Viewpoint

Combining Intercontinental Parenting and Research: Dilemmas and Strategies for Women

One of the biggest challenges for parents conducting research abroad is how to manage either with one's children or without them during that time. These days, the pressures of dual-career marriages have meant that it is rare to find a woman bringing her spouse along to "the field" to help with the children unless the husband is also involved in his own fieldwork project in the same locale. I have heard of only one situation where a male researcher with children took the children along with him to the field, leaving his spouse behind to attend to her career, although no doubt there are other exceptions. Because so many of the difficulties still fall primarily on mothers who are field researchers, I am focusing in this article on women's dilemmas as they negotiate these temporary working/domestic arrangements with their partners, families, and academic departments.

This article points to some current issues relating to how parenthood affects international research and outlines specific implications of such research for funding agencies, academics who evaluate the work of international scholars, university policy makers, and academic departments, all of whom need to be mindful of the particular constraints of parenting and doing international research. This article also weighs the trade-offs involved in such research and offers some strategies women have pursued to navigate this complicated terrain. As women in the United States increasingly occupy more demanding professional jobs and as husbands share child-rearing responsibilities more equally with their wives, these concerns are becoming more important to men as well.

Many thanks to Sharon Hutchinson, Lisa Naughton, Linda Beck, Leigh Payne, Maria Lepowsky, Diane Singerman, Kathryn Sikkink, Hevina Dashwood, Katherine Bowie, Holly Hanson, Jo Ellen Fair, Carolyn Makinson, and the anonymous reviewers for their most helpful suggestions and insights.

[*Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 2002, vol. 27, no. 3]
 0097-9740/2002/2703-0001$10.00

Dilemmas facing academic mothers in international research

In no way are women's private arrangements in doing international research trivial: they affect the content, subject, scope, and quality of research women do in any number of fields, from anthropology to history, political science, sociology, geography, and many other disciplines that may require extended periods of work in a foreign country if one adopts an international approach. Academic expectations and norms were not established with academic mothers in mind, nor have they been sufficiently modified as more women have entered academia. To the contrary, while the competitiveness of academia has made it difficult for male scholars who want to be more involved in raising children, it has become exponentially harder for academic mothers and, in particular, mothers who do foreign field research. Domestic responsibilities and considerations still unfortunately affect women's careers to a greater extent than those of men, even men with employed spouses.

While tenure expectations have become more demanding, research in many parts of the world has become more dangerous and risky. In the 1960s, the typical male researcher thought little of packing up and taking his wife and children for a year or more to live in the Congo (Zaire), Uganda, Kenya, or Ethiopia, just to name a few countries in a region with which I am familiar. Although there were some of the same concerns we face today, it was qualitatively different three or four decades ago. Today one has to contemplate more seriously the possibilities of theft, banditry, and violence as well as health considerations, given the higher incidence of malaria, hepatitis, cholera, AIDS, and other illnesses. In many rural and even urban areas it is necessary to have access to clean water. Finding affordable quality schools is also more of a challenge these days. In Africa, for example, the list of research sites that are virtually off limits for fieldwork has grown, not only because of civil conflict but also because of the difficulty of obtaining research clearance due to political sensitivities. And although I have female colleagues who continue to carry out research in southern Sudan, Algeria, Rwanda, and western Uganda, I am very sure none of them would even consider taking their children with them to these particular research locales.

Thus one finds many women who did extensive international fieldwork as graduate students prior to having children focusing in subsequent projects on U.S.-based research as they become established in teaching positions while raising families. Some of this may be due to pragmatic considerations (e.g., meeting mortgage payments and other bills), but it does appear that children weigh heavily into such decisions, especially for those on the tenure track pursuing a second major research project. Scholars

working on a second or subsequent project might perhaps study diasporic immigrant communities of the foreign societies they had previously studied as graduate students or take the dissertation research question they worked on elsewhere and apply it to the United States. Some expand their original topic and examine it in a more abstracted theoretical, comparative, or historical light. Others deconstruct key government, donor, media, cultural, or academic texts relevant to their topic. While there is, of course, nothing intrinsically problematic about doing such research, scholars are sometimes forced to limit their talents in ways that do not make the best use of the many years of language, area studies, and research skills they acquired with their first research project. The empirical richness of their original work may not be as apparent in subsequent projects, which no doubt have other strengths. For women graduate students doing international studies, embarking on an extensive research project involving primary fieldwork is often a necessity and not really all that optional. The same could be said for many assistant professors on the tenure track in major research institutions who need to undertake a second research project involving fieldwork. What cruel coincidence it is that women's graduate training and years on the tenure track coincide with our prime childbearing years. How women negotiate international research while raising children, publishing, and attending to the other demands of an academic position may have consequences for their success in graduate school, on the job market, and later with academic promotions further down the road.

Naturally, academic mothers differ considerably in terms of their marital status, income, where they are in their careers, the age of children, and other considerations. Unfortunately, I cannot address all these important concerns in one short article, but I will instead focus on a few key issues academic mothers face going abroad. In writing this article, I interviewed and consulted a variety of academic mothers who had worked as social scientists in Latin America, the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and Europe and had found creative solutions to the challenges of doing fieldwork abroad. I also draw extensively on my own experiences conducting research in Uganda, Tanzania, Britain, and Finland.

Institutional implications

Starting in the late 1980s, some advocated that the particular family burdens women faced implied that women ought simply to lower their career expectations and settle into a "mommy track" (Schwartz 1989; Blumenthal 1991). An academic "mommy track" might lengthen the tenure track

and lower tenure standards for mothers, but this would in the end set women back even further. With such reasoning, some might conclude that academic mothers should not conduct international research if they cannot cope with the enormous challenges it presents. But this is no solution either: it simply eliminates many women from important areas of international research, closes off their possibilities for making useful contributions, and keeps them out of major research institutions. None of these types of "solutions" would do anything to address the gender imbalances that currently exist in major research institutions and the disproportionately large number of women who occupy positions as adjunct professors.

In part, the solutions have to be institutional. For example, tenure and annual review committees, dissertation committees, and academics evaluating grant proposals of scholars who do international work need to be mindful of the enormous cost, skills, negotiations, and planning that go into this kind of research at a personal level and how these private concerns can both facilitate but also become impediments to such research through no fault of the scholar. Departments need more flexible sabbatical and research leave policies to make it easier for scholars with families to travel abroad on research trips.

One of the main constraints on conducting research with children has to do with insufficient available funding. Most funding agencies, with a few exceptions, do not provide for family travel and expenses or for the added expense of maintaining two households on two continents. For graduate students, this can be quite prohibitive. Compounding the lack of financial support for research with children is the fact that one ends up incurring expenses one would otherwise forgo were it not for the fact that one has children in tow. Some have to buy a secondhand car to transport their children to and from school, where otherwise a motorcycle or public transportation might have sufficed. Others may find it necessary to rent or purchase mobile phones. Still others with teenagers end up buying an extra laptop computer. I practically went broke this past year on leave in Finland, having to supply my eleven-year-old with English-language books as she was reading almost a book a day. These expenses are small but necessary accommodations one often has to make.

Donors may need to consider supporting international travel for the families of scholars. Some might argue that given the already limited funding available, allocating greater resources to academics with families will mean less funding available to others. This may, indeed, be the consequence of such a policy to give greater support to academic parents.

Some might ask, why should those with children be supported to take their family on a research trip, which is, after all, a private decision? As it is, many academic mothers and fathers are not engaging in international research because the costs are simply too high. They are eliminated from the pool of applicants because they cannot even realistically apply, yet their talents, contributions, and insights are also being forfeited. Thus, the current system is hardly fair, even though it is based on an assumption that everyone has an equal shot if they are of equal capability. Academics in single-income households, single parents, and graduate student parents in particular suffer from the inequalities built into the current funding systems that do not account for families.

There are other forms of support that donors could provide. For example, funding agencies with offices abroad should make greater efforts to provide logistical support to families, advising them and helping them with arrangements having to do with pediatricians, schooling, day care, and other transition issues. Little if any support of this kind is generally provided to ease some of the difficulties in adjusting to a foreign locale with one's children.

One of the biggest areas of concern for almost everyone I interviewed who had worked in a third-world country was how their life abroad would affect the health of their children. Some universities and funding agencies provide for medical evacuation coverage, but most do not, and even if they cover the researcher, they do not cover the rest of the family. My university did not provide such coverage for myself or my daughter at the time I went to Uganda. For this reason I made sure I had sufficient cash on hand so that if I needed to fly my daughter or myself to a hospital in Europe or Nairobi quickly, I could have done so. Universities need to reconsider their health provision policies to provide better health insurance coverage and emergency evacuation for scholars and their families abroad.

Parenting philosophies

While parts of the dilemma need to be addressed through institutional reforms, other issues need to be tackled at a more personal level. This begins with how one approaches and thinks about the challenges of doing international research. According to Joan Cassell, there are two divergent parental philosophies of field researchers: one is protective and attempts to shield children from the emotional and physical rigors of living abroad, and another sees enormous benefits for children confronting radical cultural differences (Cassell 1987b, 263). Some see the experience of living

abroad as an enriching one for their children and rationalize bringing their children with them in terms of an ethical and moral commitment to raising their children to be tolerant, global citizens (Flinn 1998, 13).

I myself fall somewhere in between these two divergent views. Although I lean toward the latter view that emphasizes the benefits for children of living abroad, I believe it is important to make the experience as positive as possible for children who accompany field researchers to foreign countries. In part, this has to do with the fact that I am the daughter of two anthropologists. Both parents carried out fieldwork and wrote dissertations (in addition to holding jobs) while I was growing up in Tanzania, where I lived for fourteen years. My father carried out a study of urban traditional healers in Dar es Salaam, and my mother spent many years in a rural village north of Dar es Salaam studying the rituals and symbols of the Zaramo coastal people. As a child, and more so as a teenager, she took me to divinations, exorcisms, weddings, ancestor worship ceremonies, and to community affairs in the village where we had a second home. We also traveled more widely in the region. She sometimes enlisted me as an observer and assigned me the task of note taker. Needless to say, part of my interest in studying Africa grew out of these early experiences. I very much wanted my own children to appreciate what I had come to love about Africa. This is a fairly common sentiment among Americans who grew up abroad.

I find that my own children learned many important life lessons from living in Uganda and Finland. It broadened their horizons and made my older daughter more aware of social inequalities. She learned that people have many different but perfectly acceptable ways of doing the same thing. Having grown up in Tanzania, which was in some ways similar to Uganda, I especially enjoyed introducing my daughter to the flowers, birds, wildlife, and foods that were such a large part of my childhood. She learned to eat *ugoli* (stiff maize meal porridge), Nile perch, and *matoke* (cooked bananas) and was able to enjoy the sweet pineapples, tomatoes, and the giant mangoes and avocados, among other things. She learned to use a pit latrine, sleep under a mosquito net, bathe without hot water, and tolerate lizards on the walls.

In Uganda, Leila learned how to live without lots of toys and television, but more important, she learned how much fun it was to make her own toys out of cardboard and other scraps and to create her own entertainment. The regular evening electricity blackouts turned into opportunities to spend more time together working on puzzles or playing games using candlelight. On our return to Madison, I had to smile when Leila asked me as we entered our home, "Is the power on?"

Children who live abroad gain a broader sense of the world at a young age and can think beyond their own hometown or national boundaries. At four, my daughter was asking me questions such as, "Do they speak Luganda in Japan?" Children learn to be with different kinds of people and to enjoy the differences. My daughter was so enamored with her experiences in Uganda that when we left, she announced, "I want to take all the Ugandan people in our airplane with us to America!" Instead, she took back countless wonderful memories and insights and continues seven years later to correspond with a Ugandan girlfriend.

Finally, it is a well-known fact that children learn languages with greater ease than adults. During our one year in Finland, both children learned Finnish, which is my mother tongue. The opportunity to learn another language is a tremendous gift to a child, the benefits of which are generally reaped later on in life, especially if those language skills are reinforced.

But even an openness to new cultures and ways of life is no guarantee that immersion experiences will be smooth sailing. One anthropologist working in Thailand described the day care her two boys attended: "[The day] began with standing in rows for the flag-raising ceremony, standing still for Buddhist meditation, corporal punishment for whispering during nap time, memorizing an entirely different alphabet, learning about the king's favorite color, flower, etc." The boys also "endured unending numbers of people wanting to touch their skin when we went anywhere—not malicious, just simple curiosity, but exhausting for the boys. It was not easy for them at all!" But then she added, "On the other hand, I'm not sorry they had these experiences."

Family arrangements

There are three basic scenarios for mothers who do fieldwork abroad: take the child(ren) with you and leave the father behind, leave your child(ren) at home with the father or another family member, or take the whole family with you. I address all three, but I focus on the first option because it is the most challenging. Women rarely pursue taking their families along because husbands generally cannot leave their jobs for extended periods of time, nor can families usually survive without the husband's additional income for such lengthy periods. Here, academic couples are at an advantage because they may have more flexibility. One such couple spent a year abroad with their children, staying six months in Mexico where the husband conducted research and six months in Germany so the wife could do her research. Others carry out research together in the same country,

or one may do field research while the other uses the year off to write up a project.

Taking the family along is more likely to be a strategy adopted by male professors or graduate students who have stay-at-home wives. Even then, it is access to generous grant funds (possibly even independent wealth) that makes such arrangements possible. One well-known primatologist, for example, brings his wife, three boys, and full-time college student tutor and hires a house staff of four when he works in the Kibale forest in western Uganda. He also has two vehicles at his disposal. "How will I ever bring my family to the field in Africa? It will take an enormous fund-raising effort. I'll probably stick with quick trips," lamented one assistant professor and mother of two young children, who felt the financial limitations to be her biggest constraint on returning to her original dissertation site. Subsequently she has shifted to a U.S.-based project even though, as she put it, "I'm not very competitive in the North American context."

I myself have experimented with a number of different research strategies since our children were born. I had done extensive dissertation fieldwork in Tanzania prior to having children and also once when I was pregnant. Leila was born in 1988, and Max was born in 1997. Since my first child was born I have conducted fieldwork virtually every year. My only respite from fieldwork was the year following the birth of each child. I took our children along with me for the longer research stints without my spouse, who stayed behind to continue in his job as an emergency physician. Leila came to Uganda for much of 1993. Up until 1999 I was an assistant professor. Then after becoming tenured, I took a research leave and lived in Finland for a year with both children. I left the children with my husband in the United States during shorter six-week research trips to Tanzania, Uganda, and Britain. I also did extensive conference and work-related travel in this period that involved extended periods away from home, including travel to Israel, Argentina, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Namibia, Germany, Canada, Denmark, Italy, and other locales.

Support from others

Naturally one of my biggest concerns in planning international research has been to give serious consideration to my husband's wishes because doing this kind of research with children generally requires the cooperation of one's spouse or ex-spouse. In one case, a political science graduate student told me she would not have even contemplated taking their nine-

month-old son to Zimbabwe had it not been that her husband strongly encouraged her to go. This surprised me because I did not think it would be that easy for a spouse who had not been to the country in question to be so amenable. But as she pointed out to me, "Most of us would not have got even this far without that kind of complete support."

My husband, however, was not thrilled about the prospect of my taking our four-year-old daughter, Leila, to Uganda for eight months and understandably so. He had been encouraging and supportive throughout my graduate career and throughout my extended fieldwork stays in Tanzania without him, but taking his child, our child, to Uganda was different. And he was right. We considered other alternatives, including leaving Leila with him, but because my husband's hospital schedule is constantly in flux and frequently involved work at night, it was impossible for him to care for her, even with her in day care. So we agreed that I would take her and he would come to visit for three weeks in the middle of our stay. It was an enormous sacrifice on his part. But he had always been supportive of my career and shared with me the conviction that taking Leila to Uganda would be a wonderful learning experience.

Given the strain such extended separations place on a family and a relationship, it would be foolish not to weigh the trade-offs and consider the pitfalls carefully. The marriage of one colleague ended in divorce after decades of both husband and wife conducting international travel and research. He said they parted because the relationship simply became "too much work." Each marriage is different, with varying levels of independence, flexibility, and freedom. For some women, no amount of negotiating would make any difference. As one anthropologist, a mother of two preteens, put it, "I, for one, have had to decline international invitations to speak, owing to my former husband's refusal to cooperate in just about anything." Her second husband has been much more supportive, but even then she concludes, "having children to care for has definitely crimped my professional accomplishments."

My husband and I stay in close contact daily when I travel either through e-mail, letters, faxes, mailed tape recordings, video recordings, or phone calls. Some might see this as a lot of work, but in some ways it has been a wonderful way to document our children's and our own lives in detail. I have better records of what our children said and did from these periods of being apart than any other part of their lives. It has also been a way for me to keep a daily record of my research, impressions, and the background context to various interviews I conducted in the field. This often proved invaluable later on as I tried to reconstruct a particular event or describe an individual in my writing. But mainly it has been a

way for my husband and me to stay involved in each other's lives regardless of how far apart we might have been. My husband's periodic visits to the country also helped shorten the time apart.

Some of the biggest constraints on academic mothers doing international research are societal and cultural. "Good" mothers are not supposed to wrench their children from their safe family environment and predictable routines and take them to parts unknown for months at a time away from their father. Similarly, the "good" wife does not leave her husband and young children for weeks at a time to travel hither and yon in pursuit of new knowledge. Often family and friends feel free to weigh in on such decisions. My father thought that taking my daughter to Uganda would not be good for my marriage. Similarly, one of my best friends wrote me an impassioned letter pleading with me not to take our children on a research leave to Finland for a year because she felt it would adversely affect my marriage. I appreciated their concern, which was well intentioned, and the issues they raised were certainly worthy of consideration. Some of this kind of advice is well taken, but sometimes it is simply a projection of people's own marriages and relationships, or it is based on worries about what others will think.

The questions and concerns of family and friends are sometimes inconsequential compared to the ambivalence and guilt women lay on themselves about leaving their children for long periods of time or about taking them away from their fathers for research trips. Even after years of travel, I still have the compulsion to cook fifteen meals of lasagna, meatballs, and ratatouille, label, and freeze them (in the past year, I was thrilled to learn of several men who do the same for their wives when they leave town). I print out for my husband extensive appointment/schedule reminders and to-do lists, plant-watering instructions, and itineraries, for which he politely thanks me and promptly files and (I suspect) forgets about the minute I leave. I have never—well, until now—openly admitted to these minor compulsions, but they are part of what makes it possible for me to leave home with slightly less angst in my heart. As the years have gone by, the lists have become shorter. I also worry less about whether my husband is running the house "my" way. Needless to say, he has always managed brilliantly. The house is a little messier, some tasks remain sorely undone, and some treasured plants have dried up, but in the larger scheme of things such matters are of little consequence.

Nevertheless, I have never been ambivalent enough that I would, for example, have remained home and passed up a research opportunity or some other academically related activity abroad that I could have done. However, because of the children I have had to pass up numerous op-

portunities that I otherwise might have taken under circumstances that would not limit most male scholars. I did not travel during the first year after the birth of our children when I was nursing. When I was pregnant I passed up a trip to Niger because the vaccinations I had to take would have been dangerous to the fetus. I have cut research trips shorter than I would have liked and have passed up consultancies abroad that would have been useful to my own research agenda. And while I have designed ambitious projects, they have always been less ambitious than they would have been had I not had children to consider. Although in my case I doubt that these decisions seriously affected my career, for others the constraints are overwhelming and seriously limiting, not for lack of will or ambition. For example, the difficulty of negotiating research trips with a spouse can make it nearly impossible to conduct such research.

Even for those who manage to arrange such research trips, one still has to contend with the fact that generally no one—not one's colleagues, not even one's best friends—is going to be terribly supportive or encouraging, mostly because they do not really understand what such an endeavor entails. They also might have a hard time visualizing the country and conditions under which one will be living and therefore cannot imagine the difficulties one might encounter, let alone with children. Except for three academic mothers in my two departments who did international research (I have a joint appointment in political science and women's studies), I have the impression that most colleagues in my two departments did not have any idea how difficult this was to arrange and pull off. No one asked, and I had little opportunity to explain. It certainly never featured in any way in my annual departmental reviews as an assistant professor even though the life skills it took to arrange something such as this were considerable. Moreover, most of my friends thought I was nuts, and my family was not thrilled with my plans. The moral of the story is that one should not expect any special support from the people around one, even those who love and care about one deeply.

Strategies of parenting while carrying out international research

Academic mothers I have known have employed a variety of different strategies to make their international research possible. Especially with young children, one ends up relying on others to one degree or another. The most common strategy is to make short trips abroad and leave one's children in their father's care or the care of a trusted relative. One political science professor at a Midwestern university I spoke with traveled regularly to Argentina, leaving her toddler behind with his father. She would sched-

ule interviews well in advance so that once she got there, she could work intensively and did not have to spend time tracking people down and making arrangements. This kind of strategy works best for those who already have a familiarity with the country, having done extensive research there during their pre-child days, and are in a position to track down interviewees from abroad. The spread of e-mail has made such arrangements even more doable.

Because of my husband's varying schedule as an emergency physician, even these short trips pose considerable logistical challenges when it comes to child care. I generally had help from a live-in or an au pair in addition to a relative. On different occasions my sister, mother, a sixteen-year-old nephew, a twenty-year-old niece, a dear friend, and a cousin helped out with child care for these extended trips. Without going into the complicated details of each case, I made sure there was some kind of quid pro quo involved, so that even though they were doing us an enormous favor, they also got something out of the arrangement that made it worth their while. Added to this was the cost of paying their travel to and from our home. One of my biggest worries is that at some point I will have exhausted the goodwill of family and friends who help out while I travel, so I put a lot of thought into making sure that the arrangement is not an imposition.

Some scholars, however, are able to take both their husband and children abroad, especially on shorter trips, combining research with a vacation or with the husband's own work in the foreign country. One graduate student took her retired mother along with her to Zimbabwe to help care for her nine-month-old, which gave her instant companionship and child care in trusted hands, plus it offered the mother a little adventure. Others have taken other family members or American baby-sitters with them with the same objective.

In my case, I lived with another family in Uganda. The husband was a graduate student from my own university. His wife did voluntary work but was otherwise occupied with her family. We had our own separate sleeping and bathing quarters, but we shared a kitchen, dining room, and living room. Their children were roughly the same age as Leila, so she had instant playmates whom she loved dearly. The difficulty with this kind of arrangement was in blending two different sets of parenting styles. Although there were considerable adjustments on all sides, the arrangement was basically a good one. It also helped cut down on the expenses of setting up house for a brief time.

Lightening the burdens: Nuts and bolts of survival

Often it can be the most mundane of issues that present the biggest challenges. Child care and schooling are among the most difficult to navigate.

Child care

In Africa and Europe, for example, child care is cheaper and more accessible than in the United States. Here the criteria in selecting a child-care provider are similar to what one might consider in the United States, especially questions of discipline, practices of hygiene, first aid knowledge, and areas of cultural difference.

In parts of the world such as Latin America, where relatives and live-in nannies do much of the child care, it may be more difficult to make child-care arrangements. One professor who carried out research in Argentina discovered that finding quality child care was the biggest challenge of conducting research in that country. There really is little baby-sitting in Argentina, and what is available is more costly than in the United States because it is considered highly skilled work. "Thinking back on it, I wish we had taken a student with us," she said. "Live-in maids or even day maids don't provide, in my experience, the kind of quality care that we are used to in the U.S." The woman they had found was more of a cleaning woman and "didn't really interact with the children at all." She continued: "There are problems with children trusting the child-care providers, especially when they don't speak the same language as the children and have no previous relationship with them. We also tried a day care, which we ended up using. This was fine for A., who was under one, but not so good for Z., who was three, because it was all in another language and a very different structure—much more regimented and authoritarian than we were accustomed to."

What often was harder for me to arrange as a single parent in Uganda was the occasional evening baby-sitter or short trips out of town because my networks and contacts were more limited than in the United States. In Uganda, I would try to do longer trips in one day, rising early and returning late. In other instances, I took my daughter with me for longer trips to the rural areas and hired a baby-sitter to travel with us for the duration.

Education

Educating one's children while in the field poses a wide range of dilemmas. This is generally very difficult for women working in rural areas of de-

veloping countries. My mother, an academic, rented a house in an urban area so my sisters and I could attend an English-speaking primary school while she worked in the countryside, where she maintained another house.

Where to send one's children to school is yet another problem. Local schools are one option, but the language spoken, standards, and curricula might not be suitable, depending on the locale. English-speaking international schools commonly found throughout the world are expensive and may promote an expatriate culture that many academics often find conflicting with their own values. Some choose to leave their teenagers in the United States with close relatives in order to continue their schooling. Others homeschool or enroll their children in correspondence schools, which is how I myself completed my secondary education. The latter two options require a lot of motivation on the part of the student.

Some academic families have resorted to boarding schools because they found that their teenagers needed to be in a more structured environment. Several American parents of teenagers in Egypt were shocked to find that many expatriate teenagers in Cairo felt the local rules did not apply to them and that they could go to any bar or disco or speed as much as they liked.

Providing continuities and easing the transition

Another survival mechanism includes finding ways to ease the transition to the research site. To make the adjustment to life in Uganda smoother for my daughter, I brought along photographs from home, her teddy bear, a favorite blanket, some familiar toys, her pillowcase, and some favorite foods. I also brought a few things to make birthdays and other festivities feel a bit more like home. In Uganda I was able to place my daughter in a Montessori school similar to the one she attended in the United States. These small efforts to keep a few constants in her life went a long way to helping her adjust.

It is worth giving some thought to the initial transition in particular. Some have eased the transition from home to the field by staying in a comfortable hotel for the first couple of nights so that everyone is rested up and in good spirits before dealing with some of the bigger adjustments (Dreher 1998, 170).

Another strategy for smoothing transitions is for the researcher to make a preliminary visit to the research site. The fact that I visited Uganda alone during the summer of 1992 for six weeks to make preparations for my arrival half a year later with my daughter made an enormous difference from many points of view. During those six weeks of initial fieldwork, I

bought a secondhand car, got us a place to live, and enrolled my daughter in a school.

The transition back home can be difficult and worth thinking through. One academic mother of two teenage children said they had a hard time adjusting when they returned to the United States from Uganda because it seemed that no one understood their experiences.

Challenges encountered

Some superb studies by anthropologists have reflected in a descriptive and personal manner on how children affect fieldwork and on the impact of fieldwork experiences on children. They have shown the benefits of having children in the field in terms of helping researchers become integrated into a community, making them appear more human, vulnerable, and approachable (Cassell 1987a; Flinn, Marshall, and Armstrong 1998). Having Leila with me in Uganda also helped me establish relationships with the parents of her playmates. It helped me forge relationships with various Ugandan colleagues at my research institute. Although no doubt I would have made friends without children, I felt a shared bond as several Ugandan female scholars became a tremendous source of friendship and assistance. My Ugandan friends doted on Leila and had lots of fun with her. When we left, three of them got together and made her a beautiful *busuti* (traditional Baganda dress). In much of Africa, mothers are generally accorded more status and respect than in the United States. Having previously done research before I had children in Tanzania, I was acutely aware that I was treated differently and taken more seriously when I had a child with me. It provided me with a new dimension of credibility that would have been much harder to attain without a child.

However, in spite of such benefits to conducting research with children, I have found the whole experience of living abroad more trying than my children have. Many of the difficulties I encountered would be familiar to single mothers; however, the problems were compounded by living in foreign surroundings where one's normal resources were not generally available, such as reliable mechanics, baby-sitters, familiar neighbors, and so forth. In Uganda, there were also dangers and problems with which I was not accustomed: extremely poor roads, banditry on roads at night, reckless drivers with hazardous cars, and guards shooting into the air at night to scare away thieves. Many of the risks could be minimized, but not all of them all of the time.

I also had to be available always for the children, regardless of my own

stresses, fatigue, and dilemmas. There was no one else to fall back on. Of course I usually muddled through somehow, but sometimes the storms were not so easily weathered. While I was in Uganda, within a period of a month, the director and two colleagues from my research institute, one of whom was a Canadian researcher, were murdered under suspicious and possibly related circumstances. My colleagues and I were extremely fearful and stressed at the time. The hardest thing was not knowing if the rest of us were also in danger because we did not know the reason for the killings. It finally became unbearable, and I had to cut my research stay short by a month because I could not live with that level of anxiety any longer. In the meantime, I did not want to let on to my daughter how afraid I really was. Living with her abroad under such circumstances was one of the hardest things I have ever done in my life.

People around us had enormous life problems that were impossible to ignore, and these problems added to the daily stresses of life that would be less common in the States: Our cook who was living with us self-aborted her six-month fetus using traditional medicines and required medical attention. A man living on our compound was unstable mentally and threatened the cook's life. Several friends died of AIDS. The sister of one of Leila's baby-sitters had been sold into domestic slavery in Kampala by her widowed father. The woman she worked for beat and overworked her. So this eight-year-old girl had boarded a bus without money or shoes and returned home (a six-hour trip) to her father in Kabale, but he could not afford to support her. I could go on with the stories. While these were not my tragedies, I could not live without sharing some of the burdens of those whose paths in life crossed mine.

I also found it difficult to do interviews at the spur of the moment because of child-care considerations and the fact that we did not have a phone. In Uganda, I often had to interview someone when I ran into them because of the difficulty of tracking people down. In other words, not having a partner along meant that I could not be flexible in my interview scheduling, nor could I generally do many interviews on weekends. The few times I took my daughter along to an interview it proved disastrous, at least from my point of view. But here the experiences are vastly different depending on the age of the child and one's own comfort level. Some anthropologists have told me that having an infant or toddler along while doing interviews with rural villagers who had their own children roaming around was an enormous asset. But I found my four-year-old was not always a happy camper when dragged into what no doubt seemed like an endless Sunday afternoon interview. I still recoil when I remember how my otherwise well-behaved daughter started sliding down

my back, having grown tired and restless, as I tried to interview a sophisticated Ugandan administrator about how she influenced a faculty senate debate to admit more women to the university. I do not think she was especially bothered by my daughter's antics, but I know I was not very relaxed and was anxious to bring the interview to a close rather quickly.

Another difficulty was the toll my own research took on my husband. He never complained or made me feel guilty about my decisions to take the children on these research trips. He was supportive in every way he knew how. In the end, however, there was no getting around the fact that he was unhappy about our temporary separations. But as he in his sweet and diplomatic way put it, "Had I been happy about us being apart, that would have been an even bigger problem!"

Finding time for both research and children is complicated in the field. Because I was the only adult in our children's lives when I was with them away from home, I had the chance to spend more time with them. I also had fewer distractions and demands on my time than I might have had in the United States. In Uganda, I took my daughter to the pool every evening. In Finland, I took the children to my parents' home by a lake in the beautiful Finnish forest every weekend. In the United States, I rarely have had this kind of time to spend with our children, and it is something all of us treasured greatly. One woman whose husband accompanied her to Cairo for a year of field research made a similar observation: "Life abroad can also be in some ways easier. . . . You don't have to go to every family event that occurs at home, or travel to see lots of friends, etc. It can be lonely, but my husband and I actually found that we spent far more time with our kids than we do in the states between committee meetings, talks, receptions, family events, and grocery shopping."

But there is another side to this issue of time for women doing fieldwork alone with children. Fieldwork is an all-consuming experience, and the work never really ends and requires a certain amount of total immersion in another society. Care of children requires the same kind of intense commitment. Carrying out research while attending to their needs, even for those employing domestic help, is not always as easy as it might seem. As Melanie Dreher, an anthropologist in rural Jamaica who took her three young children along with her, explained, "I tried to combine the two roles by including the children in various village events, such as cricket games, festivals, concerts. Nevertheless, it was difficult, at best, to record events and simultaneously supervise their behavior, answer their questions, explain what was going on, reject their requests for more ice cream, ensure

their safety, and so on." When she returned to Jamaica the following summer without the children, she collected more data in six weeks than she had in two and a half months with them (Dreher 1998, 169).

Some concluding thoughts

These days most people can choose to have children voluntarily, and one most certainly chooses to do international research voluntarily. So are these research dilemmas of our own making? Yes and no. We could advise all academic women who do international research not to have children, or we could advise academic women not to pursue international research and opt for an academic "mommy track." Not only are these unrealistic suggestions, but they do not move us toward a more just and egalitarian society.

This means that funding agencies, tenure review committees, dissertation committees, grant proposal reviewers, and individuals administering fellowship programs would do well to consider some of the particular hardships women with children face if women are going to contribute equally to our understanding of the world. The challenges are often formidable and sometimes insurmountable. Most professional careers are harder for women with children. As men take on more child-care responsibilities, they will face many of the same difficulties and problematic choices. Child care is inadequate; fathers in the United States cannot generally take parental leaves; mothers usually do not have paid maternity leaves; and maternity leaves are far too short for what is in the best interests of the mother and child. Moreover, employers are not sympathetic to employees taking time off to be with sick children. On top of all these limitations, academic norms and expectations, especially for graduate students and junior faculty, are not compatible with active parenting, let alone doing international research at the same time. Moreover, the incompatibility is worsening given the increased competitiveness of academia. So part of the change needs to come from within academia and from funding agencies. The other part of the battle still has to be waged on the domestic front, where women need to learn to become better at negotiating with their partners, and where greater equality in decision making and sacrifice needs to be encouraged.

Department of Political Science and Women's Studies Program
University of Wisconsin—Madison

References

Blumenthal, Sidney. 1991. "In Defense of Nancy: The Mommy Track." *New Republic* 204(19):19–21.

Cassell, Joan, ed. 1987a. *Children in the Field: Anthropological Experiences.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

———. 1987b. "Conclusion." In Cassell 1987a, 257–70.

Dreher, Melanie. 1998. "Three Children in Rural Jamaica." In Flinn, Marshall, and Armstrong 1998, 149–71.

Flinn, Juliana. 1998. "The Family Dimension in Anthropological Fieldwork." In Flinn, Marshall, and Armstrong 1998, 1–21.

Flinn, Juliana, Leslie Marshall, and Jocelyn Armstrong, eds. 1998. *Fieldwork and Families: Constructing New Models for Ethnographic Research.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Schwartz, Felice, 1989. "Management Women and the New Facts of Life." *Harvard Business Review*, January–February, 65–76.