

# 'Expatriates': Gender, Race and Class Distinctions in International Management

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## Abstract

In the international management (IM) literature, 'expatriate' is used as a verb in reference to the transnational movement of employees by multinational corporations (MNCs) and as a noun in reference to the people who are so moved across borders to work. IM's resulting expatriate analyses apply only to a specific minority of relatively privileged people. However, as is clear in other bodies of literature, many others ('migrants') in less privileged class positions move themselves across national boundaries for work. In this majority are often women and men — people of diverse races, ethnicities, economic and social means — who have less education and who work in lower level jobs, also often in or for MNCs. Their invisibility in the IM literature sustains and reinforces gender, race and class-based disparities in globalization processes and work to the detriment of poor women of colour around the world. We call for gendering change that would make visible the invisible in IM scholarship related to expatriation.

[T]he British engineer working for a multinational oil company in Trinidad is a British expatriate ..., [an] outsider but not an inferiorized other. However, the female factory worker from Aruba who migrates to Holland to work is constructed as other and is inferiorized. ([Jones, 2008](#), p. 763)

Migration is considered one of the defining global issues of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century and more people are on the move today than at any other point in human history (International Organization for Migration [[IOM](#)], 2010). There are now about 214 million people living outside their country of birth — just over 3 per cent of the world's population. This means that roughly

one of every 35 people in the world is a migrant and about half of them are women ([IOM, 2010](#)). Globalization and migration trends influenced by immigration policies and corporate interests shape the employment landscape for these millions of people who move, many of whom do so expressly for work. Some of them move themselves to other countries to work, finding various positions in various types of organizations on their own. Others are moved by multinational corporations (MNCs) and sent abroad to manage foreign operations.

As suggested by the opening vignette, women and men from different parts of the world cross national boundaries to work in other parts of the world. Their compensation (cheap labour or not) and treatment (inferiorized or not) are intertwined with their gender (female or not), race (of colour or not) and class (poor or not) and with whether they are even visible to many researchers. [Holvino \(2010\)](#) refers to ways in which race, class and gender relations are built into organizational structures and processes, which are normalized to produce and reproduce inequality and privilege. In this article we expand upon the argument of a circumscribed attention to globalization in the international management (IM) literature on expatriation ([Berry, 2009](#)), proposing that race, class and gender are built into the MNCs' organizational structures and the processes of globalization and that they work to the detriment of poor women of colour around the world. We apply the notion of class processes and practices to show how class is part of the processes of globalization, migration and the inequalities between women and men and people of different races, ethnicities and economic and social means who leave their home countries to work; and how class fosters the invisibility of these inequalities. We use the conceptualization of 'the expatriate' to show how the focus of MNCs and IM researchers on one group only is normalized to produce and reproduce inequality and privilege across borders.

We first consider the terms 'expatriate' and 'migrant', emphasizing their virtually identical dictionary meanings and pointing out how expatriates are constructed in IM literature. We highlight the gender, race and class-related differences in the constructed meanings of the terms and consider how this construction directs and is directed by the MNC-related management, control and profit-centred focus in IM research. We point out that this construction circumscribes the IM study of global movement for work, ignoring the overwhelming majority of people moving across borders to work. Having pointed out these constructed differences, we then discuss MNCs hiring practices that are specifically relevant to women — highlighting the gender, race and class aspects of these processes that disadvantage poor women. Lastly, we make some recommendations for change that would begin to make visible (and therefore might help to reduce) gender, race and class-based omissions in IM research that are structured by the processes and practices of globalization's MNCs.

## **Defining and studying expatriates and migrants: the same, but different**

Merriam-Webster defines an expatriate as one who leaves or withdraws from residence in one's native (home) country ([Merriam-Webster, 1984](#), p. 799). In the IM literature, expatriate refers to a person moved to another country by an MNC on a temporary work assignment and expatriation to that movement; variants of migration are rarely used in IM. In the Academy of Management's journals (*Proceedings*, *Executive*, *Journal*, *Review* and *Learning and Education*), for example, the word, 'expatriate' appears in article titles 36 times between 1974 and 2008. 'Immigrant' appears in the title of a single 2001 *Academy of Management Executive* article and this is a

review of a book about immigrant entrepreneurs in the USA and Israel. In the *Journal of International Business Studies* between 1970 and 2007 there are 23 articles with expatriate in the title, but none with any variant of migrant. In *Journal of World Business* between 1997 and 2008, 22 articles with expatriate in the title appeared, but again, none with any variation of migrant.

Outside of the IM literatures migrant and expatriate are used interchangeably in reference to people who move across national boundaries for work, and migration to the act of such movement. For example, in *International Migration*, a policy-oriented journal concerned with migration issues, expatriate, migrant and migration are used in discussion and analysis of people and their movement across international borders. Variations in the definition and usage of expatriate and migrant across disciplines inform different understandings of the concept of moving from one's home country to work abroad. Given the considerable overlap and often nearly the same meaning, of these terms, one might argue that there is no need to use both expatriate and migrant. On the other hand, if the terms differ in whom they refer to, how do expatriates and migrants differ such that one is attended to by MNCs and is the focus of study in the IM literature and the other is not?

In the following sections, drawing from IM and other bodies of literature, we point out some of the key differences between those construed as expatriates and those construed as migrants, emphasizing the gendered, raced and classed differentiations. Consideration of these differences may help to make visible the invisible and provide a foundation for change. [Table 1](#) presents comparisons between expatriates and migrants in their characteristics, occupation, skill level, compensation and benefits and organizational support. The focus on expatriates in the IM literature and the material differences in the organizational status and treatment by MNCs of expatriates and migrants serve to legitimate these differences.

Table 1. *Race, gender, and class differences between expatriates and migrants*

	<b>Expatriate</b>	<b>Migrant</b>
Gender	Primarily male; 15% female ( <a href="#">Adler, 1984c</a> ; <a href="#">Altman and Shortland, 2008</a> ; <a href="#">Caligiuri and Cascio, 1998</a> ; <a href="#">Kollinger, 2005</a> )	Approximately 50% female, 50% male ( <a href="#">IOM, 2005</a> )
Race/ethnicity	Primarily white Anglo-Saxon	Often racial and ethnic minorities of colour ( <a href="#">Jones, 2008</a> ; <a href="#">Moss and Tilly, 2001</a> ; <a href="#">Passel, 2006</a> ; <a href="#">Rivera-Batiz, 1999</a> ; <a href="#">United Nations, 1998</a> ; <a href="#">Vo, 2001</a> )
Employers and industries	MNCs in various industries	MNCs in various industries, other employers (e.g., health care, construction, agriculture, apparel, food processing, entertainment, individuals) ( <a href="#">Moss and Tilly, 2001</a> ; <a href="#">Passel, 2006</a> ; <a href="#">Rivera-Batiz, 1999</a> )
Sample of occupations and gender make-up	Executives, managers and professionals, primarily male	Nursing ( <a href="#">Folbre, 2006</a> ) elder and child care, domestics, 'entertainment' workers, primarily male
		Labourers in capital-intensive industries; meat processing, agricultural; construction), primarily male

Table 1. *Race, gender, and class differences between expatriates and migrants*

Expatriate		Migrant
		female
		Labourers in labour-intensive industries; apparel, fruit sorting, primarily female ( <a href="#">Caraway, 2007</a> ; <a href="#">Human Rights Watch, 2002</a> ; <a href="#">Jones, 2008</a> ; <a href="#">Passel, 2006</a> ; <a href="#">Rivera-Batiz, 1999</a> )
Skill level	Skilled	Both skilled and unskilled; skilled workers may work in unskilled positions; women's work more likely to be termed semi-skilled ( <a href="#">Findlay and Gould, 1989</a> ; <a href="#">Gould, 1988</a> ; <a href="#">Pyle, 2006</a> ; <a href="#">Shih, 2002</a> ; <a href="#">Yeoh and Khoo, 1998</a> )
Compensation and benefits	High wages and benefits	Often low wages and few to no benefits ( <a href="#">Moss and Tilly, 2001</a> ; <a href="#">Shih, 2002</a> )
Organizational support	Significant, including corporate move, housing allowance, tax abatements; language training and family support ( <a href="#">Bauer and Taylor, 2001</a> ; <a href="#">Hutchings et al., 2008</a> ; <a href="#">Tung, 1987</a> )	Very limited to none

## Expatriates

Revisiting the opening vignette, we can see how in the IM literature, white men dominate the conceptualization of expatriates and how this often goes almost without saying:

[T]he British engineer working for a multinational oil company in Trinidad is a British expatriate ..., [an] outsider, but not an inferiorized other. ([Jones, 2008](#), p. 763)

Three key words in the description of this person point out some of the unspoken reasons why he would not be inferiorized as he worked for an MNC in Trinidad: British, engineer and expatriate. 'British' reads 'Anglo-Saxon' and could as well be substituted with 'American', attesting to the perceived (and actual) whiteness of most expatriates in the IM literature ([Feldman and Thomas, 1992](#)). Next, the title 'engineer' carries a general expectation that the person holding this job is a man, making it unnecessary for the author to mention this. Less than 12% of American engineers ([National Science Foundation, 2006](#)) and only 15% of expatriates are women ([Altman and Shortland, 2008](#)). That 'women expatriates' are referred to as *women* expatriates speaks to their continued outsider status, much like 'women police officers', 'women firefighters' or 'women pilots'. Along with male, engineer also indicates well-educated, a class difference. Were class, race and sex more visible among expatriates it would have been necessary to say in the opening

statement ‘the well-educated, high status, white, male British engineer’ rather than simply ‘the British engineer’.

Expatriates comprise a small minority of the population of people moving across borders to work ([Harzing and Christensen, 2004](#); [Jokinen et al., 2008](#)). Their race and ethnicity are not always reported in empirical IM literature or discussed in conceptual work. In [Feldman and Tompson \(1993\)](#), 113 of the 118 expatriates (in Saudi Arabia, Europe, South America and Japan) were white men. Only three were women (presumed white) and two belonged to ethnic minorities. [Feldman and Tompson \(1993\)](#) noted that age, marital status and sex were the only variables relevant to expatriates' adjustment in their study. [Harvey \(1997\)](#) reported expatriate age and sex but not race. Although they did not report race, [Shaffer et al. \(2006\)](#) reported that of the 182 expatriates working in Hong Kong in her sample, 44, 22 and 10% were from the USA, Australia and the UK, respectively; 87% were men and 86% worked in mid-level to senior-level management. Shaffer *et al.* compared her sample with 35 other studies of expatriates and found it representative. As shown in [Table 1](#), expatriates work in MNCs in various industries. They are employed as executives, managers and professionals and are well-compensated. They receive high wages and benefits and significant organizational support for their expatriation. This organizational support includes support for movement to the host country, housing allowances, tax abatements, language training and family support.

## **Migrants**

Again revisiting the opening vignette, in comparison with expatriates, migrants' race, gender and class are clear:

However, the female factory worker from Aruba who migrates to Holland to work is constructed as other and is inferiorized. ([Jones, 2008](#), p. 763)

As with the British engineer, the description of this person points out some of the unspoken reasons she would be treated as an inferiorized other: female, factory worker, from Aruba, who moves (herself) for work. That she is female points out her membership in a devalued group, as does her work in a factory, which suggests she is low-skilled and low paid. That she is from Aruba suggests that she is of colour, which is also a devalued status. That she migrates herself suggests she comes of her own volition, rather than being moved by an MNC, further indicating a less valued status. Thus, her race, class and gender are apparent.

As shown in [Table 1](#), migrants are often racial and ethnic people of colour ([Jones, 2008](#), p. 762) and approximately half are women ([IOM, 2010](#)). Among MNCs, migrant employees work in sex-segregated positions and capital-intensive occupations are heavily male-dominated, while labour-intensive occupations are female-dominated ([Caraway, 2007](#)). [Jones \(2008, p. 762\)](#) refers to ‘implicit racialized and gendered codes’ that are used to separate and differentiate migrants.

In another difference between migrants and expatriates, the former may be skilled or unskilled, although women who are skilled often work in unskilled positions. [Kofman and Raghuram \(2005\)](#), speaking to the gender sensitivity of migration streams, point out what they term ‘the problematic definition of skills’ (2005, p. 150). They note that some usages of the term ‘skill’ are

gendered as 'skilled' is more often associated with scientific and technological professions and 'semi-skilled,' with few exceptions, is often associated with professions in which women dominate. [Findlay and Gould \(1989, p. 6\)](#) note that the terms skilled and unskilled (as defined by education, occupation or income) require careful contextual consideration (for example, referring to professional and managerial or manual and clerical in one context and some other demarcation in another).

Migrant women work in feminized, racialized positions with low wages and status and few or no benefits. At times, placing women in such positions is a deliberate staffing strategy of MNCs. In some maquiladoras, 80% of the employees are women, who are believed to be more dexterous (and therefore more productive), more obedient and less combative than men ([Human Rights Watch \[HRW\], 2002](#)), creating a 'toxic mix' for women workers ([Caraway, 2007, p. 5](#)). In addition to their low wages, migrant women workers are often subjected to gender-specific labour violations, including pre-employment pregnancy testing, termination of employment for becoming pregnant and sexual harassment and assault. Women's low-wage labour in MNC factories perpetuates gender inequality ([Caraway, 2007](#); [HRW, 2002](#); [Vo, 2001](#)) yet the experiences of these MNC workers are invisible in IM research.

In summarizing the differences presented in [Table 1](#), it is clear that although expatriates and migrants are alike in crossing national boundaries to work, they differ by race, gender and class. Many feminist scholars have argued that those with profit-focused capitalist interests specifically consider workers' race, gender and class in structuring employment systems ([Acker, 2004](#); [Caraway, 2007](#)). Migrants themselves understand this. [Vo \(2001\)](#) proposes that Asian women migrants are well aware that their employment is connected to globalization and that American capitalism profits from their concentration in race-segregated and gender-segregated jobs. We now address the way in which globalization and capitalist profits are related to migrant women's employment in MNCs and invisibility in IM research.

## **Globalization, MNCs and IM research**

Globalization, MNCs and IM expatriate research are closely intertwined. Across academic disciplines researchers theorize about the benefits, drawbacks and wide-ranging effects of globalization. [Eden and Lenway \(2001\)](#) bring multiple perspectives together, identifying MNCs as the 'the embodiment of globalization and its principal agent' (p. 383). They propose that MNCs have driven globalization, integrating their activities across markets and societies, with the full support and co-operation of IM scholars. They spotlight the role of the IM research community by associating them with the global elites and intelligentsia for whom globalization is portrayed as largely quite positive. They contrast these elites with those who acknowledge the dark side of globalization. [Mohanty \(2003\)](#), too, links globalization with markets and business practices, defining it 'a process that combines a market ideology with a set of material practices drawn from the business world' (p. 171). She points to the association of globalization and certain ways of organizing production (and reproduction) and class relations across national borders that are less transparent and asserts that people in power and institutions maintain inequalities partly by hiding or mystifying practices related to them. [Mohanty \(2003\)](#) links, as do [Eden and Lenway \(2001\)](#), globalization, MNC business practices and the work of academics. She challenges the seeming willingness of those who create knowledge to accept the supremacy



of globalization and the inevitability of its effects, explicitly implicating them regarding the primacy of market ideologies and related business practices. Before examining other perspectives on globalization we provide data from a review of international management research topics ([Werner, 2002](#)) to highlight this focus on profit maximization.

[Werner \(2002\)](#) analysed trends in the IM literature from 1996 to 2000 using 271 articles in 20 of the top management and related organizational science disciplines — although only one of these, the *Journal of International Business Studies*, had an exclusively international focus. He used only those articles that fell within the management domain and identified 12 primary topics. The IM-related research focus included such topics as the global business environment (such as the global economy and markets; political and regulatory environments and international risks); entry mode decisions and consequences; and ownership equity and control (such as joint ventures and wholly owned subsidiaries). Nearly 40% of the articles were about internationalization (descriptions, measurement, antecedents and consequences), entry mode decisions and foreign direct investment. Expatriates; those who move from their home countries for to work in an MNC, and the problems they encounter both when on assignment and when returning to the home country, are one of the 12 top areas studied in IM research. However, they comprised less than 6 per cent of all articles. Thus, 94% of this body of IM-focused research was about globalization without consideration of the people involved in or affected by it.

On the other hand, the people affected by globalization are discussed by many researchers outside of IM, including [Acker \(2004\)](#), [Bauman \(2000\)](#), [Caraway \(2007\)](#), [Jones \(2008\)](#), [Vo \(2001\)](#) and many others. For example, [Browne and Braun \(2008\)](#) point out that although globalization means higher standards of living for some, for others, particularly in developing nations, it means increasing inequality and poverty, especially for women. [Vo \(2001\)](#) notes that as a result of globalization's disruption of traditional economies in Asia (and Latin America), women move to the cities in their own countries or immigrate to other countries looking for work and become a cheap source of labour at the bottom of feminized, racialized labour forces. Thus, as a result of globalization, 'Asian immigrant women provide a readily available cheap labour force in the United States and ... for American multinational corporations with factories in Asia' ([Vo, 2001](#), p. 283). [Acker \(2004\)](#) emphasizes that globalization drives the 'increasing pace and penetrations of movements of capital, production and people across boundaries of many kinds and on a global basis' (p. 18) but class, race and ethnic and gender relations undergird these movements. She refers to the large literature on women's labour as a resource for capital and for multinationals as they seek the lowest wage labour — seeking sites for their operations where labour laws and unions are weak. In her book on the feminization of global manufacturing [Caraway \(2007\)](#) explains how discourses of work and of production in capital-intensive sectors provide work opportunities for women while at the same time closing them off from the jobs that pay well. The 'workings of capitalism reproduce rather than undermine the processes that create it' (p. 5). Finally, [Tsui \(2007\)](#), addressing globalization in her call for movement 'from homogenization to pluralism' in international management research, asks: 'What are the implications of continuing globalization for firms, work, management, and employees at home and abroad?' (p. 1360).

These researchers point to an all-encompassing phenomenon in which MNCs pursue their goals on a world stage to the benefit of some and the detriment of others. Class, race and gender are

factors in who benefits and who does not (for example, [Acker, 2004](#); [Caraway, 2007](#); [HRW, 2002](#); [Mohanty, 2003](#)). For many powerful business entities, globalization is about profit maximizing and the finding and employment of cheap labour wherever in the world it exists for as long as possible. The foundations for the same raced, classed and gendered practices that disadvantage poor women of colour in business entities within nations are exported, often to countries with fewer laws, unions and other controls, to affect those who are even more powerless. The overwhelmingly positive portrayal of globalization in the IM literature makes a more accurate and complete assessment of its unequal effects less likely.

## **Class, capitalism and expatriation**

In [Bauman's \(2000\)](#) conceptualization of globalization, he focuses on its class effects and highlights a taken-for-granted assumption that the owners (or investors) of a business enterprise are, rightfully, the only ones whose interests matter. Thus, class is ultimately about inequality ([Acker, 2004](#); [Gibson-Graham et al., 2000](#); [Mohanty, 2003](#); [Scully and Blake-Beard, 2006](#)). [Gibson-Graham et al. \(2000\)](#) address the two prominent streams of meaning in discourses related to class. One stream refers to a hierarchy in social ranking and is commonly used in reference to a social location related to income, jobs, wealth and status. The other meaning refers to an economic relation of exploitation between surplus producers and non-producers and considers the flow of surplus labour between the appropriators and recipients of surplus labour distributions. In this conceptualization, the process of production, appropriation and distribution are class processes and participants occupy class positions. Economic systems can also be distinguished based on relationships to surplus labour. A key element of a capitalist system is that one group produces and others appropriate and distribute the products of labour. Thus, there is a range of class positions related to the distribution of surplus labour ([Gibson-Graham et al., 2000](#)). [Folbre \(1982\)](#) argues, though, that a class analysis must be explicitly gendered with respect to unpaid labour also, as the unequal conditions of wage labour are not unrelated to those of unpaid labour. When considering waged production, the production and reproduction of women in the home, which makes wage labour possible, must not be invisible.

[Acker's \(2006\)](#) class analysis also involves the processes that shape divisions and practices to create and sustain differences in employment, power relations and monetary rewards. Class 'stands for practices and relations that provide differential access to and control over the means of provisioning and survival' (p. 68). It is relational and, as in her assessment of globalization, she asserts that the relations are gendered and racialized through various processes such as the organization of work and the use of images and ideologies related to divisions of labour. Acker argues that work is organized to create and maintain differential access to and control of resources via recruitment and hiring practices, work requirements, organizational hierarchies, control and supervision, wage determination and job classifications. A key assertion is that these are accomplished through invisible processes that then result in invisible inequalities that are therefore difficult to eradicate ([Acker, 2006](#), p. 118).

We submit that in the case of the silence in the IM literature on the subject of those who move themselves to find work in MNCs, [Acker's \(2006\)](#), [Folbre's \(1982\)](#) and [Gibson-Graham et al.'s \(2000\)](#) conceptualizations of class are interrelated. MNC requirements of making a profit drive the creation and maintenance of the gendered classed processes in which certain people are



producers and others appropriate and distribute products such that unequal social and economic processes are sustained. The hierarchical class system in the home, impacting on expatriates and migrants but differing by race, class, gender, nationality and location, also serves as an ongoing source of labour for the expansion of globalization. Those who are MNC owners and their agents are participants through their employment practices; these practices also exist regarding workers in MNCs. The structured labour markets of international companies and ‘those who *select candidates* for expatriate postings within large firms’ are, through their human resources (HR) policies, critical determinants of the composition of skilled migration flows ([Findlay and Gould, 1989](#), p. 4, emphasis added). HR policies and programmes related to expatriate selection, compensation and support for certain people in MNCs but not others are included among these organizing practices and create and sustain class inequities around who and what expatriates are. Expatriates are executives, managers and professionals sent abroad to ensure that a company's foreign operations are run as they should be and to provide management development experiences for those who are expatriated ([Hutchings et al. 2008](#); [Tung, 1987, 2004](#)). The roles of expatriates thus fit well within class processes — the management and control of MNC global operations and the associated labour of workers.

As a result of these roles, expatriate management is viewed as a key part of IM research ([Tsui, 2007](#), p. 1353). The term ‘expatriate management’ is an acknowledgement that expatriates are also exploited by the class system — their actions are controlled and their labour is extracted even as they (as managers) manage and extract the labour of others. These others are often poor women of colour who have also moved to work, yet who are invisible in IM literature and are treated as unimportant and replaceable by MNCs. And, in focusing on the needs of particular groups of workers and ignoring others who are also critical contributors to the success of MNCs, IM scholars also participate in these class processes and help maintain and normalize the constructed inequalities. However, some scholars outside management have specifically begun addressing gender and migration processes.

## **Gendering change in IM's study of migration**

After a long period in which gender was ignored in the migration literature, scholars began bringing gender in ([Pessar and Mahler, 2003](#); see also [Mahler and Pessar, 2001](#)). As a result, a large body of literature outside IM identifies ways in which gender articulates migration ([Pessar and Mahler, 2003](#)). We call for similar work such that classed, raced and gendered processes associated with migration are visible to students, scholars and practitioners of IM. We have shown the gender, race and class at work in expatriation and in determining the focus of IM research. In this section, we point out specific ways in which gendered aspects of power and privilege have begun to enter the IM literature (women expatriates and self-initiated expatriates) and call for the additional gendering of this literature.

### **Women expatriates**

Despite a significant amount of research showing that women are infrequently expatriated and calling for more women expatriates ([Adler, 1979, 1984a, 1984b, 1987](#)), women remain unlikely to be selected to be expatriates. The earliest research tried to dispel perceptions that women were unwilling and uninterested in international assignments and that host country nationals were

resistant to women expatriates. It also documented resistance against the selection of women expatriates by HR personnel ([Adler, 1984a, 1984b, 1987](#)). Since Adler's pioneering work, considerable research has focused on women expatriates and their experiences. One concern about this research that is important to class processes and the invisibility of certain groups of workers is immediately apparent from the titles of the articles: the focus on women as managers. Examples of these are 'Expecting international success: female managers overseas' ([Adler, 1984b](#)); 'Pacific basin managers: A *gaijin*, not a woman' ([Adler, 1987](#)); 'Another 'glass ceiling'?: the experiences of women professional and managers on international assignments' ([Forster, 1999](#)); 'Work–family conflict and the senior female international managers' ([Linehan and Walsh, 2000](#)) and 'Female expatriates: the model manager?' ([Tung, 2004](#)).

It is important to note that aside from their sex, women expatriates are similar in socioeconomic terms to male expatriates: they are white, highly educated executives, managers and professionals who receive significant compensation, benefits and organizational and family support from the MNCs that send them abroad to manage and control foreign operations. Since Adler's call for women expatriates, and numerous subsequent articles emphasizing the need for women as expatriates and women's success as managers when expatriated, women still comprise less than 15% of MNC-assigned expatriates ([Altman and Shortland, 2008](#); [Caligiuri and Cascio, 1998](#); [Kollinger, 2005](#)), up from an estimated 3% ([Adler, 1984a](#)). Yet, as with the intra-national glass ceiling, women expatriates occupy fewer of the highest status international assignment positions even though they sometimes have more education and other qualifications than male expatriates ([Forster, 1999](#); [Fischlmayr, 2002](#)). Some have argued that, much as happens in other jobs that increase female representation, women are being welcomed as expatriation loses its lustre ([Altman and Shortland, 2001](#); [Hofbauer and Fischlmayr, 2004](#)).

We call for more research on women's lived experiences as expatriates. What is expatriation really like for them as gendered, raced and classed participants of globalizing processes? How can expatriates who are women become knowledgeable about the class-based and race-based inequalities inherent in global business structures and processes such that they can use their understandings as forces for change?

### **Self-initiated expatriates**

Because expatriates in IM have been constructed as those who are moved by an MNC to work for the MNC, studies of expatriates who use their own resources to move to another country for work are extremely limited in IM. These people are referred to as 'self-initiated expatriates' (SIEs), still not as 'migrants'. [Inkson et al. \(1997\)](#) argue that while the MNC-assigned expatriate experience is dominant in the USA, the SIE experience is more prominent in New Zealand. [Bonache et al. \(2001\)](#) highlight previous research ([Suutari and Brewster, 2003](#)) in which one-third of university-level Finnish employees on foreign assignments were found to have found jobs without assistance from the employing organization. [Myers and Pringle \(2005\)](#) point out that the self-initiated assignment is now a recognized alternative model of international careers (p. 421) and propose that workers on self-initiated assignments may form a larger segment of the labour market than business-assigned expatriates.

In other research on SIEs, age, gender, career orientation, organization mobility, repatriation and indicators of career success are considered and often compared with that of assigned expatriates ([Al Ariss, 2010](#); [Biemann and Andresen, 2010](#); [Tharenou and Caulfield, 2010](#)). Finding that SIEs exhibit higher organizational mobility and higher intentions to change organizations, [Biemann and Andresen \(2010\)](#) argue for more research on this group of expatriates. [Jokinen, et al. \(2008\)](#) assert that SIEs are not only a widespread group but are also widely used by organizations and termed this state of affairs an ‘*almost hidden* aspect of the international labour market’ (p. 997, emphasis added).

Although research including SIEs broadens the scope related to those who move across borders to work, SIEs are skilled managers or professionals, as are those associated with expatriate assignments and women expatriates. In fact, [Yeoh and Khoo \(1998\)](#), who use the terms expatriate and migration together in discussion and analysis of people and their movement across international borders, distinguish between skilled professionals and managers and low-skilled workers. Again, we call for inclusion in IM research of people of various education and skill levels who move to work, including migrants.

### **Including migrants in IM research**

In contrast to women expatriates, who are the focus of considerable IM research, and SEIs, who are now receiving some, although limited attention, the complete absence of research on migrants has been the focus of this article. As we have discussed, migrants work in positions with low wages, low status and few benefits, and are disproportionately women and those from devalued racial and ethnic groups. They often work in segregated jobs and industries with few other opportunities and are subject to exploitation and abuse, both intra-nationally and internationally. These are class distinctions — divisions of labour in which there exists differential access to and control over the means of provisioning and survival ([Acker, 2006](#)). These are differences in employment relationships — relationships among people to the unpaid surplus in their labour ([Gibson-Graham et al., 2000](#)). Both skilled and unskilled migrants who work in factories, hospitals, universities and construction sites are important to the MNCs, other entities and the societies in which they work. They form a large part of the labour market yet are absent from IM research. That they are out of sight is dynamic of class processes, related to the organization of work, hierarchies in job and work processes, recruitment, hiring, control and wage determination. Thus, lastly, we call for change in how IM scholars view globalization processes, MNC practices and their own exclusive research focus by considering the classed, gendered and raced implications of expatriation and migration processes.

### **Gendering change in our scholarship**

As we have discussed, globalization is the means through which MNCs pursue profits worldwide; IM research examines and documents their ventures. We have examined the contours of IM research related to expatriates and migrants to better understand the exclusive focus on only one of the groups of people who move across national boundaries to work. We have seen how the groups are composed of people with very different characteristics and how globalizing processes and MNCs have created and IM scholars (however unintentionally) have sustained inequalities related to these groups.

[Mohanty \(2003\)](#) implicates the academy and academic capitalism (p. 172) in our willingness to conduct research based on the interests of large, wealthy corporations. In the case of MNCs, their interests are dependent upon gendered, raced and classed hierarchies and the invisibility of these processes and systems appears to be linked to the exclusive study of expatriates. Or perhaps, as Mohanty also points out, even in (some) feminist writings in the USA the ‘boundaries of the academy stand in for the entire world’ (2003, p. 6) and a focus on academic careers rather than a quest for fundamental and radical transformation appears to be at work. Consciously considering how the work we do (or do not do) in the academy might advance inequality in the world at large is a much needed change. Anne Tsui, President-Elect (2011–2012) of the Academy of Management, a large multinational group of management scholars, proposes:

To fill the critical gap in global management knowledge, we must avert the homogenizing tendency and foster the development of pluralistic intellectual perspectives or ‘pluralistic scholarship’ by members of the global management research community. As scholars, we share a mission to identify, to understand, and to explain novel phenomena in our management world, and most of the important new puzzles are in the international arena. Engagement in and contribution to this research agenda offers opportunities to make a difference not only to scholarship, but also, importantly, to practice [Bartunek, 2007] through filling the gargantuan gap in global management knowledge. ([Tsui, 2007](#), p. 1353)

We propose that one such important puzzle is the invisibility of migrants. Why is it that this large group — a majority of those who move to work and who are critical to the success of MNCs, is invisible? Making them visible, with bodies, hearts and minds will be important to practice and to the workers and the families who depend on them.

Migration, political economy and sociology studies have already begun bringing gender in; we might begin by using these bodies of literature as resources for bringing in class, race and gender. Gender and diversity scholarship in the management arena would also be a good source of insights to help gender change in IM scholarship. To start, some of the same issues that are commonly studied for IM’s expatriates might also be considered for migrants. For example, ‘Work–family conflict and the senior female international managers’ ([Linehan and Walsh, 2000](#)) focuses on senior managerial women and addresses some of the work–family concerns they face in expatriating. Although many of the work–family conflicts of migrants may differ from those of the expatriates described in most IM research, both migrant women and expatriate women experience tensions between their efforts to earn a living and their efforts to care for their families ([HRW, 2002](#)). And migrants have far fewer resources and no organizational support to help them find a work–family balance. Further, while expatriates’ families often accompany them on the assignment, the families of migrant women are often left behind. How are migrant women affected by such absences and what should MNCs do to assist them? When the families of migrants do expatriate with them, it is likely that they also face problems with acculturation and their spouses face problems finding employment. We might ask whether adjustment for migrants within a country could be improved through a more equitable distribution of support from employing MNCs rather than limiting this type of support to high status workers and their families. Another resource of learning to changing our scholarship is the work of feminist economists (for example, [Folbre, 1982, 2006](#) and many others). These scholars often address the gendered, raced and classed aspects of globalizing processes with not only a fundamental

understanding of the gendered history of class analysis but also an understanding of the need for an analysis in which gender, race and class processes are fundamental. Last but not least, the work of those at the IOM, the United Nations and government and non-governmental organization-related practice are sources for informing our literature.

Of areas for future research in IM, [Tsui \(2007\)](#), p. 1356, citing [Werner \(2002\)](#) proposes that there are many substantive areas that deserve more concentrated research attention, including research on social factors and MNCs (such as studies of their ethics, stakeholder relationships and political actions); and research on MNC strategies.

We propose that research on the combination of social factors and MNCs is more than substantive and is long overdue. Rather than focusing solely on profits, market penetration, entry strategies and competition, gendered IM scholarship would look at the lives of people affected by globalization. Some research outside of IM suggests that women are preferred in some cases to men because unions eschew women members. Without the protection of unions, women are even more vulnerable to low wages, abuse and exploitation ([Caraway, 2007](#); [HRW, 2002](#)).

[Treviño et al. \(2006\)](#), p. 959; citing [Opatow, 1990](#)) note that moral exclusion occurs when some people are considered to be outside the normal boundaries of moral values, rules and considerations of fairness. They specifically included as potential targets for moral exclusion immigrants and employees in developing countries. As pointed out, in globalization processes in MNCs and IM research about globalization, immigrant employees, often poor women of colour, in developed and developing countries have been excluded. They are viewed as outside the normal boundaries of concern from MNCs and of IM research and this is a moral issue. We call for their inclusion as a focus of IM research and for changes to the raced, gendered and classed processes that have rendered them invisible. [Mohanty \(2003\)](#) tasks feminist researchers, in particular, with asking the questions that would highlight the connections between invisibilities in our scholarship and race, gender and class inequalities of globalization's processes. [Folbre \(1982, 2006\)](#) and [Acker \(2004, 2006\)](#) emphasize the need to consider women's productive and reproductive work — in global contexts and otherwise — from gendered, raced and class perspectives. We propose that gendering change in IM research begin focus with the other expatriates.

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