

# ELUCIDATING THE POSITIVE SIDE OF THE WORK-FAMILY INTERFACE ON INTERNATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS: A MODEL OF EXPATRIATE WORK AND FAMILY PERFORMANCE

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*Drawing on both Job Demands-Resources theory and contagion theory, we conceptualize cognitive, affective, and conative influences on expatriate work role and family role performance. We clarify expatriate adjustment by expanding the concept to capture family role adjustment and by mapping relationships among the forms of adjustment. We also highlight the mediating role of engagement for understanding the influence of adjustment on role performance, and we consider spillover across work and family contexts and crossover between expatriates and partners.*

International assignments are a catalyst for change in both the family and work lives of expatriates. This is especially true for the majority of expatriates who are married or in a committed relationship (Copeland & Norell, 2002; Harvey, 1985; Tung, 1987, 1999). Before the assignment both partners have full lives intertwined with those of relatives, friends, colleagues, and community contacts. Upon arriving in the new country, however, they only have each other and, for some, their children. It is not uncommon that both partners work and share household responsibilities before a posting abroad (Harvey, 1995; Harvey & Wiese, 1998a; Reynolds & Bennett, 1991). The assignment often disturbs this balance as the expatriate becomes the sole earner and provider for the family and the expatriate partner becomes a household caretaker and a stay-at-home parent, having not only lost a job but also forgone a career, financial independence, and extended family support. Partners, even those not employed before the move, find themselves faced with new tasks and expectations (e.g., Linehan & Scullion, 2001;

Pellico & Stroh, 1997; Punnett, 1997; Reynolds & Bennett, 1991; Riusala & Suutari, 2000).

In cases where the expatriate couple has children, additional challenges arise, such as the children's anguish and uncertainty related to identity formation, breakup of friendships, and disruption of schooling (Borstorff, Harris, Feild, & Giles, 1997; De Leon & McPartlin, 1995; Harvey, 1985). Meanwhile, the expatriate is often burdened by more job responsibilities or excessive travel and has less time to spend with family members (Shaffer & Harrison, 2001; Tung, 1986). Consequently, in addition to facing the challenges of new work colleagues and contexts, expatriates need to adjust to new family roles and responsibilities, including the changing dynamics of relationships within the family unit (Caligiuri, Hyland, Joshi, & Bross, 1998; Harris, 2002; Van der Zee, Ali, & Salomé, 2005).

Further, in international assignments boundaries between the work and home contexts become more permeable (Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2005). Not only do organizations assume more responsibility for the expatriate family but family members are often more dependent on each other for support and companionship (Caligiuri et al., 1998; Copeland & Norell, 2002). From an

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identity theory perspective (see Stryker & Burke, 2000), this enhanced permeability strengthens the salience of the expatriate's identity as an employee and as a partner/parent. According to Thoits (1991), salient roles provide the strongest meaning or purpose. The more meaning that is derived from a role, the greater the behavioral guidance that ultimately leads to the enactment of behaviors associated with the role. Thus, for expatriates, performance related to both the work and family roles is important.

In this paper we contend that experiences within both the work and family contexts contribute to "expatriate success" and expand traditional conceptualizations of expatriate adjustment and performance to include both work role and family role forms. In addition to expanding the content of adjustment and performance, we also explicitly consider the relationship between adjustment and performance in both the work and family domains. Dating back to early expatriation research, adjustment has been assumed to be a critical antecedent of performance. So pervasive is this assumption that some authors use adjustment as a proxy for performance, without much elaboration on the theoretical grounds regarding the exact nature of the relationship between the two constructs (for a review see Thomas & Lazarova, 2006). As a consequence, in only a limited body of literature have scholars empirically examined the relationship between adjustment and performance. Recent meta-analyses (Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer, & Luk, 2005; Hechanova, Beehr, & Christiansen, 2003) have concluded that the relationship typically ranges from nonexistent to what can only be considered moderate, suggesting that it may be mediated by other constructs. We propose that the motivational construct of engagement (Kahn, 1990) plays an intervening role in this process. That is, well-adjusted expatriates will have more energy that they can invest in fulfilling their work and family role expectations.

The purpose of this paper is to clarify the process by which expatriates perform their roles as employees and as spouses/partners. Specifically, our model examines the work-family interface that underpins both work role and family role performance on assignment. In developing our model we integrate the domestic work-family literature and the expatriate literature to

(1) provide a theoretically grounded conceptualization of cognitive, affective, and conative influences on expatriate behaviors in the work and family contexts; (2) clarify the concept of adjustment to capture family role adjustment and to map the relationships among context-specific dimensions of adjustment; (3) highlight the critical mediating role of engagement for understanding role performance; and (4) consider spillover effects from the family to the work contexts and crossover effects between expatriates and partners.

Because of the complexity of integrating dual roles (i.e., work and family) and dual actors (i.e., expatriate and partner), we consciously chose several delimiters that allowed us to manage more effectively the development and presentation of the model. The first delimiter involves our unit of analysis. We focus on the experiences of individual expatriates and partners, although we recognize that the model could easily be expanded to one with a multilevel (e.g., family cohesion or dyadic communication) perspective. A second delimiter is that our model is best applied to what can be called a "traditional" expatriate situation—an extended international posting that requires physical relocation and residence in the foreign country where one of the partners (the expatriate) works and the other is unemployed. Our emphasis is on the expatriate as the focal target of investigation. Although we take into consideration issues associated with changes in the partner's life, we do not explicitly develop a model for partners. Such a model would parallel the one we propose for expatriates, but some constructs may not be relevant, depending on the employment status and the relocation status of the partners. A third delimiter is that our inclusion of partners accompanying the expatriate on assignment restricts the relevance of the model to intact families. We note here that, for simplicity of presentation, we refer to two committed partners as a *family* and we use the term *partner* to refer to both spouses and significant others. Those who are not with a partner on the assignment, either because they are not in a committed relationship or because they are separated geographically, are likely to have different experiences. That is not to say, however, that some aspects of the model are not relevant to them.

### A MODEL OF EXPATRIATE PERFORMANCE

We construe expatriate performance as a four-stage process consisting of cognitive, affective, conative, and behavioral components. Using abstract constructs, Figure 1 presents a simplified version of our proposed model of expatriate performance. In this section we briefly present definitions of our key constructs and provide the theoretical bases for our framework. In subsequent sections we describe the stages of the expatriate performance model, elaborating on the specific constructs of interest and the complex relationships among them.

#### Model Components

*Cognition* is the process of acquiring knowledge and understanding about an event or experience (Huitt, 1999). In our model it refers to the conditions describing circumstances of the international assignment and is represented by the demands and resources associated with the individual as well as various features of the assignment, including the job, the family, and the foreign environment in general. Demands have been formally defined as stressors, such as physical, psychological, social, or situational conditions that require sustained physical or mental effort and are therefore associated with certain physiological and psychological costs (Karasek, 1979). In contrast, resources refer to physical, psychological, social, or situational conditions that are functional in achieving goals, reducing demands, and/or stimulating

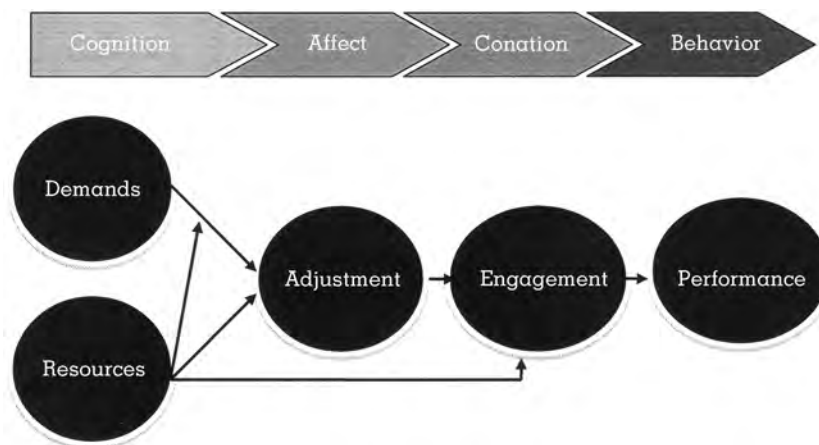
personal growth and development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

*Affect* is the emotional response to an individual's cognitions (Huitt, 1999). We conceptualize it through expatriate adjustment that has been most commonly defined as the "degree of a person's psychological comfort with various aspects of a new setting" (Black & Gregersen, 1991a: 498). We include three forms of adjustment in line with the most salient contexts of the expatriate experience: foreign culture, work, and family.

*Conation* is the striving element of motivation and connects cognitions and affect to behavior (Bandura, 1997; Huitt, 1999). In our model it is represented by the motivational constructs of work role and family role engagement. Engagement is a broad concept that encompasses high involvement, energy, and self-presence in various roles (Sonnentag, 2003). We adopt Kahn's definition of engagement as the willing employment and expression of oneself in a particular role and the investment of one's physical, emotional, and cognitive energies in role performance (Kahn, 1990).

As depicted in Figure 1, our main focus is on explaining the ultimate *behavioral* component, which we construe in terms of role performance in the work and family domains. According to ecological systems theory, both work and family are microsystems that entail patterns of activities and roles (Voydanoff, 2007). We broadly define performance in terms of an array of behav-

FIGURE 1  
Model of Core Constructs



iors that reflect participation in a particular role (Welbourne, Johnson, & Erez, 1998). Just as work role performance refers to the attainment of work-related obligations and expectations, family role performance refers to the attainment of family-related obligations and expectations (Voydanoff, 2007).

### Theoretical Bases for the Model

To explain the inputs to expatriate performance, we draw on two main theoretical frameworks. Our overarching theory is provided by the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001; Llorens, Bakker, Schaufeli, & Salanova, 2006), which we integrate with key propositions from contagion theory. The JD-R model provides a parsimonious and integrative theory that explains psychological health impairment (or burnout) in terms of job demands and motivation (or work engagement) in terms of job resources. This model is an extension of earlier work conceptualizing job strain as the result of a disturbance of the equilibrium between the demands to which employees are exposed and the resources they have at their disposal. For example, the demand-control model (Karasek, 1979) indicates that strain is caused by a combination of high job demands and low decision latitude. The effort-reward imbalance model (Siegrist, 1966) proposes that strain is caused by the imbalance between effort (extrinsic job demands) and rewards (resources such as salary and esteem). In contrast with this earlier work, the JD-R model considers both negative and positive outcomes and recognizes that demands and resources may be unique to certain situations.

First introduced in the study of burnout, in recent years the JD-R model has been applied to the study of the work-family interface and to gain a better understanding of how job characteristics are linked to performance (Bakker, Demerouti, & Verbeke, 2004). The key rationale behind such investigations has been that environments characterized by many resources and fewer demands are likely to foster readiness to dedicate one's efforts and abilities to one's task (Llorens, Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2007). The JD-R model has direct implications for two critical components of our model. First, in the expatriation context the demands-resources

classification can be particularly useful in providing a systematic examination of the various conditions describing the circumstances of the international assignment, as discussed in the subsequent section. Second, based on the schema of relationships proposed by the JD-R model, we argue that a motivational component needs to be included as a link between adjustment and performance.

Another key feature of our proposed framework has to do with previously unexamined aspects of the work-family interface that are likely to affect performance. Kanter (1977) claimed that work and home are the most important domains in a person's life and that experiences in the two domains are interconnected. To capture this dynamic interplay between contexts (i.e., work and family) and actors (i.e., expatriate and partner), we consider the contagion processes of spillover and crossover. Spillover theory conceives of a process by which affect, attitudes, and behavior carry over from one role to another for the same individual (Crouter, 1984; Piotrkowski, 1989; Zedeck, 1992). Spillover is used to describe the transference of moods, skills, values, and behaviors from one role to another (Carlson, Kacmar, Wayne, & Grzywacz, 2006). The crossover model adds another level of complexity by considering this interplay between individuals. Crossover occurs when the experiences of one member of a dyad are transferred to another member; as with spillover, these experiences may be either positive or negative (Westman, 2001). Thus, spillover is an *intraindividual* contagion process that occurs across contexts, and crossover is a dyadic, *interindividual* contagion process that occurs within or across contexts but generates similar reactions in another individual (Westman, 2001).

### PROPOSED RELATIONSHIPS

In this section we provide further specificity regarding our key constructs and consider the dynamic interplay between expatriates and partners and between work and family contexts on international assignments. Insofar as our focus is on understanding expatriate performance, we begin with a consideration of this construct. As noted earlier, our model includes both work role and family role performance, with role performance referring to the participation in a role and the attainment of obligations



and expectations stemming from that particular role (Voydanoff, 2007; Welbourne et al., 1998). Our conceptualization of dual forms of performance is consistent with existing efforts to expand the domain of individual performance in general and expatriate performance in particular. Historically, organizational researchers have primarily emphasized employee task performance. However, during the last two decades, theory about performance has evolved to include contextual (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993) and role-based (Welbourne et al., 1998) forms. Similarly, expatriate researchers have conceptualized expatriate performance in terms of task and contextual forms, as well as in terms of developing and maintaining relationships with host country nationals (e.g., Arthur & Bennett, 1997; Ones & Viswesvaran, 1997; Ronen, 1989; Tung, 1981).

Expanding the criterion space to include family role performance, we draw on the sociology literature and marriage/family literature. Researchers in these areas have conceptualized family role performance in various forms, including performance of household chores (Anderson & Robson, 2006; Devreux, 2007; Gupta, 2006), parental or child care activities (Devreux, 2007; Gorman & Kmec, 2007), quality of partner and parent-child interactions (Carlson & McLanahan, 2006), and family functioning, such as family cohesion, flexibility, and communication (Olson, 1993). Participation performance within the work context includes both task and contextual performance. Similarly, performance within the home/family includes task (e.g., completing household chores) and contextual (e.g., helping family members) forms of performance (Voydanoff, 2007). Performance in the family domain is especially relevant to expatriates. In addition to facing the challenges of new work conditions and culture, expatriates need to adjust to new family roles and responsibilities, including the changing dynamics of relationships within the family.

The proposed influences on performance are depicted in Figure 2. In the text we offer general propositions that portray expatriate performance as a sequential process involving cognitive, affective, and conative stages. While our purpose is to put forward an overreaching theoretical framework that elucidates the relationships within and between these stages, in addition to our general propositions we outline

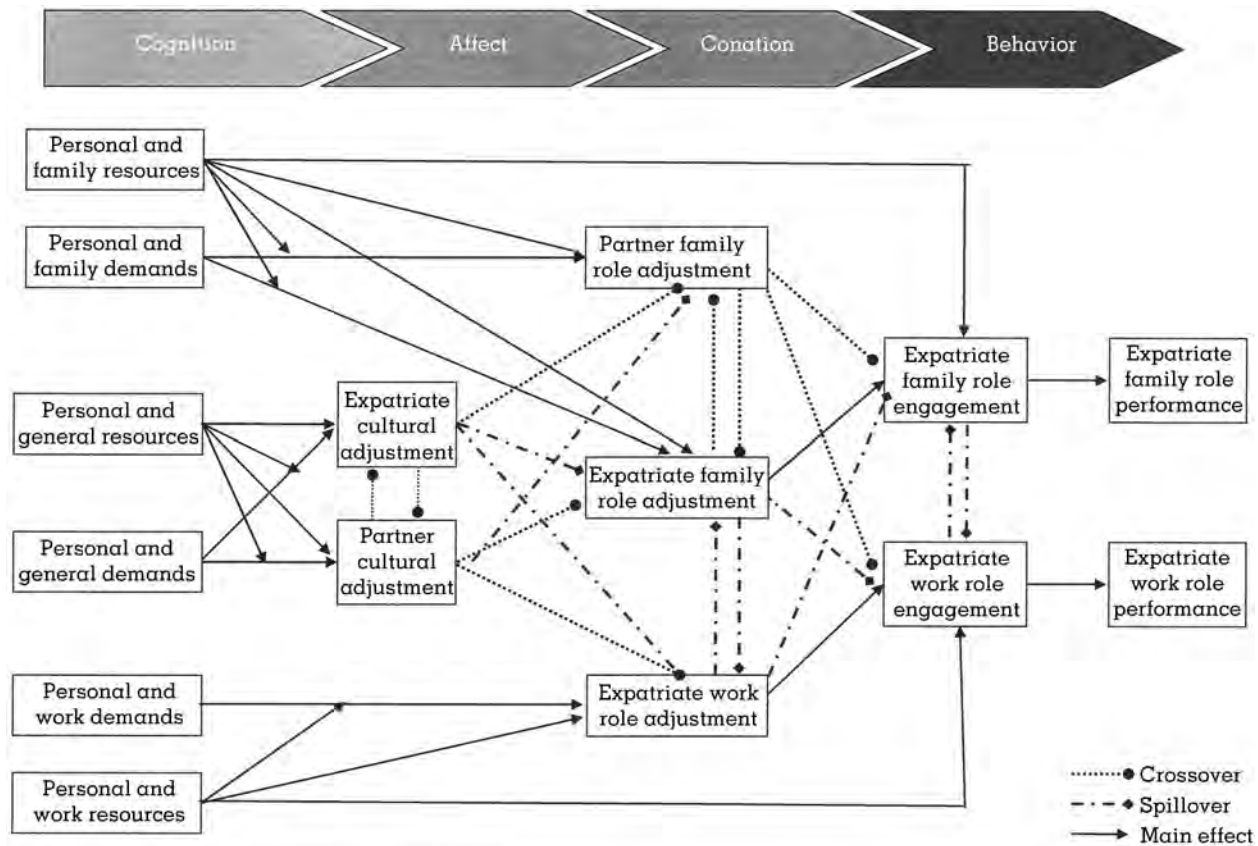
specific hypotheses in Table 1. These hypotheses are more explicit statements of the general propositions and can be used to test the proposed framework. A core assumption of our model is that conative (i.e., engagement) elements are mediators in the proposed process.

### Cognition Stage

We construe cognitions as distal influences that indirectly determine expatriate performance in work and family contexts through their effect on expatriate affect and conation. Although cognitions refer to the perceptions and interpretations of what is occurring, they are based on objective reality (Hobfoll, 2002). As noted above, for expatriates, cognitive influences include demands and resources that represent conditions of the international assignment. In this section we first describe the content of these demands and resources and then detail their complex relationships with adjustment and engagement.

**The content of demands and resources.** Our blueprint of the cognitive stage is provided by research on adjustment antecedents (notably, but not exclusively, work by Black and colleagues; Black, 1990; Black & Gregersen, 1991a,b; Black & Mendenhall, 1991; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Shaffer, Harrison, & Gilley, 1999; Shaffer, Harrison, Luk, & Gilley, 1999; Takeuchi, Yun, & Tesluk, 2002; Ward & Kennedy, 1999, 2001). The literature offers a plethora of adjustment predictors that can be loosely classified in several groups (for recent reviews see Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Harrison, Shaffer, & Bhaskar-Shrinivas, 2004; Hechanova et al., 2003): general attributes of the local host environment; personal attributes of the expatriate; work attributes, including characteristics of the larger organization, the job, and the assignment; and family attributes. To reduce the complexity reflected in current research, we use the framework provided by the JD-R model (e.g., Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti, Bakker, de Jonge, Janssen, & Schaufeli, 2001) to classify these attributes as general, personal, work, and family demands or resources (see Table 2). Attributes associated with negative expatriate experiences are considered demands; those associated with positive experiences are considered resources.

**FIGURE 2**  
**A Model of the Work-Family Interface on International Assignments**



**The influence of demands and resources on adjustment and engagement.** Applying the JD-R model not only allows us to make sense of the multitude of individual and contextual predictors but also provides a theoretical grounding for the relationship between these predictors and performance, via their influence on adjustment and engagement. According to the JD-R model, demands deplete employees' energy, ultimately culminating in strain or negative affect. For example, Bakker et al. (2004) found strong evidence that work pressure and emotional demands predicted the exhaustion component of burnout (see also Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001; Hakonen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006; Llorens et al., 2006). Applying this to the case of expatriation, we anticipate that excessive demands, emanating from the work or family domains as well as from the general foreign environment, will have an adverse impact on expatriate and partner affect. For example, expatriates and partners who

are overwhelmed by the novelty of the foreign culture, have ethnocentric attitudes, and have extensive work or family demands will have difficulty adjusting (Shaffer & Harrison, 2001; Shaffer, Harrison, & Gilley, 1999). If these demands are not offset by appropriate resources, they may be especially detrimental to the adjustment of the expatriate and his or her partner.

*Proposition 1: Demands are negatively related to adjustment.*

From a JD-R perspective, resources either contribute to expatriate adjustment directly or indirectly by buffering the effects of demands on adjustment (see Bakker, Demerouti, & Euwema, 2005). In contrast to the energy-depleting role of demands, resources trigger a process that enables individuals to achieve their goals, leading directly to positive affective outcomes such as organizational commitment (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). For example, employees with positive self-evaluations (a personal resource) are more

**TABLE 1**  
**General Propositions and Specific Hypotheses Following the Model**

Propositions	Hypotheses
<i>Proposition 1: Demands are negatively related to adjustment.</i>	<p>1a: Personal and family demands are negatively related to expatriate family role adjustment.</p> <p>1b: Personal and family demands are negatively related to partner family role adjustment.</p> <p>1c: Personal and general demands are negatively related to expatriate cultural adjustment.</p> <p>1d: Personal and general demands are negatively related to partner cultural adjustment.</p> <p>1e: Personal and work demands are negatively related to expatriate work role adjustment.</p>
<i>Proposition 2: Resources are positively related to adjustment and mitigate the negative relationship between demands and adjustment.</i>	<p>2a,b: Personal and family resources are positively related to family role adjustment of (a) expatriates and (b) partners.</p> <p>2c,d: Personal and family resources moderate the negative relationship between family demands and family role adjustment of (c) expatriates and (d) partners.</p> <p>2e,f: Personal and general resources are positively related to cultural adjustment of (e) expatriates and (f) partners.</p> <p>2g,h: Personal and general resources moderate the negative relationship between general demands and cultural adjustment of (g) expatriates and (h) partners.</p> <p>2i: Personal and work resources are positively related to expatriate work role adjustment.</p> <p>2j: Personal and work resources moderate the negative relationship between work demands and expatriate work role adjustment.</p>
<i>Proposition 3: Resources are positively related to engagement.</i>	<p>3a: Personal and family resources are positively related to expatriate family role engagement.</p> <p>3b: Personal and work resources are positively related to expatriate work role engagement.</p>
<i>Proposition 4: Cultural adjustment is positively related to work role and family role adjustment, with spillover occurring across contexts and crossover occurring between expatriates and partners.</i>	<p>4a,b: Expatriate cultural adjustment spills over to expatriate (a) family role adjustment and (b) work role adjustment.</p> <p>4c,d: Expatriate family role adjustment spills over to (c) expatriate work role adjustment and (d) vice versa.</p> <p>4e: Partner cultural adjustment spills over to expatriate family role adjustment.</p> <p>4f,g: Expatriate cultural adjustment crosses over to (f) partner cultural adjustment and (g) vice versa.</p> <p>4h,i: Expatriate family role adjustment crosses over to (h) partner family role adjustment and (i) vice versa.</p> <p>4j: Expatriate cultural adjustment crosses over to partner family role adjustment.</p> <p>4k,l: Partner cultural adjustment crosses over to (k) expatriate family role adjustment and (l) expatriate work role adjustment.</p>
<i>Proposition 5: Adjustment and engagement are positively related, both within and across work and family contexts.</i>	<p>5a: There is a positive relationship between expatriate work role adjustment and expatriate work role engagement.</p> <p>5b: There is a positive relationship between expatriate family role adjustment and expatriate family role engagement.</p> <p>5c: Expatriate work role adjustment spills over to expatriate family role engagement.</p> <p>5d: Expatriate family role adjustment spills over to expatriate work role engagement.</p> <p>5e: Partner family role adjustment crosses over to expatriate work role engagement.</p> <p>5f: Partner family role adjustment crosses over to expatriate family role engagement.</p>
<i>Proposition 6: There is a spillover between work role and family role engagement.</i>	<p>6a,b: Expatriate work role engagement spills over to (a) expatriate family role engagement and (b) vice versa.</p>
<i>Proposition 7: Engagement has a positive effect on performance and mediates the relationship between adjustment and performance.</i>	<p>7a: Expatriate work role engagement is positively related to expatriate work role performance.</p> <p>7b: Expatriate family role engagement is positively related to expatriate family role performance.</p> <p>7c: Expatriate work and family role engagement mediate the effects of work and family role adjustment on expatriate work and family role performance.</p>

**TABLE 2**  
**Expatriate Demands and Resources**

Attributes	Demand	Resource
General attributes		
Comparable standard of living in host location		X
Urban location of assignment		X
Comparable quality of living conditions		X
Availability of domestic help (driver, gardener, household help)		X
Culture toughness/novelty/distance	X	
Personal attributes		
Demographic characteristics		
Gender (Male)		X
Marital status (Married)		X
Number and ages of children	X	
Education		X
Income		X
Tenure		X
Organizational level/position		X
Number of previous assignments		X
Individual differences		
Self-efficacy		X
Flexibility/adaptability		X
Openness		X
Empathy		X
Tolerance for ambiguity		X
Emotional sensitivity		X
Positive affectivity		X
Extroversion		X
Self-monitoring		X
Optimism		X
Emotional resilience		X
External locus of control	X	
Ethnocentrism	X	
Career salience/career proactivity		X
Knowledge, skills, abilities		
Predeparture knowledge		X
Host country language ability		X
Relational skills		X
Coping/stress management skills		X
Willingness to go on assignment		X
Willingness to relocate to culturally dissimilar countries		X
Work attributes		
Organizational factors		
Cross-cultural training		X
Logistical support and relocation assistance		X
Parent company perceived organizational support		X
Large organizational size		X
Supportive organizational culture		X
Job (assignment) factors		
Senior position level on assignment		X
Generous assignment compensation package (including cost of living adjustments)		X
Length of assignment		X
Communication with head office		X
Host location perceived organizational support		X
Company support on assignment location (e.g., spouse job-seeking assistance, schooling for children)		X
Social support from/interaction with host country nationals		X
Social support from/interaction with other expatriates		X
Supervisor support		X
Leader-member exchange		X

(Continued)



**TABLE 2**  
(Continued)

Attributes	Demand	Resource
Role clarity		X
Role discretion/autonomy		X
Role conflict	X	
Role ambiguity	X	
Role overload	X	
Demands for frequent travel	X	
Regional responsibility	X	
High work pressure	X	
Unfavorable physical environment	X	
Emotionally demanding interactions with clients	X	
Family attributes		
Adjusted accompanying spouse		X
Spouse/partner support		X
Spouse/partner satisfaction		X
Relationship satisfaction		X
Family communication		X
Partner willingness to go/partner attitude to host location		X
Dual-career couple	X	
Loss of partner career/job/income	X	
Family responsibilities (including child care and/or elderly care responsibilities in country of assignment or home country)	X	

Notes: This list of attributes considers the most commonly used factors in expatriate research but is not exhaustive. Attributes associated in the literature with negative expatriate experiences are listed as demands; those associated with positive expatriate experiences are listed as resources. Table entries are based on frameworks proposed by Aycan (1997b), Black, Mendenhall, and Oddou (1991), Parker and McEvoy (1993), Shaffer, Harrison, and Gilley (1999), Ward and Kennedy (1994), and recent meta-analyses by Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al. (2005) and Hechanova et al. (2003).

likely to strive to fulfill goals and, in the process, to experience greater job satisfaction (Judge, Bono, & Locke, 2000). According to the JD-R model, resources also function to offset the adverse effects of demands. In other words, individuals can draw on resources to buffer the adverse effects of demanding conditions (Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2005).

Within the expatriate context, resources have been shown to have both direct and moderating influences on adjustment. For example, perceived organizational support and supervisor support positively contribute to expatriate adjustment (Guzzo, Noonan, & Elron, 1994; Kraimer, Wayne, & Jaworski, 2001; Shaffer, Harrison, & Gilley, 1999). Such support may also play a buffering role, alleviating the negative impact of work overload on adjustment (Shaffer, Harrison, & Gilley, 1999). Indeed, social support and other resources play a key role in moderating stressor-strain relationships (Cranford, 2004; Hobfoll, 2002). In particular, given the ubiquitous nature of personal resources (e.g., personality and interpersonal skills), they will likely be in-

involved in numerous direct and moderating relationships as detailed in Table 1 and illustrated in Figure 2.

*Proposition 2: Resources are positively related to adjustment and mitigate the negative relationship between demands and adjustment.*

Resources can also stimulate employee motivation to participate fully in one's various roles and dedicate one's efforts and abilities to a particular task (Llorens et al., 2006). Indeed, in recent research scholars have been amassing evidence for the positive relationship between resources and engagement (Christian & Slaughter, 2007; Hakanen et al., 2006; Salanova, Agut, & Peiró, 2005). The idea that resources can increase levels of engagement is consistent with a variety of theoretical approaches focusing on the motivational role of job resources. One approach is Hackman and Oldham's (1980) job characteristics theory, which considers the motivational potential of a job as a function of various work resources, such as job signifi-

cance, job identity, skill utilization, job autonomy/perceived control, job significance, and job feedback. Another relevant theoretical framework is the conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989), according to which resources lead to the acquisition of new resources, with accumulated resources motivating employees to invest those resources in improving their performance (see also Hobfoll, 2002).

Numerous studies based on the JD-R model have demonstrated that work resources, such as feedback, job control, supervisory support, social climate, participation, job security, and perceived management quality, predict work role engagement (e.g., see Bakker et al., 2004; Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001; Hakkanen et al., 2006; Mauno, Kinnunen, & Ruokolainen, 2007). Personal resources, such as individual differences (e.g., extraversion or self-efficacy beliefs; Langelan, van Doornen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006; Salanova, Bakker, & Llorens, 2006), have also been found to predict work role engagement. We anticipate that comparable family resources (e.g., spouse support, family communication) as well as personal resources (e.g., optimism, tolerance for ambiguity) will induce expatriates to become more engaged in their family roles.

*Proposition 3: Resources are positively related to engagement.*

### **Affect Stage**

This stage of the model is represented by adjustment, which is the central affective construct in the expatriate literature. In line with this literature, we conceptualize adjustment as a multidimensional set of affective responses (Shaffer, Harrison, & Gilley, 1999) to demands and resources emanating from the family and work contexts and the foreign environment. However, we critically examine past research and argue for a revised conceptualization of the dimensionality of adjustment. We then map relationships among the revised facets of this construct, specifying both crossover and spillover effects. Finally, we consider the influence of adjustment on engagement.

**The content of adjustment.** Grounded in the stress literature, the definition and conceptualization of adjustment most widely adopted in expatriate research was suggested by Black and

colleagues (Black, 1988; Black & Gregersen, 1991a,b; Black & Stephens, 1989). According to them, expatriate in-country adjustment comprises three aspects: adjustment to various cultural factors (such as living conditions and local food), adjustment to interactions with host country nationals, and adjustment to the assignment's work responsibilities. Further, spouse adjustment includes cultural and interaction adjustment. In nearly two decades of research, scholars have accumulated sizable, though not entirely internally consistent, evidence for the fact that adjustment is a multifaceted construct (i.e., work, interaction, and cultural/general), as well as evidence for specific links between adjustment facets and their antecedents and outcomes (e.g., Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Harrison et al., 2004; Shaffer, Harrison, & Gilley, 1999; Thomas, 1998). All in all, the model has held up well under empirical scrutiny and has been extremely useful in unraveling many aspects of the expatriate adjustment experience.

While the idea of multidimensionality of the adjustment construct has been widely embraced by researchers, concerns have been raised about the theoretical basis of the specific facets of Black et al.'s model (Hippler, 2000; see also Suutari & Brewster, 1998, and Thomas & Lazarova, 2006). Furthermore, a large number of researchers have used the model selectively, choosing to test some of its propositions at the expense of others. Some authors (Kraimer et al., 2001; Shaffer, Harrison, & Gilley, 1999) have adopted all three facets, but the majority have focused on the cultural and work facets, especially in research that combines work on expatriation and work-family balance (Aycan, 1997a,b; Caligiuri et al., 1998; Takeuchi, Tesluk, Yun, & Lepak, 2005; Takeuchi, Wang, & Marinova, 2005; Takeuchi et al., 2002). According to these researchers, there are two broad contexts to which expatriates need to adjust: work and nonwork (Takeuchi, Wang, & Marinova, 2005).

Whereas cultural adjustment is primarily nonwork related, and work adjustment is work related, interaction adjustment spans the work and the nonwork environments (Shaffer & Harrison, 1998). Interactions with host country nationals are implicit in both—and necessary for both. As measured by the Black scale (1988, 1990), the dimension of interaction adjustment is ambiguous since it refers to interactions with host country nationals both within the work-

place and within the general environment. In addition to what appears to be a conceptual redundancy, recent empirical research that utilizes the three dimensions has reported very high levels of association between interaction adjustment and cultural adjustment (Cerdin, 1999; Stahl & Caligiuri, 2005). To better clarify the content and nuances of adjustment facets and to avoid such redundancy, we draw on role theory (Katz & Kahn, 1978) to suggest that interaction adjustment be subsumed under the respective contexts where social interactions occur. That is, interactions with host country nationals within the work context can be incorporated within the work adjustment construct, and interactions with host country nationals in the nonwork environment fall into cultural adjustment.

Research has also suggested that existing models of adjustment (Aycan, 1997b; Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991; Parker & McEvoy, 1993; Searle & Ward, 1990) may fail to account for all aspects of adjustment. In a study of the adjustment of expatriate spouses, Shaffer and Harrison (2001) discuss "personal" adjustment, which they define as "identity reformation." Attachments and routines established in one's home country are broken, personal and social roles are redefined, and relationships are viewed differently. Similarly, Mohr and Klein (2004) talk about "role adjustment"—the adjustment to the substantial change in their roles. Similar sentiments are echoed in anecdotal accounts of the expatriate experience. In one example an author describes her overnight identity transformation from a journalist with a promising television career to "a single parent without dating privileges" (Pascoe, 2003). Although in past research scholars have discussed these issues primarily with respect to the nonworking partner, we believe the same arguments are applicable in the case of the expatriate whose identity as a partner/parent also undergoes major changes. In sum, we expand the concept of adjustment to include a new facet—*family role adjustment*—to account for changes within the family context for both partners.

#### **Relationships among the forms of adjustment.**

Having (re)defined adjustment in terms of comfort within specific contexts, we draw on theoretical perspectives from spillover research to map the relationships among the three facets of cultural adjustment, work role adjustment, and

family role adjustment. Whereas most spillover studies have investigated job and marital satisfaction (Judge & Ilies, 2004; Williams & Alliger, 1994), some expatriate studies have examined the spillover of adjustment. Takeuchi et al. (2002) found that expatriates' cultural adjustment spilled over to their work context and affected job satisfaction. Specifically, expatriates' cultural adjustment and work adjustment were positively related to job satisfaction. Similarly, Van der Zee et al. (2005) found negative spillover of expatriates' home demands to their work roles. Given this support for the spillover of affect across salient contexts, we anticipate that expatriate adjustment within one context will affect other contexts. In particular, we expect the more general construct of cultural adjustment to influence the more specific work role and family role forms of adjustment. This ordering of affective reactions is consistent with Aycan's (1997a) model of work adjustment. Specifically, if expatriates are culturally adjusted, their positive feelings will spill over to the family and to their work. Similarly, if expatriates are well adjusted to their work, one can expect a spillover of adjustment to their family context; if they experience family role adjustment, it will spill over to the work context, thus creating a positive spiral (Hobfoll, 1989).

In addition to spillover effects within the affective space, we also contend that expatriates and partners will experience crossover effects of adjustment to various contexts. Within the expatriate literature some researchers have examined positive crossover between expatriates and spouses. Caligiuri et al. (1998) found that spouses' family cross-cultural adjustment positively influenced expatriates' overall cross-cultural adjustment. Similarly, Shaffer and Harrison (1998) found a crossover of satisfaction between expatriates and spouses. Specifically, they found that spouses' overall satisfaction with the foreign environment was positively related to expatriates' nonwork satisfaction. In the same vein, Van der Zee et al. (2005) found crossover of stressors from the expatriate to the spouse's subjective well-being and crossover of expatriates' emotional distress to their spouse's distress. Likewise, Black and Stephens (1989) found that a spouse's general adjustment was positively related to all forms of the expatriate's adjustment.

Insofar as international relocation causes loss of support from extended family and friends, expatriates and accompanying family members become more dependent on one another. This is a precondition for strong crossover since frequent interactions and good relationships are the basis for crossover (Westman, 2001). However, researchers have tended to investigate only unidirectional crossover from spouses to expatriates, ignoring the possibility of bidirectional crossover. To the best of our knowledge, Takeuchi et al. (2002) were the first to look for bidirectional crossover of adjustment. Moreover, they suggested that there is a possibility of both negative and positive synergy between spouses and expatriates in terms of the cross-cultural adjustment process. Accordingly, the failure of one partner to adjust affects the other's adjustment, causing a downward spiral of losses that can result in premature termination of the assignment. Although Takeuchi et al. (2002) suggested that the potential exists for synergy between spouses and expatriates, they did not elaborate on how this process occurs. Possibly, expatriates find the features of the job challenging and therefore adjust quickly, experience growth, and hence affect their partners' cultural adjustment. From this perspective there is the potential for positive synergy between partners and expatriates as the adjustment of one partner crosses over to the other. To that end, recent research has provided evidence of crossover of satisfaction and happiness between spouses (Demerouti, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2005; Powsthavee, 2007; Prince, Manolis, & Minetor, 2007). Consequently, we offer the following proposition, with specific relationships detailed in Table 1 and illustrated in Figure 2.

*Proposition 4: Cultural adjustment is positively related to work role and family role adjustment, with spillover occurring across contexts and crossover occurring between expatriates and partners.*

#### **The influence of adjustment on engagement.**

As previously noted, adjustment is the degree of comfort with various aspects of the assignment. Engagement refers to willingly employing and expressing oneself in a particular role and involves the investment of one's energies in role performance. We argue here that adjustment is an affective psychological state that enables ex-

patriates to put more effort into their roles both as employees and as partners, so they become more engaged in their work and family roles.

Adjustment implies that the individual has overcome such symptoms as stress, anxiety, irritability, and helplessness normally associated with the transition to a new environment (Church, 1982; Oberg, 1960) and is experiencing a sense of psychological and emotional well-being (Searle & Ward, 1990). By definition, an engaged individual is one who is attentive, connected, integrated, and focused and who channels his or her personal energies in physical, cognitive, and emotional labors (Kahn, 1992). To be fully attentive one has to be open to others and free from anxiety. To be connected one has to be able to experience empathy toward others, make oneself available to people or tasks, and be a part of a mutuality of connections. To be integrated one has to experience a sense of wholeness in a situation. To be focused one has to stay within the boundaries of one's respective role, situation, and/or relationship (Kahn, 1992). Individuals who are not adjusted are highly unlikely to be able to experience any of these states. In contrast, adjustment allows expatriates to achieve attentiveness, a sense of connection, integration, and focus by diminishing (or completely freeing them from) stress, eliminating distractions, and giving them the energy they need to employ and express themselves in their roles as workers and family members.

Kahn's model of engagement (Kahn, 1990, 1992) provides further support for our argument. The model posits that three conditions are necessary for an individual to become engaged: psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety, and psychological availability. Achieving all three can be facilitated by adjustment.

Psychological meaningfulness refers to elements that create incentives or disincentives for investment of the self. It is present when an individual feels worthwhile, valued, and valuable and feels able to give and receive from engaging in a role. Expatriates who are not adjusted are still uncertain about how to interpret and respond to their new environment. Thus, it is highly unlikely that they can experience meaningful participation in their roles.

Psychological safety involves the sense of being able to show and employ oneself without fear of negative consequences to self-image or status. Individuals who feel psychological



safety feel that situations are trustworthy, secure, predictable, and clear in terms of behavioral consequences. Expatriates who are not adjusted are unsure of the appropriate ways to behave in the foreign environment and lack a sense of security and/or predictability. Any action (or inaction) that clashes with the appropriate norms may lead to potentially negative consequences. In other words, low levels of adjustment will likely be reflected by decreased perceptions of psychological safety.

Psychological availability refers to possessing the physical, emotional, and psychological resources necessary for investing oneself in role performances. Psychological availability is associated with minimum distractions, confidence in one's abilities and status, and certainty about one's fit with the social systems that allow more room for investment of self in role performances. Only expatriates that are well adjusted will feel they have sufficient available resources. Poorly adjusted expatriates will need to conserve resources to help them achieve an acceptable level of comfort with the foreign environment, thus reducing the sense of psychological availability that is necessary for role engagement.

The influence of adjustment on engagement is consistent with Kahn's idea that psychological states mediate the relationship between the environment and engagement (Kahn, 1990, 1992). Related to this, he notes that psychological presence in a role (an important attribute of engagement) is a function of how people experience themselves and their situations (Kahn, 1992). Additional support for our proposition is provided by new developments in motivation theory, which suggest that affective experiences have a critical role in determining motivation (e.g., Seo, Barrett, & Bartunek, 2004). A recent review maintains that evidence for the importance of affect is increasing (Latham & Pinder, 2005). Similarly, Huitt (1999) points out that affect is an essential element for the energizing component of conation. Based on these perspectives, we posit that adjusted expatriates are emotionally equipped to effectively engage in all their life domains. Given that both adjustment and engagement occur within specific contexts such as work and family, we propose a direct relationship between adjustment and engagement within one's work and family roles.

Based on contagion theory, we also expect positive spillover of adjustment to engagement

from one context to another (work to family and family to work) and crossover across contexts between partners. Spillover occurs when expatriates who are adjusted to their new work roles have more time and energy to put into the family context. Similarly, family role adjustment reduces the uncertainties emanating from the family context and enables expatriates to become more absorbed in their work roles. This is consistent with Greenhaus and Powell's (2006) work-family enrichment model that posits that experiences in one role improve the quality of life in another role. We also expect a crossover effect to occur between the partner's family role adjustment and the expatriate's family role engagement (for a review see Westman, 2001). In this case partners who experience high family role adjustment will provide a comfort zone for the expatriate, and, thus, the partner's family role adjustment will cross over to the expatriate and affect his or her work role and family role engagement.

*Proposition 5: Adjustment and engagement are positively related, both within and across work and family contexts.*

### Conation Stage

As noted above, conation is the striving element of motivation, and it connects cognition and affect to the behavioral (i.e., performance) stage (Huitt, 1999). This stage of our model is represented by engagement. After discussing the content of this construct, we consider reciprocal influences between work role and family role forms of engagement, as well as the direct and mediating influences of engagement on performance.

**The content of engagement.** As previously noted, in this paper we adopt Kahn's earlier definition (Kahn, 1990), according to which engagement refers to willingly employing and expressing oneself in a particular role, and it involves the investment of one's physical, emotional, and cognitive energies into role performance. We do so for several reasons. Kahn's landmark model is the first to apply the concept of engagement to the world of work (Avery, McKay, & Wilson, 2007), and it is at the core of much subsequent engagement research (Christian & Slaughter, 2007; Rothbard, 2001; Schaufeli,



Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002). Most important, Kahn's definition emphasizes the motivational component of engagement; as such, it best represents a conative component of the mind (Huitt, 1999).

**Reciprocal influences of engagement.** Consistent with our emphasis on both the family and work contexts, we consider here two corresponding forms of engagement: work role and family role. From a spillover perspective (Salanova et al., 2005), we contend that work role and family role engagement will have reciprocal spillover effects. Determining whether spillover will be positive or negative, however, is problematic. The extensive body of work-life balance literature contains a myriad of theoretical perspectives that can support a positive, a negative, or a nonexistent relationship between the two forms of engagement (Bailyn, 1993; Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Fredriksen-Goldsen & Scharlach, 2001; Lambert, 1990; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1997; Randall, 1988; Rothbard, 2001; Zedeck, 1992).

While a detailed review of the literature is beyond the scope of this paper, we present the two central perspectives in the field. By far the more dominant argument in the literature, the conflict/depletion perspective implies an inverse relationship between work role and family role engagement. Given the (assumed) inherent and inevitable trade-offs between the family and work domains, high engagement in one role will necessarily be associated with lower engagement in the other role (e.g., Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Hochschild, 1997). Less prevalent but gaining increasing popularity, the facilitation/enrichment perspective suggests that a positive spillover is possible (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Marks, 1977; Rothbard, 2001). In line with tenets of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), the argument centers on the possibility that engagement in one context (e.g., family) can generate feelings of well-being that may spill over to the other context (e.g., work). For example, expatriates who are energized by and dedicated to (i.e., engaged in) the family role can obtain more personal resources to allocate to the work role. Similarly, those who are engaged in the work role will likely have more energy and commitment to the family role.

Perhaps not surprisingly, empirical evidence regarding the spillover between the two forms of

engagement is mixed. Most notably, Rothbard (2001) found support for both depletion (negative spillover) and enrichment (positive spillover) between work role and family role engagement in a single study. She further examined the impact of a person's positive or negative emotional response to a role and the importance of gender as a moderator. In light of existing research, our model will be incomplete if we fail to acknowledge that a spillover between work role and family role engagement exists. However, given the focus of our paper (building a process model of expatriate performance), we are wary of veering too far off course by examining all possible influences on the apparently complex relationship between the two constructs. Thus, we put forward a spillover proposition without specifying whether the relationship will be positive or negative.

*Proposition 6: There is a spillover between work role and family role engagement.*

**The direct and mediating roles of engagement.** As depicted in Figure 2, engagement has a direct effect on performance. This is consistent with the JD-R perspective whereby engagement is a proximal antecedent of performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker et al., 2004; Salanova & Schaufeli, 2008). Recent studies based on the JD-R model have indeed indicated that work engagement is positively related to performance (for an overview see Demerouti & Bakker, 2006). Related research has also shown that engaged workers exhibit personal initiative, proactive behavior, and learning motivation (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007; Sonnentag, 2003). Kahn's model also explicitly suggests that engagement is an important ingredient for effective role performance (Kahn, 1990, 1992). Kahn maintains that the extent to which organization members are "psychologically present" and, thus, personally accessible at work shapes their productivity (Kahn, 1992).

Studies have linked job engagement with a spectrum of performance-related behaviors, including task performance (Hakanen et al., 2006), performance rated by a supervisor (Rich, 2007; Rich & LePine, 2007; Rothbard & Wilk, 2007), commitment (Hakanen, Schaufeli, & Ahola, 2008), and organizational citizenship behavior (Rich, 2007; Rich & LePine, 2007). Schaufeli and Salanova (2007) recently summarized the positive

outcomes of work engagement in terms of positive job-related attitudes, good physical and mental health, extrarole behavior and performance, satisfaction with the job, commitment and tendency to remain in the organization, better performance, and loyalty to customers. Based on these theoretical arguments and growing empirical evidence, we anticipate that expatriate work role engagement will have a direct effect on expatriate work role performance. Similarly, family role engagement will have a direct effect on expatriate family role performance. Although no empirical studies have explored the latter relationship, the same theoretical argument holds: psychological presence in the family role is likely to lead to effective family role performance (Kahn, 1990).

In addition to positing a direct effect of engagement on performance, we also maintain that engagement plays an intervening role in the relationship between adjustment and performance. The expatriate literature has traditionally assumed that increased performance is a direct outcome of cross-cultural adjustment. However, a careful review of research to date reveals that the evidence for such an association is far from established. Not all studies have found support for a positive link between adjustment and performance, and interpreting existing research is complicated by conceptualization and measurement issues—notably, the conceptual overlap between many “expatriate effectiveness” measures and facets of adjustment (Thomas & Lazarova, 2006). In line with results from two meta-analyses that conclude that adjustment exhibits stronger relationships with attitudinal variables such as job satisfaction rather than with performance (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Hechanova et al., 2003), Thomas and Lazarova (2006) encourage future research to consider the possibility that the adjustment-performance link is not direct but is mediated by other constructs.

As discussed in previous sections, evidence exists to suggest that adjustment is positively related to engagement and engagement is positively related to role performance. Based on this evidence, and drawing on the cognition-affect-conation-behavior framework (Bagozzi, 1992; Huitt, 1999) and the JD-R model (Bakker & Geurts, 2004; Bakker et al., 2004), we propose that the relationship between adjustment and performance is mediated by engagement. According

to Bagozzi (1992), attitudinal researchers have not been successful in predicting behavior because they have omitted the construct of conation. Engagement represents this missing conative or motivational link that allows expatriates to transfer the positive state of adjustment into successful performance. Further, following the logic of the JD-R model, resources lead to positive emotions such as happiness and enthusiasm, better physical and psychological health, and the ability to create and mobilize more resources. Consequently, employees become engaged in their roles, and engagement, in turn, contributes to effective role performance.

Applying this logic to the expatriate context, because adjusted expatriates enjoy an overall sense of well-being, better health, and more confidence in their ability to live and work in a foreign environment, they are able to invest time and physical, emotional, and cognitive energy (i.e., to engage) in their work and family roles. The allocation of effort to these roles contributes to effective performance in both domains. These arguments are consistent with general theories of work motivation (e.g., Vroom's VIE theory [1964]; see also Naylor, Pritchard, & Ilgen, 1980) that construe motivation as a process triggered by a need (in the case of expatriation, the need to adapt), which then activates the drive to achieve a goal (Luthans, 1998). Adjustment provides expatriates with the volition to engage in work and family role activities; the result of this is the fulfillment of expected role behaviors. Thus, we predict that expatriates' adjustment has a direct impact on their engagement in specific day-to-day work and family activities. Engagement, in turn, contributes to expatriates' job and family performance.

*Proposition 7: Engagement has a positive effect on performance and mediates the relationship between adjustment and performance.*

## DISCUSSION

In this paper we consider how the dynamic interplay of work and family influences behaviors of expatriates in their roles as employees (i.e., work role performance) and as partners (i.e., family role performance). We offer a theoretically grounded framework of the expatriate ex-

perience across four stages—cognitive, affective, conative, and behavioral—and we propose a motivational process that links demands and resources to work role and family role performance via adjustment and engagement. With the work-family interface as the core of our model, we explicitly recognize the importance of multiple actors (expatriates and partners) and multiple contexts (family and work).

We believe that we offer several important contributions that can enhance expatriate management theory and practice. First, we offer a model that takes into consideration the complex relationships and interdependencies of the work and family domains on international assignments. While extant research has acknowledged the importance of the expatriate family (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Black & Gregersen, 1991b; Black & Stephens, 1989; Hammer, Hart, & Rogan, 1998; Harvey & Wiese, 1998b; Konopaske, Robie, & Ivancevich, 2005; Punnett, 1997; Shaffer & Harrison, 1998), by and large it has not provided a comprehensive theoretical explication of how the work and family spheres interact and how the interplay between the two affects expatriates and their families. Assignments are frequently portrayed as disruptive and demanding on the expatriate family, and the expatriate partner in particular. Indeed, partner inability to adjust is often invoked as the central reason for assignment failure. However, research has also pointed out that expatriates with accompanying partners tend to adjust better (Thomas, 1998). In order to align such discordant findings, we consider not only spillover in the case of the expatriate but also crossover between partners (Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Wethington, 1989; Westman, 2001), as well as potentially positive interactions leading to optimal functioning of all family members (Sheldon & King, 2001). In constructing our model we take a balanced view of the role of the expatriate partner. Expatriates and partners influence each other via a crossover process, and these influences *could be* but are not inherently negative—positive synergy is equally likely. Partner adjustment affects not only expatriate adjustment but can also cross over to expatriate engagement in both the work and the family contexts. Thus, it can have a broader and potentially more positive influence that has been largely ignored in past studies.

Second, we focus on performance in both work and family contexts. Reviews of the broader work-family research have concluded that the majority of work-family studies center on work-related outcomes (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000; Glass & Finley, 2002). This has prompted recommendations that researchers consider dependent variables relevant for a broader group of stakeholders, particularly family processes and family functioning (Glass & Finley, 2002). This is especially relevant in the context of expatriate assignments, where a family may be uprooted for the sake of the expatriate job, thus blurring to some extent the boundary between work and family. Accordingly, we propose a model including dual performance outcomes to provide a better reflection of the web of complex relationships connecting the work and family domains.

Third, we examine the process through which adjustment, arguably the most studied construct in expatriate research, affects performance. In contrast to much research in the field, we place adjustment in a more distal role in the performance process and discuss the intervening role of engagement. Specifically, we posit that adjustment leads to increased performance by generating the motivational state of engagement that then facilitates performance within the work and the family domains (see Propositions 5 and 7 and related hypotheses in Table 1). A focus on engagement is in line with emerging trends in positive psychology (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Expatriate research has traditionally originated from the stressor-stress-strain perspective (e.g., Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Black & Gregersen, 1991a; Harrison et al., 2004; see also Shaffer & Harrison, 1998, and Shaffer, Harrison, & Gilley, 1999); drawing on the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), we go beyond a stress-based framework and propose a motivational process whereby conditions on the assignment influence performance through their impact on both adjustment and engagement.

Finally, we revisit research on adjustment to address adaptation to changing family roles, to map relationships among the forms of adjustment, and to offer a systematic way to group adjustment antecedents. Drawing on role theory, we propose a new facet of adjustment (i.e., family role adjustment) and argue that this is relevant to both expatriates and their partners. Our revised tripartite conceptualization of ad-

justment, comprising cultural, work role, and family role forms, offers two contributions to expatriate adjustment theory. The first refers to the mapping of relationships among the adjustment forms. Having proposed that the more general form of cultural adjustment is predictive of the more specific forms of work role and family role adjustment, we explicitly recognize the complexities of the adjustment process (see Proposition 4 and related hypotheses in Table 1). This is in contrast to much of the extant adjustment literature (for an exception see Aycan, 1997b). Our second contribution is applying the JD-R model to classify the broad array of demands and resources that may be relevant to expatriate and partner adjustment. Although we recognize that the demands and resources listed in Table 2 are not exhaustive, the JD-R model provides a useful framework to systematize the various predictors of adjustment.

### Implications for Research and Management

In conceptualizing the interdependencies of the work and family domains on international assignments, we identify several issues that provide a roadmap for future research. One issue that deserves further attention has to do with the JD-R framework. While we rely heavily on this framework, our model does not follow it exactly. According to the JD-R, demands predict burnout (a stress-related response) and resources predict engagement. These relationships are direct, with resources also moderating the link between demands and burnout.

Our model departs from the JD-R in two ways. First, the stress-related response of adjustment is predicted by both demands and resources. Second, our model implies that engagement is linked to demands through adjustment. In addition to the fact that these additional links are strongly implied by the literature on expatriation, accumulating empirical evidence based on the JD-R theory suggests that more complex relationships among the key constructs may be occurring. Notably, in support of our first additional link (between resources and adjustment), studies have shown that cross-relationships (between resources and burnout) are not uncommon (Christian & Slaughter, 2007; Hakkanen et al., 2006; Llorens et al., 2006). In support of our second additional link (adjustment as a mediator of the relationship between demands and

engagement), researchers have found evidence for mediation processes in the relationships between demands and resources on one end and burnout and engagement on the other (e.g., Hakkanen et al., 2006). Furthermore, burnout and engagement have consistently been found to be moderately to highly negatively correlated (e.g., Bakker, van Emmerik, & Euwema, 2006; Bakker et al., 2004; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). In this context we feel that sufficient justification exists to include additional links in our model. In terms of broader research implications, in future studies researchers may want to subject the JD-R framework to a more critical examination and consider the viability of more complex relationships than those proposed by the JD-R model.

A second issue for future research has to do with time. Although we do not explicitly incorporate time in our model, we recognize its potential importance in the process. One example is that many of the demands and resources change during expatriation. One of the major assumptions of Hobfoll's (2002) conservation of resources theory is that different resources reinforce each other in the sense that possession of resources leads to possession of other resources. Resources are said to "co-travel in resource caravans" (Hobfoll, 2002: 318); key resources facilitate the development and use of other resources. Drawing on these ideas, it is possible that, over time, resources enhance each other both within and across the work and the family domains and create a resource gain spiral. For example, an expatriate who possesses positive affectivity may be able to learn the host country language faster. In combination, these two factors may help facilitate the formation of social relationships with host country nationals on and off the job. In the same vein, there is a change in the demands in the various stages of the assignment.

Another example of the potential relevance of time has to do with reverse causal relationships. For the sake of parsimony we do not include such relationships in our model. However, in line with Fredrickson's (1998) "broaden-and-build" framework, not only do resources contribute to increased engagement and performance but increased engagement and performance also contribute to the accumulation of additional resources (see also Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, and Salanova et al., 2006). An alternative possibility also can be considered. Whereas



positive outcomes are likely to lead to more resources, they may also contribute to additional demands. For example, if the expatriate has excellent job performance, he or she may be given more tasks to accomplish, and this may ultimately result in increased role overload. These examples underscore the importance of longitudinal studies with specific measurements before, at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the assignment.

A third issue that deserves future research attention is the relationship between work role engagement and family role engagement. According to the facilitation perspective of the work-family interface, engagement in one role will spill over into another role (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Rothbard, 2001). Such thinking is in line with positive psychology (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005; Sheldon & King, 2001). However, depletion theories (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985) of the effect of multiple-role obligations suggest that there is a limited amount of energy people possess. Thus, engagement in some roles may come at the expense of engagement in other roles (Rothbard, 2001). Greenhaus and Powell (2006) suggest that, according to the enrichment model, role accumulation can provide more extensive resources to be applied to the other roles, as well as time constraints that produce conflict. Research has yet to examine the conditions under which role accumulation promotes enrichment to a greater versus lesser extent than it promotes conflict (Byron, 2005). One viable possibility is drawing on identity theory and considering role salience, role centrality, or role involvement as moderators of the relationships (Carlson & Kacmar, 2000; Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Collins, 2001; Lobel, 1991; Rothbard, 2001). Thus, individuals for whom both the work role and the family role are salient may experience a positive spillover between engagement in the two spheres, whereas those for whom one of the roles is more salient than the other may experience enhanced engagement in one role that leads to diminished engagement in another role. Personality variables may also play an interactive role in this process.

A final avenue for future research involves gender. Throughout the paper we discuss expatriates and their partners, but we do not consider the possible effects of gender on their experiences, beyond acknowledging gender as a pre-

dictor of adjustment, in line with existing research (see Table 2). The general work-family research has not established consistent gender differences in the work-family interface (Nelson & Burke, 2000). Expatriate research, however, has suggested that the experiences of female expatriates can be somewhat different, especially in terms of adjustment (Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2002; Caligiuri & Tung, 1999; Linehan & Walsh, 2000; Westwood & Leung, 1994). Specifically, the argument that female expatriates may have a harder time regarding adjustment appears to have gained a lot of currency, but findings are by no means consistent (e.g., compare findings in Caligiuri & Tung, 1999, and Tung, 2004).

Further, while the same demands and resources are relevant for both male and female expatriates, it is likely that they do not experience the same *levels* of these demands and resources. For example, women are more likely to experience demands such as dual-career challenges, owing to the lower willingness of their partners to put their careers on hold and accompany them on assignment, and greater familial responsibilities (Elron & Kark, 2000; Harris, 1993; Linehan & Walsh, 2000; Taylor & Napier, 1996). Also, female expatriates may have more limited access to such resources as company support or social support from host country nationals, particularly in environments with more traditional gender role ideologies (e.g., Adler, 1984; Izraeli, Banai, & Zeira, 1980; Taylor & Napier, 1996).

Although we believe that our proposed model will apply for both genders, we encourage future research that examines this question empirically. In addition to the impact of gender on adjustment and engagement, an important issue to investigate is whether the strength of some of the relationships proposed by the model differs for men and women—that is, whether gender acts as a moderator. For example, it is possible that the strength of the relationship between partner adjustment (cultural, family role) and expatriate adjustment (cultural, family role) is stronger for women than men. Similarly, the link between expatriate family role adjustment and expatriate work role adjustment may be stronger, with the reverse relationship being weaker for female expatriates compared to male expatriates. Other relationships that may be moderated by gender are those that involve spillover from expatriate adjustment in one role



to expatriate engagement in another role and the spillover between expatriate family role engagement and work role engagement.

While our model focuses on expatriate experiences, it could easily be modified to clarify the experiences of the trailing partner or to consider nontraditional types of assignments. Because most partners do not hold a job in the foreign country, a parallel model for them will probably focus only on family role performance. In constructing a model for partners, it is important to consider experiences that may be unique to the partner. For example, the transition from paid employment (before the move) to unemployment could represent a demand for the partner.

As we noted earlier, our model is best applied to an expatriate couple when the expatriate is accompanied by his or her partner on assignment. However, parts of the model will be broadly applicable to other types of assignments. For example, one can consider a long-term assignment in which the expatriate is not accompanied by family members. The expatriate will have to adjust to different types of demands, such as the changed role of the "absent" partner and/or parent. On the other hand, the partner will also experience a change in the family role brought about by the necessity of taking over all domestic responsibilities or assuming the responsibilities of the absent parent in cases where child care is involved. The partner's adjustment to a redefined family role is likely to play into the expatriate experience. Similar arguments can be made about expatriates on short-term or frequent traveler assignments. The demands and resources will be different, but the basic logic of our model can be applied to these varied situations, and a series of related models may be proposed to describe the work-family interface and its link to performance in various assignment types.

Before the model is theoretically refined or extended by future research, its veracity must be tested empirically. Given its complexity, we recognize the challenges involved, especially in testing the model in its entirety. However, researchers could focus on various parts of the model, such as clarifying the dimensionality of adjustment; assessing the mediating role of engagement; examining the spillover and crossover effects of adjustment, engagement, and performance for expatriates and their partners; and specifying the content of work and family

performance. One of the strengths of the model is that the work-family interface is conceived of as a process that occurs across cognitive, affective, conative, and behavioral stages. Assessing this process can be done by focusing on just two or three stages, but it does require longitudinal research. This is especially challenging with such a mobile population. Our inclusion of spillover and crossover effects involving marital partners also requires collection of data from both partners. Obtaining data from work colleagues or other family members would also help to mitigate potential problems with common method variance and would provide a more comprehensive and accurate picture of the experiences of expatriates and their partners.

Our model portends several implications for management practice. For years organizations have been aware that families contribute to expatriate success; however, this has not translated into consistent consideration of family factors and adequate support for families on assignment (e.g., GMAC, 2008). Our research highlights a familiar theme but provides a better understanding of the complex processes within the expatriate family unit. It is important for organizations to be aware of the crossover between partners and the spiraling that occurs. To that end, expatriates and their partners should be forewarned about changes in family roles brought about by the assignment. We also emphasize the important role of resources provided by organizations since they not only contribute to enhanced adjustment and engagement but also mitigate the negative effect of demands on adjustment. Finally, increased attention to expatriate engagement above and beyond adjustment is also warranted.

## Conclusion

International assignments entail uncertainty and stress—but they also offer the promise of new opportunities and challenges. In elucidating the process whereby work and family intertwine and result in effective performance in both contexts, we envision expatriates and their partners as individuals who have access to a wealth of personal, work, and family resources that help them respond effectively to the demands entailed in the move to a foreign environment. The resultant adjustment of the expatriate and his or her partner to their new roles

and responsibilities is a source of motivation for the expatriate. Energized to enact both family and work roles, the expatriate experience culminates in the achievement of goals in the context of both work and family. We believe our proposed model and related hypotheses provide an important foundation for future work in this area, and we hope that it will open up new avenues for expatriate and work-family interface research and will inform management practice.

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