

RESEARCH REPORT

REVIEWING GLOBAL CAREER DIMENSIONS:  
TOWARDS A FUTURE RESEARCH MODEL

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## **REVIEWING GLOBAL CAREER DIMENSIONS: TOWARDS A FUTURE RESEARCH MODEL**

### **ABSTRACT**

Considering the changing nature of the career concept, we conduct a review of both recent career theory and research findings on global managers' careers. Relying on recent career theory, we first identify different individual and organizational dimensions that are characteristic for contemporary careers. Guided by these career dimensions, we examine the research findings of expatriate studies to assess their meaningfulness for global careers. While this review confirms the dimensions as identified from career theory, it also suggests the relevance of an additional organizational career dimension and a new domain of cultural career dimensions. The result of both reviews is a research model that approaches global careers at the intersection of individual, organizational and cultural domains.

## INTRODUCTION

Prior to the '90s, the majority of studies on expatriate managers mainly examined cross-cultural adjustment, repatriation and the HR policies supporting the international assignment, paying little attention to the relationship between international assignments and careers. Scholars only commented on the international assignment as a 'haphazard, ill-planned affair' with no clear relationship to career development and advancement (Mendenhall, Dunbar & Oddou, 1987) or briefly mentioned its side-effects on career advancement (Adler, 1984; Miller, 1972). In the beginning of the '90s, however, Feldman and Thomas (1992) argued that longer term issues such as career development can be as important as the shorter term issues that facilitate expatriate success. Although this plea led to the incorporation of the notion of career into expatriate studies, most scholars tend to study career as it relates to other outcomes such as facilitating adjustment (Feldman & Tompson, 1993; Selmer, 1998) or repatriation (Harvey, 1989; Stroh, 1995). Considerable less research has focused on the career paths of expatriate managers as such, understanding the ways in which global careers unfold.

It is the aim of this theoretical paper to contribute to the study of global careers by developing a research model in which the career dimensions to understand global managers' careers are specified. These career dimensions refer to different factors that potentially influence global managers' careers. We prefer here to use the term global managers instead of expatriate managers as it is our intention to develop a research model to understand careers of managers who work internationally. From our perspective, global managers are managers with international experience which can be gained through traditional expatriate assignments but also through short-term international projects or self-initiated foreign assignments.

To identify the career dimensions of our research model, we rely on recent career literature as well as on a review of research findings on global managers' careers. We first consider the meaning of contemporary careers as career scholars have intensively discussed the changing nature of the career concept. After the introduction of the notion of the boundaryless career (Arthur, 1994), one has pointed to the increasing relevance of inter-firm mobility (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996), the internal career (Schein, 1996) and individual responsibility towards career development (Mirvis & Hall, 1996). As we assume that these changes are as relevant for global careers as for domestic ones, we start our search for meaningful career

dimensions in this literature.

We then turn to the review of research findings on expatriate and international managers. Guided by the career dimensions as identified from the career literature, we conduct a review on empirical studies that considered the notion of career when studying global managers. This approach allows us to assess the meaningfulness of the career dimensions, the gaps in previous research and additional career dimensions to include that are specific to global careers. The result of this examination of career literature and research findings is a research model that specifies the relevant career dimensions to understand and study global careers.

The paper is organized in three main sections. In the first section, we identify the most important career dimensions as discussed in recent literature on the changing nature of the career concept. In the following section, we start our review on expatriate studies and discuss the value of the identified career dimensions as well as identify additional career dimensions. In the third and last section, we present our research model on global careers and formulate implications for future research.

## **INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL CAREER DIMENSIONS**

To understand global managers' careers, we turn in this section to recent career literature and identify different career dimensions that career theorists have suggested as ways of thinking about contemporary careers. The term career is often defined as the unfolding sequence of a person's work experiences (Hughes, 1958) over time (Arthur, Hall & Lawrence, 1989) within an occupational or organizational context (Van Maanen & Barley, 1984). Recent career literature (e.g. Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Collin & Young, 2000) however has indicated that the meaning of the term career has shifted. Introducing the notion of 'boundaryless career' as opposite to 'organizational careers', scholars (Arthur, 1994; Defillippi & Arthur, 1994) have pointed to changing organizational career contexts and the evolution of careers away from single employment settings. In combination with the emerging notion of the internal career, which considers the subjective sense of where one is going in work life (Schein, 1996), this literature started to emphasize conscious and responsible decision making in career choices. Following the career tradition (Schein, 1978; Bailyn, 1989), we organize the most important components of this new career concept into individual and organizational dimensions.

## **Individual Career Dimensions**

Reviewing the career literature, we identify three individual dimensions that seem to capture the complexity of modern-day careers: career competencies, locus of career development responsibility, and work/family boundary.

**Career competencies.** Given the emergence of the internal career and the multiple changes in organizational contexts, career scholars (Arthur, Claman & Defillippi, 1995; Defillippi & Arthur, 1994, 1996) have argued that competency accumulation should occur at the level of the individual, introducing three career competencies: know-why, know-how, and know-whom.

*Know-why* competencies answer the question ‘Why?’ as it relates to career motivation, personal meaning and identification (Defillippi & Arthur, 1994; Gunz, Evans & Jalland, 2000). While some scholars (Weick & Berlinger, 1989) encourage individuals to decouple their identities from their work experience, most scholars (Mirvis & Hall, 1996; Mohrman & Cohen, 1995) discuss this competency in terms of identifying personally with work and integrating their work experiences into a coherent self-picture.

*Know-how* competencies reflect career relevant skills and job-related knowledge (Defillippi & Arthur, 1994) that are portable (Sullivan, 1999), flexible (Brousseau, Driver, Eneroth & Larsson, 1996) and transferable (Baker & Aldrich, 1996). This emphasis on personal accumulation of information and knowledge leads some authors to define a career in terms of what is learned from experiences: the information, knowledge and perspectives acquired or changed over time (Bird, 1996) and to stress high occupational commitment (Defillippi & Arthur, 1994).

*Know-whom* competencies reflect career relevant networks (Defillippi & Arthur, 1994) that can take on multiple meanings. Some authors consider these networks in terms of occupational communities or communities of practice that provide a reference group for shared problem solving (Defillippi & Arthur, 1994; 1996). Other scholars stress inter-firm contacts or client, buyer and supplier relationships for information about job opportunities and other resources (Raider & Burt, 1996; Jones & Bergmann Lichtenstein, 2000). Still other scholars mention developmental relationships that reside outside one’s place of work such as community groups, friendship circles or one’s former educational institutions (Thomas & Higgins, 1996).

**Locus of career development responsibility.** Because of the increasing importance of the internal career and uncertainties in organizational contexts, career

scholars (Mirvis & Hall, 1994; 1996) have emphasized the individual's responsibility for career development. Individuals' subjective sense of where one is going in one's work life is taking precedence over individuals' expectations of organizational defined career paths (Schein, 1996), shifting the responsibility for personal and professional growth to the individual. In addition, the uncertainties in organizational contexts through which current organizations are no longer able to steer people through prescribed career paths contribute to this shift. This emphasis on individual's career responsibility gears attention towards idiosyncratic career journeys (Dany, Mallon & Arthur, 2003), and employees as free-agent managers and professionals (Mirvis & Hall, 1996), willing to go anywhere, at any time (Brousseau et al., 1996).

**Work/family boundary.** While the previous career dimensions appeared because of emerging internal career orientation and the boundaryless form of organizations, other career scholars (Fletcher & Bailyn, 1996; Eaton & Bailyn, 2000) started to question the boundary between work and family. As private life is gaining importance, professional careers are profoundly shaped by family, the career and life choices of his/her partner, and by children and elders who need care and time. In addition, an individual's career cannot be understood outside the person's relationship with one or more other persons because the division between work life and personal life is much more blurred these days (Goffee & Jones, 2000).

### **Organizational Career Dimensions**

Besides the three individual career dimensions, we identify four organizational career dimensions that reflect the changing nature of the organizational career context: short-term, project based employment, cellular organizational design, knowledge sharing systems and external organizational contacts.

**Short-term, project based employment.** In response to increasingly turbulent economic conditions, organizations tend to seek flexibility through reduction of permanent employees and an increasing use of subcontractors or temporary employees (Carey & Hazelbaker, 1986; Swinnerton & Wial, 1995). While short-term, project-based employment has long been characteristic of some types of jobs and some occupational groups, scholars (Tolbert, 1996) argue that such employment arrangements are now being extended to a wider proportion of the workforce.

**Cellular organizational design.** Together with the trend of limited-term employment relationships, organizational forms are moving away from large

bureaucratic structures towards more fluid structures such as 'networked' and 'cellular' organisations (Miles & Snow, 1995; 1996). A cellular organization is made up of cells such as self-managing teams or autonomous business units that can exist on their own, but through cooperation with other cells can produce more knowledge and execute more complex functions. In this view, an organization functions not as an employer, but as a facilitating mechanism to promote the development and transfer of professional skills.

**Knowledge sharing systems.** As the basis of new organizational forms is knowledge, knowledge sharing systems are put forward to facilitate continuous growth and renewal (Miles & Snow, 1996). Knowledge and information need to be shared by individuals and teams as this drives learning opportunities and development (Brown & Duguid, 1991).

**External organizational contacts.** A final trend behind the emergence of the new career concept involves the increased outsourcing or spin-off of activities previously completed in-house (Defillippi & Arthur, 1994), making former employees one of several external customers or suppliers. Other external activities that increase are alliances with customers, suppliers or competitors as inter-firm collaboration provides an effective way to build new knowledge (Hagedoorn & Duysters, 2002).

## **DIMENSIONS OF GLOBAL MANAGERS' CAREERS:**

### **AN EXAMINATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS**

In selecting articles to include in our review of research findings on careers of global managers, we scanned 3 leading journals in international management studies: Journal of International Business Studies, Journal of World Business, and The International Journal of Human Resource Management. For the first two journals, we considered articles between 1970 and 2003 as this time-span allows us to discuss the focal issues as well as gaps within research on global managers' careers; for the third journal, we scanned articles since its start in 1990 until 2003. We focused on empirical articles in which the terms expatriate, international, foreign or global manager appeared in the title or abstract, which resulted in a first pool of 103 articles. From this group of 103 studies, we selected the articles that explicitly examined or discussed the relationship between global managers and their career. This selection resulted in 33 articles, forming the subject of our review. The other 70 articles



focused on several other issues such as adjustment (18), family (4), repatriation (3), leadership (8), gender (8), HRM policies (20), cultural descriptions (8) and third country nationals (1). Although these studies sometimes refer to particular career dimensions, we did not consider them in this review. Because the focus of this article is on understanding careers of global managers, we restrict our discussion to those studies that explicitly made the link between the two concepts.

We organize this review by the different career dimensions as identified in the previous section. This allows us to assess the meaningfulness of the identified career dimensions for global careers as well as to identify additional career dimensions specific to global careers. As one study can provide indications for several career dimensions, we allow one article to be categorized under more than one career dimension. However, at the same time, we include only those aspects of the study that were explicitly related to careers. An overview of this classification can be found in the review table (see Appendix).

### **Individual Career Dimensions**

**Career competencies - Know-why.** Four of the 33 articles examined the know-why competency of global managers or their motivation to pursue a global career. While three studies (Clegg & Gray, 2002; Mayrhofer & Scullion, 2002; Stahl, Miller & Tung, 2002) considered this career dimension as part of a broader research question, one study (Peltonen, 1998) focused exclusively on the way in which expatriates interpret their international career experience and career cycle.

Surveying Australian expatriates in Thailand, Glegg and Gray (2002) found career progression, remuneration package offered and change in lifestyle the top three motivational issues to pursue or accept an international assignment. The majority of these respondents believed the foreign posting to accelerate their careers, although only 3 per cent of them believed the primary reason for being in Asia was as part of a planned career structure. In contrast, Stahl and colleagues (2002) surveying German expatriate managers in 59 countries, found motives such as personal challenge and professional development to be more important than opportunities for career advancement. These expatriates placed a high intrinsic value on the international experience per se, especially on the opportunities it brings for personality development and enrichment of their personal lives. The study of Mayrhofer and Scullion (2002) found both intrinsic and extrinsic factors to be important goals.

Gaining international experience was the most important as well as most frequently mentioned goal for the female expatriates in this study, followed by high income, avoidance of unemployment and living abroad. Increased promotion chances was the second most frequently mentioned goal, however not attributed much importance as a goal.

In a study focusing exclusively on expatriate experience as an event in the process of self-development and learning, Peltonen (1998) interviewed Finnish expatriates about their career and work experience. Relying on a narrative approach, he identified a bureaucratic, occupational and enterprising discourse. The bureaucratic discourse considers careers as accumulating experiences in the existing hierarchy of knowledge; the occupational discourse interprets work experience as the development and transfer of occupational knowledge across national borders, and the enterprising discourse highlights the individual initiative and mechanisms of self-actualizing.

In sum, the results of the studies on career motivation and personal meaning show this career competency to be meaningful to understand global careers. However, not all findings point to a personal identification with work as suggested by the changing nature of the career concept. The finding of a bureaucratic discourse (Peltonen, 1998) suggests that even rather 'traditional' discourses remain useful to global managers, while extrinsic factors such as remuneration packages preserve their significance as motivator.

**Career competencies - Know-how.** Four of the 33 articles reported the importance of skills in the pursuit of an international career. Early in the 1970's, Miller (1972) already emphasized the consequences for expatriates' career development if managers responsible for international staffing select individuals with superior skills and performance. The strategy of these decision makers to regulate their own uncertainty by means of appointing a candidate with high qualifications and proven performance was considered to be suboptimal for the appointee's career development. The selected expatriates were overqualified for the assignment, preventing their personal growth and development from international experience.

The more recent studies, however, tend to consider an international assignment as an excellent opportunity to acquire skills and experience. Examining the importance of an international assignment to career development, Tung (1998) found that the majority of expatriates viewed their overseas assignment as an opportunity for skill

acquisition. In a similar vein, Stahl et al. (2002) found that expatriates were optimistic that the assignment would help them improve their professional, managerial and intercultural skills. Research on female expatriates (Culpan & Wright, 2002) mentioned specifically the use and development of language, negotiation and listening skills. These skills helped expatriate women managers not only to communicate better but also to deal with discrimination at the workplace.

Overall, these studies point to the meaningfulness of the know-how competency to understand global careers. The recent studies all consider the international assignment an excellent opportunity to acquire skills that are not available at home and to become cosmopolitans (Tung, 1998). Despite this emphasis, little attention however is given to the particular types of skills that can be developed through working internationally.

**Career competencies – Know-whom.** Three expatriate studies considered the know-whom competency or use of social networks. Two studies (Linehan, 2002; Linehan & Scullion, 2002) discussed the significance of social networks in the case of female expatriate managers. Linehan (2002) identified the exclusion from (male) influence networks as one of the most important challenges for female expatriates, forcing them into isolation. However, it is exactly these business and social networks that Linehan and Scullion (2002) found to influence promotion and acceptance.

Studying the boundary spanning behavior of expatriates, Au and Fukuda (2002) found that having culturally diverse social networks may not only help expatriates with boundary spanning activities, which can be most useful to the organization, but also gives them new career aspirations. A diverse social network, constituted of a variety of contacts, internal or external to the organization, may give expatriates more divergent perspectives concerning their career. While the emphasis of the study lies on the utility of networks towards the organization, the results showed that they can be equally important to the individual.

These three recent studies all indicate that access to and use of social networks is a meaningful component of the global career. Similar to discussions in career theory, these studies show how networks can take on different meanings. While business networks tend to help with future promotional opportunities (Linehan & Scullion, 2002), culturally diverse networks tend to stress community resources and increase the expatriate's perception of possessing power (Au & Fukuda, 2002).

**Locus of career development responsibility.** Seven of the 33 articles explicitly emphasized the prominent responsibility of expatriates in their own career development. Examining the personal career intentions of expatriates, Selmer (1998) found a clear positive association between the presence of personal intentions and both socio-cultural and psychological adjustment. If one intends to have an expatriate career, positive efforts are exerted to get adjusted to such a life (Selmer, 1998). Similar, other studies stressed the individual's responsibility for career development in terms of expatriates' commitment to their careers instead of to the organization (Lazarova & Caligiuri, 2001), and the value of an international posting for the experiences and opportunities it brings for personal development and career enhancement (Tung, 1998; Stahl et al., 2002).

In addition, a study on female expatriate managers (Culpan & Wright, 2002) emphasized the crucial role of women's own responsibility in their career development. Culpan and Wright (2002) found women to plan their own careers, with little or even no help from their companies.

Some authors went even further in emphasizing the individual's responsibility, redefining the expatriate assignment as an overseas experience (Inkson, Pringle, Arthur & Barry, 1997) or a self-initiated foreign assignment (Suutari & Brewster, 2000). Both studies questioned the assumption that working internationally implies being sent by an employer. In contrast, they stress individual initiative and making own arrangements to obtain a foreign employment contract.

In sum, recent expatriate studies clearly indicate that the organization is no longer the primary decision maker regarding international work experiences. The individual takes full, and sometimes only, responsibility in his or her international career development. In addition, these studies seem to regard an international assignment as primarily having an impact on the internal career through the acquisition of knowledge, skills and experiences. The shift in locus of responsibility therefore seems to go along with an emphasis on the intrinsic value of international work, a particular response to the know- why-question.

**Work/family boundary.** Three expatriate studies indicated that the balance between work and family life seemed to play a pivotal role in the expatriate career. Studying female expatriates, Linehan (2002) found that establishing a balance between an international career, a relationship and raising a child is one of the primary challenges that female expatriates encounter in pursuing an expatriate career.

In a study on dual-career couples, Harvey (1998) discussed how the interrelated nature of work and family compounds difficulties in making the choice to relocate and the conflicts which arise once the decision has been made. In specific, he found family characteristics and the stage of the career life cycle to be two important factors in individuals' willingness to relocate.

While the two studies above emphasized the problems that family life brings to an expatriate assignment, Tung (1998) also found that spending more time with the family while on assignment can be an effective coping mechanism. Especially older male expatriates tend to select this coping mechanism for dealing with the isolation experienced in living and working internationally.

In sum, these studies all show that the effective handling of a trailing spouse and family is an important factor in the successful completion of an international assignment. Global managers' careers are shaped by family and the partners' career and life choices.

**Summary.** Our examination of research findings shows that all individual career dimensions as identified from recent career literature are meaningful to study global careers. What strikes us, however, is that most of these studies tend to consider the individual career dimensions under study as rather isolated, independent of organizational career dimensions. They focus on the individual experience of global managers without considering the possible importance of the organizational contexts in which their career unfolds.

### **Organizational Career Dimensions**

**Short-term, project based employment.** Two studies (Forster, 1994; 2000) point to a change in the form of international assignment suggesting a shift from the traditional expatriate posting to more short-term cross-border transfers. Based on evidence from a longitudinal study of over 500 expatriates in UK companies, Forster (2000) expects that the international human resource policy of companies will evolve towards frequent cross-border job swops, short assignments or assignments to multi-cultural project teams. This change in form is due to the reluctance of employees to become globe-trotting international managers because of the personal and professional disruption that regular international relocations would entail (Forster, 2000), the high organizational cost of relocating employees and their families

(Forster 2000), and the experienced difficulties of repatriation as an atypical work-role career transition (Forster 1994).

Another change is that these short-term cross-border transfers will not be the domain of senior managers but will occur early in employees' careers. In early career stages, the learning curve is likely to be greater and employees are less likely to encounter family constraints (Forster, 2000).

Of all studies under review, Forster is the only scholar pointing to a trend towards more short-term employment. However, his strong argumentation that organizations will try to develop managers internationally through relying on project teams and short-term international postings rather than on traditional long-term country-based assignments, provides evidence for the meaningfulness of this organizational career dimension to understand global careers.

**Cellular organizational design.** Reviewing the different studies, we found no study discussing the organizational form of international companies in terms of cellular structures. However, related to organizational form, we found 4 expatriate studies that discussed job and organizational design as important factors influencing expatriates' careers. Three of these studies focused on task characteristics and examined how these characteristics influenced the degree of successful adjustment and satisfaction of the expatriate assignment. For instance, Naumann (1993) found that role clarity, skill variety, task identity and task significance were good predictors of intrinsic satisfaction. In a similar vein, Feldman and Thompson (1993) indicated that task characteristics that proved valuable to the overall career plan facilitated adjustment. Job changers, being expatriates or repatriates, were motivated by new challenges and responsibilities in the work itself. Linehan and Scullion (2002) came to a similar conclusion in their study on the repatriation of female international managers. These women experienced main difficulties in the re-entry process when they did not have a suitable position to return to in the home country, and by consequence experienced a loss of status and autonomy. These three studies all indicate that, if the task characteristics are perceived as career enhancing, they facilitate the successful execution of the assignment.

While the above studies tend to focus on task characteristics as career-enhancing, a fourth study (Suutari & Brewster, 2000) suggested the importance of both organizational design and task characteristics. In examining how expatriate assignments differ from self-initiated foreign assignments, Suutari and Brewster

(2000) found that traditional expatriates more frequently work in matrix organizations typical of big international companies while self-initiated foreign workers work more for the project type of organization. The latter also typically have more temporary contracts, work less often in managerial and marketing functions, and at lower organizational levels with expert-status. These findings suggest that this organizational dimension goes along with differences in locus of career development responsibility, an individual career dimension. Individuals who obtained international assignments under their own initiative tend to work for different types of employers, having also different types of jobs.

In sum, the studies under review didn't discuss cellular organizational design as a particular organizational component. However, this may not be that surprising as scholars in the career literature (Miles & Snow, 1996) acknowledge that this organizational form is only present in a few pioneering settings. Four studies however pointed to job and organizational design as a meaningful organizational career dimension to understand global careers. Especially, enriched jobs and flexible structures seem to reflect opportunities for growth and development. Instead of cellular organizational design, we therefore propose to label this organizational dimension 'organic organizational and job design'. This label refers to the classic distinction of mechanistic versus organic organization systems (Burns & Stalker, 1961) in which the latter is discussed as a dynamic and flexible structure.

**Knowledge sharing systems.** We only found one expatriate study that examined the ways in which the exchange of information and building of knowledge occurs in international organizations. Studying expatriate managers in Russia, Engelhard and Nägele (2003) examined the mutual exchange of knowledge between expatriates and local employees in Russia as a means to organizational learning. They concluded that learning is hindered by various barriers with the expatriates' pursuit of individual interests being an important one. Because the career advances for expatriates were linked primarily to the achievement of quantitative goals, they neglected local employee development and individual coaching. Expatriate managers also tended to focus on the transfer of technical skills rather than of soft management skills because the latter are difficult to codify.

Although only one study examined knowledge sharing and organizational learning, its findings clearly indicate the meaningfulness of this organizational career dimension to understand global careers. Studying the type of knowledge sharing

systems present in international organizations may offer valuable insights into global career issues.

**External organizational contacts.** Reviewing the different studies, we found no studies examining the relevance of outsourced activities and external contacts for global careers. This organizational dimension was however mentioned by Inkson and colleagues (1997) when studying the difference between expatriate assignment and overseas experience. In their section on managerial implications, they argue that organizations become less reliant on core hierarchical career-builders and more reliant on contingent contractors and short-term employees. Organizations will increasingly be obliged to locate the expertise they need outside the company and pay for that expertise as and when they use it. In this scenario, Inkson and colleagues (1997, p. 365) further argue that expatriates become 'project partners' to be related to in a mutual exchange of benefits over a finite period.

While there is no empirical evidence found for the trend towards external activities, the implications derived by Inkson and colleagues (1997) clearly point to this evolution. We therefore consider this organizational career dimension as meaningful for future research on global careers.

**Organizational support practices.** Next to the above dimensions, our review of studies suggests the inclusion of organizational support practices as an additional organizational dimension to study global careers. We came across 12 studies that focused on career issues within repatriation and HR policies, discussing organizational support as an important factor influencing career movements.

Most studies examined repatriation issues from the assumption of a traditional organizational career. For instance, Tung (1986) found that expatriates are concerned about their repatriation and chances of promotion within the corporate organizational hierarchy because of their prolonged absence from corporate headquarters. Other studies also found that the lack of advice (Forster & Johnsen, 1996) and uncertainty about the consequences of the expatriate assignment after its completion causes expatriates to leave the organization premature (Feldman & Thomas, 1992; Birdseye & Hill, 1995). A guaranteed re-entry at the hierarchical level at which one left (Tung, 1986) or clear promises on advancement prospects (Birdseye & Hill, 1995) were found to facilitate expatriates' success and to reduce turnover after repatriation (Feldman & Thomas, 1992).



Following this organizational career pathing, other studies examined the type of formal programs that would facilitate the repatriation process. Important topics in such programs that retain expatriates were career path counselling (Harvey, 1989), career development assistance (Harvey, 1989; Feldman & Thomas, 1992; Stroh, 1995) and the building of a logical chain of international and domestic assignments (Feldman & Thomas, 1992).

Besides formal repatriation programs, some studies pointed to the relevance of mentoring and realistic job previews as ways to facilitate both expatriation and repatriation. Mentoring was found to be an important aspect of formal organizational career development programs that facilitates adjustment to new job assignments (Feldman & Tompson, 1993) as well as plays a crucial role in repatriating expatriates and keeping them on a predetermined career track (Linehan & Scullion, 2002; Linehan, 2002). In addition, realistic job previews or having accurate information were found to be an important factor in employees' retention and career decisions (Feldman & Thomas, 1992; Feldman & Tompson, 1993). In a similar vein, Fish and Wood (1996) pointed to the importance of role clarity or providing full information about the performance expectations prior to the international assignment. Early notification of career moves and the supply of sufficient information were found to be important organizational practices, allowing employees to make informed career decisions.

While the above studies all tend to assume the traditional organizational career concept, two recent studies (Lazarova & Caligiuri, 2001; Suutari & Brewster, 2003) referred to the trend towards a boundaryless career. Examining several repatriate support practices, Lazarova and Caligiuri (2001) found that, in contrast to previous studies, organizational commitment was no predictor for repatriates' intention to leave. In this study, employees remained with the company if they felt their global experience to be valued. The key to retention after expatriation was the creation of an environment appreciative of global experience (Lazarova & Caligiuri, 2001). These authors (2001, p. 394) argued that, in a context of restructuring and outsourcing, organizational support of career investment activities through relevant repatriation practices might encourage retention, but without necessarily positively influencing long-term loyalty.

In a similar vein, the study of Suutari and Brewster (2003) found that Finnish highly educated professionals reported their career status outcome after repatriation

on average positive, however not always with the same employer. Given the repatriates' interest in changing employers, the authors argued the need for clear organizational support practices, preventing the international experience from getting lost to the organization making the initial investment.

In sum, the above studies on career issues within repatriation and HR policies suggest the inclusion of organizational support practices as an additional organizational career dimension. While these support practices may no longer have the intention to offer global managers guaranteed career advancement and life-long employment, the recent studies indicate that they can create an appreciative organizational context in which experience and skills are valued and can be further developed.

**Summary.** Our examination of research findings shows that all but one organizational career dimensions as identified from recent career literature are meaningful to study global careers. Although not many studies considered these organizational dimensions, their argumentation clearly points to the relevance of incorporating the organizational context into the study of global careers. The dimension of cellular organizational design was not found to be meaningful as it probably only occurs in pioneering settings. However, as some studies pointed to the relevance of job enrichment and flexible structures, we label this career dimension 'organic organizational and job design.' Finally, based upon numerous studies on career issues within repatriation and HR policies, we include organizational support practices as an additional dimension to understand global career movements.

### **Cultural Career Dimensions**

Next to individual and organizational career dimensions, the reviewed studies suggest a third domain to fully understand global managers' careers: the cultural context. This context involves factors that can influence global managers' careers due to the confrontation of different national cultures when working internationally. While one might argue that cultural career dimensions are part of the organizational context, we decided to consider them separately. Compared to domestic careers, global careers explicitly entail crossing cultural boundaries. Reviewing the studies, we identify two cultural career dimensions: headquarters' orientation and host national cultures.

**Headquarters' orientation.** Two studies indicated that headquarters' orientation may have a profound impact on global managers' careers. Comparing the profile of American and European subsidiary managers working for U.S. companies in Europe to that of local companies, Daniels (1974) found important differences regarding education and mobility level. While American expatriate managers were more formally educated and more mobile than their European colleagues working for the same U.S. firms, those latter were found to be more mobile, horizontally as well as vertically, than European managers working for local companies. Daniels (1974) argued that this difference is due to a desire by American firms to attract local managers whose profiles more closely resemble those of US domestic managers.

In another study, Ondrack (1985) found firms to follow different staffing patterns when dealing with home or host country nationals. Managers' options for locations of assignment differed significantly depending on their nationality. Managers from the headquarters' country belonged to a worldwide human resource pool and experienced geocentric transfer patterns. In contrast, managers belonging to the host country or regional pool experienced polycentric and regiocentric patterns of transfers, limiting their careers to the local or regional hierarchy.

In sum, these two studies suggest that headquarters' orientation is a meaningful career dimension to study global managers' careers. Because this orientation involves particular staffing policies, it can determine global managers' mobility and career options.

**Host-national culture.** A second cultural career dimension is the host-national culture. While this cultural component has been extensively examined with respect to expatriate managers' adjustment, only three studies considered this component as it relates to their careers. A first study of Adler (1984) pointed to host-national culture as the main reason why staffing decision makers are reluctant to send women on international assignments, prohibiting them an international career. Because of their culture, a wide range of countries were considered to be unsuitable for women to work in. Another study (Florkowski & Fogel, 1999) focused on the importance of host-unit treatment in terms of perceived host ethnocentrism. It showed that if expatriate managers perceived host ethnocentrism, their work adjustment and commitment to the host unit was lower. Further, career management support such as the provision of mentors was found to be irrelevant to diminish these perceptions of host ethnocentrism.

Finally, a study of Feldman and Bolino (1999) pointed to the importance of on-site mentoring but also to differences in on-site mentoring due to differences in host country cultures. On-site mentoring consisting of task, career, psycho-social and role model mentoring, was found to help expatriates to get socialized into their new jobs and adjusted to new national cultures. However, the amount of mentoring received differed depending on the host country culture. Expatriates were more likely to receive mentoring in small power distance, weak uncertainty avoidance and individualistic cultures.

Overall, the host-national culture in which global managers work seems to be a meaningful dimension to understand global careers. The above studies indicate that the host-national culture or managers' perception of this culture influences the possibilities of career movements and development.

**Summary.** Our examination of research findings shows that the different cultural contexts of the international experience may strongly influence the pursuit and development of a global career. Especially the headquarters' orientation and the host-national culture were found to be meaningful cultural career dimensions. While we could not find any evidence for these dimensions in the career literature, we add them to our review as they represent specific components to global careers.

## **CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A RESEARCH MODEL ON GLOBAL MANAGERS' CAREERS**

Based upon our review of recent career literature and research findings of international managers' careers, we identified different career dimensions that all potentially influence the unfolding of a contemporary global career. The result is presented in Figure 1. In this figure, we map global managers' careers as an intersection of three domains: the individual, organizational and cultural domain.

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Insert Figure 1 about here

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Following other career scholars (Collin, 1998; Eaton & Bailyn, 2000; Hall, 1996), we propose to move away from an individualistic notion of career. Although most previous expatriate studies focused on individual career factors, this review suggests the need for a more contextual understanding of global careers. The individual with

his/her human capital is no longer an isolated figure in career development but embedded in broader individual, organizational and cultural domains.

In the first place, an extension is needed of the concept of the individual. Beyond individual career competencies and career development responsibility, the individual component of global career can no longer be separated from the worker's personal life (Linehan, 2002; Harvey, 1998) and social networks (Au & Fukuda, 2002). As already argued by career scholars (Eaton & Bailyn, 2000; Fletcher & Bailyn, 1996), family and community as part of managers' personal life are important contexts for global career decisions.

Second, the organizational context in which any part of a career plays out is critical. Although firm boundaries are no longer rigid as proposed in older organizational career models, they remain important to the specific day-to-day learning, opportunities and experiences, and to the relationships and networks these professionals develop (Eaton & Bailyn, 2000). The type of employment in terms of time frame, organic organizational and job design, the knowledge sharing systems, external organizational contacts, and organizational support practices are all relevant organizational career dimensions because they may limit, define, suggest or create the next career opportunity.

Third, the cultural context is an additional domain when studying global careers. Because global careers involve the crossing of cultural boundaries, cultural career dimensions may influence career movements, opportunities, and developments. Previous expatriate research suggests headquarters' orientation and host-national culture as part of global managers' careers. The ways of developing a global career is partly the result of the decision making processes within headquarters and the cultural context and relationships within the host unit. However, as only a limited number of studies considered the relationship between career and the cultural domain, other cultural components may be important but lacking from this review. Specifically, we think about the importance of third country national cultures. Considering recent international management literature that discusses the design of global companies (Galbraith, 2000) and the use of global teams (Canney Davison & Ward, 1999), global managers increasingly interact with members from operating units and subsidiaries located in different parts of the world. Consequently, global managers' careers do not only unfold within the host country's culture but within

possibly all different cultural contexts of the international experience. We therefore suggest this factor as a third cultural career dimension.

Finally, we propose to incorporate time in understanding global careers. Career scholars stress that careers and the motivations attached to them change with circumstances and over time (Eaton & Bailyn, 2000). They further argue that the main difference between careers and jobs is the significance of time. Time affects employment stability, skills and experiences gained, relationships nurtured, and opportunities encountered, especially in dynamic economies and organization (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Robinson & Miner, 1996). We therefore consider time to play a role in the development of global careers.

To conclude, inspired by Eaton and Bailyn's (2000) conception of career, we suggest a definition of global careers that incorporates the above elements. A global career can be considered "as a path: a series of initiatives and adaptations to employment, family and different communities, evolving with changes in individual interests or skills, life experiences of oneself and the people central to one's personal space (individual domain), the characteristics and requirements of one's contemporary employment context (organizational domain) and the encountered cultural attitudes, values and beliefs of the international context (cultural domain)" (adjusted definition of Eaton and Bailyn, 2000, p. 192).

Consequently, future research consistent with this definition will focus on the intersections among the career domains. It may, for instance, examine the ways in which internal career orientations become operational within particular organizational and cultural contexts. In addition, scholars may focus on how particular career competencies develop, depending on the type of organizational design in which managers work as well as on their relationships with colleagues from other cultures. Or, more in general, future research may examine how the interplay of different career dimensions functions as a career trigger (Hall, 1986). This type of research can then inspire the development of more dynamic career models in which the complex interplay of factors will be laid out. Concerning the research methodology, a more contextual approach to global careers is needed. The use of case studies and in-depth interviews offers the potential to collect rich data through which the interplay of the three domains can be captured. In addition, longitudinal and retrospective research may identify the ways in which time plays a role. Overall, such research approaches can explore the complexities of global careers and increase

our understanding of how different factors influence global managers' career pathing. To study global careers taking into account all these intersections is to acknowledge the very different types of experiences that are most central to global managers.

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## APPENDIX

Author, year	Research Focus	Findings
<b>INDIVIDUAL CAREER DIMENSIONS</b>		
<b>1. Career competencies</b>		
<i>a. Know-why</i>		
Peltonen, 1998	Conducting an analysis of the discursive patterns of expatriates' talk of their own career development	Three discourses were identified: bureaucratic, occupational and enterprising
Clegg & Gray, 2002	Understanding the experiences of Australian expatriates in Thailand	Career progression, remuneration offered and change in lifestyle were found to be deciding motivators
Mayrhofer & Scullion, 2002	Analysing the situation of male and female expatriates in the German clothing industry	Career goals of female expatriates were gaining international experience and living abroad
Stahl, Miller & Tung, 2002	Analysing the motivation of managers to accept an international assignment	Main motives to accept an international assignment were personal challenge and professional development
<i>b. Know-how</i>		
Miller, 1972	Examining the personnel decision maker's behavior in the decision process and the way in which an international selection appointment is reached	Candidates with high qualifications and proven performance were selected, which was considered suboptimal for the appointee's career development
Tung, 1998	Understanding the importance of the international assignment to overall career development	An overseas assignment was considered an opportunity to acquire skills and experience that are not available at home
Stahl, Miller & Tung, 2002	Examining the motivation of managers to accept an international assignment and factors that influence them in their decision to go abroad	Main motivation to accept an international assignment was to improve professional, managerial and intercultural skills
Culpan & Wright, 2002	Testing the influence of individual characteristics and skills of expatriate women managers	Language skills, negotiation skills and listening skills were used and developed, enhancing performance
<i>c. Know-whom</i>		
Au & Fukuda, 2002	Exploring the boundary spanning of expatriates	Having a culturally diverse network helped expatriates with boundary spanning activities and gave them new career aspirations
Linehan, 2002	Assessing the international career transition made by senior female managers in Western Europe	Main challenge for female international managers was the exclusion from male influence networks
Linehan & Scullion, 2002	Examining the perceptions of senior female expatriate managers in relation to the repatriation phase of their international career move	Weak integration in organizational networks negatively influenced promotion and acceptance

<b>2. Locus of career development responsibility</b>		
Inkson, Pringle, Arthur & Barry, 1997	Comparing the expatriate assignment and overseas experience models of international career experience	Overseas experience was found to be a personal odyssey initiated and resourced by the individual
Selmer, 1998	Examining personal career intentions (being determined to have an expatriate career)	Clear positive association was found between personal expatriate career intentions and socio-cultural and psychological adjustment
Tung, 1998	Understanding the importance of the international assignment to overall career development, modes of acculturation and mechanisms used to adjust to living abroad	Successful completion of an international assignment was believed to enhance career prospects, either within their organisation or without
Suutari & Brewster, 2000	Examining workers on self-initiated assignment abroad	The initiative for a self-initiated foreign assignment was coming from the individual
Lazarova & Caligiuri, 2001	Understanding the repatriate support practices currently offered by organizations and how effective they are at lowering repatriates' turnover intentions	Lack of support found for the role of organizational commitment, instead acquisition of additional skills and experiences valuable for their advancement in career, not in their company
Culpan & Wright, 2002	Testing the influence of individual characteristics and skills of expatriate women managers	Women made their own plans and organized their careers overseas with little or no help from other companies
Stahl, Miller & Tung, 2002	Examining the nature of the expatriate career concept	Majority of expatriates viewed their international assignment as an opportunity for skill development and future career advancement, even though it may not have been with their current company
<b>3. Work/family boundary</b>		
Harvey, 1998	Examining various categories of dual-career/dual-income couples and the impact of career orientation upon relocation	Family and career life-cycle of the dual career partners played a pivotal role in the willingness of the couples to relocate
Tung, 1998	Understanding the importance of the international assignment to overall career development, modes of acculturation and mechanisms used to adjust to living abroad	Spending more time with the family was a coping mechanism to adjust to living abroad
Linehan, 2002	Assessing the international career transition made by senior female managers in Western Europe	Challenge for female international managers was to balance demands of international career versus those of maintaining a relationship and child raising
<b>ORGANIZATIONAL CAREER DIMENSIONS</b>		
<b>1. Short-term, project based employment</b>		
Forster, 1994	Understanding experiences of a group of expatriate UK managers	Repatriation was found to be an atypical work-role career transition



	and professionals who have recently returned to the UK from foreign assignments	with an equal potential for negative as for positive outcomes
Forster, 2000	Examining the idea of the 'international manager'	More frequent cross-border job swaps, short assignments or assignments to multi-cultural project teams were expected
<b>2. Cellular organizational design</b>		
Naumann, 1993	Identifying the factors under control of the organization that may predict expatriate job satisfaction	Job/task characteristics were strongly related to intrinsic satisfaction
Feldman & Thompson, 1993	Examining the impact of six sets of factors on multiple indices of adjustment to new job assignments	Job assignments that fit in with overall career plans facilitated adjustment
Suutari & Brewster, 2000	Examining workers on self-initiated assignment abroad	Expatriates were working more frequently in matrix organizations, while SFEs worked more common in the project type of organization
Linehan & Scullion, 2002	Examining the perceptions of senior female expatriate managers in relation to the repatriation phase of their international career move	Almost all female expatriates experienced a loss of status and autonomy upon their return, re-entry stage should be built in as part of overall career plan
<b>3. Knowledge sharing systems</b>		
Engelhard & Nägele, 2003	Examining features of organizational learning processes in a cross-cultural context	Technical skills were found more likely to be transferred than soft management skills
<b>4. External organizational contacts</b>		
Inkson, Pringle, Arthur & Barry, 1997	Comparing the expatriate assignment and overseas experience models of international career experience	More frequent reliance on expertise from outside as implication of overseas experiences
<b>5. Organizational support practices</b>		
Tung, 1986	Examining the most common problems encountered by American and Western corporate executives in living and working in China	Concern that prolonged absence from corporate headquarters negatively affected their chances of promotion within the corporate organizational hierarchy
Harvey, 1989	Understanding problems that exist for an executive upon re-entry from a foreign assignment	Lack of repatriation programs was found; topic that received attention was career path counselling
Feldman & Thomas, 1992	Exploring expatriate assignments from a career development perspective	Perception of connection between assignment and long term career plan was positively related to performance, relationships with host nationals, skill acquisition, intent to remain, job satisfaction and mutual influence
Feldman & Thompson, 1993	Examining the impact of six sets of factors on multiple indices of adjustment to new job assignments	Having mentors and realistic job previews positively related to indices of adjustment

Birdseye & Hill, 1995	Assessing the effects of selected individual, organization/work and environmental characteristics on intent-to-leave measures relating to individuals' jobs, organizations and geographic locations	Advancement prospects associated with turnover; uncertainty about career prospects after the assignment was a concern for some of these executives
Stroh, 1995	Exploring the predictors of turnover among repatriates and testing a model of organizational career development	Having a career development plan was best predictor of repatriate turnover
Fish & Wood, 1996	Identifying the factors across six separately identified expatriate staffing practices that guide these practices in Australian business enterprises	Role clarity, or the necessity for staff to be fully informed about the performance expectations of the role prior to undertaking an appointment overseas, was an important factor
Forster & Johnsen, 1996	Understanding the management of international assignments in 15 UK companies that have expanded their operations into the international arena over the last 3-12 years	Important factor was lack of advice about the possible implications of moves abroad for their career progression after return to the UK
Lazarova & Caligiuri, 2001	Focusing on the repatriate support practices currently offered by organizations and how effective they are at lowering repatriates' turnover intentions	Organizational support of career investment activities through relevant repatriation practices encouraged retention, but without necessarily positively influencing long-term loyalty
Linehan, 2002	Assessing the international career transition made by senior female managers in Western Europe	A challenge for female international managers was a lack of mentors
Linehan & Scullion, 2002	Examining perceptions of senior female expatriate managers in relation to the repatriation phase of their international career move	Advancement to international management was believed to be partially based on successful development of mentoring relationships
Suutari & Brewster, 2003	Exploring what kind of impacts an international assignment had on careers of Finnish expatriates	Positive career impacts of international assignments, high interest in changing employers, repatriation support practices were rare
<b>CULTURAL CAREER DIMENSIONS</b>		
<i>a. Headquarter's orientation</i>		
Daniels, 1974	Profiling American and European subsidiary managers of U.S. and local firms regarding education, interfirm mobility and upward mobility	American expatriates were more mobile and educated than European subsidiary managers in U.S. firms while those latter were more mobile and educated than their domestic counterparts
Ondrack, 1985	Examining the relationship between the type of international operations of the firm and two basic HR activities to staff these operations with managers	Geocentric transfer and career patterns were found for managers from the headquarters country, while polycentric or regiocentric transfer patterns were found for

		managers from host countries
<b><i>b. Host-national culture</i></b>		
Adler, 1984	Testing the myth of companies' reluctance to send women overseas	North American personnel managers saw foreign cultural practices as posing major barriers to female expatriate managers
Feldman & Bolino, 1999	Examining the importance of on-site mentors for the effective socialization of expatriates given the host national culture	On-site mentoring, being task mentoring, career mentoring, psycho-social and role model mentoring, was positively related to expatriate socialization. More mentoring was received in small power distance, weak uncertainty avoidance and individualistic cultures
Florkowski & Fogel, 1999	Assessing how expatriates' work attitudes are affected by perceptions of host ethnocentrism	Perceived host ethnocentrism resulted in less favourable work attitudes of the expatriate

**FIGURE 1**  
**Global career as intersection of domains**



