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Interpreting Dual Career Couples' Family Life-Cycles: Identifying Strategic Windows of Global Career Opportunity

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ABSTRACT

Dual career families are more resistant to undertaking expatriate assignments primarily due to the difficulties associated with the trailing spouse not being able to find a job overseas and the potential net financial loss for the couple. As reported in other research, the failure of spouse or family to adjust is the number one reason for expatriate failure, therefore, a model for selecting expatriate candidates that accommodates the dual career family should help international human resource managers. This paper examines some of the particular gender and sociological issues surrounding the dual career expatriate couple, such as family and career Life-Cycles, to identify 'strategic windows' of opportunities for relocating expatriates overseas. Several selection methods based on self selection, such as accomplishment review, plus corresponding appraisals by management are proposed as an alternative to the present dual career couple dilemma. The significance of this research lies in the necessity for organisations to be primarily aware of rapidly changing recruiting environments and to be willing to undertake the changes allowing for greater effectiveness of HRM process in global environments.

INTRODUCTION

As professional dual career couples increase as a percentage of potential overseas assignees they will have an increasing impact on the success/failure of expatriate candidates (Harvey 1997a, 1998, Harvey & Wiese 1998). In some cases dual career couples have refused expatriate assignments because of the difficulties of relocating a trailing spouse in a career oriented position overseas. Since the failure of spouse or family to adjust to foreign environments is the number one reason for expatriate failure (Tung 1981, Harvey 1985, 1989, Thornton & Thornton 1995) it would be logical to develop a selection method which is sensitive to the unique characteristics of dual career expatriate candidates. And while the ultimate destination of the candidate is relevant, with regard to the success or failure of the assignment, additional attention must, therefore, be attributed to the involved cultural and socioeconomic factors.

The issues associated with relocating dual career couples globally are complex and difficult to address by international organisations. In 1995 dual career couples accounted for nearly 60 per cent of all professional households (US Census 1999), and by 2005, as many as 70 per cent (US Dept. of Commerce 2006) of all families were defined as either dual income or dual career couples. This translates to 4.5 million dual career couples as of 1993 and nearly 8.0 million in 2005 (Reed & Reed 1993, US Dept. of Commerce 2006). In addition, the highly skilled and educated candidate for an expatriation assignment is more likely to have a similar qualified spouse, as evidenced by the fact the 65 per cent of United States (US) expatriates had a working spouse (Windham International 2006).

A distinction between dual career and dual income couples demonstrates the differences between the two groups. Dual career couples are engaged in continual professional employment (Bradbury 1994), are psychologically committed to their work (Burke & Greenglass 1987, Falkenberg & Monachello 1988, Bruce & Reed 1991) or are employed in upwardly mobile jobs with personal growth attached (Bruce & Reed 1991). In contrast, in a dual income couple, both members primarily work for a wage or at least one member's motivation is to supplement the

family income (Harvey 1997a, 1998). The affective reactions and behaviours of an individual member of the dual career couple may be explained better by a combination of attitudes held by both partners, rather than one partner taken alone (Karambayy & Reilly 1992). Thus, the couple should be the unit of analysis, rather than the individual (Yogev & Brett 1985, Sekaran 1986, Harvey 1996, Harvey & Buckley 1997) when making global relocation decisions. Professional dual career couples will assess the net advantage relative to a global relocation opportunity for one of the members of the dual career couple against the potential disadvantages for the couple, especially when the trailing spouse is highly skilled and makes a substantial contribution to the couples' combined income (Shaklee 1989). Considering that 60 per cent of all couples relocated annually are relying on both salaries to maintain their household (Harvey, Buckley, Novicevic & Weise 1999), the threat of losing one member's contribution to the financial well being of the family, due to a international relocation of the other, may be a prohibiting financial loss. This condition is a logical reason for dual career couples to turn down global relocation opportunities.

A fear of family unit loss of resources is particularly true in global relocations that could potentially end the trailing spouse's career. In particular, that is likely in emerging markets (e.g., Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Poland, Turkey, South Africa, China, India, South Korea and the ASIAN countries). These marketplaces have the following characteristics (a) A total of 7/8 of the global population will live in these emerging markets in the next 30 years, (b) some 93 per cent of the growth in markets (i.e., demand) in the next 20 years will be in these countries, (c) the relative rate of economic growth/development will be at a five to 10 per cent rate of growth, (d) an increased rate of foreign direct investment (FDI) in these emerging countries due to greater opportunities than in developed economies, (e) a rapid shift from agrarian to industrial societies, (f) an inordinately youthful segment of the population where 30 to 40 per cent of their population is under the age of 20 years, and (g) an increase in the rate of urbanisation and industrialisation creating both economic and social opportunities as well as concomitant problems. Growing long term stability and a movement toward more free enterprise and open markets in emerging economies accentuates the growing importance of these countries as the key markets for global organisations. This tapestry of unique countries will make it exceedingly difficult for dual career couples to both be employed during their overseas assignment, given the legal requirements for obtaining work permits and the lack of job opportunities. Given the interwoven professional goals of dual career couples and the potential location in emerging markets for their overseas assignments it would appear that selection of these unique expatriates would require a distinctive selection criteria from that of their more traditional selection of expatriates.

This paper examines the members of a dual career couple and their unique characteristics when compared to more traditional expatriate managers. The paper examines some of the selection criteria suggested by the literature for the selection of expatriate managers. In addition, the paper explores family and career issues related to dual career couples that could provide insights into when dual career couples might be successfully expatriated (e.g., strategic windows of opportunity for expatriation). Due to the complexity of the decision to relocate overseas by dual career couples and the prevailing legal environment surrounding the human resource function, self selection based on appropriate motives and corresponding appraisals by management would appear to be an alternative to examine relative to the dual career couple expatriation dilemma.

SELECTION PROCESSES IN A DUAL CAREER CONTEXT

The selection of expatriate managers for overseas assignments has had a long and tortured research history (Ones & Viswesvaran 1997, Harvey & Novicevic 2001). In practice, it has been well documented that technical or functional expertise has been the predominant criterion used for selecting managers for overseas assignments (Tung 1981, 1982, Mendenhall, Dunbar & Oddou 1987). Early attempts at identifying an appropriate method for selecting expatriate managers frequently centred on personal characteristics that could help improve the chances of expatriate managers' 'survival' during overseas assignments (for example, see Hays 1971, 1974, Tung 1981, Tharenou 2007). Although there are different methods used for the selection of managers among various cultures, the core concepts have centred on functional capabilities and personal characteristics of potential candidates (see Levy-Leboyer 1994 for a review of European selection methods and Tharenou & Harvey 2006 for a review of Australia selection methods). While these early studies identified a number of issues that could impact the success or failure of expatriate managers, initially very little was done to develop a more systemic approach to the expatriate selection process.

Researchers have concentrated their attention on what are referred to as the Big Five Personality Characteristics. The five characteristics are (a) extroversion - individuals that successfully assert themselves and gain acceptance in the social environment through social relationships (Ones & Viswesvaran 1997), (b) agreeableness - being identified as a team player through the formation of reciprocal social alliances and the building of social capital in the organisation (Caligiuri 2000), (c) conscientiousness - are trusted, diligent cohorts that are productive and supportive of increased organisational performance (Hogan & Goodson 1990), (d) emotional stability - the intrapersonal ability to adapt and cope with stress in professional and personal spheres of one's life (Buss 1991), and (e) openness and intellect - having the ability for individuals to effectively complete their functional assignment and at the same time an awareness of the environment to allow for adaptation of their behaviour to changing conditions in that environment. While these personality characteristics are thought to have a predictive capability relative to the success of the expatriate manager, the empirical research to fully support this position is somewhat lacking. In a comprehensive review of 117 empirical studies using the Big Five Personality Characteristics, Barrick

and Mount (1991) found that conscientiousness was the best single predictor of performance. A comparable survey of research was conducted in Europe resulting in similar, although not as strong, results (Salgado 1997). In addition, the tie to organisational performance using the Big Five Personality Characteristics as the primary selection means it is also somewhat tentative. The Big Five personality attributes used as a selection tool for expatriate managers has given way to some degree to the development of classifications or categories of soft social skills to be used for the selection of managers (Caligiuri 2000).

Several classification schemes illustrate the intent of the practitioners to establish multiple means to predict success for expatriate managers. The Ashridge Management Research Centre identified four categories with multiple items in each category. The four categories are (a) strategic awareness and support, (b) adaptability in new/novel environmental situations, (c) sensitivity and openness to other cultures and social mores, and (d) language capabilities and/or interpersonal communication skills (Harris & Brewster 1999). Other studies also supported 'soft' skills (i.e., skills not directly tied to technical training and functional expertise) and have included global awareness, international strategy, cultural empathy, international or cross cultural team building, international negotiation skills, ethical understanding of conducting business in foreign countries, and self efficacy (Birchall, Hee & Gay 1995). Many practitioners feel that having multiple screening devices augments the more traditional personality characteristics selection tools. But most recently, international human resource management (IHRM) has begun to develop a more systematic approach to the entire human resource process.

Increasingly, academic IHRM researchers contend that human resource functions and in particular selection, should not be viewed separately, but must be viewed as an integrated system of human resource functions (Huselid, Jackson & Schuler 1997). Such IHRM researchers have adopted a systemic approach toward human resource functions by developing integrative IHRM frameworks (for example see Taylor, Beechler & Napier 1996, Dowling, Welch & Schuler 1999). Therefore, the selection process would have to be fully integrated into the other human resource functions such as training/development, compensation, performance appraisal and the like. These integrated human resource systems should be attuned to the strategic position taken by the firms relative to their future global expectations. By examining all the human resource functions as a unit, better collective human resource decisions should be possible, which will increase the consistency among the various operating units in a global network.

It would be difficult at this juncture in evaluating the selection process for international managers to claim that the selection of expatriate managers is a systemic, well articulated and documented process. Thus, the complexity associated with selection of dual career expatriates to fill overseas assignments is becoming more vexing given the staffing requirements associated with global organisations entering emerging markets. The globalisation process is predicated on increasing the diversity of candidate pools for overseas assignments, compounding the selection issues faced in the past by human resource managers in global organisations (Tharenou 2007).

For over 25 years researchers have determined that two indices were primarily used when expatriates are selected for overseas assignments. These two indices are (a) technical competence and (b) experience and past performance in similar positions in the candidate's home country (Baker & Ivancevich 1971, Miller 1973, Tung 1981, 1982, Brewster 1988, Hamill 1989, Bjorkman & Gertsen 1992, Harvey & Novicevic 2001). Personality or social/psychological factors that relate to intercultural competence are rarely emphasised (Bjorkman & Gertsen 1992). While many US and European organisations have begun to augment their selection criteria, technical competence typically remains the key determinant by Asian and Australian managers (Tharenou & Harvey 2006, Tharenou 2007). Some companies still employ the same selection criteria as those used in selection of candidates in the home country. Although some of these criteria may be relevant (Bjorkman & Gertsen 1992), the international dimensions of an expatriate position are frequently ignored in the selection of expatriate candidates (Harvey, et al. 1999).

Why send an expatriate in the first place? Once again, technical competence would appear to be of primary importance, since anecdotal evidence suggests they are sent primarily to (a) transfer technology, (b) offset skill shortages in the host country, and (c) to perform a 'carry the flag' mission (Thornton & Thornton 1995). While the first two concerns are related to skills and know how of the expatriate, the last pertains to an ethnocentric mentality of many in global organisations that are transferring expatriates.

INCREASING REFUSAL TO RELOCATE GLOBALLY

Knowing that their lives are being disrupted for a seemingly trivial selection criteria, could raise concerns among expatriate managers, and especially for the dual career couple when the trailing spouse may have to give up his/her position and in many cases put their career on 'hold'. This has led to an increase in refusal to relocate to global assignments. Overall, firms have reported a growing trend in employee reluctance to relocate, from 37 per cent in 1986 to 70 per cent in 1997 (Employee Relocation Council 1987, 1998). Dual career couples add an additional dimension to the refusal to relocate overseas problem. Several researchers have found an increase in refusal rates from employees of dual career marriages (Driessnack 1987, Harvey 1995, Harvey & Buckley 1997). In a survey of global organisations, 42 per cent of expatriate candidates refused relocation for dual career reasons (The Wall

Street Journal 1992). In addition, the breakdown of expatriate households that are dual career versus those that are more of a traditional model mirror the refusal rate and the growth trend, from 41 per cent in 1992 to 45 per cent in 1994 (Swaak 1995).

Estimates of global organisations offering spousal assistance during international relocation has ranged from 75 per cent (Collie 1989) to 42 per cent. Further, there seems to be a direct correlation between refusal/willingness to expatriate and the type of configuration of the family unit (i.e., traditional versus dual career). Even with the obvious impact that a spouse's career has on both refusal and failure rates, the type of assistance provided is less than optimal. For instance, only six per cent of firms report actual personnel policies, while 41 per cent deal with the issue on an ad hoc basis. When recruiting expatriate candidates, corporations must recognise that the trailing spouse in the professional dual career couple will need more assistance than a traditional spouse, due to the sacrifices that are being made in his/her own life, and the lack of focus on non career alternatives (Harvey & Novicevic 2001, 2002, Hall & Chandler 2005, Tharenou 2007).

A foreign assignment frequently can require an interruption in the trailing spouse's career, or at worst, a sacrifice of that career to follow the expatriate spouse overseas (Thornton & Thornton 1995). A transfer can also interrupt long term social relationships (Harvey 1985, 1997a). In addition, like the expatriate, trailing spouses take the risk of returning home to a less desirable job (Gomez-Mejias & Balkin 1987). The trailing spouse and the expatriate fear the 'out of sight, out of mind' inclination of management, which is especially fearsome for the trailing spouse, who is not working, so is truly 'out of mind,' and may have more time and inclination to dwell on that fact. Women appear to be less willing to relocate for career enhancement, company needs or even for job security, but have been more willing to relocate when it was important to their spouse's career (Lichter 1980, Markham & Pleck 1986, Noe, Steffy & Barber 1988, Munton 1990, Harvey 1997b, 1998, Hall & Chandler 2005). Age, children at home, elderly relatives in the area, community ties, organisational tenure, and job tenure have been identified as integral variables in the decision process that negatively impacted the willingness of female candidates to relocate overseas (Markham & Pleck 1986, Landau, Shemir & Authur 1992, Caligiuri & Cascio 1998).

Expatriate compensation during overseas assignments is a primary issue for refusal among dual career couples. In a survey of human resource managers, compensation was a source of major discontent. An employee who feels under compensated may work at less than peak levels (Harvey 1993), to the point of considering leaving the global organisation. When the compensation package must be enough to reciprocate two skilled workers rather than one, the issue becomes even more critical. The loss of one income, that of the trailing spouse, makes it problematic that any compensation programme for the expatriate will adequately satisfy the dual career family unit (Harvey 1995, Harvey & Buckley 1997). However, with the addition of relocation allowances and potential initiatives to aid the trailing spouse in obtaining work permits to work in the foreign country, it may mitigate the initial perceived loss in compensation. Based on the discussion thus far, the following question arises—are there periods in the career and family Life-Cycles where dual career couples are more inclined to accept overseas assignments?

IDENTIFYING 'STRATEGIC WINDOWS' OF OPPORTUNITY

The concept of 'strategic windows' of opportunities was first used in the academic literature in a strategic planning context, relative to marketing opportunities that a company could effectively compete to sell their products (Abell 1978). The basic premise of the strategic window of opportunity was to identify when opportunities present themselves and to prepare the organisation to be ready to act when the occasion occurred. This same basic logic can be applied to relocating dual career couples overseas, in that there are times (opportunities) when the dual career couple would find it more amiable to undertake an international assignment. What is needed is a means to anticipate when there could be strategic windows in the family Life-Cycles of dual career couple.

Family Life-Cycle Stages

The family Life-Cycle provides a means to measure the stages of a family that can provide valuable insights into the predisposition to, and probable success of, an international relocation of dual career couples. Just as the career Life-Cycle can be used to understand the professional roles, obligations and expectations of dual career couples, the family Life-Cycle provides predictors of the personal needs, time constraints, and family requirements which could influence willingness to undertake an overseas relocation (Hall & Chandler 2005).

The family Life-Cycle is divided into at least nine stages. These stages are (a) Bachelor Unit, (b) Newly Married Couple, (c) Full Nest I: Youngest Child Under Six, (d) Full Nest II: Youngest Child Over Six, (e) Full Nest III: Older Married Couples with Dependent Children, (f) Empty Nest I: Older Married Couples, No Children Living with the Unit, (g) Empty Nest II: Older Married Couple, Retired, (h) Sole Survivor, in Labour Force, and (i) Empty Nest III: Sole Survivor, Retired (Kotler & Armstrong 1991). Each of these stages represents life demands on the dual career family members that could create work family conflict.

The work life role system analyses work and family roles at different stages in family development and how these

roles vary between dual career couple members at various stages of the family development (Lambert 1990). If, indeed, there is a spillover from work to family and vice versa, the negative consequences of stress and role overload could be reduced by selecting stages of the family Life-Cycle when there would be less impact upon the family (Chi-Ching 1995).

In recent years the development perspective on work family interaction has become a useful tool for analysing family stages of evolution (Lambert 1990, Swanson 1992). Rather than using the more or less static analysis of boundary/transactions between work and family domains as is used in spillover approaches to analysing family stress, the developmental approach proposes the longitudinal analysis of work family linkages in the life span of a person or couple. As the pattern of adult development for men (Levinson 1986, Evans & Bartolome 1989) and women (Bardwick 1980, Gilligan 1980) differ and as family and career demands fluctuate depending on the stage of family/career development a person is at individuals may link work and family roles differently at the various stages of the life (Chi-Ching 1995). Each of these family stages has unique characteristics, which makes them useful in analysing various candidates in dual career couples for overseas assignments.

Global relocation can be influenced by what stages of the cycle the family is in and the characteristics of the relocation. One of the primary indicators of the family Life-Cycle in the dual career family is that of role overload. When role overload occurs, a need to cycle roles may be prompted. Deciding when to start a family or to have additional children may be based on the influences of the family Life-Cycle and the career Life-Cycle. The family conflict created by young children heightens the stress for each member of the dual career couple (Ventura 1987). And because women in dual career families still perform most of the parenting, the decision to postpone childbearing until after significant career/job training may be especially important to them (Wiersman 1994).

In a study of the histories of successful women, an age linked career stage structure emerged (White, Cox & Cooper 1992). Half of the women in this model had children, and 58 per cent of them were married. The career Life-Cycle model for women managers was similar to a model of male careers proposed by Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson and McKee (1978), but there were several noticeable differences between the female and male career Life-Cycles. The two models both have periods of stability and transition. While there may be some lag by women behind men at the beginning of the career Life-Cycle, these differences dissipate by the mid 30s for each gender. The main points of departure from the Levinson model relate to the timing of relationship and family events. The pivotal prerequisites to career success for female managers appear to be continuous employment and correct timing of transition (i.e., taking advantage of strategic windows of opportunity for career advancement).

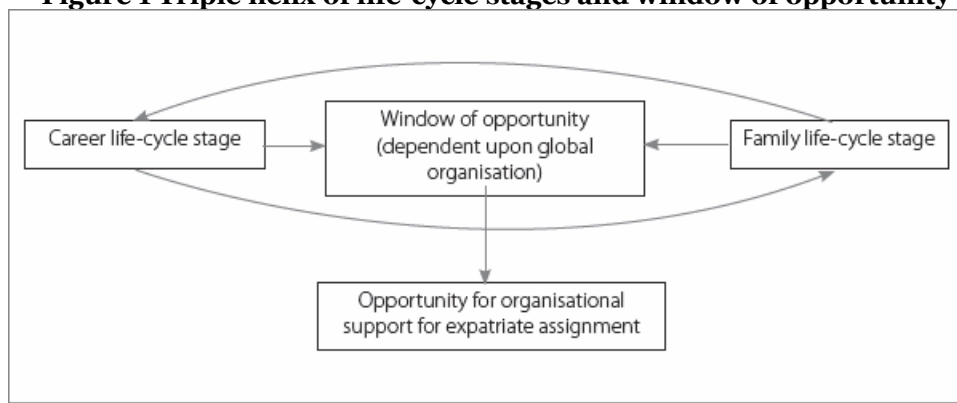
White, et al. (1992) found eight major stages that would appear in temporal fashion in the careers of successful women and are correlated by age. Briefly, these stages are characterised as (a) Early Adult Transition, 17-25 years (Exploration): early commitment to an occupation, testing of initial choices about preferences for living, identity diffusion caused by role conflict, (b) Entering the Adult World, mid twenties (Crystallisation and Implementation): development of sense of personal identity in relation to work and non work, rejection of housewife role/separation from partner, resulting in growth of career sub identity among late starters, high career centrality among early starters (go getters), seek opportunities to practice chose occupation/profession, (c) Establishment, 25 to 33 years: period of rapid learning and development, establishing a reputation as a high achiever, (d) Early-Thirties Transition, 33 to 35 years: raised awareness of biological clock - decision whether to have children, (e) Settling Down, 35 years of age (Advancement): decision about motherhood resolved, minimum maternity leave, strive toward the achievement of personal goals, (f) Late-thirties Transition, 38 to 40 years: regret lack of children, family-career conflict, move in response to glass ceiling, (g) Achievement, 40 to 50 years (Rebalancing): resolution of career-family conflict, rationalise decision not to have children, realisation of personal goals, develop greater stability and consolidate of achievement to date, (h) Maintenance, 50 years of age and up: continued growth and success, cycle of expansion and consolidation.

There have been a few attempts to combine career development stages with age and the family Life-Cycle. Sonnenfelt and Kotter (1982) modeled work and non work individual and environmental factors of women's career development. Larwood and Gutek (1987) used a model to describe how careers develop, and suggested that a network or tree of possible alternatives is preferable to an age linked stage theory, because it overcomes the problem of incorporating elements of time and age. Rapoport and Rapoport (1980) suggested the triple helix model, which interweaves occupational, family, and leisure elements. Hall (1984) incorporated elements of the helix and the idea of a 'family' and 'career' sub identity to suggest a metaphor of weaving. Weaving over and under the warp are the woof and weft threads. For the successful woman, work becomes the warp (the thread which provides the structure around which other threads are woven) around an age of 25 years. The warp becomes even more pronounced over time, as repeated career successes or investment result in the expansion of the career sub identity. In other words, the eight stage career Life-Cycle suggested by White, et al. (1992) shape the family Life-Cycle stages for career women.

Converting this helix into a general chart form for visual comparison, the interruption to career appears to have greater impact on a female trailing spouse's career later in life, rather than earlier. Therefore, it could be argued that interruptions in a career of a female executive should be made at as early an age as possible, and kept to a short duration. As a career woman ages and her career level becomes higher, options other than outright interruption should be used when faced with a foreign relocation of the couple. Each stage of the career Life-Cycle will be

discussed to illustrate the various opportunities/difficulties at each phase in the cycle. An implicit benefit to the career Life-Cycle is to determine 'strategic windows' of opportunity for dual career couples to relocate internationally. These windows of opportunity can then be anticipated that can help to assist international human resource managers in their succession planning for international positions.

Figure 1 Triple helix of life-cycle stages and window of opportunity



THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE TO DUAL CAREER COUPLES STAGES

The developmental theoretical perspective on work family interaction has gained considerable attention recently and would appear to be applicable to dual career couples' relocations internationally (Lambert 1990, Chi-Ching 1995). Instead of a static analysis of the boundary/transactions between work and family domains, the approach proposes the longitudinal assessment of work family linkages in the span of an individual and/or the dual career couple. The theory assumes that there is a difference in development of men and women and as family and career demands fluctuate depending on the stage of family career development a person is at, individuals may link work and family roles differently at various stages of their life (Chi-Ching 1995). Therefore, relationships between work and family roles are dynamic over a person's life particularly in the dual career era of the 21st Century.

To simplify the analysis of family/career development stages, it will be assumed that the trailing spouse is the wife in the dual career couple. It should be recognised that the number of expatriate women will continue to grow in the future and a similar analysis of male trailing spouse should be undertaken (Adler 1993a, 1993b, 1994, 1997). Each of the stages of the family/career Life-Cycle will be discussed using the female as an example of a trailing spouse and alternatives (i.e., strategic windows open to them at each phase of the career Life-Cycle). Table 1 presents the family/career Life-Cycle interaction in terms of stage characteristics, critical junctures, and positive/negative outcomes.

Table 1 Family/career life cycle intersection

Stage	Characteristics of the stage	Critical junctures	Positive/negative outcomes
Stage I: Family career interaction and exploration	Career exploration (both members of the dual career couple) Early family identification	Finding trailing spouse overseas Solidifying family roles for both members of the dual career	Position not necessarily related to trailing spouse's 'career' Lack of attention of organisation to trailing spouses career needs
Stage II: Crystallisation and implementation	Career solidification for trailing spouse Increasing level of role conflict between dual career members	Dealing with increasing level of conflict Maintaining career to establish Professional career path	Increased level of divorce given spillovers stress Establishing both career tracks for dual career couples
Stage III: Establishing foundation for professional career	Seeking promotion for both dual career members for willing to take assignment due to family/demands	Difficulty in maintaining Less career options/visibility Willingness depended on repatriation commitments	One of the most difficult times to relocation overseas Heightened expenses due to family needs/expectations
Stage IV: Transition in career goals	Potential career beak due to family 'requirements'	Birth of children primarily based upon care for the family	Career Availability of quality health Heightened

Stage	Characteristics of the stage	Critical junctures	Positive/negative outcomes
	Willingness to serve based on a number of intangible tasks	balancing career and family	stress for the trailing spouse
Stage V: Return to professional career and recognition 'reward'	Lack of leave for child bearing and Rekindling of career goals and metrics of career success	Taking an overseas assignment Reduced time addressing family issues	Shift in balance to more career orientation Potentially ignoring family issues that can have a negative impact
Stage VI: Potential impediments in career advancement	Perceived impediments to career advancement Exploration of career alternatives	Quit job upon repatriation Reorientation of balance between career and family	Loss of overseas experience of trailing spouse Diminished human capital Difficulty in attracting others
Stage VII: Maintaining level of achievement	Stability between work/family Clear delineation of work and family roles	Absence of children in the family unit Career plateauing	Less stress/tension in the individual and family unit Sense of professional accomplishment

Stage I: Family/Career Interaction and Exploration

The first stage in family/career interlocking cycles is the exploration phase of the Life-Cycle, is generally correlated to an age of 21 to 25 years. This could be one of the best transition periods for a foreign relocation in a woman's career. It has been found that women that travelled abroad during the early exploratory stages of their careers later became 'high flyers,' or successful earlier than others (Cox & Cooper 1988). This finding is despite the fact that they were not in senior positions or even felt at the time that foreign travel made a significant impact on their careers. Those that did recognise the importance of working abroad felt that it gave them a detached perspective, enabling them to perceive situations in America more objectively.

It is not unusual for female members of dual career couples to lag behind men in age during earlier career stages (Levinson, et al. 1978, White, et al. 1992). Many find themselves in the 'exploration' stage while their spouse is in the 'implementation' stage as was predicted by the development theory of work/family interaction. The male member will be seeking opportunities such as a foreign assignment, while the female member may still be formulating early career identity. As long as employment or some type of career growth is obtained, foreign relocation during the exploration stage can be viewed as beneficial to the female trailing spouse in the long run. It is important for the trailing spouse to remember the type or level of foreign position is not crucial to long-term career success, it is the foreign experience that is the decisive factor.

Although work permits could be a problem finding a job for the trailing spouse is easiest at this career stage. While below the level of her expertise and education, perhaps a staff position within the firm could be created. Since the level of position is not as important as in later career stages, the options for foreign employment are much greater. In the early stages of the career Life-Cycle the trailing spouse may be able to use an extended international assignment for advanced schooling. Several anecdotal cases (Thornton & Thornton 1995) have reported this type of career coping tool. The female member of the dual career couple will value education and training, since they most likely invested in such a use of time and money in the past. If a trailing spouse was considering more education in the future, the exploration stage is the opportune period, and the length of time for overseas assignments roughly corresponds to the length of time needed to complete an advanced degree programme (3 to 5 years). The downside of this option lies in location of assignment, level of sophistication of the country in desired educational area, and language skills of the transferred spouse.

Depending on the professional background of the trailing spouse or her future plans, the country may or may not have adequate academic institutions. Most industrialised nations have excellent advanced education opportunities, but this may mean living in an urban area. Countries that are less industrialised may still have some excellent educational opportunities, depending upon subject matter. India has excellent math instruction, and Japan has excellent instruction in technical arts. Finally, the trailing spouse may need fluent language capabilities to undertake a degree programme at these institutions. India teaches most subjects in English, while Japan teaches in Japanese. Finally, the advanced education gives the trailing spouse scant leverage if their future employers in the US do not perceive it as legitimate. The ethnocentric attitude of many US managers may cause them to discount a degree from a less recognised institution thereby increasing the anxiety of the trailing spouse. Knowing this, the trailing spouse may be reluctant to engage in an education experience if the country and institution are not recognised by Americans.

Stage II: Career Crystallisation and Implementation for Trailing Spouse

During crystallisation and implementation career/family stage focuses on the trailing spouse's career. It is like she has either identified her career and started the early stages of characteristic of an entry-level position, or has determined to have a career after the birth of a baby. If the female spouse has started a corporate career, she will probably be unwilling to stop at this particular point in her career. Such breaks in careers are rare for successful women, and seem to have only been used by older women of the previous generation (White, et al. 1992). Women know the importance of continuous employment, and career is often central to their identity (Scase & Coffee 1989). Researchers point out that if women 'step off' the fast track to meet family responsibilities, they will be at a competitive disadvantage in a majority of organisations (Rix & Stone 1984) and that they may be unfairly penalised by the majority of employers for taking a career break (Davidson & Cooper 1987).

Some women find it possible to focus on career only after separation from their partner (White, et al. 1992). The stress of role overload is much higher for women than for men, since they traditionally retain more familial responsibilities while pursuing careers (Scanzoni 1980, Bird, Bird & Scruggs 1984).

Providing emotional support to their spouse may also be a source of strain for women, especially if they are pursuing a demanding career (Heckman, Bryson & Bryson 1977). In addition, by this stage, work has a central role in the female professional's life (White, et al. 1992). Whatever the reasons, between 40 per cent and 50 per cent of today's young people in their mid 20s and late 20s will divorce and a large percentage of the dual career couples will attribute that failure to work/family role conflict (Schoen & Weinick 1993).

The management of multinational corporations might be surprised to find that divorce frequently happens before the overseas relocation. No management would consider this a valid cost for an international job, yet they are aware of the stress placed on the family unit when international relocations are being discussed in dual career families. The stress overload of high demanding jobs, family, and community demands may have already damaged a couple's marriage to the breaking point before an international assignment is even an issue. Taking the place of formal separation, an expatriate candidate and spouse might be eager for one member to relocate, as a break from domestic stress, and as a way to compartmentalise family and work. This type of compartmentalisation of stress overload would have to be resolved in the long run, or eventually when the assignment and commute is over.

In a positive light, those marriages suffering from spillover tension may find that the compartmentalisation due to commuting or changes in the spouse's role gives time to resolve domestic stress, and strengthen the marriage. A spillover model of tension is that daily tensions and satisfactions experienced at work are assumed to shape an employee's emotional state at the end of the workday, while a crossover model describes when an employee's stress at work results in stress for his/her spouse at home, and subsequent negative marital interactions (Sears & Galambos 1992). While an international assignment has its own level of stress an increase in rewards or job control may mitigate the stress, while a separation from the spouse may reduce the incidence of negative marital interaction until both partners can deal with the salient issues.

A divorce is a painful issue that is at various stages of actually happening through time, until the couple feels that a sacrifice of career and personal satisfaction is not worth the marriage. Once again, management may not know that a couple is considering any such change. When determining where on the continuum they might be, even the members of the couple may be unsure of their partner's perception. For this reason, this option is definitely one that only the couple can determine. Although this solves the dual career issue of refusal or rejection of relocation, it is not necessarily the best solution for reducing failure rate. Recently divorced people are often depressed, and their work suffers accordingly.

Stage III: Establishing Foundation for Professional Career

The establishment stage of the career Life-Cycle is when promotions are being sought (White, et al. 1992). It is also the point where women with children (from the exploration stage or before) are increasingly unwilling to subject them to culture shocks. This stage is not conducive to any movement away from the organisation. The 'out of sight, out of mind' metaphor exemplifies the contrariety between the words 'promotion' and 'absence.' If the organisation can procure a lateral move for the spouse that is either as high on the career ladder as the one she left, foreign relocation may be a viable option for the dual career couple. More realistic than procuring employment at a professional level overseas is some assurance of a job for both members at a higher career level upon the dual career couple's return.

The company may also have added expenses of keeping a family with more members in it 'whole' such as providing childcare, private education, flights home, extended vacations and the like. Only with those assurances will the issue of a 'break' in the career and family Life-Cycle be avoided. Overall, this is a poor time period in which to try to relocate the dual career couple.

Stage IV: Transition in Career Goals

In the mid late 30s transition period, more women are waiting until their careers are well established before contemplating a family (White, et al. 1992). After this period, women either make a decision to have a child and take minimum maternity leave, or remain childless. Only a minority of women continue to work full time throughout their childbearing years, but the break is brief, generally less than a year (Long 1984, US Bureau of Census 1999). For successful career women do not take a break (White, et al. 1992). Povall (1983) claimed that maternity leave is seen in a different light than other breaks initiated by the employees, such as function or divisional transfers to another positions. Even pregnancy can expose women to the hard stereotypical attitudes of some male counterparts (Adams 1984). For these reasons, the female trailing spouse may welcome the break in career as a way to focus on family without losing face in the corporate world. The three to five year stay could be a method of 'compartmentalising' the creation or expansion of the family through child bearing. There is much anecdotal evidence of the success of this option, as well as failure.

One of the negative aspects of this suggestion is that many working women do not perceive childbirth as a reduction in their commitment to their career, and would not welcome such a break. In a survey of female CPAs, most have 'put off' children or underplay their family responsibilities from the belief that upper management still views women as less committed than their male counterparts due to maternity leave. In an AICPA survey, 79 per cent of respondents would prefer to work full time after having a child (Coolidge & D'Angelo 1994). In fact, the National Commission on Working Women, reported that for business in general, 75 per cent of all women return to the workforce after childbirth.

Another issue may be the medical technology of the host country. A dual career couple will consider the relocation as a possible 'mommy break' only if the host country has an acceptable level of obstetric and paediatric quality of care. Since the US has a high level of medical advancement, it can be assumed that a lower level is unacceptable. This means that only those relocations to countries equivalent to the US would be considered. In some, female trailing spouses' perceptions could limit the choices to locations with large urban centres very close to the international assignment of their spouse.

Even if the host country is perceived in international terms to have appropriate medical technology, the couple may not consider the location as 'qualified' in its medical sophistication, cultural birthing expectations, or religious activities. While a willing dual career female training spouse may make compromises and sacrifices in many areas to accommodate an important career move of their spouse, child safety is not one of them. Certainly neither member of the couple will take this risk, but perceptions of appropriate childbirth seem stronger for women. Do the hospitals have 'birthing rooms' where husbands are involved in delivery? Is ultrasound technology convenient and used frequently? Is there appropriate availability of clergy and support for religious ritual? Secondly, many women do not want to have children while removed from family and community support. Finally, having children while in a foreign country puts the spouse in a stressful situation of dealing with host country nationals on a highly charged emotional issue. Dealing more with host country nationals has already been linked to problems of adjustment (Briody & Chrisman 1991) and childbirth is a stressful period in a couple's life and during a time when the spouse may feel inadequate to handle the pressures associated with a foreign assignment. The 'mommy break' approach would probably be taken if the country was post industrial and a large expatriate community was in place as a support group. Another alternative would be to come home to have the child, and return to raise it during the next few years.

Stage V: Return to Professional Career for Recognition and 'Reward'

After renewed commitment to their careers, those women that have had children can begin to feel the strain of career and family conflict, while others regret their childless state (White, et al. 1992, Hall 2002). If it is decided to have children at this stage, career women frequently use no or minimum maternity leave. It is at this transition point that women begin to focus more on personal goals. They have good depth in their field, so they begin looking for a broader range of experiences. This transition is more of a 'network' stage; if the career woman feels frustrated at a lack of opportunity, she may try her own business (Kanfer, Wanberg & Kantrowitz 2001). Otherwise, it is more important for her to consolidate her position and strive for a senior organisational position mindful the 'glass ceiling' may initiate an interruption to her career.

The commitment to career success is frequently rekindled in women who return to the workforce after having children and the global assignment of their spouse to an overseas assignment can serve as the catalyst to return to the workforce (Flum & Bluestein 2000, Ibarra 2003, Taveira & Moreno 2003, Zikic 2004). The opportunities afforded by a 'change of venue' may provide the professional spark that has been dimmed due to commitment to establishing the family unit.

Stage VI: Potential Impediments to Career Advancement

It is during the period that many female members of the dual career couple feel they have hit the 'glass ceiling' (Hansard Society 1990). The glass ceiling is an intangible barrier within the hierarchy of an organisation that prevents female (and minority) employees from rising to positions above a certain level. It is this glass ceiling that inspires many females to create their own upper level position, by starting a business. Symptoms of the glass ceiling are shown in many statistics. The turnover rate in the US is twice as high for women as for men (Cox & Blake 1991), and the rate of new companies started by women is much higher than those started by men. The discrimination is felt most acutely by the type of dual career couple most likely to be asked to relocate, those in their late 40s, highly educated and trained and successful in their present domestic assignment.

The creation and start up of a business may take many months or even years of planning, research, polishing presentations, and negotiating. The period of time that the expatriate spouse is overseas may be the perfect time for a female trailing spouse to plan her new venture, start up upon returning to the domestic location. Some companies may even consider providing venture capital for the spouse to establish a business overseas. Assisting the trailing spouse to start a new venture encourages dual career couples to relocate internationally (Ioannou 1994). An extension of this idea into a programme for qualifying trailing spouses as they begin a start up could be cheaper than covering their base compensation or doubling expatriate benefits, and could be more of a motivation to the trailing spouse to undertake an international assignment.

While the benefits of this entrepreneurial option are that it could cost the company very little, relieve the feeling of isolation for the trailing spouse and empower the couple, it also has some potential drawbacks. The issue of location of the assignment becomes critical. This option would be difficult to execute in an isolated area, research for some businesses may require materials not available to the trailing spouse. Trips to research centres could be provided, or global organisations could give support through using clerical staff for research assistance to the trailing spouse. Most entrepreneurial women (and start ups in general) are heavily reliant on social networks. Separation from a mentor or network can reduce the probability of success of the emerging venture. This could also be somewhat alleviated through the global organisation paid phone calls or providing fax machines.

Stage VII: Maintaining Level of Achievement

At the achievement/maintenance stage, many women reach a maintenance level in their career (White, et al. 1992). No further periods of transition have been observed. Those women that are childless have rationalised their decision as being necessary to their success, while those with children are empty nesters. These women are still involved with their work, although they may work fewer hours (White, et al. 1992). Their family and marital life is stable, while their career may be in decline. For these women, following a spouse overseas may now be a much more palatable option than before. Even if unable to move with them, commuting or frequent visitation may be acceptable by the couple.

Dahl (1985) reported that as many as a million dual career couples were commuters. A 1991 survey by Runzheimer International Ltd. of 51 US multinationals found that one third of the dual career couples in their survey were commuting, and they estimated that this number should double by 1996. At present, 78 per cent of expatriates are married, and of them, eight per cent have chosen to go without their spouse, creating commuting couples (Windham International 2006). Considering the growth expected in dual career couples where one member is relocated overseas, this number might be expected to climb commensurately.

The increase in commuters may not be reflected only in increasing numbers, but also by a preference for this type of life style. Most commuters accept the popular view of the life style as chronically stressful (Bunker, Vanderslice & Rice 1992). Commuters consider their situation temporary, and would prefer to live in a single residence (Kirschner & Walum 1978). Despite its negative anecdotal reputation, this type of arrangement seems to work well for many couples when studied empirically.

While there are some costs in spouse relationship and family, there are also gains in personal time available, and more satisfaction with work life (Bunker & Vanderslice 1982). In a recent survey it was the single residence couple that reported the most stress overload, while the commuter couple was better able to compartmentalise and reduce family versus work strain (Carlson & Reyes 1992). Some corporations are accommodating these couples by paying for phone calls, flights home, and fax machines (The Wall Street Journal 1992). With frequent visits the costs in relationship and family time can be minimised, and the gains of daily overload kept compartmentalised. Since an estimated 72 per cent of dual career couples face the issue of geographic separation for the sake of their careers (Holstrom 1972), commuting may be one of the most valid resolutions that yields the highest value for the couple.

SELF SELECTION IN THE DUAL CAREER SELECTION PROCESS

International human resource managers can use self selection tools to reconcile the paradoxical relationship between determining a candidate's fit on personal, familial factors within the legal and regulatory landscape. For ethical and productivity reasons, international human resource managers tend to focus on at least six elements. These features are (a) the ability of spouse and family to adjust to foreign relocation, (b) work versus family role stress overload, (c) career path expectations, (d) spousal career commitments, (e) stages of transition for children, and (f) the dual career couples stage in their family Life-Cycle. This information is needed to assess a dual career couple's match to a successful expatriate assignment. Self selection can be used to determine initial interest and competency and open the door for employee initiated discussion of personal issues. Since some of the most competent employees considered for expatriate assignments are married to a career spouse, questions regarding the trailing spouse's willingness to relocate are vital. Handled correctly, necessary information for selection can be obtained, and motivation levels of candidates increased, without putting the company at risk for litigation.

There are two main advantages, or approaches, to the use of self selection as an initial selection tool. One method uses a legal method of matching a candidate's family and spouse on factors that are identified as influencing the probability for the employee's expatriate success. This approach requires some training to increase awareness of the candidate and family as to what factors could impact overseas assignments (which implies that the organisation knows which factors lead to expatriate success). Self selection goes beyond a simple offer by the firm and acceptance from the employee. The process entails a commitment of resources from the firm for initial training/introduction to adjustment issues for dual career couples and extends all the way through training and site visits for both members of the dual career couple. In addition, self selection requires a level of commitment of time and energy by the candidate, trailing spouse and family members. The second advantage is the dual career couple should have an increased motivation level, and, therefore, increased probability of success. Self selection implies that the dual career couple has examined the impact of the relocation on both career and family Life-Cycles, and that both career cycles were 'brought in' to the international relocation decision (Harvey 1997a, 1997b, 1998, Harvey & Buckley 1998). With this initial commitment, the dual career couple will be more committed over time, and the probability of success of the international relocation will be increased.

Human resource managers may be wary of the validity of self selection, obviously unwilling to trust such an important and expensive decision to the perception of an internationally inexperienced manager/employee. Used in a simplistic and isolated way, this would be justified. It is suggested that self selection be used in conjunction with education/mentoring by the organisation and repatriates, and with a realistic job preview as a 'lens' to equalise perceptions (Harvey & Wiese 1998). After a careful overview of dual career expatriate issues, the initial self selection of the dual career couple could take place. This gives some indication of the level of initial motivation. Whether they choose yes, no, or maybe, they should be asked to engage in some activities designed to give a realistic job preview. Those that chose 'no' may not engage in the relocation preview, but should be encouraged, if possible, since they may have interest in the future when a strategic window in the family and career Life-Cycle presents itself. After a much more thorough explanation of the location, position, length of assignment and resources available to the family, and an introspective look at their location in their family Life-Cycle, the dual career couple should go through a self selection process again. Once again, a global organisation will be presented with yes, no, or maybe responses by the couple furthering their commitment to becoming an active participant in an international assignment.

The expatriate will be informed, committed, and will have more information for future problem solving hence, increasing the probability of the expatriate's success. It is assumed that at this point, the dual career couple will know where in their family Life-Cycle and career cycle an international relocation will best fit and will coordinate their move with the overseas opportunities. A 'window' of opportunity is operational when the organisation requires the skills of the expatriate manager overseas. This also gives the organisation an indication of the size of their pool of willing expatriates, making the actual selection process much faster and flexible similar to a succession plan used domestically. These employees should be given an international training and career preparation throughout this development process. If the pool of willing candidates is too low, future hiring by the firm may stress the importance of international experience to applicants, starting a pipeline of expatriates.

Those candidates who choose maybe become more aware of under what conditions they could become a yes or under what conditions they could become a no. The maybe candidates could be considered an alternate pool of expatriates. If the organisation has control over some of the factors that could lead to a yes, then negotiation with the individuals on what resources need to be committed should be examined relative to the need for expatriates in the succession planning by the IHRM. If several prime candidates are not willing to relocate for the same reason, the firm should consider investing resources in that area to increase their pool of candidates.

Career disruption of a trailing spouse is an area for dual career couples that implies that accommodating a trailing career spouse can be crucial to gaining a pool of expatriate candidates. Such possible candidates should be given a career track that remains domestic, but stresses assessment, training and intermittent exposure to international assignments. This pool of applicants may make the best candidates for short term international assignments, since it furthers the employees' understanding and comfort level with foreign relocation without threatening those personal issues that require domestic permanence. The employees who choose no have reduced the time and

resources of the organisation and in the long run possible failure during a foreign assignment. They are well informed, and could possibly select back into the expatriate candidate pool if their circumstances change considerably. Otherwise, these employees should be given a domestic career track.

Being Informed versus Being Influenced: The Selection Process

While the dual career couple is empowered by the self selection process/method, global organisations can improve the probability of attracting the dual career couple to 'buy-in' to the present or future relocation utilising a politico-symbolic dialectic process. A 'politico-symbolic dialectic' (Cohen 1974) is a process in which individuals are invited to think of themselves as being 'informed' rather than influenced or persuaded. This was done through well known and established figures/persons that knew and understood the interests, values and lexicons of the people they were dealing with in an organisation. The reliance on a one to one pattern of communication with opinion leaders and those holding senior positions all served to favor the enactment of their interpretations, and help "... reify a particular social structure with ramifications for the maintenance of a particular power order" (Rosen 1985: 33).

For the organisation, this could mean a mentoring or close relationship with the dual career couple, educating them on the values of the foreign assignment (Harvey & Wiese 1998, Harvey, Buckley, Novicevic & Wiese 1999). In their eagerness to convince the dual career couple, organisations need to be cognisant of the temptation to deliberately tailor their arguments to match the interests and aspirations of individuals while simultaneously being careful to omit other information they believed to be relevant. Hypocritical action may be interpreted as a rational response (Brunsson 1989) to the conflicting demands of the dual career couple since only by acting hypocritically could they hope to promote a foreign assignment.

Realistic Global Relocation Preview

Since the dual career couple and the organisation will both view the process and the advantages/disadvantages of relocation through their own screen of perception, a realistic international relocation preview is suggested before the couple or the organisation self selects into a training or international career path programme (Caligiuri & Phillips 2003). A site visit that includes the family, and is part of a cross cultural pre training programme, could be used as an 'inoculation'. This serves a dual purpose of allowing the dual career couple a chance for pre departure information gathering and, as a 'family', a realistic job preview (Harvey & Fung 2000). An extended vacation length visit, where the candidate may actually have a job task, may deflate some unrealistic expectations and 'vaccinate' dual career couples from initial disappointments (Feldman & Thomas 1992).

Since each family is different in their view of negative, neutral or positive job aspects (Meglino, DeNisi, Youngblood & Williams 1988) a trip would be the best way to convey information to them, allowing them to determine what factors of the relocation will be most important themselves in one of the most information rich methods available to the organisation. To not give the family a realistic preview of what relocation entails is even possibly unethical. The following ten steps define the required stages of a realistic job preview for dual career couples:

1. Step One: Rationale Reactive versus proactive
2. Step Two: Diagnosis Structured or unstructured
3. Step Three: Focus Descriptive versus judgmental
4. Step Four: Background Extensive versus intensive
5. Step Five: Level of negativity Medium versus high
6. Step Six: Medium used Written versus audio visual versus personal versus combination
7. Step Seven: Message source Actors versus job incumbents
8. Step Eight: Timing Late or early
9. Step Nine: How to get started Pilot study versus policy
10. Step Ten: Sharing results Proprietary versus disseminated.

The preview into the global assignment for all family members is a cornerstone for successfully matching dual career couples in the wide variety of global assignments.

CONCLUSION

In the light of compounding selection issues in part due to the increasing rate of dual career couples, the basic premise of this paper is to identify opportunities within a family's Life-Cycle that will coincide with an organisation's need for an international career relocation. It is suggested that an organisation may increase its chances of such a family/career lifecycle intersection by taking proactive measures to enhance the chance of employing the best candidate possible. This action is most likely accomplished with the implementation of a model/process that allows organisations to select dual career expatriate candidates. Such a process must take into

consideration the characteristic of various stages, critical junctures and the positive as well as negative outcomes of such endeavours. Needless to say, such modifications of the HR selection process come at the expense of several implications and consequences of HRM policies and practices in contemporary organisations. Despite the expenditure of time and other resources, implementing such processes is likely to be well worth the effort of selecting such individuals.

This paper has emphasised the need for self involvement and self motivation of the dual career couple as a way to augment the success rate of international relocations. From this position the concept of self selection combined with information from the firm is used to time relocations with periods of transition in the trailing spouse's career that are conducive to interruption. Each career stage corresponds with an age range, as does the family Life-Cycle. The importance of various options to dual career couples can be described as strategic windows of opportunity to undertake an expatriation assignment.

The dual career couple represents an opportunity to develop programmes to support the most qualified candidates for international assignments. Without such programmes, the reluctance of dual career couples to accept international positions will reduce the pool of qualified candidates. If the foreign assignments are relegated to the 'second best' candidates, the competitive competency of US based global organisations will be hampered. By developing a clear understanding of the 'natural' transitions in dual career couples' family and career Life-Cycles, international human resource managers can more effectively develop selection criteria. As more female expatriates are sent overseas, the need for well articulated programmes for male trailing spouses will necessitate a proactive stance by human resource managers in global organisations.

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