

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

THE IMPACT OF CONTEMPORARY GLOBAL MOBILITY ON THE FAMILY WHO STAYS BEHIND

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Human Resource Management at Massey University, Albany, New Zealand

Joanne Kim Mutter
2017

Abstract

This thesis considers the impact of contemporary global mobility on the lives of the stay-behind family. Organisations are increasingly utilising flexible modes of global mobility to meet their international obligations, including frequent international business travel, commuting, and short-term assignments. However, research has continued to lag practice. The aim of this study is to understand the work and non-work implications of living with contemporary global mobility. Specifically, the research is guided by two questions: i) how have the home lives of the stay-behind family members been affected by the contemporary global mobility of their partner or parent? and ii) how has the career of the stay-behind partner been impacted by the global mobility undertaken by their partner?

Through a lens of social constructionism, this study uses qualitative semi-structured interviews to give voice to the families of international sailors, who are employed across the continuum of contemporary global mobility. The limitations of the context-specific sample are considered justifiable in exchange for access to the often ignored voice of the child.

The findings make theoretical, methodological and practical contributions to contemporary global mobility, work-family, and career scholarship. They enhance understanding of the demands borne by those who stay behind, and the resources they utilise to manage their ever-evolving situation. The development of the Work Family Mobility Framework, as viewed through the lens of contemporary global mobility, is the overarching contribution of the thesis. The applicability of the Kaleidoscope Career to contemporary global mobility is the primary career contribution. Incorporating children makes a methodological contribution, while the practical suggestions emerging from the findings provide focus for improving the lives of those who stay behind.

Future research is required to test the Work-Family Mobility Framework in other contemporary global mobility communities, and with a sample including both male and female travellers. Longitudinal studies are recommended to investigate the impacts of this global mobility over time. Finally, it is recommended that the Kaleidoscope Career Model be further explored within the global mobility context.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank those who have made my journey possible.

Dr Kaye Thorn and Dr Margot Edwards, your unwavering faith gave me the confidence to believe I could complete this life changing challenge. Your guidance has been instrumental in ensuring the academic rigour, and the clarity, of my thesis.

To my fellow PhD candidates based on the Albany campus, I enjoyed our group learning sessions, but even more so, I appreciated those five minute chats while waiting for the kettle to boil in the staff lounge. It was those collegial moments that proved invaluable, in terms of mutual understanding, and also in prompting the occasional academic epiphany.

To my lifelong friends Rachel and Lee, thank you for always asking after my research, even though the halls of academia are worlds away from your busy and successful corporate lives. You were my intelligent, yet uninformed audience, whose questions often proved incredibly insightful.

To the women and children from the contemporary global mobility community, thank you so very much for gifting me your time. I hope my work has done your stories justice, and that in some way my contributions will make your lives just that little bit easier.

Finally, to my family. I would like to thank my mother who through her life lived has shown me that strong women are capable of achieving anything. I would also like to thank her and Paul for being my second and third pair of hands when I was the stay-behind parent. And to the faux farmer and my two beloved children, without your love, support, and sacrifice this would not have been possible. Thank you.

Publications

Mutter, J. (2017). The global mobility decisions of professional sailors' spouses.

Journal of Global Mobility: The Home of Expatriate Management Research,
5(2), 203-219. doi: 10.1108/JGM-08-2016-0035

Mutter, J. (2015, December). *A model of the work-family interface: Through the lens of contemporary global mobility*. Interactive paper presented at the Australia and New Zealand Academy of Management Conference, Queenstown, NZ.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|------|
| Abstract | ii |
| Acknowledgements | iii |
| Publications | iv |
| Table of Contents | v |
| List of Figures | xii |
| List of Tables..... | xiii |
| Chapter 1 Introduction..... | 1 |
| 1.1 Locating the Research | 2 |
| 1.2 Research Aims..... | 3 |
| 1.3 Research Design | 4 |
| 1.4 Researcher Reflexivity | 6 |
| 1.5 Research Contribution | 6 |
| 1.6 Overview of the Thesis..... | 7 |
| Chapter 2 Contemporary Global Mobility..... | 9 |
| 2.1 Introduction | 9 |
| 2.1.1 Literature Identification | 10 |
| 2.2 Global Mobility | 12 |
| 2.2.1 The Rise of Contemporary Global Mobility | 12 |
| 2.2.2 Contemporary Global Mobility – Construct Clarity | 17 |

| | | |
|-----------|--|----|
| 2.2.3 | The Globally Mobile | 24 |
| 2.3 | Families | 30 |
| 2.3.1 | Overview of the Work-Family Interface..... | 30 |
| 2.3.2 | The Globally Mobile at Home | 33 |
| 2.3.3 | The Family at Home..... | 35 |
| 2.4 | Careers | 49 |
| 2.4.1 | Career Literature Overview..... | 50 |
| 2.4.2 | Sailing as a Career..... | 54 |
| 2.4.3 | Domestic and Expatriate Dual-careers..... | 61 |
| 2.4.4 | The Stay-Behind Partner at Work..... | 63 |
| 2.5 | Potential Theoretical Constructs | 66 |
| 2.5.1 | Job Demands-Resources Theory..... | 66 |
| 2.5.2 | Family Systems Theory | 69 |
| 2.6 | The Research Gaps and Questions | 73 |
| 2.7 | Summary | 75 |
| Chapter 3 | Methodology | 77 |
| 3.1 | Philosophical Position | 77 |
| 3.2 | Research Methodology..... | 78 |
| 3.2.1 | The Choice of a Qualitative Methodology..... | 79 |
| 3.2.2 | An Abductive Research Strategy | 80 |
| 3.3 | The Participants | 83 |
| 3.3.1 | Criterion for Inclusion..... | 84 |

| | | |
|-----------|---|-----|
| 3.3.2 | The Sampling Process | 88 |
| 3.3.3 | Saturation | 88 |
| 3.4 | Data Collection Techniques | 90 |
| 3.4.1 | The Choice to Interview | 90 |
| 3.4.2 | Interview Process & Content | 92 |
| 3.5 | Data Analysis | 107 |
| 3.5.1 | Abductive Reasoning – An Overview | 108 |
| 3.5.2 | Thematic Analysis – An Overview | 109 |
| 3.5.3 | The Six Phases of Data Analysis | 110 |
| 3.6 | Researcher Reflexivity | 121 |
| 3.7 | Critical Evaluation..... | 123 |
| 3.8 | Ethics | 125 |
| Chapter 4 | Findings and Discussion – Non Work Findings | 129 |
| 4.1 | Recognised Positive Factors..... | 129 |
| 4.1.1 | Stability | 130 |
| 4.1.2 | Responsibility and Dependability | 132 |
| 4.1.3 | Opportunities to Visit the Globally Mobile Parent | 133 |
| 4.1.4 | Time-off Spent Together..... | 136 |
| 4.1.5 | The Other Recognised Positive Factors | 140 |
| 4.1.6 | Discussion | 142 |
| 4.2 | Recurring Departures and Repetitive Repatriation..... | 150 |
| 4.2.1 | Recurring Departures | 150 |

| | | |
|-------|--|-----|
| 4.2.2 | Strategies for Managed Departures | 153 |
| 4.2.3 | Repetitive Repatriation..... | 154 |
| 4.2.4 | Strategies for Minimising the Disruption..... | 161 |
| 4.2.5 | Discussion | 163 |
| 4.3 | Domestic Demands and Responsibilities | 167 |
| 4.3.1 | General Responsibilities..... | 167 |
| 4.3.2 | Parenting Alone..... | 174 |
| 4.3.3 | The Resulting Stress..... | 182 |
| 4.3.4 | Discussion | 183 |
| 4.4 | Empathy and Resentment..... | 190 |
| 4.4.1 | Compassion and Concern for the Traveller | 191 |
| 4.4.2 | Frustration with the Traveller | 192 |
| 4.4.3 | Discussion | 193 |
| 4.5 | Support Resources | 194 |
| 4.5.1 | Organisational Support..... | 194 |
| 4.5.2 | Family and Friend Support Network | 200 |
| 4.5.3 | Discussion | 215 |
| 4.6 | Communication | 221 |
| 4.6.1 | When the Partner Misses the Traveller | 221 |
| 4.6.2 | Advancements in Communication | 222 |
| 4.6.3 | Synchronous Communication..... | 223 |
| 4.6.4 | Asynchronous Communication..... | 228 |

| | | |
|-----------|--|-----|
| 4.6.5 | Discussion | 231 |
| 4.7 | Chapter Summary | 235 |
| Chapter 5 | Findings and Discussion – Career Findings..... | 236 |
| 5.1 | Career Priority | 236 |
| 5.1.1 | The Trailing Spouse Experience | 237 |
| 5.1.2 | Career Hierarchies..... | 240 |
| 5.1.3 | Prioritising the Sailors’ Career | 243 |
| 5.1.4 | Discussion | 244 |
| 5.2 | Career Strategies of the Partners who Stay Behind..... | 248 |
| 5.2.1 | Strategies at Either End of the Employment Continuum | 250 |
| 5.2.2 | Flexible Working Arrangements..... | 252 |
| 5.2.3 | Entrepreneurial Self-Employment | 256 |
| 5.2.4 | Discussion | 258 |
| 5.3 | The Kaleidoscope Career Model..... | 263 |
| 5.3.1 | The Partners’ Current Roles..... | 264 |
| 5.3.2 | Discussing Balance, Authenticity and Challenge | 266 |
| 5.3.3 | Career Patterns | 268 |
| 5.3.4 | Discussing Career Patterns..... | 276 |
| 5.4 | Chapter Summary | 279 |
| Chapter 6 | The Work-Family Mobility Framework. | 281 |
| 6.1 | The Framework | 281 |
| 6.2 | Stay-Behind Family Adjustment | 284 |

| | | |
|-------------|--|-----|
| 6.3 | Traveller’s Work Demands | 285 |
| 6.4 | Traveller’s Work Resources | 286 |
| 6.5 | Family Systems and Family Adjustment..... | 286 |
| 6.5.1 | Communication as a Facilitating Dimension | 287 |
| 6.5.2 | Non-Work Resources | 289 |
| 6.5.3 | Non-Work Demands | 291 |
| 6.6 | Stay-Behind Partner Career | 293 |
| 6.7 | Conclusion..... | 294 |
| Chapter 7 | Conclusion | 297 |
| 7.1 | Overview of the Study..... | 297 |
| 7.2 | Theoretical Contributions..... | 298 |
| 7.3 | Methodological Contributions..... | 300 |
| 7.4 | Practical Suggestions for the Family..... | 301 |
| 7.5 | Practical Suggestion for Organisations | 306 |
| 7.6 | Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research..... | 309 |
| 7.7 | Concluding Comments | 313 |
| References | | 315 |
| Appendix A: | Extant Taxonomies of Global Employees..... | 347 |
| Appendix B: | Exemplar Family Summary Worksheet | 352 |
| Appendix C: | Adult Interview Guide | 356 |
| Appendix D: | Adult Information Sheet..... | 363 |
| Appendix E: | Children Interview Guide | 366 |

Appendix F: Children Information Sheet.....369

Appendix G: Authenticity, Balance and Challenge Scales371

List of Figures

| | |
|---|-----|
| Figure 1: Symbolic Representation of the Overlap between Relevant Literature Streams | 9 |
| Figure 2: Reasons for Declining Traditional Expatriation..... | 15 |
| Figure 3: Symbolic Representation of Overlap between the Relevant literature Streams and the Identified Gaps | 74 |
| Figure 4: The Stages of the Abductive Research | 82 |
| Figure 5: Career Strategies of the Partners who Stay Behind | 249 |
| Figure 6: Career Strategies across Modes of Mobility..... | 249 |
| Figure 7: Patterns of Kaleidoscopic Focus | 269 |
| Figure 8: Kaleidoscopic Patterns across Modes of Mobility | 279 |
| Figure 9: Work-Family Mobility Framework | 283 |

List of Tables

| | |
|--|-----|
| Table 1: Overview of the Relevant Modes of Contemporary Global Mobility | 23 |
| Table 2: The Career Stages of a Professional Sailor..... | 57 |
| Table 3: Primary Participants Demographic Data | 87 |
| Table 4: Exemplars of the Iterative Development and Refinement of Nodes | 115 |
| Table 5: Second Phase Participants Demographic Data | 119 |
| Table 6: Communication Practices of the Partners and Children who Stay Behind..... | 223 |
| Table 7: Suggestions for Organisational Support | 308 |

