



Prudential Relocation's Many Women Many Voices



Prudential  **Financial**

Executive Summary

Many Women Many Voices: A Study of Accompanying Spouses Around the World

Goals of Project:

- ♦ To understand the commonly-reported finding that family adjustment is central to a successful employee relocation.
- ♦ To develop an understanding of what affects spouses' international experiences at a deeper level, by going beyond superficial ratings of how spouses feel about daily living tasks and measuring their mental health adjustment instead.
- ♦ To explore the experiences of accompanying spouses from their own point of view, rather than simply as an influence on their husbands' productivity.
- ♦ To provide a forum for expatriate accompanying spouses to communicate their experiences to their sponsoring organizations.

Sample:

- ♦ 194 accompanying spouses and partners, currently living in four world regions: Europe (UK, Austria, France, Switzerland, Germany, Sweden, Monaco, Norway), Middle East (Jordan, United Arab Emirates, Israel), Latin America (Mexico and Bolivia), and Asia (Thailand, China)
- ♦ Mostly (but not exclusively) white, married, American women living in a new country temporarily because of their husbands' jobs, expecting to return home or to another country within five years.
- ♦ Recruited through women's associations, American clubs, and English-speaking unions.

Selected Findings:

- ♦ Different factors influenced what women viewed as stressful and what affected their deeper levels of adjustment. While practical support for learning how to manage the tasks of daily living is important, it is critical to offer women emotional and social support throughout the entire assignment.
- ♦ There was no single world region that women found "easier" to live in or in which they had the best adjustment. Nor did having been on prior international assignments protect women from adjustment problems.

- ♦ Only 6.2% of the spouses were consulted by their husbands' employers before the decision to move was made. 28.3% said their husbands had had more influence in making the decision to move than they had. In addition, 31% of the spouses said they and/or their husbands/partners felt pressured into accepting the assignment. Women who were consulted by the employer, felt equally involved in the decision, and did not feel pressured had significantly better adjustment.
- ♦ Women experienced some gains and some losses as a result of the move. The most important of these for their adjustment were their professional identity, social status, material comfort and housing, and time with friends. Those who experienced gains in these areas had better adjustment while those with losses had poorer adjustment. Having a comfortable home has a special significance for those living in a new country. Gains or losses in money and time with family were unrelated to adjustment.
- ♦ Mothers of teenagers and women with no children had poorer adjustment than mothers of younger or adult children. Having children meant both having more opportunities for entering the new culture yet the possibility of worry and stress.
- ♦ Women who started their assignments well-prepared in terms of language skill, cultural understanding, and career strategy had an easier time fitting into the culture.
- ♦ Employed women and homemakers had similar levels of adjustment. Women who had losses in professional identity and in the ability to live a life consistent with their career role values had poorer adjustment.
- ♦ One of the strongest predictors of adjustment was the social support women felt they had. It was not the practical kind of support (like having someone to tell how to find a doctor, or where to buy shoes) that mattered, however. Women with the best adjustment had both casual and intimate local friends. Women who relied to the largest extent on long distance support (like e-mail) had the poorest adjustment.

For more information about this study, please contact:

The Interchange Institute
11 Hawes Street
Brookline, MA 02446 USA
telephone (617) 566-2227
info@interchangeinstitute.org
www.interchangeinstitute.org

Many Women Many Voices: A Study of Accompanying Spouses Around the World

Table of Contents

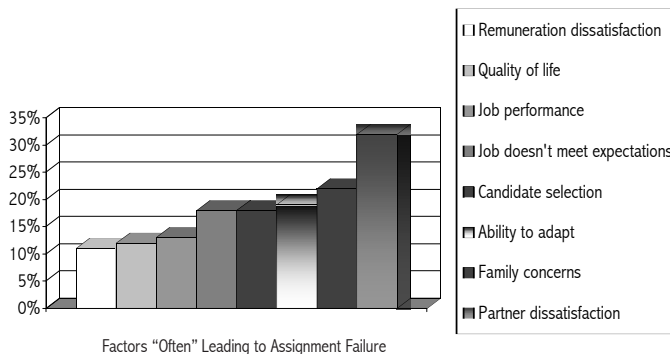
Preface	1
Chapter 1: The “Many Women Many Voices” Project	3
Chapter 2: Preliminary Findings: What is “Outcome?”	7
Chapter 3: Tip #1 — It’s Not Just a Matter of Time.....	12
Chapter 4: Tip #2 — “Where in the World” is Only Half the Questions.....	15
Chapter 5: Tip #3 — Just Because They’ve Done It Before Doesn’t Make It Easy (At Least Not in the Ways that Count).....	22
Chapter 6: Tip #4 — Cajole Spouses at Your Own Risk.....	25
Chapter 7: Tip #5 — Watch the Balance of Gains and Losses.....	29
Chapter 8: Tip #6 — Children are a Complicated Blessing.....	34
Chapter 9: Tip #7 — Share Your Employees with Their Families.....	40
Chapter 10: Tip #8 — Ask About Beliefs, Values, and Strategies that Make a Difference.....	44
Chapter 11: Tip #9 — Be Prepared: Language, Communication, and Fitting In.....	48
Chapter 12: Tip #10 — Match Career Values with Opportunity.....	54
Chapter 13: Tip #11 — Friends Matter (and Why).....	61
Chapter 14: A Final Word.....	67
Chapter 15: Advice from Accompanying Spouses for Accompanying Spouses.....	68
Chapter 16: Summary of Key Findings.....	70
Chapter 17: Summary of Recommendations for Sponsoring Organizations.....	73
Chapter 18: Summary of Recommendations for Accompanying Spouses.....	77
Executive Summary.....	81

Preface

(Why) Should Companies Concern Themselves with Expatriate Family Adjustment?

Is it a company's place to be sure employees consult their spouses or partners (and listen carefully to their replies) before accepting a new assignment? Should companies get involved in a spouse's job search? Should a company be in the business of helping accompanying spouses find friends in a new city?

If you have ever watched an international relocation go awry — with resulting loss of employee productivity, damaged customer relations, lowered staff morale, and increased personal stress — or if you have been reading the many reports about causes of failed international assignments, then you will understand that the answers to these questions may well be “yes.”



Data from *Global Relocation Trends Survey 2000*, conducted by Windham International, the National Foreign Trade Council, and the Institute for International Human Resources.

For example, data from the Global Relocation Trends 2000 Survey (see chart to the left), reiterate what virtually every study of international assignments finds: spouse/partner and family adaptation issues are the most important issues to manage, and are critical to assignment success.

How do you ensure that your employees' spouses will feel like this:

"Living in England these past 3 years has been great. The adjustment was very easy for us. We have always looked at this experience as a great opportunity for us and our children and, to a certain extent, our extended families back in the States. I would say the most difficult aspect is living so far from family, otherwise I have absolutely no complaints." (UK)

and not this:

" I have spent so much time supporting my spouse and helping my children adapt that I feel as if I have no energy left for me. After a 12-year stint as a stay at home mom, and then finally finding the perfect job part time, we were uprooted. The resentment is some days overwhelming. I wake up every day wondering what I'm going to do until it is time to go to bed again. "

(UK)

Two women living in the same country, with such radically different experiences! The first will be a cheerful asset to her husband's productivity, the second a constant worry for him.

It may be a new role for you, as a human resource manager, to be so involved in an employee's family life, and of course it is a role that must be played carefully. No one wants to be intrusive in someone else's life and marriage. But the overriding finding from our research, and that of virtually every other research study available, is that most families appreciate — indeed, demand — a company's concern and involvement when they make an international move.

Of course, families themselves have a responsibility to watch over their own mental health, and be active in getting their own needs met. But families do not have control over all the factors that will influence their lives. Sponsoring organizations must be proactive in assuring not only a family's getting settled into daily life, but in optimizing their adjustment at the deepest level. One might think, at first glance, that a spouse's ability to complete the daily tasks of living in the host country is all that a sponsoring organization need be concerned with. But it is the spouse's deeper adjustment — her ability to take care of her family and herself, to communicate and radiate a sense of optimism and vigor — that is likely to have the most profound influence on the family and hence on employees' productivity.

The goal of this report, therefore, is to demonstrate the factors that influence accompanying spouses' adjustment, and to extract from the findings concrete, tangible, trustworthy advice about what families and sponsoring organizations can do to maximize the chances that the experience will be fulfilling and positive, productive and successful for all.

Chapter 1

The ‘Many Women Many Voices’ Project

The ‘Many Women Many Voices’ project focused on the experiences of women who had moved to a new country to live temporarily, primarily because of their husbands’ or partners’ jobs. In the belief that spousal adjustment is critical to the overall success of an international assignment, our goal was to learn about the relocation from the spouses’ point of view, to understand their experiences, and to help them voice their views to sponsoring organizations.

Participants. This report includes results from surveys received from 194 women who were mostly (but not exclusively) white, middle class, well-educated, and financially secure (see Table below)¹. Because 98.5% of our sample were married women, we have decided to use the terms “wife,” “husband,” “spouse,” and “partner” intermittently in this report. We expect that the findings are equally applicable to unmarried female partners and, at least in many ways, to male accompanying spouses and partners as well. Future research will illuminate any differences in male and female spouses’ experiences.

PARTICIPANTS IN THE STUDY

	<i>Typical</i>	<i>Range</i>
Age	43.3 years	22-65 years
Number of Children	1.4	0-5
Age of Children	12.1 years	6 months to adult
Marital Status	married (98.5%)	co-habiting (1.5%)
Race/Ethnicity	White (93.8%)	Hispanic (2.1%), Asian (1.5%), Black (1%), other (1.6%)
Nationality	American (83%)	UK (5.7%), Sweden (4.1%), Canada (3.1%), other (4.1%)
Education	4-year university (34.5%)	secondary or less (2%), 2-year post-secondary (15.4%), some university (6.7%), some or finished graduate school (35%)
Expected Length	2-5 years (67%)	< 1 year (1.5%), 1-2 years (6.7%), > 5 years (7.2%), don't know (17.5%),
Length to Date	2.4 years	1 month to 21.1 years (90% less than 5 years)

¹We invited participation from any interested party. We received surveys from one man and from 68 women who were living in their new countries permanently or had moved there primarily for their own work. We have excluded these surveys from this report because we feel their experience is likely to be very different from that of the target group.

CURRENT HOST COUNTRY OF PARTICIPANTS

Austria (9.8%)	Norway (5.7%)	United Kingdom (23.2%)	Thailand (5.2%)
France (.5%)	Spain (2.6%)	Israel (.5%)	China (14.9%)
Monaco (.5%)	Sweden (5.7%)	Jordan (4.6%)	Bolivia (3.6%)
Netherlands (4.6%)	Switzerland (8.2%)	United Arab Emirates (.5%)	Mexico (8.8%)
			Russia (1%)

Collecting the Surveys. We collected surveys during the period from 1995-2001, from members of women's associations, English-speaking groups, business or government groups, and international schools in 17 different countries. In coordination with the leadership of these groups and with the help of a designated site liaison, we collected the surveys in a way that protected the anonymity of each respondent and did not result in undue burden or cost for the participating associations.

Measures. Our goal was to understand the factors that influence women's experience while living as an accompanying spouse on an international assignment. Toward that end, we included a wide range of measures, each of which is described in more detail in the body of this report. Briefly, we measured:

Demographics. Participants reported on their gender, age, marital status, citizenship, race/ethnicity, number and age of dependents and whether these dependents had any special needs. They also reported on prior overseas living experiences, the reason for and expected length of the current assignment, and whether the move coincided with any other major life events. They described their host language proficiency. And finally, they described their employment and salary histories, their current work status, and an evaluation of their own and their spouses' current and previous jobs.

Family Style Measures. Participants described the process of how their families made the decision to move internationally, and their assessment of various gains and losses that had resulted from the overseas move. They also completed a widely-used research measure of family adaptability and cohesion (closeness).

Social Support. Participants detailed for us the sources and adequacy of the emotional and practical support they received, as well as the nationality of their support network members.

Values, Beliefs, and Attitudes. Participants completed several widely-used research measures of values, beliefs, and attitudes, including measures of locus of control, the importance of various life roles (occupational, parental, marital, and homemaker), and preferred coping strategies.

Outcome. We approached the issue of outcome — how the women were “doing” — in two ways. First, we asked women to rate the **difficulty** or **stress** they encountered in living in the host country. They described how some aspects of international living compared with the last place they had lived, and how stressful other aspects of international living were, in an absolute sense. These items are listed on pages 7 and 9:

Second, we included several measures of mental health **adjustment**. We considered these to be the most important indicators of how women were doing. Participants completed:

- ♦ a widely-used research measure of their current mood (including subscales of anxiety and hostility, depression and dejection, tension and anxiety, and vigor —a sign of positive mental health),
- ♦ a short, widely-used research measure of mental health, designed for use in the general public, and
- ♦ a 7-point rating of how they (and their children and spouses) felt about life in their host countries

Naturally, these measures of adjustment were highly related to each other, so in this report we have presented a single factor score of adjustment that includes all of these measures together.

Findings. The following pages include the major findings from this study. After an initial chapter that describes preliminary findings about the meaning of our outcome measures, results are presented as a series of Tips for human resource managers and families to follow, to maximize the likelihood that a relocation will be successful. Watch for “Key Findings,” which summarize the results in the subsequent section. Charts illustrate the findings; each is explained in the text as well.¹

Recommendations. Each chapter concludes with practical recommendations for sponsoring organizations and accompanying spouses, based on our findings. Because of the greatly variable resources and constraints facing different sponsoring organizations, we have kept the recommendations thematic rather than concrete. For example, we say “Help spouses establish and maintain connections to local residents” rather than “Pay for spouses to join the nearest Women’s Club.” While some recommendations for sponsoring organizations require some expenditure of funds, many do not. We do not presume to suggest the best expatriate family support policy for all families. Rather we present our data about what matters to spouses, and suggest ways to leverage this information into more successful assignments.

¹*Statistical note.* We have written this report with non-statisticians in mind. To make complicated findings easier to visualize, we have presented bar graphs rather than tables of statistics. Almost all the charts in this report refer to statistically significant differences. Occasionally, for contrast reasons or because the finding was so unexpected, we do present non-significant findings, but these are always clearly marked. Questions about methodology and statistics should be addressed to The Interchange Institute.

We also have included recommendations for accompanying spouses themselves, in the belief that families must take an active role in the success of their own relocation. When sponsoring organizations and families each pull hard in the same direction, their common goal of a successful relocation can be met.

Participants' Advice. At the end of the survey, women were invited to give advice to other expatriates, and to summarize their wisdom and experience. We think these quotes speak clearly, in the women's own voices, about what you need to know. We have included them as part of our report.

Chapter 2

Preliminary Findings: What is “Outcome?”

We focused on two aspects of spouses’ experience: how stressful and difficult they found intercultural living, and their mental health adjustment.

Stresses. Participants rated the following items for stressfulness. In all cases but one (“being the race I am”), participants showed the full range of reaction — that is, the lowest rating any one gave each item was “not stressful” and at least one person called each item “very stressful.” (The highest rating for “being the race I am” was “stressful.”) Items are listed below in descending order of stressfulness. The average score for each item is marked with an X.

SURVEY ITEMS: STRESSES

Please rate how stressful to you each of these is while living in this country.

	not stressful	a little bit stressful	stressful	very stressful
managing the tasks of daily living			X	
missing family and friends in my home country			X	
speaking the host country language			X	
the possibilities for my own employment in this country		X		
not being able to be the kind of person I want to be		X		
being treated differently because of my nationality		X		
losing contact with my home country		X		
having reservations about raising my children in this country		X		
being afraid of doing or saying something inappropriate when socializing with host country nationals		X		
living in this economy		X		
gender discrimination		X		
providing support for my spouse’s employer (e.g., entertaining)		X		
living in this political system		X		
having a foreign accent		X		
having available places for me to worship	X			
having local residents know my nationality	X			
living in this country with the major religion it has	X			
having a foreign surname	X			
being the race I am	X			

Next, we asked whether these various aspects of intercultural living were significantly related to women’s adjustment. On one hand, one would expect that they would be — a woman who is highly stressed by her life would be expected to be depressed or tense, for example. On the other hand, perhaps women separate the challenges they face in a new country from their deeper levels of

adjustment. One can imagine, for example, feeling frustrated by living in the host political system but still being able to maintain an optimistic, healthy sense of adjustment. Below, we list the potential stresses again (from the previous page), this time listed in order of how closely related to women's adjustment they were. For example, women who felt they were "not being able to be the kind of person [they wanted] to be" were most likely to have very poor adjustment, while women who *did* feel they could be the kind of person they wanted to be were likely to have very *good* adjustment — that is what being "closely related to adjustment" means. In contrast, some of the women who felt stressed by their race had good adjustment and others had poor adjustment. And, of the women who did not feel at all stressed by their race, some were well adjusted and others poorly — the two factors were unrelated to each other. That is what is meant by "having no relationship to adjustment."

KEY FINDING

The aspects of intercultural living most closely related to women's adjustment concerned their identity, their employment potential, their bicultural connection, their children, and the tasks of daily living.

STRESSES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO ADJUSTMENT

	not related	moderately related	closely related
Items that Were Significantly Related to Women's Adjustment			
not being able to be the kind of person I want to be			x
the possibilities for my own employment in this country			x
having a foreign accent			x
having reservations about raising my children in this country			x
losing contact with my home country			x
managing the tasks of daily living			x
having local residents know my nationality			x
being treated differently because of my nationality			x
missing family and friends in my home country			x
being afraid of doing or saying something inappropriate when socializing with host country nationals			x
having a foreign surname		x	
living in this economy		x	
providing support for my spouse's employer (e.g., entertaining)		x	
gender discrimination		x	
Items That Were Not Significantly Related to Women's Adjustment			
speaking the host language		x	
living in this political system		x	
living in this country with the major religion it has		x	
having available places for me to worship	x		
being the race I am	x		

Difficulties. We also asked women to compare some aspects of their lives in the host country to their last country of residence. Participants rated 17 items for difficulty (see next page). There was a

big range in how women rated the items — at least one participant rated each item “much easier here” and somebody else rated it “much more difficult here.” Items are listed below in descending order of difficulty. The average score for each item is marked with an X.

SURVEY ITEMS: DIFFICULTIES

How easy or difficult is your life in this country compared to your last country of residence?

	much easier here	easier here	about the same	more difficult here	much more difficult here
shopping for clothes				X	
shopping for household goods				X	
shopping for and preparing food				X	
using health care facilities				X	
getting daily tasks/errands done				X	
general living costs				X	
available quantity and types of food				X	
general housing conditions				X	
general living conditions				X	
everyday customs that must be followed				X	
recreation and entertainment				X	
climate				X	
finding child care				X	
finding a good-quality school for my children				X	
making friends				X	
local transportation				X	
sense of personal safety				X	

We also asked whether these aspects of intercultural living were related to women’s adjustment. Again, on one hand, one might expect that they would be — a woman whose life feels harder than in her previous residence might be expected to be depressed or tense, for example. On the other hand, one can imagine, for example, reporting that local transportation is more difficult than in the last country of residence, while still maintaining an optimistic, healthy sense of adjustment.

KEY FINDING

The difficulties of intercultural living most closely related to women’s adjustment were ability to make friends, following new customs, shopping for clothes, recreation, and getting errands done.

On the next page, we list the potential difficulties in order of their relationship to adjustment. “Making friends” showed the strongest relationship — women who were having a much harder time making friends now compared to their last country of residence had the poorest adjustment.

DIFFICULTIES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO ADJUSTMENT

	not related	moderately related	closely related
Items That Were Significantly Related to Women's Adjustment			
making friends			x
general housing conditions		x	
everyday customs that must be followed		x	
recreation and entertainment		x	
shopping for clothes		x	
finding a good-quality school for my children		x	
getting daily tasks/errands done		x	
general living conditions		x	
Items That Were Not Significantly Related to Women's Adjustment			
shopping for and preparing food	x		
local transportation	x		
finding child care	x		
general living costs	x		
shopping for household goods	x		
using health care facilities	x		
climate	x		
sense of personal safety	x		
available quality and types of food	x		

There are several striking things about these findings. First, even when an item's overall average rating of stressfulness/difficulty was fairly low, it was common to see strong relationships with adjustment. For example, the overall group rating for the difficulty of "making friends" was not very high and yet it was strongly related to adjustment. That is, apparently most women in the study did not rate making friends as any more difficult now compared to their last place of residence, but those who were having a harder time making friends had particularly poor adjustment.

Conversely, note that there were some items (like shopping for household goods and food, for example) that were described as quite a bit more difficult than in the last country of residence, but that were unrelated to women's adjustment. Women can successfully compartmentalize some of the stresses of living in a new country and not allow them to affect their core adjustment.

These finding, and the ones in the chapters to follow, clearly show the limits of relying simply on brief, superficial ratings of adaptation to practical issues, and speak, instead, to the importance of understanding spouses' whole experience.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS

- ♦ Offer practical support to families as they learn to manage the tasks of daily living. Be sure they have the assistance they need to manage these tasks.

- ♦ But recognize that the challenges that are most likely to affect their adjustment are more likely to concern their cultural fit, their careers, their children, and their sense of emotional comfort. Facilitate ways to encounter and understand the host culture and become involved in the local community.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACCOMPANYING SPOUSES

- ♦ Feeling alienated from or disturbed by your host culture is likely to be difficult for you. Find cultural guides who can help you understand the local culture, even as you maintain your connections to your home country and its culture.
- ♦ “Being the kind of person you want to be” is deeply important, especially to people in transition. Be thoughtful about what is most important to you and what you are (and are not) willing to forego. Look for ways to develop and grow consistent with your deeply held personal goals, recognizing that the course of reaching these goals will surely be different than if you did not relocate to a new country.

Chapter 3

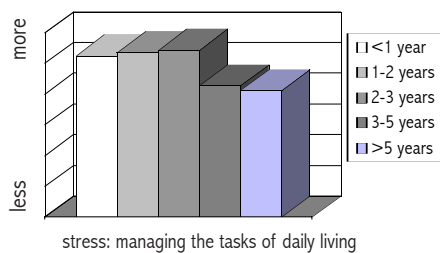
Tip #1: It's Not Just a Matter of Time.

A common assumption is that “it’s just a matter of time” before families happily adjust to life in a new country. To test this assumption, we asked whether women who had been living in their host country longer were better adjusted and found life there less stressful than those who had recently moved here.

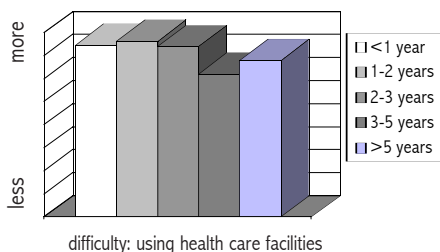
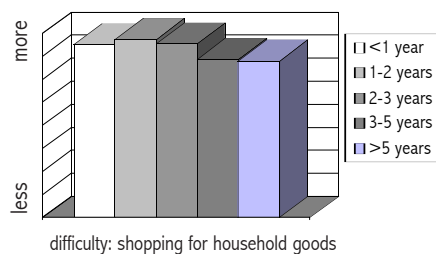
KEY FINDING:

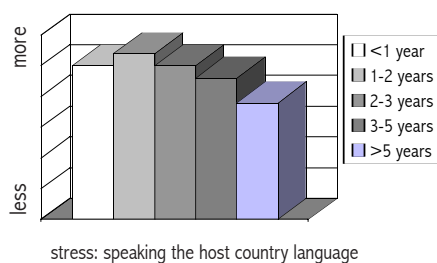
A few aspects of daily living got easier with time (about three years), but most did not. Adjustment did not get better with time either.

A few aspects of international living showed improvement with time:

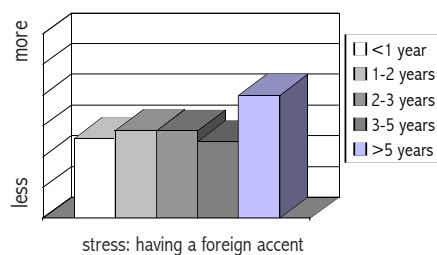


Managing the tasks of daily living — especially shopping for household goods and using health care facilities — became easier with time, although not until the participants had been in the host country for at least three years.





Not surprisingly, participants reported less stress about speaking the host country language with time.



However, there was an unexpected finding that women who had been in the country more than five years — and who were presumably the most fluent — were the most bothered by having a foreign accent.

Just as important as what got easier with time was what did *not* get easier with time. Look at the whole list of items the participants rated (on pages 7 and 9). Of those, only the five listed on pages 12 and 13 were related to how long the women had lived in the host country. The others were not.

And, therefore, not surprisingly, *adjustment was not significantly related to how long women had lived in the host country. That is, adjustment did not improve (or get worse) with time.* Adjustment probably depends much more heavily on the factors like making friends, feeling accepted, and the like. Since these were unrelated to how long women had lived in the host country, so was their adjustment.

In summary, a few aspects of international living got easier with time but most did not, nor did adjustment. And some things got harder with time, suggesting that in some ways, as women become more accustomed to a culture they become more aware of and distressed by the ways they are different and marginalized. Further, even when things did get easier, it took at least three years to do so. It should be noted that three years is longer than some international assignments last in the first place. Clearly, “waiting for the passage of time” is not the solution for those hoping to optimize families’ adjustment.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS

- ♦ Offering support services at the time of the move is undoubtedly valuable but does not address the continuing needs that families face. Their needs continue over the course of the assignment, and new needs arise. Check in with families periodically.
- ♦ Help families get connected to local support networks that will address their continuing needs.
- ♦ While women may learn to manage the acts of daily living fairly quickly, their feelings of stress do

not generally diminish for at least three years. If spouses are not meeting friends, learning to be comfortable in the new culture, or feeling accepted there — in short, if they are not building the foundations of their own good adjustment — do not simply keep “waiting for the passage of time.” Determine what the families’ needs are and guide them toward the support they need.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACCOMPANYING SPOUSES

- ♦ It is important to learn how to manage the tasks of daily living as quickly as possible. If you are having trouble, ask for help.
- ♦ Recognize that to feel very comfortable in a new culture takes a long time. Take an active role in setting the foundations of your own adjustment. Ask for help. Speak to your new neighbors. Join organizations that will help you meet new people.

Chapter 4

Tip #2: “Where In the World?” is Only Half the Question.

Many people assume that living in some countries is easier than others. To explore this assumption, we divided the participants into five groups on the basis of where they were living at the time of the study. Because we had a proportionally large group from the UK and because this group proved to be different in many ways from the European-based group, we kept the UK-based participants as their own group for these analyses.

Of course, this kind of world region comparison does not allow us to examine potentially interesting intra-region differences. For example, those living in Beijing are combined with those living in Bangkok into the “Asia” group. Generalizations about the stresses of world regions, therefore, should be taken as tentative and suggestive only¹.

KEY FINDING

Although different countries posed different kinds of stresses and difficulties for women, participants’ adjustment was unrelated to where they were living.

“Our experience living in Japan was fabulous. We lived in Tokyo where there is a large expat community with all of its resources. [Where we live] in England, there are not many expats here...Believe it or not, life was much easier as an expat in Tokyo than it is here.”

UK

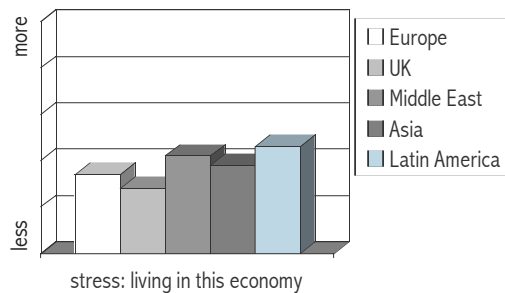
First, we examined whether women living in any particular world region had significantly better or poorer adjustment than any other group. They did not. There were no locations that ensured a good (or bad) adjustment.

Next, we compared the five regional groups on their ratings of the stressfulness of living in their host culture (19 items) and the difficulty of living there compared to the last country they had lived in (17 items). See pages 7 and 9 for full lists of the items. The participants in the five regions differed in how stressful they found some aspects of intercultural living.

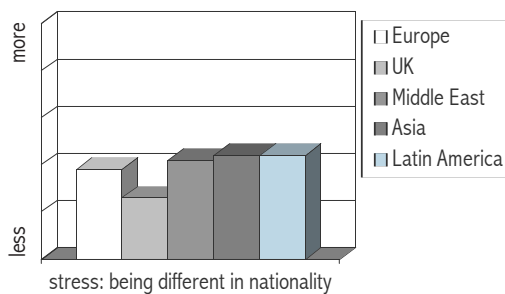
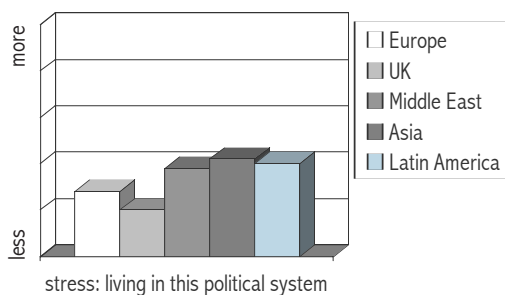
¹*Statistical Note:* Due to sampling differences, the women living in Latin America had lived in their current host countries significantly longer, had lived as an adult in significantly more countries, and had significantly higher current family salaries and higher salary histories than the other groups. Therefore, the analyses that follow include a statistical control for these four factors.

Although these group differences in stress and difficulty are interesting and important, it is also particularly important to examine the list of items where no group differences were found. These are described at the end of this chapter, as it helps to explain the lack of difference in overall adjustment.

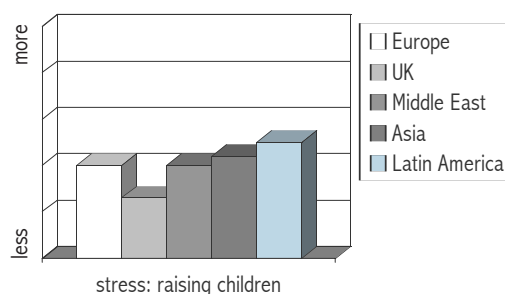
Living in the UK



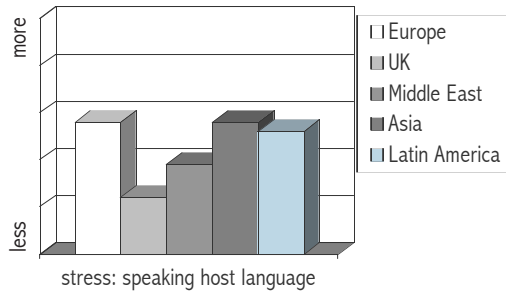
Participants living in the UK, and to a lesser extent, those living in Europe, rated the stress of “living in this economy” and “living in this political system” as particularly low. This is not surprising, as most participants came from countries with economic and political systems similar to the UK and Europe.



Those in the UK also found the stress of “being treated differently because of my nationality” to be particularly low...

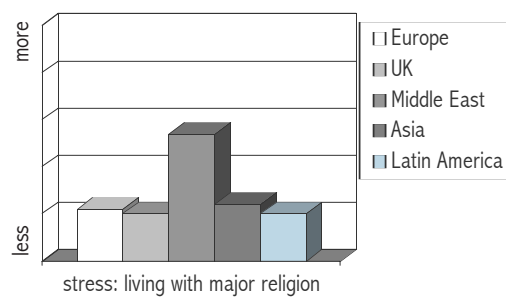


... as was the degree of stress of “having reservations about raising my children in this country,” especially compared to those living in Latin America. Again, the similarity between home and host cultures easily explains these differences.

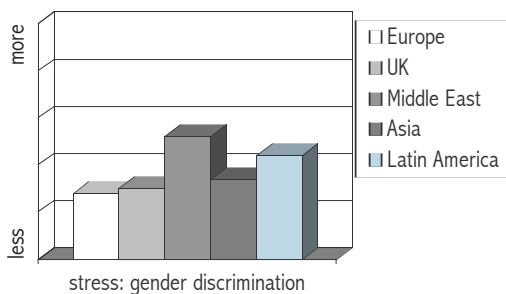
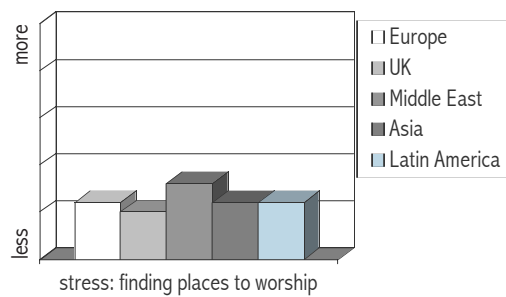


“Speaking the host language” was least stressful for those living in the UK, hardly surprising as this study heavily sampled English speakers. What is perhaps more notable is the relatively low stressfulness about speaking the host language reported by those living in the Middle East.

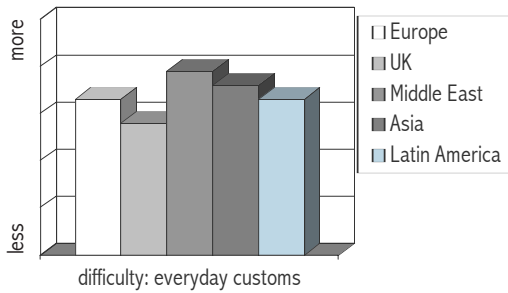
Living in the Middle East



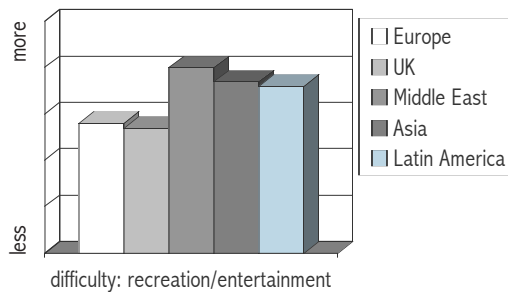
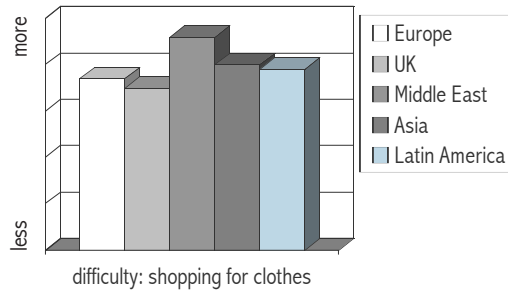
Participants living in the Middle East reported the highest levels of stress concerning “living in this country with the major religion it has” and “having available places for me to worship.”



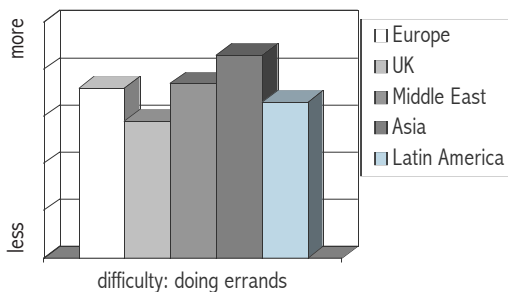
They (and to a lesser extent the group living in Latin America) also reported the most stress from “gender discrimination.”



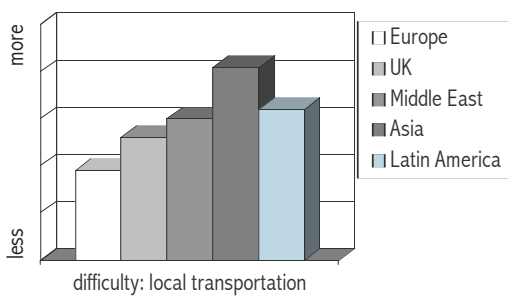
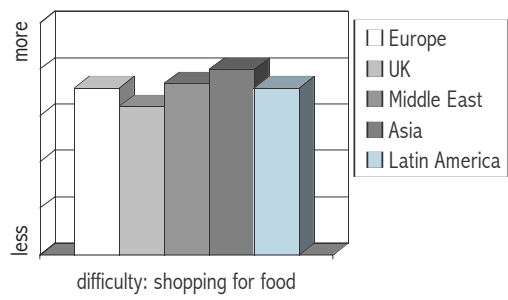
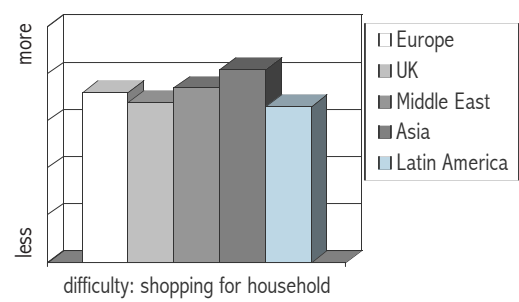
Those in the Middle East also reported the greatest degree of difficulty, compared with their last country of residence, with several practical issues: “everyday customs that must be followed,” “shopping for clothes,” and “recreation and entertainment.”



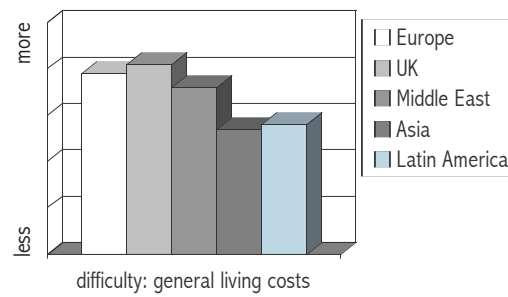
Living in Asia



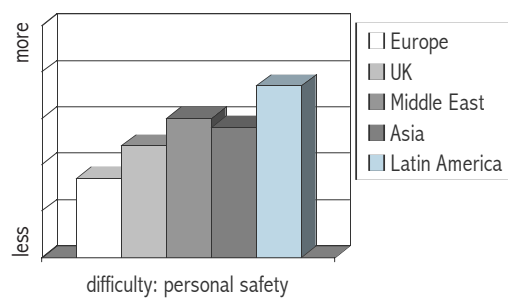
The areas in which the group living in Asia stood out were all in the domain of daily living. Those in Asia had the most difficulty “getting daily tasks/errands done,” “shopping for household goods,” “shopping for and preparing food,” and “local transportation” as compared to their last country of residence. “Local transportation” was seen as particularly easy in Europe.



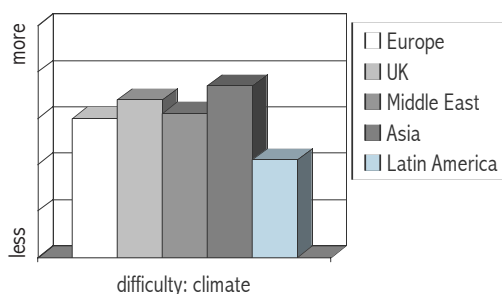
Living in Latin America



The groups living in Asia and Latin America reported the least difficulty in “general living costs,” especially relative to living in the UK.



The group living in Latin America felt particularly safe, especially as compared to those living in Europe.



Women living in Latin America also reported feeling the least difficulty in living with the local “climate” (especially compared with those in Asia).

Clearly, some aspects of international living depend on one’s location. So how could it be that women’s adjustment was *unrelated* to where they were living? The answer lies in the fact that there were almost as many potential aspects that were *not* related to location as there were that *were*. And *these* factors — the ones that were *not* related to where people were living — were quite consistently related to adjustment.

For example, note that whether participants rated “not being able to be the kind of person I want to be,” “making friends,” or “having a foreign accent” as hard had nothing to do with where they lived. But it was these factors that were related to how well adjusted women were (see pages 8 and 10).

These factors that challenge women regardless of their host location primarily involve their emotional support, their sense of connection to both their host and home cultures, their sense of acceptance, and their confidence that they can continue their lives as they like. When these are optimal, women’s adjustment is good. When they are problematic, women’s adjustment is poor.

It is no wonder, then, that adjustment was unrelated to where the women were living.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS

- ♦ **Study the host location to understand the particular stresses likely to influence families’ adjustment there. Offer support in these particular areas.**
- ♦ **Offer cross-cultural training to increase an understanding of the values underlying the host political and economic system.**
- ♦ **Assistance in connecting expatriate families of similar religions, especially when families are religious minorities in the host country, can address many needs.**
- ♦ **Destination services that offer practical orientation about shopping and daily living can get families started on the right foot.**

- ♦ At the same time, do not assume that families moving to “easy locations” will have no problems. The factors that are most consistently related to women’s adjustment were challenging no matter where women lived.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACCOMPANYING SPOUSES

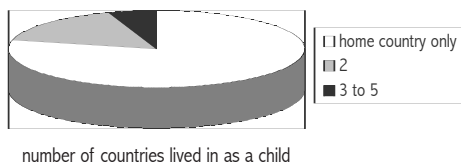
- ♦ Be realistic about the stresses you are likely to face in your host country. Be creative about solving these problems. (For example, one tall American mother with three tall growing children bought a year’s worth of shoes every summer during home leave and shipped them to herself in Beijing.)
- ♦ Even if you are moving to a country that seems culturally similar to your own, focus on how your social and emotional needs will be met. These are with you no matter where you live.

Chapter 5

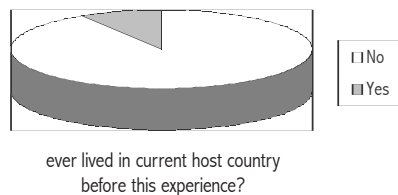
Tip #3: Just Because They've Done It Before Doesn't Make It Easy (At Least Not In the Ways that Count).

In the previous chapter, we reported on the relationship between where participants lived and their adjustment and stress. We take a parallel approach here in examining the relationship between women's previous experience in living overseas and their adjustment and stress.

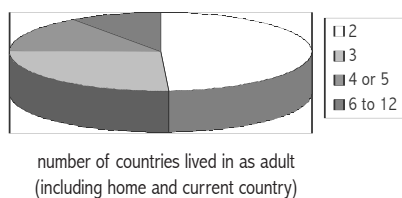
Included in our sample were women of greatly varying international experience:



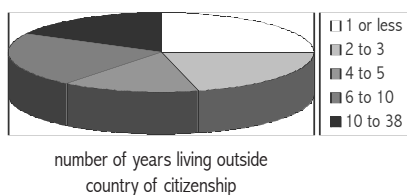
Most had not had international living experiences as children, although 21.3% had. Those who had lived in other countries as children were no better or worse adjusted than those who had not.



Only 8.8% of the women had lived in their current host country prior to this experience. Those who had lived there before expressed *more* stress about “the possibilities for [their] own employment” than first-timers, but otherwise were no better or worse adjusted.



About half of the participants were on their first international assignments but others had lived in many other countries.

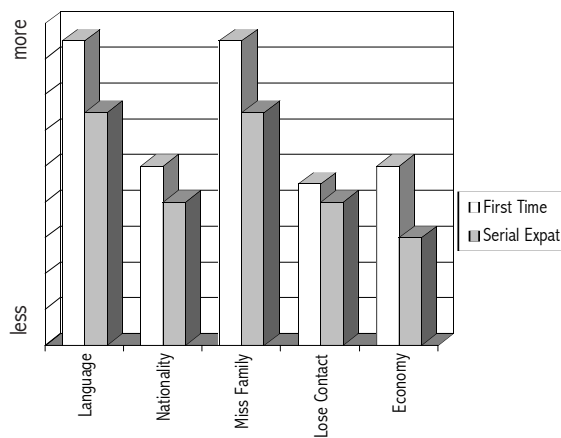


Women varied greatly in how long they had lived outside their citizenship country.

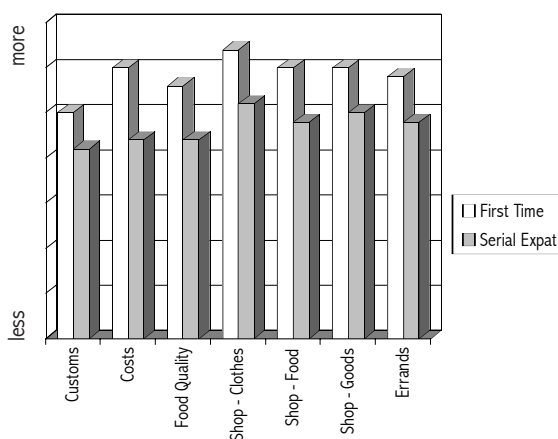
KEY FINDING

Women with prior international experience found some aspects of international living easier than those on their first international assignment, but they were not necessarily better adjusted.

Women who had lived in more countries as adults and/or had lived longer outside their citizenship countries found several aspects of international living to be less stressful or difficult. These are presented in the next two charts¹. We refer to women who were living in at least their second foreign country as “serial expats.”



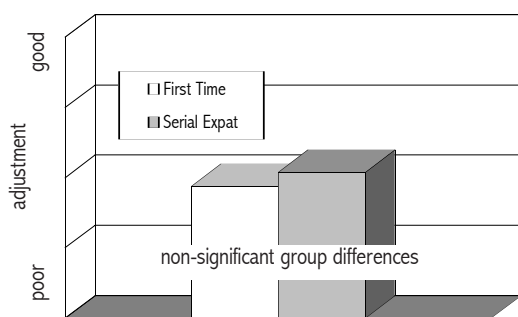
Women who were living in their first foreign country reported feeling significantly more stress, compared to serial expats, from “speaking the host country language,” “being treated differently because of [their] nationality,” “missing family and friends in [their] home country,” “losing contact with their home country,” and “living in this economy.”



Women who were living in their first foreign country reported that the following aspects of international living were significantly more difficult than their last country of residence (home, for them), compared to serial expats: “everyday customs that must be followed,” “general living costs,” “available quality and types of food,” “shopping for clothes, food, and household goods,” and “getting daily tasks/errands done.”

In short, the serial expats did find some aspects of international living less stressful than first-time transferees. This might make it all the more surprising, then, that women’s adjustment was unrelated to their international experience:

¹ We used the “number of countries lived in as an adult” to make the groups for these charts; the results were very similar for the other measure, “number of years outside citizenship country” and so are not repeated here.



Serial expats and women living in their first foreign country did not differ in adjustment. The same results were found when comparing women with no vs. some childhood international experience, women with varying numbers of years lived outside their citizenship country, and women who had vs. had not lived in this country.

How could it be that women with no prior international experience could be so stressed by these aspects of international life but were not more poorly adjusted? It is important to remember that many of the stresses reported by those without prior international experience were unrelated to adjustment. (See Tables on pages 8 and 10) That is, serial expats may have found things like “shopping for household goods” easier but this skill did not penetrate into their sense of adjustment.

In contrast, there were a number of other aspects of international living that did not get easier with experience, but that mattered a lot for women’s adjustment. For example, the following were not related to international experience but had very strong relationships to adjustment: “not being able to be the kind of person I want to be,” “making friends,” “having reservations about raising my children in this country,” and “having a foreign accent.” These were probably a function of the women’s particular living circumstances rather than how much international experience they had. Those who did find it easy to be the kind of person they wanted to be, to make friends, etc. were the ones with good adjustment — regardless of their international experience.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS

- ♦ Do not assume that spouses who have moved internationally before will have no adjustment difficulties. Offer them the same emotional and social support as the first-time transferee.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACCOMPANYING SPOUSES

- ♦ If you have lived in another country before, do not assume that your experience will necessarily be easier the next time. You may have a head start in some practical ways. But each relocation poses a set of social, emotional, and practical challenges that you must meet anew.
- ♦ At the same time, if you have had a negative international experience, do not assume that the next relocation will necessarily be negative. You, your family, and the circumstances of the move will now be different, even if you are moving to the same country for the second time.

Chapter 6

Tip #4: Cajole Spouses at Your Own Risk.

In an ideal world, no one would pressure an employee into accepting an international assignment if it was not the best choice for his/her whole family. However, sometimes employers feel they need a particular person at a particular place immediately. What are the consequences for families — and therefore, for companies — of pressuring families into reluctantly accepting an international assignment?

“I’ve noticed that people who have chosen to move to a foreign country do better than those who have been forced to go.”

(Switzerland)

We asked spouses to answer the questions shown in the box below, and then we compared their responses to their adjustment.

SURVEY ITEMS: FEELING PRESSURED

- ☐ My spouse's employer consulted me directly before the final decision was made.
- ☐ My spouse felt it would be detrimental to his/her career to refuse this move.
- ☐ I felt I had no choice but to agree to accept this move.
- ☐ At the time we decided to move to this country, I was excited and happy about the decision.
- ☐ At the time we decided to move to this country, my spouse was excited and happy about the decision.

(Check one of the following:)

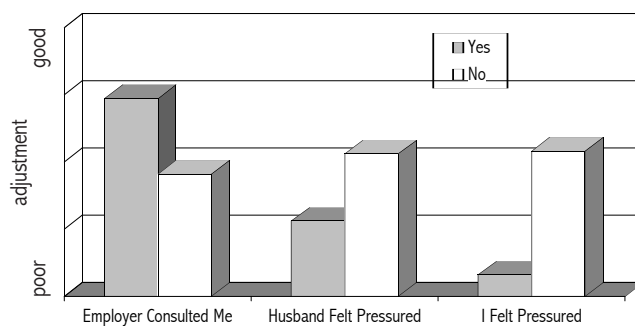
- ☐ My spouse/partner and I shared equally in the decision to move.
- ☐ My spouse/partner and I discussed whether to move, but s/he had more influence in the decision than I did.
- ☐ My spouse decided all by himself/herself.

KEY FINDING:

Spouses who felt coerced into accepting the international assignment had significantly poorer adjustment than spouses who felt involved and interested in the move from the beginning.



Only 6.2% of the participants said they were consulted by their husbands' employers before the final decision to move was made. In addition, 22.2% said their husbands felt that turning down the assignment would be detrimental to their careers. And 13.4% said they felt they had no choice but to accept the move.



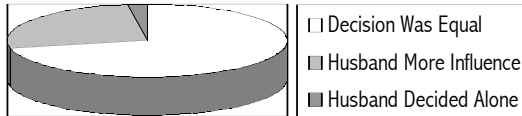
Women's adjustment was significantly better when their husbands' employers had consulted them before the final decision to move was made, and when neither they nor their husbands felt pressured into accepting the assignment.



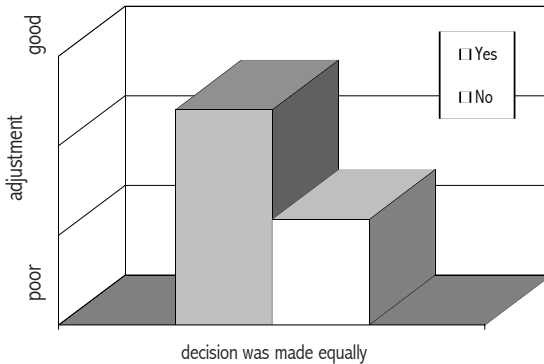
Looking back at the moment of decision about whether to move to a new country, 66% of the women said they had been happy and excited; 56.2% of the women said their husbands were happy and excited.



Women who had been initially happy about the move had significantly better adjustment than those who had not been happy. Women's adjustment was unrelated to how they had judged their husbands' initial happiness about the move.



71.7% of the women said that they and their husbands had shared equally in the decision to move overseas. 26.2% said their husbands had more influence over the decision than they, and only 2.1% said their husbands decided alone.



Women who said the decision to move was made equally by their husbands and themselves had significantly better adjustment than those who said their husbands had more (or all) influence.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS

- ♦ Consult employees' spouses prior to making the final offer and/or their making the final decision to accept the offer. You will hear any concerns first hand and be more likely to be able to address them. And you will be signalling to the spouse that you understand how critical she/he is to the assignment's success.
- ♦ Avoid situations in which you need employees to accept assignments quickly, without proper time to discuss the move with their spouses.
- ♦ Do not try to pressure employees and spouses into accepting moves they do not want to make. Offer real alternatives to accepting the assignment, including the assurance that they will not be penalized for refusing the assignment. Offer real career-enhancing alternatives, and realistic offers of an overseas assignment a few years later when it might fit better with the family's needs.
- ♦ If the spouse expresses initial reluctance about the move, take her concerns seriously. Many of them may be able to be addressed.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACCOMPANYING SPOUSES

- ♦ Ask to meet with the sponsoring organization before making your decision to move, even if they have not initiated such a meeting. Establish that you understand that this relocation must be a collaborative effort between them and you.
- ♦ If you have reservations about accepting the assignment, develop an articulate and clear way to present your concerns to the sponsoring organization. Ask yourself what it would take to make the assignment work for you and your family. Which of these things can you arrange for yourself? What kinds of assistance do you need?
- ♦ Work with the sponsoring organization to think creatively about how their needs and yours can both be met. Would you be more able and willing to relocate in the future? Can the sponsoring organization wait?
- ♦ Begin and maintain frequent discussions with your spouse about the implications of the move for you, him, and your children.

Chapter 7

Tip #5: Watch the Balance of Gains and Losses.

In some sense, an international move marks a confluence of gains and losses in a family's life. If one has gains, not losses, in the most important aspects of one's life, the international relocation is likely to be a success.

"Most of us do find ways to cope but the costs of marital stress and depression are high and not observed by sponsoring companies."

(France)

We asked participants to describe the extent of their gains or losses in three areas: material comforts, identity, and time (see box for Survey Items).

KEY FINDING

Gains and losses in material comforts and housing, identity, and time with friends were related to participants' adjustment, while gains and losses in money, and time with self and family were not.

SURVEY ITEMS: GAINS AND LOSSES

Compared to the last place I lived, I now have:

	much less	less	about the same	much more	more
money/buying power	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
material comforts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
time with my children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
time with my spouse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
involvement with my extended family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
time with friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
time for myself	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
social status	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
job prestige	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
professional identity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
respect from my community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The amount of time I now have with my _____ is:

	much less than I would like	less than I would like	about right for me	more than I would like	much more than I would like
children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
spouse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
extended family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Material Comfort

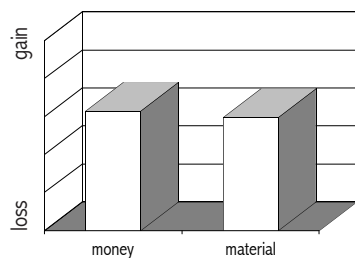
Sponsoring organizations must make a judgment about how to allocate funds for practical support of relocating families. Some expenditures were more predictive of good adjustment than others.

“It is very difficult after 25 years of marriage to ‘go back’ to mismatched furniture, no money for eating out, etc.”

(United Kingdom)

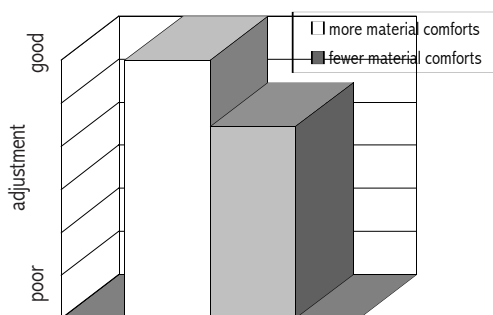
“Our children were the only American children not given an allowance to go to the local international school. I cannot express the resentment I will harbor forever against this company for denying my children what I later learned was a basic perk.”

(Switzerland)



On average, women felt that they had about the same amount of money/buying power and material comfort as before the move, although there was a range in both domains, from women who felt they had “much less” to those who felt they had “much more” of each.

Whether participants felt they had an increase or decrease in the amount of money/buying power they had was unrelated to their adjustment. That is, those who felt they had much more money were not necessarily better adjusted, and those with much less were not necessarily poorly adjusted.



However, feeling a change in material comforts *was* related to adjustment — those who felt a net gain in material comforts were significantly better adjusted than those who felt a loss. It seems it was not so much the salary as the circumstance of their living situation that seemed to matter.

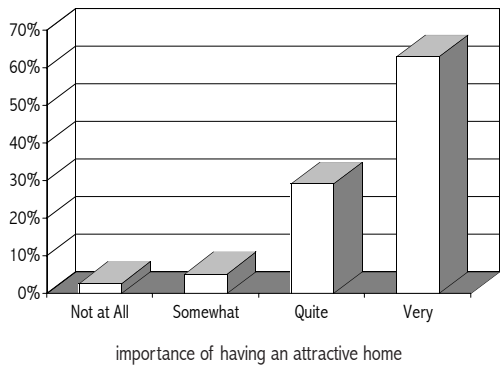


Similarly, women who said that general housing conditions were much more difficult now than in their previous country had significantly worse adjustment than those who said housing conditions were the same or better now.

We also asked participants about the importance of homemaking in their lives (see sample items below) and their responses help to explain why a loss in material comfort would be so closely related to adjustment:

SAMPLE SURVEY ITEMS: "HOMEMAKER ROLE VALUE"

	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree
To have a well-run home is one of my life goals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is important to me to have a home of which I can be proud.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

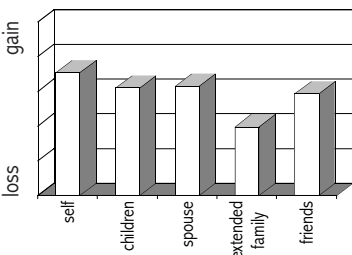


The majority of participants said that their homemaking role was very important to them (between a 4 and 5 on the 5-point scale). Responses to this measure were uncorrelated with women’s age, education level, and salary or career history. It is no wonder, then, that a loss of material comfort was related to poor adjustment.

"I find the expectation to just "up and move" to be hard -- with no support in any form for me. My surroundings are of great importance and the uncertainty of a forthcoming move is difficult -- knowing that I have to dismantle our beautiful house."
(Thailand)

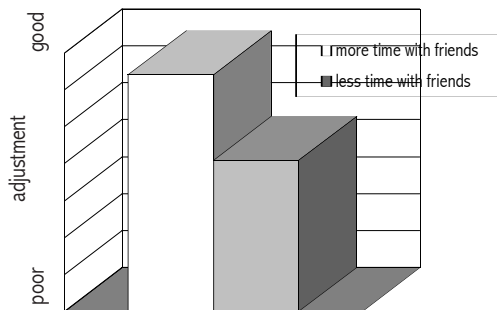
Time

Participants were also asked about gains and losses in the amount of time they had with themselves, their family members, and their friends.



On average, they reported a slight increase in the amount of time they had for themselves, about the same amount of time with their husbands, children, and friends, and a decrease in the amount of time with their extended families. Still, in every category, there was a range from “much less” to “much more.”

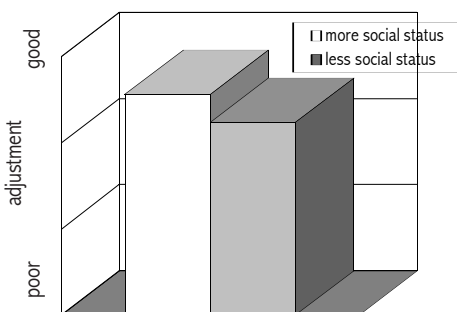
Surprisingly, despite this range in actual gains and losses in time with *self* and *family*, none of these measures was related to participants' adjustment. In addition, when we asked about how satisfied the participants were with the amount of time they had with their children, spouse, and extended family, these measures were also unrelated to their adjustment. Only one time gain/loss was related to adjustment:



Women who now had more time with friends had significantly better adjustment than those with less time with friends. A parallel result was found with the satisfaction measure: those more satisfied with the amount of time they had with friends were better adjusted than those less satisfied.

Identity

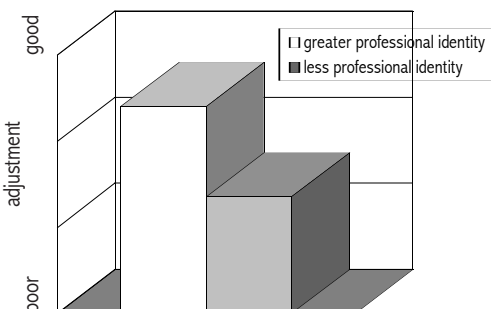
And finally, participants' gains and losses in various aspects of their identity were measured and compared to their levels of adjustment.



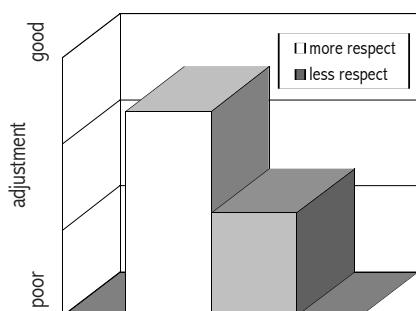
Women reported better adjustment if they had more gains (or less loss) in social status,...



...job prestige,...



...professional identity, and...



...respect from their communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS

- ♦ Invest in families' material comfort and housing. These have a special importance for those making a home in a new country. Gains there can help counterbalance other losses.
- ♦ Facilitate and protect the amount of time spouses have with their local friends. Friends play a particularly important role when women are far away from their home communities.
- ♦ Help women protect their social and professional identities. Even (or especially) if they are not able to work in the host country, help them find meaningful and career-enhancing volunteer work or training programs. Investing in spousal assistance programs, and funding such professional activities as attendance at conferences, memberships in local professional organizations, or trade journal subscriptions can yield a large return in terms of spouses' adjustment.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACCOMPANYING SPOUSES

- ♦ In many ways, moving to a new country will put you into new roles in life and in your family. You may have more (or less) social status. You may have given up (or taken on) new career responsibilities. Recognize that this kind of identity change is likely to be challenging.
- ♦ If you do expect to encounter challenges to your professional identity, protect yourself. You may not currently be on the payroll as a software engineer, for example, but *you* are still a software engineer. Go to professional meetings in your field. Stay current with developments in your field. Look for ways to enhance your professional identity in the new location, even if these take you in new directions.

Chapter 8

Tip #6: Children are a Complicated Blessing.

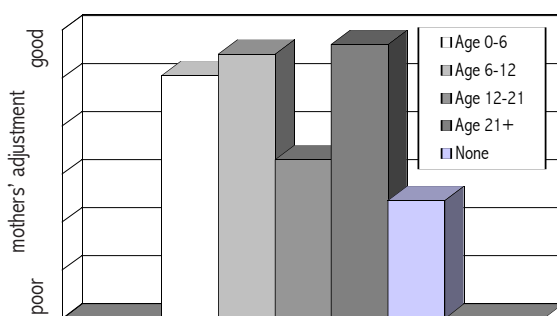
We have given predominant attention in this report to the adjustment of the accompanying spouse because of the centrally influential role of mothers and wives in families and couples. But it is critical to understand the context of the employee's entire family whose needs will influence the spouse as well as the employee's ability to work effectively. Women, in particular, tend to be centrally involved in and affected by the needs of their children, parents, and siblings. One cannot understand the needs of an accompanying spouse without understanding the needs of her broader family.

"Both of my parents died while I was abroad. It raised hell with my marriage. Grown and married children, the coming of grandchildren, I feel I have been pulled in 3 or 4 directions during my 20 years as an expatriate...I am needed in the USA and with my husband in Stockholm."

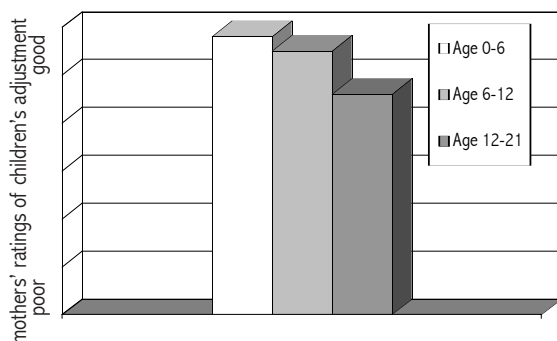
(Sweden)

KEY FINDING

Mothers of teenagers and women with no children had significantly worse adjustment than mothers of younger or adult children.



Women with teenage children or no children had significantly lower adjustment than women with younger or adult children.

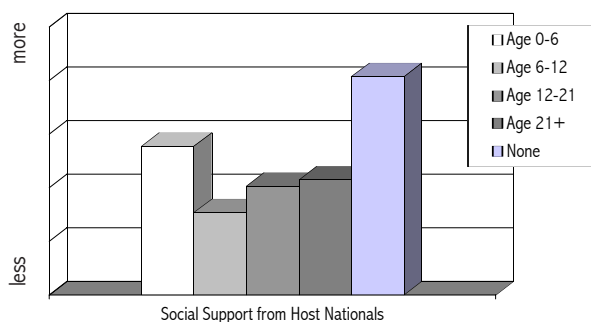


Mothers also rated the teenagers themselves as significantly less well adjusted to the international assignment than younger children.

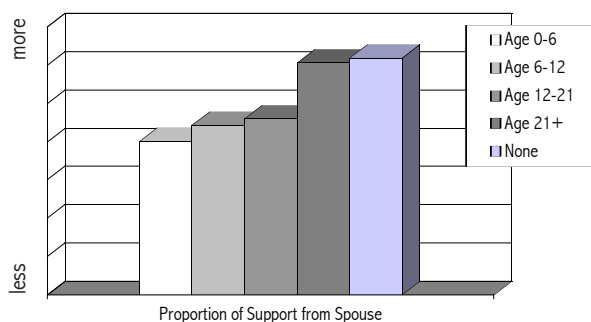
What accounts for the different experiences of these women at different life stages? Mothers of teenage children living anywhere — relocated or at home — may have lower adjustment simply because of the demands of their growing children, at least in cultures that value increasing independence from families at this age. But why were the women without children so relatively poorly adjusted¹? After all, in some cases, their freedom allowed them to enter the culture more easily. To address this question, we examined various aspects of their lives.

KEY FINDING

Women with no children had more host-national friends than did mothers and more time for themselves, but they said they had a harder time making friends. They also reported a greater perceived loss in professional identity and job prestige.

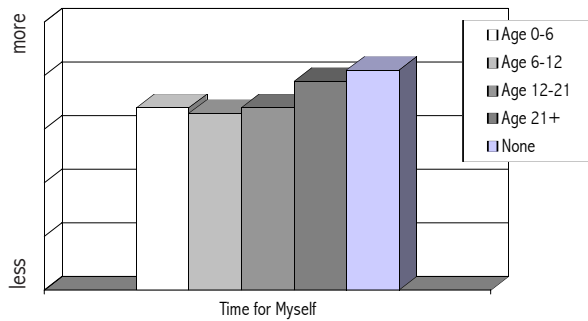


Women with no children reported having a much higher proportion of host-national friendships than did mothers, suggesting that they might be having an easier time integrating into the host culture. (See page 62 for wording of survey item.)

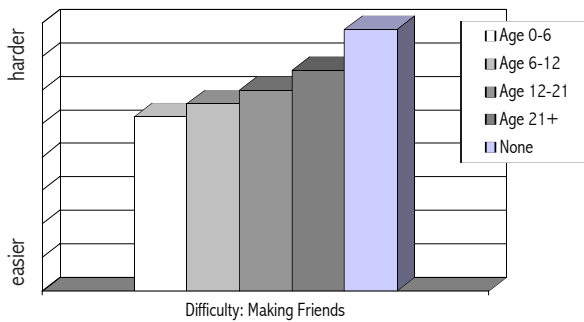


Women without children and mothers of adult children reported receiving the greatest amount of social support from their husbands (as opposed to friends, other family members, professionals, etc.), but...

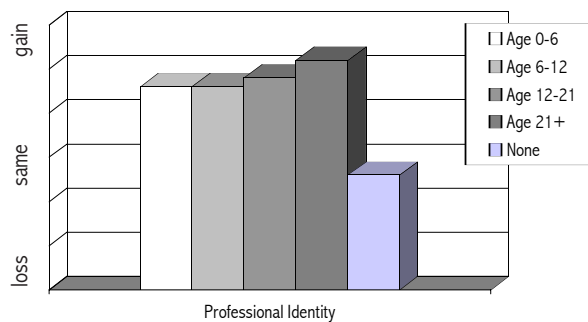
¹Statistical Note: Because the women in these different life stage groups differed significantly in age (those with no children being the youngest), we statistically controlled for any effects of age in the following analyses.



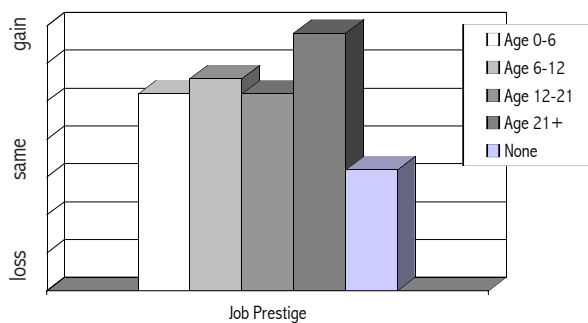
...also, the most increase in the amount of time they had for themselves, compared to what they had before the international move. This might be seen as a benefit, but the findings below suggest that it had a mixed meaning.



Women with no children reported the hardest time making new friends, and...



...they felt the greatest loss in professional identity, and...



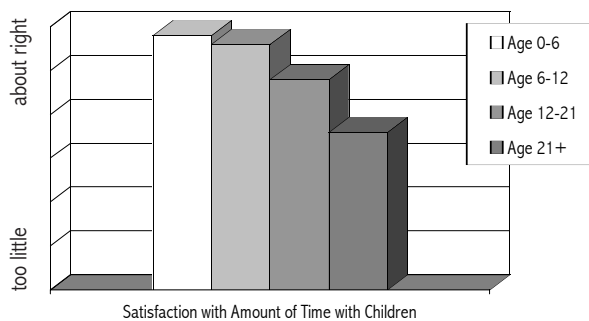
...job prestige.

In short, the women without children seemed particularly “at loose ends.” They were supported by their spouses and host nationals but seemed to feel they had time on their hands, which was made worse by having difficulty making friends and significant career losses.

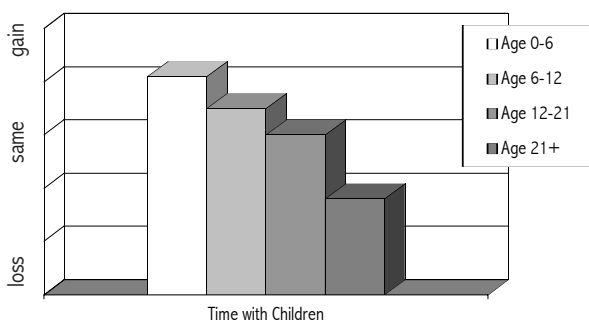
On the other hand, women without children did not face some of the stresses and challenges reported by the mothers in the study:

KEY FINDING

Mothers of adult children were particularly troubled by their lack of time with their children while mothers of younger children appreciated a gain in their time with their children.



Mothers of adult children were least satisfied with the amount of time they had with their children as a result of the international assignment

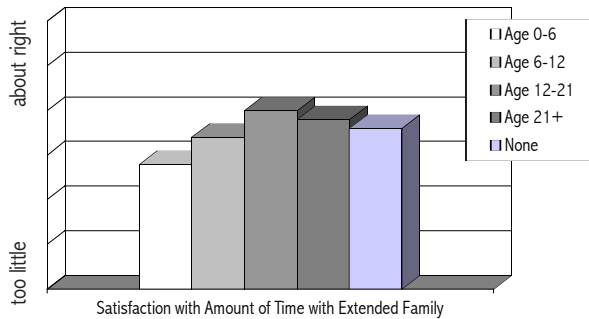


Mothers of younger children reported a gain in the amount of time they had with their children while mothers of adult children reported a loss.

“I regret, daily, leaving my seventeen year old daughter (now 18 and a freshman in college). I should have stayed one more year. We were close, now we’re not. She lives in our house with her older brother. I feel I abandoned them. But my marriage needed me to come with my husband.”
(China)

KEY FINDING

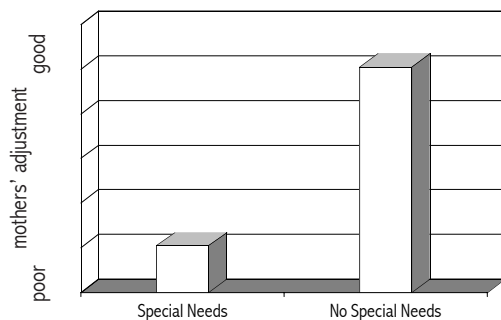
Mothers of babies and preschool children particularly felt the loss of time with their extended families.



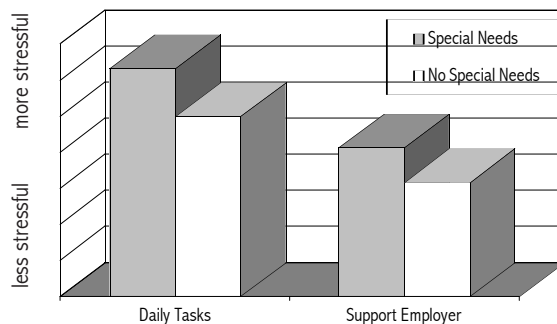
Women with the youngest children reported having significantly less time with their extended families than they would have liked.

KEY FINDING

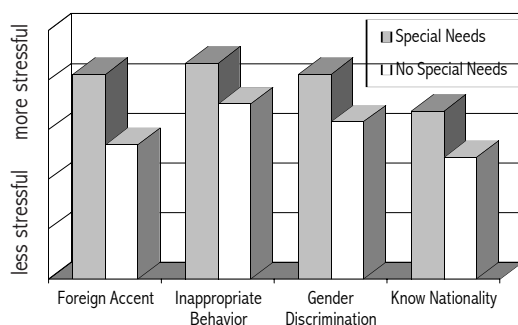
Mothers of children with special needs are at risk for feeling overwhelmed by daily demands as well as by feeling marginalized and isolated.



Mothers of children with special medical or educational needs had significantly poorer adjustment than mothers of children with no special needs.



Mothers of children with special needs found some aspects of international living more stressful than mothers with children with no special needs. In some ways (managing the tasks of daily living and providing support for spouse's employer), these could easily be understood, considering the extra burden of caring for the special needs.



In other ways, (having a foreign accent, being afraid of doing something inappropriate, gender discrimination, and having locals know one's nationality), the higher stressfulness ratings suggest a sense of marginalization and isolation that can accompany raising children with special needs in another country.

“Coming to this country with a child with very special educational needs and not knowing who to turn to for help was an especially stressful period of life. I was deeply depressed those first couple of years. I was always feeling bitter, angry, and depressed. Having someone to guide me to find help for my son would have helped tremendously.”

(Israel)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS

- ♦ At the selection and pre-departure phases, help potential transferees consider the impact of an international move on their families. If the family has adolescent children, discuss the wisdom of accepting this assignment at this time. However, remember that many teenagers (and their mothers) adapt well.
- ♦ Do not assume that women without children will necessarily have an easier time on assignment than those with children; children can provide an entree into a new culture and social support system that is very helpful, and the benefits of increased time with them can counterbalance the negative effects of other losses.
- ♦ If a family has a child with special needs, offer special and continual support throughout the assignment, not just for the child but for the parents, whose experience overseas may be largely taken up by concern and understanding new systems of special care.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACCOMPANYING SPOUSES

- ♦ You and your spouse know your children and their needs best. Some children adapt easily to new situations and others do not. Use this knowledge to decide whether to accept an international assignment and to plan for their needs.
- ♦ Children can be a wonderful help in entering a new culture, as they immediately put you side by side with host nationals with many similar concerns. Take advantage of this, if you have children.
- ♦ If you do not have children, find other ways to benefit from the relocation. Perhaps you will be able to travel more, and experience a different side of the culture than you would be able to do if you had children.
- ♦ If your child has special needs, ask for help. You and he/she will both benefit from not feeling alone.

Chapter 9

Tip #7: Share Employees with Their Families.

Employees living in their home communities are not generally accustomed to having their employers being involved in their home lives. Whether, where, and when to take a vacation, how many and which hours to work, how to accomplish the tasks of daily living — these choices are typically made within the family with minimal input from employers. Of course, families differ widely in how involved husbands and wives are in the running of a household and family. But when a company moves an employee to a new country, taking his or her family away from its usual community of support, it bears some responsibility to facilitate employees’ availability to their families.

“Loneliness is a huge issue and many women expect their husbands to become all things to them.”

(Austria)

We asked participants to describe the sources of their social support — who gave them advice? to whom could they confide? with whom could they discuss impersonal topics? who would lend them things or time? who let them know they were valued? with whom could they get together to have fun or relax?

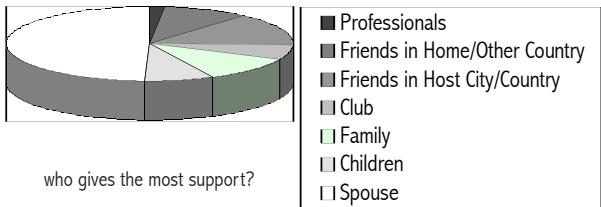
SURVEY ITEM: SOURCE OF SUPPORT

Taking together all the kinds of support you get, what percentage of it comes from *(these numbers should add up to 100%)*

your spouse	_____ %
your children who live with you	_____ %
other family members who live in another country	_____ %
club membership	_____ %
friends in the city where you live now	_____ %
friends in the country (but not the city) where you live now	_____ %
friends in your home country	_____ %
friends in some other country	_____ %
professionals in the city/country where you live now (including therapists, religious leaders, relocation professionals, human resource managers, school personnel, etc.)	_____ %
professionals in some other country	_____ %
other	_____ %

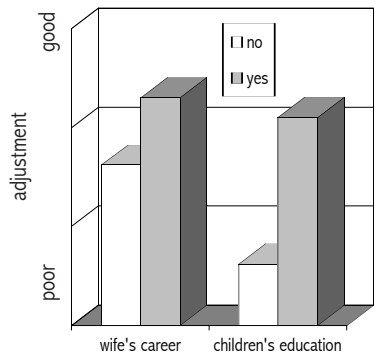
KEY FINDING

Husbands played an especially important role in families’ lives yet were often unavailable.



Husbands were by far the greatest source of support for participants. On average, participants said they got about half their social support from their husbands.

We asked several questions about how the couples discussed the potential international assignment prior to making the decision to move.



Women had significantly better adjustment if they said they and their husbands had talked more about (a) how the move would affect their careers, education, or training and (b) (if they had children over age 6) how it would affect their children's education.

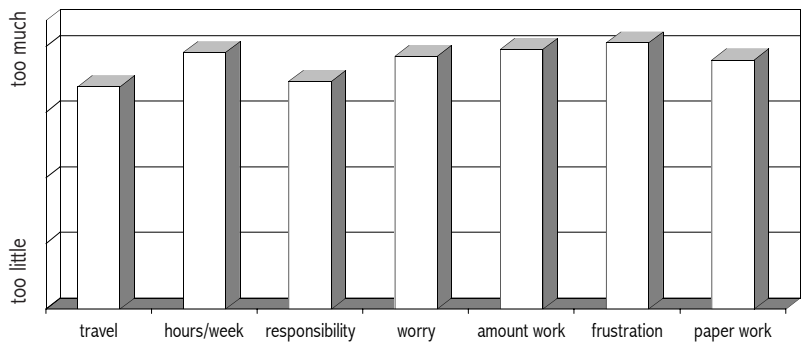
Husbands clearly play a critical role in the social support of the accompanying wife. What happens, then, if the husband's work responsibilities take him away from the family?

" The amount of traveling a spouse does deeply affects the family. I would estimate that my husband is gone for half the working year, if not more. The children are my total responsibility. He can never attend school functions, he often forgets birthdays, and was not there when we moved into our house. All this has caused an air of resentment within the family. "
(Switzerland)

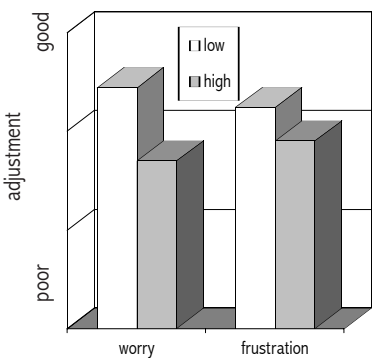
SAMPLE SURVEY ITEM: HUSBANDS' WORK

Please rate your spouse's current work on the following dimensions on a 5-point scale:
1 = too little, 3 = just right, 5 = too much

	too little			too much	
amount of travel	1	2	3	4	5
number of hours/week	1	2	3	4	5
amount of responsibility	1	2	3	4	5
amount of worry	1	2	3	4	5
amount of work	1	2	3	4	5
amount of frustration	1	2	3	4	5
amount of paper work	1	2	3	4	5



On average, women were not particularly critical of their husbands' work conditions. The highest level of criticism was in their rating of the amount of frustration involved in their husbands' jobs.

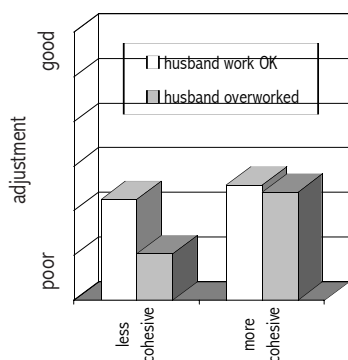


Women who were more critical of the amount of worry and frustration their husbands' jobs engendered had significantly poorer adjustment than women who were not so critical.

Of course, families differ in how much closeness they have and prefer. We measured family cohesion using items like these:

SAMPLE ITEMS: COHESION

	almost never	once in a while	some- times	frequently	almost always
Family members feel closer to other family members than to people outside the family.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family members like to spend free time with each other.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We can easily think of things to do together as a family.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



In the more cohesive, close-knit families, whether or not the husbands were overworked was unrelated to women's adjustment. However, in the less cohesive families, husbands' being overworked was significantly related to their wives having poorer adjustment. Wives in this poorly adjusted group appear to feel doubly deprived of their husbands, first by family style then by the demands of his job.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS

- ♦ Institutionalize policies that let employees spend time with their families. For example, require employees to take several days off when families move to the host country, to help them get settled. Limit employees' travel to a level that suits the family.
- ♦ Provide the setting for employees to discuss the ramifications of a move with their spouses. It is in your interest (as well as the families') for these discussions to take place.
- ♦ Understand that spouses feel the effects of employees' work-related stress, just as employees feel the effects of spouses' stress.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACCOMPANYING SPOUSES

- ♦ Discuss how the move will affect you, your family, and your children. Opening this line of communication from the beginning is critical to the whole international experience.
- ♦ Understand that family roles — who cooks dinner, who helps with homework, who makes decisions about what to buy and what children are allowed to do — often change after a move to a new country, and that these changes require families to be flexible. Give and bend wherever you can.
- ♦ At the same time, do what you can to have both you and your spouse involved in some of the tasks of daily living, and in family support. Even if yours is a family with traditional roles, with men having paid employment and women taking care of the family and home, remember that doing these tasks in a new country, away from the normal sources of support, will be more difficult than at home. Ask the sponsoring organization for understanding about this, and for time for the employed spouse to help at home.

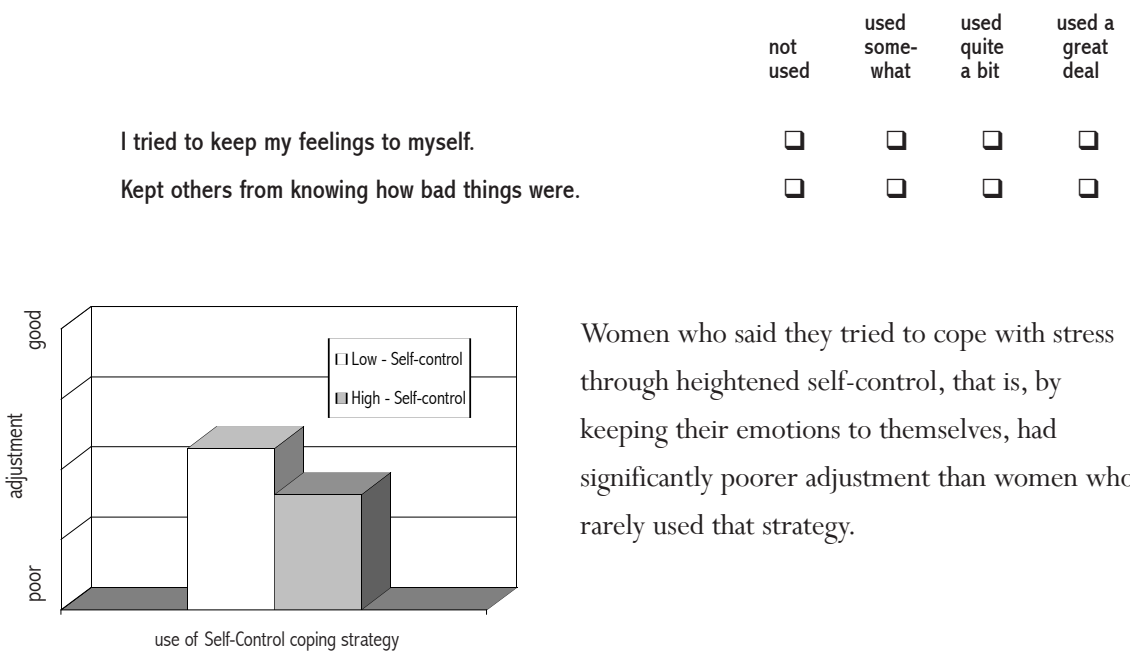
Chapter 10

Tip #8: Ask About the Beliefs, Values and Strategies that Make a Difference.

We asked participants how they coped with any difficult times they had in the first year of their relocation, using a widely-used research measure of coping styles. Some of the strategies they used were helpful and some were not.

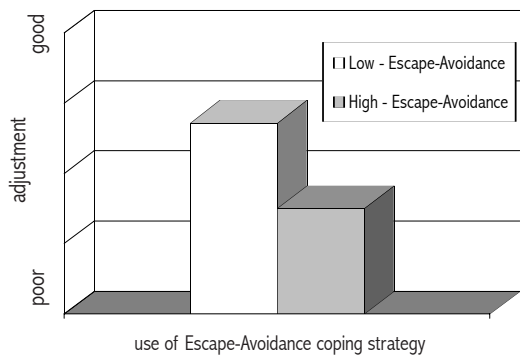
KEY FINDING
Women who coped with relocation stress by trying to control their emotions or escape and avoid their problems had poor adjustment. Those who coped with effective problem solving and positive reasoning had better adjustment.

SAMPLE SURVEY ITEM: SELF-CONTROL COPING STRATEGY



SAMPLE SURVEY ITEM: ESCAPE-AVOIDANCE COPING STRATEGY

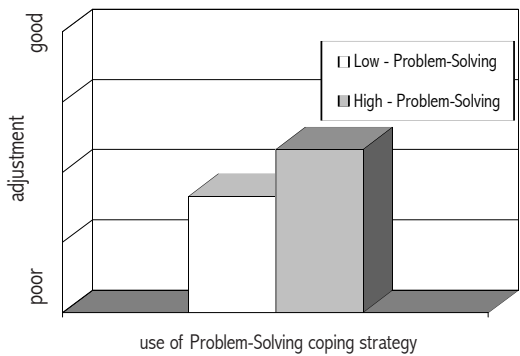
	not used	used somewhat	used quite a bit	used a great deal
Slept more than usual.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Had fantasies or wishes about how things might turn out.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Women who coped with stress through escape and avoidance of their problems, including by eating, drinking, or using medication, had poorer adjustment than women who rarely used this approach.

SAMPLE SURVEY ITEM: PROBLEM-SOLVING COPING STRATEGY

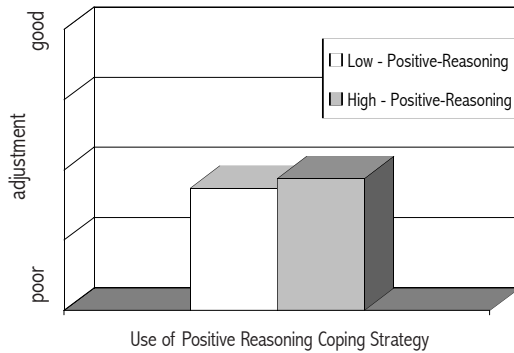
	not used	used some-what	used quite a bit	used a great deal
Just concentrated on what I had to do next — the next step.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Came up with a couple of different solutions to the problem.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Women with *better* adjustment tended to use a problem-solving coping strategy...

SAMPLE SURVEY ITEM: POSITIVE REASONING COPING STRATEGY

	not used	used some-what	used quite a bit	used a great deal
Changed or grew as a person in a good way.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I came out of the experience better than when I went in.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



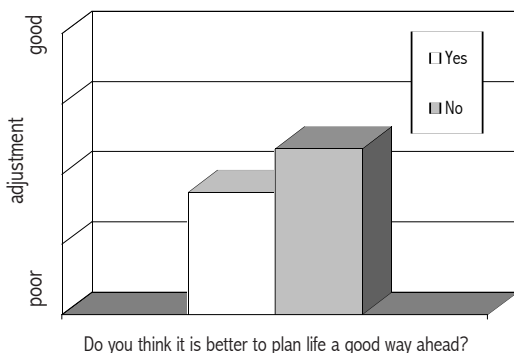
...as well as a positive reasoning approach.

In addition to asking about coping strategies, we asked participants how much control they felt they had over events in their lives. In general, among people (or at least, among Americans, with whom the research has been done) who are not in the process of relocating, adjustment is higher if people believe they have more control over their lives and if they feel that planning ahead is a good and effective thing to do. But is this belief so useful for people whose lives, in some ways, are not so controllable?

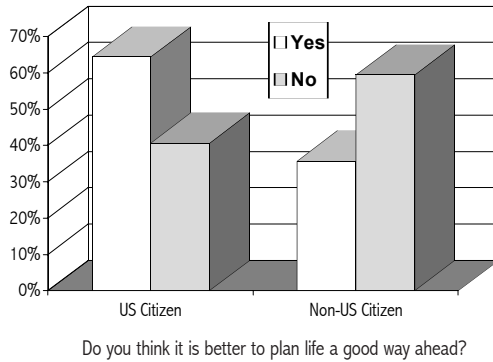
SAMPLE SURVEY ITEMS: LOCUS OF CONTROL

	Yes	No
Do you think it is better to plan life a good way ahead?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you usually able to carry things out the way you expect?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Overall, participants who believed they had more control over their lives had better adjustment, consistent with prior research. But in the case of one question — “Do you think it is better to plan life a good way ahead?” — we found a different result.



Women who said they did think it was better to plan life a good way ahead had significantly poorer adjustment than women who said they did not think it was better to plan ahead.



Interestingly, Americans were significantly more likely to answer “Yes” to the question about planning ahead than were non-US citizens, reflecting a core American value of “effort optimism,” or the belief that, through action things will probably work out for the best. This belief, usually helpful to Americans, seems not to have served women well while on international relocation.

RECOMMENDATION FOR SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS

- ♦ Help families articulate and understand the core values and beliefs they bring with them when they move internationally. Give them the opportunity to discuss how these values may support or interfere with their adjustment, for example, in the context of cross-cultural training and/or pre-departure assessment and planning sessions.

RECOMMENDATION FOR ACCOMPANYING SPOUSES

- ♦ Try to respond to stressful situations in positive, problem-solving ways, rather than by denying that they are stressful.
- ♦ Learn what is controllable in your life and what is not, and try to adjust your expectations accordingly.
- ♦ Find someone to discuss how your core values and beliefs affect your adjustment to an international move.

Chapter 11

Tip #9: Be Prepared: Language, Communication, and Fitting In.

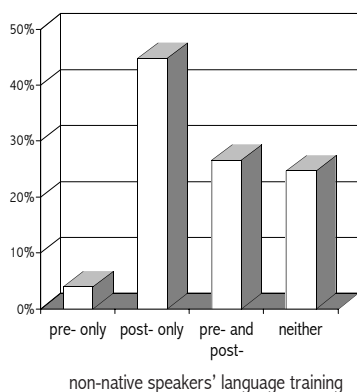
When asked to give advice to other expatriate spouses, one of the most common suggestions from our participants was to study the host language. We examined the role of host language ability, but in doing so, found it helpful to consider “knowing the host language” as a metaphor for understanding how to communicate with and fit into the host culture.

"When one is not fluent in the native language, even small frustrations are amplified to giant proportions. Articulate, intelligent expatriate adults are viewed as difficult to understand or incomprehensible by locals who would find life much easier if the expats were not there! "

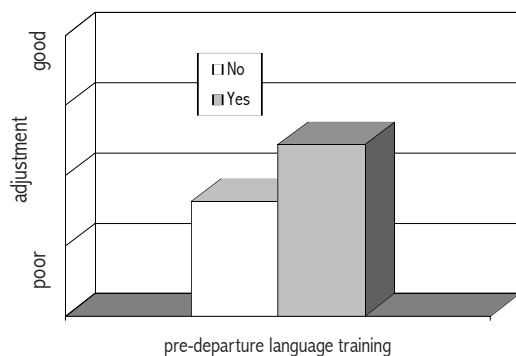
(Austria)

KEY FINDING

Women who had received more pre-departure support and language training had better adjustment. There may be specific benefits to starting an international assignment knowing the host language and/or there may be general benefits to being well prepared to fit into a new culture.

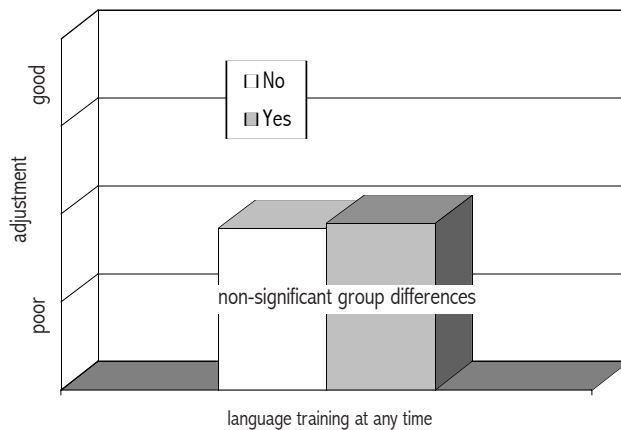


In our sample, 19.8% were native speakers of the host country language. Of the others, 75.3% took some language training, either before the move, after the move, or both.



Only 30.5% of the participants had language training prior to moving to their host country, but those who did had significantly better adjustment than those who did not have pre-departure language training.

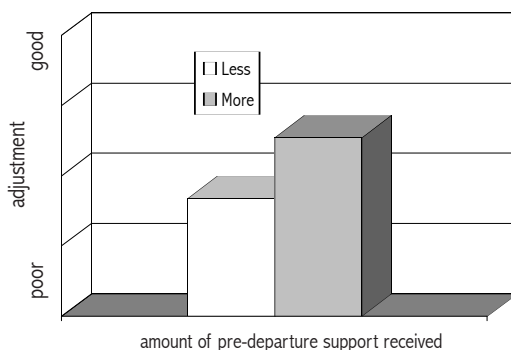
Of the 69.5% who did not get language training before they left, 44.8% did get it once they were in the host country. Did it matter when the language training occurred?



When participants who had no language training at all were compared to those who had language training at some point (either pre-departure or post-arrival or both), the groups did not differ in adjustment.

In short, women who had language training before moving had better adjustment than those who did not. Having language training later did not make up for this difference. Surely knowing the host language is beneficial and leads to deeper intercultural experiences, no matter when it is learned. We do not doubt the value of language training, whenever it occurs. But learning it after arrival did not seem to be related, per se, to better adjustment. It may be that entering a new culture already able to speak the host language had lasting positive effects on women's adjustment.

But there are other explanations as well. It may simply be that women who had pre-departure language training were less rushed in their decision to move, with more time for thorough preparation, and that it was this general deliberativeness that was beneficial.



To pursue this idea, we looked at the amount of pre-departure and post-arrival support received by the participants (see Survey Items on next page). Those who received more pre-departure help (summed across all possible types of support) had significantly better adjustment.

Especially helpful were “written materials about overseas living” and “help from your sponsoring organization in finding work or school for you,” in addition to “language training,” mentioned above. In contrast, amount of post-arrival support was unrelated to adjustment.

SURVEY ITEMS: PRE-DEPARTURE AND POST-ARRIVAL SUPPORT

Please check which of these pre-departure or on-site supports you used.

BEFORE YOU MOVED TO THIS HOST COUNTRY

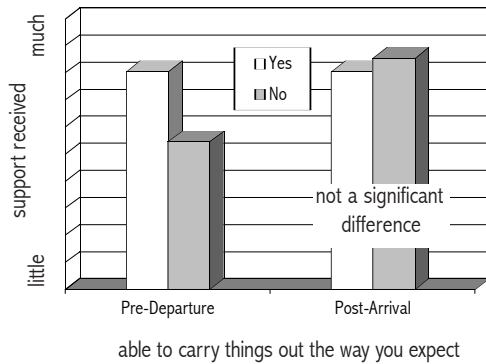
- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. language training | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. orientation classes about your host country | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. orientation classes about general issues of living in another country | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. written materials about overseas living (eg taxes, moving, banking) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. written materials about living in your host country | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. informal talks with people who had lived in host country | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. pre-move trip to host country | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. career counseling for you | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. help from your sponsoring organization in finding work or school for you | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. help from your sponsoring organization in finding volunteer work for you | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. help from your sponsoring organization in finding schools for your children | <input type="checkbox"/> |

AFTER ARRIVAL

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. language training | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. orientation to your host country and city | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. written materials about living in your host country | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. formal social events for newcomers, organized by your sponsoring organization | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. informal social events for newcomers, organized by your sponsoring organization | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. informal help from personal friends and neighbors | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. help from your sponsoring organization in finding work or school for you | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. help from your sponsoring organization in finding volunteer work for you | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. help from your sponsoring organization in finding schools for your children | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. membership in club or organization with other expatriates | <input type="checkbox"/> |

In short, higher levels of pre-departure support were related to better adjustment in our participants. It is important to remember that we cannot tell cause from effect here. On one hand, maybe it was just as it seems on the surface — the pre-departure support started the women off on the right foot and had lasting benefits. Or, it may be that the women who were effective in arranging for more pre-departure support for themselves were the ones who were generally better adjusted, even before the move. That is, perhaps getting the kind of support they needed was part of an effective, instrumental approach to life that continued to benefit them while in the host country.

Evidence in support of this explanation comes from women’s responses to a measure of whether they believed they were in control of their own lives and life’s outcomes.

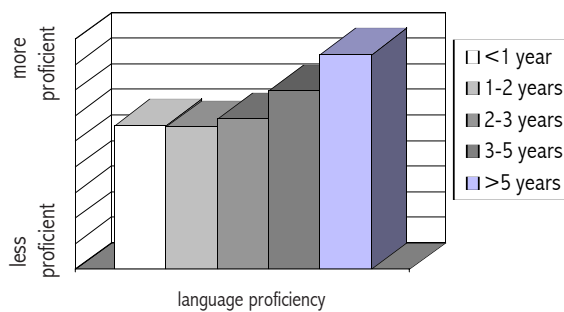


Women who answered “Yes” to several questions about believing they were in control of their lives (see Chapter 10 for sample items), especially one about being “able to carry things out the way you expect,” tended to have received more pre-departure (but not post-arrival) support. In other words, getting more pre-departure support may be part of a personal style that stems from a belief that one is in control of one’s own life outcomes.

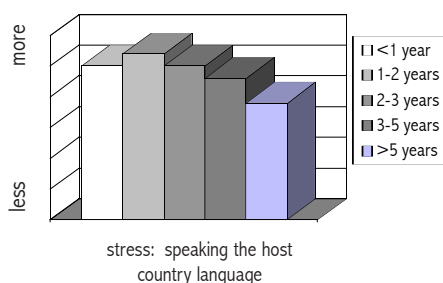
Alternatively, women who received a lot of pre-departure support may have interpreted this support as evidence of their sponsoring organizations’ care and concern. Maybe the fact that they had better adjustment was not due to any particular pre-departure benefit or service but rather simply to feeling better cared for by their organizations.

It appears, in any case, that careful preparation and/or feeling well taken care of — especially in terms of language, information about the host country, and career planning — is important. The timing of support services is clearly a topic that requires careful study.

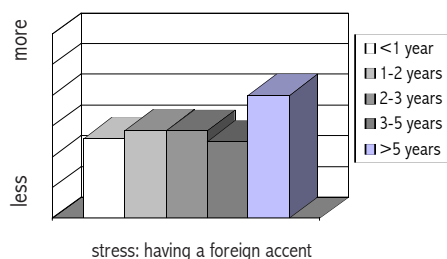
Once in the host country, what happened to participants’ language abilities?



Participants’ language proficiency (self ratings of their ability to speak, write, and read the host language) improved with time...

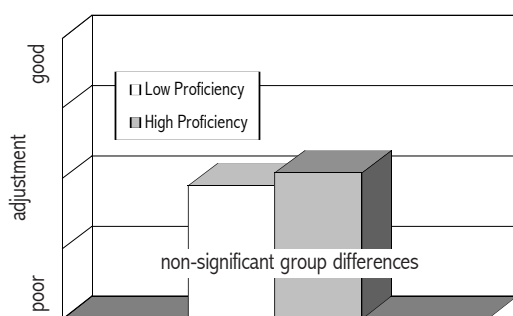


...and the stressfulness of speaking the host language decreased with time as well.



However, participants who had been living in the host country longer than five years reported an *increase* in the stressfulness of having a foreign accent. Presumably these long-time residents, having mastered the technical aspects of the language, had an increased awareness of their marginality revealed by their foreign accents.

Because so many participants wrote about the importance of learning the host language in their open-ended comments on the survey, we expected that women who were higher in language proficiency would have better adjustment.



Women's adjustment was unrelated to their actual language proficiency, however.

To pursue the idea that what is stressful is a sense of marginality, suggested by the finding that having a foreign accent becomes *more* stressful with time, we next examined those potential stresses and difficulties (see pages 7 and 9 for the full list) that involved "not fitting in," to see if they were particularly strongly related to adjustment. All items having to do with "fitting in" are listed below. They are listed in decreasing order of their relationships to adjustment.

STRESSES AND DIFFICULTIES CONCERNING "NOT FITTING IN" AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO ADJUSTMENT

	not related	moderately related	closely related
Stresses			
not being able to be the kind of person I want to be			x
having a foreign accent			x
losing contact with my home country			x
having local residents know my nationality			x
being treated differently because of my nationality			x
being afraid of doing or saying something inappropriate when socializing with host country nationals		x	
having a foreign surname			
Difficulties			
everyday customs that must be followed			x

Clearly, participants who felt the most stress about fitting in were the ones with the poorest adjustment. Or viewed the other way, participants who felt most at home and comfortable in the host country had the best adjustment.

“Cross cultural training received prior to moving to France proved helpful as we learned to be more patient, to find alternative approaches, and to cope when dealing with frustrations.”

(France)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS

- ♦ Offer pre-departure support and communicate from the beginning of the assignment that the family’s needs will be considered and met.
- ♦ Offer language training that includes a focus on cultural differences in communication style.
- ♦ Offer cross-cultural training that includes a focus on communication differences.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACCOMPANYING SPOUSES

- ♦ Be prepared before you go. Learn what you will need for this assignment to work, and get that support for yourself.
- ♦ Learn the host language. It will help you feel comfortable and your cultural experience will be immeasurably deeper.

Chapter 12

Tip #10: Match Career Values with Opportunity.

For some families, the most obvious and urgent issue to resolve when moving to a new country is the spouse's career and whether to pursue paid employment. In many cases in this study, the spouse had had a career prior to the international assignment. In other cases, she had not been working or had stopped for several years while she raised her children but during the course of the international assignment, the children grew old enough that she wanted to begin to work outside the home. Restrictions due to visa regulations, professional licensure, language and cultural facility, the loss of or need to build clientele or business contacts, demands from their husbands' employers, and/or job availability posed potential obstacles in either case. Women in this study resolved this issue in different ways, with varying results. These quotes illustrate the range of perspectives we heard:

"The sponsoring organizations are financially secure in their knowledge that the economic intimidation to the family unit is forceful enough to coerce the accompanying spouse into cooperation. The loss of the accompanying spouse's professional life and most importantly, that spouse's work and identity role model for the children, has long range consequences for the family. She is backed into a corner professionally."

(China)

"There are wonderful opportunities around the corner. My advice to relocating wives is to keep an open mind, view each new experience as an adventure, try not to mourn the career you left behind because something more interesting may be around the corner"

(Austria)

This study, with its emphasis on the social context of spouses' relocations, did not focus on the mechanics of how women maintained, established, or re-established careers, but rather on how their values affected and were affected by the employment situations they faced.

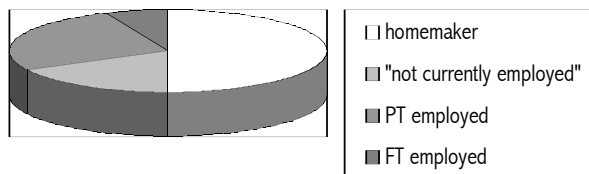
Participants were asked to describe their current employment status (See Survey Item on the next page).

SURVEY ITEM: EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Which of these best describes your current work status:

- ☐ Full-time homemaker
- ☐ Employed outside the home ☐ full time ☐ part time
- ☐ Self-employed ☐ full time ☐ part time
- ☐ In school or training, full time (program and level: _____)
- ☐ In school or training, part time (program and level: _____)
- ☐ Not currently employed, actively looking for employment
- ☐ Not currently employed because of visa restrictions or other consequences of living in this country
- ☐ Not currently employed because of constraints from my spouse's job
- ☐ Volunteer work (# hours per week: _____)
- ☐ Retired

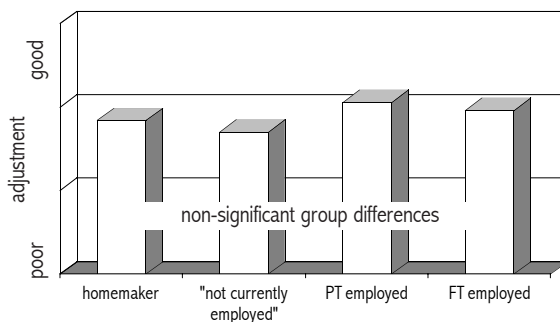
Those in school or training were combined with those who were employed, either full- or part-time. The three “Not currently employed” categories were collapsed into one group. Volunteers were classified with the Part-time employed group. The Retired participants were put with the Homemaker group¹.



The largest group (47.9%) described themselves as Full-time Homemakers.

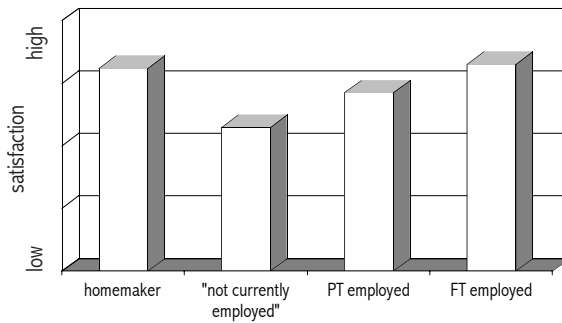
KEY FINDING

Women who were working were not necessarily better adjusted than those not working. However, women who were doing what they wanted to be doing — whether that was working or being a homemaker — and who did not feel their professional identities had suffered were the happiest.

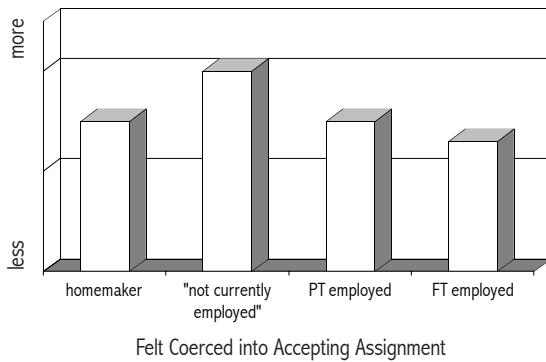


Interestingly, the participants' adjustment was not a simple function of their work status — the four groups did not significantly differ in adjustment.

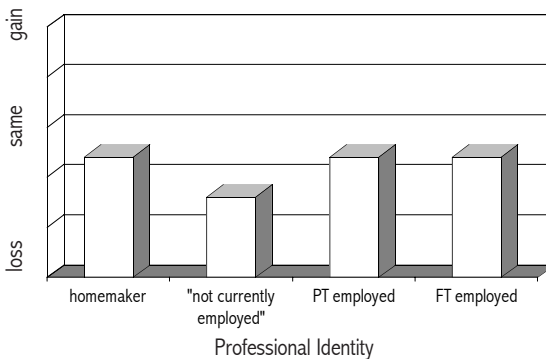
¹Statistical Note: These grouping decisions were made following extensive analysis of how the various groups compared with each other on measures of adjustment and values.



However, when asked “How satisfied are you with your current work situation?” the Not Currently Employed group was significantly less satisfied than the Full-Time Employed and Homemaker groups.



The Not Currently Employed group reported feeling significantly more coerced into accepting the overseas assignment than the other three groups. Feeling coerced was one of the strongest predictors of poor adjustment in the study (see Chapter 6).



When asked whether they had seen a gain or loss in their professional identities since moving overseas, the Not Currently Employed group reported a significantly greater loss than the other three groups. Loss in professional identity was another strong predictor of poor adjustment (see Chapter 7).

In many cases, those who described themselves as Homemakers had left long-term, well-paying jobs to go on this international assignment and yet chose the descriptor of “Homemaker” for themselves. This raised an interesting question: “What was the difference between the Homemaker and the Not Currently Employed groups?” After all, both groups were currently not working outside the home. If we could understand how these two groups differed, we might better understand why some women embrace the chance to stop working for a while during an overseas assignment, but others see the demand to stop working as an insurmountable burden.

The results that follow focus on whether and how the Homemaker and Not Currently Employed groups differed from each other (and from the two working groups) in life circumstance, history, and values¹.

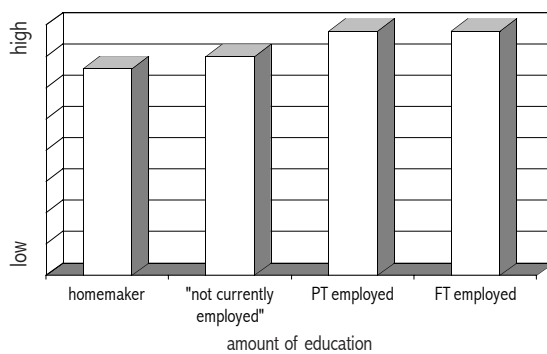
KEY FINDING

Homemakers reported the lowest career commitment, the least education, and the fewest previous jobs compared to the other groups. The Not Currently Employed group was more similar in career history to the two employed groups than to the Homemakers, yet their family salaries were the lowest in the sample.

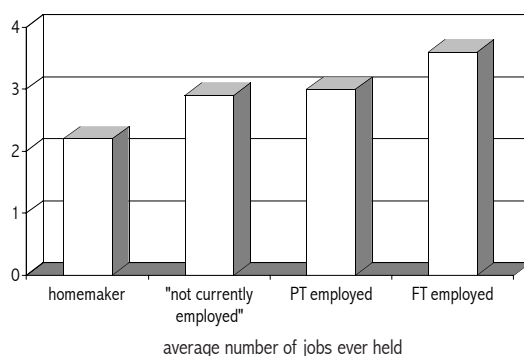
SURVEY ITEM: LEVEL OF EDUCATION

Please check the box that shows the highest educational level you reached

- ☐ some high school/secondary school (no diploma) ☐ GED or other high school equivalency certificate
☐ some 2-year college or technical program ☐ finished 2-year college or technical program
☐ some 4-year college or university ☐ finished 4-year college or university
☐ some graduate school ☐ finished graduate school
☐ other (please describe: _____)

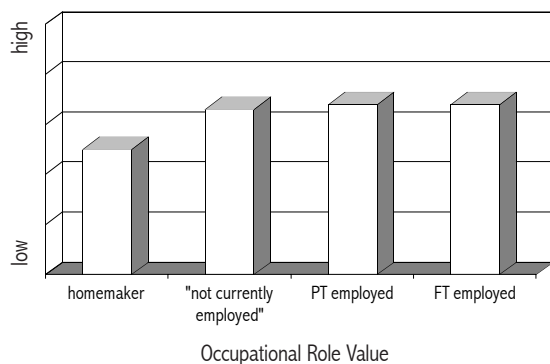


Homemakers had significantly less education than the two working groups (although it should be noted that the average level of the Homemakers' education was "4-year college or university graduate"). The education level of the Not Currently Employed group was in between that of the Homemakers and the employed groups.



The Homemakers had had significantly fewer different jobs prior to the international assignment, especially compared with the Full-Time Employed group.

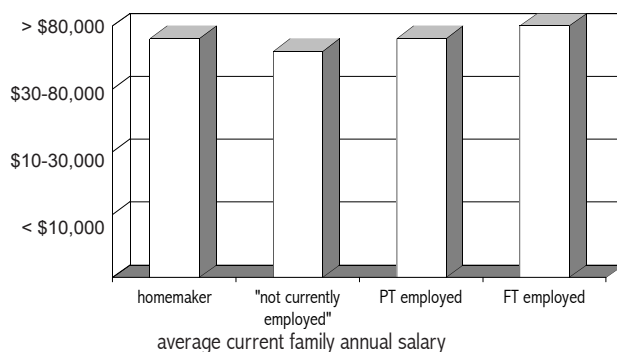
¹Statistical Note: Because the Not Currently Employed group was significantly younger than the other three groups, we statistically controlled for any effects of age in these analyses.



Compared to the other three groups, Homemakers valued having a career the least (see below for sample items). The Not Currently Employed group was similar to the two employed groups in how much they valued having a career.

SURVEY ITEM: SAMPLE QUESTIONS FROM "OCCUPATIONAL ROLE VALUE" SCALE

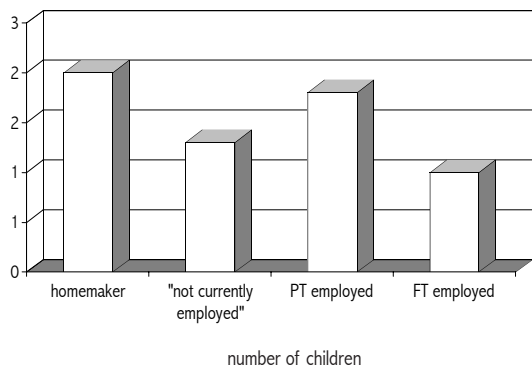
	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree
Having work/a career that is interesting and exciting to me is my most important life goal.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is important to me that I have a job/career in which I can achieve something of importance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



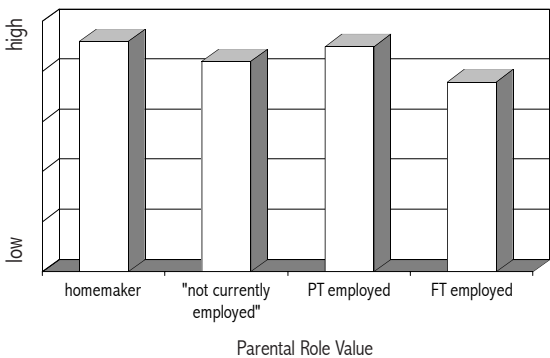
The Not Currently Employed group had significantly lower current family salaries than the other groups. Given their career commitment and job histories, this economic status may have been particularly distressing to them.

KEY FINDING

The Not Currently Employed and Full Time Employed groups had significantly fewer children and valued the parental role less than the Homemakers and Part Time Employed groups.



The Homemaker and Part Time Employed groups had significantly more minor children than the Not Currently Employed and Full-Time Employed groups. Few in any group had no children, however (5 each in the Homemaker and Part-time Employed groups, and 3 each in the other two groups).



The Homemaker and Part-Time Employed groups also said they valued being a parent significantly more than the Not Currently Employed and Full Time Employed groups (see Sample Items below).

SURVEY ITEM: SAMPLE QUESTIONS FROM “PARENTAL ROLE VALUE” SCALE

	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree
Although parenthood requires many sacrifices, the love and enjoyment of children of one’s own are worth it all.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My life would be empty if I never had children.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

In summary, participants’ *adjustment* was not a simple function of their work status — employed and non-employed women had the same adjustment. However, women who described themselves as Not Currently Employed (as opposed to Homemaker) were less satisfied with their situations. This group of Not Currently Employed women had career histories similar to the employed groups, yet showed greater losses in professional identity and family salary. The fact that they had fewer children and

valued the parental role less highly suggests that the role of “mother” was a less attractive alternative to paid employment than it may have been for the Homemakers. Pre-departure assessment of those values that are most important to women, as well as their interest in accepting the overseas assignment, is clearly important.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS

- ♦ Spouses who are committed to having paid employment while on overseas assignment may face a number of legal and practical obstacles but sometimes these are obstacles that can be overcome. Early consultation with a knowledgeable source about employment restrictions and opportunities is critical.
- ♦ Do not assume that spouses with careers will be unable to adjust happily to an overseas move, even if they cannot work there. Help them assess their level of career commitment in the context of their other family commitments. However, if career commitment is very high and chances of working overseas low, question the wisdom of moving at this time.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACCOMPANYING SPOUSES

- ♦ Be realistic about the role of a career in your life. If it is very important, make decisions about an international relocation with this in mind.
- ♦ Get as much accurate information as possible about whether/how you can work in the host country. Do not rely on hearsay, either that says, “you won’t have any trouble” or that says, “you won’t be able to work.” Get professional advice on your situation from someone who knows you and the host country regulations well. Become familiar yourself with the visa, business, and licensure regulations that are relevant to you.
- ♦ Even if you have had a career, ask yourself whether not working for a while could be acceptable and/or welcome to you. What could you do that you could not do while working? Could you return to your career later? Is this a good trade-off?

Chapter 13

Tip #11: Friends Matter (and Why).

How much do women rely on their friends and families during an international relocation? And what do they rely on them for — practical jobs and information? fun and relaxation? emotional support? all of these? Are friends and family at home — or in some third country — able to be helpful and supportive? Who makes friends with host nationals and who sticks mostly to friends from her own nationality, and is this distinction important? We asked all these questions, in various ways.

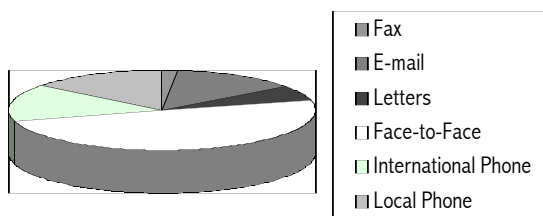
"The most help comes from other women who are living where you are relocating. My husband calls it "Wifenet"...I cannot understand why support systems like this aren't formalized."
(Switzerland)

SAMPLE SURVEY ITEMS: SOURCE OF SUPPORT

Taking together all the kinds of support you get, what percentage of it comes from (*these numbers should add up to 100%*)

local/domestic telephone conversations	_____ %
international telephone conversations	_____ %
face-to-face conversations	_____ %
letters by mail	_____ %
e-mail communications	_____ %
fax communications	_____ %

(Also see Sample Survey Items: Source of Support in Chapter 9)

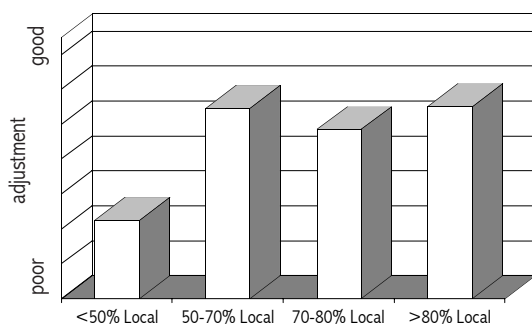


how do you get the support?

On average, participants said they got about half their social support from face-to-face conversations. Roughly equal amounts of support were received from e-mail, local, and international telephone conversations. We suspect that the proportion of support from e-mail has increased and continues to increase since these surveys were collected (1995-2001).

KEY FINDING

Participants had better adjustment if they had local social support in the host country rather than relying on international connections through email, telephone calls, and home visits.



Participants who got most of their support from long-distance sources (e-mail, fax, letters, and international telephone conversations) had significantly poorer adjustment than those who got most of their support locally — from face-to-face and local telephone conversations.

We were also interested in who the spouses' friends were. A common assumption is that international transferees will be better adjusted if they get involved with host nationals. Expatriates are regularly admonished to “get out of the expat bubble” and make friends with locals. Accordingly, we expected that women with social networks that were made up of proportionately more host nationals would have better adjustment, or would at least report less stress with the various aspects of daily living, than women whose networks consisted of people from their own or some third country. We asked the following questions:

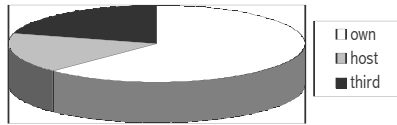
SAMPLE SURVEY ITEMS: NATIONALITY OF SUPPORT NETWORK

Please describe the nationality of your family's current social network. To do this, estimate the percentage of each nationality in each row. Each row should add up to 100%.

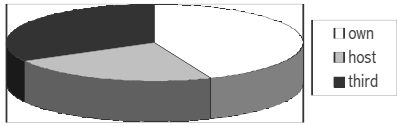
	my own nationality	host country nationality	some third nationality
socializing, sports, or entertainment	_____%	_____%	_____%
children in school	_____%	_____%	_____%
children's play	_____%	_____%	_____%
your work/school/volunteer work	_____%	_____%	_____%

KEY FINDING

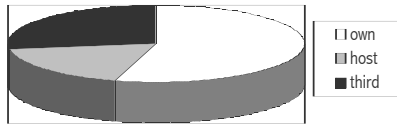
Women were just as likely to be well-adjusted if most of their friends were from their own nationality as they were if they had many host national friends.



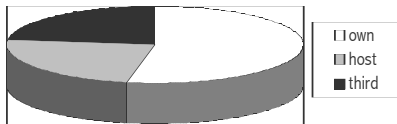
socializing, sports, or entertainment



children in school



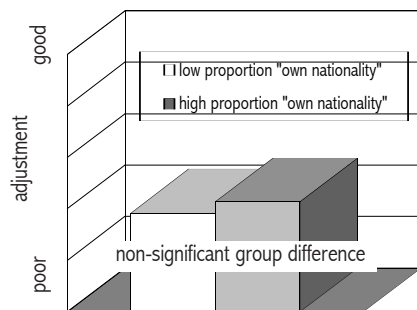
children's play



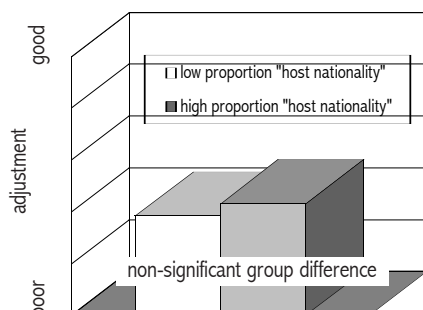
your work/school/volunteer work

Overall, most of the women's social support network, and that of their children, were of their own nationality.

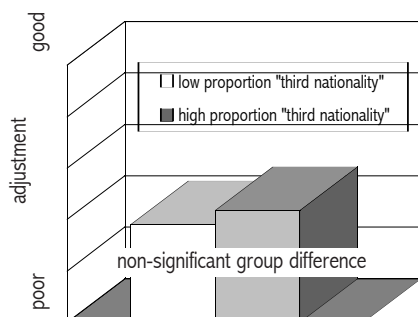
To our surprise, we found no support for our assumption that being in an expatriate bubble would be related to poor adjustment. Looking at the nationality makeup of the women's networks across the categories of socializing, children's school and play, and work, there were no significant correlations with adjustment, stress, or difficulty:



Women's adjustment was not a function of the nationality of their social support networks. That is, women were just as likely to show good adjustment if most of their friends were from their own,...



...the host nationality, or...



... some third nationality. Their ratings of the stressfulness or difficulty of international living were similarly unrelated to the nationality of their networks (data not shown).

Besides the source and nationality of women's support, we were interested in the various *ways* friends and families could be helpful to each other. Each participant provided a detailed description of her network and the various functions different people filled for her.

SURVEY ITEM: SOCIAL SUPPORT

For each question, please list the first names, initials, or nicknames of people who fit the description *and who are available to you (in one way or another) while you are living in this country*. The people might be friends, family members, professionals, or other people you might know. They may live anywhere in the world. Include any kind of communication — talking in person, talking on the telephone, email, fax, or letters. Describe your interactions with these people *during the last month*.

1) If you wanted to *tell someone things that are very personal and private*, whom would you tell?

During the last month, which of these people did you actually [tell things that were personal and private?]

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

During the past month, how much do you think you needed people to [talk to about things that were very personal and private?]

- ☐ not at all
☐ a little bit
☐ a fair amount
☐ a lot

(Other questions followed the same format:)

2) If you wanted to *discuss something that was not particularly personal* (like choosing a doctor, or understanding an interesting cultural difference), whom would you go to?

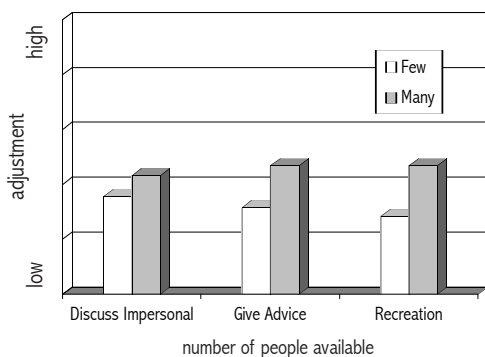
3) Who are the people whom you could comfortably ask to *lend you something* (like a household appliance or some children's equipment), or to *give up some of their time to help you* (like driving you somewhere) if you needed it?

- 4) To whom would you turn if a situation came up when you *needed some advice*?
- 5) Who are the people you could expect to *let you know when they like your ideas or the things that you do*?
- 6) Who are the people that you could *get together with to have fun or to relax*?
- 7) Who are the people that you can *expect to have some unpleasant disagreements with or people you can expect to make you angry and upset*? _____

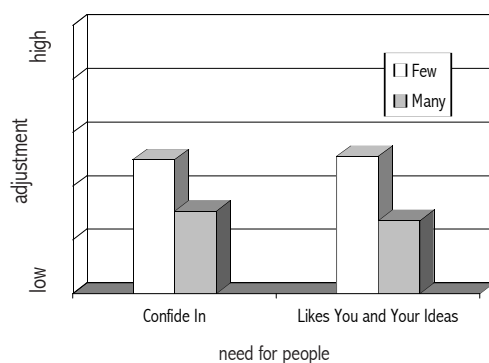
From the questions about these seven functions, we computed three scores: (1) the *number* of people who were available for that function, (2) how many of the available people the participant actually *used* for that function, and (3) how much *need* the participant felt for help with that function (this last measure was not computed for the seventh function — unpleasant interactions). Researchers have generally found each of these measures to be related, in different ways, to women's adjustment.

KEY FINDING

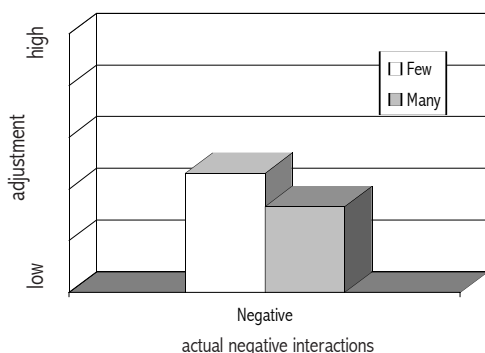
Both casual friendships and intimate relationships are important to spouses. And having negative interactions with people is related to poorer adjustment.



Women who had more friends to discuss impersonal things with, give them advice, and share recreation with had better adjustment. Those with more people for more intimate functions were not particularly better adjusted (data not shown). Casual friendships are clearly important.



Women who reported feeling that they needed more people to confide in and to tell them that they liked them and their ideas had the poorest adjustment. In addition to casual friends, women clearly have a need for deep emotional support as well.



Women who actually had more negative interactions within their networks in the past month of filling out the survey had poorer adjustment. Not all social networks are positive.

It is important to note that having support for practical things was simply unrelated to adjustment whatsoever. Casual and intimate friendships are both important for social and emotional reasons, more than for practical ones.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS

- ♦ Help spouses stay in touch with old friends and family. But facilitate local connections in the host country. The more local support groups are meaningful and helpful to spouses, the less spouses will have to rely on your close involvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACCOMPANYING SPOUSES

- ♦ E-mail and telephone calls each play an understandably important role in keeping in touch with your family and old friends. But do not rely exclusively on them. It is critical to make local connections too. Take a language class. Join a gym, a club, or a community orchestra.

Chapter 14

Tip #12: A Final Word.

One last word. With the rarest exception, all the participants in this study seemed to be trying hard to make their assignments work. By virtue of their circumstance — the factors outlined in this report — some were doing better than others. But all had been willing to turn their lives upside down for the good of their husbands' employer and because they understood — and hoped — that living in a new culture could be a life-changing, exciting opportunity for themselves and their children. Although we do not have data to support the last two Recommendations, we are certain they are good ones.

RECOMMENDATION FOR SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS

- ♦ Acknowledge what the spouse has done for your organization. Even if you think she is lucky to be living where she is living, recognize that she has made multiple sacrifices to do so. Thank her publicly, privately, and often. Acknowledge her contribution to your organization at the annual dinner, in the monthly newsletter, and with a personal letter.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACCOMPANYING SPOUSE

- ♦ Do not expect the sponsoring organization to anticipate all your needs. Develop a collaborative relationship with your contacts there, keeping your requests reasonable. Let them understand your circumstances, including the good and the not-so-good parts.
- ♦ Thank those who have helped you

Chapter 15

Advice from Accompanying Spouses for Accompanying Spouses

At the end of our survey we invited participants to offer advice to other accompanying spouses. They spoke with one voice in urging prospective expatriates to take the following five steps:

#1: Get involved in the local community.

“Get out of the house no matter what you do, at least once a day.”

“Take advantage of every organization that brings people together.”

“I find that asking people for help and advice even on the simplest things really opens doors.”

#2: Learn about the host country and culture.

“Learn as much as you can about the country you’re moving to.”

“Pre-departure cross-cultural training proved helpful as we learned to be more patient, to find alternative approaches, and to cope when dealing with frustrations.”

“Be sure to know about the new country’s manners, tax laws, banking, and schools.”

#3: Be up-beat and flexible.

“Flexibility is the name of the game. If you can’t adapt to the different cultural and social traits and customs, you are in for a rough time.”

“Keep a positive attitude, keep your sense of humor, and stay true to yourself!”

#4: Learn the host language.

“Learn the local language as best you can but don’t let language difficulties keep you from getting out and doing things on your own.”

“Not learning the host language keeps you forever in the tourist or child level of communication.”

“When one is not fluent, even small frustrations are amplified to giant proportions.”

#5: Don't expect too much of yourself.

"I think that it is very important to allow yourself time to get used to life in another country and to accept that it is very normal to have culture shock before you can enjoy living somewhere else. It is wise not to have very high expectations of your lives in another country or the work opportunities."

Chapter 16

Summary of Key Findings

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS: WHAT IS “OUTCOME?”

- ♦ The aspects of intercultural living most closely related to women’s adjustment concerned their identity, their employment potential, their bicultural connection, their children, and the tasks of daily living.
 - ♦ The difficulties of intercultural living most closely related to women’s adjustment were ability to make friends, following new customs, shopping for clothes, recreation, and getting errands done.
-

TIP #1: IT’S NOT JUST A MATTER OF TIME.

- ♦ A few aspects of daily living got easier with time (about three years), but most did not. Adjustment did not get better with time either.
-

TIP #2: “WHERE IN THE WORLD?” IS ONLY HALF THE QUESTION.

- ♦ Although different countries posed different kinds of stresses for women, participants’ adjustment was unrelated to where they were living.
-

TIP #3: JUST BECAUSE THEY’VE DONE IT BEFORE DOESN’T MAKE IT EASY (AT LEAST NOT IN THE WAYS THAT COUNT).

- ♦ Women with prior international experience found some aspects of international living easier than those in their first international assignment, but they were not necessarily better adjusted.
-

TIP #4: CAJOLE SPOUSES AT YOUR OWN RISK.

- ♦ Spouses who felt coerced into accepting the international assignment had significantly poorer adjustment than spouses who felt involved and interested in the move from the beginning.
-

TIP #5: WATCH THE BALANCE OF GAINS AND LOSSES.

- ♦ Gains and losses in material comforts, identity, and time with friends were related to participants’ adjustment, while gains and losses in money, and time with self and family were not.
-

TIP #6: CHILDREN ARE A COMPLICATED BLESSING.

- ♦ Mothers of teenagers and women with no children had significantly worse adjustment than mothers of younger or adult children.
- ♦ Women with no children had more host-national friends than did mothers and more time for themselves, but they said they had a harder time making friends. They also reported a greater perceived loss in professional identity and job prestige.
- ♦ Mothers of adult children were particularly troubled by their lack of time with their children while mothers of younger children appreciated a gain in their time with their children.
- ♦ Mothers of babies and preschool children particularly felt the loss of time with their extended families.
- ♦ Mothers of children with special needs are at risk for feeling overwhelmed by daily demands as well as feeling marginalized and isolated.

TIP #7: SHARE YOUR EMPLOYEES WITH THEIR FAMILIES.

- ♦ Husbands played an especially important role in families' lives yet were often unavailable.

TIP #8: ASK ABOUT BELIEFS, VALUES AND STRATEGIES THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

- ♦ Women who coped with relocation stress by trying to control their emotions or escape and avoid their problems had poor adjustment. Those who coped with effective problem solving and positive reasoning had better adjustment.

TIP #9: BE PREPARED: LANGUAGE, COMMUNICATION, AND FITTING IN.

- ♦ Women who had received more pre-departure support and language training had better adjustment. There may be specific benefits to starting an international assignment knowing the host language and/or there may be general benefits to being well prepared to fit into a new culture.

TIP #10: MATCH CAREER VALUES WITH OPPORTUNITY.

- ♦ Women who were working were not necessarily better adjusted than those not working. However, women who were doing what they wanted to be doing — whether that was working or being a homemaker — and who did not feel their professional identities had suffered were the happiest.

- ♦ **Many in the group who described themselves as Homemakers had had significant careers. Within this context, however, Homemakers reported the lowest career commitment, the least education, and the fewest previous jobs. The Not Currently Employed group was more similar in career history to the two employed groups than to the Homemakers, yet their family salaries were the lowest in the sample. The discrepancy between having high career commitment on one hand, and not being employed and having less money on the other, may explain the differences in these groups' satisfaction with their situations.**
- ♦ **The Not Currently Employed and Full Time Employed groups had significantly fewer children and lower Parental Role Value scores than the Homemakers and Part Time Employed groups.**

TIP #11: FRIENDS MATTER (AND WHY).

- ♦ **Participants had better adjustment if they had local social support in the host country rather than relying on international connections through email, telephone calls, and home visits.**
- ♦ **Women were just as likely to show good adjustment if most of their friends were from their own nationality as they were if they had many host national friends.**

Chapter 17

Summary of Recommendations for Sponsoring Organizations

- ♦ Offer practical support to families as they learn to manage the tasks of daily living. Be sure they have the assistance they need to manage these tasks.
- ♦ But recognize that the challenges that are most likely to affect their adjustment are more likely to concern their cultural fit, their careers, their children, and their sense of emotional comfort. Facilitate ways to encounter and understand the host culture and become involved in the local community.
- ♦ Offering support services at the time of the move is undoubtedly valuable but does not address the continuing needs that families face. Their needs continue over the course of the assignment, and new needs arise. Check in with families periodically.
- ♦ Help families get connected to local support networks that will address their continuing needs.
- ♦ While women may learn to manage the acts of daily living fairly quickly, their feelings of stress do not generally diminish for at least three years. If spouses are not meeting friends, learning to be comfortable in the new culture, or feeling accepted there — in short, if they are not building the foundations of their own good adjustment — do not simply keep “waiting for the passage of time.” Determine what the families’ needs are and guide them toward the support they need.
- ♦ Study the host location to understand the particular stresses likely to influence families’ adjustment there. Offer support in these particular areas.
- ♦ Offer cross-cultural training to increase an understanding of the values underlying the host political and economic system.
- ♦ Assistance in connecting expatriate families of similar religions, especially when families are religious minorities in the host country, can address many needs.
- ♦ Destination services that offer practical orientation about shopping and daily living can get families started on the right foot.

- ♦ At the same time, do not assume that families moving to “easy locations” will have no problems. The factors that are most consistently related to women’s adjustment were challenging no matter where women lived.
- ♦ Do not assume that spouses who have moved internationally before will have no adjustment difficulties. Offer them the same emotional and social support as the first-time transferee.
- ♦ Consult employees’ spouses prior to making the final offer and/or their making the final decision to accept the offer. You will hear any concerns first hand and be more likely to be able to address them. And you will be signalling to the spouse that you understand how critical she/he is to the assignment’s success.
- ♦ Avoid situations in which you need employees to accept assignments quickly, without proper time to discuss the move with their spouses.
- ♦ Do not try to pressure employees and spouses into accepting moves they do not want to make. Offer real alternatives to accepting the assignment, including the assurance that they will not be penalized for refusing the assignment. Offer real career-enhancing alternatives, and realistic offers of an overseas assignment a few years later when it might fit better with the family’s needs.
- ♦ If the spouse expresses initial reluctance about the move, take her concerns seriously. Many of them may be able to be addressed.
- ♦ Invest in families’ material comfort and housing. These have a special importance for those making a home in a new country. Gains there can help counterbalance other losses.
- ♦ Facilitate and protect the amount of time spouses have with their local friends. Friends play a particularly important role when women are far away from their home communities.
- ♦ Help women protect their social and professional identities. Even (or especially) if they are not able to work in the host country, help them find meaningful and career-enhancing volunteer work or training programs. Investing in spousal assistance programs, and funding such professional activities as attendance at conferences, memberships in local professional organizations, or trade journal subscriptions can yield a large return in terms of spouses’ adjustment.
- ♦ At the selection and pre-departure phases, help potential transferees consider the impact of an international move on their families. If the family has adolescent children, discuss the wisdom of accepting this assignment at this time. However, remember that many teenagers (and their mothers) adapt well.

- ♦ Do not assume that women without children will necessarily have an easier time on assignment than those with children; children can provide an entree into a new culture and social support system that is very helpful, and the benefits of increased time with them can counterbalance the negative effects of other losses.
- ♦ If a family has a child with special needs, offer special and continual support throughout the assignment, not just for the child but for the parents, whose experience overseas may be largely taken up by concern and understanding new systems of special care.
- ♦ Institutionalize policies that let employees spend time with their families. For example, require employees to take several days off when families move to the host country, to help them get settled. Limit employees' travel to a level that suits the family.
- ♦ Provide the setting for employees to discuss the ramifications of a move with their spouses. It is in your interest (as well as the families') for these discussions to take place.
- ♦ Understand that spouses feel the effects of employees' work-related stress, just as employees feel the effects of spouses' stress.
- ♦ Help families articulate and understand the core values and beliefs they bring with them when they move internationally. Give them the opportunity to discuss how these values may support or interfere with their adjustment, for example, in the context of cross-cultural training and/or pre-departure assessment and planning sessions.
- ♦ Offer pre-departure support and communicate from the beginning of the assignment that the family's needs will be considered and met.
- ♦ Offer language training that includes a focus on cultural differences in communication style.
- ♦ Offer cross-cultural training that includes a focus on communication differences.
- ♦ Spouses who are committed to having paid employment while on overseas assignment may face a number of legal and practical obstacles but sometimes these are obstacles that can be overcome. Early consultation with a knowledgeable source about employment restrictions and opportunities is critical.
- ♦ Do not assume that spouses with careers will be unable to adjust happily to an overseas move, even if they cannot work there. Help them assess their level of career commitment in the context of their other family commitments. However, if career commitment is very high and chances of working overseas low, question the wisdom of moving at this time.

- ♦ **Help spouses stay in touch with old friends and family. But facilitate local connections in the host country. The more local support groups are meaningful and helpful to spouses, the less spouses will have to rely on your close involvement.**
- ♦ **Acknowledge what the spouse has done for your organization. Even if you think she is lucky to be living where she is living, recognize that she has made multiple sacrifices to do so. Thank her publicly, privately, and often. Acknowledge her contribution to your organization at the annual dinner, in the monthly newsletter, and with a personal letter.**

Chapter 18

Summary of Recommendations for Accompanying Spouses

- ♦ Feeling alienated from or disturbed by your host culture will be difficult for you. Find cultural guides who can help you understand the local culture, even as you maintain your connections to your home country and its culture.
- ♦ “Being the kind of person you want to be” is deeply important, especially to people in transition. Be thoughtful about what is most important to you and what you are willing to forego. Look for ways to develop and grow consistent with your deeply held personal goals, recognizing that the course of reaching these goals will surely be different than if you did not relocate to a new country.
- ♦ It is important to learn how to manage the tasks of daily living as quickly as possible. If you are having trouble, ask for help.
- ♦ Recognize that to feel very comfortable in a new culture takes a long time. Take an active role in setting the foundations of your own adjustment. Ask for help. Speak to your new neighbors. Join organizations that will help you meet new people.
- ♦ Be realistic about the stresses you are likely to face in your host country. Be creative about solving these problems. (For example, one tall American mother with three tall growing children bought a year’s worth of shoes every summer during home leave and shipped them to herself in Beijing.)
- ♦ Even if you are moving to a country that seems culturally similar to your own, focus on how your social and emotional needs will be met. These are with you no matter where you live.
- ♦ If you have lived in another country before, do not assume that your experience will necessarily be easier the next time. You may have a head start in some practical ways. But each relocation poses a set of social, emotional, and practical challenges that you must meet anew.
- ♦ At the same time, if you have had a negative international experience, do not assume that the next relocation will necessarily be negative. You, your family, and the circumstances of the move will now be different, even if you are moving to the same country for the second time.

- ♦ Ask to meet with the sponsoring organization before making your decision to move, even if they have not initiated such a meeting. Establish that you understand that this relocation must be a collaborative effort between them and you.
- ♦ If you have reservations about accepting the assignment, develop an articulate and clear way to present your concerns to the sponsoring organization. Ask yourself what it would take to make the assignment work for you and your family. Which of these things can you arrange for yourself? What kinds of assistance do you need?
- ♦ Work with the sponsoring organization to think creatively about how their needs and yours can both be met. Would you be more able and willing to relocate in the future? Can the sponsoring organization wait?
- ♦ Begin and maintain frequent discussions with your spouse about the implications of the move for you, him, and your children.
- ♦ In many ways, moving to a new country will put you into new roles in life and in your family. You may have more (or less) social status. You may have given up (or taken on) new career responsibilities. Recognize that this kind of identity change is likely to be challenging.
- ♦ If you do expect to encounter challenges to your professional identity, protect yourself. You may not currently be on the payroll as a software engineer, for example, but *you* are still a software engineer. Go to professional meetings in your field. Stay current with developments in your field. Look for ways to enhance your professional identity in the new location, even if these take you in new directions.
- ♦ You and your spouse know your children and their needs best. Some children adapt easily to new situations and others do not. Use this knowledge to decide whether to accept an international assignment and to plan for their needs.
- ♦ Children can be a wonderful help in entering a new culture, as they immediately put you side by side with host nationals with many similar concerns. Take advantage of this, if you have children.
- ♦ If you do not have children, find other ways to benefit from the relocation. Perhaps you will be able to travel more, and experience a different side of the culture than you would be able to do if you had children.
- ♦ If your child has special needs, ask for help. You and he/she will both benefit from not feeling alone.

- ♦ Discuss how the move will affect you, your family, and your children. Opening this line of communication from the beginning is critical to the whole international experience.
- ♦ Understand that family roles — who cooks dinner, who helps with homework, who makes decisions about what to buy and what children are allowed to do — often change after a move to a new country, and that these changes require families to be flexible. Give and bend wherever you can.
- ♦ At the same time, do what you can to have both you and your spouse involved in some of the tasks of daily living, and in family support. Even if yours is a family with traditional roles, with men having paid employment and women taking care of the family and home, remember that doing these tasks in a new country, away from the normal sources of support, will be more difficult than at home. Ask the sponsoring organization for understanding about this, and for time for the employed spouse to help at home.
- ♦ Try to respond to stressful situations in positive, problem-solving ways, rather than by denying that they are stressful.
- ♦ Learn what is controllable in your life and what is not, and try to adjust your expectations accordingly.
- ♦ Find someone to discuss how your core values and beliefs affect your adjustment to an international move.
- ♦ Be prepared before you go. Learn what you will need for this assignment to work, and get that support for yourself.
- ♦ Learn the host language. It will help you feel comfortable and your cultural experience will be immeasurably deeper.
- ♦ Be realistic about the role of a career in your life. If it is very important, make decisions about an international relocation with this in mind.
- ♦ Get as much accurate information as possible about whether/how you can work in the host country. Do not rely on hearsay, either that says, “you won’t have any trouble” or that says, “you won’t be able to work.” Get professional advice on your situation from someone who knows you and the host country regulations well. Become familiar yourself with the visa, business, and licensure regulations that are relevant to you.
- ♦ Even if you have had a career, ask yourself whether not working for a while could be acceptable

and/or welcome to you. What could you do that you could not do while working? Could you return to your career later? Is this a good trade-off?

- ♦ E-mail and telephone calls each play an understandably important role in keeping in touch with your family and old friends. But do not rely exclusively on them. It is critical to make local connections too. Take a language class. Join a gym, a club, or a community orchestra.
- ♦ Do not expect the sponsoring organization to anticipate all your needs. Develop a collaborative relationship with your contacts there, keeping your requests reasonable. Let them understand your circumstances, including the good and the not-so-good parts.
- ♦ Thank those who have helped you.

The *Many Women Many Voices Study of Accompanying Spouses Around the World* was conducted by The Interchange Institute and was underwritten by Prudential Financial.

About Prudential Financial's International Mobility Services

Prudential Real Estate and Relocation Services, a business of Prudential Financial, offers corporate clients full-service mobility management to address the needs of globally mobile employees. Prudential Relocation International services are coordinated from our offices in the United States, Canada, France, the United Kingdom, Mexico City and Hong Kong. These services include intercultural training and global workforce development designed to facilitate cross-cultural adaptability.

At Prudential Relocation International, we understand that our customers' business challenges extend far beyond the transactional aspects of relocation, which is why we are committed to developing and implementing a host of employee benefits strategies needed for success. One of the ways we do this is through the gathering of information and data that will educate, enlighten and inform our clients and their internationally mobile employees on a variety of topics involving corporate relocation. This research, which includes the "Many Women, Many Voices Survey" we are pleased to sponsor, is designed to help us ensure that our global relocation services effectively address those issues that are related to productive employee adjustment and, consequently, directly affect corporate return on expatriate investment. For more information, please contact any of our offices listed on the back page of this report or visit us at www.prudential.com.

About The Interchange Institute

The Interchange Institute is a not-for-profit research organization focused on the study of international relocation of individuals and families, including international newcomers to the United States and Americans moving overseas. On the basis of these research findings we offer publications, cross-cultural training and materials, customized research and writing projects, and consulting services to individuals, families, and organizations. For more information, visit us at www.interchangeinstitute.org or call (617) 566-2227.

© 2004, Prudential Financial, Inc., Newark, NJ, USA. All rights reserved.

© 2004, The Interchange Institute. Printed in the USA. All rights reserved.

No part of this report may be reproduced in any manner without written permission.

To obtain permission or to order copies of the report, please contact:

The Interchange Institute • 11 Hawes Street • Brookline, MA 02446

Tele: (617) 566-2227 • Fax: (617) 277-0889

www.interchangeinstitute.org • e-mail: info@interchangeinstitute.org

Those wishing to cite findings from the study should identify it as the "Many Women Many Voices" Study of Accompanying Spouses Around the World, conducted by Dr. Anne P. Copeland at The Interchange Institute and commissioned by Prudential Financial.

