarter), my line manager was

important basically all the time, after all, we were working with him every day. But sometimes you need help from others, if your project need finance, you need approval from the finance department… if you need extra hand, you need your department managers or HR; and maybe you were not aware of if someone helped you" (Interviewee 7, pre-departure experiences, 24 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Ghent (Belgium)

4.3.2 Expatriates' perceptions on the obligations of exchange partners

Following the preceding result section on the identification of exchange partners (4.3.1) this set of findings is structured to present the results for research questions 1 and 1(b). The expatriates were quite clear in articulating their respective perceptions regarding the obligations of their exchange partners, where a few key beliefs emerged and were categorized utilizing Rousseau's (2000) contract typology.

Expatriates' perceptions on the obligations of headquarter-line managers

It was identified that expatriates' contract beliefs focused predominately upon the performance support dimension of the balanced psychological contract. Table 4-3 provides descriptions of the key theme that emerged.

Table 4-3: Expatriates' perceptions on the obligations of headquarter-line managers

Theme	**Theme description**	**No. of expatriates citing the theme.**	**Example quotes**

Performance support	Employees' perceptions on the obligations of employers in terms of providing work performance-related support.	11 (100%)	*"He (my line manager) was also specialized in engineering, so his participation in the technological part of the work made my project run more smoothly…. I mean, you will have an idea of which direction to go"*

Performance support dimension

The key contract beliefs cited by expatriates were categorized under the performance support dimension of the balanced contract. In describing these beliefs, expatriates clearly gave priority to the importance of open and direct communication with their respective line managers. Overall, the issue of communication was raised in all of the 11 interviews and brought up more than once in each of the interviews. Specifically, expatriates felt a pressing need for clear guidance on the precise nature, timing, and objective regarding the forthcoming expatriation assignment. This was deemed to enable a more efficient scheduling of task progress whilst to allow for a degree of flexibility. As one expatriate stated:

"At that time, I did expect him (line manager) to be clearer about the project I will be doing, these are more professional things… in simple terms, the timing of completing which part of project was important, you had to finish stage one before proceeding… therefore, the objective and timing for each stage should be carefully designed and communicated. But I had talked with my line managers regarding these issues early, the answer was that it depended on the situations here. So, it was not clear. My understanding was that, before we were sent abroad, we signed an agreement with the headquarter and the subsidiary here about the work we were about to perform, it was like another form of employment contract. On one side, it should be that the subsidiary will take charge of every activities about the project work after our arrival. On the other side, there were something unpredictable about our work. I recalled that we had to develop an instrumentation equipment just for a new test run". (Interviewee 10, pre-departure experiences, 26 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Ghent (Belgium)

Relatedly, expatriates also considered being offered regular feedback from their line managers as important after undertaking the assignment in near future, especially when there were uncertainties or conflicts between headquarter and subsidiary operation on how to proceed the projects. Several examples of the expatriates' comments were illustrated as follows:

"I think there should be more feedback about the direction of project progression. Because back in the headquarter, most of our work was directed by our line managers. During the work process, we will submit written forms of progression report for the line manager to review and based on his comments, we can initiate further activities. My job included the analysis of test data for the automotive system and its sub-systems; given several rounds of test run, we will be able to have a general idea of how this machine works in different conditions. But the experience was that the machine will display similar patterns given a certain range of input data. So, under this condition, we will be required to report to our line managers, he will have a discussion with us then make a decision on some kind of critical parameter. Before coming here (subsidiary in Turin (Italy), it was hard to tell how the project will proceed, but I am sure there will be different opinions because these things occur very often in our daily work, especially cooperating with other teams". (Interviewee 3, pre-departure experiences, 25 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Turin (Italy)".

"Before we were sent abroad, what I thought was largely about more communication from him (the headquarter line manager). We normally worked with him every day, so it was not easy to adjust that habit… but there were also other things about coordination with the subsidiary teams. My work description for the international assignment is quite clear for me, which are consistent to what I am doing here now: prototypes development via simulations and physical test. We have been developing several prototypes with one entering test stages. so now I can say we have been coordinating well with our local teams. But at pre-departure, I was not so sure about this. The first thing was about their working procedure, I heard from the experiences of my colleagues who was sent abroad before, they (employees in subsidiary units) seemed to have a more flexible work arrangements compared to us. It may be good thing for me as well to enjoy a level of flexibility. But it also means that there will be divergences from the original plan, which should have been settled down prior to the assignment, and my experience tells me that a divergence of view will lead to more divergences and this will cause delay on our projects. This was the thing in my mind before the departure". (Interviewee 7, pre-departure experiences, 24 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Ghent (Belgium)

As the line managers were responsible for nominating candidates for international assignment, there was also an expected communication from them on the relational aspects of subsidiary operations such as the operating style and personality of managers in the subsidiary units, preparing these expatriates for net working in a new environment. As one pre-expatriate commented,

"In addition to the background information and the whole project information which had been briefed, I was more interested in the people there… like my future managers there; how does he prefer to handle things. When working in the headquarter, our line managers had his style of arranging things which were categorized according to the importance and

urgency of that particular matter. This had influence on how our work was arranged because it was my line manager who made decision on work task. So, we will first do the work that was characterized as both important and urgent, then do things that was urgent but not so import and so forth. This was his style and we knew it pretty well. So, when I was in pre-departure stage, I wanted to know the style my future managers so that I can make adjustment more quickly. There were also other related things like how to develop work relationships there… and who should I go to if I need help". (Interviewee 2, pre-departure experiences, 27 years old, transmission technology, expatriated to Detroit (USA)).

Further, the performance-related support extended to expatriates expecting role-specific support, such as consulting on technical details of tasks. As one expatriates stated:

"As I recall at that time, I definitely wanted more support, because this was a completely new environment at that time and I expected especially more feedback from my line manager, this let me know whether I am on the right track, how I am doing and whether there is something to be improved. Because this was usually the way of our working procedures, you report to your direct line managers and waiting for instructions for your next stage of work. This is particularly important for my part of work… this is related to test and testing conditions…my work includes applying testing to the prototype according to the industry standards. In this case, my line manager will supervise and approve our test first, so my teams will make every effort in ensuring the validity of testing so that my line manager will authorize the next testing stage". (Interviewee 8, pre-departure experiences, 25 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Ghent (Belgium))

Expatriates' perceptions on the obligations of headquarter-department managers

As outlined in section 4.1, the content of beliefs was to be specified according to the exchange partners involved. As identified in section 4.3.1, prior to departure, the department managers of headquarter were perceived to be the exchange partners of expatriates typically due to their influence on facilitation of organizational policy and personnel arrangement. As such, expatriates were asked to specifically describe the contract beliefs for their respective department managers. The responses reflected a contract type focusing on the development dimension of balanced contract. Table 4-4 provides descriptions of the key themes that emerged as expatriates were questioned about their beliefs about their department managers.

Table 4-4: Expatriates' perceptions on the obligations of headquarter-department managers

Theme	Theme description	No. (%) of expatriates citing the theme	Example quotes

Development	Employees' perceptions on the obligations of employers in terms of promoting continuous learning and development opportunities.	5 (100%)	*"Probably… more opportunities to progress to the different parts of the department or organization. I certainly know that this depends on how I perform on the current position. But I do appreciate if there are opportunities to work on a project of different nature to expand my skills and knowledge"*

Development dimension

The key beliefs clustered under this category (development dimension of balance contract) related to the provision of opportunities to develop job skills valued by the organization as well as by the external market (e.g. qualification certificate), typically through the provision of structured training program. For example, several expatriates commented:

"I think (my department manager's obligation) was more about providing training. I am now still working on a qualification that will benefit my work here and probably differentiate me from my peers in the future. But it need time commitment, I usually had to study until 2 am after work. So, if there would be some training opportunities provided by the company, although it may not be exactly the same as the courses of the qualification I am working on, as long as it (training program) was relevant, it will make things easier. Also, from my personal point of view, you should continue learning new things to remain competitive, this is not only required by your organization and your profession, but also required by the labour market. It looks clear to me that when I first started working in this company, my master degree gave me some advantages, but now our company is full of employee with master degrees…my point is that we better keep learning to make the market see your value, to make yourself confident". (Interviewee 1, pre-departure experiences, 25 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Detroit (USA))

"This was mostly about developing my job skills something related to engine control technology, because my department manager was an expert in this area, I believed he should have an idea about in what direction this area of profession should develop. He

(department manager) was also the one who has this authority to arrange the training program to suit this type of need. Our management had a clear division of decision making capacity, my line manager was in charge of daily work, whilst the department manager took more responsibility on the policies and practices for employees to have a career development. If there was anything to say, we should also have more opportunity to talk with other experts in this area, like a forum. I thought this was something he can arrange". (Interviewee 9, pre-departure experiences, 26 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Ghent (Belgium)

Further with particular relation to expatriation, expatriates sought for a path of career advancement, and these beliefs were deemed to be the responsibility of their department managers who were perceived to be influential in making personnel appointment. Expatriates' comments suggested that the experience of undertaking an international assignment would differentiate themselves from domestic employees and would be rewarded with high-level job prospects upon repatriation. Several examples of the expatriates' comments were as follows:

"Before I went on an international assignment, I thought these experiences would mean that I could develop my career more quickly than others (employees in domestic companies) because of the complexity in the tasks and the experience of coordinating with those professionals from other countries; these were certainly opportunities to learn. This company's policies in terms of promotion requirement stated that your participation in project will be one of the qualifying criteria for promotion, so the international assignment can be an advantage for me. But I have to say, the promotion is not definite thing, because no one can give you a promise that you will be promoted after the assignment, people here (headquarter) preferred to avoid making promises and it is considered normal. I heard from my colleagues that not everyone coming back from an assignment will be promoted immediately; several people said 6 months, other said 1 or 2 years. It was not clear, but my feeling is that If my work on the assignment was properly done, I should deserve more opportunities regarding this matter (promotion)". (Interviewee 4, pre-departure experiences, 28 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Turin (Italy))

"I thought international experience would give me something valuable that differentiated me from my peers, at least (the expatriation) will give me more opportunities in the company than before. I would not think too much about the promotion, but you had to admit that it was a tempting thing…it (a promotion) actually depended not only on my performance, but also depended on to what extent my managers recognized it, this was something beyond my control. So, my expectations were relatively more realistic here: I did expect a change on the nature of my work after the assignment …it could be a transfer to another different department; or my managers will give me more flexibility during work. To me, this should be a recognition of my capability; in one way or another, I hoped the management would see my value". (Interviewee 11, pre-departure experiences, 31years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Ghent (Belgium))

Expatriates' perceptions on the obligations of subsidiary unit

In comparison to the results obtained for the above exchange partners (headquarter line managers and department managers), the subsidiary-related beliefs were found to be fairly broad and clustered around three areas: the development and performance support dimensions of the balanced contract and the loyalty dimension of the relational contract (Table 4-5).

Table 4-5: Expatriates' perceptions on the obligations of subsidiary unit

Theme	**Theme description**	**No. (%) of expatriates citing the theme**	**Example quotes**
Development	Employees' perceptions on the obligations of employers in terms of promoting continuous learning and development opportunities.	3(100%)	*"I thought that they should invest more on programs or practices that will allow my self-development"*
Performance support	Employees' perceptions on the obligations of employers in terms of providing work performance-related support.	3(100%)	*"Creating a people-oriented, friendly and supportive environment; a place where you know where you could get help"*
Loyalty	Employees' perceptions on the obligations of employers in terms of supporting the well-being and interests of employees and their families.	2(67%)	*"I think you will like to know their policy about employee welfare, this shows how much this company value the interest of its employees"*

Performance support dimension

The expatriates' beliefs on performance support dimension were generally referred to as a supportive environment. This was likely due to that the expatriates were uncertain concerning the source of their future support, therefore tended to aggregate this beliefs towards potentially varied organizational agents within the subsidiary units at an organizational level. As one expatriate stated:

"Before this assignment, the general expectation was about support. But it was not very clear at that time what kind support it will be, so, the most important thing for me was that

we would have a supportive environment. When working at headquarter, you will know who will help you… your fellow engineers, your line managers, even colleagues in other departments could give you some ideas. This was because we had been working together for a long time to have some kind of mutual understanding. But before the assignment, you just pictured what it (the support) will be…we may have several different people coming from different cultural backgrounds, holding different qualifications. For these colleagues, do they have the intention to provide support to you or do they prefer working independently. Because back in headquarter, we depended on each other and the important thing was that to what extent you can actually help each other. But this kind of working style may or may not apply to the subsidiary because of the potential cultural differences I assumed…it was unclear at that time". (Interviewee 5, pre-departure experiences, 27 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Turin (Italy))

Development dimension

Further, the responses on the development dimension of balanced contract were identified to be overlapped to some extent with the results found on headquarter departments managers, such as opportunities for upskill and career progression. For example, one expatriate commented,

"These should be concerned with the development of my profession; after all, I considered this assignment as an opportunity to further my career, so it would be better that they had opportunities to challenge myself. I would say, they should encourage employees like us to take more responsibility for… like developing our own ideas and applying the abilities of these employees to make improvements. Also, I would like more opportunities of working with the experts from other countries. This is the opportunity you rarely had in headquarter. In fact, in headquarter, we have workshops, meetings and forums to encourage the discussions on the automotive technology, especially on those published foreign articles. It would be good to understand what their views were if we could have more direct communications with them. also… I expected them (experts) to help me with my career prospect, I believe their expertise and experiences would be insightful in understanding the future direction of automobile industry, like…the challenges, the emergence of new materials and artificial intelligence applications in this area. These could be important in gaining a deep understanding of my career". (Interviewee 6, pre-departure experiences, 30 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Ghent (Belgium))

Loyalty dimension

Expatriates also cited beliefs on the loyalty dimension of the relational contract; the focus was more on social-emotional support through creating a friendly environment. For example, several expatriates commented,

"At the pre-departure stage, it should be concerned with more support on my life. The first thing was that you knew little about their country and culture. I didn't know about others, but for me, the cultural information I knew for Italy came from movies; that was basically all I knew for this country. Also, we will only start receiving training after arriving here. So, I was afraid that there will be a long way to go through the adjustment and it was

actually the case when I came here. This was because I had similar experiences when I was transferred from another subsidiary company to the headquarter back in China. When I started working at that time, you had to learn everything. So, when talking about expatriation, I was prepared that there will be a degree of discomfort with the new environment… I believed I can do this better (adjustment) in a more understanding and friendly environment". (Interviewee 5, pre-departure experiences, 27 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Turin (Italy))

4.3.3 Expatriates' beliefs about the obligations owed to the exchange partners

While the concept of contract is rooted on the notion of social exchange, much of empirical work on the content of contract focuses solely on the employees' perceptions of employer obligations, reflecting a scarcity of studies that assess both perceived employer and employee obligations when operationalizing the psychological contract (De Vos *et al.,* 2003). Responding to this point, this thesis seeks to assess perceived employers' obligations, whilst to explore employees' perceptions on what they should provide in return in exchange relationships. Again, by undertaking a multi-foci perspective to the psychological contract, the employees' perceived obligations are to be specified according to different exchange partners identified in section 4.3.1. namely: headquarter line managers, headquarter department managers and subsidiary units. In contrast to the results obtained for the exchange partners (beliefs for each exchange partner section 4.3.2), the results for this line of questioning were quite general and non-context specific, which were noteworthy given that the expatriates have been properly informed of their responsibilities pre-assignment in the form of assignment protocol. This pointed towards the constitutes of the psychological contract that only obligations arising from the exchange of perceived promises were in the domain of the psychological contract (Rousseau, 1989). This will be discussed in detail in section 4.4.

Expatriates' perceptions regarding what they are obligated to provide in return to headquarter-line managers

The expatriates' beliefs cited here mainly focused on the performance dimension of balanced contract. Table 4-6 provides the descriptions of the theme outlined above.

Table 4-6: Expatriates' perceptions regarding what they are obligated to provide in return to headquarter-line managers

Theme	Theme description	No. of expatriates citing the theme.	Example quotes
Performance support	Employees' perceptions on what they are obligated to provide in return to employers in terms of meeting new and demanding goals.	11 (100%)	*"I thought it was to fulfil your duties properly in the assignment…to fulfil what was expected of you… and to devote your efforts to the goals of this team"*

Performance support dimension

The key obligations expatriates presumed included properly fulfilling their responsibilities in the assignment, achieving the designed objectives and working with efficiency. Several examples of expatriates' comments were illustrated below:

"I would say, first, to achieve the performance standards you were required…my work descriptions for the international assignment were quite clear for me, it was related to the prototypes development via simulations and physical test. So, you should properly perform your job first. Then, to have an understanding that it was impossible for everything to proceed as expected during the assignment…I should say that given my actual experiences here, it is above my expectation. But still, I didn't know this at the pre-departure stage and I prepared that I was going to meet more challenges. So, my obligations should be to solve potential problems using my knowledge and skill as well as being active in coordinating with my colleagues". (Interviewee 7, pre-departure experiences, 24 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Ghent (Belgium))

"It was simple for me: to perform your work effectively and generally work hard. I thought this was what my manager (the headquarter line manager) will expect, after all, he was the one who nominated me as an expatriate and he should expect me to do my part to fulfil the requirements of this role. There were also other things which were related to collaboration; I thought he should expect me to be more active when working with others… and being

active in making communication with them. Because, let your colleagues know your ideas and your ways of doing things should make work go smoothly. If there were anything else, it would to be more patient during work…my manager (headquarter line manager) used to say I was sometimes too eager to prove myself, there was no need to do so". (Interviewee 4, pre-departure experiences, 28 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Turin (Italy)

Expatriates' perceptions regarding what they are obligated to provide in return to headquarter-department managers

The department managers-target obligations particularly focused on the development dimension of balanced contract (Table 4-7).

Table 4-7: Expatriates' perceptions regarding what they are obligated to provide in return to headquarter-department managers

Theme	Theme description	No. of expatriates citing the theme.	Example quotes
Development	Employees' perceptions on what they are obligated to provide in return to employers in terms of developing professional skills.	5(100%)	*"I believed what my department managers expected should be developing myself and using this assignment as an opportunity to learn and apply my skills"*

Development dimension

As the theme suggested, these obligations were concerned with learning and developing skills during the assignment. This included progression in their expertise, expansion in professional knowledge, actively seeking development opportunities, absorbing information and willingness to learn. For example, several expatriates commented,

"What he (the headquarter department manager) expected from me should be the development of my professional expertise. This (the international assignment) was an opportunity to work with people with various professional backgrounds and therefore, possibly an opportunity to develop professional knowledge. Compared to my line manager, he (the headquarter department manager) will be more interested in seeing our professional development, so we can make more contribution to the department. He (the

headquarter department manager) often encouraged us to take more responsibilities which he believed will eventually benefit us. So, based on my understanding, he should expect me to pay more attention to self-development". (Interviewee 10, pre-departure experiences, 26 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Ghent (Belgium))

"I guess…he (the headquarter department manager) thought that I should have an active attitude and being willing to learn. Although we had some experiences in this professional area, there were always opportunities to learn new knowledge…I thought he should expect us to have this attitude first. Then, we should be more sensitive to the information on how the foreign market responded to our technology and to have an understanding on how this will influence our direction of future work, so these related to things about direction". (Interviewee 11, pre-departure experiences, 31years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Ghent (Belgium)

Expatriates' perceptions regarding what they are obligated to provide in return to subsidiary units

The expatriates' perceived obligations specifically towards the subsidiary collapsed into two areas: performance support and development dimensions of balanced contract and these themes were described in Table 4-8. It was noted that these obligations largely overlap with those of headquarter-line managers and headquarter-department managers. For example, the expatriates commented on the need to improve technical abilities, being a team-player when working with people of different cultural back grounds (performance support dimension); up-skilling to become productive organisational members, wiliness to learn and actively seeking development opportunities (development dimension). Some expatriates found it difficult to distinguish the obligations for the subsidiary from those for their headquarter-line managers and headquarter department managers. For example, several expatriates commented:

"Before going abroad, it (my obligation) was largely about performing our work according to the outlined plan… I thought it was the same for subsidiary; what I can offer will be my work performance". (Interviewee 4, pre-departure experiences, 28 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Turin (Italy))

"I thought it was the same for the subsidiary…being active in working with their teams, trying to take on more obligations and generally work hard. As an employee, this should be something we should provide no matter who will be your managers, these things, I believed, should be the basic requirements for you…If you were an expatriate, this means you already had experience in your role, what you can actually deliver should be more, like willing to learn and develop yourself". (Interviewee 6, pre-departure experiences, 30 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Ghent (Belgium))

Table 4-8: Expatriates' perceptions regarding what they are obligated to provide in

return to subsidiary units

Theme	Theme description	No. (%) of expatriates citing the theme.	Example quotes
Performance support	Employees' perceptions on what they are obligated to provide in return to employers in terms of meeting new and demanding goals.	3 (100%)	*"I thought they will need employees who were efficient and committed. So, my obligations may include… improving my capabilities…and we also need good teamwork because we will work with different people with diverse cultural and educational backgrounds".*

Development	Employees' perceptions on what they are obligated to provide in return to employers in terms of developing professional skills.	2(67%)	*"It should be learning as fast as we can. As I mentioned this before, we (headquarter and subsidiary) certainly had gaps in terms of technical strength, so we need to learn quickly. This will be an opportunity for self-development and certainty will be an advantage when we go back (to home country)*

The preceding results has identified the exchange partners (section 4.3.1) and specifically described the reciprocal obligations associated with each party (section 4.3.2-4.3.3), this paragraph will now move to summarize the main patterns arising from their respective exchanges at the pre-departure stage. First, the exchange pattern with the headquarter-line managers, from the perspective of expatriates, related to the performance support dimension of the balanced contract. This included the offer of clear communications on matters relating to the assignment (e.g. objective and timing), regular feedback and role specific support (e.g. technical support) by their line managers and the expatriates will, in turn, provide effective work performance and achievement of assignment's objectives. Second, the exchange pattern with headquarter-department managers related to the development dimension of the balanced contract. This included the provision of opportunities to develop skills and career progression by department managers and expatriates' contribution of professional development in their expertise and self-development. Third, the main exchange pattern with the subsidiary units, related to both the performance support and the development dimensions of balanced contract. With regard to performance support dimension, this included the provision of supportive environment by the subsidiary units and the expatriates will respond by improving technical abilities and being a good team-player. In relation to development dimensions, this included the subsidiary units providing opportunities for developing their skills and expatriates' contribution of willingness to learn and actively seeking development opportunities.

4.4 Discussion of Study One findings

The objectives of Study One were to identify the key exchange partners with whom pre-departure expatriates created psychological contracts (research question 1(a)) and on the basis of this, to specify the content of perceived employer as well as employee obligations (research question 1 and 1(b)). The following sections will now turn to the discussion of the results obtained in these two areas.

1.What are the other parties to which the pre-departure expatriates perceive to be the exchange partners? (research question 1-(a))

The results for research question 1-(a) confirm and extend the psychological contract literature, and the constructs rooted in social exchange theory in general in terms of the understanding of the parties to the employee-organization relationships (EOR). A wide variety of organizational behaviour theories drawing on the idea of social exchange have extensively examined different forms of exchange relationships that are operationalized through the parties involved in the relationships. For example, leader-member exchange (LMX) captured the quality of relationships formed with immediate managers (Kunze and Phillips, 2012); team-member exchange (TMX) represented an individual quality of relationship with his/her co-workers (Shore *et al.,* 2004); on the other hand, perceived organizational support (POS) offers an indication on employees' perceptions of resource and support actually received from the organization (Stinglhamber and Vandenberghe, 2003; Guchait *et al.,* 2015). From this lens, the findings on pre-departure expatriates' perceived exchange partners confirmed what other authors have found to be the salient parties for exchange relationships in work settings.

Further, while psychological contract resides within an individual as perceptions of reciprocal obligations with another party, LMX, TMX and POS depict the "perceptions of actual state of relationships" with the immediate leader, co-workers and organization itself respectively (Shore *et al.,* 2004). Although it is not the intention of this thesis to differentiate among the outlined constructs (please see Shore et al, 2004 for details), it is important to note that the assumptions underlying these constructs are a series of interdependent interactions where one party's behaviour is contingent on the other party (Shore *et al.,* 2004; Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). In relation to psychological contract, a strict interpretation of social exchange theory would lead to both the inducements (perceived employers' obligations) and contributions (perceived employee's obligations) being defined in terms of a single partner. The results of this study suggest a more nuanced view of the psychological contract in that reciprocal obligations tend to be defined in terms of multiple foci.

To clarify, the most frequently listed exchange partners by the pre-departure expatriates were line managers and department managers in headquarter; importantly, individuals appreciated the respective role of each party on shaping their aspects of work conditions whilst acknowledged the simultaneous existence of such influences. Specifically, it was found that expatriates often had direct and the most contact with their line managers who often played a role in work-specific issues such as the type of task, work load, the allocation of resources and performance evaluation; relatedly, the department managers (middle-level manager) were typically perceived as influential decision-makers in terms of facilitating organizational policy/practices and personnel appointment. Despite the debate on the issue of employer representation (the type of agent who is in the best position to capture the view of organization), the results obtained here are consistent with the psychological contract literature in the sense that: first, "most contract makers are individuals acting as the organization's agents" (Rousseau, 1995: 60); and second, employees' line managers (Lewis and Taylor, 2001; Tekleab and Taylor, 2003) and middle-level manager (Freese and Rene, 2008; Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler, 2002) are both theoretically and empirically positioned to be the key contract makers to an employee.

To extend the discussion on contract makers, the implication of subsidiary itself acting as another party to expatriates' psychological contracts is discussed below. While the agents of organizations offered more specific guidance on employment relationships, literature looking at how the psychological contract state (e.g. contract violation and fulfilment) influenced employees' outcomes tended to adopt a view that the organization as a whole was assumed to be the other party to the psychological contract of an employee (Lee *et al.*, 2014;

Ruiter *et al.,* 2016). This was particular the case for research using surveys as data collection tool (Chi and Chen, 2007; Chen and Chiu 2009; Chen, 2010). These studies rested on the assumption that rather than a specific agent, individuals viewed all possible contract makers including agents and functional or administrative departments bundled into a single exchange party. With reference to the psychological contract theory and EOR in general, this process referred to as "personifying" or "anthropomorphizing" where employees can "view all the organization's possible agents, principals, and non-human contract makers (e.g. departments) as if the organization were a single, human, contract maker" (Conway and Briner, 2005: 128).

Anthropomorphizing of organizations can be traced back to Levinson (1965) whose position, as summarized by Conway and Briner (2005), is that "employees view actions by agents of organization as actions by the organization itself" (Conway and Briner, 2005: 130). This process is facilitated by organizations' legal, moral and financial responsibilities over the actions of agents and as a result "organization takes on an anthropomorphic identity as a party to the psychological contract" (Robinson and Morrison, 1995: 290). Such process bears a close resemblance to the observation made within this study (Study One) with the identification of subsidiary operation itself as an exchange partner. Specifically, individuals showed an intention to view all potential contract makers (organizational agents and departments) in subsidiary as the sources of support provided by the subsidiary operations, therefore implicitly treating the subsidiary unit as a single exchange partner. This was also evident by expatriates using the term of "they" or "the company" to relate to subsidiary when describing the associated contract beliefs. However, it is perhaps more useful to view this result as a tentative guideline, as the topic of contract makers and associated psychological contract beliefs will also be explored as a part of Study Two for the remaining expatriate groups (those at the stages of initial-entry, subsequent and repatriation). Given the enlarged sample size and the complexities of organizational agents and departments involved in international assignments, it is expected to generate more evidence on this issue.

2. How does the presence of multiple parties influence the content of the psychological contract beliefs of expatriates at pre-departure stage?

The findings for research question 1 and 1-(b) extend the understanding of expatriates' psychological contracts by qualitatively exploring the foci-specific content of pre-departure expatriates' psychological contracts. The content of these contracts comprises the individual's understanding of the reciprocal obligations between the focal individual and another party and this is categorised utilizing Rousseau's (2000) contract typology. Existing contract research works from the viewpoint that each employee establishes one psychological contract with a unitary "employer" that is represented either by a unique person (immediate manager, HR unit or senior manager) or organization in itself (Coyle-Shapiro and Briner, 2005; King and Bu, 2005; Rousseau, 2000;2004; Sels *et al.*, 2004). While these studies have offered evidence that employees differentiate the level of social exchange they perceive themselves having with multiple parties, and there have been theoretical propositions about the multi-foci perspective of the psychological contract (Marks, 2001; Lavelle *et al.,* 2007), limited research has been done to explore these issues.

Drawing on the multi-foci perspective in exploring the reciprocal psychological contract beliefs, the pre-departure expatriates' psychological contracts can be categorized as predominantly balanced contracts, with its low-level dimensions of performance support and development being found to differentiate to some extent according to the foci of that exchange relationship. Overall, expatriates' beliefs regarding the performance support dimension related mainly to headquarter line managers while those regarding development dimensions related to headquarter department managers. In looking at the contract beliefs specifically at the item-level, while individuals attributed obligations such as open communication, regular feedback, flexibility and technical support to the responsibilities of line managers, beliefs including opportunities of developing valuable job skills and career prospect were perceived as obligations of department managers. Moreover, although the expatriates' beliefs for subsidiary units cross both dimensions of the balanced contract (performance support and development), it is important to note that these tend to be differentiated at the contract-item level (e.g. supportive environment) from the beliefs for the other two contract makers.

Drawing on the proposition by Coyle-Shapiro and Parzefall (2008) may offer a plausible explanation for the distinct beliefs for each contract maker. Following a discussion of conflicting positions in the psychological contract literature regarding whether immediate managers or middle/senior managers represented the employers' perspective. Coyle-Shapiro and Parzefall (2008) offered a potential solution to unite these opposing views and they suggested that the role of immediate and middle/senior managers may be complementary in managing employee-organization relationship; extending this line of thinking, it was further argued that employees may develop multiple relationships: "a distal relationship with senior managers and a proximal one with line managers" (Coyle-shapiro and Parzefall, 2008: 20). Corresponding to this notion, the results obtained here illustrated that, while department managers were the key decision-makers in defining the broad parameters of the exchange (design and facilitation of organizational practice/policy and personnel appointment), therefore being attributed to associated obligations, typically training practice and career progression; managers in the lower level of organizational hierarchy (line managers) enacted these policies on a day-to-day basis and therefore defined the specific elements of the exchange (e.g. type of work and resource allocation), thus further being expected of obligations related to those matters (e.g. communication and technical support). As a function of authority, the exchange partners differing in the level of organizational hierarchy appeared to be responsible for maintaining different aspects of work conditions, potentially adding more details and specificity to the establishment of expatriates' foci-specific psychological contracts.

While there is a scarcity of research attempting to explore who or what employees perceived to be the contract makers, the Coyle-Shapiro and Parzefall's (2008) contract makers typology (proximal versus distal) offered a useful guideline for distinguishing among potentially diversified organizational agents and this typology will be used in the other strand of study (Study Two) to ensure consistency. In relation to employees' perceived obligations, two points are made. First, as discussed above for the perceived employer obligations, the differentiation of contract dimensions is also evident for employees' obligations: expatriates' obligations regarding performance dimension (e.g. work with efficiency) related mainly to their line managers whereas those regarding the development dimensions (e.g. expansion in professional knowledge) related to their department managers. Second, while the results on employers' obligations regarding the impending international assignments tend to be specific with expatriates attaching more detailed descriptions, this is the opposite for employees' perceived obligations; indeed, they are general and non-context specific. For example, expatriates often referred to their domestic working experiences (e.g. the nature of work and reporting procedures) in articulating performance support-related responsibilities of headquarter line managers, whereas the corresponding employee obligations were quite broad and generic, focusing largely on providing high-quality work performance. A plausible explanation could be derived by looking at the nature of contract beliefs constituting the psychological contract. Psychological contracts were belief systems of individual employees and employers regarding their mutual obligations, the development of these contract beliefs depended on the promises made as employment arrangements (Hui *et al.,* 2004). These promises can be conveyed through words (explicit promise) or actions (implicit promises) (Rousseau,1989).

In both cases, the context where the employment relationship was embedded played a key role in establishing whether a promise has been made (Rousseau, 2001). For example, organizational communications, whether in its explicit or implicit forms, were more likely to be interpreted by individuals as promises in the events where repeated interactions occurred (e.g. recruitment and socialization: Rousseau, 2001). Returning to the case of expatriates, the specificity of perceived employer obligations for the line managers and department managers was likely due to the existing employment relationships offering the context where repeated interactions had occurred; for example, expatriates (e.g. interviewee 3 and 7) often described the direct and frequent involvement of line managers in directing their routine work. Thus, when verbal expressions and actions occurred on such occasions, these were more likely to be interpreted as promises which were further used to construct psychological contract beliefs (Rousseau, 2001). In contrast, this is not the case for the perceived employee obligations given the event of international assignment has not commenced yet from the perspective of pre-departure expatriates, hence the relative absence of promises. From methodological lens, the inherent limitations in the data collection methods (the adaptation of retrospective reports) may also result in the non-context specific nature of perceived employee obligations; however, this seems to be unlikely given the specificity of employers' obligations.

4.5 Summary

The findings relating to the Study One research questions extend the understanding of the expatriates' psychological contract and more specifically on the multi-foci nature of contract. These findings offer preliminary evidence for that 1) individuals recognize the distinctions between different exchange partners typically as a function of authority; 2) individuals differentiate the level of social exchange they perceive themselves having with multiple parties and this is operationalized through the varied patterns of exchange relationships. The theoretical implication is that the organizational agents differing in the level of organizational hierarchy respectively contributed more details and specificity to the development of individual's foci-specific psychological contract and this could be linked as influences on specific contract content dimension. In addition, there is a growing body of evidence demonstrating that multi-foci perspectives are more precise than single-foci perspectives when attempting to predict the attitudes and behaviors of organizational members (e.g. Reicher, 1985; Shore *et al.,* 2004; Lavelle *et al.,* 2007; Cropanzano and Rupp, 2008. Thus, it is important to understand the degree to which individuals distinguish between similar foci so that researchers do not consider redundant relationships. In this respect, the findings in Study One made attempts towards addressing this issue.

Chapter 5 Results of Study Two and Discussion

The previous chapter presented the results of semi-structured interviews undertaken in Study One (pre-departure expatriates' psychological contract), including a discussion of the theoretical implications of the findings. These results offered an understanding of expatriates' psychological contract at pre-departure stage and in the context of an international assignment cycle, this served as the initial point to further explore the topic of changes in expatriates' contract beliefs across varied contract makers. Taking account of the presence of multiple contract makers, the role of Study Two is to provide a more in-depth exploration of how expatriates' contract beliefs changed over the remaining stages of the international assignment cycle (the initial entry stage, the subsequent assignment and the repatriation phase). As discussed in literature (Chapter 2-section 2.5), each of these episodes represented a major transition point which was likely to differentially shape the development of the expatriates' psychological contract during the whole assignment. In the consideration of the distinct work experiences attached to each stage and the likely differential effects on contract development, the presentation of the results and discussion for Study Two will be separately conducted in accordance with the sequence in which these episodes proceeded in an international assignment. This chapter begins by the outline of Study Two's objectives and research questions (section 5.1.). This is followed by the presentation of the interview protocol (section 5.2.). The results and the discussion of its theoretical implications will be respectively presented for the initial entry stage (section 5.3), the subsequent stage (section 5.4) and the repatriation stage (section 5.5).

5.1 Objectives

Study Two aims to gain an understanding of how expatriates' psychological contracts change over the remaining stages of the international assignment including, the initial entry stage, the subsequent stage and the repatriation phase. Consistent with the multi-foci of the perspective to the psychological contract, the content of expatriates' reciprocal contract beliefs is to be specified according to the respective organizational parties involved. (Specifically), the research questions to be answered are as follows:

2. How does an individual expatriate's psychological contract change across perceived employee and employer obligations over the stages following pre-departure (namely: the initial entry, the subsequent assignment and the repatriation stages)? More specifically,

(a) How do the other parties with which an expatriate creates psychological contracts (contract-makers) change over the stages following pre-departure?

(b) How do the expatriates' psychological contracts change across perceived employee and employer obligations over the stages following pre-departure and what is the role of the presence of multiple parties in this change?

5.2 Interview protocols

Semi-structured interviews are used in Study Two for two reasons. In addition to those mentioned in Study One (Chapter 4-section 4.2) namely: the provision of a framework for directing interview process and clarifying the organizational representatives to which an expatriate perceives to be the contract makers. The utilization of semi-structured interviews is particularly important for Study Two in terms of: first, explaining the change in the salient role of organizational agents on the basis of the expatriates' own story of working experience; second, providing a context-specific understanding of the critical events and expatriates' experiences that drive the change of their psychological contracts. The individual interview will be implemented according to the phases of expatriation namely: the initial entry stage, the subsequent assignment stage and the repatriation stage; therefore, a three stage semi-structured interview will be conducted in Study Two.

The protocol for the interviews with the three remaining expatriate groups is structured around three areas.

1. The first area of inquiry focuses on which organizational parties (contract-makers) are particularly salient in shaping individuals' employment experiences and contract beliefs. Apart from identifying the current contract makers, this line of questioning also requires expatriates to reflect upon the role of influential individuals during their previous stage of expatriation with close attention to how this has changed in the following stage. This highlights the emergence of critical experiences that served to change the expatriates' choice of contract makers over time (responding to research question 2-(a))

2. Then, identical to interview protocol used in Study One, the second area of inquiry referred to the key parties the expatriates had mentioned, targeting at the content of expatriates' psychological contract with particular attention to the influence of multiple

contract-makers (responding to research question 2 and 2-(b)). Specifically, this area will look at

- the differences on expatriates' perceptions regarding what the other parties are obligated to provide
- the differences on what the expatriates believe they are obligated to provide in return

In addressing this area of enquiry, a table will be provided for directing the interview process and organizing the responses from the participants (Table 5-1)

Table 5-1: Example of an interview table

	Contract makers	**Expatriate's expectation of the other parties**	**Expatriate's belief about what the other parties expected of him/her**
An individual expatriate	A (e.g. a headquarter supervisor)		
	B (e.g. a HR manager		
	C (e.g. a host unit supervisor)		
	….		

3. The third area of investigation focused on why the expatriates' psychological contracts have changed in comparing to preceding stage (responding to research question 2 and 2-(b)). This area of inquiry asked the expatriates explicitly about whether there were events of either a positive or negative nature that influenced the expatriates' views about their employment relationships and how they responded to such events. Depending on the response of the interviewed expatriates and in line with the semi-structured process, the order of particular questions was flexible. The full interview schedule for Study two is provided in Appendix 4.

5.3 Results and discussion: expatriates at initial entry stage

This set of findings is structured to present the results for research questions 2 and 2(a)-2(b). Upon initial entry, the expatriates outlined a few key organizational agents as the perceived exchange partners (section 5.3.1). The expatriates are usually involved with several exchange partners simultaneously, with whom various forms of dependence are established (section 5.3.2 and section 5.3.3). Each of these respective results sections includes a table (Table 5-2 to 5-6) which provides a description of the themes evident from the interview data. The implications of findings for expatriates at initial-entry stage are discussed (section 5.3.5).

5.3.1 Results: exchange partners of expatriates at initial entry stage

The most frequently listed exchange partners were the host-unit line managers; many expatriates also cited more experienced colleagues (parent-country-nationals) as exchange partners due to their frequent interactions and their role-specific support for the expatriates in working and living settings. Table 5-2 provides the type of organizational agents identified and the reasons for identification as expatriates are questioned about the influential individuals in shaping their working experiences.

Table 5-2: Perceived exchange partners at initial entry stage

Type of organizational agents	**No. (%) of expatriates citing the organizational agents**	**Example quotes on reasons for citing the organizational agents**
Host-unit line managers (host country nationals)	9 (81%)	*"There is definitely my line manager who performs a mentor role for me. Well…he decides how my work should be arranged like, for today, I have been instructed to work on (project code) and my performance on that job is definitely evaluated by him"*
Host-unit colleagues (parent country nationals)	5 (45%)	*"A good colleague helps you get familiar with either the work or the living environment. They will help you get through the initial phases relatively easily… compared with*

		yourself alone"

Host-unit line managers

As previously stated, the key exchange partners cited by the expatriates were the line managers in host units. Given that post-entry stage was situated at the early phase of an international assignment, the response showed a certain degree of dependence by initial-entry expatriates on their host-country-national line managers to facilitate their adjustment process. To illustrate, the expatriates' comments suggested in general that the influence of the host-unit line managers on their working condition related to their role as mentors. This was typically demonstrated by their line managers giving formal and informal work instructions, holding one-on-one or group meetings, and demonstration and evaluation of work tasks. These processes normally occurred during daily interactions, the conduction of role-specific tasks and also during formal training programs. In addition, expatriates also described their line managers' support on helping them extend the network in subsidiary units. This was achieved through the hosting of internally-organized events including workshops and networking events, as well as helping them further engage with cooperation bodies and professional associations. Several examples of the expatriates' comments are as follows:

"I receive guidance whether it is during work or just a chat in a short break, knowing that he (the line manager) is an expert in this area, I am trying to learn from him either in technical or managerial areas". (Interviewee 2, 26 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Detroit (USA))

"First, there was something new here, back in headquarters, my line managers certainly will only provide instructions when there were problems with my work. Here (the subsidiary unit), whether during training or lunch break occasionally, my current line managers would like to know whether we had questions so he can help; sometimes during work, I also received suggestions on how things perform given different scenarios, it is something technically related to my work…the other thing is about my line manager's help during the engagement with other professional institutions. As the Automobile Co. has been cooperating with these institutions in the areas of feasibility study and engineering design, we need our line manager to prepare us when dealing with these professional bodies since we have just been here. (Interviewee 7, 24 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Ghent (Belgium))

"Several of us sometimes talked about this… and I suppose we do appreciate his (the line manager) support in our work and life as we all go through this process of adjusting ourselves. After our arrival, the company (the subsidiary unit) hosted a number of events for use to get to know this place and during these events, he (the line manager) introduced a number of great people here (the subsidiary unit), helping us a lot in these networking events. So, the attendance on these networking events definitely makes things easier, I

mean, it's a quicker way to get to know this place". (Interviewee 9, 26 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Ghent (Belgium)

Host-unit colleagues (parent country nationals)

Expatriates' responses also mentioned experienced colleagues, typically parent country nationals who had been relocated at the host units prior to expatriates' arrival. The reasons for citation were clustered around the issues of expatriates' adjustment to the general aspects of work and life environment. It is noteworthy that the existing literature has not yet theorised colleague as another party to an individual's psychological contract, as the contract is deemed to capture the reciprocal terms between an employee and the organization via itself or its various agents (Lewis and Taylor, 2001; Tekleab and Taylor, 2003). However, this result was perhaps not surprising given the initial-entry expatriates were exposed to the context with a high-level uncertainty where colleagues lent an important role of social and emotional support. As one expatriate commented:

"I am thinking of my colleagues, those who arrived here earlier than us. I hope you understand that when you are abroad, it is a thankful thing that you can meet with people of your own nationality. I can't speak for others, but in my view, there are so many things that I am unfamiliar with… the way the work was arranged, how the local employees communicated and cooperated. This is also the case for living here, like, I am trying to get used to the food here first of all, I think their help (experienced colleagues) is very important". (Interviewee 4, 28 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Turin (Italy))

5.3.2 Results: expatriates' perceptions on the obligations of exchange partners

Host-units line managers

The findings showed that expatriates' contract beliefs for their line managers in host units clustered around two areas: performance support dimension of the balanced contract and loyalty dimension of the relational contract (Table 5-3)

Table 5-3: Expatriates' perceptions on the obligations of host units-line managers

Theme	**Theme description**	**No. (%)of expatriates citing the theme.**	**Example quotes**
Performance support	Employees' perceptions on the obligations of employers in terms of providing work performance-related support.	7 (63%)	*"Support is going to be necessary, as what I do involves cooperation from other departments, this is something he (line manager) should do"*
Loyalty	Employees' perceptions on the obligations of employers in terms of supporting the well-being and interests of employees and their families.	5 (45%)	*"For me, ... it would be really helpful if there were opportunities to talk… when you don't have any idea where this path leads you to or when you have a bad day, it will feel better if you know you can talk to him (line manager)"*

Performance support

The key obligations cited by expatriates at the initial-entry stage related to performance support dimension of the balance contract. Expatriates recognized that they were in the early stage of international assignment where continuous support from their line managers was required to help to adjust to the new work role. Specifically, the obligations of host-unit line managers concerned with role-specific support, such as being comfortable in answering questions when there are uncertainties for expatriates to perform the job, being supportive when expatriates discussed areas of concern with various internal groups or departments of subsidiary units, giving instructions on identifying the acceptable solutions to the technical aspects of tasks. These were considered by expatriates as particularly important in this early stage of their assignments in order to have an idea on how the subsidiary unit worked as a whole and what was their role in it. Several examples of expatriates' comments are illustrated below:

"When it comes to support; after all he's (host-unit line manager) experienced, we certainly have a lot to learn from him on the technical level. The other one is that I come here as a secondment, and I will definitely have some coordination to do with the domestic businesses, so hoping that he can provide more support on that aspect to meet the requirements of the headquarter… so being supportive on both technical level and coordination level". (Interviewee 6, 30 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Ghent (Belgium))

"This relates more specifically to the technical nature of our work. The purpose of establishing this R&D centre is to utilize fully the superior local resources for engine and variator development. So, in this regard, we should recognize their (the subsidiary unit) technical strength in contributing to the overall competitiveness of Automobile Co…so when recognizing their advantages during daily work, I think there should be more guidance for expatriates like us during work performance, whether this was achieved through an interactive style, like addressing the questions we may have or through giving direct instructions during the performance of our work…this will ultimately benefit the overall R&D capacity of Automobile Co in terms of powertrain technology". (Interviewee 1, 25 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Detroit (USA))

Loyalty dimension

Expatriates also cited beliefs relating to the loyalty dimension of the relational contract. While, again, it related to a type of support, the focus was more upon socio-emotional support through a friendly social work environment. This type of obligation can be related to the construct of leader-member exchange which captures the quality of relationships formed with line managers. The expatriates' comments on the social-emotional obligations suggest an expectation of a high-quality supervisory relationship, which is understandable given that Chinese have a strong orientation to build personal interactions in social networks (Lin, 2011). Specifically, there was an expectation for their host-unit line managers to be understanding and patient, because they were undergoing a process of adjustment, with one expatriate commenting that:

"I am thinking abut… having an understanding that we were adjusting ourselves here, I know it have been several months since we came here, but in fact, my personal feeling was that the physical adjustment (climate and time difference) here took me quite a while. I guess I am a slow learner, so I hope he would have some understanding of this…he is actually quite willing to communicate with us". (Interviewee 5, 27 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Turin (Italy))

Moreover, many expatriates commented that they accepted the assignment with an intention of career advancement, therefore expecting to achieve progress on this path with the advice of their line managers. While this contract belief emerged around the elements of support, expatriates displayed a tendency to emphasize the emotion of being lost when embarking on this journey. Hence, this was interpreted as an expectation for emotional support from their host-unit line managers, with one expatriate stating that:

"In fact, for me at this stage, the most important requirement for my immediate leader (host-unit line manager) is not how much support he will give me in my work… Because prior to this international assignment, I have been working (in headquarters located in Beijing) for a long period of time, at least for several years. You know… having passed the earliest "rapid growth period," I feel I am facing some bottlenecks in my career path. To tell the truth, sometimes I am still felling lost and I really need some guidance from my line manager". (Interviewee 1, 25 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Detroit (USA))

Host-unit colleagues (parent country nationals)

The beliefs for the host unit-colleagues (parent country nations) related mainly to loyalty dimension of the relational contract (Table 5-4)

Table 5-4: Expatriates' perceptions on the obligations of host unit-colleagues (parent-country-nationals)

Theme	Theme description	No. (%)of expatriates	Example quotes

		citing the theme.	
Loyalty	Employees' perceptions on the obligations of employers in terms of supporting the well-being and interests of employees and their families.	4 (80%)	*"Then our colleagues are more likely to be helpful in terms of supporting our lives or our feelings"*

Loyalty dimension

While the perceived obligations for line managers related to socio-emotional support for work (career advice); colleagues-specific contract beliefs fell largely on the expatriates' life which referred, generally, to coping with the feelings of anxiety as a result of entering a novel environment. These feelings were described to be mainly attributed to unfamiliar surroundings, homesick and frustrations on the work, which were expected to be eased with the help of relatively experienced colleagues and the provision of opportunities for socialization. Several examples of the expatriates' comments are illustrated as follows:

"Because we are so far from home, parents are no longer here for us; this is also the case for relatives and friends. Some ideas you had when you were in China like… whether you were from sichuan or guangzhou (cities located in different regions of China) does not make any more sense here. At this place, we are all Chinese and we will be the family members for each other for the time period staying here, this is what matters. So, I am more likely to expect their opinions about this place, the culture, customs… and so on". (Interviewee 3, 25 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Turin (Italy))

"It (colleagues' obligations) should be concerned with giving us some clues on coping with the frustrations of work. Because we just started working here and it became inevitable that our managers were sometime unsatisfied with our work, so their (relatively-experienced colleagues in host units) experience could be really helpful in processing these things out of our system. In speaking of this, I think it is better if we could have more opportunities to talk and develop an understanding of each other; just several simple ideas I personally prefer, like taking us to some local restaurants or some interesting places to relax a little bit". (Interviewee 2, 26 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Detroit (USA))

5.3.3 Results: expatriates' beliefs about the obligations owed to exchange partners

By undertaking a multi-foci perspective to the psychological contract, the employees' perceived obligations were specified according to different exchange partners identified in section 4.5.1: host-unit line managers and host-unit colleagues (parent country nationals).

Expatriates' perceptions regarding what they are obligated to provide in return to host-unit line managers

Expatriates' beliefs cited here focused on performance support dimensions and the development dimension of the balanced contract. Table 5-5 provides the descriptions of the themes outlined above.

Table 5-5: Expatriates' perceptions regarding what they are obligated to provide in return to host-unit line managers

Theme	**Theme description**	**No. of expatriates citing the theme.**	**Example quotes**
Performance support	Employees' perceptions on what they are obligated to provide in return to employers in terms of meeting new and demanding goals.	9 (100%)	*"You need improve to fulfil your duties properly, whether it is through self-learning or training"*

Development	Employees' perceptions on what they are obligated to provide in return to employers in terms of developing professional skills.	5 (100%)	*"What we need is to expand professional knowledge, and I think it is more than just about developing professional things, the way of conducting ourselves and networking are pretty important from my personal point of view"*

Performance support dimension

In citing the beliefs about the performance dimension, individuals highlighted the need to upskill, to enhance the level of technical capabilities and on the basis of this, taking initiatives to constantly expand their professional scope to become productive organizational members. For example, one expatriate stated that:

"In fact, I often communicate with him (the line manager), but still, that's just a guess. At the present stage, I think the overall technical ability is relatively weak in this sector which I am specialized in, this is how I truly feel from a technical perspective. Because many departments/branches within our sector are still on the way of development. We are now responsible for a lot of business segments which means an individual employee is responsible for different technical segments at the same time. On this background, I think my obligations now are, from the view of my supervisor (host-unit line manager) … I think what he requires more from me is to breakthrough in my own professional field and to lead the development of this sector. I think that's what he would like to see". (Interviewee 4, 28 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Turin (Italy))

Development dimension

In relation to the development dimension, expatriates considered technical competence as only a basic facet in constituting their operational efficiency, therefore commenting on the necessity of constant learning and advancing the abilities of managerial aspects such as project structuring and coordination of human resources. One example of the expatriates' comments is as follows:

"What we need is to... expand professional knowledge, but I think it is more than just about developing professional stuff, the way of conducting ourselves and networking are pretty important. If there were anything else, this should be about taking initiatives to learn more about the managerial operation of project, like how to arrange people from different departments working on the same project and how to plan for contingency. Based on my understanding, this should be about you having the initiatives to absorb information and to observe". (Interviewee 2, pre-departure experiences, 27 years old, transmission technology, expatriated to Detroit (USA))

Expatriates' perceptions regarding what they are obligated to provide in return to the host-unit colleagues

In comparison to line managers, expatriates' belief regarding what their obligations towards their colleagues (parent-country-nationals) were deemed to be fairly broad, focusing on performance support dimension of the balanced contract and loyalty dimension of the relational contract (Table 5-6).

Table 5-6: Expatriates' perceptions regarding what they are obligated to provide in return to host-unit colleagues (parent-country-nationals)

Theme	Theme description	No. of expatriates citing the theme.	Example quotes
Performance support	Employees' perceptions on what they are obligated to provide in return to employers in terms of meeting new and demanding goals.	4 (80%)	*"He must want to me to be able to independently process work and generate work outputs as soon as possible; to be able to cooperate so that I can share more the workload proportionally"*

Loyalty	Employees' perceptions on what they are obligated to provide in return to employers in terms of showing loyalty and commitment to the organization's needs and interests.	4 (80%)	*"I would say…help each other, take care of each other, more importantly, have mutual trust"*

Performance support dimension

As shown in Table 5-6, the beliefs cited here focused on the performance support dimension of the balanced contract. The expatriates expressed the need to overcome the feeling of frustration in order to independently meet their own responsibilities; expediently up-skill to achieve a rapid growth, as one expatriate commented:

"In the case of my colleagues (parent-country-nationals), they should think that I need to learn how to overcome setbacks in the work, how to better adapt to the unfamiliar environment and then to adjust ourselves. Again, because we all grow up, everyone will face a journey where you are alone. My point is that you have to constantly adjust yourselves to adapt to the environment in order to grow, you can't just rely on others for your whole life". (Interviewee 3, 25 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Turin (Italy))

Loyalty dimension

Further, the expatriates' perceived obligations also related to the loyalty dimensions of the balanced contract, referring to having mutual trust upon and taking care of each other, with one expatriate commenting:

"This is not an easy thing for us; I mean the thing about going abroad and being far from family and friends…I suppose this was also the case for them when they just arrived here, so they should have an understanding about what we were are going through and I believed that we should take care of each other and stay together to overcome the possible problems, whether it is about working or living here". (Interviewee 1, 25 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Detroit (USA))

The above results have identified the expatriates' exchange partners (section 5.3.1) and specifically described the reciprocal obligations associated with each party (section 5.3.2-5.3.3), this paragraph will now move to summarize the main patterns arising from their respective exchange at the initial entry stage. First, the exchange pattern with the host-line managers related to performance support dimension of the balanced contract. This included the offer of role specific support (e.g. instructions on work and technical support) and being responsive (e.g. answer work-related questions) by their line managers and the expatriates will, in turn, provide advanced technical capabilities and expanded professional scope. Second, the main exchange pattern with their colleagues, from the perspective of expatriates, related to loyalty dimension of the relational contract, this included the provision of social-emotional support (e.g. coping with feelings of anxiety) by colleagues and the expatriates' contribution of having a mutual trust for each other.

5.3.4 Results: workplace experiences that shape the expatriates' perceptions of employment relationships

This result section highlights the key events and experiences that influenced the initial entry expatriates' views about their employment relationships either in a positive or negative manner. Generally, the positive experiences were generated as a result of the fulfilment of employer obligations, more specifically, the employer obligations identified in the previous stage (pre-departure). Overall, positive workplace experiences included building good relationships with host-unit line managers and host-unit colleagues. While positive workplace experiences resulted from belief fulfilment, these negative workplace experiences were often the consequences of unmet employer obligations including the lack of effectiveness of training programs and lack of communication with headquarters.

Good relationships formed with host-unit line managers

The expatriates' relationships formed with their host-unit line managers were often viewed as positive experiences that improved their working experiences. The expatriates particularly appreciated their guidance and support during the first three to four months and this included their line mangers being: friendly, approachable, and welcoming when they arrived at host-unit, willing to take care of expatriates' life outside the workplace and active in helping the expatriates to expand their networks in host units. These experiences are illustrated in the following comments:

"I have been here for almost four months; my line manager was very welcoming since the day we arrived, I don't know whether if this was due to different cultural backgrounds or something else, but I think that he (the line manager) was not just showing a gesture of welcoming us on behalf of the subsidiary, he is actually happy to see us all… this was interesting and it make me feel welcomed here". (Interviewee 5, 27 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Turin (Italy))

"I would say… rather than a supervisor, I would treat him as mentor because he seems to have devoted a lot of attention to my work, and more than work, to my life here. As I recall, in the first several weeks of our arrival, I basically felt very sleepy all the time because of jet lag, a lot of us did… he was very nice and understanding to make some allowances for us so we can have more time to make adjustments here". (Interviewee 2, 27 years old, transmission technology, expatriated to Detroit (USA)).

Good relationships formed with host-unit colleagues

The focus on social interactions was also extended to the relationships with their colleagues including both parent-country-nationals and local employees. When articulating these experiences, it would appear that the expatiate believed that there was a need to build and maintain good relationships with their colleagues in order to increase their work efficiency. Moreover, the expatriates also spoke of the necessity of relationship development to enhance their career opportunities. In particular, this type of positive workplace experience was found with colleagues who were: welcoming and responsive, willing to communicate and build relationships, honest in expressing their opinions on work. As one expatriate commented:

"I was not a very talkative person; my profession proves that…back in headquarters, you know, you have to try very hard to build relationships. But generally, my colleagues here helped to create a relaxing environment, you can basically talk about a lot of things, they are good listeners and they are very responsive, so this two-way communication was not only helpful during the time off, also make our work smooth". (Interviewee 10, 26 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Ghent (Belgium))

The importance of maintaining relationships with colleague was also evident in another example, with additional emphasis on career opportunities.

"This is actually good experience to network with colleagues from different departments,

in fact, you will find it more enjoyable to work with friends… talking with more senior colleagues also gives me some ideas about which path should I choose and where this path will lead me to, so generally, building these personal relationships here definitely benefits my understanding of the career". (Interviewee 8, 25 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Ghent (Belgium))

Given these positive workplace experiences, there were reports from the expatriates about the positive influence on the perceptions of their employment relationships such as improved commitment and trust, with one expatriate stating that:

"I find that it did change my view about this assignment, while it was a task which was full of standard performance requirements measured by numbers, it has become a journey for me now". (Interviewee 3, 25 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Turin (Italy))

These experiences appeared to further encourage the willingness of the expatriates to maintain these relationships with line managers and colleagues in host units. One expatriate stated:

"Building these bonds with both my line managers and colleagues is quite an experience and it seems to be worthy to maintain these relationships, I feel that it is not so hard as I think to be open to other people. I think I would like to continue these communications". (Interviewee 9, 26 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Ghent (Belgium))

The following result section highlighted the key events and experiences that negatively influenced the initial entry expatriates' views about their employment relationships. This theme derived from the interviews with expatriates at initial entry stage concerned mainly with the lack of effectiveness of training programs and lack of communication with headquarters.

The lack of effectiveness on training program

"Automobile Co" worked with different service providers around the world to offer on-the-job training programs for initial entry expatriates. Depending on the characteristics of the international assignment, the training program lasted from three to six months. However, it became clear from the interviews that the expatriates often found that the training programs were limited in scope, so much that that a considerable proportion of expatriates at this stage questioned its effectiveness and were generally not satisfied with the design of training programs. For example, one expatriate commented:

"I don't think the training program works exactly as it should be. While I don't expect it to provide me knowledge or experience that was equal to what I will learn through practice, this training should be relevant to what I am doing here. So, this is the problem, I don't think the training here has anything to do with my current job, these technologies and systems has not been used in practice yet, and I doubt that they will be used in the near future… The language training works I think, but you can't say that for sure, because you know, we were all going through college, having that English qualification (Certificate IV in English examination). The most effective way of learning for me should be talking with local employees". (Interviewee 2, 26 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Detroit (USA))

Similar experiences were also reported in another location of the international assignment, with one expatriate commenting that:

"From an objective perspective, I can see that these trainings aimed to inform us about the role that we are going to play, the relevant knowledge related to the work… also something about the culture. But it is just the way it was delivered, obviously I can't speak for others, but it reminds me my college experience… your lecturer was reading a difficult book and trying to get your attention, while you were sitting there thinking about something else. I know this may sound dramatic, but this is how I feel about it (the training program)". (Interviewee 7, 24 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Ghent (Belgium))

Lack of communication with headquarters

For those expatriates who described negative experiences, also cited the lack of communication particularly with their headquarter-line managers as a key reason for this. Several expatriates indicated that there were no formal communications from their headquarter-line managers since their arrival, with some commenting that although they have been fully informed pre-assignment that, their future work will be under the governance of subsidiary units, it is reasonable to expect to maintain communication during this particular stage so that the expatriate can evaluate their progress against the required direction of headquarters. An illustrative example is as follows:

"There was not so much instructions from the headquarter, I was often the one initiating this communication with my line manager (in headquarters). This is quite a surprise even that we have been informed early that the subsidiary will take charge of everything when we arrive… because there was something I wanted to discuss with him, something about the project we are working on, apparently their opinions (subsidiary) is different from ours, so the questions were should I continue our way of doing things or just follows my managers (host-unit) instructions? But he seems to be fine with it, he said, just do your

best at work, don't worry about these things. So, the message I got is that I should follow my managers here". (Interviewee 10, 26 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Ghent (Belgium))

The lack of communication was also observed in the context of expatriates describing the differences of working behaviours between themselves and local colleagues and this was perceived by the expatriates as the cause of ambiguities in terms of processing their tasks. As one expatriate explained:

This is what everybody working in a company can understand, what is called an executive ability. I understand it as such, whether the company or your leadership allocates a task for an employee to perform. The first thing for that employee should be to work on this task as soon as possible and to achieve the requirements. Based on my observation, the staff on this side (subsidiary), they have very strong executive abilities and I believe this is also the case for us (the expatriates). But there may be a difference in the way this executive ability is operated. For a local colleague, if you assigned him a task that was in consistent with the colleague's opinion or comprehension, he will do it right away and he will outperform the standards. But if he neither understood this task nor agreed with the task, he would bring it up directly to his managers and then will discuss his idea with the managers. There would be a communication going on. only when this task is fully understood will he show a strong executive ability. This is the big difference I felt when I came. In our mind (expatriates), a leader is an absolute authority, but they (local colleagues) think that a leader is more of a work partners, a source of support rather than viewing them as an absolute authority that need to be obeyed… since I don't receive any instructions from the headquarter, I sometime feel confused about the way we should conduct our work here". (Interviewee 8, 25 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Ghent (Belgium))

As the results of these negative workplace experiences, expatriates generally responded in a manner of expressing negative emotions including: feeling of uncertainty and dissatisfaction in work place. This is illustrated by the following comment:

"I have worked here for over three months, when talking about my understanding of our projects, not to say that it is deeply understood, but compared to the time that I just came here, I do have changes in terms of my own responsibilities here. Let me put it this way, we signed a sort of protocol before we went broad. This protocol contains a framework for your work… a lot of my own work is actually about tracking the progress of these projects and then the project management. But I do have my own plans or objectives that I could make some breakthroughs in a certain area. So, in the first place, I believed that the greater the ability the greater the responsibility, but then it's going to feel like I am not sure I am in the right direction. Sometimes I feel confused about how to proceed with these things… so I am just "doing my job" now. (Interviewee 10, 26 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Ghent (Belgium))

Several expatriates also mentioned that although these experiences seemed to be considered as normal by the senior colleagues (parent country nationals) who arrived at host unit about

2 years earlier, they often found it difficult to accept without influencing their work performance. As one expatriate stated:

"I remember that there once a chat with them (senior colleagues-parent country nationals), the training… the difference of working styles, these seemed to be normal for them. They tried to comfort me by saying things like, you will get used to this and we all started this way. Maybe this is true, but honestly, I don't see the point…what I have in mind now is just to work and nothing more". (Interviewee 4, 28 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Turin (Italy))

5.3.5 Discussion of findings: initial entry stage

1.How do the other parties with which an expatriate creates psychological contracts (contract-makers) change over the stages following pre-departure?

The expatriates at this stage were found to highlight the respective role of two types of exchange partners in alleviating the uncertainties involved in working and living in a foreign country (host-unit line managers and host-unit colleagues (parent-country-nationals)). For example, the experienced colleagues (parent-country-nationals) were believed to lend the support of a social-emotional nature while the host-unit line managers were the main source of professional support in executing work; their role was also extended to act as the initial node for the expatriates to expand the network in the host operation. This scenario can be understood from the perspective of stress model where the event of international assignment is characterized by both of the role stressors (e.g. role ambiguity) and the situational stressors (e.g. national culture novelty: Kraimer and Wayne, 2004); in such cases, social support played an important role for improving an employee's ability to cope with the stress.

Extending this line of discussion, the results obtained here resonated with the expatriate adjustment literature where organizational support was deployed to the international assignment with an objective of facilitating the adaptation and socialization of expatriates (Kraimer *et al.,* 2001). Typically, this area of literature discussed different forms of organizational support, ranging from social support (Guzzo *et al.,* 1994; Shaffer *et al.,* 1999) and logistical and general support (housing and healthcare facilities: Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.,* 2005), to the perceived organizational support (employees' evaluations of the extent to which the organization cares about their well-being: Kraimer *et al.,* 2001). While addressing the types of organizational support, the sources from which expatriates perceived organizational support to come were often not specified, with studies falling to go beyond distinguishing between headquarter and subsidiary organizational support (Liu and Ipe, 2010). This was striking given that studies examining perceived organizational support in the domestic context had provided confirming evidence that employees were able to recognize the distinctiveness of support and adjust work-related outcomes towards the particular source of support (e.g. supervisors and co-workers) (Stinglhamber and Vandenberghe, 2003; Loi *et al.,* 2014; Guchait *et al.,* 2015). In this regard, the results for research question 2-(a) confirmed and extended the organizational support studies by establishing that in an international context, expatriates at the initial stage were able to recognize the support from the subsidiary operation and to further distinguish between the support from supervisor and co-workers.

By applying the proposition of Coyle-shapiro and Parzefall (2008) in categorizing between proximal and distal contract makers, the role of both host-unit line managers and experienced colleagues were often described to as revolving around work-specific issues (e.g. work instructions, demonstration, advices and evaluation of work tasks), thus representing the proximal agents in response to an expatriate's psychological contract. In comparing the results with the contract makers identified in Study One (Chapter 4-section 4.3.1), the position of proximal contract makers (headquarter-line manager) was observed to be replaced with personnel in host operations: line managers and experienced colleagues. There is an opportunity to apply the framework of the psychological contract antecedents in deriving the plausible explanations for the shift in contract makers. However, prior to this part of the discussion, it is useful to first establish the role of antecedents in the development of employees' contract beliefs. Psychological contract influences behaviour and attitudes through both indirect and direct means. The direct influences functioned as the content of psychological contract provided the individual with a goal-oriented structure that directed behaviours (Conway and Briner, 2005), while the indirect influences existed as the contract content providing a standard on the basis of which an individual can evaluate an exchange relationship (Conway and Briner, 2005; Rousseau, 1995; Taylor and Tekleab, 2004). The implication is that in both cases, the content of psychological contract is the predictor of employee outcomes and the contract antecedents are the determinant of the content of a psychological contract (Conway and Briner, 2005; Rousseau, 2001).

Then with regards to the results obtained here, the salient antecedent of the psychological contract was found to be a perceived degree of dependence. The term of dependency referred to as an individual relied on the other party to provide important sources (Fiske, 1993); an individual was highly dependent on another party when making mistakes on matters relating to that dependence was likely to result in an economic cost (Fiske and Taylor, 1991). Consequently, an individual in a highly dependent relationship was more likely to exercise his/her cognitive efforts in the forms of paying closer attention to and actively seeking information concerning that dependency, which by extension gave rise to more frequent and involved interactions (Fiske and Taylor, 1991). While the contract antecedents were premised on an individual establishing one psychological contract with the organization (Lewis and Taylor, 2001; Tekleab and Taylor, 2003), its implications for the multi-foci concept of the psychological contract were twofold; first, the perceived degree of dependence were more likely to generate variations among the contract content of an individual held towards different contract makers, as individuals were likely to be differentially motivated to paying close attention to and actively seeking for information concerning that dependency; second, the closer monitor of an individual's exchange partner tended to generate more frequent interactions with that exchange partner, which further increased the opportunities for promise-exchanging, binding each party to a psychological contract; this accorded with Rousseau (2001) that in the events of repeated interactions, organizational communications whether in the form of words or actions were more likely to be interpreted by individuals as promises (constitutes of psychological contract). Therefore, the perceived degree of dependence was argued to generate variations on the contract content whilst having a role to play in identifying with particular contract makers.

Applying this notion of dependence to the results, a shift in the organizational support-based dependence was observed by comparing the results obtained as the expatriates moved from the pre-departure to the initial entry stage of an international assignment, which may work through the motivated cognitive efforts, replacing the expatriates' previous contract makers. More specifically, the proximal contract maker at pre-departure stage (headquarter-line managers) was found to be the initial source of support, taking responsibility for preparing the expatriates for the international assignment (e.g. clarifying the objectives and demands related to the assignment). As the expatriates moved on to the initial entry stage, there emerged the need for coping with the uncertainty involved in working and living in the novel environment, fostering a degree of dependence on the support from host-unit personnel (line managers and colleagues) in order to facilitate the adjustment process. This was likely to trigger the expatriates' cognitive efforts (observation and information-seeking behaviour) with the resulting closer interactions, there were increased opportunities for promise-exchanging, binding each party to a psychological contract (Rousseau, 1990; 2001)

In line with this prediction, contract research also addressed the information-seeking behaviour of newcomers. Information-seeking broadly refers to individuals seeking information about their job role and tasks, as well as their work group and the organizational setting (De Vos *et al.,* 2005). As a result, individuals, over time, come to better understand their employment exchange and to revise their psychological contracts in line with the information available to them (Rousseau, 2001; De Vos *et al.,* 2005). The literature on newcomers in organizations largely viewed these employees as inexperienced. However, it was important to note that expatriates were often seasoned members of staff and were selected for the international assignments on the basis of the experience they had accumulated during their tenure in the headquarter organization (Sherman and Morley, 2016). Therefore, it is important to highlight that expatriates who are often seasoned, experienced individuals have "a degree of agency when it comes to making particular demands of the organization before departure" (Sherman and Morley, 2016: 14). However, in the area of expatriate adjustment literature where expatriates were observed to experience the phenomenon of cultural shock: "a normal process of adaptation to cultural stress" (Stahl and Bjokman, 2006: 272), there was evidence suggesting that veteran expatriates may be more likely to experience culture shock than novice expatriates (Sherman and Morley, 2016). Applying this line of thinking to the information-seeking behaviours, it is plausible to draw parallels between the newcomers joining the organization and the expatriate's initial entry to the host environment for their international assignment.

Moreover, although the expatriates acknowledged that there were random informal communications with headquarter line managers at this stage. It was maintained largely for the purpose to ensure an open communication channel. Therefore, it is argued that at the initial entry stage, there was an absence of dependence on headquarters-line managers and an emergence of dependence on host-unit personnel, both resulting in the shift of contract makers. Further, as acknowledged in the result section (5.3.1), the existing literature had not yet theorised colleagues as another party to an individual's psychological contract, as the contract was deemed to capture the reciprocal terms between an employee and the organization via itself or its various agents (Lewis and Taylor, 2001; Tekleab and Taylor, 2003). However, the result here suggests otherwise, with evidence suggesting their exchange relationships were based on the provision of social-emotional support (e.g. coping with feelings of anxiety) by colleagues and the expatriates' contribution of independently meeting their own responsibilities and achieving a rapid growth. The plausible explanation may be concerned with the context in which this exchange relationship was embedded. With reference to the contract literature, the employer side of the psychological contract was often occupied by agents (e.g. the line manager: Lewis and Taylor, 2001; Tekleab and Taylor, 2003), who were perceived by the employee to be the representatives of the organization due to their decision-making capacity over the local employee. This was clearly not the case for the colleagues. However, in the context of expatriates entering the subsidiary units without sufficient knowledge of the novel environment, the results so far suggest that the expatriates viewed their more experienced colleagues (parent-country-nationals) as the representatives of the subsidiary, thus treating them as the contract makers.

Rousseau's (1995) work in relation to contract makers can be used to take this discussion further. Specifically, there is a scarcity of research attempting to explore who or what employees perceived to be the organization, with the exception of Rousseau (1995). More specifically, the author distinguished between principal contract makers and agents who represented these principal contract makers. By definition, "organizations become party to the contract as principals who directly express their terms or through agents who represent them" (Rousseau, 1995: 60). Contract theorising and research has followed this guideline in maintaining that an employee develops a psychological contract with the organization (as a principal contract maker) via the idea of anthropomorphism (Coyle-Shapiro and Shore, 2007; Lavelle *et al.,* 2007) or more often with agents representing it (e.g. the line manager: Lewis and Taylor, 2001; Tekleab and Taylor, 2003; Freese and Schalk, 2008). As such, Rousseau's (1995) classification of contract makers takes no account of the opportunity for the existence of employee-to-employee psychological contracts, as the other party in response to an employee's contract is often superior in term of organizational hierarchy (e.g. line manager and senior manager).

However, it was acknowledged that "any person who conveys some form of future commitment to another person is potentially a contract maker" (Rousseau, 1995: 60). On the basis of this notion, she further highlighted that co-workers can be a powerful influence to newcomers' contracts as the co-workers described their own experiences and beliefs. These "stories" can be perceived by potential employees as being the views of the organizations, implicitly suggesting that co-workers have the capacity to act as the representatives of organizations (Rousseau, 1995). When applying this notion to the case of expatriates, there were likely cases of senior colleagues describing their experiences and beliefs of assignment during the initial entry interactions with expatriates. This may mean that expatriates treat senior colleagues as contract makers to an extent that those colleagues' expectations from the expatriates are perceived to represent those of the organization (e.g. independently meeting their own responsibilities and achieving a rapid growth). However, it is perhaps more useful to view this result as a tentative guideline.

2. How do the expatriates' psychological contract change across perceived employee and employer obligations over the stages following pre-departure and what is the role of the presence of multiple parties in this change?

Overall, the employer obligation on the performance support dimension (balanced contract beliefs) exhibited a downward change trajectory and there was an emergence of employer obligations in relation to loyalty dimension (relational contract beliefs). First, the downward trend of performance support dimension may be explained by expatriates having greater uncertainty regarding these obligations. To clarify, contract theorising and research has shown that organizational newcomers can have unrealistic expectations regarding prospect employment and will likely experience a degree of disappointment with the reality they encounter after organizational entry (Rousseau, 2001). Although this may not be the case for the expatriates as they were seasoned members of staff, it is important to note that all of the expatriates in this stage (initial entry) do not have previous international experience. This may mean that at the initial entry stage, individuals were likely to be unsure about their employers' obligation, and were thus more willing to adapt their beliefs about employer obligations over time. In this case, the adaption of their beliefs was operationalized by lowering the expectation of performance support from their host-unit line managers; a situation that was consistent to the findings of Tekleab (2003) which showed that there was a reduction on employee's perceptions about employer obligations during the first 3 months of employment.

This process can also be understood by drawing on the lens of sense-making theory. Sense-making process was referred to as individuals make sense of the event and situations that are ambiguous and unexpected (De Vos *et al.,* 2005). The initial entry stage characterized by novel incidents raise the awareness of the expatriate to the differences between the new situation and their expectations of what the international assignment may mean relative to their domestic experiences (Sherman and Morley, 2016). Essentially, it represents a context of uncertainty in which a sense-making process was triggered (Louis, 1980). For example, as there were cases of expatriates in this sample changing work areas as part of the assignment requirement (e.g. from project advisor to technical support advisor) as well as the cases of those remaining in the same work area (the adaption of local production lines to a new model), however, without having acquired sufficient knowledge of a local production plant yet. From the perspective of work role transition, it is viewed as the process of expatriates altering their own attitudes and behaviours to "match better the role expectation" (Black, 1988: 278). These differences between the new and previous work role as well as the differences between new and old organizational settings were likely to involve ambiguous and unexpected incidents, which worked through sense-making, placing demands on the expatriates to adapt their beliefs. Such events were also evident in the result sections concerning the shaping force of critical experiences, the results suggested when the expatriates' contract beliefs about what should be exchanged were not met, there was a tendency for the expatriates to decrease their expectations of employer obligations. For example, at the initial entry stage, the experiences in terms of lack of effective training program and absence of communication from headquarters, were perceived by the expatriates as a breach of previously identified employer obligations in performance support dimension (pre-departure stage). This resulted in the expatriates generally expressing a feeling of uncertainty and dissatisfaction in work place.

Second, as mentioned previously, the downward trend of employer obligations on performance support dimension (balanced contract) was also accompanied by the emergence of loyalty dimension related obligations (relational contract). This may be, again, explained by individuals adapting their attitudes to this post-entry reality through the process such as information seeking and sense-making, that is, expatriates experiencing a series of events that may trigger them to evaluate existing expectations and to form new expectations (relating to loyalty dimension in this case: De Vos and Freese, 2011). In specific relation to the results obtained (section 5.3.4), the emergence of loyalty dimension related obligations can be linked to the positive experiences described by the expatriates. Specifically, these experiences related to the social relationships formed with both of the expatriates' host-unit line managers and broad networks (host-unit colleagues). As a result, the expatriates were found to further maintain these relationships with an attitude of commitment and trust.

Alternatively, the data comparison with Study One's results (pre-departure expatriates) tends to reveal another plausible explanation that the emergence of loyalty dimension-related obligations may take place via the transfer of perceived employer obligations. Specifically, the loyalty dimension-related obligations may experience a shift over time from towards the subsidiary unit as a whole (a distal contract maker at pre-departure stage) towards host-unit line managers and colleagues within it (proximal contract makers at initial entry stage). Contract research has acknowledged that the contract content can transform from transactional to relational items over time and this change is attributed to the fulfilment of reciprocal obligations by each party (individual employee and the organizations Kotter, 1973). In essence, the transformation of contract content was an operationalization of the dynamic nature of the psychological contract, which emphasized how employees' reactions to contract evaluations unfolded and changed over time (Conway and Briner, 2002). When bringing in the notion of the multi-foci perspective of the psychological contract, it is plausible that the dynamic nature of contract may also be operationalized via its contract makers in addition to its content, and the proximity rule formulated by Lawler (1992) can provide support to this proposition. Lawler's proximity rule stated that individuals developed stronger affective ties to subgroups within a social system than the system itself, and in work settings, to work teams rather than to the organization as a whole (Lawler, 1992). Inherent in Lawler's proposition was the principal of motivation that individual valued self-determination; and on the basis of the proximal groups possessing an advantage over distant groups in that they had far more frequent interactions with the focal person; individuals in a nested structure were more likely to experience the fulfilment of need for self-determination and thus show greater intention towards the proximal subgroups (e.g. a team-member or immediate supervisor) than towards the distant larger groups (the team-leader or the organisation as whole) (Lawler, 1992).

Returning to the case of expatriates, the transfer of loyalty dimension over time from subsidiary unit as a whole to the constituencies within it (e.g. host-unit line managers and colleagues) can be explained by the expatriates in this sample forging valued relationships with line managers and colleagues to whom they are closest. The initial entry stage results supported this by showing the affective commitment-related expectations related to both of the line managers, for example, an understanding of they were undergoing adjustment and a social-emotional support for career path, and the colleagues (a social-emotional support to cope with feeling of anxiety). This means that instead of bonding with the subsidiary operation itself, expatriates developed affective commitment ties with those to whom they were closest, so that the host-unit line managers and colleagues appeared as the principal models in relation to fulfil the perceived obligations of loyalty dimension; this was a situation that was in line with the prediction of the proximity rule. Therefore, for research on transformation of perceived employer obligations across different contract types (from transactional to relational contract), this finding extends the understanding of dynamic nature of psychological contract by providing evidence that the transformation may occur within the same contract type (e.g. relational contracts) via different contract makers.

Third, the perceived employee's obligations continued to focus on performance support dimension and development dimension of balanced contract. However, compared to the perceived employer obligations, these contract beliefs were relatively general. This included first, the expatriates' obligations of developing advanced technical capabilities and expanding their professional scope towards their line managers; and second, their obligations of independently meeting their work responsibilities and having a sense of trust towards their colleagues (section 5.3.3). In looking at the changes of employee obligations from pre-departure to initial entry stage, the performance support dimension exhibited a downward trend and the converse was the case for loyalty dimension. Regarding the performance support dimension, the downward trend can be linked to the negative workplace experiences identified by the expatriates upon their initial entry (section 5.3.4.2). More specifically, the expatriates' perceptions regarding the lack of communication with the headquarter and the lack of effective training programs were viewed as negative influences on their understanding of employment relationship.

In looking more specifically at the item-level of contract content, two points are made. First, there was an increase in the intensity of obligation specifically in role-specific support. In comparison to the pre-departure stage where the role-specific support (e.g. consulting on technical details of tasks) ranked at the last position of perceived employer obligations, it became to the priority with greater level of specification when expatriates moved on to the initial entry stage. For example, expatriates at this stage highlighted the importance of giving instructions on technical aspects of work, being comfortable to ask questions and being supportive when engaging with various internal groups. The fluctuation on the importance of the obligations can be associated with expatriates' context-specific circumstances which caused the changes on psychological contract. For expatriates at pre-departure stage, it was likely that expectations related to role-specific support was not at the front-of-mind contract beliefs considering that their experiences accrued in their role. However, upon initial entry to the novel environment, the uncertainty involved in working in an unfamiliar organizational setting placed demand on expatriates to adapt their contract beliefs including reinforcing those previously in existence. In addition, there were also increases on the level of complexity regarding employer obligations on the loyalty dimension. The pre-departure expatriates described quite broad and simple beliefs relating to the subsidiary providing friendly environment and caring about the well-being of employees. Despite the fact that that expatriates were seasoned members of staff, this level of simplicity of beliefs regarding the loyalty dimension resembled those of organizational newcomers who were often with little workplaces experiences (Rousseau, 2001). Research on socialization showed that contract beliefs were enriched by information and implicit promises which accrued during the early socialization stage (Alcover *et al.,* 2017). In line with this prediction, the results here reflected a development of quite broad beliefs.

Summary

Upon initial entry, the overall experiences of the expatriates were characterized by the uncertainties involved in both of working and living settings. In terms of contract makers, the position of proximal contract makers was observed to change from headquarter-line manager in previous stage to personnel in host operations: line managers and experienced colleagues. A plausible explanation was derived from antecedents of psychological contract. The shift in the organizational support-based dependence could work through the motivated cognitive efforts to replace the expatriates' previous contract makers. There were also changes in the content of expatriates' psychological contract, the employer obligation on the performance support dimension (balanced contract beliefs) exhibited a downward change trajectory and there was an emergence of employer obligations in relation to loyalty dimension (relational contract beliefs). This could be explained by individuals adapting their attitudes to this post-entry reality through the process such as information seeking and sense-making. However, the presence of multiple contract makers may mean that the loyalty dimension-related obligations may experience a shift over time from towards the subsidiary unit as a whole (a distal contract maker at the pre-departure stage) towards host-unit line managers and colleagues within it (the proximal contract makers at the initial entry stage). The proximity rule formulated by Lawler (1992) were discussed to support this proposition. In particular, employees will will establish stronger affective links with individuals who are close to them than with other agents representing the organization in a more abstract or impersonal manner. As such, this finding also provides theoretical support to the self-categorization and social identity theories, which stated that individual was more likely to identify with distinctive collectives such as their work team than with broader collectives like the larger organization to which they belong (Reicher and Wetherell, 1987; Ellemers *et al.,* 2004). Moreover, the contract change at the item-level suggested patterns of increased complexity in describing employer obligations on the loyalty dimension.

5.4 Results and discussion: expatriates at subsequent stage

This set of findings is structured to present the results for research questions 2, 2(a)and 2(b). The expatriates in this study were found to be usually involved with several agents simultaneously who were acting as source of significant professional support and with whom different forms of dependencies were created (section 5.4.1). These relationships were shown to be based on reciprocal obligations which included the inducement they could expect and the contributions the individuals provided in return (section 5.4.2-5.4.3).

5.4.1 Results: exchange partners of expatriates at subsequent stage

The exchange partners consisted of line managers, project managers, regional department managers (all from host units). While, given that there was a degree of overlap in relation to the decision-making capacity among the cited agents, the following results on the identification of exchange partners focused upon the distinctiveness of each agent in shaping the working condition of expatriates in order to reduce the redundant descriptions to a minimal. Table 5-7 provides the type of organizational agents identified and the reasons for identification as expatriates are questioned about the influential individuals on shaping their working experiences.

Table 5-7: Perceived exchange partners at subsequent stage

Type of organizational agents	No. (%) of expatriates citing the organizational agents	Examples quotes for reasons of identifying them as exchange partners
Host-unit project manager	10 (53%)	*"Basically, everything related to our work is under his management (the project manager) … the progression of work…against which quality standard this should be evaluated, these parts are governed by the project managers"*
Host-units line managers	9 (47%)	*"He (my line manager) will be assigning tasks and supervising your job, sometimes when you reported back to him, he will help make corrections where there are mistakes"*
Regional department managers	7 (37%)	*"If you need to go through some approvals, because the financial approval of (Automobile. Co) is very complex, from the representative office to the regional department to the*

		headquarters, the regional department manager will help you push through these approvals"

Host-unit project managers

It was identified that the key exchange partners were host units-project managers, with 10 out of 19 interviews commenting on the importance of having the support from their project managers on work performance. More specifically, the role of project manager was described as responsible for a range areas of project management including project planning and monitoring, implementing the project management standards, managing risks. One expatriate commented that:

"I think my project manager is very important in this situation, from my position, it will be hard to tell exactly what his job descriptions, but he is the one in charge of everything related to the project that I am working on right now… from its initial tender, then the planning… then the quality standard of our department work will be specified… Let me put it this way, so the project manager will take overall responsibility for a project such as the planning and monitor of the project and these things will be further discussed with our line managers in formal meetings. when specified, this will be allocated to our performance requirements". (Interviewee 22, 30 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Nottingham (UK))

The role of project managers was also highlighted in the event of allocating expatriates designated key performance indicators on semi-annual or annual basis. For example, one expatriate stated:

"Now, it is my project manager… when you just came here, your line manager was pretty important, because he (the line manager) was the one who will lead you…Later, after that you can take responsibility for your area of expertise in an independent task, the project manager will allocate you the designed key performance indicators, normally on semi-annual or annual basis. This means that you are now a professional in this area… a process of professionalization. After this time, the pressure will also come from your project managers. So now, you are likely to have a clear understanding of the whole industry and under the pressure, you can see through something, human nature, things like this. In my work area, my project manager has important influence". (Interviewee 27, 26 years old, thermos management department, expatriated to Turin (Italy))

Relatedly, the project manager also acted as the first official contributor in expatriates' formal performance evaluation. This was typically due to the process of the case organization's evaluation system where the project-based performance evaluations were first undertaken by the host-unit project managers. This were then passed on to the regional department to be summarized and were further used to formulate the annual performance report for the expatriates at the year end. As one expatriate commented:

"He (my project manager) is important in that…as a matter of fact, it is related to our company's internal practice; the evaluation mechanism or incentive programs works like that. Our performance evaluation is project based, which basically means, your evaluation was be based on how well you have achieved the key performance indicators in that project. So, my project manager will first make an evaluation on my performance on that project, but I may have engaged in several projects in a year, so these results will be summarized into the regional department and then finally I will get an overall performance evaluation" (Interviewee 13, 26 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Birmingham (UK))

Host-unit line managers

The expatriates also cited the host-unit line managers as critical exchange partners, their role functioned in terms of making daily work arrangement (e.g. arrange staff time, priorities work area and schedule regular meetings with expatriates), setting goals, giving feedback and offering a gauge of their overall level of performance. Some examples of expatriates' comments are as follows:

"He (the line manager) will be assigning tasks and supervising your job, sometimes when you reported back to him, he will help make corrections where there are mistakes. I would definitely say that he is very important, after all, we basically work together every day". (Interviewee 15, 26 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Birmingham (UK))

"My line manager will be in charge of our daily work, but usually, the amount or the objectives of our work are made on weekly basis, but it is also flexible… so the target for each week is set (by my line manager) in advance, and then you will know much work you should do and which area of work should be done at first place… this is important here, I am not so clear about the other departments, but in my department (transmission technology development), how well our team do the job influence other teams… also he (line managers) will arrange some training for us, whether it is on-job training or more formal training program and then advise related issues on our performance during the training". (Interviewee 12, 26 years old, transmission technology development, expatriated to Birmingham (UK))

Regional department managers

Further, the expatriates cited their regional department managers in the host country as the critical exchange partners. The identification of this type of agent further demonstrated the complexity of organizational structures and practices involved in the context of international assignments. To clarify, the expatriates described that the regional department served as the intermediary between the subsidiary units (e.g. the local representative offices and research canters) and the headquarter. The regional departments were described by the expatriates to be in charge of all international-activities including the assignments on behalf of the headquarter, expatriates described that the directions from the headquarter and the implementation of home-country policies were often monitored and directed by the regional departments. As one expatriate stated:

"I feel that the regional department were the main and direct coordinator of the entire overseas operations. This includes not just us, other sister companies in this region such as the research and development centres in Nottingham (UK) is also under its governance… some major decisions and policies are also conveyed by them…I recall that once there was an application of new quality standards, this was the regional department which made this decision according to the company's internal documents. But apparently, this is done after the discussion and negotiation with other professional bodies and local government. But my point is, our work is definitely influenced by the regional company". (Interviewee 24, 27 years old, Thermos management development, expatriated to Nottingham (UK))

The role of regional department was also evident in coordinating the activities of different subsidiary units in the same region. One example of such role concerned with establishing specific organizational systems for knowledge sharing between different subsidiaries units. As one expatriate commented:

"I would say our regional department manager…unlike the time when we first came here (the subsidiary unit), that was three years ago… now our work includes more complex environment and involves, particularly, more people. I think when we first came here, our line managers will help to familiarize ourselves with the work and life here, but mostly, it was about you trying to integrate into this company, developing yourself more quickly, learning how to perform your work properly and how to work together with the local colleagues. So, it was mostly about learning. But It is a different picture now, we collaborate more frequently with our sister companies in this region. In my view, there were quite differences in terms of expertise among these sister companies. So, the regional managers will direct some practices for us to learn from each other such as establish a database for sharing our reports during assignments". (Interviewee 17, 25 years old, transmission technology development, expatriated to Birmingham (UK))

Another expatriate further elaborated on the coordinating role of regional department managers, with comments highlighting their involvement in creating guidance templates which outlined how team members across different subsidiary units might undertake cross-unit projects.

"I believe that my regional manager is very supportive during my work… I would say that my work is very challenging now, because it involved collaboration with different teams

from other sister companies…the challenging part is that everybody seems to have different opinions about how projects will proceed and this is always the case, but my regional managers will help us reach an agreement about the obligations for each party and the deadline at which all our work should be finished .In relation to our work, the first thing is that the project-related work is heavily associated with the length of time given to you, that means your deadlines…and there could be multiple deadline at each different stage, so if the regional department requires this stage of project to be completed before a certain deadline, you basically must have met this requirement at that time. But if you do have any questions about finishing on time, you do need to discuss this issue with the regional managers… to see whether he could help you solve or delayed the deadline for you…. I mean once the deadline for a project is determined or renegotiated, it must be guaranteed". (Interviewee 20, 25 years old, transmission technology development, expatriated to Birmingham (UK))

In particular relation to the expatriates' performance on the assignment, the regional department managers were considered as critical individuals in terms of negotiating with different regional parties in projects on behalf of the expatriates and promoting their requests through to the headquarter. Some examples of expatriates' comments are as follows:

"I mean, for the department managers, I think he is important in providing me some performance support. Because I used to travel a lot in this region to support different projects, because of the differences in some ideas, type of projects, many people will have different voices. This will complicate the situations. When there are differences between my views and those of other people in the other sister companies, the regional department manager will give me strong support by thinking and negotiating on my behalf… guiding me in the right direction". (Interviewee 18, 25 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Birmingham (UK))

"To put it directly, now at work, my line managers and regional department managers will be the most important, I work on the finance and accounting department, but during work, I will report directly to my regional department manager in some area of work such as the accounting receivable…also, if you need to go through some approvals, because the financial approval of the "Automobile Co" is very complex and sometimes troublesome; the application will start from us, the representative office to the regional department and then to the headquarters. In these processes, my regional department manager will help you push these approvals". (Interviewee 14, 25 years old, finance and accounting department, expatriated to Birmingham (UK))

5.4.2 Results: expatriates' perceptions on the obligations of exchange partners

Host-unit project manager

The key obligations for host-unit project managers related to performance dimension of the balanced contract and financial dimension of the transactional contract. Table 5-8 provides descriptions of the key theme that emerged as expatriates were questioned about their expectations of host-unit project managers.

Table 5-8: Expatriates' perceptions on the obligations of host-unit project manager

Theme	**Theme description**	**No. (%)of expatriates citing the theme.**	**Example quotes**
Performance support	Employees' perceptions on the obligations of employers in terms of providing work performance-related support.	8 (80%)	*"He is more experienced, if there were some things that I couldn't do well, he will be able to correct my work problems in time, saving me from troublesome results"*
Financial	Employees' perceptions on the obligations of employers in terms of provide financial rewards as work incentives.	4 (40%)	*"What I expect… well… good comments on my yea-end performance review and higher bonus"*

Performance support dimension

The strongest emerging theme from the responses was obligations regarding performance support dimension of the balanced contract. Expatriates were clear that they expected their project managers to provide supports when performing specific tasks with both internal and external parties involved. Internally, these obligations related to offering clear directions on tasks where group members entered a discussion with each other on the need to abandon or amend existing approaches to problem-solving, often on technical matters. Specifically, expatriates identified the need to seek advices from their project managers on the understanding of rationale behind each alternative solution as well as the benefits of their implementations. This process normally occurred formally through organized meetings, or informally, via one-to-one meetings and daily interactions. Some examples of expatriates are presented as follows:

"For him (the project manager), (the obligations concern with) more of a positive support; when you have a problem for example, you can ask him for assistance so that he can help solving or assigning others to this task helping you… and then when there are some differences in our opinions on the work, we also expect him to analyse from an objective point of view. Particularly, we hope that he can give us some ideas on how to integrate our approaches on some technical issues, because, although my team members have different opinions on the work, it does not mean that they are wrong. It is more like the thing that we focus on different aspects of problem-solving, but apparently, we can't persuade others. So, regarding these situations, I think that kind of support is enough… my line manager was more like taking charge of the work arrangement and if there were small questions, we will go to him for support, but if there were quite divergence of views among my teams, we will definitely need suggestions of project managers". (Interviewee 12, 26 years old, transmission technology development, expatriated to Birmingham (UK))

"I will expect to receive some instructions on my work (from my project managers). This involves more of the details of my work, let say it is about imitation; this process involves issues of adequacy, which depends on whether your model is stable or whether you input is accurate enough. So, you're going to have to identify these conditions or parameters and to predict some of the effects of the model you are using, these kinds of things need to be done by you. Generally, this part of work… it is usually the responsibility of yourself and is totally under the control of yourself. But regarding these things…people were likely to have different views, because of the different work experiences, it is quite objective. My line manager generally will not have too much to say about these things, he will generally look at your report, assess the integrity of your report, detecting some of the errors. He can detect it and he will point it out to you; But then regarding our different opinions on the model, he won't tell you exactly how to coordinate these things, but it's something to be reported to the project managers, because he is the one taking charge of the whole project". (Interviewee 16, 26 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Birmingham (UK)

Alternatively, expatriates commented on obligations of project managers regarding planning and organizing or coordinating their jobs. This situation occurred when the expatriates understood the technical tasks they were responsible for performing in a project, but still need assistance in planning and collaborating with other departments in order to implement the project smoothly. In such cases, expatriates stated that it would be important that their project manager offered consultations on the establishment of plans and facilitation of collaborative work. As one expatriate commented:

"This is the true about my work here; I need to do it in accordance with the progress of teams from other departments, such as those from powertrain research and development, as well as the transmission technology. This is due to the nature of my work, it is quite a professional thing and complex here…I will give you a simple example, my work will be related to powertrain department here because there is a part of powertrain technology that requires heat recovery and thermal energy storage. So, you can see the links here… for my project managers, I would say, it will be appreciated if he can help me coordinate with the other departments more frequently. Because, they have their own work schedule, it will not be easy for me to directly facilitate a communication with them, like asking them to pause their work because there was something unexpected during my work here. I think this could be the case for them as well; we are all connected here. Let's say if there was a need for rescheduling the work on my side, I will expect my project manager to consider it and help to direct the work". (Interviewee 19, 26 years old, thermos management department, expatriated to Birmingham (UK)

The performance-related obligations were also extended to expatriates expecting to receive supports in dealing with tasks where external parties were involved. This was referred to the professional bodies which were in a joint venture with the "Automobile Co". This situation normally occurred when the requests from this party (e.g. quality standards) had been initially processed by the expatriates and were transferred to relevant departments for further fulfilment. Specifically, in order to keep the production running continuously according to the requested standard of quality, the expectations for their project managers focused upon pushing forward the process of request-handling. For example, on expatriate explained:

"When it comes to support, let's say I meet some issues of coordination in the process of dealing with the request with our corporate party. This request may be concerned with matters on our quality standards or the efficiency of production lines and so on. I can't push it forward from my position… because each project has its own operational structures consisted of a wide range of functional departments. So, there will be obstacles if I want to reach to another department. Such that their requests will need to be dealt with by going to a higher level such as my project manager, then he can communicate with other departments on this issue… so when dealing with this kind of thing, I hope to get help and coordination to make sure the project run effectively". (Interviewee 29, 26 years old, engineering maintenance department, expatriated to Turin (Italy))

Financial dimension

Project managers-specific obligations also related to transactional elements. In general, expatriates commented on the expectations regarding the good performance evaluation the associated bonus; however, they did not articulate a highly specific list of rewards and felt reluctant to further the conversion on this topic, because it was perceived as a highly sensitive information. However, the expatriates seemed to build a link between the provision of reward and the recognition of work performance. Rewards in the context of both domestic and international operations had been theorized as a salient component of exchange relationships (Coyle-Shapiro and Parzefall, 2008). By making senses on the signal sent from the organizational practices (performance evaluation in this case), employees created meaning about their exchange relationships. In this sense, expatriates' comments on the transactional elements also reflected a recognition on project manager as the official authority in fulfilling performance-evaluation related responsibilities. Several examples of expatriates' comments are illustrated below:

"What I expect from my project manage… good comments on my yea-end performance review and higher bonus". (Interviewee 21, 28 years old, engineering maintenance department, expatriated to Nottingham (UK))

"It (the expectation for my project manager') should be a good review on my performance here. This is the thing that everyone should be interested, I mean, in a good way. I personally consider it as a recognition for my performance here". (Interviewee 15, 26 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Birmingham (UK))

Host-units line manager

The perceived obligations of expatriates' line managers at host units concentrated on the performance support dimension of the balanced contract and loyalty dimension of the relational contract. Table 5-9 provides descriptions of the key theme that emerged as expatriates were questioned about their perception on the obligations of host-unit line managers

Table 5-9: Expatriates' perceptions on the obligations of host-unit line managers

Theme	Theme description	No. (%)of expatriates citing the theme	Example quotes

Loyalty	Employees' perceptions on the obligations of employers in terms of supporting the well-being and interests of employees.	5(55%)	*"For him (the line manager), I think there would be expectations around the willingness of listening to our suggestions and maybe taking our ideas more seriously"*
Performance support	Employees' perceptions on the obligations of employers in terms of providing work performance-related support.	6 (67%)	*"In fact, we have been working together for several years and it was good experience for me, but I think it would be more helpful for our team, if sometimes there would be flexibilities in terms of decision making. Actually, we hope that we could participate more in decision making on our own work.*

Loyalty dimension

The key contract beliefs relating to the loyalty dimension of the relational contract was recognition. While recognition was often assessed in its tangible forms (e.g. performance-based pay or monetary incentives) in the psychological contract literature (Coyle-Shapiro and Parzefall, 2008), the responses in this study related mainly to recognition in terms of its intangible aspects: feelings of being valued and respected. Specifically, expatriates commented that they expected their line managers to show respect to them by valuing their input in work-related issues and being understanding if their work progress was not as effective as expected. With regards to the first scenario, expatriates suggested that at this stage they were thoroughly familiar with the plants and equipment in the production process, with some commenting that there were initiatives on modifying the current process to achieved improved efficiency. This initiative was normally stimulated via self-learning and via both formal and informal discussion with colleagues. As such, there was an expectation for their line managers to be open to suggestions such as make minor adaptions of the plants utilizing the knowledge of the benchmark in automobile industry, as well as redesign the technical equipment or tooling to boost the operation in each station. Several examples of the expatriates' comments are presented as follows:

"First of all, you have to have some ideas of your own when you are working on the tasks with your colleagues and …. he (the line manager) has a holistic view of the task. If it (my ideas on modifying existing plants) is in line with the whole picture, I would appreciate if my opinion was accepted or supported… I believed we could make a breakthrough on the work. (Interviewee 17, 25 years old, transmission technology development, expatriated to Birmingham (UK))

"I think I always try to provide my best possible work … I have been here for more than three years and…I think I have been quite familiar with the work here, and in this matter, I believed I could speak for all of our team members. So, there are somethings now in the production line that need improvement, we believe our current production capacity would be much likely to be improved with minor changes on the platform. We have been using local raw materials for quite a long time and it has been proved as an effective cost-reduction approach. On that basis, if we can make adaptions to the production line, we could further improve the efficiency of material usage and I am saying these modifications will work. So, I am obviously going to be sad if this was not accepted". (Interviewee 19, 25 years old, production line, expatriated to Birmingham (UK))

Alternatively, expectation of recognition also focused on their line managers to be understanding. It was identified that expatriates sought for a supportive environment that, when there were cases of insufficiencies in the work performance, an understanding from their line managers that they had tried their best and there was still space for them to learn and grow. As one expatriates stated:

"I would expect him (the line manager) to give me some help when I have difficulties with the tasks in my work. Also… an understanding that I may not be able to do well on all the tasks, because some projects, at the time of process, is highly possible to cause technical problems or coordination problems. So, if these problems happened, sometime you need to take responsibility, but sometimes your colleagues or any other people need to take the responsibilities. In this kind of circumstance, I expect my line manager to be understanding that we have tried our best to fulfil our duties and responsibilities… and I think if he can't, I may feel disappointed. Also, the reason that I may need his understanding is that there was still space for me to learn how to improve my performance. This is not me being of modesty, because the industry where we are working demands continuous improvements, so there will always a process of learning and growth. That's my thoughts on him (the line

manager)". (Interviewee 28, 26 years old, model design department, expatriated to Turin (Italy))

Relatedly, the expatriates also believed their line managers should be reasonable when mistakes in the work occurred. For example, one expatriate commented:

"Another thing (about my line manager) is being reasonable…like, he will not be talking very aggressively when there are mistakes on my job. I once heard from my colleagues that there was a manager judging his subordinates' performance more than very seriously. My opinions on this is that we are professionals, so respecting us like professionals" (Interviewee 22, 30 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Nottingham (UK)).

Performance support dimension

Expatriates also cited obligations relating to the performance support dimension of the balanced contract. The key obligations cited in this area focused on the issue of being granted a degree of autonomy in the execution of their jobs, so that an improved efficiency of expatriates' work performance can be expected. In articulating these beliefs, the expatriates considered themselves able to perform their tasks without close supervision, as the technical and managerial capabilities accumulated during the assignments allowed them to perform with less support. Therefore, expatriates in particular sought for a degree of autonomy in decision making regarding work schedule, adaptation of manufacturing process, the use of raw materials and parts-design to reduce cost, and so forth. The expatriates believed that doing so had great potential to benefit their efficiency on work performance. Several examples of expatriates' comments are illustrated as follows:

"As for my line manager here, he is mainly responsible for the daily work arrangement of our teams. So I hope he can, in everyday, be a little more explicit in delegating the tasks and … at the same time he also can consider the idea of authorization…so, I can do better in my work. What I mean is that giving a certain autonomy is to believe that some people have the abilities to do the job and will not affect, negatively, the progress of the whole project". (Interviewee 30, 26 years old, model design department, expatriated to Turin (Italy))

"This (the line manager's obligation) is more about delegation, I believed that he (the line manager) is an expert in this area of business and we sometimes discussed issues about the efficiency and quality standards of our production platform, it seems to me that he is quite confident that we are doing pretty well. I agree with this, it is just that the trend of automobile production is always changing, I believed we could make a lot of improvement on the raw materials used for car manufacture. While the materials involved in

manufacturing car are iron, aluminium and so on, but from my perspective, the whole industry are working towards the use of lighter materials to increase speed and power. This is a direction we could focus, it will also increase the efficiency of material recycling. I hope we can have more communications on these aspects of work. (Interviewee 25, 27 years old, production line, expatriated to Nottingham (UK)))

Regional department managers

The key obligations for regional department managers fell into performance support dimension and development dimension of the balanced contract, as outlined in Table 5-10.

Table 5-10: Expatriates' perceptions on the obligations of regional department managers

Theme	Theme description	No. (%)of expatriates citing the theme	Example quotes
Performance support	Employees' perceptions on the obligations of employers in terms of providing work performance-related support.	5 (71%)	*"I would say being supportive during my work among other sister companies in this region. Depending on the nature of the project, I feel that sometimes the workload is too much so I would like extra hands, but there are occasions that I expect support particularly on coordination with the teams from different sister companies"*

Performance support dimension

The main theme emerging from the responses related to performance support dimension of the balanced contract. While expatriates' responses emphasized work planning and coordinating (as those outlined for host-unit project managers), this situation occurred when expatriates travelled through the countries cooperating with other sister companies respectively in the same region in order to support different projects. For example, one expatriate commented:

"(I expect) mainly about support from the regional department manager when I am to be deployed to other sister companies. During these tasks, who and what resources do you need is important and I believed the regional department managers should take the responsibilities for these things. Also, we have guidelines to direct the corporations among teams from other sister companies, but sometimes when you have requirements such as how many people you will need and particularly their expertise, or some processes need to be implemented, you will expect him to help me make and push those demands" (Interviewee 22, 30 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Nottingham (UK)).

As explained in more detail by the expatriates, although they were familiar with the technical aspects of a given platform/model, they still lacked of knowledge on how local production line operated and had difficulties in planning and collaborating with other departments in the respective sister companies. For example, the adaption of production line to the new model while maintaining the same level of production capability required collaboration between various teams from several departments. In order to implement the project smoothly, the assistance from regional department managers on the facilitation of collaborative work was highly valued by the expatriates. One expatriate stated:

"I mean, for the regional department manager, I believe he can provide important support. Because I used to travel a lot in the region to support different projects… and projects involve a lot of people from different departments who have different voices. Sometimes I am also not familiar enough with their process because these processes are subject to the local country's regulations…I guess, I often find it difficult to coordinate with others, such as when there was a need to arrange work overtime for developing a new model, you need people in managerial position help to plan things such as work shifts and redeploy people from different department. I expect strong support from him (regional project manager) on these things". (Interviewee 15, 26 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Birmingham (UK))

5.4.3 Results: expatriates' beliefs about the obligations owed to exchange partners

As mentioned in Study One (Chapter 4-section 4.1), this thesis seeks to assess the perceived employers' obligations, whilst to explore employees' perceptions on what they should provide in return in the exchange relationships. Overall, the results for this line of questioning showed that while expatriates' perceptions regarding their obligations of respective organizational agents were deemed to be specific, their perceptions about what the obligations owed to exchange partners were relatively broad. Further, the majority of expatriates found it difficult to differentiate the perceived employee obligations towards the respective organizational agents with the exception of host-unit line managers. Several examples of the expatriates' comments were as follows:

"I think my obligations are pretty much the same for them (host-unit project manager and regional department managers) … like taking more responsibilities and having a self-development here. I mean, if I was thinking from their perspectives, a good employee should be the one who will do their best on the work. This will be related to your performance on the job and more... such as actively seeking opportunities for you careers. Such that you are not just an employee, but an active member in the organization". (Interviewee 28, 26 years old, model design department, expatriated to Turin (Italy))

"For my project managers, my obligations should be to complete the allocated tasks on time and with high good quality, being able to adapt to the requirements of different kind of projects. Then in relation to the technical abilities, I think what they expect of me should be to master more skills…this is also the case for my regional department managers". (Interviewee 15, 26 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Birmingham (UK)

Given the responses obtained, the results for employees' perceived obligations will be presented first for the host-unit line managers; and then for the host-unit project managers and regional department managers as a group (Table 5-11 and Table 5-12)

Table 5-11: Expatriates' perceptions on the obligations of host-unit line managers

Theme	Theme description	No. (%) of expatriates citing the theme	Example quotes

Performance support	Employees' perceptions on what they are obligated to provide in return to employers in terms of meeting new and demanding goals.	9 (100%)	*"I guess it (my obligations) should be making enough effort on my own work. Then it should be related to helping my team members If possible. "*

Host-unit line managers: performance support dimension

With regard to host-unit line managers, the beliefs cited here largely focused on the performance dimension of the balanced contract. Individuals highlighted the importance of effective and high-quality performance in order to fulfil the designated key performance indicators. Several examples of expatriates' comments are illustrated as follows:

"I think it (my obligations) must be that I could put in more effort to finish the job he gave me; Second, achieving the objective according to my key performance indicators on time and in consistent with the standard quality. Then what he expects from me more… may be that I could do more than what I am asked for; keep improving and make perfection". (Interviewee 13, 26 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Birmingham (UK))

"I have an obligation to deliver what my line managers expect in terms of daily work, such as making sure my work is finished according the intended goals. Also, I believe that I have a role to play in contributing to my teams' objectives such as ensuring the production run effectively and of course ensuring a safe production". (Interviewee 25, 27 years old, production line, expatriated to Nottingham (UK)))

Host-unit project manager and regional department managers

Regarding the host-unit project managers and regional department managers, the beliefs cited related to development dimension of the balanced contract. As shown in Table 5-12, expatriates believed they should offer progression in their expertise and take initiatives to learn.

Table 5-12: Expatriates' perceptions regarding what they are obligated to provide in return to host-unit project manager and regional department managers

Theme	Theme description	% of expatriates citing the theme.	Example quotes
Development	Employees' perceptions on what they are obligated to provide in return to employers in terms of developing professional skills.	90%	*"My obligations should be to keep improving myself and to take opportunities to perform challenging tasks"*

For example, one expatriate commented:

"I think it (my obligations) should be proficient in all expertise-related process and this also included my technical abilities. Of course, this is the basis of doing a good job, then I would think that working here has given me a lot of things to learn such as its (subsidiary) management model and operational process. These are worth learning and will enrich my understanding on both areas of my profession and business management. That is to say, wherever you go, you will be very confident; because this knowledge is very helpful for their future work". (Interviewee 24, 27 years old, Thermos management development, expatriated to Nottingham (UK))

5.4.4 The workplace experiences that shape the expatriates' perceptions of employment relationships.

Lack of effective communications with other subsidiary units

For those expatriates who described negative workplace experiences, many cited a lack of support from regional department as a key reason for this. This experience often occurred in the context of expatriates travelling through the countries cooperating with other sister companies respectively in order to support different projects. Specifically, many expatriates commented on the inconsistence of working progress when working with the teams from other subsidiaries, which were believed to cause difficulties in preforming their own work, as one expatriate stated:

"When you were collaborating with other teams from different subsidiary, I believe that we must work towards the same goal. But this should be based on mutual communications, and my experience tells me that the lack of this was often the cause for problems and issues of delay in delivering the projects… my personal experiences is that you have to make every effort to facilitate the communication, this is the true for me, it takes a lot of more energy to do this than my own work. Also, from this I also learned that, many people have contributed to this project more than you know from my personal view and the importance I placed on the whole project is much higher than before. This reminds me that…we should also take this issue (lack of communication) quite seriously. Because the reality is that, people have different style of doing things, and in the case of you travelling to another region, this issue can be complicated by cultural differences, I think it will take more than an organizational practice to solve it (templates directing collaborative work among different subsidiary unit)". (Interviewee 20, 25 years old, transmission technology development, expatriated to Birmingham (UK)

Several expatriates also attributed the issue of inconsistent work progress to the information asymmetry prior to the commencement of collaboration, with one expatriate commenting:

"In relation to this issue, I suppose we are the supports for each other, but there will be difficult time for working on the project, I think this was mainly due to the different style of work processes between each company (subsidiary unit)…and also prior to our work, we will exchange information about work settings, team equipment so on, although the communication through the internet is fast and convenient, let's say if they had a requirement for us, they normally will let us know by sending an email, but they will want a quick response from us, I mean…think from our perspective, we normally want a full investigation on the issues of concern, how to make a proper preparation. So, we have our own idea, it then becomes understandable that they consider us slow. So, we want some understanding from them that we are not being uncooperative, it is just different work styles and both of us should make effort to communicate these things" (Interviewee 17, 25 years old, transmission technology development, expatriated to Birmingham (UK))

One expatriate also noted that there was a lack of trust with team members from other subsidiary units; although this was viewed as a rare case, it will be presented as follows due to the expatriate's strong negative reactions to this experience.

"There was an event that I need to be present on a meeting with the department from other subsidiary, it is mainly about the division of project's work responsibility. Let's just say that… there is disagreement about the project, because I was sent here by my department, I am negotiating on behalf of the subsidiary in the Nottingham (UK) with them, Birmingham (UK) centre, but my department has opinions of their own, the Birmingham centre also has a different opinion of their own. The views of the two sides produced a particularly wide divergence. There was no agreement after two rounds of discussion. And then the Birmingham (UK) centre held an inside meeting to discuss about this matter. I didn't know that until later that they were actually making another schedule with the regional department first, they were actually using the regional department to give me some pressure to force me to make compromises…so they have an internal discussion on Thursday, then a meeting with the regional department on Friday. On that meeting they

came to an agreement with the regional department first, then you know, I give them what they want. I found that they are completely avoiding me, don't want me to participate in, but we were sister companies after all, we are just next to each other (geographically), but they don't allow me to participate in, I can't believe that they don't want to hear me or my department's opinions. To be honest, I was very upset at that time" (Interviewee 23, 27 years old, thermos management development, expatriated to Nottingham (UK))

5.4.5 Discussion of findings: expatriates at the subsequent assignment stage

1.How do the other parties with which an expatriate creates psychological contracts (contract-makers) change over the stages following pre-departure?

After several years of tenure at post-entry stage (an average of 2.3 years), the expatriates' work experience is found to be enriched by presence of new organizational agents and complexity of work environment. For example, a large proportion of expatriates in this sample work collectively with professionals from other areas of expertise including technology development, tools and machines, typically for expatriates working in departments related to research and development (e.g. powertrain and transmission technology); there were also cases of expatriates regularly changing working areas in a subsidiary company across a variety of departments to suit different needs while there were those traveling across the countries in the same region cooperating with other sister companies respectively in order to support different projects. This resulted in different workplace experiences including varying relationships with managers or departments situated at different organizational hierarchies. Specifically, the expatriates at this stage identified three key personnel with the capacity to influence their psychological contract: project managers, line managers and regional department managers. The host-unit project managers were the most frequently cited exchange partners and were described to take the overall responsibility for successfully delivering the project. While their role indicated control and decision-making power covering main areas of project such as planning, monitoring and management standards, the expatriates particularly appreciated the importance of this role regarding their authority in performance evaluation; this was evident by expatriates' comments that the project managers allocated key performance indicators and undertook performance evaluation on that basis.

Given that the host-unit project managers functioned to enact organizational policy with regards to expatriates' performance appraisal and the daily involvement in overall project management, it arguably fell to project managers to act as the proximal contract makers in response to expatriates' psychological contract. Falling into the same contract maker category, the decision-making capacity of host-unit line managers were described to be largely limited to operational routines. However, they continued to be cited as important exchange partners, typically due to their frequent involvement in expatriates' work such as, making work arrangement (e.g. arrange staff time, priorities work area and schedule regular meetings with expatriates), giving feedback and setting goals. The expatriates at this stage further referred to the managers of regional departments as sources of significant professional and administrative support. They were often described to take the responsibility of coordinating the activities of different subsidiary units in the same region. At organizational level, this included establishing specific organizational systems for knowledge sharing between different subsidiaries unit and creating guidance templates which outlined how team members across different subsidiary units might undertake cross-unit projects. At individual level, the expatriates highlighted their respective role in negotiating with different regional parties in projects on behalf of the expatriates and promoting expatriates' requests through to headquarter, often on matters of administrative nature (e.g. financial approval process). Since the managers of regional departments are charged with the decision-making capacity that tends to fundamentally influence the ways expatriates conduct their work with members of different subsidiaries unit, and by extension, the employment relationship held with those parties, it fell to the managers of regional department to define for expatriates the broad parameters of the exchanges. Thus, the regional department managers served as distal contract makers in response to expatriates' psychological contracts.

The data comparison with the results of initial entry stage (section 5.3) highlighted three points concerning the change of contract makers. First, there was evidence for the succession of organizational agents: host-unit line managers as proximal contract makers. In this thesis, succession referred to as the simultaneous role played by that agent over time, so that new agents were added to the individual's psychological contracts without the previous agents losing its importance. For example, at the initial entry stage, most of the expatriates commented on the crucial role of host-unit line manager as the main source of professional support in executing work and initial node for the expatriates to expand the network in host operation (section 5.3.1). Over an extended period of time (an average of 2.3 years in this sample), this role, with their frequent presence in expatriates' daily work, remained influential despite that their decision-making capacity was confined to operational routine. When applying the idea of perceived degree of dependence to explain the succession of host-unit line managers as contract makers, this means that the degree of expatriates' dependence on this role remained stable over time.

However, the form of dependence the expatriates placed upon the host-unit line manager were found to change over time and the expatriate adjustment literature can be used to inform this part of discussion. For example, during the first three to four months upon entry (initial entry stage), the results (section 5.3.1) showed that expatriates typically depended on the line managers for professional and a degree of social-emotional support in order to facilitate work adjustment: a process of expatriates altering their own attitudes and behaviours to "match better the role expectation" (Black, 1988: 278). Alternatively, this scenario can be understood from the perspective of stress model that the social support from the host-unit line manager contributes to the expatriates' ability to cope with stressors arising in the event of assignment (e.g. role ambiguity and national culture novelty). In either case, this form of dependence is consistent to the observation made in expatriate adjustment literature (Bhaskar-Shrinivas, *et al.,* 2005). After an extended period of time working at the subsidiary units, this dependence is found to stem from operational routine rather than a source of professional support. This may mean that expatriates at this stage has understood and can perform necessary behaviours to function effectively without uncertainties associated with the event of assignment (e.g. role ambiguity), which further, accorded with adjustment literature that expatriates could have completed the adjustment stage (Black, 1988).

Second, there is a replacement of experienced colleagues (parental-country-nationals) by host-unit project managers as proximal contract makers at the subsequent stage. As discussed earlier in section 5.3.1, the existing literature has not yet theorised colleagues as another party to an individual's psychological contract, as the contract is deemed to capture the reciprocal terms between an employee and the organization (Lewis and Taylor, 2001; Tekleab and Taylor, 2003). However, the results for expatriates at the previous stage (initial entry) suggested otherwise and identified experienced colleagues as proximal contract makers; the described resource exchanges between the expatriates and their colleagues pointed towards the existence of psychological contract between the two parties. More specifically, these exchanges included experienced colleagues offering social support and opportunities for socialization and expatriates' contribution of independently meeting their own responsibilities and achieving a rapid growth to the experienced colleagues. The antecedents for this psychological contract was argued to be social-emotional dependence on experienced colleagues in order to facilitate the adjustment process. Given that there was evidence of expatriates having completed the adjustment stage (as those discussed above), it was plausible that the absence of such dependence contributes to the absence of senior colleagues on the position of proximal contract makers. Further this line of reasoning, the expatriates then experience new work environment and adapt their attitudes over the subsequent stage reality through processes such as sense-making and information-seeking, such that organizational agents who are perceived by expatriates at this stage to capture the view of organization emerge and replace the colleagues. Since there are no empirical research exploring the topic of employee-to-employee psychological contract in the domestic/international context (to the author's knowledge), the results of this thesis so far suggest that the colleagues acting as contract maker is confined to a period of time, particularly, during the organizational entry/initial entry stage.

Third, while it was also reasonable to expect that there was a degree of dependence on the project managers for expatriates to undertake their work, given the decision-making power of this role covered major areas of project progress (e.g. planning and monitoring), the results provided support to an alternative antecedent for psychological contract: perceived degree of accountability, and this was evident by expatriates' comments that the project managers allocated key performance indicators and undertook performance evaluation on that basis, such that the expatriates had an obligation to justify their performance to the project managers. The perceived degree of accountability referred to as an individual was accountable to the degree that he/she must justify his/her opinions, beliefs, and actions to others (Tetlock, 1992). Under such conditions, the more that an individual was held accountable to another party, the more that the focal individual tended to manage that accountability through actively seeking and paying attention on that accountability (Tetlock, 1992). Similar to the effects of perceived of degree of dependence, there were increased opportunities for promise-exchanging, binding each party to a psychological contract. The exchange relationship between this two parties included project managers offering: "professional support, assistance in collaborating with other departments, help in pushing forward expatriates' request internally" and expatriates' contribution of "progression in their expertise, actively taking responsibilities and take initiatives to learn in return". Then, there was the emergence of new contract maker: regional department managers as distal contract makers. The emergence of regional head as a contract maker was in line with the prediction of perceived degree of dependence since expatriates are reported to rely on this party in the process of coordinating with other regional parties.

2. How do the expatriates' psychological contract change across perceived employee and employer obligations over the stages following pre-departure and what is the role of the presence of multiple parties in this change?

Perceived employer's obligations on performance support dimension and loyalty dimension remained as the core contract beliefs for expatriates at the subsequent stage. Three proximal employer obligation contract dimensions, performance support, loyalty and financial changed differently over the subsequent stages. For example, the employer obligation on performance support dimension (balanced contract beliefs) exhibited an upward change trajectory while the converse was the case for loyalty dimension (relational contract beliefs); there was also an emergence of transactional contract obligations. These changes will be discussed respectively in detail in the following.

First, while expatriates' contract beliefs on performance support dimension previously resided primarily within the obligations of host-unit line managers (section-5.3.2), there appeared to be a division of this dimension between two proximal contract makers (host-unit line managers and project managers) when expatriates moved to the subsequent assignment stage. As discussed earlier in (section 5.3.5), there was a plausible transformation of contract dimension (loyalty dimension) over time via different contract makers (e.g. from subsidiary unit as a whole to host-unit line managers and colleagues) and this was argued to be an operationalization of dynamic nature of psychological contract, the results here can provide further evidence to support this proposition. Given the determinant role of psychological contract antecedents on its content, it will be used here as mechanism for explaining the division of performance support dimension via different contract makers. On the basis of results from initial entry to subsequent stage of assignment (section 5.3.1 and section 5.4.1), the form of expatriates' dependence on the host-unit line managers experienced a change from support-based towards operational routine-based, although the degree of dependence on this role was found to remain stable over time. In line with the prediction of dependent relationships that individuals were cognitively motivated to search for information concerning that dependency (Fiske and Taylor, 1991; Darley *et al.,* 1988), it was reasonable to expect that expatriates will search for information and then developed contract beliefs of their contract makers' obligations that was focused mainly on operational matters, in addition to those concerning professional support.

The results on expatriates' psychological contract with host-unit line managers at this stage justify this by showing a contract with predominate loyalty dimension (e.g. open to suggestions and value the expatriates' work input) and low in performance support dimension. In this line of reasoning, expatriates were also motivated to manager their performance accountability towards the project managers through seeking out and paying close attention to the information concerning that accountability (Tetlock, 1983). The resulting psychological contract held with project managers provide further support by illustrating performance support dimension obligations (e.g. coordination with internal and external parties). Therefore, it is likely that the contract antecedents, perceived degree of dependence and accountability, work collectively over time and this resulted in the division of performance support dimension across proximal contract makers.

Second, alongside the upward change trajectory of performance support dimension, the presence of multiple contract makers further complicated the pattern of changes at the item-level of contract content. These changes include transfer, replacement and complexification of specific contract items, which are observed to occur individually or collectively. For example, the contract item regarding giving instructions on technical aspects of tasks, which was previously perceived to be the obligation of host-unit line managers, is currently under the obligation of project managers. Although this contract belief is situated in the context of expatriates having disagreements with each other concerning the feasibility of problem-solving approaches, it highlighted the contract beliefs of receiving work instructions and thus is same in nature. Moreover, there was emergence of new obligations as the expatriates familiarized themselves with their work and this resulted in the replacement the previous contract beliefs. The typical example of this change pattern was found in the contract belief about asking questions when there were uncertainties on performing the job. The results showed that after extended period of time work experience, the expatriates considered themselves able to perform their tasks without close supervision, as the technical and managerial capabilities accumulated in subsidiary unit allowed them to perform without less support. As such, there emerged a belief of being granted a degree of autonomy in order to effectively utilize their skills. Further, there are cases of contract beliefs transferring to another contract maker whilst developing itself with more complex constitutes. For example, a previously held contract belief with line manager regarding being generally supportive when conferring with other departments, has been transferred to project managers. Simultaneously, this were developed into a detailed expectation of receive support when respectively coordinating with internal departments and dealing with request of external party.

Third, in line with the Lawler's proximity rule, the employer obligations on loyalty dimension resided primarily with expatriates' proximal party; in the case of expatriates at the subsequent assignment stage, this referred to as the host-unit line managers particularly. This result means stronger affective ties associated with proximal group than relatively distal group. Moreover, the proximal contract makers' obligations on loyalty dimension exhibited a downward change trajectory and this is linked to experiences that expatriates' contract beliefs for employers' obligations are unmet. For example, expatriates described experiences on a lack of communication with subsidiary units when planning and performing their jobs. While recognizing that it could be difficult for, particularly, larger organizations to maintain efficient communications, this type of negative experience led to expatriates' feelings of lack of trust and commitment. Beliefs of this type particularly relate to relational contract (loyalty dimension). When encountering these negative experiences, the employer obligations in the same dimension displayed a decreased trend.

In looking more specifically at item-level of loyalty dimension, two change patterns are observed. First, the transfer of social-emotional support from experienced colleague to host-unit line managers. At the previous stage (5.3.2), this contract belief concerned with receiving social-emotional support to cope with feelings of anxiety as results of entering the novel environment and expatriates perceived their experienced colleagues to be the main party for fulfilling this obligation. When expatriates moved on to the subsequent assignment stage, this contract beliefs were found in the perceived employer obligations for host-line managers. In particular, these contract beliefs related to being valued and respected. Additionally, similar to the pattern identified in performance dimension, there were patterns of replacement and complexification of specific contract items occurring simultaneously. For example, there was a contract belief of being understanding from their line managers at the early stage of initial entry. Such beliefs were found to be replaced with an expectation of being valued and respected, with much details expatriates attached to. These included expectations of valuing their input in work-related issues and being understanding if their work progress was not as effective as expected.

Finally, there was an emergence of transactional contract dimensions associated with project managers during this stage. As discussed in division of performance support division, it was argued that the antecedents of psychological contract determined the contract content through information-seeking concerning the dependence or accountability. In the case of project managers, an individual who perceived that he/she is accountable to others for desirable outcomes is cognitively motivated because making a mistake related to that accountability is likely to have both a social and an economic cost (Tetlock, 1992). Thus, it is likely that an individual in an accountable relationship will seek to specify the conditions of exchange to avoid making a mistake related to that accountability. By extension, it also seems likely that the psychological contracts of dependent individuals will have terms that are transactional in nature (Conway and Briner, 2005; Hui *et al.,* 2004; Rousseau, 2000). In terms of perceived employee obligations, the majority of contract dimensions exhibited a no-change' trend. This means that the expatriates' beliefs regarding the obligations owed to exchange partners remained stable in this stage.

Summary

In the subsequent assignment stage, the expatriates' work experience was enriched by working collectively with professionals within and across subsidiary units. In terms of contract makers, the position of experienced colleague as proximal contract makers was observed to be replaced by host-units project managers. The plausible reasons for this change could be that there was an absence of social-emotional dependence on experienced colleagues, and at the same time an occurrence of performance-evaluation accountability towards project managers. Regarding the content of expatriates' psychological contract at this stage, the perceived employer's obligations on performance support dimension (balanced contract beliefs) exhibited an upward change trajectory. The converse trend was identified for loyalty dimension (relational contract beliefs), which was attributed to individuals' perceptions of contract breach events. The presence of multiple contract makers also complicated the contract change at the item level. Three patterns were observed namely: transfer, replacement and complexification of specific contract items, which are observed to occur individually or collectively.

5.5 Results and discussion: expatriates at the repatriation stage

Upon re-entry, the majority of interviewed repatriates were promoted either via an advanced position in the same department or a transfer to another department, typically with an increase in grades. Eighty percent of the interviewees in the sample indicated that they had been assigned to a job where there were opportunities for the utilization of the knowledge and skills accumulated during the international assignment, with one repatriate commenting that:

"There is something special about my situation; the headquarter actually offered me my current job like… 4 months before my return. While I used to work between engineering and powertrain, I do find that during the assignment, there was something to improve on areas related to simulation. This is the "automobile co" needs to pay attention to and what my work's focuses". (Interviewee 31, 28 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Birmingham (UK) for 2 years)

Only one repatriates implicitly suggested that there were some ambiguities on his re-entry position. However, this repatriate indicated that considering that he has been repatriated in headquarter for only 2 months, it was reasonably acceptable to be working on the pre-assignment position.

"After I came back, I still have the same job in the same department. But, considering that I have been back here for only 2 months, there still need some time to adjust…and it is still too early to make judgement". (Interviewee 33, 27 years old, model design department, expatriated to Turin (Italy) for 2 years)

5.5.1 Results: exchange partners of expatriates at the repatriation stage

Overall, the responses showed that repatriates primarily referred to senior management as a source of significant influence. (see table 5-13 for the type of organizational agents identified and the reasons for identification). With reference to the repatriate's comments, the group of repatriates that gained promotion upon return deemed that the senior management preserved significant influences on setting strategic objectives on which repatriates' work planning was built. For example, repatriates commented that this set the course for the overall coordination of interdependent activities. These intended goals can be further delegated to functional departments, so that their own objectives can be measured whether in quantitative or qualitative terms in order to offer a standard for the subsequent achievement. Several examples of the expatriates' comments were illustrated as follows:

"Once an objective was made, we get to plan how many people we need, what projects to undertake and what goals to achieve in the future. We were doing research and development, the senior management said at that time, in the future, "Automobile Co" will not ask for foreign research teams to undertake vehicle and powertrain development and assemble, this becomes a very revolutionary change for Automobile Co. In the past (the initial stage of product development), we signed contracts with foreign developers; each development of a model or a machine depended on foreign design companies and costed millions of euros or more; but now "Automobile Co" has definitely achieved the objective of independent development". (Interviewee 35, 32 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Birmingham (UK) for 3 years)

"What we are doing now depends on the delegated targets to a large extent… in a simple example, our senior management, based on their strategy and consideration, intended to develop a new model type for the domestic market, this will be likely to generate a series of associated activities from different departments. We mostly will want to initiate model design, there could also be the marketing department, as far as I know, will start investigating domestic market including the X Co (a competitor) recent activities. For our team, we will now have a goal so that our team members can work around that goal. It can also be said that everyone will have a clue what his responsibilities are". (Interviewee 32, 29 years old, model design department, expatriated to Birmingham (UK) for 2 years)

In the case of the repatriate who just returned, it was noted that there were concerns over the areas of professional development and performance recognition during the international assignment, with comments suggesting a high dependence on his department managers to provide support on his career path.

"In fact, before the return, I have been advised with a career planning, so at that time. I had a basic idea of what choice do I in terms of my career. When I came back, I have also talked with my department managers about where my experience can lead me to, and he told me that I should not worry about a promotion, but still, when it has not happened, you will keep worrying". (Interviewee 33, 27 years old, model design department, expatriated to Turin (Italy) for 2 years)

Table 5-13: Perceived exchange partners at the repatriation stage

Type of organizational agents	No. (%) of interviewees citing the organizational agents	Examples quotes for reasons of identifying them as exchange partners
Headquarter-senior management	4 (80%)	*"what you do certainly need to meet the corporation objectives and that is determined by the higher-level management, so you must follow what they say if you want to do a good job"*
Headquarter-department managers	1 (20%)	*"In fact, before the return, I have been advised with a career planning, so at that time. I had a basic idea of what choice do I in terms of my career. When I came back, I have also talked with my department managers about where my experience can lead me to, and he told me that I should not worry about a promotion, but still, when it has not happened, you will keep worrying"*

5.5.2 Results: expatriates' perceptions on the obligations of exchange partners

The expectations for headquarter senior management related mainly to performance support dimension of the balanced contract (Table 5-14).

Table 5-14: Expatriates' perceptions on the obligations of headquarter senior management

Theme	Theme description	No. (%) of expatriates citing the theme	Example quotes
Performance support	Employees' perceptions on the obligations of employers in terms of providing work performance-related support.	4 (100%)	*"I would consider clear timetable around each stage of project development and source support import here"*

Performance support dimension

The key obligation was the importance of material and human resource support. The repatriates in this sample commented that the senior management should be increasingly forthcoming with material and human resource in support of their current or impending working projects, with one repatriate commenting that:

"We are now working in a project as part of new prototype, the current situation is fine, our team is working very hard, but we have to plan for the coming project analysis, this is the time when we could use extra hand and more materials". (Interviewee 35, 32 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Birmingham (UK) for 3 years)

Relatedly, repatriates strongly felt the importance of receiving adequate communication from their superiors and top management. The most critical component of desired communication concerned with adequate directions on current project progress. As one repatriate put it:

"Generally speaking, if they (top management) make an arrangement for the work here, they will put forward some specific requirements, or some things they need do highlight to point out the right direction, so that we can do these things well. In this regard, I hope that

the senior management will be able to giving some specific background if possible when allocating tasks. I also hope that some goals can be more specific and quantified. In this way, we can better meet the work requirements and be able to achieve these intended goals". (Interviewee 34, 32 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Birmingham (UK) for 3 years)

Another repatriate's response echoed this comment and stated:

"It seems like the company have other thoughts… we have submitted all our paperwork and requirements in applying for the approval, we would like to know it if there were further directions". (Interviewee 31, 28 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Birmingham (UK) for 2 years)

These comments reflected expatriates' feelings of uncertainties on the support provide for their work after repatriation. In the case of department managers, the repatriate expressed his concerns over career prospect. It is not surprising for repatriates to have high expectations in terms of career-related benefits upon their return, particularly for individuals who viewed the opportunity of the international assignment as a path to further career development before taking on the assignment (Table 5-15)

Table 5-15: Expatriates' perceptions on the obligations of department managers

Theme	**Theme description**	**No. (%) of expatriates citing the theme**	**Example quotes**
Development	Employees' perceptions on the obligations of employers in terms of promoting continuous learning and development opportunities.	1 (100%)	*"I think… more about my career, before the assignment, I thought the international experience would mean a work of different nature when I came back, so as I said, I expect that the company would make proper arrangement"*

5.5.3 Repatriates' beliefs about the obligations owed to

exchange partners

Overall, the results showed that the repatriates' perceived employee obligations towards the respective organizational agents (e.g. senior management and department manager) can be categorized into the same dimension of contract content: performance support dimension of the balanced contract. This suggested that the repatriates did not differentiate their obligations towards the identified agents. Therefore, this part of results will be presented treating the senior management and department manager as a group (Table 5-16)

Table 5-16: Expatriates' perceptions regarding what they are obligated to provide in return to headquarter-senior management and department manager

Theme	Theme description	% of expatriates citing the theme	Example quote
Performance support	Employees' perceptions on what they are obligated to provide in return to employers in terms of meeting new and demanding goals.	100%	*"I think there should be no doubt here, performing you job according the required standards"*

The repatriates' obligations were largely concerned with high-quality performance. It was also evident that the repatriates felt that taking more obligations was part of their role. As one repatriate commented:

"It (my obligations) should be do your own work well … having the ability to think actively and to solve problems on your own. But it should be noted that what they expect of you is not always explicitly stated, a precise quantification of your work is sometimes impossible, so there should be you playing a proactive role in your work; and it is also understandable that if you have to take more responsibilities, I assume it is part of your role". (Interviewee 35, 32 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Birmingham (UK) for 3 years)

5.5.4 Workplace experiences that shape the expatriates' perceptions of employment relationships.

This result section highlighted the key events and experiences that occurred during the repatriation stage, which were viewed by repatriates as influential on their perceptions of employment relationships.

Supportive organizational practices

As mentioned early (section 5.5.1), upon their return, the majority of repatriates were offered with a promotion either via an advanced position in the same department or a transfer to another department. This was viewed as an important event when the repatriates recalled their repatriation experience. Specifically, the repatriates linked this positive experience to the fulfilment of the organizational obligations in terms of career prospect, with some commenting on the feeling of being valued by their organization. Several examples of the repatriates' comments were presented as follows:

"I suppose that getting promoted is very good experience. I was actually very surprised when I was first informed by the HR department, because I heard from my colleagues that when you returned, it will normally take like…a long time before you get promoted… I consider myself very lucky. But I do appreciate this opportunity and I considered it as a recognition for my service in the subsidiary unit". (Interviewee 31, 28 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Birmingham (UK) for 2 years)"

"I was offered with an advanced position in my department…. 6 months after my return. So, this position related more closely to my educational background than my previous one, and importantly, it is very relevant to my experiences in the assignment… I believed this is the position that I can apply the knowledge and skills accrued during the assignment. I guess this is one advantage of having an international experience, you actually are more competitive now even if you haven't realized that. You don't actually have to fight for it (the current position), so it feels like that my organization recognized my performance during the assignment and they believed I could achieve more in the current position. If there was anything to say, I do believe that I have now been given my responsibilities and correspondingly, there is more autonomy here". (Interviewee 34, 32 years old, powertrain research and development, expatriated to Birmingham (UK) for 3 years).

Moreover, several repatriates indicated that they had a positive view of repatriation process, with the organization providing adequate support during the whole process. As one repatriates commented:

"We have a post-assignment career planning months before my return, so before coming back to the headquarter, I have a general idea of what my strength and weakness are. Also,

all the things had been properly prepared before I actually moved; this related to more general administrative things, so I knew exactly what will happen during this process (repatriation process). I think it is a good idea to arrange these things early before the return, so that even if there were emergencies and unexpected things, we will have enough time to communicate and solve it out. But as I recall, there were not so much challenges during that time, it was… smooth, like a normal day". (Interviewee 32, 29 years old, model design department, expatriated to Birmingham (UK) for 2 years)

After their return, the repatriates showed an intension to compare their general working experience during the assignment to that of their current employment. The results seemed to show a congruence between the repatriates' preference and organizational structure, with some commenting that they preferred the work environment here at the headquarter. As one expatriate state,

"I was assigned to the research development centre in Birmingham (UK) for 2 years, their working environment was quite different form our company (headquarters), I suppose you can say their way of doing work is more flexible. But I just feel more comfortable working here… the way of doing things are more clearly defined whether this is related to the timing or the content of work". (Interviewee 32, 29 years old, model design department, expatriated to Birmingham (UK) for 2 years)

The similar experience was also observed in another repatriate who seemed to be more satisfied with high organizational contract. He said,

"Before I came back, you can actually say that…I was hoping to be unused to work here (the headquarter), I have been working in the company in Italy for 2 years and there are big differences between the company here (the headquarter) and the company in Italy. I guess I just feel more comfortable working under the leadership of the senior management… it gives me a feeling of being important and sometimes being powerful". (Interviewee 33, 27 years old, model design department, expatriated to Turin (Italy) for 2 years)

5.5.5 Discussion of findings: expatriates at the repatriation stage

1.How do the other parties with which an expatriate creates psychological contracts (contract-makers) change over the stages following pre-departure?

After extended periods of time in another country, the participants in this stage have returned to the home country (China) and therefore will be referred to as repatriates thereafter. All of the repatriates in this sample described that their return was facilitated either after the completion of international assignment (e.g. establish and adapt the production plant) or the fulfilment of their responsibility as required by the assignment (e.g. developing electronic control system of transmission); typically, all the participants have been repatriated within the previous 12 months. In this stage, the repatriates identified two key personnel in headquarter with the capacity to influence their psychological contracts: senior management and department managers. For example, the senior management was the most frequently cited exchange partner due to their authority on setting the overall objectives for repatriates' work. Comparing to other previously identified organizational representatives (e.g. headquarter line managers), the repatriates often did not describe in much detail concerning the role of senior management in their working experience; indeed, repatriates' comments suggested an absence of senior management from repatriates' work on a day-to-day basis. However, at the repatriation stage, the existence of senior management was considered by the repatriates as both a direction for planning and coordinating their future work as well as a standard for its subsequent achievement.

Since the fundamental decisions regarding the employment relationship was made by the upper level of organizational hierarchy, it falls to the senior management to define for the repatriates the broad parameters of the exchanges, suggesting that senior management served as distal contract makers in response to repatriates' psychological contracts. The exchange relationship between the repatriates and senior management included senior management offering material and human resource support and repatriates' contribution of stable performance and being flexible to the senior management in return. The department managers were identified as key distal contract makers in designing and monitoring the organizational practice/policy (e.g. quality standards and personnel appointment). At the repatriation stage, the exchange pattern between repatriates and department managers included the offer of career advancement opportunities by department managers and repatriates' contribution of actively seeking development opportunities, absorbing information and willingness to learn.

The data comparison with the results of previous stage (subsequent stage) highlights a fundamental change on repatriates' contract makers. The proximal contract makers identified during the previous stage (host-unit line managers and project managers) and distal contract makers (regional department managers) were not found to continue their position. This suggested that their employment relationships with the repatriates were confined to the time period of the international assignment. From the social exchange perspective, the termination of this employment relationship can be understood as the cease of interdependent exchanges. To clarify, relationships can be understood as "the interpersonal attachments that resulted from a series of interdependent exchanges" (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005: 886), the exchanges between repatriates and host-unit line managers (e.g. feeling of being valued), host-unit project managers (e.g. work instructions) and regional department managers (e.g. support on coordination) ceased to exist at the formal end of international assignment; such that the interpersonal attachment towards each party (hence the relationships) were terminated. Moreover, it is useful to further this discussion through the respective role of organizational agents involved in the repatriation process (headquarter-HR department, headquarter-line managers and headquarter-senior management). Given the inherent limitation in the sample size of repatriates group, the information distracted from interview transcripts concerning matters of repatriation policy was quite general. However, the review of internal organizational documents offers an additional view on how repatriation proceeded. This will be used in conjunction with repatriates' comments to resume a picture of employees' experience on repatriation.

Broadly, the repatriation stage commenced in at around four to six months prior to departure to home country (China); during this process, line managers and HR department of headquarter will work collectively taking responsibilities for departure preparation such as informing expatriates about moving process, collaborating with "automobile Co" logistics, undertaking post-assignment career planning, preparing entry clearance documentation as well as general administrative issues (e.g. insurance). After re-entry, the repatriates will report to headquarter international assignment management committee going through further administrative procedures. While there was the presence of multiple organizational representatives (e.g. HR and immediate managers) who appeared to have the decision-making capacity to influence repatriates' psychological contract, the results that repatriates identified the senior management and department managers of headquarter as the contract makers yield two plausible explanations. First, it was likely that the repatriates were psychological contracting with the organization itself (the headquarter) which assumed anthropomorphized identity, and the senior/middle management were perceived by repatriates as the most proximal symbolic image relating to that identity. This explanation was supported by the repatriates often using the term of "my/the company" or "the headquarter" when describing their perceived employer obligations, despite that this line of enquiry specifically asked the interviewees to describe the contract beliefs referring to their recognized organizational agents (e.g. senior management). The concept of anthropomorphizing organization was briefly touched in Study One (Chapter 4-section 4.6) and the following paragraphs will now turn to unpack this notion to inform this part of discussion.

Anthropomorphizing can be defined as “the attribution of human motivation, characteristics, or behaviour to animals, natural phenomena or inanimate objects” (Conway and Briner, 2005: 130). This phenomenon was frequently observed in employee-organization relationship literature and particularly in the context of organizational learning, for example, organizations can learn (a human attribute) and thus was termed as learning organization (Sun 2003). While contemporary psychological contract research rarely discusses the concept of anthropomorphizing, the early contract research provided some supporting ideas. For example, in the book of *Men, Management and Mental Health,* Levinson et al (1962) elaborated on the nature of organization with reference to the concept of anthropomorphizing, suggesting that organization took a parental role so that employee sought for an interdependent relationship with the organization and the organization itself tended to reciprocate that effort. Their further work made it more explicitly by arguing that “people project upon organizations human qualities and then relate to them as if the organizations did in fact have human qualities” (Levinson, 1965: 377). In a similar vein, in a study of examining the extent to which there was a match between expectations and contributions of managers and that of their employing organizations, Kotter (1973: 96) mentioned the “sensitivity of organizations” which illustrated a human attribute of organization.

With reference to more recent work, Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler (2000) commented that having an obligation is a human attribute, organization “assumes an anthropomorphic identify for employees” in order to capture the mutual obligations with its employees (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler, 2000: 905). This was echoed by Robinson and Morrison (1995) noting that organizations have “legal, moral and financial responsibilities over the actions of agents” (Robinson and Morrison, 1995: 290). In the context of psychological contract literature, the idea of anthropomorphizing is currently operationalized in a way that employees can “view all the organization's possible agents, principals, and non-human contract makers as if the organization were a single, human, contract maker” (Conway and Briner, 2005: 128). With reference to the results obtained here, it is therefore likely that the repatriates view all actions of HR management and line managers (e.g. informing expatriates about moving process and collaborating with "automobile Co" logistics) as the action of organization itself, so that it has obligations for the repatriates (e.g. offering material and human resource support).

Second, it is plausible that repatriates effectively view line managers and HR department as agents of the senior management, such that the repatriates identify senior management as the principle contract maker who expressed its views via actions of the agents representing it. In this line of reasoning, the senior management was situated at the upper level of organizational hierarchy and charged with overall decision-making responsibility for employment practices such as resourcing (recruitment and selection), learning and development, (induction, skills-based training, career development), reward management (compensation and benefits) (Aggarwal and Bhargava, 2009). This level of decision-making power was also evident in repatriates' comments that they believed senior management played a crucial role in the overall coordination of interdependent organizational activities. Therefore, the repatriation practices could reasonably be viewed as being facilitated by line managers and HR department on behalf of the senior management. On the basis of this premise, this result pointed towards the existence of dual psychological contracts held by organizational agents (line managers and HR department). In particular, the organizational agent could be considered as the "employer" for the employees, but the dynamics of psychological contract inferred that the focal individual may also act as the "employee" for parties at the higher echelons of organizational hierarchy.

This due identification can also be understood from the perspective of optimal distinctiveness theory (Brewer, 1991). This theory suggested that individuals were motivated to balance two opposing needs namely: "the need for assimilation and inclusion, a desire for belonging that motivates immersion in social groups; and the need for differentiation from others" (Alcover *et al.,* 2017: 15). The two needs worked in opposition and independently to contribute to group identification, the resulting social identification with distinctive groups thus will satisfy both needs simultaneously (Alcover *et al.,* 2017). Applying this perspective to organizational agents (line managers and HR department) the employer side of role is likely to fulfil the need for differentiation from their employees while the opposing need (the need for assimilation) was likely to be met when organizational agents (e.g. line managers) worked as the employee side for higher ranking managers (e.g. department managers and senior managers). In this way, the organizational agents were able to fulfil both the need for differentiating from other members (subordinates) and the need to belong to a work group (managers in similar grade). This prediction is also consistent with the ''identity-matching principle'' (Ullrich, *et al.,* 2007). The IMP states that identification at any level of categorization is more predictive of attitudes and behavior related to that identification than to others, because these outcomes match the respective identity.

2. How do the expatriates' psychological contract change across perceived employee and employer obligations over the stages following pre-departure and what is the role of the presence of multiple parties in this change?

The employer obligations focused on performance support dimension of the balanced contract; comparing to the results in the subsequent assignment stage (section 5.4), the contract dimension showed an upward trend. As previously discussed in section 5.4.5, the positive work experience may result in an increase in the perceived employer obligations. There was also supporting evidence in this expatriate group. For example, repatriates described experiences of being promoted and this was viewed as the fulfilment of the organizational obligations in terms of career prospect. This then appeared to generate more employer responsibility in terms of performance support dimension of the balanced contract (e.g. material and human resource support.). In addition, as the termination of previous employment relationships in an international assignment and the beginning of completely new working relationships in the domestic companies, the contract beliefs cited by the repatriates at the item-level were largely of a different nature. For example, at the previous stage, the contract beliefs cited for distal contract makers (regional department managers) related mainly to providing support in coordinating among subsidiaries, however, the repatriates described mainly about material and human resource support at the repatriation stage. Conversely, the employee obligations remained similar as those previously identified, focusing on high-quality performance. Overall, the change of expatriates' psychological contract was relatively not radical comparing to other expatriate groups (e.g. the initial entry versus the subsequent assignment).

Chapter 6 Overall Discussion and Conclusion

Contract researchers agree that the content of an individual's psychological contract changes over time (Robinson *et al.,* 1994; De Vos *et al.,* 2003; 2005), however there is little exploration on how this process unfolds in the context of an international assignment (Chen, 2010; Lee *et al.,* 2014; Ruiter *et al.,* 2016; Aldossari and Robertson, 2016). The overall objective of this thesis was to investigate the dynamics of expatriates' psychological contracts over the tenure of international assignment cycle. In order to meet this objective whilst to address some of the methodological limitations within the field of the psychological contract (predominately quantitative research design), a qualitative case study approach, constituted by two studies (Study One and Study Two), was utilized. Both strands of studies drew on the notion of the multi-foci perspective of the psychological contract, that was, employees simultaneously held multiple psychological contracts with various organizational agents. Specifically, Study One sought to identify the content of Chinese expatriates' reciprocal contract beliefs around the time of pre-departure, and using this as a starting point, Study Two then assessed how these contract beliefs changed as the assignments proceeded in a Western context over the reminder of the international assignment cycle (the initial entry stage, the subsequent assignment stage and the repatriation stage). The remainder of this chapter summarises the findings evident in both studies and identifies the theoretical implications (sections 6.1-6.3). limitations of the studies and future research directions are discussed (section 6.4), followed by an outline of the practical implications of the findings (section 6.5). Finally, the contribution of thesis in fields of international human resource management (IHRM) and the psychological contract theory is highlighted (section 6.6).

6.1 Multiple exchange relationships and distinctions among foci

The distinctions among foci perceived by the expatriates were evident across both Study One and Study Two. The results from both strands of studies suggested the expatriates were able to recognize the differences among different organizational parties. This distinction was showed to be primarily made on the basis of the decision-making capacity of as well as the form of support provided by that organizational party. Using the typology proposed by Coyle-shapiro and Parzefall's (2008), expatriates' perceived contract makers were categorized and outlined for the whole cycle of the international assignment (Table 6-1)

Table 6-1: Type of contract makers across the tenure of an international assignment

Contract makers	Pre-departure stage (Chapter)	Initial entry stage	Subsequent stage	Repatriation stage
Proximal	Headquarter line manager	Host-unit line manager Host-unit colleague	Host-unit line manager Host-unit project manager	N/A
Distal	Headquarter-department manager Subsidiary unit	N/A	Regional department manager	Headquarter-senior management Headquarter-department manager

In looking more specifically at the results concerning the identification of contract makers across both studies, the basis upon which the expatriates distinguished the contract makers appeared to shift following the commencement of the international assignment. To clarify, while such distinction was predominately recognized on the basis of the decision-making capacity of contract makers within the domestic context (Study One), there was a tendency for the expatriates to place more importance on differentiating contract makers as sources of support over the tenure of the international assignment (Study Two). Looking at this through the whole cycle of the international assignment perhaps could offer a clear picture on how these changes occurred. From the pre-departure expatriates' perspective (Chapter 4-section 4.3.1), the capacity of headquarter-line manager covered work-specific issues (e.g. type of task and work load) while the department managers were typically perceived as influential decision-makers in terms of facilitating organizational policy/practices and personnel appointment. As such, the differentiation between the expatriates' line managers and department managers were mainly made based upon the function of authority. Upon the expatriates' initial entry (Chapter 5-section 5.3.1), there was evidence suggesting that the distinction between contract makers was understood according to the forms of support provided. This was particularly the case for the colleagues, as they had no decision-making power over the expatriates; such that the host-unit line managers played a mentor role (e.g. provide work instructions and network extension) while the colleagues lent a social-emotional support for the expatriates to cope with adjustment issues (e.g. feeling of anxiety and homesick). Over time, the source of support as a differential criterial gained prominence over decision-making capacity during the subsequent assignment stage (Chapter 5-section 5.4.1) when the expatriates' work spanned across a wide range of internal departments, and in some cases, across different subsidiary units. The host-unit project managers acted as official contributors to expatriates' performance evaluation, whereas the host-unit line managers and regional department managers respectively served as a salient support role in work arrangement (e.g. priorities work area) and the primary coordinators for the expatriates' activities at regional level. However, the decision-making capacity regained its importance as the differential criteria after repatriates' return to home country (Chapter 5-section 5.5.1), with the headquarter-senior management being the organizational-objective designer and headquarter-department managers influencing personnel arrangement.

Overall, the varied importance of the differential criteria placed by the expatriates is triggered as a variation of context (from Eastern headquarters to Western subsidiary units), which pointed towards the existence of influence of the cultural differences. In interpreting this line of result, the Hofstede's cultural module can be applied to provide further clarification. As an approach to examine national cultural variation, the Hofstede's framework was well acknowledged across a range of different domains including management, marketing, psychology and sociology studies (Steenkamp, 2001). Under this module, culture was understood as a multifaceted concept consisted of four different dimensions including, individualism/collectivism (the extent of preference for the individual in contrast to group), uncertainty avoidance (the willingness to accept and deal with ambiguity), power distance (the degree of acceptance towards the centralization of authority and variation in the hierarchical structure), masculinity–femininity (the extent of the dominance in terms of tough values e.g. achievement, tender values and personal relationships) (Hofstede *et al.,* 1990).

Having briefly described the concept of national culture, the proceeding discussion will highlight the differences of national cultural context where the headquarter and subsidiary units were embedded, in order to offer a plausible explanation on the varied importance the expatriates placed upon the differential criterial (e.g. decision-making capacity and source of support). However, it should be noted that it is not the intention of this discussion to offer detailed descriptions regarding the cultural context, but to highlight the critical influential cultural dimension (power-distance) that was evident in the results according to the Hofstede's framework. Specifically, the expatriates in the case organization of this thesis were sent from the headquarters located in China to various subsidiary units across the Europe and America. The Chinese national cultural was characterized by a high-power distance, meaning that there was a higher willingness of Chinese to acknowledge and accept uneven distributions of power in society and organizations than those of low-power distance countries (King and Bu, 2005). This acceptance of inequity between individuals was often achieved through categorizing members in terms of authority, material possessions, power, prestige, status and wealth (Javidan and House, 2001). In close relation to the results obtained for the expatriates' pre-departure experiences (Chapter 4-section 4.3.1), the cultural values of the expatriates were characterized by a high-power distance in three ways; first, there was a greater management control over employee behaviours in that the expatriates' working procedures were tightly controlled by headquarter line managers (e.g. type of task, work load and resource allocation: Khatri, 2009)). Second, there was a centralization of decision-making power at headquarter department managers in terms of personnel appointment. Third, the expatriates legitimized the differences between headquarter-line managers and the department managers on the basis of hierarchical positions. In this regard, the finding can be explained in accordance with the national culture literature that, in an organizational context characterized by high-power distance, the employees accepted the unbalanced power distributions which, in turn, gave rise to a strong directive leadership style (Javidan and House, 2001; King and Bu, 2005; Lee *et al.,* 2005).

In contrast, the cultural norms of Europe and America where the subsidiaries were located were largely characterized by a low-power distance (Hofstede *et al.,* 1990), meaning that members in these regions were more likely to share their power with those in lower power positions. More importantly, individuals lower on power distance did not perceive many distinctions based on the decision-making power or hierarchical position (Javidan and House, 2001). This characteristic corresponded to the results that the host country personnel treated their managers as source of support, and by extension, were more likely to perceive the differences of managers who were situated in varied hierarchical levels on such a base. The preceding discussion has established that employees higher on power distance tend to differentiate authority figures according to decision-making capacity, whereas employees lower on power distance inclined to do so on the basis of support provided, the following will now return to the case of expatriates in this thesis. As the expatriates were sent abroad to subsidiary units across the Europe and America, there was a changed pattern concerning how they viewed the agents situated above their own position in the organizational hierarchy over time. As the results specifically discussed early in this section, the expatriates tended to treat their managers at different levels of organizational hierarchy as sources of support more than the absolute authorities; this was particular the case for the majority of expatriates at the subsequent stage. This indicated the expatriates' adaption of power distance perceptions towards those of local personnel. As such, the findings of this thesis pointed towards the influences of host country cultural values on shaping the expatriates' perceptions of their employment relationships and it was likely such influences were operationalized through assimilation.

The following sections will now turn to the discussion of how assimilation occurred during the tenure of assignment in order to shed light on the changing pattern of distinctions among varied contract makers over time. The mechanism of assimilation has been studied in psychological contract typically for newcomers (De Vos *et al.,* 2005; Thomas and Anderson, 1998; Rousseau, 1995). Having concluded from their findings that there was a tendency for newcomers to adapt to the psychological contract perceptions of organizational members to whom they were connected in their network, this line of research took a position that social interactions were influential in shaping employees' perceptions regarding their employment (De Vos *et al.,* 2005; Thomas and Anderson, 1998). While the results of this thesis accorded with this literature to the extent that there was a tendency for the Chinese expatriates to adapt to the cultural values of Western local personnel in host units, in terms of adjusting the perception of power distance, there was a complexity in the context of the international assignment and this will be discussed as follows according to sequence in which the international assignment proceeded.

During the initial entry stage (an average of 3.8 months abroad), there was an emergence of expatriates assimilating different cultural values (host country) and this was evident in their relationships with the host-unit line managers and host-unit experienced colleagues (parent-country-nationals) (Chapter 4). To clarify, the expatriates distinguished their line managers from colleagues on the basis of support provided, instead of organizational hierarchy. This reflected the characteristics of low power distance cultural values in terms of lowering the intention to differentiate members based on hierarchical position. However, more evidence suggested otherwise. For example, the identification of experienced colleagues (parent-country-nationals) also suggested that the expatriates displayed an intention to categorize members in terms of status (experienced versus inexperienced) (Javidan and House, 2001) (a characteristic of high power-distance value). Moreover, the discussion in the Chapter 5 (section 5.3.5), argued that the colleagues were likely to emerge as a contract maker as the expatriates perceived them to be a symbolic representative of the subsidiary units. This willingness of acknowledging unequal position also pointed towards a high power-distance value (Khatri, 2009; Hofstede *et al.,* 1990). Further, there were reports from the expatriates in this stage on the positive experiences of social relationships built with both local line managers and colleagues (Chapter 5-section 5.3.4); Overall, the results obtained suggested that, although the expatriates adjusted the perception of power distance towards that of local personnel (assimilation) and this could take place via repeated social interactions with local personnel, the expatriates' predominate cultural values in operation was characterized as high-power distance (an Easter cultural value).

In the subsequent stage (an average 2.3 years abroad), the expatriates appeared to experience a co-existence of different cultural values, with the host-country cultural values (low power distance) occupying more prominent position. More specifically, the expatriates identified three organizational agents who had the capacity to shape their employment relationships (host-unit project managers, the host-unit line managers and regional department managers); while the expatriates inclined to differentiate the project managers from the others on the basis of their decision-making capacity over performance evaluation (a characteristic of high power-distance value), both of the line mangers and regional department managers were respectively recognized as sources of support in relation to daily work and coordination on the regional level (low power distance cultural values) (Khatri, 2009; Hofstede *et al.,* 1990). As such, the expatriates' perceptions of contract makers, as manifestation of their employment relationships, were largely shaped by the lower power distance value (a Western cultural value). In further interpreting this result from the expatriate adjustment perspective, the presence of higher host-country cultural values corresponded to a status of cultural adjustment, where the expatriates integrated “new behaviour, norms and roles into the foundation provided by (their) home cultures” (Church, 1982: 543). Then, apply this line of thinking to the repatriation stage (an average of 10 months after returning to home country), the repatriates’ cultural value is thus characterized as high-power distance (an Easter cultural value).

The above discussion identified the criterial used by the expatriates to differentiate contract makers and how this responded to cultural values variations. The contract maker that has been discussed above referred to individuals acting as the organizational agents and entering a psychological contract with an employee. In addition, the results in this thesis also provided supporting evidence for notion that organization itself acted as the other party to expatriates and this was likely to be achieved through anthropomorphizing (King and Bu, 2005; Rousseau, 2000; Rousseau, 2004; Sels *et al.*, 2004). The concept of anthropomorphizing has been discussed early (Chapter 4-section 4.6.1 and Chapter 5-section 5.5.5), so the key arguments is briefly re-described here. Anthropomorphizing can be defined as “the attribution of human motivation, characteristics, or behaviour to animals, natural phenomena or inanimate objects” (Conway and Briner, 2005: 130). In the field of psychological contract, the idea of anthropomorphizing is currently operationalized in a way that employees can “view all the organization's possible agents, principals, and non-human contract makers as if the organization were a single, human, contract maker” (Conway and Briner, 2005: 128). Rest on this assumption, the literature of expatriates’ psychological contract adopted a view that the organization as a whole was assumed to be the other party to the psychological contract of an employee (Lee *et al*, 2014; Ruiter *et al,* 2016). However, this strand of research often shows a lack of transparency regarding the arguments for this underlying assumption (Chi and Chen, 2007; Ruiter *et al,* 2016). In this regard, the results of this thesis provide some clarification on the condition upon which the anthropomorphizing was likely to occur.

The anthropomorphizing of an abstract entity was observed in the pre-departure stage Chapter 4-section 4.3.1) and the repatriation stage (Chapter 5-section 5.5.1) of the international assignment. During the pre-departure stage, the subsidiary itself was anthropomorphized to be another party to the expatriates’ psychological contract. This was due to the expatriates considering all potential organizational agents and departments in subsidiary units as varied sources of support provided by the subsidiary operations. More specifically, in citing the subsidiary unit as a contract maker, the expatriates believed that the subsidiary will provide relevant support in the assignment and those likely organizational agents, under the governance of the subsidiary unit, will enact these support in congruence with the will of subsidiary. A similar condition occurred at the repatriation stage, it was reported by the repatriates that headquarter immediate managers and HR department will work collectively to take responsibilities for departure preparation, such as informing expatriates about moving process, collaborating with "automobile Co" logistics, undertaking post-assignment career planning, preparing entry clearance documentation as well as general administrative issues (e.g. insurance). Importantly, the repatriates tended to consider these activities by the organizational agents as those of the headquarters, thus treating the headquarter itself as the contract maker to their psychological contracts. Overall, the assumption underlying these descriptions by the sample expatriates was that, the actions of these organizational agents in terms of support-offering in the impending assignment as well as repatriation process were perceived to be consistent to the intention of subsidiary and headquarter themselves. In such cases, the operationalization of anthropomorphizing seems to be more likely to occur when the expatriates believed that the actions of organizational agents align with the interest of the organization itself.

6.2 Multiple exchange relationships and contract content

In the line of enquiry regarding the content of expatriates' psychological contracts, the overall results (Study one and Study two) demonstrated that the expatriates maintained differentiated resources of exchanges with the diverse contract makers identified. In particular, three main patterns were observed regarding the content of expatriates' psychological contracts and these will be discussed as follows. First, from the expatriates' perspective, the perceived employers' obligations are foci-specific whereas the perceived employees' obligations tend to be foci-ambiguous. In terms of organizational obligations, the data indicated that the expatriates, regardless of the stages they were at, perceived strong distinctions between contract makers when keeping track of what was owed to them. The theoretical explanation of the distinction among different foci has been discussed early (Chapter 5-section 5.4.5), so the key argument is briefly re-described here: individuals were likely to be differentially motivated to pay close attention to and actively seek for information about their respective dependency on the other party, which generated variations among the contract content of an individual held towards different contract makers. A typical illustration can be found on expatriates at subsequent stage where the contract beliefs on the performance support dimension of the balance contracts were differentiated at the item-level (Chapter 5-section 5.4). For example, contract beliefs including being supportive when coordinating with other parties related mainly to host unit-project managers whereas those beliefs regarding the delegation of authority related mainly to host unit-line managers (Chapter 5-section 5.4.2).

In contrast, the perceived employees' obligations, that are, the employees' perceptions regarding what they are obligated to provide in return to another party are not always foci-specific. To clarify, when the exchange partners held higher positions in the organizational hierarchy (e.g. host unit-project managers and regional department managers), the perceived employees' obligations were foci-ambiguous and centred on the same contract dimensions, and at the item-level, sharing similar contract beliefs. Taking the expatriates at the subsequent stage as an example (Chapter 5-section 5.4), for both of the host unit-project managers and regional department managers, the beliefs cited by the expatriates related to development dimension of the balanced contracts; expatriates believed they should offer progression in their expertise and take initiatives to learn to fulfil their obligations to both of these contract makers (Chapter 5-section 5.4.4). However, when the exchange partners held less powerful positions in the organizational hierarchy (e.g. host-unit line managers and colleagues), the employees' perceived obligations were foci-specific often with different contract dimensions, and at the item-level, having distinct contract beliefs. This could be illustrated according to the results on expatriates on the initial-entry stage (Chapter 5-section 5.3), expatriates' own obligations towards host unit-line managers related mainly to development dimension of the balanced contracts including learning constantly and advancing managerial abilities, whereas the obligations towards colleagues related to loyalty dimension of the balanced contracts, referring to having mutual trust upon and taking care of each other (Chapter 5-section 5.3.3). Overall, the data suggested that as the positions of exchange partners moved upwards along the organizational hierarchy, the expatriates perceived fewer distinctions when keeping track of what they are obligated to provide in return. It seems that the position of contract maker in the organizational hierarchy plays a key role in determining which distinctions are maintained, importantly, the expatriates may be simultaneously paying back obligations to the contract makers in the upper echelons of the hierarchy, because their actions are believed to be able to simultaneously fulfil the obligations required by these exchange partners. While interesting, it should be noted that the extent to which the simultaneous payback occurs and role of individual-characteristics variations on this process remain unclear; this will be discussed in section 6.4.

The second pattern evident in the overall results is that the relational components of the psychological contract tend to be developed with proximal members of organizational agents (e.g. line managers), rather than distal members (e.g. department managers). As previously discussed (Chapter 2-section 2.4.3), the psychological contract is multi-dimensional (Freese and Schalk, 2008) and this can be characterized as transactional and relational (Rousseau, 1990), and later balanced contract (Rousseau, 2000). The relational contracts involved broad, long-term obligations and the exchange of social-emotional elements (e.g. commitment and trust: Petersitzke, 2009). The transactional contract focused on short-term exchanges of benefits and obligations in economic nature; the balanced contracts consisted of features of both transactional and relational contract by maintaining the involvement and long-term time horizon while at the same time allowing for greater flexibility and changing contract requirements (Dabos and Rousseau, 2004). Linking this contract typology with the proximity of relationships expatriates may have with multiple parties, it is likely that the relational contracts tend to be developed with proximal exchange partners and the Lawler's proximity rule has been put forward to explain this proposition, that is, driven by the need to fulfil self-determination, individuals had greater intention to develop stronger affective ties to the proximal subgroups than to the distant larger groups (Lawler, 1992). For example, the initial entry stage results showed that the host unit-line managers and colleagues appeared as the principal models in relation to fulfilling the perceived obligations on the loyalty dimension of relational contracts (Chapter 5-section 5.3.2). This was illustrated as the expatriates developed affective commitment-related expectations that were related to both of these proximal contract makers: the host unit-line managers (e.g. an understanding of they were undergoing adjustment and a social-emotional support for career path) and the colleagues (e.g. a social-emotional support to cope with feeling of anxiety). This pattern is more apparent when expatriates entered into subsequent stage of international assignment cycle (Chapter 5-section 5.4.2). The results showed that the obligations on loyalty dimension of relational contract (e.g. being understanding) resided primarily with expatriates' proximal party (host-unit line managers), whereas transactional and balanced contracts (e.g. financial rewards and support for coordinating work) tended to be established with the distal parties.

Third, drawing on the contract typology utilized in this thesis, the expatriates' psychological contracts over the whole international assignment cycle can be categorized as predominantly balanced contracts, specifically the performance support and development dimensions. In terms of perceived obligations of exchange partners, while these beliefs are context-specific, over the entire cycle of the international assignment, the expatriates focused upon beliefs about having direct communications with managers of different levels, receiving support in coordinating work with both internal and external parties, receiving technical instructions during performance of daily work as well as developing valuable job skills and career prospect. There was also a focus upon relational contract elements, particularly the loyalty dimensions, such as receiving career guidance and general social-emotional support and being understanding. The contract beliefs which could be characterized as transactional were generally not mentioned with the exception of a minority of expatriates at the subsequent stage; specifically, these transactional beliefs related to good performance evaluation and the associated bonus (Chapter 5-section 5.4.2). Overall, these beliefs about what the exchange partners owed the expatriates contrasted sharply to what the other authors found to be salient beliefs for this particular group of employees (expatriates) based on Western samples (Pate and Scullion, 2009; Halsberger and Brewster 2009; Lee *et al.,* 2014).

Of particular relevance to this part of discussion is the study by Pate and Scullion (2009) in the examination of the nature of expatriates' psychological contract based on three in-depth qualitative case studies. Drawing on the findings from three organizational case in Western settings (two multinational corporations in Europe and one in North American), the authors argued that as a response to the tight organizational practice in a competitive international environment, expatriates moved their psychological contracts towards a transactional overtone. This was evident by expatriates expecting enhanced remuneration, promotion on return, negotiating better compensation package before international assignment and reducing their dependence on a single organization, which suggested an individualistic and calculating interpretation of the employment relationship (Pate and Scullion, 2009). However, as illustrated above, the findings of this thesis suggested otherwise by showing the predominantly balanced and relational contracts held by Chinese expatriates (e.g. receiving technical instructions, career guidance and general social-emotional support). The plausible explanations for this inconsistence with the existing literature could be that as influenced by the Chinese society values of Confucian philosophy, specifically *guanxi*. Chinese expatriates do not attempt to define their exchange relationships in a transactional fashion

As mentioned earlier (Chapter 1-section 1.2), psychological contracts were belief systems of individual employees and employers regarding their mutual obligations, the development of these contract beliefs depended on the promises made as employment arrangements (Hui *et al.,* 2004). The society, within which the employment was embedded, shaped how these promises were conveyed and interpreted. The psychological contract, then, can be interpreted and constructed differently depending on the social context where the employment relationship was embedded (Rousseau and Schalk, 2000). Within this thesis, the social values which were of importance to the construction of Chinese expatriates' psychological contracts were deemed as *guanxi*. To clarify, *guanxi* had its root in Confucian philosophy (a series of codes of ethics that emphasize harmony and reciprocity: Warner, 1993). The meaning of *guanxi*, as pointed out by Lee and Dawes (2005), pertained to a state in which entities (e.g. human beings, objects, or forces) were connected. The indigenous Chinese concept of *guanxi* did not have a direct Western equivalent because of the intricacies of its definition, but it may be loosely translated as "connection" or "relationship." In deriving the Chinese expatriates' perceptions on the employers' obligations, two characteristics of *guanxi* were believed to be influential, namely: *ganqing* and *renqing*; these two characteristics are briefly described as follows and their implications for understanding the predominately balanced contracts held by Chinese expatriates are highlighted.

Ganqing (sentiment) involved the exchange of emotional commitment as social resources. The Chinese tend to use *ganqing* to maintain and assess their *guanxi* with others. For example, *guanxi* with other parties were often differentiated between a mutual *ganqing* (characterized by making personal sacrifices for other parties) and affected *ganqing* (characterized by exchanging beneficial materials: Lin, 2011). Relatedly, *renqing* referred to reciprocal favour. In Western society, reciprocal favour was guided by the norm of reciprocity, that is, each party's actions were contingent on the other (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). This form of reciprocity tended to be provided within a limited timeframe and was facilitated for pursuing cost-benefit balance (Park and Luo, 2001). In contrast, *renqing* has unique characteristics in Chinese society. For example, *renqing* is categorized as an emotional investment, thus the pursuit of cost-benefit balance was not necessarily embedded in this type of reciprocal favour (Lin, 2011). This means that the recipient was expected to exceed what was offered to him/her when receiving a favour. In such exchange, *renqing* implied a long-term or even lifetime return (Lin, 2011). In this way, *renqing* reinforced the obligations of a *guanxi* relationship. These defining characteristics of society values will collectively shape the ways in which Chinese expatriates establish and maintain employment relationships, such that their relationships involved the exchange of beneficial materials (*ganqing*) whilst the parties within these relationships sought for a long-term involvement (*renqing*). This corresponds to characteristics underpinning the balanced contracts, that are, long-term time horizon while at the same time allowing for greater flexibility and changing contract requirements (Dabos and Rousseau, 2004).

6.3 Multiple exchange relationships and contract change

The pattern of changes on expatriates' psychological contracts and the plausible explanations for driving those changes were respectively discussed for each stage of the international assignment cycle (section 5.3-5.5), so the key findings were summarized here. Overall, the findings showed that expatriates described the psychological contracts which, at the pre-departure stage, started with highly balanced beliefs regarding employer obligations and relatively low relational contract beliefs. Then there was a reduction in balanced and an increase in relational contract beliefs after initial entry, followed by an increase in balanced contract beliefs, a slightly increase in beliefs about transactional obligations and a decrease in relational contract beliefs at the subsequent stage, which was further followed by an increase in balanced employer obligations at the repatriation stage. The existing research into the change of psychological contract could offer some results by which to compare those from this thesis (Robinson *et al.,* 1994; Thomas and Anderson, 1998). Of particular relevance, these studies found that the perceptions of employees regarding the obligations of their employers increased over time. In this regard, the results of this thesis contrasted with the Western literature in that, instead of a linear form, the content of Chinese expatriates' psychological contracts changed differentially at each stage of the international assignment.

The first mechanism for deriving contract change related to information-seeking and acquisition, and sense-making, which generally referred to expatriates experiencing a series of events that may trigger them to adjust and revise existing contract beliefs (De Vos and Freese, 2011). There were also evidence suggesting that individuals' perceptions of contract fulfilment, breach and violation events can trigger the revision of their contract content. In terms of perceived employee obligations, the majority of contract dimensions (e.g. performance support) exhibited non-change patterns generally. This means that the expatriates' beliefs regarding the obligations owed to exchange partners remained stable over time. With reference to existing longitudinal studies, there was no consensus achieved on the change of perceived employees' obligations overtime. For example, early longitudinal research suggested that newcomers decreased their perceived obligations during the first year of employment (Robinson *et al.,* 1994), whereas the converse was found in a more recent study by De Vos (2005). In this regard, this finding offered evidence that expatriates' beliefs regarding their obligations owed to exchange partners remained stable over the tenure of the international assignment. It was also noteworthy that the presence of multiple contract makers further complicated the pattern of changes at the item-level of contract content. For example, specific contract item (e.g. giving work instructions) can be transferred across different contract makers (e.g. from line managers to project managers). There was also the emergence of new obligations as the expatriates working conditions changed (e.g. complexity of work) and this resulted in the replacement of the previous contract beliefs (e.g. the contract belief of being able to ask question was replaced by granting a degree of autonomy). These changes were observed to occur individually or collectively.

6.4 Limitations and future research directions

While this thesis provides insights into expatriation and psychological contract literature; the researcher acknowledges various limitations, and additionally highlights some of the possible implications for further research. First, an international assignment normally lasts for "three to five years" (McKenna and Richard, 2007: 307), making it difficult to follow a given cohort due to the time constrains of doctoral work. The findings presented in this thesis therefore have been reported from data where collection took place at one point in time. More specifically, two semi-structure interviews were conducted for initial entry expatriates to respectively identify their pre-departure contract beliefs and current beliefs as at the initial entry stage; the remaining expatriate groups namely: expatriates at subsequent assignment stage and repatriates, were interviewed in line with their current respective stage within an international assignment. Overall, this thesis was designed to identify the psychological contracts of expatriates at these key transition stages, and through further comparison between the contract beliefs at each stage, to assume a full picture of psychological contract development over the international assignment cycle. However, it should be noted that there is a wide geographical spread within and across the selected expatriate groups. For example, the expatriates at initial entry stage were located in subsidiaries across the USA, Italy and Belgium whereas the majority of expatriates at the subsequent assignment stage were located in subsidiaries in the UK. Given the likely different working experiences in these locations and their shaping influence on the expatriates' psychological contracts, the data derived from these groups of expatriates may not adequately represent the contract beliefs held by expatriates at these corresponding stages, thus the complexity and the dynamics of the psychological contract may not be fully captured. In this regard, a longitudinal research design that follows a given cohort through the whole international assignment might capture the changing process and offer deeper understanding into the dynamic nature of psychological contracts. Relatedly, retrospective reports from expatriates at initial entry stage were used to understand the perceptions of contract belief at time point of pre-departure, which could introduce bias. In such report, the initial entry expatriates were asked to reflect back on their pre-departure experience regarding the influential exchange partners and associated reciprocal obligations. As there is a time gap between pre-departure and initial entry, the accuracy of this report may be subject to memory fade. In this sense, a longitudinal research design that tracks the expatriates from the starting point of international assignments (pre-departure) to the end of it (repatriation) could avoid this issue.

Second, the results in this thesis provided supporting evidence for the operationalization of employees anthropomorphizing the organization itself as the other party to their psychological contracts, and this occurred at the stages of initial entry and repatriation where employees believed that the actions of organizational agents aligned with the interest of the organization itself. However, it should be noted that not all expatriates in these two stages displayed the intention to anthropomorphize the organization. As such, it is possible that the occurrence of anthropomorphizing could be conditioned on other variables such as the personal characteristics of expatriates, that is, some individuals may be more inclined than others to attribute organizations with human-like qualities. However, constrained by the size of sample employed, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to further investigate the role of demographic features and /or personal traits on employees' anthropomorphizing process and how this process functions. It is therefore suggested that future research could pursue this direction and particularly, it is possible that future research could consider the Big Five personality characteristics: "extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience" (Huang, *et al*, 2005: 1660) in the examination of this issue. Expatriate literature examined the role of the Big Five as the predictor of job performance (Mol *et al,* 2005; Shaffer *et al,* 2006), cultural adjustment (Huff *et al*, 2014; Shaffer *et al,* 2006), and intention to remain at assignment (Caligiuri, 2000); overall, the evidence suggested that the Big Five personality characteristics is a relevant and useful framework in understanding expatriate-related issues.

Third, the expatriates, regardless of the stages they were at, perceived strong distinctions between contract makers when keeping track of what was owed to them; however, they perceived fewer distinctions regarding what they were obligated to provide in return to another party. The data suggested that the expatriates may be simultaneously paying back obligations to the contract makers. However, as this thesis did not assess the degree of simultaneous payback, the questions remain as the degree to which individuals consciously use simultaneous payback to manage their exchange relationships. Therefore, a possible suggestion for future research could be to employ larger sample size to explore employees' opinions and attitudes towards simultaneous payback in their exchange relationships. Then, in addition to the finding that an individual's psychological contract with different foci are distinct to some degree, there are opportunities to explore the cross-foci relationships; there are at least two different ways that future research can shed some light on this issue. First, researchers are suggested to explore how psychological contracts with different foci influence each other. For example, an individual's psychological contract with the first party may place demand an individual's contract with the second party. Taking the expatriates in this thesis as an example, they believed that their project manager should offer assistance in work planning because their psychological contracts with a given department require collaborative work from the expatriates. Second, a possible suggestion could be to consider whether the breach of the psychological contract with the first party may cause the contract breach with the second party. For example, it is possible the contract breach with line managers might generate breach of the department managers-focused psychological contract, because line managers work under the instructions from department managers.

6.5 Practical implications

The findings also offer a range of insights for managers and other organizational representatives regarding the expatriate management. First, it is clear that expatriates maintain differentiated exchange relationships with organizational members of the wider multinational organization. Within these relationships, the expatriates are able to distinguish among a varied range of organizational agents (e.g. headquarter line managers and host-unit line managers) and clearly, a varied importance are placed upon them by the expatriates. Relatedly, according to the degree of the dependency expatriates have on organizational agents, the exchange of resources is largely unique. In this case, managers are encouraged to understand which exchange relationships are the important to expatriates and to identify the content of these important psychological contracts, so that the motives and demands of those expatriates can be better understood.

Second, over the whole cycle of international assignment, the expatriates focus more on their direct supervisors and middle-level managers as organizational representatives to understand what they should offer and receive in the employment relationship. While the critical role of line managers in shaping expatriates' employment experience should be recognized, it is also important to recognize that when expatriates' work spanned across a wide range of internal departments, and in some cases, across different subsidiary units, they are exposed to different workplace experiences including varying relationships with managers or departments situated at different organizational hierarchies. Expatriates use the perceptions for their line managers and middle-level managers as the basis for an overall assessment on what they believe they should be giving and receiving in their employment exchanges. As the potential organizational agents can be variable, fostering these types of relationships can be an effective strategy for organizations to encourage expatriates' retention.

Third, and more specifically for organizations operating international assignments, the results of this thesis show that the challenges remain as to maintain stable and effective communication with expatriates throughout the whole period of international assignments. In the context of Chinese expatriates moving to Western host operations, these issues were particular salient when expatriates were at the initial transition stage. The results practically implied that expatriates' psychological contracts were based on the social exchange deal they made with their exchange partners; thus, at the initial entry stage, if expatriates' headquarter line managers with whom they exchanged and agreed on their international assignment, are assigned to other organizational duties, expatriates can have a feeling of being isolated and this can damage the psychological contracts with their headquarter line managers. It is thus encouraged to appoint a team of main referents for the selected expatriates (e.g. HR specialists to represent the headquarter) for the whole period international assignment. While it is acknowledged that the case organization's regional department located abroad are responsible for managing and supervising all international assignments, such teams could be deployed to support expatriates' activities specifically during the initial transition stage.

Fourth, over the whole cycle of international assignment, the psychological contracts of expatriates in this sample can be categorized as predominantly balanced contracts and this suggests the significance of non-financial exchange in employment relationships. For example, expatriates have commented on open communication, flexibility and career prospect as the key obligations of employers. This could have implications for HR practitioners in the design of expatriate compensation package to better meet expatriates' need. Guided by the agency theory, the traditional approach to expatriate compensation has placed attention on financial rewards (e.g. cost-of-living allowance and housing allowance) to control, motivate and retain expatriates. It is therefore important to highlight that there is a discrepancy between organizations and employees' views regarding financial rewards: the formers develop retention policies relating financial rewards while employees attach most importance to inducements related to the social atmosphere, career development and job content. In this respect, the results of this thesis show that HR practitioners could incorporate the use of intangible (non-financial) elements in compensation design.

Fifth, expatriates clearly gave importance to different sets of employer obligations as they went through the stages of international assignment. Based on the understanding of employees' perceptions on what their employer ought to give in employment relationships, managers can prevent the perception of psychological contract breach by developing open-ended and flexible communication for pre-departure expatriates. Apply this line of thinking, as expatriates went through different stages of international assignment, managers can prevent the perception of psychological contract breach by developing corresponding employer obligations such as being supportive for initial entry stage expatriates, coordinating expatriates' work with internal and external departments for expatriates at subsequent stage and offering promotion opportunities for repatriates.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Details of Automobile Co.’s oversea research and development centers

Location of oversea centre	Description
Turin (Italy)	Established in May 8th 2006. The main activity of this centre is to conduct modelling research, body development, automotive interior and exterior trim research and development activities by using the notion of Italian and European car design. In addition, it also cooperates with local companies and universities to set up Automobile Co.’s training base to cultivate related technical talents.
Ghent (Belgium)	Established in May 25, 2009. Mainly engaged in automobile interior and exterior decoration and engineering design work.
Birmingham (UK) and Nottingham (UK)	Established in June 25, 2010. These centres mainly engaged in power system product research and development and advanced technology research. The purpose is to make full use of local research and development advantage resource to strengthen Automobile Co.’s power system research and development.
Detroit(USA)	Established in January 18, 2011. Specializing in automotive chassis technology, including chassis performance development, chassis engineering design, chassis technology research, and chassis manufacturing process research. In addition, it also undertakes the task of absorbing top automobile talents for Automobile Co. in the United States to

	supplement the enterprise's talent pool.

Appendix 2: Plain language statement and consent form

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Plain Language Statement

Study title: East-West expatriate employment relationship: a multi-foci perspective of the psychological contract

Researcher: Xiao Wang, PhD in Business

Supervisors: Dr Sarah Robinson and Professor Robert Paton

You are being invited to take part in a research study to explore the psychological contract perceptions of Eastern expatriates moving to Western locations. It is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Please take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. The details of this research are given below.

<u>About the research</u>

I would be interested to hear the experiences of expatriates employed in a Chinese organisation in order to identify the psychological contract perceptions at key stages of international assignment. In simple terms, the concept of psychological contract broadly refers to the unwritten and mutual obligations between an employee and an employer. In this research, I aim to apply this concept to Eastern expatriates who are respectively at the different stages of an international assignment (pre-departure stage, initial entry stage, subsequent assignment stage and repatriation stage). This will allow my research to capture the picture of how the psychological contract of expatriates develops over time. This research is part of a PhD thesis that I am undertaking at University of Glasgow.

You are invited to participate in this research project because you were/are/will be an expatriate, I am interested in hearing about your expatriation experiences. The results of this research may be used to help researchers and management understand how best to coordinate expatriation policies and provide support to expatriates during their international assignment.

Please be advised that your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Should you wish to withdraw at any stage, or to withdraw any unprocessed data you have supplied, you are free to do so without explanations. If you decide to take part in the interview, we will find a mutually convenient time to meet or conduct skype interview. The interview may take about 45-60 minutes and with your permission will be audio recorded.

Explanation

The information you give will be kept strictly confidential. Your names and contact details will be kept in separate files in my password-protected personal laptop. In addition, I will assign a pseudonym to each participant so that no real names or personal details will appear in the final report and other paperwork. Besides, the data collected from you will be processed in a way that the identifiable features will be replaced by a code, with no record retained of how the code relates to the identifiable features. It is then impossible to identify the individual to whom the sample of information relates. In the final report as well as any possible future publications arising from this research, all participants as well as the name of organization will be referred to by pseudonyms.

Please note that assurances on confidentiality will be strictly adhered to unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is uncovered. In such cases the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies.

The results will be written up for my thesis and completed in October 2018 approximately. During the project, all your personal details including names, contact details along with the assigned pseudonyms will be stored in my personal laptop which will be password protected and locked in the cupboard in my own accommodation. You will have access to the written summary of results and copy of final manuscript, if requested, I will send these materials to your contact details; then all your personal information will be destroyed and shredded after your verifications.

After the completion of this project, the research data will be retained for 10 years in Enlighten

Repository, the University of Glasgow's repository for research data, because there are possible intentions to publish journal articles on the findings, publish books on the findings and conference presentation. In January 2029, all original data will be destroyed and all electronic files will be deleted.

This project has been considered and approved by the College Research Ethics Committee

For further Information please contact:

Researcher: Xiao Wang, PhD in business, Adam Smith Business School, University of Glasgow, email:

Supervisor: Dr Sarah Robinson, Reader in Human Resource Management/Organizational Behaviour, Adam Smith Business School, University of Glasgow, email: Sarah.Robinson.2@glasgow.ac.uk

Professor Robert Paton, Professor of Management, Adam Smith Business School, University of Glasgow, email: Robert.Paton@glasgow.ac.uk

If you want to pursue any complaint, please contact: Dr Muir Houston, the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer, email: Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk

_____________________End of Participant Information Sheet__________________

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Consent Form

Title of Project: East-West expatriate employment relationship: a multi-foci perspective of the psychological Contract

Researcher: Xiao Wang, PhD in Business

Supervisors: Dr Sarah Robinson and Professor Robert Paton

1 I confirm that I have read and understood the Plain Language Statement for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2 I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

3 I consent to interviews being audio-recorded.
(I acknowledge that a copy of my transcript will be returned to participants for verification.)

4 I acknowledge that participants will be referred to by pseudonym.

5 All names and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymised.

6 The material will be retained in secure storage for 10 years after completion of the project.

I agree to take part in this research study ☐

I do not agree to take part in this research study ☐

Name of Participant …………………………………………

Signature ……………………………………………………..

Date ……………………………………

Name of Researcher…………………………………………………

Signature ……………………………………………………..

Date ……………………………………

End of consent form

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………

Appendix 3: Study One: interview schedule

1. Contract-makers

- Can you recall your pre-departure experience and who were the main people you interacted with during pre-departure stage?

Prompts: senior management; line manager; human resource manager; colleague; other networks

- The people who you believed to have the most impact on shaping your work experiences?
- What was the role of these people, from your perspective, in your daily work experience?
- Can you describe why and how this/these people were important in your work?

Prompts: during work arrangement; career opportunities

2. The content of the psychological contract

- Referring to the people you have mentioned, can you describe what each of the other parties was obligated to provide to you in your employment relationship?

Prompts:

- Type of work,
- Support during work performance
- Training opportunities
- Performance evaluations

- Stability of employment

— In your opinion, were there any differences regarding the obligations you believed these people were obligated to provide?

— If yes, can you describe these differences according to your own experience?

— Referring to the people you have mentioned, can you describe your own obligations towards them?

Prompts:

- Technical skills
- Active in taking on more obligations
- Performance indicators
- Being active in terms of learning and taking part in training opportunities

— In your opinion, were there any differences regarding what you believe you were obligated to provide to these people?

— If yes, can you describe these differences according to your own experience?

Appendix 4: Study Two: interview schedule

1. Contract-makers

- Can you recall your experiences during your preceding stage in the international assignment, who were the important individuals shaping your work experience? (prompts: senior management; line manager; human resource manager; colleague; mentors; other networks)

- Now you have been working here (subsidiary units) for a time of period, who are the main people you interacted now? The people who you believe to had the most impact on shaping your work experiences?

- Can you describe why and how this/these people were important in your work?

2. The content of the psychological contract

- Referring to the people you have mentioned at your current stage, can you describe what each of the other parties is obligated to provide to you in your employment relationship?

Prompts:

- Type of work,
- Support during work performance
- Training opportunities
- Performance evaluations
- Stability of employment

- In your opinion, are there any differences regarding the obligations you believe these people were obligated to provide?
- If yes, can you describe these differences according to your own experience?
- Referring to the people you have mentioned at your current stage, can you describe your own obligations towards them?

Prompts:

- Technical skills
- Active in taking on more obligations
- Performance indicators
- Being active in terms of learning and taking part in training opportunities

- In your opinion, are there any differences regarding what you believe you are obligated to provide to these people?
- If yes, can you describe these differences according to your own experience?

3. Have you experienced any (positive or negative) events during the international assignment that change the way you view this organization or a particular person?

- Did you meet any challenges meet during working in the subsidiary units?
- If yes, what were these challenges according to your own experience and how do you handle these challenges?
- Were there any other things that happened at work, any experiences that changed the way you thought about working here?

Prompts: Maybe good things: like making great progress with your team

Or not so good things: like facing obstacles in terms of work at hand

- How did this make you feel?

— What was your reaction?

Reference

Adler, N. J. (1981). Re-entry: managing cross-cultural transitions. *Group Organ. Management,* 6(3), 341-356.

Agarwal, U. & Bhargava, S. (2009). Reviewing the relationship between human resource practices and psychological contract and their impact on employee attitude and behaviours: A conceptual model. *Journal of European Industrial Training,* 33(1), 4-31.

Agarwal, U. & Bhargava, S. (2013). Effects of psychological contract breach on organizational outcomes: Moderating role of tenure and educational levels. *Vikalpa,* 38(1), 13-26.

Aldossari, M. & Robertson, M. (2016) The role of wasta in repatriates' perceptions of a breach to the psychological contract: A Saudi Arabian case study. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management,* 27(16), 1854-1873.

Andresen, M., Bergdolt, F., Margenfeld, J. & Dickmann, M. (2014). Addressing international mobility confusion – developing definitions and differentiations for self-initiated and assigned expatriates as well as migrants. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 25(16), 2295-2318.

Ang, S., Dyne, L. V., Koh, C., Ng, K. Y., Templer, K. J., Tay, C. & Chandrasekar, N. A. (2007). Cultural Intelligence: Its Measurement and Effects on Cultural Judgment and Decision Making, Cultural Adaptation and Task Performance. *Management and Organization Review,* 3(3), 335-371.

Antal, A. B. (2000). Types of Knowledge Gained by Expatriate Managers. *Journal of General Management,* 26(2), 32-51.

Argyle, M. (1969). *Social Interaction.* London: Methuen.

Argyris, C. (1960). *Understanding Organizational Behavior*. Oxford: Dorsey Press.

Arthur, W. & Bennett, W. (1995). The international assignee: the relative importance of factors perceived to contribute to success. *Personnel Psychology,* 48(1), 99-114.

Aycan, Z. & Kanungo, R. (1997). Current issues and future challenges in expatriate management. In Aycan, Z. (ed.), *Expatriate Management: Theory and Research*. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Barnard, C. I. (1938). *The functions of the Executive. Cambridge.* MA: Harvard University Press.

Baruch, Y., Dickmann, M., Altman, Y. & Bournois, F. (2013). Exploring international work: types and dimensions of global careers. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management,* 24(12), 2369-2393.

Bauer, T. N. & Erdogan, B. (2016). Organizational socialization: The effective onboarding of new employees. In Zedeck, S., Aguinis, H., Cascio, W., Gelfand, M., Leong, K., Parker, S. & Zhou, J. (eds.), *APA handbook of industrial and organizational psychology,* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Becker, T. E. (1992). Foci and bases of commitment: Are they distinctions worth making? *Academy of Management Journal,* 35(1), 232-244.

Bell, M. P. & Harrison, D. A. (1996). Using Intra- National diversity for International assignments: A model of Bicultural Competence and Expatriate adjustment. *Human Resource Management Review*, 6(1), 47-74.

Bhaskar-Shrinivas, P., Harrison, D. A., Shaffer, M. A. & Luk, D. M. (2005). Input-based and time-based models of international adjustment: Meta-analytic evidence and theoretical extensions. *Academy of Management Journal,* 48(2), 257-281.

Biemann, T. & Andresen, M. (2010). Self-initiated foreign expatriates versus assigned expatriates: Two distinct types of international careers? *Journal of Managerial Psychology,* 25(4), 430-448.

Bird, A., Mendenhall, M., Stevens, M. J. & Oddou, G. (2010). Defining the content domain of intercultural competence for global leaders. *Journal of Managerial Psychology,* 25(8), 810-828.

Björkman, I., Barner-Rasmussen, W. & Li, L. (2004). Managing knowledge transfer in MNCs: the impact of headquarters control mechanisms. *Journal of International Business Studies,* 35(5), 443-455.

Black, J. & Gregersen, H. (1991). Antecedents to cross-cultural adjustment for expatriates in Pacific Rim assignments. *Human Relations,* 44(5), 497-515.

Black, J. S. (1988). Work role transitions: a study of American expatriate managers in Japan. *Journal of International Business Studies,* 19(2), 277-294.

Black, J. S. (1992). Coming home: the relationship of expatriate expectations with repatriation adjustment and job performance. *Human Relations,* 45(2), 177-192.

Black, J. S. & Gregersen, H. B. (1991). Antecedents to cross-cultural adjustment for expatriates in Pacific Rim assignments. *Human Relations,* 44(5), 497-515.

Black, J. S. & Mendenhall, M. (1989). A practical but theory-based framework for selecting cross-cultural training methods. *Human Resource Management,* 28(4), 511-539.

Black, J. S. & Stephens, G. K. (1989). The influence of the spouse on American expatriate adjustment and intent to stay in Pacific Rim overseas assignments. *Journal of Management,* 15(4), 529-544.

Blau, P. M. (1964). *Exchange and power in social life*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Bogdan, R. & Biklen, S. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods.* London: Pearson A & B.

Bonache, J. & Brewster, C. (2001). Knowledge Transfer and the Management of Expatriation. *Thunderbird International Business Review,* 43(1), 145-168.

Bonache, J., Brewster, C. & Suutari, V. (2001). Expatriation: A developing research agenda. *Thunderbird International Business Review,* 43(1), 3-20.

Bordia, P., Restubog, S. D., Bordia, S. & Tang, R. L. (2010). Breach begets breach: trickle-down effects of psychological contract breach on customer service. *Journal of Management,* 36(6), 1578-1607.

Bossard, A. B. & Peterson, R. B. (2005). The repatriate experience as seen by American expatriates, Journal of World Business, 40(1), 9-28.

Bossard, A. B. & Peterson, R. B. (2005). The repatriate experience as seen by American expatriates. *Journal of World Business*, 40(1), 9-28.

Boyacigiller, N. (1990). The role of expatriates in the management of interdependence, complexity and risk in multinational corporations. *Journal of International Business Studies,* 21(3), 357-381.

Braun, V. and Clark, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology,* 3, 77-101.

Briscoe, D. R. (2014). Expatriation into and out of Emerging Markets: Challenges for IHRM. *Argumenta Oeconomica Cracoviensia,* 11, 25-45.

Bryman, A. (1988). *Quantity and quality in social research.* London, Boston: Unwin Hyman Publications.

Burmeister, A. (2017). Repatriate Knowledge Transfer: A Systematic Review of the Literature. In Bader, B., Schuster, T. & Bader, A. (eds), *Expatriate Management.* London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Caligiuri, P. M. (2000). The Big Five personality characteristics as predictors of expatriate's desire to terminate the assignment and supervisor-rated performance. *Personnel Psychology,* 53(1), 67-88.

Caligiuri, P., Tarique, I. & Jacobs, R. (2009). Selection for international assignments. *Human Resource Management Review,* 19(3), 251-262.

Carraher, S. M., Sullivan, S. E. & Crocitto, M. M. (2008). Mentoring across global boundaries: an empirical examination of home-and host-country mentors on expatriate career outcomes. *Journal of International Business Studies,* 39(8),1310-1326.

Castles, S. (2013). The forces driving global migration. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 34(2), 122-140.

Cerdin, J. & Selmer, J. (2014). Who is a self-initiated expatriate? Towards conceptual clarity of a common notion. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 25(9), 1281-1301.

Chaminade, C. (2015). Technology-Driven FDI by Emerging Multinationals in Europe. *AIB Insights,* 15(2), 11-14.

Chang, C. H., Rosen, C. & Levy, P. (2009). The Relationship Between Perceptions of Organizational Politics and Employee Attitudes, Strain, and Behavior: A Meta-Analytic Examination. *Academy of Management Journal,* 52(4), 779-801.

Chang, Y. Y., Gong, Y. & Peng, M. (2012). Expatriate knowledge transfer, subsidiary absorptive capacity, and subsidiary performance. *Academy of Management Journal,* 927-948.

Chen, C., Kraemer, J. & Gathii, J. (2011). Understanding locals' compensation fairness vis-à-vis foreign expatriates: the role of perceived equity. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management,* 22(17), 3582-3600.

Chen, H. F. (2010). The relationships of organizational justice, social exchange, psychological contract, and expatriate adjustment: An example of Taiwanese business expatriates. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management,* 21(7), 1090-1107.

Chen, H. F. & Chiu, Y. H. (2007). The influence of psychological contracts on the adjustment and organisational commitment among expatriates: An empirical study in Taiwan. *International Journal of Manpower,* 30(8), 797-814.

Chen, M. J. & Miller, D. (2010). West Meets East: Toward an Ambicultural Approach to Management. *The Academy of Management Perspectives,* 24(4), 17-24.

Chi, S. C. S. & Chen, S. C. (2007). Perceived psychological contract fulfillment and job attitudes among repatriates-An empirical study in Taiwan. *International Journal of Manpower,* 28(6), 474-488.

Chiu, Y. P., Wu, M., Zhuang, W. L. & Hsu, Y. Y. (2009). Influences on expatriate social networks in China. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management,* 20(4), 790-809.

Cho, T., Hutchings, K. & Marchant, T. (2013). Key factors influencing Korean expatriates' and spouses' perceptions of expatriation and repatriation. *International Journal of Human Resource Management,* 24(5), 1051-1075

Church, A.T. (1982). Sojourner adjustment. *Psychological Bulletin*, 91(3), 540-572.

Clarke, L., Corbin, A. & Punnett, B. J. (2017). Expatriates to and from developed and developing countries. In McNulty, Y. & Selmer, J. (eds.), *The Research Handbook of Expatriates*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.

Collings, D. G., Scullion, H. & Morley, M. J. (2007). Changing patterns of global staffing in the multinational enterprise: Challenges to the conventional expatriate assignment and emerging alternatives. *Journal of World Business,* 42(2): 198-213.

Collings, D., Scullion, H. & Dowling, P. J. (2009). Global staffing: A review and thematic research agenda. *International Journal of Human Resource Management,* 20(6), 1253-1272.

Conway, N. & Briner, R. B. (2002). A daily diary study of affective responses to psychological contract breach and exceeded promises. *Journal of Organizational Behavior,* 23, 287-302.

Conway, N. & Briner, R. B. (2005). *Understanding psychological contracts at work: A critical evaluation of theory and research.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Conway, N. & Briner, R. B. (2009). Fifty years of psychological contract research: What do we know and what are the main challenges? In Hodgkinson, G. P. & Ford, J. K. (eds.), *International Review of Industrial and Organizational Psychology.* New York: Wiley.

Conway, N. & Coyle-Shapiro, J. A. M. (2012). The reciprocal relationship between psychological contract fulfilment and employee performance and the moderating role of perceived organizational support and tenure. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 85(2), pp. 277-299.

Coyle-Shapiro, J. & Kessler, I. (2000). Consequences of the psychological contract for the employment relationship: A large scale survey. *Journal of Management Studies,* 37(7), 903-930.

Coyle-Shapiro, J. A. M. & Parzefall, M. (2008). Psychological contracts. In Cooper, C. L. & Barling, J. (eds.), *The SAGE handbook of organizational behaviour.* London: SAGE Publications.

Cropanzano, R. & Mitchell, M. S. (2005). Social exchange theory: An interdisciplinary review. *Journal of Management,* 31(6), 874-900.

Cropanzano, R. & Rupp, D. E. (2008). Social exchange theory and organizational justice: Job performance, citizenship behaviors, multiple foci, and a historical integration of two literatures. In Gilliland, S. W., Skarlicki, D. P. & Steiner, D. D. (eds.), *Research in social issues in management: Justice, morality, and social responsibility*. Greenwich, CT: IAP.

Cullinane, N. & Dundon, T. (2006). The psychological contract: A critical review. *International Journal of Management Reviews,* 8(2), 113-129.

Dabic, M., Gonzalez-Loureiro, M. & Harvey, M. (2015). Evolving research on expatriates: What is 'known' after four decades (1970–2012). *The International Journal of Human Resource Management.* 26(3), 316-337.

Dabos, D. E. & Rousseau, D. (2004). Mutuality and reciprocity in the psychological contracts of employees and employers. *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 89(1), 52-72.

Darley, J. M., Fleming, J. H., Hilton, J. L. & Swann, W. B. (1988). Dispelling negative expectancies: The impact of interaction goals and target characteristics on the expectancy confirmation process. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology,* 24(1),19-36

David, M. & Sutton, C. D. (2004). *Social research: the basics.* London: SAGE.

Daymon, C. & Holloway, I. (2004). *Qualitative Research Methods in public Relations and Marketing Communications.* London: Routledge.

De Hauw, S. & De Vos, A. (2010). Millennials' career perspective and psychological contract expectations: Does the recession lead to lowered expectations? *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 25(2), 293-302.

De Vos, A. & Freese, C. (2011). Sensemaking during Organizational Entry: Changes in Newcomer Information Seeking and the Relationship with Psychological Contract Fulfillment. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology,* 84(2), 288-314.

De Vos, A. (2005). The psychological contract of organisational newcomers: An investigation of antecedents and changes over time. *International Journal of Human Resources Development and Management,* 5(4), 371-388.

De Vos, A., Buyens, D. & Schalk, R. (2003). Psychological contract development during organizational socialization: Adaptation to reality and the role of reciprocity. *Journal of Organizational Behavior,* 24, 537-559.

De Vos, A., Buyens, D. & Schalk, R. (2005). Making sense of a new employment relationship: Psychological contract-related information seeking and the role of work values and locus of control. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment,* 13(1), 41-52.

Delios, A. & Bjorkman, I. (2000). Expatriate staffing in foreign subsidiaries of Japanese multinational corporations in the PRC and the United States. *International Journal of Human Resource Management,* 11(2), 278-293.

Denzin, K. N. & Lincoln, Y. S. (2009). *Qualitative research.* Yogyakarta: PustakaPelajar.

Doherty, N., Dickmann, M. & Mills, T. (2011). Exploring the motives of company-backed and self- initiated expatriates. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 22(3), 595-611.

Doherty, N., Richardson, J. & Thorn, K. (2013). Self-initiated expatriation and self-initiated expatriates: Clarification of the research stream. *Career Development International*, 18(1), 97-112.

Earley, P. C. & Ang S. (2003). *Cultural intelligence: Individual interactions across cultures*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.

Easterby-Smith, M., Richard, T. & Paul, J. (2012). *Management research.* London: SAGE.

Edstrom, A. & Galbraith, J. R. (1977). Transfer of managers as a coordination and control strategy in multinational organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly,* 22(2), 248-263.

Ernst and Young. (2018). *Belt and Road-exploring a blueprint for steady growth in oversea investment.* [Online]. [Accessed 20th June 2019]. Available from: https://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/ey-china-overseas-investment-report-issue-7-en/$FILE/ey-china-overseas-investment-report-issue-7-en.pdf

Fang, T. (2001). Book Review “Guanxi and business” (Book by Yadong Luo, World Scientific Publishing Co. Pte. Ltd, 2000, xiii, 342 pp.). *Journal of Asian Business,* 17(1), 119-120.

Fang, Y., Jiang, G. L. F., Makino, S. & Beamish, P. W. (2010). Multinational firm knowledge, use of expatriates, and foreign subsidiary performance. *Journal of Management Studies,* 47(1), 27-54.

Feitosa, J., Kreutzer, C. & Kramperth, A. (2014). Expatriate Adjustment: Considerations for selection and Training. *Journal of Global Mobility,* 2(2), 134-159.

Firth, B., Chen, G., Kirkman, B. & Kim, K. (2014). Newcomers Abroad: Expatriate Adaptation during Early Phases of International Assignments. *The Academy of Management Journal,* 57(1), 280-300.

Fiske, S. T. (1993). Social cognition and social perception. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 44, 155-194.

Fiske, S. T. & Taylor, S. E. (1991). *Social Cognition*. New York, NY: Random House.

Freese, C. & Schalk, R. (2008). How to measure the psychological contract? A critical criteria-based review of measures. *South African Journal of Psychology,* 38(2), 269-286.

Fritz, W., Mollenberg, A. & Chen, G. M. (2002). Measuring Intercultural Sensitivity in Different Cultural Contexts. *Intercultural Communication Studies,* 11(2), 165-176.

Froese, F. J. & Peltokorpi, V. (2013). Organizational expatriates and self-initiated expatriates: differences in cross-cultural adjustment and job satisfaction. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management,* 24(10), 1953-1967.

Gao, L., Liu, X. & Zou, H. (2013). The role of human mobility in promoting Chinese outward FDI: A neglected factor? *International Business Review,* 22(2), 437-449.

Gong, Y. (2003). Subsidiary staffing in multinational enterprises: agency, resources, and performance. *Academy of Management Journal,* 46(6), 728-739.

Graf, A. (2004). Screening and training inter-cultural competencies: Evaluating the impact of national culture on inter-cultural competencies. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management,* 15, 1124-1148.

Green, C., Duan, N., Gibbons, R., Hoagwood, K., Palinkas, L., & Wisdom, J. (2015). Approaches to mixed methods dissemination and implementation research: Methods, strengths, caveats, and opportunities. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research,* 42(5), 508-523.

Guba, E. G. (1990). The alternative paradigm dialog. In Guba, E. G. (ed.), *The paradigm dialog*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Guba, E. G. & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Guchait, P., Cho, S. & Meurs, J. A. (2015). Psychological Contracts, Perceived Organizational and Supervisor Support: Investigating the Impact on Intent to Leave Among Hospitality Employees in India. *Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality & Tourism,* 14(3), 290-315.

Guest, D. (2000). *The Psychological Contract in the Public Sector: The Results of the 2000 CIPD Survey of the Employment Relationship*. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

Guzzo, R. A., Noonan, K. A. & Elron, E. (1994). Expatriate managers and the psychological contract. *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 79(4), 617-626.

Halsberger, A. & Brewster, C. (2009). Capital gains: Expatriate adjustment and the psychological contract in international careers. *Human Resource Management,* 48(3), 379-397

Harris, H. (2002). Strategic management of international workers. *Innovations in international HR*, 28(1), 1-5.

Harrison, D., Shaffer, M. & Bhaskar-Shrinivas, P. (2004). Going places: Roads more and less traveled in research on expatriate experiences. *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management,* 23, 199-247.

Harvey, M. & Moeller, M. (2009). Expatriate managers: A historical review. *International Journal of Management Reviews,* 11(3), 275-296.

Harvey, M. G. (1989). Repatriation of corporate executives: an empirical study. *Journal of International Business Studies,* 20(1), 131-144.

Harzing, A. W. (2001). Of bears, bumble-bees, and spiders: The role of expatriates in controlling foreign subsidiaries. *Journal of World Business*, 36(4), 366-379.

Harzing, A. W. & Sorge, A. (2003). The Relative Impact of Country of Origin and Universal Contingencies on Internationalization Strategies and Corporate Control in Multinational Enterprises: Worldwide and European Perspective. *Organization Studies,* 24(2), 187-214.

Hatch, M. J. & Cunliffe, A. L. (2006). *Organization Theory* (2nd ed.). NY: Oxford University Press.

Hechanova, R., Beehr, T. A. & Christansen, N. D. (2003). Antecedents and Consequences of Employees' Adjustment to Overseas Adjustment: A Meta-analytic Review. *Applied Psychology An International Review*, 52(2), 213-236.

Henderson, D. J., Wayne, S. J., Shore, L. M., Bommer, W. H. & Tetrick, L. E. (2009). Leader–Member Exchange, Differentiation, and Psychological Contract Fulfillment: A Multilevel Examination. *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 93(6), 1208-1219.

Henning, E., Van Rensburg, W. & Smit, B. (2004). *Finding your way in qualitative research.* Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Hocking, J. B., Brown, M. & Harzing, A. W. K. (2004). A knowledge transfer perspective of strategic assignment purposes and their path-dependent outcomes. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 15(3), 565-586.

Hofstede, G., Neuijen, B., Ohayv, D. & Sanders, G. (1990). Measuring organizational cultures: a qualitative and quantitative study across twenty cases. *Administrative Science Quarterly,* 35, 285-316.

Howard, C. G. (1974). Model for design of a selection program for multinational executives. *Public Personnel management,* 3(2), 138-145.

Huang, T. J., Chi, S. C. & Lawler, J. J. (2005). The relationship between expatriates' personality traits and their adjustment to international assignments. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 16(9),1656-1670.

Hui, C., Lee, C. & Rousseau, D. M. (2004). Psychological contract and organizational citizenship behavior in China: Investigating generalizability and instrumentality. *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 89(2), 311-321.

Javidan, M. & House, R. (2001). Cultural acumen for the global manager: lessons from Project GLOBE. *Organizational Dynamics.* 29(4), 289-305.

Jimenéz-Jimenéz, D., Martínez-Costa, M. & Sanz-Valle, R. (2014). MNCs Innovation, Reverse Knowledge Transfer and Firm Absorptive Capacity. *Electronic Journal of Knowledge Management,* 12(1), 47-55.

Johnson, K. & Duxbury, L. (2010). The view from the field: A case study of the expatriate boundary-spanning role. *Journal of World Business*, 45(1), 29-40.

Jokinen, T., Brewster, C. & Suutari, V. (2008). Career capital during international work experiences: contrasting self-initiated expatriate experiences and assigned expatriation. *International Journal of Human Resource Management,* 19(6), 979-998.

Jonassen, D. H. (1991). Objectivism versus constructivism: do we need a new philosophical paradigm? *Educational Technology Research and Development,* 39(3), 5-14.

Katou, A. & Budhwar, P. (2012). The Link Between HR Practices, Psychological Contract Fulfillment, and Organizational Performance: The Case of the Greek Service Sector. *Thunderbird International Business Review,* 54(6), 793-809.

Kealey, D. J. & Protheroe, D. R. (1996). The effectiveness of cross-cultural training for expatriates: An assessment of the literature on the issue. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations,* 20(2), 141-165.

Khatri, N. (2009). Consequences of Power Distance Orientation in Organisations. *Vision: The Journal of Business Perspective,* 13(1), 1-9.

Kiazad, K. (2010). Responses to psychological contract breach: moderating effects of organisational-embeddedness. Melbourne: Custom Book Centre.

Kim, H. D. & Tung, R. (2013). Opportunities and challenges for expatriates in emerging markets: An exploratory study of Korean expatriates in India. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management,* 24(5), 1029-1050.

King, N. (2004). Using templates in the thematic analysis of text. In Cassell, C. & Symon, G. (eds), *Essential Guide to Qualitative Methods in Organizational Research.* London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

King, R. C. & Bu, N. (2005). Perceptions of the mutual obligations between employees and employers: A comparative study of new generation IT professionals in China and the United States. *International Journal of Human Resource Management,* 16(1), 46-64.

Kobrin, S. J. (1988). Expatriate reduction and strategic control in American multinational corporations. *Human Resource Management,* 27(1), 63-75.

Kotter, J. P. (1973). The psychological contract: Managing the joining-up process. *California Management Review, 15*(3), 91-99.

Kraimer, M. L. & Wayne, S. J. (2004). An examination of POS as a multidimensional construct in the context of an expatriate assignment. *Journal of Management,* 30(2), 209-237.

Kraimer, M. L., Wayne, S. J. & Jaworski, R. A. (2001). Sources of support and expatriate performance: the mediating role of expatriate adjustment. *Personnel Psychology,* 54(1), 71-100.

Kraimer, M., Bolino, M. & Mead, B. (2016). Themes in expatriate and repatriate research over four decades: What do we know and what do we still need to learn? *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior,* 3(1), 1-27.

Kunze, M. & Phillips, J. (2012). The Influence of Employee Affect on Leader-Member Exchange and Perceptions of Psychological Contract Violation. *International Journal of Management and Marketing Research,* 4(2), 1-23.

Lam, A. (2003). Organizational learning in multinationals: R&D networks of Japanese and US MNEs in the UK. *Journal of Management Studies,* 40(3), 673-703.

Lau, C., Ngo, H. & Yiu, D. (2010). Internationalization and organizational resources of Chinese firms. *Chinese Management studies,* 4(3), 258-272.

Lavelle, J. J., Rupp, D. E. & Brockner, J. (2007). Taking a Multifoci Approach to the Study of Justice, Social Exchange, and Citizenship Behavior: The Target Similarity Model. *Journal of Management,* 33(6), 841-866.

Lavelle, J. J., Rupp, D. E. & Brockner, J. (2007). Multifoci perspectives and target similarity in organizational behavior: Bridging justice, commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior. *Journal of Management,* 33, 378-394.

Lazarova, M, Caligiuri, P. (2001). Retaining repatriates: the role of organizational support practices. *Journal of World Business,* 36(4), 389-401.

Lazarova, M. & Cerdin, J. L. (2007). Revisiting Repatriation Concerns: Organizational Support Versus Career and Contextual Influences. *Journal of International Business Studies.* 38(3), 404-429.

Lee, D. Y. & Dawes, P. L. (2005). *Guanxi*, Trust, and Long-term Orientation in Chinese Business Markets. *Journal of International Marketing*, 13(2), 28-56.

Lee, H. W. & Liu, C. H. (2006). The determinants of repatriate turnover intentions: An empirical analysis. *International Journal of Management,* 23(4), 751-762.

Lee, J. (2005). Communication as antecedents and consequences of LMX development globally: A new strong inference approach. In GRAEN, G. & GRAEN, J. (eds.), *Global organizing designs.* Greenwich, Connecticut: IAP.

Lee, L. Y. & Sukoco, B. (2010). The effects of cultural intelligence on expatriate performance: the moderating effects of international experience. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management,* 21(7), 963-981.

Lee, L. Y., Veasna, S. & Sukoco, B. M. (2014). The antecedents of cultural effectiveness of expatriation: Moderating effects of psychological contracts. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources,* 52, 215-233.

Levinson, H., Price, C. R., Munden, K. J., Mandl, H. J. & Solley, C. M. (1962). *Men, Management and Mental Health.* Boston: Harvard University Press.

Lewis, K. & Taylor, S. M. (2001). Reciprocity from the Organisation's Side: Managers Reactions to Employee Psychological Contract Breach, paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, San Diego, April.

Lin, L. (2011). Cultural and Organizational Antecedents of *Guanxi*: The Chinese Cases. *Journal of Business Ethics,* 99, 441-451.

Littrell, L., Salas, E., Hess, K., Paley, M. & Riedel, S. (2006). Expatriate Preparation: A critical analysis of 25 years of cross-cultural training research. *Human Resource Development Review,* 5(3), 355-388.

Liu, Y. (2009). Perceived Organizational Support and Expatriate Organizational Citizenship Behavior: The Mediating Role of Affective Commitment Towards the Parent Company. *Personnel Review,* 38(3), 307-319.

Liu,Y. & Ipe, M. (2010). The impact of organizational and leader-member support on expatriate commitment. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management,* 21(7), 1035-1048.

Lo, S. & Aryee, S. (2003). Psychological Contract Breach in a Chinese Context: An Integrative Approach. *Journal of Management Studies.* 40(4), 1005-1020.

Loi, R., Ao, O. K. & Xu, A. J. (2014). Perceived organizational support and coworker support as antecedents of foreign workers' voice and psychological stress. *International Journal of Hospitality Management,* 36, 23-30.

Louis, M. R. (1980). Surprise and sense-making: What newcomers experience in entering unfamiliar organizational settings. *Administrative Science Quarterly,* 25(2), 226-251.

Luo, Y. & Tung, R. (2007). International Expansion of Emerging Market Enterprises: A Springboard Perspective. *Journal of International Business Studies,* 38(4), 481-498.

Lyles, M., Li, D. & Yan, H. (2014). Chinese outward foreign direct investment performance: The role of learning. *Management & Organization Review*, 10(3), 411-437.

Malterud, K., Siersma, V. & Guassora, A. D. (2015). Sample Size in Qualitative Interview Studies: Guided by Information Power. *Qualitative Health Research,* 1-8.

March, J. G. & Simon, H. A. (1958). *Organizations*. Oxford: Wiley.

Marks, A. (2001). Developing a multiple foci conceptualization of the psychological contract. *Employee Relations,* 23(5), 454-469.

Maxwell, J. A. (1992). Understanding and validity in qualitative research. *Harvard Educational Review,* 62(3), 279-300.

Mayerhofer, H., Hartmann, L. C. & Herbert, A. (2004). Career management issues for flexpatriate international staff. *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 46(6), 647- 666.

Mayrhofer, W., Reichel, A. & Sparrow, P. (2012). Alternative forms of international working. In Stahl, G., Björkman, I. & Morris, S. (eds.), *Handbook of Research into International HRM*, London: Edward Elgar.

McEvoy, G. & Buller, P. (2013). Research for Practice: The Management of Expatriates. *Thunderbird International Business Review,* 55(2), 213-226.

McEvoy, P. & Richards, D. (2006). A critical realist rationale for using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. *Journal of Research in Nursing,* 11(1), 66-78.

McKenna, S. (2010). “Adjustment” of the independent expatriate – a case study of Doug. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management,* 5(3), 280-298.

McKenna, S. & Richard, J. (2007). The increasing complexity of the internationally mobile professional: Issues for research and practice. *Cross Cultural Management*,14(4), 307-320.

McNulty, Y. & Selmer, J. (2016). *Research Handbook of Expatriates.* Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

McNulty, Y. & Chris B. (2016). The concept of business expatriates. In McNulty, Y. & Selmer, J. (eds.), *Research Handbook of Expatriates.* Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Mendenhall, M. & Oddou, G. (1985). The dimensions of expatriate acculturation: a review. *The Academy of Management Review,* 10(1), 39-47.

Mendenhall, M. E. & Oddou, G. (1988). The overseas assignment: A practical look. *Business Horizons,* 31(5), 78-84.

Mendenhall, M. E., Dunbar, E. & Oddou, G. (1987). Expatriate Selection, Training and Career Pathing: A Review and Critique. *Human Resource Management,* 26(3), 331-345.

Miao, L. & Wang, H. W. (2017). *International Migration of China: Status, Policy and Social Responses to the Globalization of Migration.* Springer Singapore.

Min, H., Vincent, P. & Singal M. (2013). Perceived Corporate Training Investment as a Driver of Expatriate Adjustment. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management,* 25(5), 740-759.

Minbaeva, D. B. & Michailova, S. (2004). Knowledge transfer and expatriation in multinational corporations: The role of disseminative capacity. *Employee Relations,* 26(6), 663-679.

Mitton, C., Adair, C., Mckenzie, E., Patten, S. & Perry, B. (2008). Knowledge Transfer and Exchange: Review and Synthesis of the Literature. *The Milbank quarterly,* 85(4), 729-768.

MOFCOM. (2017). *Statistical bulletin of China's outward foreign direct investment*. Beijing: China Statistics Press.

Mol, S. T., Born, M. P., Willemsen, M. E. & Van Der Molen, H. T. (2005). Predicting expatriate job performance for selection purposes: a quantitative review. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology.* 36(5), 590-620.

Morris, M. A. & Robie, C. (2001). A meta-analysis of the effects of cross-cultural training on expatriate performance and adjustment. *International Journal of Training and Development,* 5(2), 112-125.

O'Sullivan, A. & O'Sullivan, S. (2008). The performance challenges of expatriate supplier teams: A multi-firm case study. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 19(6), 999-1017.

O'Donohue, W., Martin, A. & Torugsa, N. (2015). Understanding individual responses to failure by the organization to fulfil its obligations: Examining the influence of psychological capital and psychological contract type. *Human Resource Management Journal,* 25(1), 131-147.

Paik, Y. & Sohn, J. D. (2004). Expatriate managers and MNC's ability to control international subsidiaries: The case of Japanese MNCs. *Journal of World Business,* 39(1), 61-71.

Paik, Y. & Sohn, J. H. D. (2004). Striking a balance between global integration and local responsiveness: the case of Toshiba Corporation in redefining regional headquarters' role. *Organizational Analysis,* 12(4), 347-359.

Park, S. H. & Luo, T. (2001). *Guanxi* and Organizational Dynamic: Organizational Networking in Chinese Firms. *Strategic Management Journal,* 22, 455-477.

Pate, J. & Scullion, H. (2009). The changing nature of the traditional expatriate psychological contract. *Employee Relations,* 32(1), 56-73.

Pate, J. & Scullion, H. (2018). The flexpatriate psychological contract: a literature review and future research agenda. *International Journal of Human Resource Management,* 29(8), 1402-1425.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Peiperl, M., Levy, O. & Sorell, M. (2014). Cross-border mobility of self-initiated and organizational expatriates. *International Studies of Management & Organization,* 44(3), 44-65.

Peltokorpi, V. (2008). Cross-cultural adjustment of expatriates in Japan. *International journal of human resource management,* 19(9), 1588-1606.

Peltokorpi, V. & Vaara, E. (2014). Knowledge transfer in multinational corporations: Productive and counterproductive effects of language-sensitive recruitment. *Journal of International Business Studies,* 45(5), 600-622.

Perera, H. K., Chew, E. Y. T. & Nielsen, I. (2017). A Psychological Contract Perspective of Expatriate Failure. *Human Resource Management,* 56(3). 479-499.

Pérez, J., Brewster, C. & Suutari, V. (2001). Expatriation: A Developing Research Agenda. *Thunderbird International Business Review,* 43(1), 3-20.

Redding, S. G. & Hsiao, M. (1990). An Empirical Study of Overseas Chinese Managerial Ideology. *International Journal of psychology,* 25(3-6), 629-641.

Reiche, B. S., Kraimer, M. L. & Harzing, A. W. (2009). Inpatriates as agents of cross-unit knowledge flows in multinational corporations. In: Sparrow, P. (ed). *Handbook of international human resource management: Integrating people, process and context*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Reiche, S. & Harzing, A. W. (2010). International assignment. In Harzing, A. W. & Pinnington, A. (eds), *International Human Resource Management.* London: SAGE.

Reichers, A. E. (1985). A review and reconceptualization of organizational commitment. *Academy of Management Review,* 10(3), 465-476.

Reis, H. T. & Gable, S. L. (2000). Event-sampling and other methods for studying everyday experience. In Reis, H. T. & Judd, C. M. (eds), *Handbook of Research Methods in Social and Personality Psychology,* New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Richardson, J. (2016). Case study research on expatriates. In McNulty, Y. & Selmer, J. (eds.), *The Research Handbook of Expatriates*, London: Edward Elgar.

Richardson, J. & McKenna, S. (2014). Towards an understanding of social networks among organizational self-initiated expatriates: a qualitative case study of a professional services firm. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 25(19), 2627-2643.

Riusala K, Suutari V. 2004. International knowledge transfers through expatriates. *Thunderbird International Business Review,* 46(6), 743-770.

Robinson, S. L. & Rousseau, D. M. (1994). Violating the psychological contract: Not the exception but the norm. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 15*(3), 245-259.

Robinson, S. L., Kraatz, M. & Rousseau, D. M. (1994). Changing obligations and the psychological contract: A longitudinal study. *Academy of Management Journal,* 37(1), 137-152.

Robson, C. (2002). *Real world research: A resource for social scientists and practitioner-researchers*. Oxford: BLACKWELL PUBLISHING.

Roehling, M. V. (1997). The origins and early development of the psychological contract construct. *Journal of Management History,* 3(2), 204-217.

Rousseau, D. (1989). Psychological and implied contracts in organizations. *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal,* 2(2), 121-139.

Rousseau, D. (1989). Psychological and implied contracts in organizations. *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal,* 2(2), 121-139.

Rousseau, D. (1990). New hire perceptions of their own and their employer's obligations: A study of psychological contracts. *Journal of Organizational Behavior,* 11(5), 389-400.

Rousseau, D. (1995). *Psychological contracts in organisations: Understanding written and unwritten agreements.* Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Rousseau, D. (1998). The 'problem' of the psychological contract considered. *Journal of Organizational Behavior,* 19(Special Issue), 665-671.

Rousseau, D. (2000). *Psychological contract inventory: Technical report*. Pittsburgh: Carnegie Mellon University.

Rousseau, D. (2001). Schema, promise and mutuality: The building blocks of the psychological contract. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology,* 74(4), 511-541.

Rousseau, D. (2004). Psychological contracts in the workplace: Understanding the ties that motivate. *Academy of Management Executive,* 18(1), 120-127.

Rousseau, D. & Schalk, R. (2000). *Psychological Contracts in Employment: Cross-National Perspectives.* Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Rousseau, D. & Tijoriwala, S. (1998). Assessing psychological contracts: Issues, alternatives and types of measures. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 19*(Special Issue), 679-695.

Ruiter, D. M., Xander, L., Ellen, J. & Robert, B. (2016). Psychological contract fulfillment and expatriate intrinsic career success: the mediating role of identification with the multinational corporation. *International Journal of Human Resource Management,* 29(8), 1-28.

Salamin, X. & Hanappi, D. (2014). Women and international assignments. *Journal of Global Mobility,* 2(3), 343-374.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A. (2012). *Research Methods for Business Students.* Essex: Pearson Education Limited.

Schein, E. H. (1965). *Organizational Psychology.* Oxford: Prentice-Hall.

Schein, E. H. (1970). *Organizational psychology*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Schein, E. H. (1988). *Process consultation (rec. ed.).* Reading, MA: Assison-Wesley.

Scullion, H. & Collings, D. G. (2006). *Global staffing*. London: Routledge.

Scullion, H. & Paauwe, J. (2005). Strategic HRM in multinational companies. *International Human Resource Management: A Critical Text,* 22-46.

Selmer, J. (2002). Practice Makes Perfect? International Experience and Expatriate Adjustment. *Management International Review*, 42(1), 71-87.

Selmer, J. (2006). Language ability and adjustment: Western expatriates in China. *Thunderbird International Business Review,* 48(3), 347-368.

Sels, L. & Janssens, M. & Brande, I. (2004). Assessing the Nature of Psychological Contracts: A Validation of Six Dimensions. *Journal of Organizational Behavior,* 25(4), 461-488.

Shaffer, M. A., Harrison, D. A. & Gilley, K. M. (1999). Dimensions, determinants, and differences in the expatriate adjustment process. *Journal of International Business Studies,* 30(3), 557-581.

Shaffer, M. A., Harrison, D. A., Gregersen, H., Black, J.S. & Ferzandi, L. A. (2006). You can take it with you: individual differences and expatriate effectiveness. *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 91(1),109-125.

Shaffer, M. A., Kraimer, M. L., Chen, Y. P. & Bolino, M. C. (2012). Choices, challenges, and career consequences of global work experiences: a review and future agenda. *Journal of Management,* 38(4), 1282-1327.

Sherman, U. & Morley, M. J. (2016). Organizational Inputs to the Formation of the Expatriate Psychological Contract: Towards an Episodic Understanding. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 29(8), 1513-1536.

Shih, H. A., Chiang, Y. H. & Kim, I. S. (2005). Expatriate Performance Management from MNEs of Different National Origins. *International Journal of Manpower,* 26(2), 157-176.

Shin, S., Morgeson, F. & Campion, M. (2007). What you do depends on where you are: Understanding how domestic and expatriate work requirements depend upon the cultural context. *Journal of International Business Studies,* 38(1), 64-83.

Shore, L., Tetrick, L., Susan, M., Coyle-Shapiro, J., Liden, R., Parks, J., Morrison, E., Porter, L., Robinson, S., Roehling, M., Rousseau, D., Schalk, R., Tsui, A. & Van Dyne, L. (2004). The employee-organizational relationship: a timely concept in a period of transition. *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management*, 23, 291-370.

Shortland, S. (2011). Networking: a valuable career intervention for women expatriates? *Career Development International*, 16(3), 271-292.

Shortland, S. (2015). The 'expat factor': the influence of working time on women's decisions to undertake international assignments in the oil and gas industry. *International Journal of Human Resource Management,* 26(11), 1542-1473.

Silverman, D. (2000). Analyzing talk and text. *Handbook of qualitative research,* 2, 821-834.

Sims, R. & Schraeder, M. (2004) An Examination of Salient Factors Affecting Expatriate Culture Shock. *Journal of Business and Management*, 10(1), 73-88.

Sparrow, P. & Cooper, C. (1998). New Organizational Forms: The Strategic Relevance of Future Psychological Contract Scenarios. *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences,* 15(4), 356-371.

Sparrow, P. R. & Cooper, C. L. (2003). *The employment relationship: Key challenges for HR*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Sparrow, P., Brewster, C. & Harris, H. (2004). *Globalizing human resource management*. London: Routledge.

Stahl, G., Björkman, I. (2006). *Handbook of Research in International Human Resource Management.* Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.

Stake, R. E. (2005). Qualitative case studies. In Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research (3rd ed.).* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Steenkamp, J. B. E. M. (2001). The role of national culture in international marketing research. *International Marketing Review,* 18(1) 30-44.

Stinglhamber, F. & Vandenberghe, C. (2003). Organizations and Supervisors as Sources of Support and Targets of Commitment: A Longitudinal Study. *Journal of Organizational Behavior,* 24(3), 251-270.

Stinglhamber, F. & Vandenberghe, C. (2003). Organizations and Supervisors as Sources of Support and Targets of Commitment: A Longitudinal Study. *Journal of Organizational Behavior,* 24(3), 251-270.

Stoke, P. (2011). *Critical Concepts in Management and Organization Studies.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Sun, P. & Scott, J. (2003). Exploring the divide – organizational learning and learning organization. *The Learning Organization*, 10(4), 202-215.

Suutari, V., Brewster, C., Riusala, K. & Syrjäkari, S. (2013). Managing Non-Standard International Experience: Evidence from a Finnish Company. *Journal of Global Mobility,* 1(2), 118-138.

Tahvanainen, M., Welch, D. & Worm, V. (2005). Implications of Short-term International Assignments. *European Management Journal*, 23(6), 663-673.

Takeuchi, R. (2010). A critical review of expatriate adjustment research through a multiple stakeholder view: progress, emerging trends, and prospects. *Journal of Management,* 36(4), 1040-1064.

Takeuchi, R., Tesluk, P. E., Yun, S. & Lepak, D. P. (2005). An integrative view of international experience. *Academy of Management Journal,* 48(1), 85-100.

Takeuchi, R., Wang, M. & Marinova, S. V. (2009). Role of Domain-Specific Facets of Perceived Organizational Support During Expatriation and Implications for Performance. *Organization Science,* 20(3), 621-634.

Takeuchi, R., Wang, M., Marinova, S. V. & Yao, X. (2009). The role of domain-specific perceived organizational support during expatriation and their implications for performance. *Organization Science,* 20(3), 621-634.

Takeuchi, R., Yun, S. & Tesluk, P. E. (2002). An examination of crossover and spillover effects of spousal and expatriate cross-cultural adjustment on expatriate outcomes. *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 87(4)*,* 655-666.

Taylor, M. S. & Tekleab, A. G. (2004). Taking stock of psychological contract research: assessing progress, addressing troublesome issues, and setting research priorities. In Coyle-Shapiro, J., Shore, L. M., Taylor, M. S. & Tetrick, L. E. (eds.), *The Employment Relationship: Examining Contextual and Psychological Perspectives.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tekleab, A. & Taylor, S. (2003). Aren't there two parties in an employment relationship? Antecedents and consequences of organization-employee agreement on contract obligations and violations. *Journal of Organizational Behavior,* 24(5), 585-600.

Tekleab, A. G. & Chiaburu, D. S. (2011). Social exchange: Empirical examination of form and focus. *Journal of Business Research,* 64(5), 460-466.

Tetlock, P. E. (1992). The impact of accountability on judgment and choice: Toward a social contingency model. In Zanna, M. (ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Thomas, D., Liao, Y., Aycan, Z., Cerdin, J. L., Pekerti, A., Ravlin, E., Stahl, G., Lazarova, M., Fock, H., Arli, D., Moeller, M., Okimoto, T. & Van de Vijver, F. (2015). Cultural Intelligence: A Theory-based, Short Form Measure. *Journal of International Business Studies,* 46(9), 1099-1118.

Thomas, H. D. & Anderson, N. (1998). Changes in newcomers' psychological contracts during organizational socialization: A study of recruits entering the British army. *Journal of Organizational Behavior,* 19(Special Issue), 745-767.

Tomprou, M. & Nikolaou, I. (2010). A model of psychological contract creation upon organizational entry. *Career Development International*, 16(4), 342-363.

Tung, R. L. (1982). Selection and training procedures of US, European, and Japanese multinationals. *California Management Review,* 25(1), 57-71.

Tung, R. L. (1981). Selection and training of personnel for overseas assignments. *Columbia Journal of World Business,* 16(1), 68-78.

Tung, R. L. (1988). Career issues in international assignments. *The Academy of Management Executive,* 2(3), 241-244.

UNCTAD. (2016). *UNCTAD Annual Report*. [Online] [Accessed 20th June 2019]. Available from: https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/dom2017_en.pdf

UNCTAD. (2018). *World Investment Report.* [Online] [Accessed 21st May 2019]. Available from: https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/wir2018_en.pdf

Van Vianen, A. E. M., De Pater, I. E., Kristof-Brown, A. L. & Johnson, E. C. (2004). Fitting In: Surface- and Deep-level Cultural Differences and Expatriates' Adjustment. *Academy of Management Journal,* 47(5), 697-709.

Vidal, M. E. S., Valle, R. S. & Aragón, M. I. B. (2007). The adjustment process of Spanish repatriates: A case study. *International Journal of Human Resource Management,* 18(8), 1396-1417.

Wang, D., Fan, D., Freeman, S. & Zhu, C. (2017). Exploring cross-cultural skills for expatriate managers from Chinese multinationals: Congruence and contextualization. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management,* 34(1), 123-146.

Wang, S. L., Luo, Y., Lu, X., Sun, J. & Maksimov, V. (2014). Autonomy delegation to foreign subsidiaries: An enabling mechanism for emerging-market multinationals. *Journal of International Business Studies,* 45(2), 111-130.

Wang, X. & Kanungo, R. N. (2004). Nationality, social network and psychological well-being: Expatriates in China. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management,* 15(4-5), 775-793.

Westwood, R., Sparrow, P. & Leung, A. (2001). Challenges to the psychological contract in Hong Kong. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management,* 12(4), 621-651

Wooldridge, A. (2010). The world turned upside down. A special report on innovation in emerging market. *The Economist,* 1-14.

Yan, A., Zhu, G. & Hall, D. (2002). International assignments for career building: A model of Agency relationships and psychological contracts. *Academy of Management Review,* 27(3), 373-391.

Yang, Z., Wang, X. & Su, S. (2006). A review of research methodologies in international business. *International Business Review*, 15(6), 601-617.

Yeung, H. W. C. & Olds, K. (2000). *Globalization of Chinese Business Firms.* London: MACMILLAN PRESS LTD.

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case Study Research Design and Methods (4th ed.).* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Zahra, S. A. (2011). Doing research in the (New) Middle East: sailing with the wind. *The Academy of Management Perspectives,* 25(4), 6-21.

Zeira, Y. & Banai, M. (1985). Selection of expatriate managers in MNCs: the host-environment point of view. *International Studies of Management & Organization,* 15(1), 33-51.

Zhang, M. & Fan, D. (2014). Expatriate Skills Training Strategies of Chinese Multinationals Operating in Australia. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, 52(1), 60-76.