

**Patricia Asunción Loiza Calderón**

[patricialc@hotmail.com](mailto:patricialc@hotmail.com)

**UNIGRANRIO**

**Sérgio Eduardo de PinhoVelho Wanderley**

[sergio.wanderley@unigranrio.edu.br](mailto:sergio.wanderley@unigranrio.edu.br)

**UNIGRANRIO**

**Vanessa Faria Silva**

[vanessa.admufrrj@gmail.com](mailto:vanessa.admufrrj@gmail.com)

**UNIGRANRIO**

**"Lives in between": identities (re) configuration of Brazilian Multinationals'  
expats in multiple dimensions**

**Preferred stream:** Identities and Employee Relations

**Introduction**

The purpose of this article is to give attention to essentially human aspects ignored by the *mainstream* IHRM literature, such as, the identity transformations resulting from international mobility. Thus, this study presents theoretical and empirical contributions in order to understand how the experiences of Brazilian expatriate executives from Multinational companies (re)configure their identities as a result of international mobility.

The Purpose and contributions to Global South literature is to interpret, understand, and reflect on expatriates experiences, i.e. experiences in terms of personal, social, workplace, organizational, ethnic, national/plural, political, and religious identity (GUERRERO ARIAS, 2002; BURKE, 2017; de FREITAS; 2010, BROWN, 2021; JOLY, 2012; MACHADO, 2003; MACHADO and HERNANDES, 2004; PIMENTEL and CARRIERI, 2011).

Although there are many conceptual contributions about identity (BROWN, 2021), and there are few empirical studies addressing specific processes of identity construction at various levels, for example, individual, social, and collective linked to work. The scarce literature addressing the issue of identity related to the expatriation/repatriation process considering the polysemy of identity is a gap that needs to be filled.

In his work "Lives in Between", Spitzer (2001) presents the experience of assimilation and mobility within class society of three families that are part of two or more social worlds. For this author, the three families experience a "liminal situation between two worlds, in which individuals in the process of assimilation often discover themselves as a result of the barriers built to prevent their social integration. (*op cit.* , p. 16). In other words, he presents the phenomenon that happens between the **expatriation** and **repatriation of** the characters chosen in his work. That is, the **life of the in-between**, which can be understood as the life that belongs to two worlds; without, however, belonging fully to either of them.

In fact, in narrating the tribulations the characters went through in trying to cope with marginalization, the author relates suicide as "an extreme response, amid a broad category of escapist reactions, to the misfortune of marginalization" (*op cit.*, p. 200). Complementing this, Schutz (1979, p. 94) cites the **marginal man**, according to Park and Stonequist, as being a "cultural hybrid at the margin of two different patterns of group life, not knowing to which one he belongs". Thus, the contributions of Simmel (1983); Schutz and Spitzer with the mentioned works, in particular the account of the trajectories of the **Lives in Between** and the concept of **marginal man**, present themselves pertinent in the face of the object of study of this article, the (re)configuration of the identities of Brazilian expatriate/repatriate executives of MNC's.

### **Methodology**

The research of qualitative approach, with an analytical-descriptive orientation, relied on bibliographic and field research through semi-structured interviews with 21 (twenty-one) Brazilian expatriates working in multinational companies (MNC's) as participants. The interpretation of the collected material followed the guidelines of the "categorical content analysis".

### **Discussion and results**

The results of the analyses show the multidimensional character of identity, as well as the reconfiguration to a lesser or greater extent in an international context, affecting values, attitudes and behaviors of the interviewees; moreover, expatriation revealed itself as a contradictory process of losses and gains, of challenges and learning, of disruption and continuous (re)configuration, where the human problems of intercultural adaptation were excluded and ignored by the MNE's.

In the light of Simmel (1983), Schutz (1979) and Spitzer (2001), one can deduce that there is a phenomenon that illustrates life between the moment of expatriation and the moment of repatriation and this is called: **life in between**. These authors coined a theory that says that this phenomenon occurs when the expatriate has difficulty absorbing the culture of the country of arrival and does not lose the culture of the country of departure. On the other hand, if he goes back to his/her country of origin, he/she will feel strange too; then the expatriate lives in two worlds that do not fully converse, in a

certain gray area that generates a series of identity problems and, in some cases, leading to personal problems, such as, for example: suicide, as pointed out by the aforementioned author.

This research contributes to unraveling the neoliberal discourse that hides IHRM policies and practices fundamentally aimed at efficiency and effectiveness to the detriment of the "human". I draw attention to the growing process of *dehumanization* in organizations and *human dispensability*, which consider people as "resources", objectifying their nature and ignoring their subjectivity and identity. On the other hand, even if in a simple way, the research findings contribute with theory to the area of IHRM from Brazil as a *locus of enunciation*, highlighting the possibilities of Brazilian Management.

## References

Brown, A. D. (2022). Identities in and around organizations: Towards an identity work perspective. *Human Relations*, 75(7), 1205-1237.

Burke, P. (2017). *Perdas e ganhos: exilados e expatriados na história do conhecimento na Europa e nas Américas, 1500-2000*. SciELO-Editora UNESP.

de Freitas, M. E. (2010). Expatriação profissional: o desafio interdependente para empresas e indivíduos. *Gestão e Sociedade*, 4(9), 689-708.

Guerrero Arias, P. (2002). La cultura: estrategias conceptuales para entender la identidad, la diversidad, la alteridad y la diferencia.

Joly, A. (1996). Alteridade: ser executivo no exterior. *O indivíduo na organização: dimensões esquecidas*, 3, 83-124.

Machado, H. V. (2003). A identidade e o contexto organizacional: perspectivas de análise. *Revista de Administração Contemporânea*, 7, 51-73.

Machado, H. V., & Hernandez, C. A. (2004). Alteridade, expatriação e trabalho: implicações para a gestão organizacional. *Revista de Administração Contemporânea*, 8, 53-73.

Pimentel, T. D., & Carrieri, A. D. P. (2011). A espacialidade na construção da identidade. *Cadernos Ebape. BR*, 9, 1-21.

Schutz, A. (1979). Fenomenologia e relações sociais. Tradução de Ângela Melin. *Fenomenologia e relações sociais*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar.

Simmel, G. (1983). O estrangeiro. *Sociologia. São Paulo: Ática*, 182-188.

Spitzer, L. (2001). *Vidas de Entremeio: assimilação e marginalização na Áustria, no Brasil e na África Ocidental, 1780-1945*. Eduerj.