

Are Business Trips a Unique Kind of Respite?

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### ABSTRACT

In this chapter we discuss the impact of business trips on travelers and their families from the perspective of respite, thus embedding business trips in stress theories. We begin by reviewing the literature on respite and recovery. Focusing on the role of travelers' resources, we relate the phenomenon of business trips to COR and JD-R theories. We then discuss the negative and positive characteristics and outcomes of business trips. We offer evidence from interviews with business travelers regarding the special characteristics and consequences of business trips. We summarize by addressing the question of whether business trips are a special kind of respite.

In this chapter we define business trips as short-term international travel performed as part of one's job. Such trips have become common in the global economy, due in no small part to the economic benefits to the employing organization: which include establishing new contacts, obtaining new contracts, retaining existing customers, and participating in conferences and exhibitions. Gustafson (2006) states that business trips occur in a wide range of jobs (e.g. managers, consultants, IT specialists, financiers and government people), and are conducted for very different reasons (coordination, consultation, negotiation, and personal relations). Some researchers believe that in addition to their financial costs, business trips incur potential human costs such as deterioration in the well-being and performance of frequently traveling employees. Despite their prevalence, there is currently very little research on business trips and their impact on travelers, their families, and their organization. Most researchers of business trips regard such trips as a source of stress to travelers (e.g., DeFrank et al., 2000; Dimberg et al., 2002) and their families (Espino et al., 2002; Dimberg et al., 2002), although several studies have also demonstrated positive effects of business trips (Westman & Etzion, 2002; Westman et al., in press). It seems that business trips are a dual experience, consisting of demands and resources, losses and gains, all impacting upon the well-being of travelers and their families.

In the present chapter we examine the negative and positive effects of business trips on travelers' personal lives, family life, and work performance, based on stress theories. Westman (2004) embedded business trip research in Hobfoll's (1989) conservation of resources theory (COR). In this chapter, we go one step further to embed business trip research in the job demands-resource (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), and discuss the question of whether business trips are a special kind of respite.

## RESPITE AND RECOVERY: DEFINITIONS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The term respite has become central in addressing the issues of how employees in organizations recover from occupational stress and burnout. Following Kahn et al., (1964), most scholars define job stress in terms of role demands originating in the work environment. The stress aroused by stressors such as conflict, overload, and responsibility is hypothesized to cause strain. Strains are reactions or outcomes resulting from the experience of stressors (Jex & Beehr, 1991). Thus in the current chapter we relate to stressors as job and environment characteristics that potentially cause stress, which leads to strains such as anxiety and burnout.

According to COR (Hobfoll, 1989) theory, psychological stress occurs when individual resources are depleted or threatened, or when individuals fail to gain resources following resource investment. Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) definition of stress emphasizes appraisal: "Psychological stress is a relationship between a person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being" (p. 21). Burnout is perceived by most researchers as a psychological strain resulting from continuous daily stress. According to Westman and Eden (1997), "a respite from work may be a day off, a weekend, a vacation, or some other form of absence from the work setting when the everyday regular pressures of the job are absent" (p. 516). Thus, by respite we mean time off from work, such as an annual vacation, holiday leave, or even a stint of military reserve duty or a business trip. Occupational experts maintain that time off work helps employees recover from stress, replenish depleting energy, and contain burnout development (e.g., Cunningham, 1997, p. 245). Because one of the main factors impacting burnout is believed to be continuous exposure to daily stress, many burnout experts too subscribe to COR theory and see an occasional "time-out" from

work as a means of “recharging one’s batteries” and renewing one’s strength (Chernis, 1981; Freudenberger, 1974; Maslach, 1976; Pines et al., 1981).

Another line of research that has merged into the respite literature is recovery from strain and restoration of physical and psychological resources. The basic contention of recovery scholars is that our personal resources weaken or diminish in the effort of meeting the demands of everyday life. According to Sonnentag (2003), recovery experiences during off-job periods help reduce symptoms of stress and strain. Being in a recovered state helps individuals to actively approach work tasks without having to mobilize extra efforts that may deplete energy resources. COR theory assumes that resource levels are restored (i.e., recovery occurs) by refraining from activities that are similar to the activities that originally caused the strain. Moreover, COR theory assumes that additional resources can be gained by investing free time in personal development and positive experiences.

If we do not periodically restore our resources, we run the risk of negative consequences to our well-being and our work performance. Recovery research focuses on the physical conditions of recovery, distinguishing between activity and rest, and detects fluctuations between activity and rest, based on daily diary reports (see: Fritz & Sonnentag, 2006; Hartig, 2004; Sonnentag, 2001; Strauss-Blasche et al., 2000, 2003).

Work, non-work and their relations with well-being have been of central theoretical and empirical interests in the last several decades, and research has continuously developed and branched into related issues. Research on respite, which is usually conceptualized as any form of absence from the work setting when job stressors are presumably absent or dimmed (Westman & Etzion, 2002) may be considered such a branch, which has focused on the manifold effects of respite from work on well-being.

Initial studies of respite effect focused on job stress (mainly physiological) symptoms and considered time off work as a "control occasion" to be compared with time on the job (Eden, 2001). In the past decade, respite research has extended through the integration of physiological, psychological and behavioral aspects.

Among the physiological strains alleviated by respite are cardiovascular and neuro-endocrine malfunctions, physical pains and complaints, sleep disturbances and other symptoms (see Frankenhauser et al., 1989; Strauss-Blasche et al., 2004). Gump and Matthews (2000) found that even mortality rates are influenced by respites. They followed mortality rates of 12,338 middle-aged men at high risk for coronary heart disease (CHD), over a 9-year period. Vacation frequency was reported in the first five years of the study. Results showed that the frequency of annual vacations was associated with a reduced risk of all-cause mortality and, more specifically, mortality attributed to CHD.

The psychological strains alleviated by respite include depression, anxiety, dissatisfaction, ill mood, and burnout. Burnout, or more specifically its exhaustion component, has been the most common indicator of job stress included as a dependent variable in most before-after respite studies (Etzion & Boklis, 2006).

As for methodology, respite research has been conducted through longitudinal, repeated measures designs, enabling job characteristics to be intermittently present and absent, with and without control groups. Measurement occasions have commonly ranged from two (before and after respite) to five, including measurements during the respite period itself.

Length of respites has ranged from a few days to months, relating to different respite types, such as a day off work, a weekend, a lengthy holiday, or annual summer vacation, which may be organization-wide or personal/voluntary, to one-year sabbaticals. Fritz and Sonnentag

(2005), for example, investigated weekend experiences of 87 emergency service workers. They focused on three different weekend experiences that have an impact on health and job performance. They examined both negative experiences that draw on the individual's resources and more positive experiences that help individuals regain and build up lost resources. Their results indicated that non-work hassles, absence of positive work reflection, and low social activity during the weekend predicted different aspects of job performance after the weekend.

In an example of a study concerning a lengthy respite, Davidson et al. (under review) conducted a rigorous quasi-experiment testing the ameliorative effects of the relief from job stress afforded by a sabbatical leave. They gathered data from 258 faculty members; 129 *sabbatees* and 129 matched-controls who experienced no leave during that year. They found that sabbatees' stress and resource loss declined, and resource gain and well-being rose during the sabbatical. The comparison group showed no such change. Upon return to routine work, most of the beneficial effects of the sabbatical vanished. Moderation analysis revealed that respite self-efficacy, perceived control, psychological detachment from work, and respite quality moderated the impact of stress relief on well-being. Those who reported higher self-efficacy and experienced greater control, were more detached, and had a more positive sabbatical experience and enjoyed more enhanced well-being than others. However, sabbatical length (six or twelve months) did not moderate respite effects.

One of the studies have focused on cross-cultural differences in respite effects, and demonstrated different cultural attitudes and values regarding work and non-work experiences (Etzion & Dar, 2004). Respite studies have also included absence from work due to military reserve service, business travel, maternity leave and similar absences from work.

The consistency of empirical findings indicating the ameliorative effect of various forms of respite has raised the need for further comprehension of the nature of respite pursuits that enable psychological and physiological recovery. Hence, daily activities on and off work and their contribution to daily recovery and periodical alleviation of stress have also become important issues for the study of the respite effect. Consequently, findings from leisure research have been integrated into recovery and respite research, highlighting types of activities during time off and their effects on well-being, based on data on daily activities collected via daily diaries and physiological follow-ups (e.g., Repetti, 1993; Sonnentag, 2001, 2003).

Samples in respite research represent a large diversity that encompasses almost every pursuit, job status, and profession, including low-tech and high-tech workers in various organizational positions, medical staff, teachers, soldiers, flight attendants, and others. Research has even expanded to respite effects on the crossover of stress and strains between life partners before and after a respite (Etzion & Westman, 2001). Moderating effects such as vacation satisfaction, length of respite period, quality of experience, content and activities, personal characteristics, and personality traits have likewise been examined (e.g., Etzion et al, 1998; Etzion, 2003; Strauss-Blasche et al., 2005).

In the vast majority of respite studies, results indicated a decline in both stress and strains (physiological and psychological) off the job and, in most cases, on the post-respite occasion. On further post-respite occasions, a return to pre-respite levels of stress and strains was demonstrated. When burnout was examined, the fade out process was similar to the fade-out of stress, however, in some cases burnout showed a slower fade-out effect than stress (Etzion, 2003).



Rubinstein (1980) suggested that most workers feel that a vacation has positive results, such as tension release, personal growth and satisfaction, and indeed many studies have demonstrated that respite yields positive results for the individual (see review by Eden, 2001 and a meta-analysis by Etzion & Boklis, 2006). Lounsbury and Hoopes (1986) were the first to study the effect of vacation in a longitudinal before-after design. They measured the effect of vacation on six work and non-work characteristics among 128 workers of 24 industrial organizations. They found that satisfaction from vacation impacts subsequent satisfaction from life and work. Caplan and Jones (1975) studied 73 male computer system users (graduates, undergraduates and faculty) at the University of Michigan during a planned computer shut-down. The study was longitudinal, with two measurements: three days preceding the scheduled 23-day system shutdown, and five months later. Positive associations were found between role ambiguity and anxiety, between depression and resentment, between subjective work load and anxiety, and between anxiety and heart rate. A decline in subjective work load and in all the strain measures was demonstrated on the second occasion compared to the first.

Eden (1990) replicated the 1975 study by Caplan and Jones by studying a scheduled computer shutdown that created a forced vacation event. He studied 29 computer employees and users at the Tel Aviv University's computer center and found that during the period of the computer shutdown, stress among employees decreased, but measures of strain (e.g., anxiety) remained unchanged from the normal course of work (which was indicative of a state of chronic stress). Eden attributed the results to expectations of a heavy workload awaiting employees upon return from the forced vacation.

Westman and Eden (1997), who performed five measurements of perceived job stress and burnout around a forced organizational vacation, found that employees' levels of stress and

burnout decreased during the vacation and gradually rose again upon their return to work. Within three weeks, job stress and burnout returned to their pre-vacation levels. Their findings showed that female employees and employees who were satisfied with the vacation benefited more from vacation: The decline in job stress and burnout during vacation was greater for female than for male employees, and for employees who were satisfied with the vacation than for those who were less satisfied.

Westman and Etzion (2001) examined the impact of vacation on psychological (burnout) and behavioral (absenteeism) strains among blue-collar employees in an industrial enterprise. Findings showed that vacation reduced both burnout and absenteeism rates reported by the organization. Etzion (2003) compared job stress and burnout among employees at work and their colleagues who went on individually arranged vacations. The results showed a drop in the stress and burnout of the target group immediately after the vacation in comparison to pre-vacation levels; one month later, the measure of stress had risen to the pre-vacation level, but the measure of burnout was still low. In the comparison group, no changes in the levels of either stress or burnout were detected. Etzion suggested that burnout may build up gradually as a result of daily stress. Stress, however, is experienced immediately after the return to work, and sometimes the stress reaction upon return may be even more intense than in the pre-vacation measurement as a result of an accumulated backload.

Etzion and Boklis (2006) conducted a series of meta-analyses on over 30 respite studies (published, unpublished or in process) that were designed to capture the respite effect using a longitudinal, repeated measures procedure. The studies included in the meta-analyses typically consist of a pre-respite measurement, a post-respite measurement and a third measurement approximately one month after the return to work. The results of the meta-analyses show a drop

in the stress and burnout measures of the target groups immediately after the vacation (respite effect). One month later, the measures of stress and burnout rise, usually to the pre-vacation levels (fade-out effect).

### Special Kinds of Respite

In an extensive, long-term research project on burnout in Israel (Etzion, 1984; Etzion et al., 1982; Etzion & Pines, 1986), men in managerial and technical professions declared that their annual military reserve duty helped them in contain burnout process. Unlike vacation time, military reserve duty is compulsory; activities during reserve duty are generally also very different from typical vacation activities. However, if military reserve duty is viewed in terms of respite, that is, the experience of detachment from the daily routine, we find that its effect on burnout is similar to the effect of vacation time.

In a large public sector industrial enterprise, Etzion et al. (1998) found a drop in the experience of stress and burnout among men who served in the military reserves during the course of the study, in comparison to a matched group whose members carried on in their normal routines during this time. Stress and burnout were measured by means of self-report questionnaires that were administered to each “pair” of matched participants at two points in time: before the target group member left for military reserve duty, and upon his return to work. The researchers also found that the more the reserve service was perceived as a positive experience, the greater the drop in stress and burnout levels upon return to work. Furthermore, the greater the level of detachment from the routine of civilian life reported – the greater the fall in reported stress and burnout levels upon return to work. They found that military reserve service had positive effects on the individual, upon returning to the normal work routine. These

positive effects seem to emanate mainly from the legitimacy accorded to the work absence because of military reserve duty, and from the actual detachment from the routine of civilian life.

Similarly, business trips can also be considered a special case of respite, as they share several features with military reserve duty. Like the reservists, business travelers are physically removed from their regular work demands; they experience a kind of (at least physical) detachment from their work and their family tasks; and, their absence from the work site is legitimate in the eyes of colleagues, managers and family members, since they are performing a task that is deemed necessary by the organization and designed for the benefit of all parties concerned.

In a series of studies, Westman and Etzion (2002, 2005) examined the impact of overseas business trips on job stress and burnout. In fact, Westman and Etzion's (2002) study was the first ever attempt conceptualize and analyze business trips as a special case of respite. They investigated the impact of overseas business trips on job stress and burnout among 57 employees of Israeli high-tech firms whose jobs include overseas travel. Participants completed questionnaires on three occasions, ten days prior to travel abroad (pre-trip), once during their stay abroad (trip), and one week after returning to their regular workplace (post-trip). As in the reserve duty study, here too a respite effect was hypothesized and confirmed. Results indeed showed a decline in job stress and burnout on the post-trip occasion compared to the pre-trip occasion.

Westman and Etzion (2002) detected a significant decline in job stress immediately after the trip; job stress was lower after returning to the permanent work site than it was either before or during the trip. Similarly, post-trip burnout levels were lower than pre-trip burnout levels. Burnout also tended to be lower upon returning from the trip compared to during the stay abroad,

but this difference was not significant. Both the anticipation of the overseas journey and the work abroad itself may have been stressful for these employees. Only later, after they returned to their routine jobs did the level of burnout decrease. Their conclusion was that the decrease in job stress and burnout might be evidence of a delayed respite effect (Westman & Etzion, 2002). Though these travelers experienced a heavy workload and ambiguity during the trip, they also enjoyed the physical detachment from their office and their families. Furthermore, the overseas travel afforded them opportunities for new experiences and as well as an opportunity to gain a sense of personal accomplishment. This is in accord with Leider's (1991) observation that immediately after departure the travelers may find their morale elevated because of the change of scenery and their high expectations from the trip. The findings of Leider's research and other studies that followed demonstrated that business trips have outcomes similar to those of other kinds of respite.

Another support to our contention that business trips are a kind of respite comes from a qualitative study with business travelers (Westman & Etzion, 2004). When asked if they perceived the business trip as a respite, 31% of the respondents reported that they perceived the business trip as a kind of respite. Elaborating on their responses, 41% attributed this perception to the change of atmosphere, 27% attributed it to the break in routine; 14% said the trip added variety to their job, 9% commented on the opportunity to meet new people, and the final 9% reported their relief of not having to deal with day-to-day matters. Of those who did not perceive the trip as a respite, 30% said it was part of their day-to-day job, 33% said it was very intensive, 17% said it caused a backload of work at the office, 13% said it was a change of atmosphere but not a respite, and 7% said they were hooked to their laptops all the time. Altogether, this study demonstrated that approximately one third of the business travelers perceived business trips as a

kind of respite and provided reasons for their answer. Based on the above review, we elaborate on the business trip, focusing on relevant theories, on travel characteristics, negative and positive outcomes, and theoretical and practical implications.

#### EMBEDDING BUSINESS TRIPS IN THE JD-R MODEL AND COR THEORY

Very few researchers have examined business trips from a theoretical perspective. Ivancevich et al. (2003) examined business trips with reference to person–environment (P–E) fit theory, whereas Westman (2004) based her study on COR theory. In the current chapter we added the JD-R perspective in an attempt to integrate both COR and JD-R theories in analyzing the business trip phenomenon. We believe that these models offer the theoretical framework that is lacking in the business trip literature.

The JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001) is a heuristic model that specifies how two specific sets of working conditions (job demands and job resources) contribute to employees' well-being. The basic assumption of the JD-R model (Bakker et al., 2003; Demerouti et al., 2001) is that it can be applied to various occupational settings, including business trips, irrespective of their particular demands and resources. According to the JD-R model, job demands are stressors that may evoke strain if they exceed the employee's adaptive capability. Job resources are those physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that (a) reduce job demands and their associated physiological and psychological costs, (b) are functional in achieving work goals, or (c) stimulate personal growth, learning, and development (Demerouti et al., 2001).

COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001) offers an integrative stress model that considers both environmental and internal processes. As a stress and motivational theory, COR outlines how individuals are likely to be impacted by stressful circumstances, what those stressful

circumstances are, and how individuals act in order to accumulate and protect their resources. As we show in the following pages, both theories contribute to the understanding of the business trip phenomenon.

### The Role of Resources

In this chapter, we attempt to enrich the theoretical basis of business trip research by embedding it in both Demerouti's JD-R model and Hobfoll's COR theory. Both theories emphasize the importance of resources. At the same time, psychological research has increasingly turned to an examination of the impact of people's resources on their stress resistance and well-being. It is therefore interesting to compare the role of resources in each of these theories in order to better understand business trip issues. According to COR theory (Hobfoll, 2001), people seek to obtain, retain, and protect resources which they value (e.g., material, social, personal, or energetic resources). Resources are those entities that either are centrally valued in their own right (e.g., self-esteem, close attachments, health, and inner peace) or function as a means to obtain centrally valued ends (e.g., money, social support, and credit). Accordingly, stress occurs when individuals (a) lose resources, (b) fail to gain resources following an investment of resources, or (c) are threatened with resource loss. Resource gain can prevent, offset, or forestall resource loss, as the resources accrued can be invested in making further gains and accumulating resource surpluses. Accordingly, a gain cycle generates its own positive energy to promote well-being. In addition, Hobfoll (2001) has argued that resource gain in itself has only a modest effect, but acquires its saliency in the context of resource loss. This implies that job resources gain their motivational potential particularly when employees are confronted with high job demands (and thus face potential resource depletion).

In the same vein, one of the propositions of the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) is that job resources influence motivation or work engagement especially when job demands are high. According to the JD-R model, job resources may buffer the impact of job demands on strain. Typically, the buffering hypothesis explains interactions between job demands and job resources by proposing that the relationship between job demands and strain is weaker for those enjoying a high degree of job resources. This buffering assumption supports predictions regarding the level of the strain or motivation as a function of levels of demands and resources (see Table 1).

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Focusing on resources, business trips may cause resource loss for the traveler starting at the pre-trip phase, due to related trip planning and job demands; through the trip phase, due to physical and psychological demands; and in the post-trip phase, which may be characterized by overload (Westman 2004). Business trips however can help the traveler gain new resources. As Hobfoll and Shirom (2000) suggested, a relaxation period between stress episodes allows for resource gain, and the time away from the work site, even on a business trip, can be regarded as such a period. By leaving the regular working site and distancing themselves from the daily demands, travelers may not only stop the loss of resources resulting from job and family demands but may also gain resources. Following COR theory principles, business trips can interrupt loss spirals and create gain spirals.

Based on these assumptions we offer several predictions for business trips characterized by different levels of demands and resources. Business trips characterized by high demands and



low resources result in a high level of strain and a low level of motivation; low demands and high resources result in a low level of strain and a high level of motivation; low demands and low resources result in a low strain level and an moderate level of motivation; high levels of resources and high demands result in an moderate level of strain and a high level of motivation.

Based on the JD-R model, managers can improve employees' adjustment to business trips. Enriching travelers' resources before and during demanding trips will help reduce stress and burnout, and increase motivation and engagement. Understanding the results of the various combinations of demands and resources can help organizations plan business trip in such a way that they become a special type of respite that generates important benefits for travelers' well-being.

In the following section we elaborate on specific resources such as perceived control, cultural intelligence, multi-cultural experiences, self-efficacy and trip self-efficacy, which may be specifically relevant to business trip research.

### Perceived Control

Perceived control is the extent to which individuals believes that they can directly affect their work environment (Spector, 1986). There is evidence that individuals' subjective perception of the extent to which they can control events within their environment plays a more important role in influencing responses than the objective reality of the situation (Averill, 1973; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Perceived control has been extensively explored in situations that impose on individuals the need to cope with aversive stimuli, psychological threats or stress (Karasek, 1979; Kushnir & Melamed, 1991; Spector, 1986). The research literature has consistently demonstrated positive effects of perceived control for most people when facing a threatening situation (Averill, 1973; Karasek, 1979; Thompson, 1981; Skinner, 1996). Karasek

(1979) argued that the interaction between high job demands and low perceived job control (or job decision latitude) leads to job-related strain. These findings suggest that perceived control is an important resource for business travelers. Based on several samples, Westman and Etzion (2004) found a negative relationship between the degree of perceived control over trip schedules (i.e. amount of advance notice) and perceived stress. Furthermore, control over the business trip schedule was related to positive work characteristics.

### Cultural Intelligence

Cultural intelligence (CQ) is defined as “a person’s capability for successful adaptation to new cultural settings” (Earley & Ang, 2003, p. 59). CQ is conceptualized as a complex, multi-factor individual attribute composed of cognitive, meta-cognitive, motivational, and behavioral components. According to Ang et al. (2007), the cognitive factor refers to an individual's level of cultural knowledge or knowledge of the cultural environment. The meta-cognitive factor refers to an individual’s mental processes that are used to acquire and understand cultural knowledge and encompass the individual’s cultural consciousness and awareness during cross-cultural interactions. The motivational factor refers to an individual’s interest and drive to learn and adapt to new cultural surroundings. Finally, the behavioral factor refers to the extent to which an individual acts appropriately (verbally and nonverbally), is flexible and adjusts his or her behaviors to the specifics of each cultural interaction

Studying business travelers from Brazil, Israel, and Singapore, Tay et al. (2008) demonstrated that meta-cognitive, motivational and behavioral CQ decreased travelers' burnout. This finding is consistent with COR theory, which views personal attributes such as CQ as resources (Hobfoll & Shirom, 2000). In the case of business travelers, CQ is likely to reduce or prevent burnout altogether. Business travelers who have greater cognitive and meta-cognitive

CQ, i.e., are better informed and more aware and conscious of the cultural environment in different travel destinations, and thus are expected to be in a better position to cognitively plan and manage the stress that arises from interacting in the different cultural contexts during a business trip.

In the same way, business travelers who feel more efficacious, have greater motivation and drive to interact and work with others in different cultures (i.e., high motivational CQ), possess more psychological resources to address emotional demands and the stress of adjusting to different cultures. Motivation serves as an energy resource and is valued for its ability to add to the acquisition of other kinds of resources (Hobfoll, 1998). Therefore, business travelers who are high in motivational CQ can be expected to have greater drive and desire to develop personal and work resources to facilitate their intercultural business tasks and interactions that help ease travel stress. Similarly, travelers with higher behavioral CQ, i.e., those who can display a wide repertoire of verbal and non-verbal behaviors, possess more personal resources to prevent threatened loss of other resources needed to address issues that arise due to different cultural interactions.

One of the facilitators of CQ is *need for control*. Need for control is defined as the individual's desire and intent to exert influence over the situations in which he/she operates (see Burger, 1995). Need for control is conceptualized as an individual disposition and is a basic universal need (Gebhardt & Brosschot, 2002). DeCharms (1968) suggested that people need to feel a sense of mastery and personal competence in their environments. Indeed, Sutton and Kahn (1986) noted that the importance of control in organizational settings is "a persistent theme in the behavioral sciences" (p. 276). Thus, in the case of business travelers, the more intense their

desire to control, the greater their desire to take action to understand the environment of the destination – which develops the individual's CQ.

An individual's need for control suggests a desire to minimize uncertainties, plan for contingences, and influence the outcomes or situations in which one finds himself or herself. Moreover, a high need for control tends to increase an individual's responsiveness or attentiveness to available resources, including their prior travel experiences, to their advantage.

Travelers with a high need for control are likely to read more about the destination, engage in serious planning of business trips, and be more motivated to learn about the people with whom they will interact during the trip and about their cultures. Such travelers are likely to have larger stores of cultural information (cognitive CQ), be more mindful of cultures in different travel destinations (meta-cognitive CQ), and more confident in and interested to learn about effective interactions in different destinations (motivational CQ). Travelers with greater need for control may monitor, adjust, and align their verbal and non-verbal behaviors to the cultural expectations of their business partners when visiting them. To minimize unexpected outcomes that may arise from inappropriate behaviors, travelers with a high need for control are more likely to develop broad and enhanced behavioral repertoires to match different cultural situations.

Indeed, Tay et al. (2008) found that need for control was positively associated with all four CQ dimensions (cognitive, meta-cognitive, motivational and behavioral). This indicates that individuals who have a greater need to control their environment seek more cultural information, plan more extensively, are more motivated to learn and interact, and more extensively develop communication repertoires for socializing and networking with people in new cultural settings.

The expectation that travelers with a high need for control will be more proactive in anticipation of upcoming business trips is consistent with finding that managers with a high need for control used proactive coping before their business trips. Interviews of 36 managers from several high-tech companies showed that managers characterized by a high need for control used proactive coping strategies before their business trips; they assigned specific people to report to them about what was going on at the head office, assigned people to constantly keep in touch with them, and used several communications devices while away. These managers showed a higher tendency to plan the business trip with respect to delegation of tasks and authority to subordinates than managers with a low need for control. Managers with a high need for control also tended to maintain closer communications with the organization and with their subordinates than managers with a low need for control (see Westman & Etzion, 2004)

### Multicultural Experiences

Multicultural experiences (MCE) represent business travelers' cultural exposure during their business trips. Thus, MCE can be measured by frequency of trips, number of different destinations, or length and intensity of exposure to different cultures. Thus MCE is a similar resource to tenure and experience and at the same time helps building other resources. MCE provide the opportunities for business travelers to increase their knowledge of specific cultural environments (i.e., their cognitive CQ). For example, a large number of trips abroad to different destinations expand travelers' knowledge about different business and social cultural norms. Travelers with greater MCE have a larger number of opportunities to acquire and cultivate meta-cognitive strategies and interaction models, and to develop greater cultural sensitivities to and awareness of cultural differences and norms.

Greater cross-cultural experiences should also build travelers' confidence in their ability to function in different cultures. Thus, MCE may be a source of efficacious beliefs on travelers'

capability to interact and work with business partners from different cultures. We expect MCE to enhance traveler's motivational CQ. A greater number of trips abroad should also expose travelers to wider repertoires and deeper understanding of behavioral norms.

### Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations (Bandura, 1995). Bandura noted that self-efficacy should not be conceptualized or measured in terms of generalized feelings of mastery but rather should be operationalized in reference to handling a specific situation or performing a specific behavior.

Self-efficacy has been studied widely in organizational contexts (Bandura, 1997). Research has shown that self-efficacy predicts several important work-related outcomes, including job attitudes, training proficiency and job performance (Chen et al., 2001). Self-efficacy has been related to more positive physical and emotional well-being, and has been linked in prospective studies to robust stress resistance in a broad spectrum of circumstances, ranging from minor hassles to major tragedies (Bandura, 1997).

Most researchers have conceptualized and studied self-efficacy as task-specific (e.g., Bandura, 1997; Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Lee & Bobko, 1994). In the business trips literature, however, business trip self-efficacy has not been widely studied. Business trip-related self-efficacy can be defined as an employee's perceived ability to function well on the job, despite the demands of a changing work environment when traveling. Travelers who doubt their ability to respond to the demands of a business trip are likely to focus attention on their feelings of incompetence, which will be accompanied by psychological distress and a failure to cope with the situation successfully. In contrast, employees who have high levels of business trip-related

efficacy are unlikely to be distressed by feelings of inadequacy and, for this reason, are expected to persist in their efforts to manage the business trip efficiently and effectively. Self-efficacy may be a key resource for business travelers because those who possessed high levels of self-efficacy might be more capable of selecting, altering, and mobilizing other resources to meet stressful demands.

Eden (2001) defined subjective efficacy as “one’s overall assessment of all available resources that may be applied toward successfully performing a job” (p. 73). These may be internal resources, such as knowledge or willpower, or external resources, such as a car, work tools, or an IT system. According to Eden’s (2001) Internal-External Efficacy Beliefs model, *means efficacy* is subjective to external efficacy. It is defined as “the individual’s belief in the utility of means available for performing the job” (Eden, 2001, p. 74). Eden (2001, p. 78) adds that “means efficacy is as motivating as self-efficacy; a high level of means efficacy motivates a person to use the means.” In the context of business trips, means efficacy relates to the traveler’s belief in the trip’s importance.

### BUSINESS TRIP CHARACTERISTICS

Despite technological advances and rapid growth in electronic communications, global managers recognize the significance of face-to-face interactions to close deals, solve problems, negotiate contracts, and develop mutual trust and respect (e.g., Govindarajan & Gupta, 2001). Consequently, with its increasing globalization and growing economic pressures, the twenty-first century is characterized by the increasing incidence of *short business trips* defined in the current study as traveling for the organization for periods of a week or so while crossing international borders. According to survey by the 2007 CFO (Chief Financial Officers), including all the leading firms in Israel, major Israeli companies incurred 972 million dollars in business trip-

related expenses. According to US data, one in five of US adults traveled for business at least once in 2004, and US business travel generated an estimated \$153.2 billion.

Though generally beneficial to organizations, researchers emphasize the toll these trips have on travelers and their families. DeFrank et al. (2000, p. 59) define travel stress as the “perceptual, emotional, behavioral and physical responses made by an individual to the various problems faced during one or more of the phases of travel.” They refer to three specific phases of a business trip – pre-trip, trip and post-trip, and identify specific stressors for each phase. In terms of the JD-R model, these characteristics are business trip demands. Using COR terms, travel stress occurs when travelers’ resources are depleted or threatened, or when they fail to gain resources following resource investment.

Pre-trip stressors include *trip planning* (e.g., flights, hotels, appointments) and *work arrangements* (e.g., leaving the office in good order, delegating work to subordinates, or dealing with unanswered mail). According to DeFrank et al. (2000), some executives push themselves to tie as many loose ends as possible prior to departure, which may result in frustration and, ultimately, stress. Pre-trip stressors also include *home and family issues*. A high percentage of business travelers are married and most find extended absences from home to be difficult. Before the trip, travelers work to make the absence as painless as possible (e.g., planning for unexpected emergencies, completing chores).

Trip stressors include *characteristics of the trip* (e.g., duration and intensity of the trip, unexpected complications) and the air travel itself (anxiety during flight, turbulence, uncomfortable seating, flight delays or cancellations, lost luggage, etc.), and travel *logistics* (e.g., quality of accommodations and of communications infrastructure). When an effective communications infrastructure is unavailable and when regular e-mail/voice-mail



communication is not possible, travel stress will increase and make effective performance more difficult. Trips stressors also include *job-related factors* (e.g., complex job assignments, worry about the work accumulating at the home office), and *cultural differences* (e.g., culture shock). DeFrank et al. (2000) indicate that unmet expectations and the need for cultural adjustments may lead to stress.

Post-trip issues include *job demands* (e.g., problems that emerged and decisions that were made in the traveler's absence, new projects developed and staffed without the traveler's input, backload of tasks awaiting the traveler on his or her return) and *family demands* (e.g., unfinished household chores, guilt over missing important events, addressing the needs of a spouse).

#### NEGATIVE IMPACT OF BUSINESS TRIPS

The literature reviewed thus far focuses on the various demands and stressors that might emerge as a consequence of traveling. The following section deals with findings concerning the outcomes of such stressors. There is some evidence that business travelers demonstrate physical and psychological strains (e.g., Rogers, 1998; Striker et al., 1999) as a result of the demands that they encounter.

One of the assumptions in the JD-R model is that two psychological processes play a role in the development of job strain and motivation. The demanding aspects of work (i.e., work overload or emotional demands) lead to depletion of energy, and, in the long run, to exhaustion (e.g., Demerouti et al., 2001). Dimberg et al. (2002) found that the demands of business trips resulted in a high level of stress for many travelers, who subsequently sought psychological treatment. Furthermore, they found that psychological disorders (anxiety, acute reaction to stress, and adjustment disorders) increased linearly with the number of business trips.

While these studies related to business trips in general, consequences of specific characteristics of business trips have also been identified. Westman and Etzion (2004) demonstrated that length of trip, number of trips, flight delays, busy schedules, language difficulties and jet lag were related to perceived stress and strain.

Employees who travel frequently must continually adjust to and switch between resident and traveling roles. Furthermore, their families may develop two separate routines – one for when the employee is present, and another for when the employee is absent. Thus, traveling impacts not only the traveler but the spouse and children. According to DeFrank et al. (2000), family stressors are most prominent before and after the trip. In the pre-trip phase, these stressors can result from the inability to spend time with the family due to heavy workload, and in the post-trip phase they can result from the conflict between the needs of the tired and overloaded traveler and the family's demands. Leider (1991) also discussed the impact of travel stressors on the family and claimed that the temporary separation can place a strain on family relationships. He argued that as all three phases of the trip affect the family: and the longer the trip – the more intense the stress at each point.

Dennis (1997) reported that approximately 82% of the surveyed business travelers missed family events while away on business. As much as travelers try to maintain frequent contact with the family, even to the point of daily phone calls and help in the children's homework via fax, it hardly ever seems to be enough or to compensate for their physical absence from home. Thus, balancing work and family life has become a very serious issue for many business travelers. Rogers (1998) demonstrated the impact of traveling on the family. Based on a study of 140 traveling employees, she found that 73% described their business trips as having a negative impact on their family life.

Liese's (2000) findings demonstrate that the business traveler's experience of increased psychological disorders is mirrored in the family. The two sources of psychological strain experienced by the family are the difficulties caused by frequent absences of the spouse and crossover of the traveler's stress and strain to his/her spouse. Crossover is defined as a transmission of stress and strain between spouses (Westman, 2001), either through empathy or a conflictual interaction process (Westman & Vinokur, 1998).

Several studies suggest that business trips are especially stressful when they become a source of conflict between job and family demands. Business trips characteristics, such as long absences from home, last minutes changes in travel plans, and trips that interfere with special family events or holidays, are stressful for the travelers as for families. Furthermore, research suggests that men and women travelers experience such conflicts differently. Westman et al. (2004) examined fluctuations in the experience of work-family conflict and burnout in different phases of business trips among 58 male and female business travelers. Travelers completed questionnaires at three points in time: prior to going abroad, during the stay abroad, and after their return. Findings indicated that both work-family conflict (WFC) and burnout fluctuated during the various phases of the trips but these fluctuations were significant only when gender was controlled. They found a different pattern of fluctuation of WFC for men and women: Among men, WFC remained constant before and during the trip but declined significantly in the post-trip phase. Among women, WFC declined from pre-trip to mid-trip and then increased significantly upon returning home. Thus, of the three phases of business travel, the return home constituted the period of lowest WFC for men, but the period of highest WFC for women. These findings corroborate findings by Liese (2000) who maintained that the return home is the most stressful experience for women.

Similar findings were demonstrated by Westman et al. (2008) who examined fluctuations in the levels of WFC and FWC during the three different stages of international business trips among 66 business travelers. Analysis of variance detected differences in WFC and FWC levels between the three stages of the trip, indicating that the work-family interface is not static and varies according to different job and family demands. These fluctuations were moderated by gender. WFC and FWC remained relatively constant for men during the different stages of the trip, while for women, measures were lowest during the trip itself and highest upon returning home. Furthermore, whereas for men the lowest levels of WFC and FWC were experienced upon returning home, for women, they were the highest at that stage.

These findings do not support DeFrank et al. (2000), who claimed that the highest level of stress is before and after the trip, but they do support Liese (2000), who maintained that the return home is the most stressful experience for women. However, it should be noted that DeFrank et al. (2000) as well as Liese (2000) related to stress in general and not specifically to the conflict between work and family demands.

### THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF BUSINESS TRIPS

As most of the reviewed research on business trips has focused on stress and strain, this section begins with theories and research pertaining to positive affects in general, such as positive psychology, COR theory and the JD-R model. Positive psychology is an umbrella term for the study of positive emotions, positive character traits, and enabling institutions. The aim of positive psychology is to catalyze a shift of focus of psychology, from an exclusive preoccupation with repairing the worst things in life to building positive qualities (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). This section of the chapter focuses on the positive aspects of business trip from the perspective of the COR and JD-R models.

According to the JD-R model, job resources play an important role in producing employee well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001). Resource gain occurs during business travel not only through passively experiencing the positive effects of the trip, but also through proactive behavior. The different ways in which people cope with business travel experiences may represent in proactive behavior, and thus result in minimizing the resource loss and increasing the resource gain. Proactive behavior consists of efforts to build up general resources that facilitate the achievement of challenging goals and promote personal growth. In proactive coping (Greenglass, 2002), people perceive risks, demands, and opportunities as challenges. Proactive coping is based on either acquiring resources or preventing loss of resources (Westman, 2004). Conclusions from Westman's (2004) qualitative study suggest that coping is situation-specific, and a strategy that is instrumental in one phase of the trip is not necessarily instrumental in another phase.

DeFrank et al. (2000) performed a thorough review of the stressors and strains that business trips entail. The proportion of negative versus positive effects in their review is typical of stress research, which until recently has focused primarily on negative outcomes. In their review, only a few sentences are devoted to the possible positive outcomes of business trip stressors and strains:

“For many, travel can be very educational, providing exposure to new places and cultures, and even giving insight into new business practices and product ideas. It can lead to individual growth, broadening one’s awareness of domestic and global issues and enhancing one’s sensitivity to the concerns of other populations” (p. 59).

More recent studies have recognized that business trips can bring about positive effects, such as insights into new business practices and productive ideas, individual growth, and respite

from routine work demands (Welch & Worm, 2006). Furthermore, Presser and Herman (1996) have indicated that business trips often evoke a sense of independence from one's immediate supervisors and colleagues while away. Westman and Etzion (2002) concluded that the decrease in job stress and burnout of their high-tech respondents may be evidence of a delayed respite. Though these travelers experienced a heavy workload and much ambiguity during the trip, they also enjoyed the physical detachment from their office and their families.

Furthermore, business travelers have an opportunity to undergo new experiences and gain a sense of personal accomplishment. Thus, travel that is not routine may be perceived as stimulating and contributing to personal development and initiative, offering a source of variety, challenges, and new experiences. Additionally, several researchers (e.g., Oddou et al., 2000) claim that business trips may be important for future occupational advancement as personal skills required by leaders in the globalized world are skills acquired during business trips such as initiative, open-mindedness and ability to adapt to cultural differences.

While business travelers are away on a business trip, they are not subject to the regular job demands, including the organizational physical characteristics such as environment, boss, and peers. Nor do they have to cope with the daily family demands. In addition, they have the positive experience of gaining new resources in the form of new friends, increased sense of self-efficacy, new cultural experiences, rest, and other pleasurable experiences.

It seems that the better a person copes with business trip demands, the greater the gain in personal and social resources (self-confidence, support from others); as the reservoir of resources at one's disposal increases, one is better able to cope with future situations. In COR theory terms (Hobfoll, 1989) this can be viewed as a spiral of resource gain: General well-being can improve the personal and work results of the business trip, and these results increase the resources

available for coping on the next trip. In this sense, the more experience gained in business trips, the higher the chance that such trips will be experienced as positive events that increase well-being.

Change of attitude can transform what used to be a negative, stressful experience into an enjoyable experience that increases the person's well-being. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) and Folkman and Moskowitz (2000) describe the mechanisms that allow for positive coping with stressful experiences to occur. These mechanisms are positive reappraisal (through which the meaning of the situation is changed in a way that allows the person to experience positive emotions and psychological well-being), problem-focused coping (possible even in situations with very little personal control), and creation of positive events (infusion of ordinary events with positive meaning or finding humor in otherwise stressful situations). These mechanisms explain how people can not only survive the stress of a business trip but even transform the trip into an experience that increases their personal resource reservoir and their well-being.

Business trips are in fact a family experience: The traveler's absence affects the family directly, through his or her physical absence, and indirectly, through the cross-over of positive and negative emotional states between spouses (Westman, 2001). Espino et al.'s (2002) findings indicate that frequent travel increases the strain on the family and, as a by-product, contributes significantly to the traveler's stress. This finding may also be a product of crossover of stress and strain from one spouse to the other. At the same time, business trips may also be a positive experience and begin a positive spiral. The positive impact of business trips, such as exposure to new places and cultures, insight into new business practices and product ideas, individual growth, and physical detachment from home and workplace, has rarely been studied. However, in recent years positive psychology has come to the forefront of research, demonstrating very

promising findings. If the business trip is perceived as a respite, there is ground for positive crossover to operate between the spouses. Westman et al., (forthcoming), for example, found vigor crossing over from the spouses to the travelers, while Etzion and Westman (2001) found that the crossover of burnout detected among couples before a trip abroad vanished when they returned from the trip.

## EVIDENCE FROM INTERVIEWS

### Characteristics of the Business Trip

We extended previous research by interviewing business travelers, with the aim of obtaining an initial and detailed overview of how business trips affect travelers during the different stages of the trip and how business travelers cope with the stressors that characterize the different stages of the business trip. Interviewees were 75<sup>1</sup> business travelers, 59 men (average age 42) and 14 women (average age 36). At the next stage, the research team read the transcriptions and for each interview question and each stage of the trip (before, during the journey, during the stay abroad and after the return) identified: (a) the main themes relating to negative and positive aspects of the trip, (b) the coping strategies employed, (c) available organizational support, and (d) the effects of the trip on the traveler and on the family. A preliminary review of all the interviews yielded a list of themes for each subject. –A total of 146 themes were identified. The interviews provide evidence and examples for all the issues we dealt with in the previous section, specifying their occurrence along the various stages of the trip. The interviews were analyzed according to the terms of the JD-R model (see Table 2). The list of themes is detailed in the first column. Demands are detailed in the second column resources are detailed in the third column. We classified four groups of resources according to the typology of

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<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, in two interviews the gender information was missing.



resources suggested by COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989). For instance, the COR theory term "objects" includes flight conditions; the term "energy" includes time for myself; the term "conditions" includes professional development; and the term "personal characteristics" includes personal growth.

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**INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE**  
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The first type of resource is classified by the JD-R as resources that are instrumental in achieving work goals, namely organizational support, a sense of control over the trip, time for professional preparations, networking, and trip success. In the following quote, the interviewee addresses organizational support: *"My organization has created opportunities – we have developed a ritual whereby country directors can bring their spouses if they like and it becomes a team building and social ritual so that the spouses can become acquainted with the colleagues and the work their spouses are doing and that helps. I think there are many more steps my organization could be taking, but, relative to many organizations, my organization is extremely sensitive and understanding about personal needs and issues. If I can't take a trip because I have an important family event, the organization will be understanding"*. Fifteen different themes relating to organizational support were reported by respondents, emphasizing the role of this resource for the traveler.

Other types of resources organizations can supply are resources that reduce job demands and their associated physiological and psychological costs, such as flight conditions or conditions during the journey. *"I run up large telephone bills for my company. But I think that's*

*also an important thing that I do – phone home every day and say hello...” or “Our organization teaches people English which generally helps [us] on the trips”*

The third type of resources that are instrumental in achieving work goals are those that stimulate personal growth, such as learning, breaking out of the routine, making time for oneself, leisure activities, professional development, exposure to a new places. For example *"An advantage of business trips is meeting people, learning about the local culture and other new things that I wasn't aware of; to say nothing of shopping..." or "The business trip helped me understand my job better... I got a better perspective about the goals and how to achieve them. On a personal level, it helped me get ideas about my career..."*.

Many quotes mention other key resources such as social support or control. *“I talked about the trip with my colleagues. This conversation helped me prepare and cope with my trip.”: “I have quite a bit [of control] in terms of flexibility of dates. My daughter is in a one-act play on Thursday night and I was actually scheduled to be away on a trip. When I discovered the dates, I could just imagine my daughter’s face; When I told her [I would be away] she was just so crestfallen and she said ‘Are you going to be gone?’ and I said ‘Is that the day of your play? Well then, no way, I’ll just reschedule,’ and she was just so-o-o thrilled and her face just lit up”*.

Other interviewees mentioned the characteristics of the trips, for example: *“There is always a feeling that a very tiring trip is ahead of me. The flight to NY is the most difficult, seats are very narrow, you can't stretch your legs, it's very uncomfortable...” “If your flight is delayed, you could miss your next connection. It's work related in a way because it upsets your routine when you get to the other end. Maybe you miss a meeting, maybe you have to reschedule it, maybe you won't be able to reschedule”*.

## Negative and Positive Impact of the Trip on the Traveler and the Family

The main themes that emerged from the interviews were negative and positive experiences, as well as the typical coping strategies used at each stage of the trip: before the trip, during the stay abroad, and after return. In general, travelers mentioned more negative than positive aspects of the trip. For example, interviewees noted the negative aspects during the pre-trip stage relating the family: *“My youngest daughter, she’s nine years old, she’s said ‘Oh, why you are going away again? You are not around when I need you for my homework.’”* A second interview stated, *“The business trip has a price both in professional and the personal life. The separation from the family is not simple...”*

On the other hand, some interviewees focused on the positive aspect of the business trips. For example *“...breaking the routine, more interesting issues to deal with, meeting new people, gaining new knowledge...”* or *“It has helped me put a perspective on the wonderful opportunities that we have ...”* and *“To be invited to South Africa to give a talk is in itself an ego boost. To go to Singapore and address senior management in a client company about leadership trends that you are seeing and cultural changes from your perspectives –, that is esteem enhancing”* or *“I think travel and cultural experience, including language acquisition have greatly benefited my self- esteem.”* Another interviewee focused on yet another positive aspect of the trip *“We do need to travel a lot and my career has flourished because of that, because wherever you travel you exchange ideas with people from different countries, and you share experiences, and that adds to your knowledge.”*

The following quotes reflect statements that refer to the negative aspects of the business trip *“I think the main thing is the need to get everything done. On most trips you feel that had*

*you stayed a day longer you would have accomplished what you set out to do.” “What do you think causes pressure during the trip?...the knowledge that work and mail is building up and waiting for me in the office” and “Professionally it meant dealing with certain things alone, when it is difficult to consult my team the way I’m used to, because of distance and communication problems. You have to do everything there by yourself, and you have a lot of responsibility”*

Interviewees also noted the negative repercussions on their marriage or relationships: *"There’s always pressure at home. Whenever I go away for two and a half weeks and my girlfriend expects me to get home early on those few evenings beforehand so that we can spend some time together."* The negative aspects of the trip are also reflected in the following statement by a traveler’s wife: *“...getting his work done so that he feels he can leave and not have everything fall apart. Generally, he ends up spending a lot of extra hours before trips just trying to wrap up projects and getting work done.”* *“When I have to go out on short notice, from one day to the next, there is a stress of making sure I am professionally prepared for the job”* or *“Once I used to stay at the office till three in the morning before a trip clearing my desk”*. One traveler went one step further and commented *“The organization should provide professional help to people who are suffering the effects of travel. We have had several divorces, and several very strained marriages.”* Another travelers related to the expectations from the organization, for example: *" the organization doesn’t help ...I would like them to fund a nanny three afternoons a week and help my wife with the kids when I am on a business trip.”*

## BUSINESS TRIPS – A CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Based on respite and business travel literature, Westman (2004) developed a theoretical framework for business travels embedded in COR theory.

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Based on a series of open-ended, in-depth exploratory interviews conducted with 35 professional employees (from Israel, the U.S. and Sweden) who travel between 3–28 days as part of their jobs, making 3–24 trips per year, Westman (2004) proposed a meta-model (see Fig 1) for outlining the relationships between the various facets of the business travel process. A basic assumption of the model is that business trips are job events that occur over time, therefore suggesting that each business trip is an unfolding experience consisting of four phases: (1) Pre-trip; (2) Journey (e.g. flight); (3) Stay; (4) Post-trip, each with distinct gains and losses. Furthermore, such trips are viewed as elements in a cycle, where gains and losses from previous trips impact the experiences and outcomes of the following trips.

Figure 1 distinguishes between several facets and constructs: job demands, family demands, business trips gains and losses of resources, coping, personal characteristics, family status, trip characteristics, organizational support and personal and family outcomes. According to the model, job and family demands may cause losses and gains at different phases of the trip (arrows from A and B to C) whereas the gains and losses of the trip affect the perception of job and family demands (arrows from C to A and B). Each phase of the trip (Box C) has unique but also similar negative and positive events, losses, and gains of resources. To illustrate, the Pre-trip phase is characterized by overload, excitement, and expectations of gain. The Journey phase is characterized by good or bad flight conditions; The Stay phase is characterized by overload,

loneliness, new experiences, detachment, while the Return phase characterized by overload, success or failure.

The model also indicates the importance of time (Box E), as each phase of trip affects the others, and each event unfolds and affects other trips and other facets at different points in time. The loss and gain spirals affect the coping process (Box D) which impacts (Arrow from D to G) personal and family consequences. Box F includes trip characteristics (length, duration), personal characteristics (age, gender, experience, and self esteem), family status (married, with children) and organizational support: These affect the coping process and moderate the relationship between coping and outcomes.

The findings of the interviews demonstrated that each phase of the trip was characterized by different resources acquired or saved. Across all four business trip phases, the gained resources mentioned most frequently were social support, followed by time, relaxation, control, energies, and objects.

Westman's study (2004) provided insight into the dynamics of business trip demands, resources and coping behaviors. The model offers a guide for research which aims to determine how experiences and processes in the work and family domain are linked among business travelers and their spouses.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter opened with a literature review on respite and recovery, with the aim of understanding the specific characteristic of business trips. By conceptualizing business trips as a unique kind of "on the job" respite, we provide insight into the dynamics of business trip demands, resources and outcomes, and focus not only on negative, stressful aspects of business trips, but on the positive aspects as well. Furthermore, we expand the understanding of the

business trip phenomenon by basing our reasoning on both COR theory and JD-R model. In this summary section we also raise several important groups of questions regarding business trips: first, *What is the impact of the separation from the family on the traveler? Is the separation always a stressor or does it also have a positive dimension, namely a sense of detachment? Can we identify the separation conditions that have a negative or positive impact?* Second, *What are the positive impacts of business trips?* The third group of questions concerns the main issue of this chapter: *Can a business trip be considered as a unique kind of respite?* Finally, we provide theoretical and practical recommendations.

### The Impact of the Separation from Family

As indicated, an important issue in business trips research is the dual effect on the family and the traveler. While some research findings demonstrate a negative impact of the trip on the traveler and his/her family, other findings that show positive outcomes of business trips to the traveler and to the family. Business trips afford detachment from home, spouse, and children, that serves as a respite to the traveler. As one of the traveler stated in his interview: *“When they (the children) were younger it was also nice to be away for a couple of days, because I could relax from all the voices back home and all the noise and all the questions and things like that.”* Another traveler indicated that distance makes the hearts grow fonder: *“...it helps me remember why we decided to get married.”*

Thus, while the separation from home may be stressful to travelers, it also releases them from home and family responsibilities. While they miss their family and may be concerned about how they manage alone, the detachment enables the travelers to temporarily rest from their family responsibilities for a while and regroup resources. The negative or positive impact

depends on quality of relationship between partners, age of children, spouse's support, frequency, and length of trip, and other factors.

### Positive Impact of the Trip

We suggest that characteristics of the trip (such as destination, length, and purpose), environmental factors, and individual factors (such as control, cultural intelligence and self-efficacy) potentially develop an individual's positive experience of respite during and after a business trip. These individual factors, or resources, are part of a gain spiral in combating burnout and increasing engagement. Another important factor is the perception of the trip as a negative or positive experience. While this obviously depends on the nature of the experience itself, it is also a function of expectations from the trip and negative and positive affect. Westman and Eden (1997) found that among employees who were satisfied from their vacation, stress and burnout declined more than among employees who were not satisfied. Similarly, Etzion et al., (1988) found that the more military reserve service was perceived by reservists as a positive experience, the greater the drop in the levels of stress and burnout upon their return to work. Consistent with COR theory and JD-R model and findings, business travelers who have more resources or gained resources were better able to enjoy the positive impact of the trip.

### Business Trips as a Unique Kind of Respite

An appreciation of the dual impact of business trips contributes to our understanding of whether and under what conditions business trips can be considered a unique kind of respite. The contrast between individuals' well-being on and off their regular job is addressed in a general manner in respite research, and addressed more specifically by business trip research literature. Thus, these two lines of research could be mutually enriching. However, the main difference



between business trips and other kinds of respite is that people on respite from their job (e.g., vacation) may completely disengage from their jobs, whereas business travelers' detachment is limited to the physical job environment: They may experience a change in venue but not in job overload and responsibility. According to Westman and Eden (1997), "a respite from work.....when the *everyday regular pressures* of the job are absent" (p. 516). Thus, in a business trip, the *everyday regular pressures* of the job are absent, but there is overload, responsibility, and cultural difficulties. Another reason why we may consider business trips as a unique kind of respite is the results from the few before–after studies that demonstrated a decline in job stress and burnout after returning from the trip. As in the case of military reserve service, the change in venue and the physical detachment from the workplace and the home enhance the respite effects of the business trip.

It seems that business trips are dualistic experiences, consisting of demands and resources, or losses and gains, all impacting upon the well-being of the travelers and their families. Furthermore, as we saw in the literature review and the interviews, business trips may have different effects on different people. While some individuals will bloom and find a trip exhilarating, others may be almost debilitated by the same experience. Characteristics such as family status, quality of relationships between partners, need for control and sense of control, self-efficacy, positive and negative affectivity, and cultural intelligence impact the perception and experience of the business trip.

Learning what makes business trips a positive experience might help us counsel business travelers on how to benefit more from their time away from their regular work site. It may help managers understand and reinforce some of the resources emerging during business trip that may have an impact on their traveling subordinates. While away, most travelers have some free time

for leisure activities including physical exercise, visiting museums and or the theatre, going for walks in new places, and other similar activities that offer opportunities for personal growth and engagement.

Haworth (1997) and Iso-Ahola (1997) claim that involvement in leisure activities has a great restorative effect. Being actively involved in activities implies that people have to concentrate and divert attention to that activity, which helps to disengage from the previous activities. Thus, specific trip duties on one hand, and the exploration of new things on the other hand, may help travelers disengage from the chronic daily hassles at work in the home office, and help 'switch off.' A logical conclusion from this perspective is that a relaxation period between periods of chronic stress, even if it entails other but different stressors, allows regrouping of resources.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

DeFrank et al. (2000) indicated that problems caused by business trips can severely disrupt an executive's ability to perform effectively for the organization while away, and may even adversely influence performance after the return to the office. These difficulties have major implications for the success of organizations and for the physical and emotional health of employees and their families, and highlight the importance to the organization of taking care of the well-being of their employees partaking in business trips. Thus, though we highlighted positive aspects of the trip, we must be cautious and manage the negative aspects.

Korn (1999) recommends two approaches to deal with travel stress – proactive coping, which attempts to reduce demands and stressors before they occur, and reactive coping, which aims to counteract the effects of stressors once they have emerged. These recommendations are consistent with Quick et al.'s (1997) primary and secondary prevention model, which maintains

that “Preventive stress management helps one convert stress from a threat into opportunity for health and achievement” (p. 304). According to Striker et al. (1999), organizations should provide more support (resources) for maintaining a balance between work and home demands. Thus, legitimized time off, such as an optional day off prior to or after the trip, whether the option is actually exercised by the traveler or not, might also help relieve stress by giving travelers more of a sense of control. Travelers discussed stress-preventive measures in the interviews. One traveler stated, *“Reducing stressors before they occur (e.g., a day of rest after returning from a trip, long enough notice concerning a trip, support service for families), counteracting the effects of stressors after they occur and maximizing the positive effects of travels can be facilitated by the organization.”* Another interviewee stated, *“Executives must recognize the work-family concerns of their ‘frequent travelers.’”* The extent to which the organization recognizes the strain that business travel places on its employees and their families, and the extent to which the organization implements countervailing procedures will affect the success or failure of its international operations.

In sum, business trips are a unique kind of respite that contains a work-related component. Similar to the circumstances of other types of respite, business travelers are not in their usual surroundings and not performing their routine jobs. Business trips provide an opportunity to gain resources, which is consistent with one of the most important characteristics of respite. Hence, embedding business trip research in respite research enriches both the respite literature and business trip literature. The main conclusion is that the more elements of respite the business traveler experiences during the trip, the higher the positive impact on the traveler, the family, and the organization. We suggest broadening the scope of respite research by comparing patterns of business trips to learn how different degrees of disengagement (e.g.,

frequent to no communication with home office, having a spouse join the traveler on the trip, having a vacation after completing the overseas job) relate to indices of stress and strain on the one hand and to engagement on the other hand. This would be a natural extension that would shed light on many of the same issues addressed by respite research.

Knowledge about the impact of the business trips opens new directions for research and applications in organizations. We recommend that additional studies follow this line of research, in the effort to identify additional business trip stressors, resources, and important moderators that will allow us to predict who will benefit from what kind of a respite, using longitudinal designs and embedding the research in theory. While a number of studies have based their contentions on conservation of resources (COR) theory (e.g., Westman, 2004; Westman & Etzion, 2002), this chapter proposes adding the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001) to the theoretical grounding of business trip research. This line of theorizing and other avenues should be further investigated.

Finally, on the basis of the accumulated knowledge and acquired understanding, future research on business trips should seek to expand our knowledge about the importance of the characteristics of the trips. What other kinds of resources can impact the travelers' well-being? Which resources are most beneficial to travelers? How can the travelers use these trips as a respite? What can business travelers do to experience these trips as a respite? Knowledge about these issues would strength both COR theory and JD-R model, and their contribution to the business trip field.

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Fig. 1. The impact of short business travels on the individual and the family.

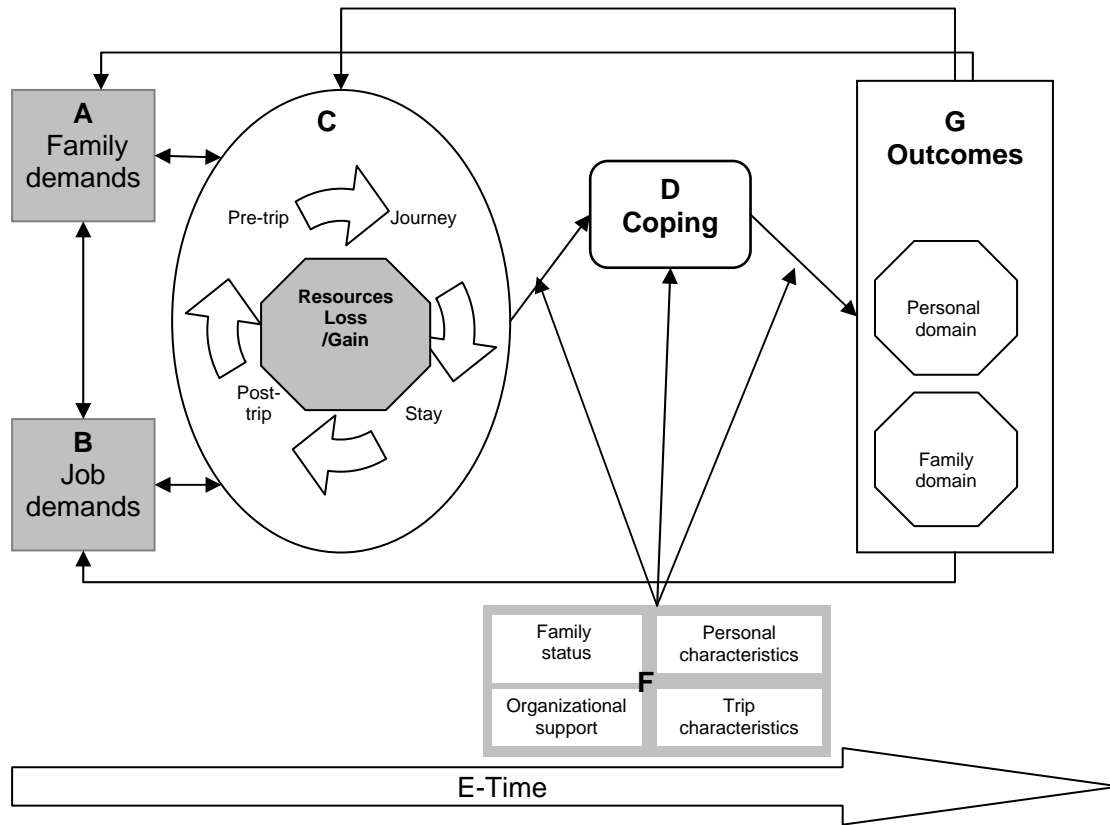


Table 1

Predictions of Business Trips Outcomes Based on the Job Demands-Resources Model

Business Trip Resources	<b>High</b>	<b>A</b> Low strain High motivation	<b>B</b> Average strain High motivation
	<b>Low</b>	<b>C</b> Low strain Average motivation	<b>D</b> High strain Low motivation
		<b>Low</b>	<b>High</b>
	Business Trip Demands		

Table 2

Themes Emerging from the Interviews Listed According to JD-R Model and COR Theory Terms

<i>Themes</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>Demands</i> <sup>3</sup>	<i>Resources</i> <sup>4</sup>
Concerns regarding work at home	+	
Difficulty to adapting to a new place	+	
Professional requirements of the work abroad	+	
Difficulties concerning the time of coming back	+	
Conditions during the stay	+	Objects
Free time, leisure activities		Energies
Prestige, reputation		Conditions
Professional development		Conditions
Exposure to new places		Conditions
Regular contact with family and friends		Social support
Receiving organizational support		POS
Happily anticipating the return home		Personal characteristics
Help from the extended family		Personal characteristics
Focusing on work		Personal characteristics
Focusing on the positive aspect of the trip		Personal characteristics
Acceptance of the trip as a part of the job		Personal characteristics
Personal traits that facilitate coping		Personal characteristics

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<sup>2</sup> First column – list of themes

<sup>3</sup> Second column – several kinds of demands

<sup>4</sup> Third column – resources, classified in COR terms



