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Married, mom and manager – how can this be combined with an international career?

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine the experiences of females combining global careers, in particular, frequent international business travel and a dual-career family. With the increasing popularity of alternate forms of expatriation, females have the opportunity to follow a global career while being in a dual-career partnership and having children. Previous research has suggested that alternatives to long-term expatriation, such as international business travel, are considered more family friendly. Integrating family and international business travel, however, still poses many challenges to women. This paper examines the ways in which they handle this challenging situation according to social capital theory. It presents initial exploratory insights stemming from interview data including 25 female international business travelers living in dual-career families from four Western and non-Western countries on four different continents. These interviews, which were analyzed using template

analysis, show common ways and similar experiences and understanding of integrating family and career life as female non-traditional expatriates across cultures. Differences remain, however, because of conditions in the local environment.

Keywords:

cross-cultural research dual-career family global careers international business traveler
non-traditional expatriates social capital theory

Notes

1. Brookfield's Global Mobility Trends Survey which has been conducted for 20 years now, asks companies of all sizes about their activities around international assignments. Similar types of questions with only marginal changes allow to observe developments and long-term comparisons. For the current report ([2015](#)), the sample comprised 143 companies worldwide.
2. For instance, German-speaking societies have been considered to support a 'male-breadwinner female part-time care model', whereas other countries such as the Nordic European countries emphasize a 'dual breadwinner/external care model' (Pfau-Effinger, [2012](#)).
3. Four Austrian and seven Colombian interviews that are also included in this study were conducted during a research project at the department. The same guiding questions as in the other interviews were used and interview results were checked on their usability for this study beforehand by the authors, as they were conducted by a research assistant.
4. The quotations include notations such as C3₇₀ referring to the interviewee's country of origin (e.g. A ... Austria, C ... Canada, CO ... Colombia, T ... Taiwan), the number of interview in the respective country (e.g. 3rd interview in Canada), and the position of the quote in the interview (e.g. 70th statement in the interview).
5. 'Rabenmutter' ('raven mother') which compares working women to ravens whose offspring seem to be left alone and thus helpless and being forced to leave their nests too soon.

Additional information

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