Emerald Insight

critical perspectives on international business

Globalization, academic knowledge interests and the global careers discourse
Steve McKenna Amanda Peticca-Harris

Article information:

Users who downloaded this article also downloaded:

(2016),"Flexible identities and cross-border knowledge networking", Critical perspectives on international business, Vol. 12 Iss 4 pp. 318-330 http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/cpoib-06-2012-0031

(2016),"Critiquing the marginalised place of research on women within international business: Where are we now and where should we be going?", Critical perspectives on international business, Vol. 12 Iss 4 pp. 348-368 http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/cpoib-08-2015-0037

For Authors

If you would like to write for this, or any other Emerald publication, then please use our Emerald for Authors service information about how to choose which publication to write for and submission guidelines are available for all. Please visit www.emeraldinsight.com/authors for more information.

About Emerald www.emeraldinsight.com

Emerald is a global publisher linking research and practice to the benefit of society. The company manages a portfolio of more than 290 journals and over 2,350 books and book series volumes, as well as providing an extensive range of online products and additional customer resources and services.

Emerald is both COUNTER 4 and TRANSFER compliant. The organization is a partner of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and also works with Portico and the LOCKSS initiative for digital archive preservation.

Globalization, academic knowledge interests and the global careers discourse

Steve McKenna

*School of Human Resource Management, York University,
Toronto, Canada, and*

Amanda Peticca-Harris

Grenoble Ecole de Management, Grenoble, France

Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to present two objectives. The first objective is to identify the academic knowledge interests (managerial, agentic, curatorial and critical) prevalent in research on global careers. The second objective is to consider and critique the discourse constructed and perpetuated in academic texts on global careers concerning globalization, global careers and the global careerist.

Design/methodology/approach – Using a critical discourse analysis, the paper analyzes 66 articles and book chapters and one book on the subject of a global career. The authors positioned the texts into one of the four academic knowledge interests – managerial, agentic, curatorial and critical. The texts were also analyzed with respect to the discourse manifested in relation to globalization, global careers and the global careerist.

Findings – The authors found that the texts were driven by primarily managerial academic knowledge interests, followed by agentic and curatorial interests. Very few reflected critical knowledge interests. In addition, texts on global careers accept the globalization of business as natural and unproblematic and, consequently, construct a discourse about the global career and the global careerist which fits the idea that global business expansion in its current form is inevitable and inescapable.

Originality/value – This paper is the first to analyze the academic knowledge production and discourse on "global careers" and the "global careerist" as it is emerging among career scholars. It is also one of the very few articles offering a more critical perspective on global careers specifically and careers more generally.

Keywords Critical management, Academic knowledge interests, Critical discourse, Global careerist, Global careers

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Career scholars have turned their attention in recent years to the idea of a *global career*. It has been suggested that with the globalization of business organizations, there is a need to develop processes for "global careers" and the "global careerist" (Dickmann and Baruch, 2011). This article examines how the academic discourse of global careers might be permeated by a particularly ideological way of seeing a global career. This is most redolent, we suggest, in the acceptance of globalization and specifically the globalization of business, as inevitable, and deriving from this, the view that globalized business requires global careers and global careerists.

Through a critical analysis of academic texts about global careers, we investigate how scholars produce academic knowledge about global careers which is infused with a specific ontology. We consider the question as to whether scholarship on global careers supports, challenges or simply reflects the view that the globalization of business is inevitable and that it is an inescapable consequence of modernization and development. To do this, we are interested in understanding the knowledge interests which are identifiable in academic knowledge production in the field of global careers. Our first objective in this article, therefore, is to identify the academic knowledge interests prevalent in research on global careers. The second objective is to consider the discourse constructed and perpetuated in academic texts on global careers concerning globalization, global careers and the global careerist.

To achieve our objectives, the article is structured as follows. First, we briefly discuss the idea of globalization and global careers, as they are currently identifiable in academic knowledge production in this area. Second, methods are outlined. Third, using Roper *et al.*'s (2010, p. 667) "four distinct knowledge interests", we consider the academic texts on the global career in relation to *managerial*, *agentic*, *curatorial* and *critical* knowledge interests. Fourth, we offer a discussion concerning the relationship between academic knowledge produced about global careers and "globalization". Finally, we suggest some "box-changing" (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2014) areas for research which operate to offer a more critical approach to the study of global careers. Additionally, we offer some ways in which existing avenues of research on global careers might be made broader as well as more critical.

Globalization and global careers
Globalization, modernization and development
Research on global careers has developed over the past 20 years. The emergence of this field has paralleled a growing consideration of the globalization of business. While the study of global interconnectedness and the existence of global systems is not new, it has been argued that "contemporary globalization has distinctive traits due to enhanced communication technology and the global spread of capitalism" (Eriksen, 2007, p. 14). In much study of management and organization, and particularly in the study of global careers, the dominant perspective on globalization is probably best reflected in a quote from Friedman (1999, pp. 7-8):

> [T]he inexorable integration of markets, nation-states, and technologies to a degree never witnessed before-in a way that is enabling […] […] .the spread of free-market capitalism to virtually every country in the world.

In this conception of globalization, the idea of the inevitability of capitalist market relations is privileged. Moreover, this view follows the tradition of management thought which views modernization and its management as essential for global economic and social development and expansion (Jack and Westwood, 2009). This has implications for the development of particular types of management and managers, who are viewed as essential to modernization and, more importantly, essential for the globalization of business (Jack and Westwood, 2009). Such a discourse, privileged in management and business studies, reflects a dominant system of knowledge that, in its uncritical portrayal of a business-oriented globalization as inevitable, has marginalized more critical knowledge interests and

perspectives which offer alternative ontologies (Parker *et al.*, 2014). Despite the importance of this view of globalization in managerialist studies and studies in global careers more specifically, other and more critical approaches are highly visible in management, organization studies and the social sciences more broadly (Banerjee *et al.*, 2009; Burawoy, 2015; Cameron and Palan, 2004; Jack and Westwood, 2009).

Globalization and academic knowledge production

The production of academic knowledge occurs within a broader context. Academic knowledge production in managerialist studies, in relation to globalization, privileges the view of increasing economic integration and market managerialism (Parker *et al.*, 2014). In this view, the world is narrowly understood to be about consumers, choices, competition, markets and corporations. Managerialist academic knowledge rarely questions the idea that this kind of globalization may not be inevitable. Equally importantly, the acceptance of the inevitability of the globalization of business impacts significantly on the manner in which scholars in sub-fields of global business (e.g. global careers) pursue their line of inquiry, and this has implications for the knowledge interests reflected in their research. We turn to this issue after the methods section.

Method

Critical discourse analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is rooted in the idea that it is through the language that perspectives on the world are created (Fairclough, 2003). Of particular significance is the idea that by examining texts (written, spoken and visual), the influence and impact of social, political, economic and historical contexts which shape the texts can be identified. Some discourses become dominant and normalized and are seen as self-evident truths. The relations serving to construct discourses are often ignored. These relations often involve power asymmetries; meaning that discourses which become dominant and privileged represent some ideas that are or become powerful at the expense of others. Other discourses, as a consequence, become marginalized and sometimes regarded as abnormal and dysfunctional (Fairclough, 2003).

With the power to construct and control discourse(s) comes the power to constitute particular views of social, political and economic realities (Fairclough, 2003). In this sense, discourses have material effects and a very practical impact on the world. To construct and control a discourse enables realities and their material consequences to be managed. It can enable control of what is "taken-for-granted" and control of where every conversation and discussion begins such that the starting position of a conversation is never questioned and remains unexamined. If a discourse becomes normalized, it creates a space wherein actors rarely interrogate their place or subjective position in the world (Foucault, 2002). A discourse can arrange the way a social phenomenon is both constructed and how it then constructs other social phenomenon. CDA seeks to unpack the construction of discourses and is particularly interested in addressing social problems, understanding power relations in discourse and understanding how discourse is constitutive of society (Fairclough, 2003).

Critical discourse analysis and global careers texts

To investigate the academic discourse about global careers, we analyzed a body of articles. In October 2014, articles from the databases Proquest ABI/Inform

(business) and Social Sciences were selected that contained the words "global career" or "international career" in the title or abstract. Sixty-three publications were identified from Proquest and three from the Social Sciences database. The latter three were excluded, as they were to do with certification of a global career development instrument. The vast majority of the 63 articles derived from the Proquest search were published after 2000 indicating the more recent interest in global careers. Of the 63 articles, 12 were excluded after further investigation by the authors. The excluded articles were deemed not to be centrally concerned with global careers. In addition to the articles, two books were also analyzed (Dickmann and Baruch, 2011; Reis and Baruch, 2012). All 15 chapters of the Reis and Baruch (2012) edited book were considered, as well as the entire Dickmann and Baruch (2011) text. Overall, we analyzed 66 articles and book chapters and one book. We focused on articles which were framed very clearly around the concept of a global career in the context of the idea of globalization. The move to an interest in global careers has recently been noted in that "while single-country assignments still play an important role, the past decades have seen global careers on the rise" (Mayrhofer and Reiche, 2014). Our concern to limit articles explicitly framed within "global careers" led us to ignore articles that may have been relevant to the subject "global careers" but which were not identifiable as such. We consider this issue further in our discussion section.

Specific attention in the analysis was paid to aspects of the articles that discussed global careers and reasons as to why they were important and relevant, as well as how a global career was defined and how this definition was connected to an expressed view of globalization. Furthermore, our concern was to identify the knowledge interests, managerial, agentic, curatorial and critical, that underpinned the academic production of knowledge about global careers. The knowledge interests are defined in the following section.

Both authors coded the articles in relation to the knowledge interests, identifying the dominant interest and the secondary interests apparent in each article, chapter or the book. The authors discussed the coding until a consensus was reached. Of particular importance was the process of examining the knowledge interests in relation to globalization, as this concept is understood in the careers literature. It was observable in all of the material reviewed, with the exception of the more critical material, that globalization was assumed to be an objective and an inevitable reality. Globalization as a natural process of global economic and business integration was not critiqued or challenged in any of these readings. The four knowledge interests identified and described by Roper et al. (2010) are considered as important in how scholarly discourse on global careers has developed and been formed. In dealing with our first objective, the following section offers an analysis of the articles in relation to the four knowledge interests.

Academic knowledge interests in global careers texts
Managerial interests
It has been suggested that "studies driven by managerial interests often articulate a need to be useful to senior organizational managers" (Roper et al., 2010, p. 667). In analyzing the literature, we used this and other definitions of knowledge interests used by Roper et al. (2010) as the guides to situating the article or book chapter.

Thirty-eight of 66 articles and book chapters and one book (Dickmann and Baruch, 2011) were primarily driven by managerial interests. Twelve others had also managerial interests as an important theme. Suutari *et al.* (2012, p. 3474), for example, argued that their study of global managers has "many implications for multinational companies (MNCs) aiming to attract and commit global careerists". Cappellen and Janssens (2005, p. 357) proposed that global careers required that "career management and development programs need to become more flexible. A standardized approach to managing global careers is therefore not suitable". The focus on establishing organizational processes to nurture and develop global careers was also prominent in many articles (Dickmann and Harris, 2005; Stahl and Cerdin, 2004; Suutari, 2003). The articles were also concerned with the competencies needed to be a global careerist and how they might be developed. For example, Tung (1998, p. 125) indicated that organizations "must also develop a new breed of managers, cosmopolitans, who are rich in three intangible assets: concepts, competence and connection".

Overall, articles and chapters highlighting managerial interests are concerned with offering organizations and management solutions to global career management and global career development issues. The articles highlighted that the global career practiced in mobile, boundaryless times requires new flexible organizational processes to be introduced and new competencies for the global careerist to be developed or identified (Lazarova *et al.*, 2014). All of the studies reviewed not only focused on managerial interests but also concerned the global career orientations and development of managers and professionals. Furthermore, the theoretical basis for research in these articles, even from within the functionalist paradigm that dominates the production of knowledge for managerial interests, is limited. The articles are primarily concerned with generating knowledge that has "practical value" for senior managers and organizations. They do not have the objective, in specific terms, of making a theoretical contribution.

Agentic interests
Agentic knowledge interests, are defined as "knowledge that is geared towards facilitating an individual's ability […] .to make and act upon, free and independent choices" (Roper *et al.*, 2010, p. 668). In the field of careers, such interests pertain to the self-development of individual career actors. In the literature on global careers, studies of this kind often claim to identify new patterns of work and organizational structures which require that individual career actors develop an appropriate identity and relevant skills to construct a successful global career. These articles often draw on boundaryless and protean career theories (Arthur, 1994; Banai and Harry, 2004) to argue that global careerists need to take control of their careers and develop skills and networks to facilitate career success. However, recently, the idea of a "boundaryless career" has come under considerable scrutiny such that it is clear that the pursuit of a global career is very much bounded by structural and psychological factors, including race, gender and class (Inkson *et al.*, 2012; Ituma and Simpson, 2009; Pringle and Mallon, 2003).

Fifteen of the articles and book chapters were identified as having agentic knowledge interests as their primary driver. A further 15 articles and the book had agentic interests as an important secondary driver. For example, Vance and McNulty (2014) conducted interviews with female expatriates from the USA and argued that they need to work on specific skills to enhance their global careers success, for example, networking. Suutari

and Smale (2008) argued that the "new" competencies required for global careerists should be included in the teaching of international business. Vance (2005) highlighted the "career path strategies and activities" for building global competencies. A number of articles are focused on highlighting the responsibilities of the individual in developing the skills and competencies for a successful global career, and many emphasized the importance of developing "career capital" (Dickmann and Harris, 2005; Jokinen *et al.*, 2008). In the articles driven by agentic interests, the notion that there are "new career realities", brought about by "globalization", is often central to the argument. There is also the normalization of the idea that it is the responsibility of individual "global careerists" to take control of their competency development (Suutari *et al.*, 2012; Tung, 1998; Vance, 2005).

Curatorial interests
Curatorial interests are "driven by scholarly wishes to categorise, label and explain phenomenon" (Roper *et al.*, 2010, p. 668). Such approaches aim to build theory and develop classifications and typologies. The central purpose of the curatorial interest is to extend our understanding without reference to managerial interests or those of individual career actors. For example, Shaffer *et al.* (2012) summarized and synthesized literature on global work experiences and produced a taxonomy.

Eleven of the articles on global careers were identified as being primarily curatorial, with a further 13 identified as having secondary curatorial interests. The articles were interested in theoretical and/or empirical classification of the phenomenon of a global career. Baruch *et al.* (2013, p. 2369), for example, sought to "facilitate a classification of global careers and develop a theoretical framework". Most of the articles highlighting curatorial interests are concerned with influencing future research agendas rather than managers or individual career actors. In many of the articles which emphasized a curatorial interest in global careers, there may well be other interests at play. And so, while most of the articles attempt to take a detached view of the concept of the global career, they also take a detached view of the context in which global careers are supposed to flourish. Curatorial academic knowledge accepts rather than questions the context within which global careers are imagined to be developing. That is, they accept a view of globalization that it is inevitable and unproblematic. Contributions to theory tend to be in the form of classifications and categorizations of types of global work or global career (Baruch *et al.*, 2013).

Critical interests
Critical interests are concerned with the expression of views critical of established economic and business views of globalization, of management and organizational practices and of the established social order. Multinational corporations are partly viewed as instruments of domination and exploitation, so critical investigations of management and society also seek to develop alternatives (Parker *et al.*, 2014). They attempt to show awareness of peripheral, marginal and ignored groups in the global experience of work as well as issues of power, control and resistance in global contexts. For critical scholars, globalization is neither inevitable nor one-directional (Burawoy, 2015). It is also not solely about global economic integration but has considerable and often negative social consequences (Mirchandani, 2004; Mirchandani *et al.*, 2012). In management and organization studies, this more nuanced appreciation of globalization

is reflected in work beyond those imbued with managerialist assumptions (Bartley and Child, 2014; Brumley, 2014; Menjivar, 2007; Murray, 2010).

Only two of our articles and book chapters could be considered as reflecting critical interests, as well as four others that showed some aspect of a critical interest in global careers. In their book chapter, Scurry *et al.* (2013, p. 49) argued that in the UK context, there are "diverse barriers, structural and cultural, that limit the realization of the global careers for different groups". In particular, they noted how low-skilled and irregular migrants are marginalized within the existing careers literature. This highlights the point that the vast majority of studies on the global career have concerned managerial and professional workers.

Gaggiotti (2013) is one author who has sought to position the idea of the global career in a broader critical frame. He uses aspects of postcolonial analysis to present the view that global careerism is part of a neocolonial discourse wherein those who might be pursuing a global career are the modern day colonial administrators, operating to further globalization as multinational-led economic integration. Global careerists, he argued, require a particular identity representation to perform this role successfully. In this context, the skills and competencies required of the global careerist take on a new and more critical aspect.

The discursive construction of a global career

Our second objective was to consider the discourse constructed and perpetuated in academic texts on global careers concerning globalization, global careers and the global careerist. The majority of the articles and book chapters analyzed, together with the Dickmann and Baruch (2011) book, reflect more than one knowledge interest. Those which are primarily driven by managerial interests often include agentic interests and promote their findings as curatorial; managerial interests are assumed to be normal and taken-for-granted. Similarly, while articles driven primarily by agentic interests emphasize the global career actor, they also assume that their agency takes place within an unproblematic context which emphasizes the dominance of managerial and organizational concerns and a view of globalization based on market and business integration. Despite the apparent differences between managerial, agentic and curatorial knowledge interests, the discursive construction of the global career was undertaken in a similar way. This discursive construction is now considered in relation to the following:

- the version of globalization normalized in the articles;
- the normalization of the global career; and
- the construction of the skills, competencies and identity of the global careerist.

Globalization
When an idea or concept becomes normalized in discourse, it operates to pre-empt and determine the nature of discussion about that idea or concept. The normalization of a discourse leads to its acceptance as "commonsense", which in turn has material and practical effects (Fairclough, 2003). We suggest that *globalization* as used in the global careers literature is such a normalized discourse. It is often used as a natural, unproblematized foundation upon which other concepts and ideas emerge.

In the articles and book chapters driven primarily by managerial interests, a view of globalization is consistently offered as "factual" information. For example, Dickmann

and Baruch (2011, p. 19) noted that "the increase in globalization has meant that many economies have benefited from global manufacturing, service, trade and consumption". Other examples include, Suutari *et al.* (2012, p. 3455), "due to the globalization of business, companies face new challenges in the management of their human resources", and Shaffer *et al.* (2012, p. 1283), "as organizations are increasingly affected by the forces of globalization, employees are often called on to take part in global work experiences".

In the literature that has agentic and/or curatorial interests to the fore, there is a similar acceptance of the inevitability of globalization. For instance, Lazarova *et al.* (2014, p. 9) noted that:

> […] in conditions of deepening globalization and a restricted labor pool, it has become increasingly important that organizations be able to identify employees who are interested in and motivated to pursue international careers.

According to these authors, the global business context within which global careers may be necessary is changing. In the vast majority of the global careers, literature reviewed here and regardless of their primary academic interest (excepting the critical articles), this process of change is seen as positive and inevitable and requires the creation of more global careerists. There is virtually no attempt to question "what globalization itself is constitutive of or constituted by" (Banerjee *et al.*, 2009, p. 187). Moreover, an uncritical acceptance of this particular discourse of globalization is likely to be constitutive of a particular idea of the *global career*. The next section deals with this.

The normalization of the global career
In the global careers literature, there are no agents constructing globalization; it is not seen as being constituted but is generally treated as a largely positive and inescapable fact. Predictably then, this leads to the proposition that global careers are considered a necessary outcome of the process of global economic and market integration. Consequently, authors in the global careers field make claims to normalize the significance of a global career. For example, Tarique and Schuler (2008, pp. 1403-1404) claimed that "most early career individuals such as undergraduate and graduate business students […][…].perceive that a career in international business is important for career success". Makela and Suutari (2009, p. 992) contended that the globalization of careers is "a consequence of a growing need for managers who are able to deal with global integration and co-ordination work in large multinational corporations".

Accepting that global business integration is natural leads to the development of the academic discourse of global careers. So, for example, while Tams and Arthur (2010, p. 629) outlined the economic and business influences contributing to "new forms of careers", their assessment is undertaken in an uncritical fashion. The influences are not themselves discussed, but they are merely the backdrop against which new forms of career, including the global career, take shape, and only a passing reference is made to groups marginalized in this "new world" of careers. Cappellen and Janssens (2010, p. 668) argued that "careers and the global economy have been changing rapidly" since the 1980s. Some of the changes which have induced change in careers are economic fluctuations, the rise of knowledge work and rapid technological innovation, but none are problematized or critiqued. The

changes are viewed as inevitable, and, as a consequence, the nature of a career and the development of a global career are assumed to be an effect of this process.

Given that the globalization of business is taken as a natural process of development and modernization, it should not be a surprise that the global career is viewed as equally natural and normal. The normalization of the idea of the global career in the academic literature on careers and the attempt to establish it in academic discourse also requires consideration to be given to the *global careerist*. The next section considers this issue.

The global career subject
Discourses, as well as the material effects of a discourse, establish what an individual has to "be" to be considered to have the appropriate normative identity, behaviours, attitudes and so on to fit the discursive construction of a phenomenon. From a critical perspective, this has been viewed as *the regulation of identity* and constructing the *appropriate subject* to enhance normative control over employees and managers (du Gay, 1994; Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). In relation to the academic knowledge interests and discourse construction surrounding the global career, it has become important in recent years for global career scholars to begin to construct not only the discourse to normalize the global career but also the subject position of a *global careerist*. For example, Cappellen and Janssens (2010, p. 688) proposed that:

> […] a global career requires that individuals pursue career competencies that are applicable in multiple regions across the world and develop a cosmopolitan orientation that transcends national, regional and social identities.

They go on to argue that the exact nature and form of these competencies will depend on the employment setting and institutional context, but they will have to "act out organizationally appropriate behaviors in order to make sense of and develop their careers" (Cappellen and Janssens, 2010, p. 689).

Other authors have attempted to be more precise in their identification of the characteristics, competencies and skills required of the global careerist. Suutari and Milla (2004, p. 834) argued that a career anchor for *internationalism* might help in the identification of global careerists. They suggested that the characteristics of such an individual are that he/she will be excited by working internationally, will prefer to work internationally and will be interested in new cross-cultural experiences. This idea of an internationalism career anchor is further developed by Lazarova *et al.* (2014, p. 30) who argued that an internationalism career anchor can "capture interest in and inclination to undertake an international career". The competencies of relevance to the global careerist are identified as openness to international experience and "cultural intelligence". It is also important that a global careerist has the skill to build networks or social capital (Makela and Suutari, 2009).

If a global career and careerist is an indisputable fact of business globalization, the purposes of such a career become less important to scholars than the skills and competencies needed to be a successful "career capitalist" (Inkson and Arthur, 2001). Whether the academic knowledge interests are managerial, agentic or curatorial, the global careerist subject position requires formulation. Not only is the phenomenon and discourse of the global career brought into being by academic knowledge interests but so is the global careerist.

Discussion

We have sought to identify the academic knowledge interests implicated in the study of global careers and the discourse constructed and perpetuated in academic texts concerning globalization, global careers and the global careerist. We noted that managerial, agentic and curatorial interests dominated this field of study, and that there are very few studies which are driven by critical knowledge interests. We proceeded to investigate the discourse(s) which dominated this literature and found that overall it takes an unproblematic and uncritical view of globalization, largely viewing the integration of global business systems as natural, inevitable and inescapable. What follows from the acceptance of this discourse of globalization is that global careers are generally perceived as necessary, and thus career scholars working in this area have acted to normalize a particular discourse of a global career. Furthermore, the effect of this is to generate the discursive construction of the global careerist. The vast majority of the articles analyzed perpetuate this cycle of inevitability and academic knowledge construction about global careers.

To offer a more critical appraisal of the emerging academic discourse of global careers, it is necessary to problematize the starting point for the idea of a global career and the subsequent construction of the global careerist. We do this with reference to two alternative frames for the consideration of the globalization of business. The first is connected to theories and ideas about the development of global capitalism. The second introduces a postcolonial frame as another way in which we might understand the globalization of business. Both of these frames have implications for how global careers and the global career subject are viewed and thus how they might be studied. We further offer suggestions as to how the present study of global careers might be undertaken in more critical and nuanced ways, partly by drawing on theories and ideas from broader literatures. This, we think, might focus more on issues related to global work, mobility and migration, thus overcoming the tendency in the global careers literature to assume that any sequence of (global) work experiences constitutes a "career" for any "type" of worker (Baruch *et al.*, 2013; Dickmann and Baruch, 2011).

Marx and Engels (2012) contended that there was a universalizing tendency inherent in capitalism, with the capitalist class trawling the world looking for new spaces of accumulation to be generated from the circuit of capital (Robinson, 2004). The expansion of capitalism, it is argued, inevitably leads to a need for a greater scale of operations for corporations as well as their constant restructuring and transformation to maximize capital accumulation. There is then, according to these scholars, an "implacable logic of global accumulation" (Robinson, 2007, p. 5). The history of capitalism is the history of its desire to universalize itself through its agents.

While critical scholars might accept the universalization of capitalism as an ongoing process, Panitch and Gindin (2012) have argued that this is not an inevitable law of nature. In their view, "it was the immense strength of USA capitalism which made globalization possible" (Panitch and Gindin, 2012, p. 1). As they pointed out, not only did Marx argue that capitalism would "nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere", but he also noted that while national barriers would be "constantly overcome", they would also be "constantly posited". Globalization then is not an *inevitable* universalizing tendency of capitalism, but a project that ultimately requires human agency.

These ideas have important implications for the way *global careers* are viewed. If capitalism is viewed as a constructed form of exploitative economic system, rather than an inevitable outcome of the operation of "free-markets", the purpose of global careers will be subject to a different and distinctive form of interpretation. For example, the vast majority of the research on global careers has focused on executives, managers and professionals (EMPs), and essentially, the work of managerialist, agentic and curatorial scholars in the careers field is focused on what critical thinkers have termed the "transnational capitalist class" (Carroll, 2010; Sklair, 2001). The purpose of a *global career* from this critical perspective is to construct and develop agents of and for the global capitalism. They are constituted by the global capitalism, not as a natural outcome of an inevitable process of globalization, but created to materially sustain and perpetuate this system.

The transnational capitalist class not only are "career capitalists" (Inkson and Arthur, 2001) but also pursue *capitalist careers*. A critical knowledge interest and discourse rooted in such a view problematizes global careers and challenges the dominant managerialism inherent in the careers literature. Global careers are not inevitable because the globalization of business is inevitable; rather, global careers and the global careerist have to be constructed to serve the purposes of a global capitalism which is constantly being remade as an economic, social and political system of global exploitation. While professional and managerial global careerists are made by and for global capitalism, a critical discourse also highlights how they are also themselves subject to exploitation and abuse within capital's global circuit of control (Willmott, 1997; Hassard *et al.*, 2012). The managerial, agentic and curatorial knowledge interests represented in the global career discourse serve to maintain and develop the idea that professional and managerial global careerists are neutral agents of inescapable global business forces and integration, rather than ideological agents, knowingly or not, of an exploitative global economic agenda.

Postcolonial analysis (Jack and Westwood, 2009; Prasad, 2003) offers a further critical approach to the study of global careers. Postcolonial scholars highlight that there would be no modernity without coloniality (Mignolo, 2011), and that the discourse (and form) of globalization in the twenty-first century has developed from the colonial past. Critical postcolonial discourse proposes that globalization is a continuation of Western domination of the world, particularly economic:

> Notions of globalization are inextricably linked with the continued development of First World economies, creating new forms of colonial control in the so-called "postcolonial" era. Thus, globalization becomes the new global colonialism, based on the historical structure of capitalism and is a process that executes the objectives of colonialism with greater efficiency and rationalism (Banerjee and Linstead, 2001, p. 683).

The postcolonial discourse offers a further critical knowledge interest concerning global careers. Here, a global career is a form of *imperial careering*. As administrators, adventurers and others from the Western colonizing countries organized and managed colonies from the fifteenth century onwards, at present, in a continuation of this process, they continue to do so as representatives of global neo-liberal institutions (IMF, World Bank and European Central Bank), multinational corporate interests and Western professional knowledge and expertise. The global careerist as a subject in this discourse is not a neutral "cosmopolitan" managing the interests of global business with a "global mindset" and in accordance with equitable rules for its governance, but is rather a

colonial careerist pursuing a colonial career and supporting an international structure loaded in favour of Western imperialism and global capitalism. Their purpose is to maintain and perpetuate the predominance of a particular system of global business. The idea of a cosmopolitan with a "global mindset" is, from this perspective, a conceit hiding a more insidious purpose.

Our discussion above has been simplified to highlight the distinctiveness of critical approaches from managerial, agentic and curatorial knowledge interests. Yet, there are important research implications of pursuing critical knowledge interests in the study of global careers, keeping in mind the words of Alvesson and Sandberg (2014, p. 980) concerning *box changing*, where box-changing researchers:

> […] instead of looking at how to further refine its existing literature, the box changer reaches outwards for new ideas, theories or methods that can be used to change the box in some significant way.

To do this, it is important to reinforce the point that academic knowledge interests in management and organization studies generally and careers studies specifically are ideological as much as academic. The discourses reflected in academic knowledge interests about global careers are not simply reflecting an objective reality in the organizational world but are actively involved in creating it in a certain way. The managerial, curatorial and agentic academic interests accept a view of globalized business as inevitable from which they construct an idea of global careers and global careerists. They work to define what is normal and normalized on this topic and to create the box within which work in this area is undertaken. Critical knowledge interests and the discourse it develops aim to challenge this normative construction of global careers through denaturalization, deconstruction and problematization. To do this in relation to global careers discourse, it is necessary initially to problematize the view of globalization accepted in the global careers literature. In what follows some directions for more critical box-changing research on global careers are offered.

Approaches to the study of global careers driven by critical knowledge interests can be undertaken at macro, meso and micro levels with recognition as to how the three levels are closely interconnected and how they articulate a relationship between agency and structure. For example, EMPs are the subjects of most work on global careers. They are crucial to global capitalism in that they are its controllers, overseers and agents; yet, they are also themselves controlled (Willmott, 1997). The global business system requires that global managers and professionals internalize a particular subjectivity such that they self-regulate their own behaviour and role. More scrutiny should be given to identity regulation of the global managerial and professional careerist, as it is designed to fit expanding global capitalism (Hassard *et al.*, 2012). If the globalization of business is designed and constructed, it is important to understand the design of the global career and careerist. Managerial knowledge interests in global careers is developing a discourse aimed at doing this, but with little attempt to critique and deconstruct the purpose that lays behind this and, in particular, how it is part of the process of creating (from a critical perspective) a transnational capitalist class (Sklair, 2001). It is important, we think, to undertake empirical research that seeks to understand global careers in a context where global capitalism is constructed and is not inevitable (Hassard *et al.*, 2012).

This implies investigating not only the identity construction of a global careerist but also what their role and purpose is in the context of transnational business. This is not only the global manager who is prepared and sent by Western MNCs, but increasing those from China, Russia and other "emerging" countries (Lee, 2009).

Also, because the study of global careers has implicitly or explicitly focused on EMPs driven by managerial and agentic knowledge interests, it has tended to ignore the issues of gender, race and sexuality, and in particular, issues relating to how dimensions of disadvantage or difference intersect to shape the experience of global careers within global capitalism. Such issues might usefully be investigated. There is some work in this area, but it is not located within a critical framework (Al-Ariss and Syed, 2011), or it is not specifically about global careers (Hilde and Mills, 2015; Thomson and Jones, 2015). Moreover, while some authors have sought to include migrants other than skilled migrants in a consideration of global careers, such work, in our view, needs to be undertaken with greater sensitivity and nuance. Skilled migrants might move to the West to better their "career" prospects, but although they are contributing to capital's global expansion, they are subject themselves to forms of discrimination, exclusion and exploitation through race, gender and class (Dahlstedt, 2011; Ghosh, 2014; Neiterman and Bourgeault, 2012; Thomson and Jones, 2015). How do these issues connect to the pursuit of a global career and with what consequences? More detailed, qualitative work is required in the global careers field to get closer to the lived experiences of global careerists (defined more broadly), partly to *de-glamourize* the way in which global mobility and global careers is often presented and portrayed in the managerialist literature (Costas, 2013).

Issues of mobility and the movement of people and, its connection to "global careers", might also be viewed in the context of a "colonial capitalism". The global economic realities of "uneven development" and continued colonial exploitation are the backdrop against which global mobility occurs. To ignore the broad macro environments can lead to the claim that economic migrancy is predominantly a career issue or one of "brain drain/gain", or "talent flow", when it is related fundamentally to historical and contemporary colonial and capitalist issues of exploitation and exclusion. For example, localization policies and immigration regulation often act to exclude rather than include many in the pursuit of a "global career" (Thomson and Jones, 2015). Critical knowledge interests about global careers should be concerned with denaturalizing the "natural" discourse on these issues perpetuated in managerialist approaches. Global careers scholars might usefully look more at the lived experiences of mobility and migration and its impact on the very idea of a global career. It is not always a positive or beneficial experience (Richardson and Zikic, 2007).

These are only a very few of the topics and issues that might be fertile grounds for developing a critical knowledge interest-driven discourse about global careers. It is important to note that such critically driven knowledge is not about global careers *per se* but about problematizing and deconstructing the very notion of a global career within the wider context in which it is discussed or, where it is constructed discursively and materially. This article has promoted a little bit of box-changing with respect to global careers such that the dominant discourse associated with this field deriving from managerial, agentic and curatorial knowledge interests is able to be challenged and confronted within the broader objective of developing a more multi-paradigmatic and critical approach to this field.

References

Al-Ariss, A. and Syed, J. (2011), "Capital mobilization of skilled migrants: a relational perspective", *British Journal of Management*, Vol. 22 No. 2, pp. 286-304.

Alvesson, M. and Sandberg, J. (2014), "Habitat and habitus: boxed-in versus box-breaking research", *Organization Studies*, Vol. 35 No. 7, pp. 967-987.

Alvesson, M. and Willmott, H. (2002), "Identity regulation as organizational control: producing the appropriate individual", *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 39 No. 5, pp. 619-644.

Arthur, M.B. (1994), "The boundaryless career: a new perspective for organizational inquiry", *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, Vol. 15 No. 4, pp. 295-306.

Banai, M. and Harry, W. (2004), "Boundaryless global careers: the international itinerants", *International Studies of Management and Organization*, Vol. 34 No. 3, pp. 96-120.

Banerjee, S.B., Carter, C. and Clegg, S. (2009), "Managing globalization", in Alvesson, M., Willmott, H. and Bridgman, T. (Eds), *Handbook of Critical Management Studies*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 186-212.

Banerjee, S.B. and Linstead, S. (2001), "Globalization, multiculturaism and other fictions: colonialism for the new millennium?", *Organization*, Vol. 8 No. 4, pp. 683-722.

Bartley, T. and Child, C. (2014), "Shaming the corporation: the social production of targets and the anti-sweatshop movement", *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 79 No. 4, pp. 653-679.

Baruch, Y., Dickmann, M., Altman, Y. and Bournois, F. (2013), "Exploring international work: types and dimensions of global careers", *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 24 No. 12, pp. 2369-2393.

Brumley, K.M. (2014), "The gendered ideal worker narrative: professional women's and men's work experiences in the new economy at a Mexican company", *Gender and Society*, Vol. 28 No. 5, pp. 799-823.

Burawoy, M. (2015), "Facing an unequal world", *Current Sociology*, Vol. 63 No. 1, pp. 5-34.

Cameron, A. and Palan, R. (2004), *The Imagined Economies of Globalization*, Sage, London.

Cappellen, T. and Janssens, M. (2005), "Career paths of global managers: towards future research", *Journal of World Business*, Vol. 40 No. 4, pp. 348-360.

Cappellen, T. and Janssens, M. (2010), "The career reality of global managers: an examination of career triggers", *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 21 No. 11, pp. 1884-1910.

Carroll, W.K. (2010), *The Making of the Transnational Capitalist Class*, Zed Books, London.

Costas, J. (2013), "Problematizing mobility: a metaphor of stickiness, non-places and the kinetic elite", *Organization Studies*, Vol. 34 No. 10, pp. 1467-1485.

Dahlstedt, I. (2011), "Occupational match: over- and undereducation among immigrants in the Swedish labor market", *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, Vol. 12 No. 3, pp. 349-367.

Dickmann, M. and Baruch, Y. (2011), *Global Careers*, Routledge, New York, NY.

Dickmann, M. and Harris, H. (2005), "Developing career capital for global careers: the role of international assignments", *Journal of World Business*, Vol. 40 No. 4, pp. 399-408.

du Gay, P. (1994), "Making up managers: bureaucracy, enterprise and the liberal art of separation", *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 45 No. 4, pp. 655-674.

Eriksen, T.H. (2007), *Globalization*, Berg, London.

Fairclough, N. (2003), *Analysing Discourse*, Routledge, London.

Foucault, M. (2002), *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Routledge, London.

Friedman, T.L. (1999), *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, NY.

Gaggiotti, H (2013), "Making sense of global careerism in Argentina: the structure, culture and context", in Reis, C. and Baruch, Y. (Eds), *Careers without Borders*, Routledge, Abingdon, pp. 107-134.

Ghosh, S. (2014), "A passage to Canada: the differential migrations of South Asian skilled workers to Toronto", *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, Vol. 14 No. 4, pp. 715-735.

Hassard, J., Morris, J. and McCann, L. (2012), "'My brilliant career'? New organizational forms and changing managerial careers in Japan, the UK, and USA", *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 49 No. 3, pp. 571-599.

Hilde, R. and Mills, A. (2015), "Does it make sense when discriminatory practice becomes 'normal': making critical sense of professional immigrants' experience in Canada", *Critical Perspectives on International Business*, Vol. 11 No. 2, pp. 173-188.

Inkson, K. and Arthur, M.B. (2001), "How to be a successful career capitalist", *Organizational Dynamics*, Vol. 30 No. 1, pp. 48-61.

Inkson, K., Gunz, H., Ganesh, S. and Roper, J. (2012), "Boundaryless careers: bringing back boundaries", *Organization Studies*, Vol. 33 No. 3, pp. 323-340.

Ituma, A. and Simpson, R. (2009), "The 'boundaryless' career and career boundaries: applying an institutionalist perspective to ICT workers in the context of Nigeria", *Human Relations*, Vol. 62 No. 5, pp. 727-761.

Jack, G. and Westwood, R. (2009), *International and Cross-Cultural Management Studies: A Postcolonial Reading*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.

Jokinen, T., Brewster, C. and Suutari, V. (2008), "Career capital during international work experiences: contrasting self-initiated expatriate experiences and assignee expatriation", *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 19 No. 6, pp. 979-998.

Lazarova, M., Cerdin, J.L. and Liao, Y. (2014), "The internationalism career anchor", *International Journal of Management and Organization*, Vol. 44 No. 2, pp. 9-33.

Lee, C.K. (2009), "Raw encounters: Chinese managers, African workers and the politics of casualization in Africa's Chinese enclaves", *China Quarterlt*, Vol. 199 No. 1, pp. 647-666.

Makela, K. and Suutari, V. (2009), "Global careers: a social capital paradox", *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 20 No. 5, pp. 992-1008.

Marx, K. and Engels, F. (2012), *The Communist Manifesto*, Verso, London.

Mayrhofer, W. and Reiche, S.B. (2014), "Guest editorial: context and global mobility: diverse global work arrangements", *Journal of Global Mobility* Vol. 2 No. 2.

Menjivar, C. (2007), "Global processes and local lives: Guatemalan women's work and gender relations at home and abroad", *International Labour and Working Class History*, Vol. 70 No. 1, pp. 86-105.

Michandani, K., Maitra, S. and Sangha, J. (2012), "Treats and threats: global cultures in India's call centers", in Prasad, A. (Ed.), *Against the Grain: Advances in Postcolonial Organization Studies*, CBS Press, Copenhagen, pp. 135-154.

Mignolo, W.D. (2011), *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*, Duke University Press, Durham.

Mirchandani, K. (2004), "Practices of global capital: gaps, cracks and ironies in transnational call centres in India", *Global Networks*, Vol. 4 No. 4, pp. 355-374.

Murray, G. (2010), "Framing globalization and work: a research agenda", *The Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 52 No. 1, pp. 11-25.

Neiterman, E. and Bourgeault, I.L. (2012), "Conceptualizing professional diaspora: international medical graduates in Canada", *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, Vol. 13 No. 1, pp. 39-57.

Panitch, L. and Gindin, S. (2012), *The Making of Global Capitalism*, Verso, London.

Parker, M., Cheney, G., Fournier, V. and Land, C. (Eds) (2014), *The Routledge Companion to Alternative Organization*, Routledge, Abingdon.

Prasad, A. (Ed.) (2003), *Postcolonial Theory and Organizational Analysis*, Palgrave-Macmillan, New York, NY.

Pringle, J.K. and Mallon, M. (2003), "Challenges for the boundaryless career odyssey", *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 14 No. 5, pp. 839-853.

Reis, C. and Baruch, Y..) (Eds (2012), *Careers without Borders*, Routledge, London.

Richardson, J. and Zikic, J. (2007), "The darker side of international academic careers", *Career Development International*, Vol. 12 No. 2, pp. 164-186.

Robinson, W.I. (2004), *A Theory of Global Capitalism*, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD.

Robinson, W.I. (2007), "Beyond the theory of imperialism: global capitalism and the transnational state", *Societies without Borders*, Vol. 2 No. 1, pp. 5-26.

Roper, J., Ganesh, S. and Inkson, K. (2010), "Neoliberalism and knowledge interests in boundaryless careers discourse", *Work, Employment and Society*, Vol. 14 No. 2, pp. 661-679.

Scurry, T., Blenkinsopp, J. and Hay, A. (2013), "A UK perspective on global careers", in Reis, C. and Baruch, Y. (Eds), *Careers without Borders*, Routledge, London, pp. 31-54.

Shaffer, M.A., Kraimer, M.L., Chen, Y-P. and Bolino, M.C. (2012), "Choices, challenges, and career consequences of global work experiences: a review and future agenda", *Journal of Management*, Vol. 38 No. 4, pp. 1282-1327.

Sklair, L (2001), *The Transnational Capitalist Class*, Blackwell, Oxford.

Stahl, G.K. and Cerdin, J.L. (2004), "Global careers in French and German multinational corporations", *Journal of Management Development*, Vol. 23 No. 9, pp. 885-902.

Suutari, V. (2003), "Global managers: career orientation, career tracks, life-style implications and career commitment", *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, Vol. 18 No. 3, pp. 185-207.

Suutari, V. and Milla, T. (2004), "Career anchors of managers with global careers", *Journal of Management Development*, Vol. 23 No. 9, pp. 833-847.

Suutari, V. and Smale, A. (2008), "Designing IB curricula for future global careerists: a boundaryless career perspective", *Journal of Teaching in International Business*, Vol. 19 No. 2, pp. 167-191.

Suutari, V., Tornikoski, C. and Makela, L. (2012), "Career decision making of global careerists", *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 23 No. 16, pp. 3455-3478.

Tams, S. and Arthur, M.B. (2010), "New directions for boundaryless careers: agency and interdependence in a changing world", *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, Vol. 31 No. 5, pp. 629-646.

Tarique, I. and Schuler, R. (2008), "Emerging issues and challenges in global staffing: a North American perspective", *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 19 No. 8, pp. 1397-1415.

Thomson, K. and Jones, J. (2015), "Being and becoming a professional accountant in Canada: mimicry and menace in the transitions of migrant accountants", *Critical Perspectives on International Business*, Vol. 11 No. 2, pp. 156-172.

Tung, R.L. (1998), "American expatriates abroad: from neophytes to cosmopolitans", *Journal of World Business*, Vol. 33 No. 2, pp. 125-144.

Vance, C.M. (2005), "The personal quest for building global competence: a taxonomy of self-initiating career path strategies for gaining business experience abroad", *Journal of World Business*, Vol. 40 No. 4, pp. 374-385.

Vance, C.M. and McNulty, Y. (2014), "Why and how women and men acquire global career experience", *International Journal of Management and Organization*, Vol. 44 No. 2, pp. 34-54.

Willmott, H. (1997), "Rethinking management and managerial work: capitalism, control and subjectivity", *Human Relations*, Vol. 50 No. 11, pp. 1329-1360.

About the authors

Steve McKenna is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: smckenna@yorku.ca

Amanda Peticca-Harris is an Assistant Professor in the Department of People, Organizations, and Society at Grenoble Ecole de Management in Grenoble, France. She is currently in the final stages of completing her PhD in Human Resource Management at York University in Toronto, Canada. Her research focuses on cultural consumption, contemporary careers, working time and working conditions, and qualitative research methodologies. She has published in *Organization, Journal of Business Ethics*, and *Journal of Management Development*.