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Actors, Structure, and Processes: A Review and Conceptualization of Global Work

Integrating IB and HRM Research

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Actors, Structure, and Processes: A Review and Conceptualization of Global Work Integrating IB and HRM Research

Abstract

As organizations increasingly fulfil their customer needs by getting their work done globally, there is a pressing need for the scientific community to further advance knowledge on global work, especially in terms of how to better conceptualize and integrate it. A particular opportunity for such development involves the cross-fertilization between the International Business (IB) and Human Resource Management (HRM) literatures, which serve as the focal domains to study global work phenomena, but have treated global work largely as separate research streams. We therefore edited a special issue to contribute to a more integrative understanding of various aspects of global work across both domains. In this opening article, we review existing research on global work in the MNE from both IB and HRM perspectives. Subsequently, we present a shared conceptualization of global work that helps integrate theoretical and empirical research in both fields. We then introduce the articles in this special issue, before developing an integrative agenda for future research on global work.

Global forms of work have become an increasingly common phenomenon in multinational enterprises (MNEs). Getting work done globally not only reflects how broader business activities have transcended national boundaries but it also promises superior access to talent and a more efficient use of strategic resources (Cascio & Boudreau, 2016). Global work arrangements are defined as situations in which employees that are collaborating with each other are culturally diverse and often also geographically distant from one another, and thus embedded in different national contexts (Hinds, Liu, & Lyon, 2011). To that end, global work arrangements not only contain forms of international assignments, including traditional corporate expatriation, self-initiated expatriation, short-term assignments, flexpatriation and international business travel but also a range of other arrangements such as global virtual teams and global domestic work, in which individuals remain in their home country but take on responsibilities and interact with individuals in or from other countries (Collings, Scullion, & Morley, 2007; Gibson, Huang, Kirkman, & Shapiro, 2014; Shaffer, Kraimer, Chen, & Bolino, 2012).

While the experience of global work entails certain benefits (e.g., Nurmi & Hinds, 2016), it also taxes the individual (Shaffer et al., 2016). The presence of cultural, linguistic, spatial, and temporal distances involved in global work, as well as distinct political, economic and societal institutions make the coordination of work and the management of people within MNEs particularly challenging (Edwards, Sánchez-Mangas, Lavelle, Minbaeva, & Jalette, 2016; Raghuram, Garud, Wiesenfeld, & Gupta, 2001; Welch & Welch, 2018). Organizations hence face pressures to design suitable forms of global work for achieving their business objectives, and to help individuals and leaders manage the associated increased complexity. At the same time, they need to continually realign their human resource (HR) systems to effectively support organizational members' engagement in global work by identifying, attracting, developing,

managing and retaining talent capable of effectively handling global complexity, which is of critical importance for MNEs and their HRM systems (Farndale, Scullion, & Sparrow, 2010).

Advancing our understanding of how individuals and teams experience global work, and how MNEs manage their global talent, should constitute a key aim for both International Business (IB) and Human Resource Management (HRM) research. It therefore comes as a surprise that the domain of global work thus far has been treated as largely separate research streams in the two literatures. For instance, existing IB research has mainly focused on the strategic design and local adaptation of HRM systems (e.g., Rosenzweig & Nohria, 1994; Schuler & Rogovsky, 1998), the role of HRM as an antecedent to MNE-level outcomes (e.g., Caligiuri, 2014) and the management of international assignments (e.g., Reiche, Harzing, & Kraimer, 2009; Wang, Tong, Chen, & Kim, 2009). Existing HR research has largely studied the influence of cultural and institutional differences on HR policies and practices (Brewster, Mayrhofer, & Smale, 2016), the generation, sharing and implementation of HR capabilities in MNEs (Mäkelä, Björkman, Ehrnrooth, Smale, Sumelius, 2013; Morris, & Snell, 2011), the appropriateness of global versus local HR strategies (Pudelko & Harzing, 2007), and particular HR practices such as expatriate selection or training (Littrell, Salas, Hess, Paley, & Riedel, 2006).

While previous research has significantly contributed to the academic debate and progress of the field, a more integrative understanding of various aspects of global work across both IB and HRM is needed for several reasons. First, without a clear and comprehensive construct definition, scholars may lump together qualitatively different forms of global work. For example, research has pointed to important differences in individual choices, challenges and career consequences of various global work arrangements in MNEs (Shaffer et al., 2012). Similarly, the

global leadership literature has recently highlighted substantive role differences of global leaders as they engage in and lead across global work contexts (Reiche, Bird, Mendenhall, & Osland, 2017). Failing to capture the nuances of global work arrangements with precision risks disguising important differences in the individual experience and organizational management of global work. Second, the largely separate treatment of global work in the IB and HRM domains may also lead to further fragmentation, which is not only a sign of an immature research field but also inhibits its scientific advancement (Pfeffer, 1993). We believe there is much to be learned from encouraging cross-fertilization between scholars in these domains.

A third reason for integrating research on global work lies in the practical benefits to be gained. A shared conceptualization will provide more strategic consideration to global work, which will allow researchers and practitioners alike to connect the nature and design of various global work arrangements to specific individual and organizational actors – questions that have remained largely untapped. For example, research demonstrates that cultural variation exists in how an array of organizational phenomena are interpreted and acted upon (Allen & Vardaman, 2017; Lee & Antonakis, 2014; Lee & Ramaswami, 2013; Ma & Allen, 2009). Such variation may have serious implications for the design and implementation of HR practices in the global workplace. Fourth, the term 'global work' has been used in a very loose way in much research so far, as it covers an extremely wide range of forms including expatriation, global teams, and any work arrangement that involves the crossing of national boundaries. Such broad definition has the advantage of being inclusive of and covering a great variety of work activities. However, it also suffers from a lack of precision to systematically guide research efforts in achieving greater understanding about the complexity and richness of global work. As a result, it is not only

desirable but also critical to develop a conceptualization or framework that can effectively anchor the global work phenomenon for advancing relevant research.

A REVIEW OF RESEARCH ON GLOBAL WORK

The phenomenon of global work forms an integral part of current research in both IB and HRM fields. While scholars may not necessarily refer to the concept of global work explicitly, it features prominently in ongoing academic research. For example, articles published in the year 2017 in the *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Journal of World Business* and *Management International Review* cover topics such as career implications of international experience, global leadership roles, identity duality in MNE subsidiaries, the role of language in MNEs, and the persisting role of national cultural values. Similarly, articles published in 2017 in *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Personnel Psychology* and *Human Resource Management* include studies of expatriate leader effectiveness in multi-source feedback systems, expatriate failure, cross-cultural psychology, cultural intelligence, and gender equality across different national employment contexts. At the same time, the two literatures have studied global work from different angles, with limited cross-fertilization.

Below, we review the most relevant research in both fields. In doing so, we draw on role theory (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964; Katz & Kahn, 1978) to differentiate our review in terms of whether studies primarily focus on (1) who is involved in global work (i.e., actors) and (2) how global work is designed (i.e., the global work-related structure and process). Role theory holds that individuals take on different roles according to the social structures they participate in. Each role that a person assumes entails specific requirements that the role taker is expected to fulfil, such as tasks, responsibilities, and activities. Further, the role expectations continue to be reevaluated as a result of the incumbent's interactions with other stakeholders

within the role (Katz & Kahn, 1978). For example, multicultural team members may expect their leaders to foster team-shared goals and help create inclusive communication in the team (Lisak, Erez, Sui, & Lee, 2016). Similarly, corporate expatriates are expected to engage in more personal change and role innovation relative to their host country counterparts if the expatriates are sent on learning- rather than control-driven assignments (Shay & Baack, 2004). In other words, performing a particular role requires considering the individual role taker (i.e., *global work actor*) as well as the broader structure and processes that have a bearing on the role (i.e., *global work structure*, which refers to the structural design of global work, and *global work processes*, which refers to its dynamic processes).

Global Work in the IB Domain

  Actors. In the IB field, there has been a notable tradition of studying corporate expatriates − one salient group of actors of global work. One line of inquiry examines the type of resources that such actors carry and exchange in MNEs, often with a focus on knowledge, as well as the performance consequences of such transfer (Chang, Gong, & Peng, 2012; Hébert, Very, & Beamish, 2005; Wang et al., 2009). Other IB scholars have studied how individuals experience work in culturally diverse teams in both co-located and virtual ways. For example, this research highlights the role of perceived status (Paunova, 2017) and global characteristics (e.g., cultural intelligence, global identity, and openness to cultural diversity; Lisak & Erez, 2015) as antecedents to leadership emergence in such teams.

  Other prevalent features about actors of global work are the cultural and linguistic differences brought into the global work by those actors. These differences are usually conceptualized as social frictions (Shenkar, Luo, & Yeheskel, 2008) that influence how actors engage in negotiation (Adair & Brett, 2005), conflict management (Morris et al., 1998),

reciprocation (Reiche et al., 2014) or cooperative behavior (Chen & Li, 2005). Language is another driver of social frictions (Welch & Welch, 2018). Research suggests that organizational members whose native language is distant from the principal corporate language spoken in an MNE experience status insecurities and stigma that translate into feelings of resentment and distrust toward members of the other language group, hence jeopardizing effective communication (Neeley, 2013). By contrast, shared language between individuals, either in the form of proficiency in the official corporate language or the respective counterpart's native language has been shown to provide a shared ground of identification and an enabler of knowledge transfer (Reiche, Harzing, & Pudelko, 2015).

A different way of approaching actors of global work is to assess the level of global leadership they engage in. While many international assignees have leadership responsibilities the assignee and global leader cohorts only partially overlap. A growing body of global leadership research emerged specifically in the IB field because IB scholars aimed to better understand the global context in which such leadership occurs and how leaders navigated the challenges of that context (Osland, 2018). Accordingly, recent research has derived a typology of different global leadership roles according to aspects of the specific task and relationship context a global leader experiences (Reiche et al., 2017). As such, this body of research provides an integrative perspective toward both role takers and role requirements in global work. In a related vein, research has started to recognize that in an era of non-employment talent platforms, not all global work will get done by full-time employees (Cascio & Boudreau, 2016), with implications for how these relevant actors are managed.

One emerging theme related to a better understanding of actors of global work is the role of their identities and the development of multicultural identities. Given the far-reaching effects

of identity in influencing individuals' cognition, emotion, and behavior (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002), scholars have started to pay attention to how actors' cultural identities affect intercultural effectiveness (Lee, 2010) and global boundary spanning (Kane & Levina, 2017). Certain actors may also develop into bicultural or multicultural individuals (Brannen & Thomas, 2010; Fitzsimmons, 2013), leading to personal and task consequences such as their capability to connect across cultures (Shakir & Lee, 2017) and leadership effectiveness in the global context (Fitzsimmons, Lee, & Brannen, 2013). Similarly, evidence points to benefits of holding a global identity when working in global teams (Lisak & Erez, 2015). Furthermore, individuals' global work experiences may lead them to develop unique identity patterns (see the Comprehensive Global Acculturation Model, Lee, Masuda, Fu, & Reiche, 2018), with consequences for how they approach future global work. Research on actors of global work that incorporates the complexity of their identities or sense of being hence offers a deeper understanding of global work.

 Structure. From a structural design perspective, research has examined the role of corporate expatriation for the control and coordination of MNE subsidiaries (e.g., Belderbos & Heijltjes, 2005; Harzing, 2001), although with little differentiation between distinct types of global work arrangements, including self-initiated or virtual assignments (Shaffer et al., 2012). Global teams, co-located or not, are another common structure for global work. A significant body of research in the IB domain studies the predictors, correlates and outcomes of global teamwork (Connaughton & Shuffler, 2007; Hinds & Mortensen, 2005), which often involves more than one type of boundary (e.g., cultural, temporal, geographical, identity, etc.). This research has focused on the structural design of teams that are geographically dispersed and require regular virtual interaction (Maznevski & Chudoba, 2000; Nurmi & Hinds, 2016),

although very little research has examined simultaneously the virtual and global nature of such teamwork (Gibson et al., 2014). In this regard, the question of how to structure and distribute leadership in global virtual teams has received increased attention (Hill & Bartol, 2016; O'Leary & Mortensen, 2010).

At a more macro level, scholars have studied the staffing composition in MNEs, including the relative weight of expatriate staffing (Gong, 2003), as well as salient predictors of subsidiary staffing and foreign entry mode choice such as institutional distance (e.g., Gaur, Delios, & Singh, 2007) and travel time (Boeh & Beamish, 2012). Research has also examined the mode of structuring corporate HR activities in MNEs, one place the IB and HR literatures intersect. For example, Farndale et al. (2010) identified four dominant corporate HR roles, which differed according to the primary international HRM structure prevalent in an MNE and hence points to a configurational design of managing global work.

Processes. A growing body of literature in IB has investigated the mechanisms through which global work arrangements help connect and coordinate across different inter- and intra-organizational boundaries (e.g., Schotter, Mudambi, Doz, & Gaur, 2017). Effective boundary spanning, as an example of global work processes, has been found to involve structural, relational and cognitive dimensions (Kostova & Roth, 2003; Reiche et al., 2009). Other research showed that boundary spanning includes not only making connections across boundaries but also overcoming differences in worldview across boundaries (Birkinshaw, Ambos, & Bouquet, 2017). As part of the effort to understand the processes of global work, scholars found that oscillating between cooperative and assertive knowledge exchange results in more effective outcomes in multicultural teams (Hajro, Gibson, & Pudelko, 2017). More specific implications for the

management of global virtual teams from an organizational perspective are largely lacking though, which is also a shortcoming in the HRM domain.

The literature on micro-politics has also highlighted a processual view towards global work. Such research has started to examine how social hierarchy and power differences are generated at the inter- or intra-unit level in MNEs (for a review see Geppert & Dörrenbächer, 2014). For example, through their social and political skills, subsidiary actors have been shown to engage in a number of micro-political games as they compete for social positions in the MNE (Conroy, Collings, & Clancy, 2018; Kristensen & Zeitlin, 2005). Further, MNEs transitioning from hierarchical towards network architecture are thought to experience a political struggle between headquarters and subsidiary actors over the relative value of their cultural resources, including cosmopolitan cultural capital, to preserve or gain dominance (Levy & Reiche, 2018).

Global Work in the HRM Domain

The phenomenon of global work has also featured prominently in the domain of HRM, and international HRM in particular. Research on international HRM commonly falls into two different streams of research: HRM in MNEs and comparative HRM (Brewster et al., 2016). Global work does not necessarily form part of either stream; prominent thematic areas in these streams have studied the transfer of HRM practices, as well as cultural and institutional differences in the design of HRM practices between MNE units, none of which concern global work per se. However, especially in the former stream, global work is conceived as a means to achieve HRM outcomes such as practice transfer, adoption and knowledge exchange (e.g., Ahlvik, Smale, & Sumelius, 2016; Harzing, Pudelko, & Reiche, 2016).

Actors. From the above-mentioned perspective, the study of international assignments as specific global work arrangements is arguably the most prominent touchpoint between the IB

and HRM literatures. Compared to IB, the HRM domain has perhaps placed a greater focus on differentiating between increasingly varied forms of such global work arrangements, including inpatriation, self-initiated expatriation or business travel (McNulty & Brewster, 2017; Tharenou, 2015). As a result, research has studied in detail the actors involved in these work arrangements, identifying substantive differences in the individual experience of such global work (e.g., Peltokorpi & Froese, 2009; Shaffer et al., 2016), and their varying motives (Doherty, Dickmann, & Mills, 2011). A large body of research has also examined predictors and outcomes of international assignees' experiences, with a specific focus on their adjustment (for a review see Takeuchi, 2010), identity strain (e.g., Kraimer, Shaffer, Harrison, & Ren, 2012), or embeddedness (e.g., Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010). Scholars have also increasingly paid attention to other stakeholders that have a bearing on actors' global experience, including the family (Lazarova, Shaffer, & Westman, 2010) and host country nationals (Toh & DeNisi, 2007).

Another actor-focused topic of global work in HRM concerns the desirable capabilities of these actors in performing global work. While a number of intercultural competences are becoming popular given their relevance in global work (Johnson, Lenartowicz, & Apud, 2006; Leung, Ang, & Tan, 2014), cultural intelligence, defined as a set of malleable capabilities that enable an individual to effectively function in and manage culturally diverse settings (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008; Earley & Ang 2003), has probably attracted the most scholarly attention. Research on global leaders identified further cross-cultural competencies such as tolerance of ambiguity, cultural flexibility, and reduced ethnocentrism to predict global leadership effectiveness (Caligiuri & Tarique, 2012). Collectively, these results offer useful insights for training and selection in the HRM domain of global work.

Structure. The HRM domain has also advanced our understanding of global work structure, focusing primarily on the composition of global staff (Tarique, Schuler, & Gong, 2006), and the organizational drivers for employing them (Harzing et al., 2016). As such, this area of inquiry connects with the IB domain. A significant body of research in the HRM domain also studies the support structure necessary alongside international assignments, including pre-departure training (Littrell et al., 2006), various facets of organizational support during the global work experience (Kraimer & Wayne, 2004), compensation (McNulty, 2015), repatriation (Lazarova & Caligiuri, 2001), and career development (Yan, Zhu, & Hall, 2002).

Another stream of research in the HRM domain has focused not only on the various above-mentioned HR practices that support global work, but also on linking HRM issues, policies and practices relevant to global work to the strategic activities of MNEs (Taylor, Beechler, & Napier, 1996)—although a more detailed analysis of how MNE strategy relates to the design and composition of global work arrangements is still largely missing. A related research strand concerns the domain of global talent management (GTM) which focuses on the attraction, selection, development and retention of the highest-performing employees in the most pivotal roles globally (Collings, Mellahi, & Cascio, this issue). It is both narrower and broader than the traditional international HRM literature. It is narrower because it focuses on a subset of individuals who engage in global work (high-performing employees for pivotal global positions). It is broader because it focuses not only on the specific international posting of an individual, but how the actual global work experience forms part of a broader development trajectory that requires the design of subsequent postings and related work experiences. The global careers literature (e.g., Shaffer et al., 2012) has made a similar distinction between global work experiences as actual cross-border work and global careers as a succession of work positions

held by individuals throughout their professional life, and which may involve both domestic and international stints.

Processes. Although relatively less developed, research has also started to examine the dynamics underlying HRM practice transfer and adoption between MNE units (e.g., Edwards et al., 2016) to enable global work to occur. Such processes tend to evolve over long periods of time and therefore involve specific challenges to research design and data collection. However, scholars have addressed these issues either through regular collection of country-level HRM data (www.cranet.org) or in-depth case studies of a small subset of firms (Gamble, 2010). At the individual level, scholars have begun to examine how actors' global work experience evolves over time, for example regarding adjustment (e.g., Firth, Chen, Kirkman, & Kim, 2014).

TOWARD A THREE-DIMENSIONAL CONCEPTUALIZATION OF GLOBAL WORK

The review of the IB and HRM domains suggests different relative foci that researchers have taken with regard to studying global work. The IB literature has examined global work primarily as a means to achieve MNE-relevant outcomes and sustain competitive advantage. Research has therefore focused more on the organizational motives for (e.g., control and coordination) and structure (e.g., leadership and boundary spanning arrangements, team composition) of global work arrangements. By contrast, the HRM literature has mainly examined how global work is experienced individually across an increasingly fragmented set of work arrangements, how this experience and the related expectations are managed through suitable HRM practices, and how the HRM system needs to be adjusted to accommodate global work.

The review however also suggests that the initial conceptualization of global work that we offered in the introduction—i.e. situations in which employees that are collaborating with each other are culturally diverse and often also geographically distant from one another, and thus

embedded in different national contexts—needs further elaboration. Consistent with our organizing framework in the review, we suggest that a shared conceptualization of global work requires accounting for (1) the *individual actors* involved in global work, (2) the *structural features* of global work, and (3) the *dynamic processes* of global work. It is worth noting that Shaffer and colleagues (2012) provide a detailed conceptualization of an individual's global work experiences by defining global work in terms of three theoretical dimensions: physical mobility, cognitive flexibility, and non-work disruptions. Our intention here is to advance a broader conceptualization, illustrated in Figure 1, which not only focuses on the individual global work experience itself, but also includes aspects of its design, management and context, in line with the broader IB and HRM literatures.

Insert Figure 1 here

Actors

Global work is performed by individuals with specific competencies, life experiences, and cultural backgrounds. A deeper understanding about these actors and their subjective experiences of and motivation toward global work would allow scholars to enter into the personal and psychological aspects of global work. The *actor dimension* of the global work construct reflects the richness of the individual's experience, its relevant predictors such as particular capabilities, identities and attitudes, and related outcomes in the form of adjustment or performance. Key characteristics like cultural and linguistic backgrounds of these actors likely shape the dynamics of global work, as evidenced in numerous studies on global teams and collaborations (Hinds, Neeley, & Cramton, 2014; Kirkman, Lowe, & Gibson, 2006; 2017). Equally important are

actors' competencies relevant for global work such as cultural intelligence and a wider range of intercultural competencies (Leung et al., 2014). These elements have been well studied in both IB and HRM fields with rich implications for theories and practices alike. Other actor-related characteristics include cognitive and affective flexibility. Cognitive flexibility concerns the need to adjust one's thought patterns and scripts to task-relevant demands, including the development and transfer of specific resources and competencies (Shaffer et al., 2012), whereas affective flexibility reflects the need to adjust to specific relational and interaction contexts, such as virtual means of communication and specific stakeholder needs (see Reiche et al., 2017).

As a result of increasing cultural exposure, individuals are likely to develop multiple cultural identities (Chao & Moon, 2005; Ramarajan, 2014) or even become biculturals or multiculturals (Brannen & Thomas, 2010; Fitzsimmons, 2013). The identities of actors have far-reaching implications for global work, and deserve further scholarly attention to develop more refined knowledge on how various identity-related patterns affect actors in engaging in global work. For example, a *rooted global citizen* (i.e., individual with high home, host, and global identities) may possess certain unique qualities and be suitable for global work that requires "frequent and close boundary spanning between different home- and host-country stakeholders" (Lee et al., 2018: 15), whereas a *global ambassador* (i.e., individual with high home and global identities but low host identity) would fit better for global work that requires connections with partners of different cultures yet keeps strong allegiance and loyalty toward the home country. Similarly, Levy, Lee, Peiperl and Jonsen (this issue) present diverse types of cosmopolitans with their corresponding approaches in bridging structural and cultural holes in global work.

Furthermore, it is crucial to take into account broader factors such as actors' socio-economic backgrounds, professional qualifications, and institutional contexts within which they

are embedded to gain a deeper understanding of the nature of global work in question. For example, a micro-provider of writing and graphic design services through a global online platform based in emerging economies (Barnard et al., this issue) will engage in global work in drastically different ways compared to a corporate global employee sent by an MNE headquartered in a developed economy for frequent international business trips (Welch, Welch, & Vorm, 2007).

Structure

Global work also involves specific structural arrangements that render the work "global". An important attribute of the *structure dimension* of global work is whether and the extent to which a particular global work arrangement involves both cross-border relocation and cross-border responsibilities, affecting the number and nature of boundaries in global work. Indeed, while a self-initiated expatriate moves physically, her work responsibilities may be mostly local in nature. While previous work has primarily focused on physical relocation, a growing number of global work arrangements do not involve physical moves, yet may be subject to multiple boundaries, such as cultural, linguistic and temporal differences (Shaffer et al., 2012). Work that contains both cross-border relocation and cross-border responsibilities is arguably more global in nature than work that contains only one of the two aspects. In addition, to the extent that the individual takes on cross-border responsibilities, it is necessary to explicate the level of global leadership responsibilities the role involves (Reiche et al., 2017). Depending on the global work arrangement, the relevant stakeholders likely differ as well. For example, while the sending organization and its main representatives such as global mobility professionals serve as salient stakeholders for corporate expatriates, self-initiated expatriates will value the support of their immediate family and host country nationals relatively more.

The composition of global teams and their geographical distribution will also determine the nature and number of boundaries involved in such global work. Common boundaries present in global work involve location, time, culture, and language (Gibbs, 2009; Tenzer, Pudelko, & Harzing, 2014). These boundaries often differ in their nature in terms of clarity, stability, permeability, and complexity (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000; Lamont & Molnar, 2002; Santistevan & Josserand, this issue) in unique global work settings. Sometimes, multiple boundaries may be aligned and form stronger faultlines (Lau & Murnighan, 2005; Thatcher & Patel, 2012) among actors of global work, influencing global work process and performance. Therefore, a clear understanding and specification of the structure of global work in question should be an integral part of the endeavor in global work research.

Further, we may differentiate the structure of global work per se and the structure of the supporting infrastructure for global work to occur. Global work can be structured differentially in both physical and temporal terms, and does not necessarily entail geographical dispersion of work activities. Indeed, many global work arrangements, including long-term international assignments and multicultural teamwork, are co-located, despite including cultural, linguistic and institutional differences. In addition, global work activities may be temporally separated, as in the case of asynchronous technologically-mediated communication (Gibson et al., 2014) or international business travel (Welch et al., 2007), or they may occur synchronously. The supporting infrastructure for global work can similarly be structured along physical and temporal lines. From a physical perspective, it is important to consider where the specific HR responsibilities for managing global work lie (e.g., HQ vs. foreign subsidiary), which likely depends on the level of strategic HR capabilities at the subsidiary level (Mäkelä, Sumelius, Höglund, & Ahlvik, 2012). Temporally, we may consider changing HR needs along the

international assignment process, including pre-departure training, relocation support, mentoring, repatriation and long-term career planning. In a related vein, this also entails continuous sequences of global work (e.g., repeated international assignments), and their implications for HR and global talent management.

Processes

The processes of global work concern how it unfolds over time, adding a temporal dimension to global work research. Based on our review, this has been thus far the least studied aspect of global work. Probably the most visible theme related to global work processes has emerged from research on global teams. For instance, Maznevski and Chudoba (2000: 473) offer a rich account of the processes of global virtual team members bridging space and time over "a deep rhythm of face-to-face communication interspersed among periods of remote communication." Cramton and Hinds (2014) developed a detailed process model of cultural adaptation in globally distributed work teams to overcome cultural differences. As mentioned earlier, studying knowledge exchange processes in multicultural teams, Hajro et al. (2017) found oscillating between assertive and cooperative knowledge exchange processes to be more effective. Santistevan and Josserand (this issue) discovered three "teaming" modes in global teams, illustrating the dynamic nature of global teams with fluid membership.

Global boundary spanning at individual, team, and organizational levels represents another pertinent line of research on processes relevant to global work (Kane & Levina, 2017; Roberts & Beamish, 2017; Schotter et al., 2017). Although not strictly belonging to global work, some scholars have started to examine knowledge sharing across boundaries, especially in terms of its possible forms and processes (e.g., transferring, translating, and transforming, see Carlile, 2004). Others have examined how power differences develop and shift as MNE actors compete for

dominance in global work contexts (e.g., Conroy et al., 2018). We expect such insights to inspire researchers to undertake similar studies on global work toward deeper understanding of the processes.

Figure 1 summarizes our three-dimensional conceptualization of global work. These three dimensions are in fact inter-connected with reciprocal influences. We suggest that only by clearly specifying these three dimensions can researchers unambiguously position the specific phenomenon of global work under study. To that end, the above conceptualization and the special issue are meant to serve as a platform to better align the diverse set of studies on aspects of global work and help further our understanding of this emerging field of research.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE

In response to our call for papers, we received 83 submissions, suggesting a strong interest in studying phenomena related to global work, strategic HRM and talent management in MNEs. At the same time, although we explicitly called for contributions that would integrate across the HRM and IB fields, or connect research on global work, strategic HRM and global talent management, the majority of submissions were firmly grounded in one particular research stream, indicating the stickiness of the different domains and a relative lack of interconnections.

Of the 83 submissions, 41 were desk rejected for misfit with JOM standards and expectations or transferred to regular submission for misfit with the SI, and 42 were sent out for review. Each manuscript was assigned to one of the three guest editors of this special issue and underwent a blind review by two subject matter experts. We ultimately accepted seven articles that appear in this issue, with author institutions representing eight countries across five continents. Table 1 analyzes each contribution according to how it treats actor- and design-related aspects of global work.

Insert Table 1 here

Rickley (this issue) addresses the issue of how MNEs strategically staff subsidiary leadership roles. Going beyond a simple local versus expatriate dichotomy, she provides a more nuanced consideration of international experience profiles. Drawing from executive cognition and institutional theories, Rickley proposes that in order to overcome the liabilities of foreignness associated with greater institutional distance between home and host countries, MNEs will select subsidiary executives with greater depth, variety, and specificity of international experiences. In a sample of executives in foreign-owned banks in Central and Eastern Europe, the study finds that greater home-host country institutional distance is associated with greater duration, count, and variety of executives' previous international experiences, but not with greater specificity of previous international experiences. By demonstrating that in more institutionally-distant, and thus presumably more challenging, environments MNEs value international generalists over specialists for executive roles, this research provides a valuable perspective as to how MNEs organize global work to deal with liabilities of foreignness.

Focusing on the actors of global work, the article by Levy et al. (this issue) offers a refined conceptualization of cosmopolitan disposition, characterized by high levels of cultural transcendence and openness. According to the authors, such disposition can be manifested in different degrees of cultural embeddedness and cultural engagement, leading to specific brokerage roles of cosmopolitans in bridging structural and cultural holes. They further develop a typology of cosmopolitan brokers with unique network configurations and opportunities and challenges for transcultural brokerage. This work helps us gain deeper knowledge of the actors

of global work—whereas actors' cultural backgrounds and experiences still matter, the derived characteristics such as cosmopolitan disposition may count more in facilitating one's involvement in global work. Levy et al. also point readers to an important aspect of global work—brokerage and transcultural connection, without which global work may not be properly performed.

The article by Takeuchi, Li, and Wang (this issue) takes a person-centered dynamic perspective to explore the question whether individuals vary in their performance change patterns over the course of their international assignments. As such, it is also mainly actor-centric in focus. Drawing on a four-wave, longitudinal archival data set of 428 corporate expatriates working in China, the authors find evidence for the coexistence of four performance growth trajectories that cannot be extrapolated from prior research. Further, Takeuchi et al. explore three types of work-related experiences—international, job, and organizational—that serve as anteceding competencies and relate differentially to the performance change patterns. Their unique data set allows the authors not only to explore longitudinal patterns in job performance but also take a partially data-driven approach that informs social learning, human capital accumulation and career management perspectives in the context of global work.

Drawing on signaling theory, Banks et al. (this issue) investigated how MNEs build their competitive advantage in human resources through strategic recruitment globally. Refining our knowledge on the tension between global standardization and local customization, Banks et al. empirically compared the content and strength of recruiting signals of MNEs when they recruit domestically versus internationally. They further examined whether and how cultural distance is related to the standardization of recruitment signals between the HQ and foreign subsidiaries. They found that MNEs largely sent consistent recruitment signals domestically and

internationally, with some minor local customization. Such local flavor becomes more visible when the signals are sent in local language in comparison to that in English. Interestingly, contextual factors (e.g., firm size, capabilities, local laws), instead of cultural distance, may play a stronger role in determining local customization of recruiting signals. This research invites scholars to develop a more subtle understanding of the global-versus-local tension, and be more attentive to contextual factors beyond national cultures.

Santistevan and Josserand (this issue) address an important yet under-researched phenomenon of global work –meta-teams. With extensive field work, the authors demonstrate how global teams function in a fluid way, moving between fluid, viscous, and tight teaming modes. They further explain how such meta-team structure, together with the teaming process and a "shared space of reference", can generate desirable outcomes to "get the global work done" by the team. This article sheds light on two important aspects of global work – its structure and process. First, it points out the possible fluid structure of global work, and the need to pay additional attention to the structural feature of global work in future research. Second, in investigating such fluid structure and the dynamics of teaming, Santistevan and Josserand contribute to the process dimension of global work, which is in most need of further study according to our review.

The conceptual article by Collings, Mellahi, and Cascio (this issue) contributes to the growing strand of global talent management research and mainly takes a work design perspective. Drawing on the resource based view of the firm, it develops a multi-level framework for how global talent management links to performance at the HQ, subsidiary, and individual employee levels. The authors conceive global work in terms of holders, or potential holders of pivotal positions that contribute disproportionately to an MNE's sustained competitive advantage

globally, rather than specific individual experiences of global work. As such, Collings et al. elaborate specific global talent management routines—defined as repetitive, recognizable patterns of interdependent actions among various actors through which work is accomplished—that allow for an identification of pivotal positions, the development of global talent pools, and the development of a differentiated HR architecture that is consistent with each level. By spelling out the performance implications of global talent management, their work also helps reiterating the academic legitimacy of the field more broadly.

Lehdonvirta et al. (this issue) consider the boundaries of where global work happens. They consider the emergence of individual service micro-providers who compete in the global economy via global online platforms. These platforms facilitate the ability of MNEs to outsource across borders to individual micro-providers, who are often located in emerging economy contexts, and enable micro-providers to compete. Integrating transaction costs economics with signaling theory, Lehdonvirta et al. propose three processes, glocalization, platformization, and individualization, through which micro-providers are able to signal competence. They further propose that this ability to signal is particularly important for micro-providers in emerging economies who suffer from a liability of origin effect. Integrating six months of digital trace data from an online labor platform with interviews with micro-providers from emerging economies, the research found that local wage rates are associated with, but do not fully explain, micro-provider pay rates, and interviews confirmed that choices among platform and local employment are complex. As expected, platform-mediated signals also explain pay rates and reduce liability of origin effects, with harder-to-fake signals providing stronger effects. Interviews emphasized the important role of signaling dynamics for providers. Overall, this research points to the need

to further consider how global platforms enable additional options for the management of global work.

FUTURE RESEARCH AGENDA

Based on our initial review and the contributions to this special issue, we offer a series of recommendations for future research to advance our understanding of global work phenomena and, in doing so, connect the IB and HRM literatures. We organize our agenda for future research according to three thematic lines: level of analysis, temporal dynamics and processes, and context (see also Table 2).

Insert Table 2 here

Level of Analysis

The special issue brings together contributions that, together, cover different levels of analysis. While a majority of contributions primarily focused on the individual level (Levy et al., this issue; Rickley, this issue; Takeuchi, Li, & Wang, this issue) all levels are represented. However, with the exception of Collings et al. (this issue) we continue to see few studies that explicitly cross levels of analysis, a state that is consistent with a broader trend in the literature and also reflected in the general scope of submissions we received for the special issue. For example, studies tend to focus on either how global work is experienced individually or how the set of global work arrangements are managed, rather than integrating both aspects. As a result, studies that consider both actor and design perspectives of global work are also scarce. It is interesting to note that although scholars have noticed—and sometimes criticized—an increasing 'psychologization' of HRM (e.g., Godart, 2014), this trend does not seem to have entered the

domain of HRM in MNEs. Instead, there is still a paucity of work on the psychological processes through which employees attach meaning to HRM (e.g., Nishii, Lepak, & Schneider, 2008) in the international domain and scholars have called for more research on the microfoundations of HR in IB (e.g., Minbaeva, Mäkelä, & Rabbiosi, 2012).

Global talent management also lacks more individual-level research. Broader research on talent management has, for example, examined the effect of talent identification on employee attitudes (e.g., Björkman et al., 2013) but we know little about how this translates to the global sphere. Similarly, although talent issues should be salient at the team level, especially given the need for more distributed leadership in global virtual teams (Hill & Bartol, 2016), this has received scant attention in the current global talent management literature.

More broadly, our conceptualization points to both individual and higher-level aspects of global work, such as the configuration of support practices and the experience of other context factors. This is particularly important as global work is in most cases interdependent and involves a myriad of actors. For example, members of global virtual teams may engage in global work to varying extents, depending on the frequency of their team participation and necessary travel. Similarly, international assignees regularly collaborate with both other international assignees and domestic workers, who may differ in their experience of the work context and the HR infrastructure. We therefore need to examine in greater depth how individual experiences of global work are aggregated to team and organizational levels and, ultimately, impact MNE performance. Doing so should also provide a natural touchpoint between HRM and more macro-level IB research.

Temporal Dynamics and Processes

While it has become commonplace to decry the lack of consideration of time in management research more broadly, we maintain that this shortcoming is of particular relevance for understanding global work, for two reasons. First, research on global work is primarily field-based, which makes inferences of causality and endogeneity particularly challenging to deal with (see Meyer, van Witteloostuijn, & Beugelsdijk, 2017). To make appropriate causal claims, it is therefore important for global work scholars to pay special attention to research design, explicitly check endogeneity risks in the analyses, and empirically incorporate instrumental variables when possible (Antonakis, Bendahan, Jacquart, & Lalive, 2010).

Second, due to inherent time zone boundaries, increased travel time, and different perceptions of time, global work is by nature temporally separated. In addition, given the growing fragmentation of global work arrangements that we currently witness, it is critical that research considers these distinctions. For a long time, the expatriate literature failed to adequately account for the qualitatively different types of assignees that organizations were using. This led scholars to mix different types of international assignees in their samples with the risk of canceling out meaningful differences in findings and adopting overly general models that could not account for the nuances of their underlying samples (e.g., Shaffer et al., 2016).

Taking into account time is one way to derive and model such differences. Takeuchi et al.'s study (this issue) is a case in point here. Using latent class growth analysis, the authors demonstrate the co-existence of four distinct subgroups of expatriates whose performance trajectories differed markedly from each other and, in doing so, also point to substantive differences in how the global work arrangements are experienced across the four cohorts. This approach also allows for explicitly taking into account previous global work experiences and relating it to the current global work activity. A similar approach promises to expand our

understanding of how other attributes of global work, such as global virtual team composition, individual abilities, participation in global talent pools, or individual use of organizational support evolve over time and differentially link to global work outcomes. Finally, modeling the evolution of predictors and outcomes of global work may also inform IB scholars studying foreign market entry, MNE staffing, locational choices or HQ-subsidiary relationships.

Context

A third area of future research concerns the need for greater contextualization. It is somewhat surprising that little research takes into account the changing global context, for example as a result of recent political events such as Brexit, Trump, an immigration backlash and a renaissance in protectionism, or other changing contextual conditions. This may be due to most research being conceived before these events unfolded but it also shows that research, and micro-level research in particular, lags behind such salient trends. However, even beyond recent events context is a powerful contingency factor that deserves more explicit attention as we advance our understanding of global work phenomena.

In this regard, we envision the value of typological theorizing as one way to bring context into research on global work. Typologies are means for generating theoretically meaningful categories (Doty & Glick, 1994) and recent work has developed typologies to identify conceptual categories for the experience of global work (Shaffer et al., 2012), differentiate global leadership roles (Reiche et al., 2017), explain how different types of human capital develop from the individual to the unit and to the MNE level (Morris, Snell, & Björkman, 2016), and derive identity configurations of multicultural team members (Lee et al., 2018). Such typologies may be either conceptually (Levy et al., this issue) or empirically (Takeuchi et al., this issue) generated.

An important advantage of typological over traditional theorizing is that it explicitly allows for equifinality, i.e., the modeling of alternative patterns through which constructs can influence a particular outcome rather than specifying relationships between independent and dependent variables (Doty & Glick, 1994). This would allow matching macro factors such as MNE strategy or structure common in the IB literature to the design of global work. Given the growing fragmentation of forms of global work and the resulting differences in their qualitative experience, it is also important to establish meaningful theoretical categories that scholars can use to compile their empirical samples, and compare and contrast research findings in the global work domain. Relevant facets of work design, such as structure and processes lend themselves for further theorizing and operationalization. For example, as we outlined the structure of global work, and the structure of the supporting HR system, entail relevant differences along physical and temporal aspects. Similarly, it would be helpful to explicate the form of global work considered in a given research sample according to whether informants engage in physical relocation, take on international responsibilities, or both. Typological theorizing would also serve to advance theoretical development in the global talent management domain, for example by deriving salient types of global talent, types of pivotal global positions, or categories of global talent management strategies.

Another fruitful path would be to explicitly study the impact of novel contextual characteristics such as digitalization and platformization on global work. Advances in communication technology have given rise to new forms of global work such as online freelancing as part of the 'gig' economy (e.g., Amazon Mechanical Turk), in which employees do not relocate physically but still interact virtually with cultural others for brief periods of time. This will have profound implications for how these actors define their roles and are perceived by

other constituents (see Cascio & Boudreau, 2016). While research on global teams has made inroads into our understanding of what facilitates effective team leadership in such contexts (e.g., Hill & Bartol, 2016; O'Leary & Mortensen, 2010), we still know little about how individuals can lead effectively when they are physically not present with regard to other global work designs. Increased distribution of work through global platforms similarly has implications for our understanding of both actors' role perceptions and work design. For example, Lehdonvirta et al.'s qualitative work (this issue) shows how workers actively consider their own and others' perceptions of work and competence across global boundaries, and also actively design work arrangements to optimize local and global opportunities.

Considering such novel contextual attributes also promises connecting global work with more macro concerns in the IB literature. For example, how do digitalization and platformization affect MNEs' foreign market entry? Drawing on Dunning's (1993) seminal work it has been common to explain MNEs' foreign market entry when a given firm possesses ownership, locational, and internationalization advantages. However, we would assume that talent platforms change the relative salience of these advantages, for example regarding the need to access local talent and the form of managing and controlling these resources, and we would encourage scholars to examine these implications.

Finally, changes in the broader political climate such as the anti-globalization attitudes we are witnessing may also shape individuals' willingness to engage in global work and the identity transformations they experience as a result of their global work experiences, both of which have implications for how organizations can continue to incentivize global work. In short, we believe that the domain of global work provides a wealth of exciting and under-researched questions to further our understanding of this important domain of IB and HRM research. We sincerely hope

that our special issue paves the way for future research on global work and further integration

across the IB and HRM domains.

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Figure 1. A Three-Dimensional Conceptualization of Global Work
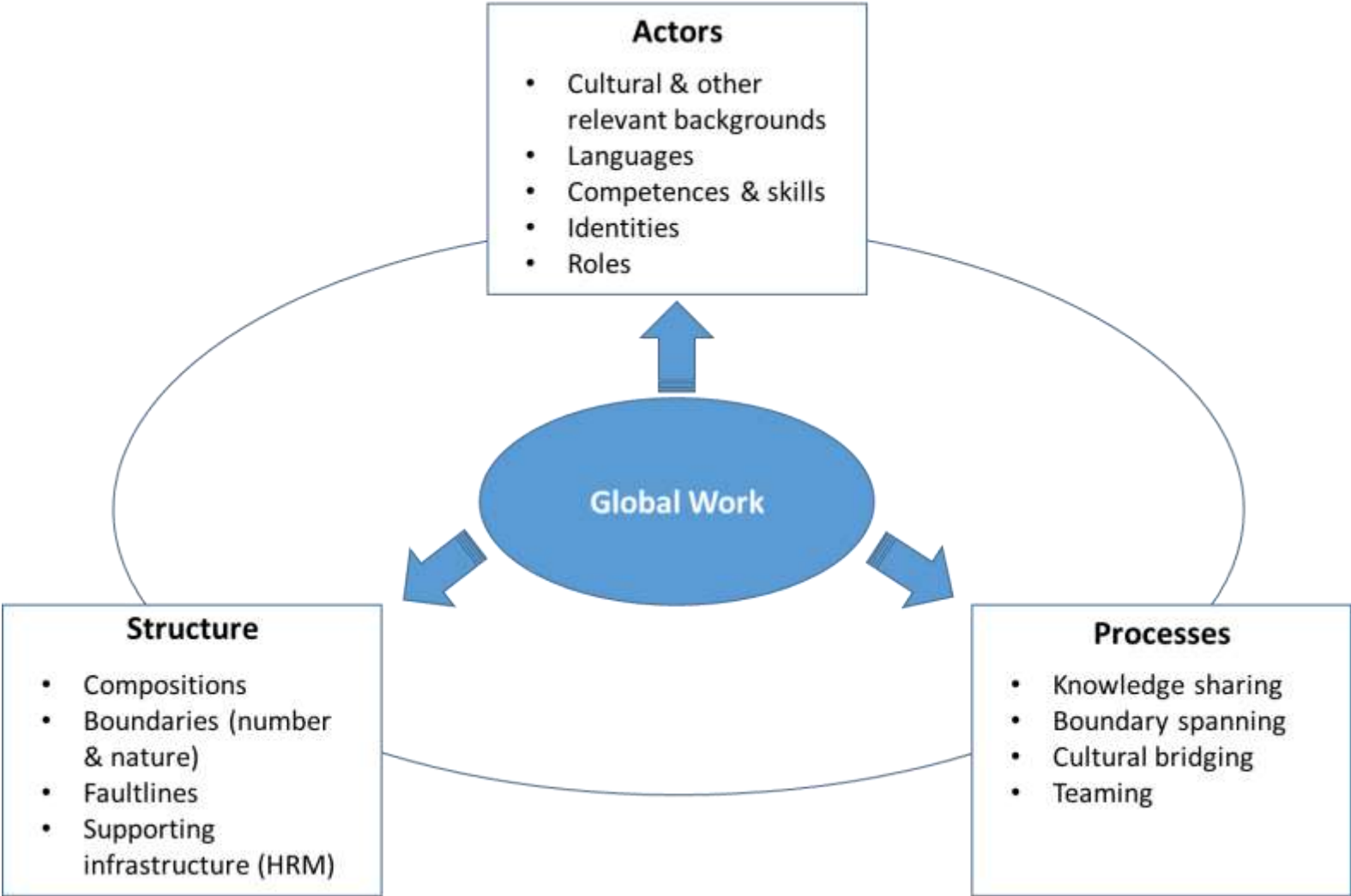
Table 1: Classification of Contributions According to Construct Dimension of Global Work

Theoretical Frame	Main Research Questions	Actor Characteristics	Structure Characteristics	Process Characteristics	Main Findings
Rickley (2019) • Institutional Theory/ Institutional Distance • Executive Cognition	1. Are variety and specificity of international experiences associated with MNE subsidiary executive staffing strategies?	• Count, duration, variety, and specificity of executives' previous international experiences	• MNE subsidiary staffing strategies • Executives' international experience profiles	• How MNEs use staffing strategies to overcome liabilities of foreignness associated with home-host institutional distance	• Home-host institutional distance is associated with greater count, duration, and variety of subsidiary executives' previous international experiences • Home-host institutional distance is not associated with greater specificity of subsidiary executives' previous international experiences
Levy, Lee, Peiperl, & Jonsen (2019) • Conceptual • A cultural perspective on cosmopolitans	1. What are the underlying characteristics of cosmopolitans? 2. How do cosmopolitan dispositions influence transcultural brokerage?	• Individuals with cosmopolitan dispositions • Various types of cosmopolitans depending on one's cultural embeddedness and cultural engagement	• The presence of structural holes and cultural holes in global work	• Brokerage activities that cosmopolitans may engage in to bridge structural and cultural holes	• The defining characteristics of cosmopolitans: cultural transcendence and cultural openness • Various degree of cultural embeddedness and engagement of cosmopolitans can be related to specific opportunities and challenges for transcultural brokerage, forming a typology of four cosmopolitan types

Takeuchi, Li, & Wang (2019) • Inductive • Integration of social learning and human capital-accumulation perspectives	1. Do different performance change patterns exist for expatriates during their international assignments? 2. How do work-related experiences accumulated prior to the assignments relate to performance change patterns?	• Expatriates' evolution of job performance over time • Key competencies as a result of the previous work experiences that expatriates carry with them	• Corporate expatriation to China (2-2.5 years)	• Variation of performance change patterns over the course of international assignments	• Four distinct longitudinal change patterns of expatriate job performance (u-curve, learning-curve, stable high performance, and stable low-performance) coexist • Three different types of prior work experiences (international, job, and organizational) are important antecedents of such performance change patterns
Banks, Woznyj, Wesslen, Frear, Berka, Heggestad, & Gordon (2019) • Signaling theory • Cultural distance as moderator	1. What signals do firms send when recruiting domestically and internationally via recruiting websites? 2. To what extent does the strength of signals on domestic recruiting websites relate to the strength of signals on international recruiting websites?	• Unspecified global talents in domestic and international labor markets as potential recruits	• HR recruiting signals used in domestic (i.e., the country of the HQ) and international subsidiaries • Cultural distance between home country and foreign subsidiaries	• Signaling generated by the messages used in corporate recruitment website	• MNEs seem to standardize and send a lot of the same overall signals in domestic and international recruiting • There was consistency between the strength of domestic recruiting signals and the English international signals • When international recruiting signals are sent in a foreign language, there appears to be much more local customization compared to international recruiting signals sent in English

	3. How does cultural distance between domestic and international locations relate to global standardization of recruiting signals used by MNEs?				• Cultural distance did not moderate the relation between domestic signals and English-language international signals
Santistevan & Josserand (2019) • A teaming perspective on global teams	1. How do meta-teams facilitate global work?	• Global account managers and members in core and extended global account teams, spreading across multiple sites and countries	• A meta-team structure that moves among fluid, viscous, and tight teaming modes according to needs	• Process of teaming that allows the meta-team to move among different teaming modes • Process of meta-team (e.g., cultural mediation, global problem-solving, etc.) that facilitates global work	• The three teaming modes in global meta-team: fluid, viscous, and tight • The mechanisms and processes through which global meta-teams mobilize members to achieve common team goals
Collings, Mellahi, & Cascio (2019) • Conceptual • Resource-based view of the firm	1. How does global talent management (GTM) link to performance at HQ, subsidiary, and individual employee levels?	• Global talent, viewed as (potential) holders of pivotal positions that disproportionally y contribute to an MNE's sustained	• Routines, defined as repetitive, recognizable patterns of interdependent actions among various actors through which work is accomplished	• Process of alignment of GTM routines between HQ and subsidiaries • Emergence as central mechanism for explaining how individual human capital	• The routines of pivotal positions, global talent pools, and a differentiated HR architecture are critical to GTM • Through vertical fit of higher-level factors such as MNE strategy or alignment between HQ intentions and

		competitive advantage		translates into unit-level outcomes	subsidiary implementation of GTM routines a MNE can develop an effective GTM system that achieves sustainable performance
Lehdonvirta et al. (2019) • Transaction costs economics • Signaling theory • Statistical discrimination	1. How do service micro-providers, particularly from emerging country contexts, successfully compete in the global economy? 2. What are the implications for global offshoring models?	• Individual micro-providers in emerging economy contexts • Signals of provider competence	• Expanded boundaries of global work • Managing global work for a MNE may not always entail managing global work within the boundaries of the MNE	• Glocalization • Platformization • Individualization	• Platform-mediated signals explain micro-provider pay rates • Platform-mediated signals reduce liability of origin effects • Harder-to-fake signals have stronger effects

Table 2: A Summary of Future Research on Global Work

Key topics	Suggestions for future research
General	• Explicitly specify all three dimensions of global work (i.e., actors, structure, and processes) to situate unambiguously the type of global work under study. • Continue to develop deeper understanding in each dimensions (i.e., actors, structure, and processes) of global work. • Examine variations in the actors, structure, and processes of global work to differentiate possible types of global work and their unique features. • Investigate the interaction and interconnectedness of the three dimensions to capture more comprehensively the complex phenomenon of global work.
Level of analysis	• Consciously position global work research at specific levels of analysis that are relevant to the research question. • Expand research of global work in terms of level of analysis to address the space that is currently under-studied (e.g., individual-level research in HR and global talent management). • Apply a multilevel perspective in both conceptual and empirical research of global work to connect individual experiences and more macro-level factors (e.g., HR system-related) of global work.
Temporal dynamics and processes	• Explicitly incorporate the time factor in global work research to uncover possible variations of global work type (e.g., career trajectories of actors). • Address the potential issue of endogeneity by careful research design and consideration of instrumental variables that allow for making causal claims. • Study the temporal dynamics of global work to understand its processes and dynamics (i.e., how do specific types of global work unfold). • Model the evolution of predictors and outcomes of global work to generate richer insights for managerial decisions regarding global talent development, leading global teams, and foreign market entry.
Context	• Explicitly specify the contexts (e.g., political, economic, cultural, institutional) in which the global work under study unfolds. • Consider applying typological and configurational theorizing in the study of global work to capture broader contextual factors and account for possible equifinality in predicting relevant outcomes.

- Incorporate emerging contextual themes (e.g., digitalization, platformization, sharing economies, less-hierarchical organizing) in the study of global work to keep research timely and relevant.