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Applying Bourdieu's Capital-Field-Habitus Framework to Migrant Careers:

Taking Stock and Adding a Transnational Perspective

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Abstract

HRM and Migration scholars increasingly employ Bourdieu's concepts of capitals, fields and habitus to explain the interrelationships between migrant careers and context. Both literatures employ a Bourdieusean framework to examine devaluation of migrant capitals in host nations and migrant responses to such devaluation. However, their explanations are based on different assumptions of context. HRM literature regards migrants as confined to the host nation context, whereas Migration literature places them in a transnational context, spanning both originating and host nations. In this conceptual paper, we argue for integrating transnational perspectives into HRM literature to offer a more accurate portrayal of contemporary migrant lives, and to capture greater nuance in migrant career experiences. We seek to expand the conceptual lexicon to support new conceptualisations of transnational context, and to explore how locating a Bourdieusean framework in transnational contexts enhances its ability to explain migrant career experiences.

Key words: Migrant careers, Bourdieu, Capital, Field, Habitus, Transnationalism

Introduction

Unprecedented levels of global migration and the increased presence of migrants in the workforce in many nations (Berry & Bell, 2012) have prompted HRM scholars to turn their attention to migrant careers (Al Ariss, 2010). While a minority of individuals receive organisational support for making career moves spanning countries (normally referred to as 'expatriates' in the HRM literature), the majority make their own way in self-initiated attempts to build careers that transcend national boundaries (referred to as 'migrants' in literature; See Andresen et al., 2014 for a review of definitions; See also Berry & Bell, 2012 for the politics behind differential terminology).

The contemporary career literature maintains that individual career trajectories are shaped predominantly by individuals' knowledge, skills and competences, variously called human capital (Seibert, Crant & Kraimer, 1999) or career capital (DeFillippi & Arthur,

1996). However, empirical studies of migrant careers reveal that human capital is an inadequate predictor of migrant career experiences, and uncovers a substantial influence of the various elements of the context, including legal systems, societal culture and labour market and organisational practices, in how migrants' careers unfold (Al Ariss, 2010; Al Ariss et al., 2013; Syed, 2008). Mounting empirical evidence suggest the need for new theoretical perspectives that explores the interrelationships between the actor and the context (Syed, 2008).

To this end, Bourdieu's concepts of capitals, fields and habitus are increasingly adopted by HRM (Al Ariss & Syed, 2011) as well as Migration scholars (Kelly & Lusic, 2006; Erel, 2010). They have fruitfully employed Bourdieusean analysis to elucidate how migrant capitals become devalued in host nations, and how migrants differentially respond to such devaluation, thus providing theoretically grounded explanations respectively for career barriers that migrants encounter in host nations and career strategies they adopt. HRM and Migration scholars, however, tend to approach this issue from opposing assumptions of what constitutes context for migrants. HRM scholars have tended to focus exclusively on host nation contexts (Al Ariss & Syed, 2011; Al Ariss et al., 2013; Bahn, 2015), whereas Migration scholars consider the transnational nature of migrant contexts that span host and originating nations (Erel, 2010; Kelly & Lusic, 2006; Parutis, 2014).

The HRM practice of focusing on host nation alone, for understanding migrant lives, is argued to be rooted in an archaic notion of migrants as 'permanent leavers', i.e. people who exit their originating nation and permanently settle in host nations, abandoning ties with the originating country (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004). The focus of Migration studies on the transnational nature of contexts originates from a more contemporary view of migrants, that recognises their simultaneous engagement with originating and host nations (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004). We argue for adopting a transnational perspective in the HRM literature, as it

offers a more accurate representation of the contemporary migrant, and holds the potential for generating a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of migrant career experiences.

Our endeavour in this conceptual paper is to strengthen the theoretical foundations necessary for locating Bourdieusean analysis in transnational contexts, and thus to contribute to the scholarly attempts to generate a more holistic and multi-level understanding of the contextual impact on migrant careers. The paper is organised as follows: We first discuss the relevance of contextual factors to understanding migrant careers and review extant literature showing how Bourdieusean concepts provide theoretical explanations for the relationships between migrant careers and context. We then make the case for locating Bourdieusean analysis within transnational contexts. Further, we review and build on conceptualisations of transnational context drawn from Migration literature, and discuss – with relevant propositions – how situating Bourdieusean analysis in transnational contexts reveals under-explored nuances in migrant career experiences.

(Migrant) Careers and Context

Conventionally, careers are defined as the unfolding sequence of a person's work experience over time (Arthur, Hall & Lawrence, 1989). Although contextual embeddedness of careers is recognised to some extent in traditional careers models, which assume careers unfold within specific organisational contexts, its significance reduces with the emergence of contemporary career models, which emphasize the 'boundarylessness' of careers (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). Instead, the focus shifts to individuals, who are seen as responsible for shaping their own careers (Lamb & Sutherland, 2010), and specifically to individual attributes that aid career building. As a result, individuals' knowledge, skills and competences have been recognised as the human capital (Seibert, Crant & Kraimer, 1999), or career capital if individuals' motivation and networks are included (DeFillippi & Arthur,

1996), for building careers. Implicit here is an assumption that human capital has universal value and will be objectively measured across contexts.

Early research on migrant careers, irrespective of disciplinary origins, seem to share the human capital perspective, and regard human capital as the key predictor of career success - the better a migrant's knowledge and skills, the better the career outcomes (Syed, 2008). This perspective underlies the policies that promote skilled migration and discourage unskilled migration. Policy regimes adopted by many nations including the UK, Australia and Canada use human capital proxies (e.g., educational qualification, past work experience) as decision criteria to allow entry to individual migrants (Shachar, 2006), with the US proposing to follow (The Guardian, 3 August 2017).

Empirical evidence, however, indicates that even highly skilled migrants, with significant human capital, often experience adverse career outcomes. Highly skilled migrants face delays in getting their first job (Reitz, 2007; Wong, 2013); they have difficulty finding full time and permanent employment (Riano, 2011) and sustaining employment (Pio, 2005); they may have to settle for jobs incommensurate with their qualifications and experience (Ramboarison-Lalao, Al Ariss & Barth, 2012); they are slow to get promotions (Fang, Zikic & Novicevic, 2009), and are likely to exit labour markets frustrated, or else resort to jobs in ethnic economies (Quereshi, Varghese & Osella, 2013).

The above suggests that migrant careers are not products of human capital alone, prompting scholars to also consider the contexts where migrants mobilise their human capital (Syed, 2008). This has resulted in two lines of inquiry, respectively focusing on: (1) the barriers that migrants face at various levels in the host country context, including the economy, legal frameworks and societal culture at the macro-level, and professions, industries and organisations at the meso-level (e.g. Almeida et al., 2015; Deitz et al., 2015; Salaf, Greve & Ping, 2002; For a review, see Syed, 2008), and (2) the strategies adopted by

migrants to overcome these barriers (e.g. Halvorsen, Treuren & Kulik, 2015; Heilbrunn, Kushnirovich & Zeltzer-Zubida, 2010; Zikic, Bonache & Cerdin, 2010). This stream of research establishes the need to reconceptualise migrant careers as the outcome of complex interrelationships of individuals with their context.

Bourdieu's Capital-Field-Habitus Framework

The above has led scholars to seek conceptual frameworks that theoretically explore individual-context interrelationships. A popular framework utilises Bourdieu's concepts of capitals, field and habitus (e.g. Al Ariss & Syed, 2011; Al Ariss et al., 2013; Kelly & Lusic, 2006; Parutis, 2014). In this section, we explain Bourdieusean concepts, before reviewing how they have been used to elicit greater understanding of migrant career experiences.

Capital

Bourdieu's notion of capital departs from the conventional economic meaning to include a sociological dimension (Al Ariss et al., 2013). Capital takes economic, social, cultural and symbolic forms, which are mutually convertible (Bourdieu, 1986). Economic capital includes financial resources (e.g., income, property, material possessions and savings) and is deemed the easiest to convert (Bourdieu, 1977). Social capital comprises social networks or 'relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p.112). Social capital can be legitimized and institutionalised by family, class and group memberships (Bourdieu, 1986). Cultural capital has three forms: institutionalised (e.g. academic qualifications which confer to its owner legitimised recognition in a given societal context at a given point in time); embodied/incorporated (e.g. past work experience, cultural experience of living in a particular society and language proficiency); or objectified (e.g. existing in material state such as books, equipment, dress and accessories) (Bourdieu, 1986).

Finally, symbolic capital reflects power gained by individuals through the mobilization of their economic, social and cultural capital, and is manifested in social ranking, class position etc.

For Bourdieu, capitals are the basis for power. Possession of capitals places actors in social hierarchies, and allows them to influence their value (Kelly & Lusia, 2006). Thus, capitals underlie implicit forms of domination (Doherty & Dickmann, 2009).

Field

Bourdieu suggests that capital has no definitive or universal value, but only what is derived from social context and structures (Riano, 2011) and uses the term *field* to represent the social context in which capitals derive their value (Bourdieu, 1986, 1990). The value of particular capitals at any given time, or during conversion, is governed by socially established, implicitly agreed upon, 'rules of the game'. Bourdieu likens field to a battle field or playground (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) in which agents play by the shared rules. The shared understanding among actors does not mean that all stand to gain equally from them, as the rules are influenced by those with capitals (and therefore power) and tend to favour further amassing of capitals by them (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011). Therefore, fields, as the context for actors to realise their capital mobilisation strategies, also become venues of constant competition for power (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Those with less capitals and power often conform to the rules, take what they can get and wait for opportunities, albeit grudgingly (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011).

Further, multiple fields coexist in a social context (e.g. legal, educational, professional, organisational etc.), which may be nested in others (e.g. disciplinary subfields nested in educational field). Each field, and nested sub-fields, have their own rules. The rules of the game in different fields may reinforce or contradict each other, affecting values of

individuals' capitals in complex ways.

Habitus

Bourdieu introduced the term *habitus* to explain individuals' dispositions to action in relation to the field (Bourdieu, 1986, 1990). Crossley (2001) equates dispositions to game-playing skills. Core to the concept of habitus is 'the internalisation of social expectations and value systems' (Kelly & Lusic, 2006, p.834). It is reflected in individuals' values, speech, dress, conduct, and manners that shape their everyday life. Habitus enables individuals to display the right behaviour and practices (e.g. at job interviews) without a conscious attempt to do so, thus 'acting intentionally without intention' (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 12). It is suggested that habitus may be an individual as well as collective phenomenon (Kelly & Lusic, 2006). While each individual actor has their own habitus, they may acquire multiple *habiti* as part of collectives based on class, gender, ethnicity, nationality, locality etc.

Though a few disagree (e.g. Kramsch, 2015), some scholars (Mouzelis, 2009; Sayer, 2010) argue that Bourdieu's views on habitus are too deterministic, and emphasize the importance of actor reflexivity in their choice of habitus. They suggest actors choose and enact habitus based not only on field structures, but also the 'state of play' (Crossley, 2001), i.e. their own relative positions afforded by capitals they possess in comparison to those of others, as well as the actions being undertaken by the other actors (Mouzelis, 2009). Further, although habitus are supposed to be durable dispositions, Bourdieu (1990) suggests they may transform or reinvent itself, especially when individual actors enters unfamiliar fields or faces crisis (Oliver & O'Reilly, 2010), where their current habitus does not fit.

Next, we present an overview of extant literature employing a Bourdieusian framework in examining migrant careers.

Taking stock of Bourdieusean Analysis of Migrant Careers

Given that, among the social theories, Bourdieu's is the one that most explicitly dwells on individual-context relations (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011), its popularity among scholars of HRM (e.g. Al Ariss & Syed, 2011; Al Ariss et al., 2013; Bahn, 2015) as well as Migration Studies (e.g. Kelly & Lusic, 2006; Parutis, 2014) may be unsurprising. These scholars peruse Bourdieusean concepts to theoretically explain the career barriers that migrants encounter, and the career strategies they adopt. They explain the former in terms of the capital-field relationships and the latter in terms of habitus required for mobilising capitals in fields, which we summarise below. We do not intend this to be an exhaustive review; rather, it is indicative of the key themes.

Migrant Capitals in Host Nation Fields

According to Bourdieu, capital has neither existence nor function except in relation to the field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Although not explicitly stated by Bourdieu, this also implies that capital loses its value when it is outside of a specific field. Although Bourdieu dwells little on this aspect of the capital-field relationship, this has served as the primary explanation for career barriers that migrants face in host nation fields. Scholars note that capitals generated in fields within the originating nation, that the migrants try to mobilise in host nation, are devalued in the host nation fields (Nohl et al., 2006; Parutis, 2014; Riano, 2011), as conditions of their production are not homologous to their conditions of functioning (Bourdieu, 1990).

A key focus of empirical research has been the changes in the value of one or more types of capitals 'imported' to the host nation, and how this affects migrant career experiences (Kelly & Lusic, 2006; Nohl et al., 2006; Parutis, 2014; , Varghese & Osella, 2013; Riano, 2011). Crucially, cultural capital even in institutionalised form, which the

human capital approach views as readily transferable, has been shown to be devalued upon crossing borders (Qureshi, Varghese & Osella, 2013). For example, Filipino migrants found that degrees from the most 'prestigious' universities in the Philippines were often worthless in Canada, as 'prestige' in a particular setting rests on shared understanding among actors in that setting, and cannot be understood by actors from other settings (Kelly & Lusic, 2006). The value of embodied cultural capital (e.g., experience of living in foreign cultures and language proficiency) fares better upon migration, although still not on a par with similar capitals developed within the host nation fields (Kelly & Lusic, 2006; Parutis, 2014). Additionally, what might have been valuable social contacts in originating nations (such as mayor of a provincial town in Latin America or head of a village in Punjab, India) may not have the same usefulness in host nations, thus stripping migrants of their social capital (Qureshi, Varghese & Osella, 2013; Riano, 2011). Likewise, migrants moving from developing to developed nations may find economic capital (e.g., savings and funds with which to begin life in the host nation) is immediately devalued because of unfavourable currency conversion rates (Kelly & Lusic, 2006). Thus, as Bauder (2005) points out, there appears to be an exchange rate applied to capital valuation when imported to a new host nation, often resulting in devaluation, and varying exchange rates for each form of capital.

Such devaluation of their overall capital portfolio pushes migrants to relatively lower positions in the social hierarchy in the host nation fields. Erel (2010) observes that migrant have to bargain with institutions (such as professional bodies or universities) and other actors (such as recruiters and managers) occupying higher social positions compared to themselves over the value of their capitals. As actors with depleted resources, migrant find that they lack the power to influence the rules of the field in their favour. Further, the bargaining may be tougher and exchange rates more unfavourable in certain fields than the other (e.g. accredited professions as opposed to unaccredited professions). Therefore, barriers for individual

migrants may differ based on the particular social process of (de)valuation that they go through with the particular set of actors in particular fields.

Migrant Habitus in Navigating the Fields

Habitus represents actors' ways of being in a field that facilitate appreciation of the value of their capitals. Migration is recognised in the literature as a crisis point that requires individuals to depart from their familiar habitus. Bauder (2005) argues that the 'foreign' habitus that migrants embody may not fit the host nation fields and, in turn, relegates them to marginal positions. As the less powerful actors, migrants may be unable to radically change the rules of the game, but can develop habitus that enhances the value of their capitals and improve their positions in the social hierarchy (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011). Below, we discuss four types of migrant habitus commonly found in Bourdieusean literature, which provide the theoretical underpinnings for migrant career strategies in non-Bourdieusean literature.

Acceptance. Actors get a sense of the value of their capitals as they begin to convert them in host nation fields. Migrants who find their capitals devalued in the field may choose to accept the new value and, especially when their economic capital is low, seek instead to occupy lower level positions afforded by their capitals. In Qureshi, Varghese and Osella's (2013) study of Punjabi skilled migrants in the UK, and Riano's (2011) study of skilled migrant women in Switzerland, devaluation of credentials led the respondents to take up jobs that were available rather than those that they were qualified for. The belief is that accepting those positions will enable them to build 'resources afforded by compliance' (Ozbilgin, 1998, in Al Ariss et al., 2013, p. 1247), such as economic capital for daily sustenance, or cultural capital like language proficiency. However, it may stall their careers if the capitals thus generated are not sufficiently valuable for upward career mobility. The highly skilled women

in Riano's (2011) study found that the contacts they made in low skilled jobs were not useful for getting better jobs.

Capital accumulation. Active engagement with the field enables agents to develop an understanding of which capitals are valued for certain positions in the field. With this knowledge, migrants may adopt a habitus that pursues further capital accumulation and conversion. Re-skilling and obtaining new qualifications are common means of rebuilding lost embodied and institutionalised cultural capital (Parutis, 2014; Riano, 2011). Another method of capital appreciation is to keep changing positions in the field. Polish and Lithuanian migrants in the UK (Parutis, 2014) and Lebanese migrants in France (Al Ariss et al., 2013) changed organisations frequently to consolidate and expand their capital base, thereby facilitating progression from 'any job' to a 'better job' to the 'dream job' (Parutis, 2014). Capital accumulation is hindered if migrants lack initial convertible capital, or when rules of the field require more or different forms (Al Ariss, 2010) of capital from migrants (e.g., Al Ariss et al., 2013; Qureshi, Varghese & Osella, 2013).

Selective positioning. Engagement with the field also sensitises agents to the *relative* value of capitals and its contingency upon one's position in the field. Migrants may thus select to occupy particular fields and/or positions in which their capitals will be most highly valued. This 'position taking' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) reflects how migrants strategise to employ their capital (Erel, 2010). While the rules of the game in given positions and/or fields are not necessarily more favourable to migrants *per se*, the rules in some cases may dissuade other players from seeking such positions. For example, in healthcare, many skilled migrants choose to work in specialties perceived as difficult (and hence disliked) by host nation citizens (Al Ariss et al., 2013; Bornat, Henry & Raghuram, 2011; Robinson & Carey, 2000). A variant of this strategy is choosing fields where migrants face fewer rules to devalue their capitals. Entrepreneurship, for instance, enables circumventing the traditional job

market routes (Al Ariss, 2010; Quereshi, Varghese & Osella, 2013).

Partial or total exit from fields. This final option may be less a truly agentic action than a result of the inability of agents to play by the rules of the fields and survive in the host nation. Inability to navigate restrictive rules on account of race, religion and/or gender may contribute to the decision to opt out of a career in the host nation (Al Ariss, 2010), or even the host nation itself – instead leaving for a new destination or returning to the originating nation. Habitus in this case reinforces dominant rules of the fields rather than altering them.

It is suggested that although habitus are meant to be durable dispositions, actor reflexivity comes into play, and actors change their habitus based on whether they have been able to generate the desired outcome (Erel, 2010). Further, although habitus indicates individual dispositions, authors have observed collective tendencies. Bauder (2005) found many former Yugoslavian migrants in Canada tended to stick to their old habitus whereas South Asian migrants chose to selectively position themselves in ethnic economies. Nee and Sanders (2001) however clarifies that this cannot be considered entirely as collective habitus of specific migrant groups, but is a function of portfolios of capitals they possess.

Assumptions of Context in Bourdieusean Analysis of Migrant Careers

The review above illuminates the context-boundedness of career building processes, and demonstrates how a Bourdieusean framework provides more nuanced and theoretically grounded insights. We note that HRM and contemporary Migration literature, however, differ in the assumptions they make about the migrant context.

Most HRM literature (e.g. Al Ariss & Syed, 2011; Al Ariss et al., 2013; Bahn, 2015) [and some of the early Migration literature (e.g. Nee & Sanders, 2001)] regards migrants as confined to the spatial boundaries of the host nation, making the host nation their only frame of reference. While delimiting the unit of analysis (individual migrants in this case) to the

boundaries of the nation and assuming social processes (here capital conversion and career strategies) are similarly confined to these boundaries, are part of the conventional approach to research and theory building in HRM and many social science disciplines, Migration scholars observe such 'methodological nationalism' is problematic in studying migrants (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2003). They argue that it is symptomatic of out-dated, assimilationist assumptions of migrants which view them as 'permanent leavers' who sever ties with their originating nation to assimilate into the in a host nation (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004) and start new lives, casting off their former lives (Kelly & Lusia, 2006).

In contrast, contemporary Migration literature, locate migrants in transnational contexts that transcend originating and the host nation boundaries (e.g. Erel, 2010; Kelly & Lusia, 2006; Nowiska, 2013). They point out that migrants neither exit the originating nations altogether nor become embedded exclusively in the host nations, thus rendering assimilationist assumptions erroneous (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Portes, Guarnizo & Landolt, 1999; Schiller, Basch & Blanc-Stanton, 1992). Instead, migrants maintain social, political, cultural and economic ties with the originating nation as well as host nations (Vertovec, 2002), by means of a variety of activities including various forms of keeping in touch, care and emotional networking, remittances, property ownership, formal and informal involvement with migrant communities/diasporas and organisations, and political activism (Schiller, Basch & Blanc-Stanton, 1992; Basch, Schiller, & Blanc-Szanton, 1994; Fouron & Glick Schiller, 2001). Therefore, their lives, activities and social processes should be viewed not as spatially restricted to the host nation contexts, but as taking place in transnational contexts that transcend the boundaries of originating and host nations, each providing a different frame of reference (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Schiller, Basch & Blanc-Stanton, 1991).

In the light of the above, continuing to limit investigations to host nation context

seems to propagate an inaccurate portrayal of contemporary migrant lives. Also, it may cause failure to capture the nuances of migrant career experiences engendered by transnationalism. Therefore, we find it imperative that HRM scholars update constructions of context to clearly reflect transnationalism.

Our aim in the remainder of this paper is to explore conceptually how locating Bourdieusean analysis of migrant careers within a transnational context may enhance the ability to explain migrant career experiences. Interestingly, Bourdieu does not directly address the spatiality of his concepts (Cresswell, 2002; Painter, 2000). However, by focusing on the interrelationships among the concepts, rather than their spatial rootedness, he leaves the framework portable across varying spatial constructions. In the next section, we turn to Migration studies to assist us in conceptualising transnational contexts. Subsequently, we locate the Bourdeusian framework within a transnational context and consider, with accompanying propositions, the implications of this integrated framework for shedding new light on migrant career experiences.

Conceptualising Transnational Contexts of Migrants

Transnationalism with respect to migration, is defined as ‘the processes by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement’ (Schiller, Basch & Blanc-Stanton, 1992, p.1) ¹. There are multiple

¹ It is the emergence of strong nation-states in 20th century that triggered the tendency among social sciences to view societies as ‘national container society’ (Lee, 1966) and formulate national-container theories to explain their workings (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004). In 1990s, the recognition of the border-transcending nature of many social phenomena, led to transnationalism perspectives gaining currency in social science disciplines including anthropology, sociology, political science and geography (Guarnizo & Smith, 1998). While phenomena such as the cross-border movement of capital, global media and emergence of supra-national political institutions were explored under the umbrella term ‘transnationalism from above’, those involving the cross-border movement and activities of migrants came to coalesced as transnationalism from ‘below’(Guarnizo & Smith, 1998; Mahler, 1998). Here, we primarily draw on the latter as it is specific to migrant lives and activities, but recognize their intertwining nature.

conceptualisations of transnational contexts connecting actors' simultaneous engagement with originating and host nations (See Vertovec, 2001 for a review).

We draw on the popular concept of 'transnational social fields' proposed by Glick Schiller and colleagues (1992). They define social fields as 'a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed' (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004, p. 1009; See also Glick Schiller et al., 1992). They build on the observations of the Manchester School of Anthropology concerning how migrants in their studies simultaneously belonged to tribal-rural localities and colonial-industrial cities (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Mitchell, 1966), and envisage social fields as relationships among actors, that need not be physically contiguous (Castells, 1996; Vertovec, 2001). Further, borrowing from Bourdieu's ideas on the power-ridden nature of fields, they characterise social fields as unequal, with inherent hierarchies of power and status among actors (Glick Schiller et al., 1992; Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004). Ensuing research focuses on migrant-specific transnational social fields, connecting actors across borders, such as migrant communities, networks and diasporas (Schiller, Basch & Blanc-Stanton, 1992; Basch, Schiller, & Blanc-Szanton, 1994; Fouron & Glick Schiller, 2001).

Although some scholars argue that emergence of transnational fields (not only migrant-specific, but also those generated through transnational processes from 'above' (Mahler, 1998), including MNCs and supra-national institutions such as European Union) seem to weaken the relevance of nation-states as boundary setting fields and encourage exploring migrant lives primarily in reference to such transnational fields, others caution against undermining nation-states (Smith & Guarnizo, 1998; Vertovec, 2001). As Fligstein and McAdam (2011) observe, modern day nation-states 'have the authority to intervene in' and 'set the rules for' fields within (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011, p.8). Thus, they influence

the varied 'institutionalised frameworks consisting of material artefacts and systems of symbolic representation' in the multiple social spaces that migrants inhabit (Pries, 2001). Schiller (2005), for example, talks about the legal pluralisms of originating and host nations. Though a tiny minority of actors who occupy elite positions in transnational fields (e.g. top executives in the internationalised Swiss firms in Buhlmann, David & Mache's (2012) study) may find themselves unfettered by nationally-bound fields, Smith and Guarnizo (1998) point out that the majority of migrants cannot be construed as 'free from the constraints and opportunities' imposed by them. Therefore, we suggest that migrant context conceptualisations should encompass both national and transnational fields.

What needs recognition though are the interrelationships between various national and transnational fields. The foundational work of Manchester School of Anthropology envisages each field as a segment of the larger social system (Mitchell, 1966), characterising their interrelationships as interdependencies and overlaps (Vertovec, 2001). Scholars like Le Espiritu (2003) also argue for situating such relationships in the 'larger history of conquest and global capitalism' (p.72), which indicates potential hierarchies of power among various originating and host and transnational fields. This includes acknowledging status differentials and power struggles between originating and host nations that are developed and developing, and colonisers and erstwhile colonies, as well as between nations and MNCs and other supra-national institutions, all of which have bearing on migrant lives.

Proposition 1: *Migrants are embedded in the actor hierarchies of various national and transnational fields simultaneously, that themselves are interrelated through hierarchies of power, interdependencies and overlaps.*

Conceptual vocabulary to explore such interrelationships between various elements of

the context is however underdeveloped in Transnationalism literature. A key reason for this is the prevalent tendency to explore context empirically, rather than conceptually. Glick-Schiller and colleagues for instance, acknowledge the existence of national as well as transnational fields, but leave ascertaining their relative importance to empirical investigation (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004). Kelly and Lusia (2006) observe a similar preference for empirical, rather than conceptual, investigations of context in the extant literature. Another reason is the methodological practice of exploring context at the individual level, which although recognises the impact of interrelationships among fields on individual career trajectories, resists making conceptual categories of those relations (e.g. Erel, 2010; Nowicka, 2013). Kelly and Lusia (2006) call for developing a conceptual vocabulary that enables systematic explorations of interrelationships among fields that constitute context - an apparent deficiency of Transnationalism literature according to Vertovec (2001).

Bourdieuian Analysis of Migrant Careers and Transnational Context Considerations

Based on the above, it appears that locating a Bourdieuan framework within transnational contexts requires re-examining capital mobilisation and habitus choices of migrants in relation to complex, multi-level field relations, with associated implications for theoretical understanding of migrant career barriers and strategies. Since Transnationalism literature does not offer sufficiently developed conceptual vocabulary to represent these multi-level field relations (Kelly & Lusia, 2006; Vertovec, 2001), we build on available related concepts. Bourdieuan terminology includes ‘multiplicity’ of fields and their mutual ‘nestedness’, allowing for representations of interdependencies and overlaps (Bourdieu, 1986). However, it is not particularly sensitive to potential status differentials among fields. The terminology developed by Fligstein and McAdam (2011), in relation to their theory of strategic action fields, is useful for this purpose. Fligstein and McAdam (2011) differentiate

between ‘distant’ and ‘proximate’ fields based on recurring ties and mutual impact between fields; ‘vertical’ and ‘horizontal fields’ based on hierarchical relations among fields; and ‘state’ and ‘non-state’ fields based on legitimate power to control (Further explained below). In this section, we consider interrelationships of varied nature among national and transnational fields that form the context for migrant capitals and habitus, and suggest implications. We do not seek to present a comprehensive model encompassing all possible interrelationships, but to illustrate how this approach facilitates conceptual elaboration of the nature and implications of specific exemplar relations.

Migrant Transnationalism and Valuation of Capitals

A key premise in the valuation of capitals is its situated nature. Our review of research on the (de)valuation of capitals in the host nation context revealed that any capital brought in from an external field depreciates in value. A transnational perspective suggests that the extent of such devaluation may vary depending on the relation between the fields where the capital originates and where it is being deployed. This highlights the multi-layered nature of the career barriers individual experience.

Proximate and Distant Fields. Proximate fields are those with mutual ties and that impact each other, while distant fields lack such ties and mutual impact (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011). Some host and originating nations may have a shared history of evolution, resulting in similarities in rules of their fields. In such cases, capitals acquired in migrants’ originating fields may be less devalued in the host nation. Wong (2013) considers migrants moving across English speaking countries such as the US, Canada and Australia, and suggests that the relative advantage they may have over migrants from non-English speaking nations, arises not only from their language proficiency, but also the similarities among the economic, political, educational and cultural fields of these countries, which may be traced

back to their shared colonial origins.

Proposition 2: *Capitals acquired in originating national fields that proximate to host national fields may be less devalued (or valued more highly) upon conversion than those that are not.*

Vertical and Horizontal Fields. According to Fligstein and McAdam (2011), ‘a field that is vertically linked to another is one that exercises formal authority over it or is in a subordinate position relative to it’ (p.8). When neither field exercises control over the other, but they depend on each other, the relationship is horizontal. The relations between European Union (EU) and its member states exemplify this. European Union enforces shared rules concerning legal rights of migrants from member states to enter, live and work in other member states. Parutis (2014) reports how Polish and Lithuanian migrants to the UK experienced a dramatic increase in their capitals, when Poland and Lithuania were granted EU membership. Though the UK depended substantially on workforce from these countries until then, indicating a horizontal relation, it was with EU accession, which brought all three countries under the same vertical field, that more favourable rules of valuation were applied in relation to capitals of migrants. Specifically, shared rules of entry, right to work and access to education enhanced their symbolic, economic, social and cultural capitals.

Proposition 3: *Capitals acquired in originating national fields that are part of the same vertical fields as the host national fields may be less devalued (or valued more highly) upon conversion than those originating in fields with horizontal relations with host national fields.*

The verticality of relations may also arise from status differentials among nations originating from institutionalised and widely accepted notions of development and progress, such as developed and developing nations, or history of subordination as in the case of coloniser and colonised. For instance, Weiss (2005) compares German professionals working in Third World countries and highly skilled migrants from the Third World in Germany, and observes that German professionals found their 'western' cultural capital was highly valued and they were not required to develop local cultural capital, whereas capitals of migrants from Third World countries, with excellent internationally validated credentials, were not similarly valued in Germany.

Proposition 4: *Capitals acquired in originating national fields that have superior positions in relation to host national fields may be less devalued (or valued more highly) upon conversion than those originating in fields that occupy subordinate positions.*

State Fields and Non-State Fields. State fields are those with legitimate power to set the rules for most non-state fields (Fliegstein & McAdam, 2011). Thus state legal systems control the rules in the educational, labour market, professional and organisational fields regarding the employment of migrants and recognition of their capitals. In general, state fields, including those subsumed under other vertical fields, operate in the interests of the nation-state, and therefore form protectionist rules, which by design are meant for devaluation of capitals from elsewhere (Erel, 2010). However, they also apply differential rules based on countries of origin. The process for recognising educational qualifications (cultural capital) is an area where such differentiation is often found. For instance, in order to practice medicine in France, those who hold medical degrees obtained outside France have to

fulfil additional training and licensing requirements (Ramboarison-Lalao et al., 2012). The accreditation processes for doctors from outside of EEA (European Economic Area) are more complex compared to the ones for those from EEA.

The differentiated protectionism originating in the state fields may percolate to the non-state fields without formal or direct intervention. The policy-making fields in the UK, although bound by the European Union laws for equal treatment of citizens of all member states, differentiate between migrants from 15 original member states that have high GDP (Old EU or EU-15) and 8 newly accessed nations (A8) that have low GDP (Hopkins & Levy, 2012), often painting the latter as a less desirable group. The labour market attitudes to these groups are found to be discriminatory. Similarly, in Spain, while migrants from EU-15 received positions and salaries comparable to Spanish citizens, those from A8 nations tended to face occupational segregation (Amuedo-Dorantes & De la Rica, 2007) and receive lower average wages (Simon, Sanroma & Ramos, 2008), indicating lesser recognition for the latter's capitals.

Proposition 5: *Rules in state and non-state fields in host nations that attribute value to migrant capitals may vary depending on the originating fields in which those capitals are acquired.*

Transnational Fields. While Migration literature recognises transnational fields that link originating and host nations created by migrant activities (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004), the broader transnationalism literature recognises those created by other cross-border processes such as globalisation (Vertovec, 2001). Transnational fields overlap, or have points of intersection with, various fields within several nations. Engagement with transnational fields has implications for valuation of migrant capitals.

The most relevant transnational field for migrants are the migrant community networks, that provide access to new migrants to economic and social capitals, which they can readily use in the host nations, as observed in studies of ‘chain migration’ (e.g. Robinson & Carey, 2000). Kelly and Lusic (2006) observe the Filipino migrants to Canada in their study, had built connections with those in Canada prior to leaving, and were entirely supported by migrant community networks upon their arrival in Canada. Thus, engagement with migrant communities served to accumulate migration-specific social capital. It must be noted that migrants from all originating nations do not form equally strong transnational communities, as Bauder (2005) found while comparing migrants from South Asia and former Yugoslavia residing in Canada, and therefore do not have the same opportunities for capital appreciation.

Migration literature also notes the emergence of migration-specific industries in originating nations that are considered ‘migration economies’ such as India and the Philippines. Qureshi, Varghese and Osella (2013) describe a multi-million dollar migration industry in Punjab, India, comprising education consultants and agents, English Language coaching and assessment institutions, that help potential migrants to obtain required language proficiency certifications, places in educational institutions, employment or contact with recruitment consultants in host nations. Cowen (2015) identified similar fields in the Philippines preparing unskilled migrants for middle-Eastern labour markets, that provided them inputs related to the culture, expectations of potential employers, basic language and other skills for performing the jobs, and managing their expenses and making remittances back home. Such industries enable migrants to acquire cultural capital that may be of some value in their intended host countries.

Proposition 6: *Value of migrant capitals may be enhanced by engaging with*

transnational fields that facilitate migration-relevant capital accumulation.

Globalisation and other trans-border economic, cultural and political processes have created several additional transnational fields, including MNCs and political movements, which lay across national borders. Engagement with some of these fields may also help in reducing the loss of value of migrant capitals. Qureshi, Varghese and Osella (2013) found that Punjabi migrants from India who moved to the UK as employees of MNCs like Wipro Technologies and Royal Caribbean did not experience as much devaluation of their educational qualifications and experience as others who migrated on their own. Similarly, Erel (2010) notes, how a Turkish woman migrant in her study was able to transfer the cultural capital, that she acquired in her involvement with certain types of political activist groups in Turkey, by reaching out to similar groups upon moving to the UK.

Proposition 7: *Migrant capitals may be less devalued when transferred via transnational fields.*

To conclude, the relations discussed thus far are not meant to be water-tight categories, merely heuristic devices to explore the implications of the relations. It is possible for more than one relation to exist between fields, affecting valuation of capitals in complex ways. Al Ariss and Syed (2011) discuss how historical connections between France and Lebanon left behind elements in the Lebanese cultural and educational fields that placed value on French language proficiency, awareness of French way of life, media and education qualifications. This suggests the proximity of cultural and educational fields in France and Lebanon, enabling Lebanese migrants to be in possession of capitals relevant in France. However, at the same time, the history of conquest places France in a hierarchically superior

position over Lebanon, which prevents capitals originating in Lebanon from realising their full potential value. Therefore, it is necessary to consider all possible interrelationships among the fields, where particular migrants acquire and mobilise their capitals to understand their relative impact.

Also, we do not suggest that migrants from the same originating nation are a homogenous category, and have the same access to the relevant fields that allow them acquire capitals that are less likely to be devalued in host nations. Comparing the career trajectories of Turkish women migrants in the UK and Germany, Erel (2010) observes how gender, class, urban-rural divisions and ethnic minority status restricted their access to positions in originating nation fields that permitted accumulation of capitals of value in the host countries, such as proficiency in host country languages, accents, familiarity with cultural practices and social networks for finding desired jobs. Therefore, individuals' attributes that affect their relative engagement with relevant fields must also be considered in addition to the interrelationships between the originating and host fields.

Migrant Transnationalism and Habitus

Habitus explains individuals' action orientations in engaging with the fields. In the host-nation centric approach, entry into the host nation is taken as a point of disruption for individuals' habitus (Bauder, 2005). It is thought that individuals will abandon their earlier habitus from the originating countries as they may not be suitable for navigating host nation fields. The transnational perspective, however, suggests that the lived space of migrants is more social than physical (Kelly & Lusia, 2006). Migrants do not see themselves as confined to the physical boundaries of a host nation, rather as mobile agents in a social space encompassing both host and originating nations. Consequently, migrants maintain a repertoire of habitus including those retained from originating nations, newly acquired in host

nation and developed in migrant networks, and they reflexively employ habitus from their repertoire (Kelly & Lusia, 2006; Nowicka, 2013). Each habitus provides ‘collectively endorsed evaluations of various forms of capital’ (Kelly & Lusia, 2006, p. 835). They serve as dual frames of reference in their self-assessments of the relative values of their capitals and their conversion potentials within and across originating and host nations, as well as positions that capitals can beget them in respective social hierarchies (Kelly & Lusia, 2006). In the light of this, examples of migrant habitus identified previously merit re-examination.

Acceptance. Migrants’ acceptance of lower values for their capitals is often seen as an indication of their inability to resist devaluation. Transnational perspectives suggest that migrants in fact juxtapose various habiti in their repertoire to discursively resist devaluation of capitals (Reay, 2004). They translate the positions they are able to get in one setting to capitals in another setting (Erel, 2010). Polish and Lithuanian migrants in the UK (Parutis, 2014) and Filipino migrants in Canada (Kelly & Lusia, 2006), who found themselves occupying low-end jobs on account of devaluation of their capitals in host nations, nonetheless felt they had acquired higher symbolic capital in their originating nations where ‘living abroad’ was highly valued. In contrast, some highly skilled Punjabi migrants in the UK felt that their professional achievements would not translate to equivalent cultural capital in their originating country because their peers back home have achieved more (Qureshi, Varghese & Osella, 2013).

Proposition 8: *Individual migrants reflexively draw on a repertoire of habitus, comprising those from originating and host nations, to subjectively evaluate the values of their capitals and their relative social positions in originating and host fields.*

Accumulation of capitals. The transnational perspective reveals that an individual's decision to pursue the accumulation of certain forms of capital is based not only on the value of current capitals in relation to host national fields, but also on the value of capitals with respect to the originating national fields. Bauder (2005) argues that many of the former Yugoslavian migrants to Canada in his study actively sought out jobs as building managers which guaranteed a place to live rather than jobs that had career progression possibilities, because such job perks were more valued in their originating contexts rather than upward mobility as in their host context. Similarly, Turkish and Kurdish women in Lutz' study (1991) took intercultural jobs of working with migrants or ethnic communities that did not enhance their capitals in the host country, but gave them higher cultural capital in the originating nations.

Proposition 9: *When deciding on the capitals to accumulate migrants may consider the relative value of their capitals not only the host fields, but also the originating fields.*

Migrants however may find habitus they retain from originating contexts inappropriate for accumulating their desired capital in the host contexts. The ethnic economies maintained by migrants in host nations may prove to be fields that migrants can engage with using habitus familiar to them and build capitals. Bauder (2005) identifies this tendency among the South Asian migrants in Canada. Qureshi, Varghese and Osella (2013) similarly find that Punjabi employers in the UK provided jobs, accommodation and help for obtaining work visas to their compatriots. Here individuals also appropriate habitus from other migrants that aid in converting their social capital to economic, cultural and symbolic

capitals (e.g., Al Ariss, 2010, Ramboarison-Lalao, Al Ariss, & Barth, 2012). Migrants from originating nations that have substantial communities in the host nation, may be able to do this more than the others, as Bauder (2005) finds in case of South Asian in contrast to the former Yugoslavian migrants.

Proposition 10: *When migrants' former habitus is inappropriate for capital accumulation in host nation fields, they may engage with ethnic economies where they may be able to accumulate capitals employing familiar habitus.*

Taking positions in the field. Migrants may adopt 'position taking' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) to extract the maximum benefit from the capitals they possess. While the earlier approach recognises position taking with respect to host fields, transnational perspectives argue that such position taking may involve both host and originating nation fields simultaneously. Nowicka (2013) discerns three kinds of positioning adopted by Polish entrepreneurs in Germany, 'single space', 'bi-local' and 'overlapping'. This is guided by migrants' subjective valuation of capitals in relation to both contexts and relative positions in the social hierarchies. Migrants who adopted single space positioning saw themselves as embedded mostly in host nations, compared them against host nation social hierarchy and took up habitus befitting host contexts. Those who had bi-local positioning, saw themselves located primarily in host contexts, but maintaining substantial contact with originating contexts, compared themselves against social hierarchies in both contexts, and employed habitus of originating and host contexts for capital accumulation in the host contexts. Those with overlapping positioning were equally engaged with originating and host contexts, constantly moving back and forth, actively engaged in improving their social positions in both, and opportunistically employing habitus from both for accumulating capitals in both

context and transnationally validating them.

Proposition 11: *Migrants may take positions in relation to originating, host or both fields, based on the relative values of their capitals and their social positions in those contexts, and may strive to improve those positions by reflexively drawing on their repertoire of habitus.*

It must be noted that individual migrants vary in the nature and levels of transnationalism (Schiller, Basch & Blanc-Stanton, 1992). This affects their propensity to use either or both nations as frames of reference to validate their capitals and social positions, and also the extent to which they rely of habiti from either context.

Conclusion

This paper aims to contribute to the fast growing body of HRM literature on migrant careers, and in particular, to the attempts to develop theoretical foundations to conceptually ground and unify the empirical findings on the impact of context on migrant careers. We focus on Bourdieusean conceptualisation of capitals, field and habitus, that has become a prominent framework in HRM as well as non-HRM literatures.

We take stock of the current Bourdieusean literature on migrant careers and find it valuable in providing theoretical explanations for career barriers that migrants encounter in the host nations, as well as for the strategies they undertake to overcome such barriers - two key areas of focus in migrant career literature. Bourdieusean analysis explains career barriers as outcomes of the social processes involved in migrant capital valuation. It highlights how values of capitals are bound to fields and how they lose value upon transferring to other fields where the actors do not share the same rules of valuation. It shows how the devaluation

places migrants in lower positions in social hierarchies, from where they find it difficult to negotiate with other actors for better values for their capital or change the rules of the fields, thus getting locked in the barriers. Bourdieusean analysis grounds career strategies in the concept of habitus. It points out how migrants' old habitus may not serve the purpose of improving their capitals and social positions in the host nations, and how they have to reflexively alter their habitus, thus offering a theoretical articulation for career strategies that migrants are found to adopt. Bourdieusean conceptualisation thus adds to the much needed theoretical foundation for migrant career studies.

We note an inadvertent, but significant oversight in HRM literature that impairs its utility. Even though Migration scholars have long recognised migrant transnationalism, i.e. migrants' simultaneous connections with originating and host contexts, HRM literature seems to overlook it, and carries on with exclusive focus on host nation as the context and frame of reference for migrant lives and activities. We call for incorporating transnationalism in Bourdieusean analysis of migrant careers in order to address this oversight, and enhance its explanatory capabilities.

We hope to help future scholars to locate the Bourdieusean framework within a transnational context, by offering an expanded conceptual vocabulary, based on the conceptualisations of transnational contexts from Migration literature (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Vertovec, 2001) and the concept of strategic action fields by Fligstein and McAdam (2011). We believe that our attempts to clarify conceptual vocabulary in relation to transnational contexts will be useful also for Migration literature that tends to approach transnational contexts empirically, rather than conceptually. This vocabulary allows for teasing out the multi-layered field relationships that have a bearing on the valuation of migrant capitals. With relevant propositions, we suggest how the power hierarchies within, across and between various originating, host and transnational fields, that form the context

for migrants, affect the valuation of migrant capitals. Further, we illustrate how migrant transnationalism may provide migrants with a repertoire of habitus and affect migrant reflexivity, and indicate in our propositions how such repertoire and reflexivity might affect choice of habitus.

Although our discussion is focused on Bourdieusean analysis, we hope to turn attention of non-Bourdieusean scholars as well to the implications of transnationalism for migrant careers, which thus far has not been systematically explored in HRM literature. We argue that incorporating transnationalism will enable a more nuanced, multi-level understanding of the contextual barriers and facilitators that cause variability in migrant career experiences. The interrelationships and implications discussed here may facilitate not only future Bourdieusean (qualitative) analysis, but the design of multi-level quantitative studies to explore the complexity of migrant experiences, and in particular, the country-of-origin effects on barriers and strategies.

We are mindful of the limitations of this paper. We recognise that transnationalism is but one potential aspect affecting migrant career experiences. It is important also to consider *intersectionality* of other diverse characteristics such as gender, class, race, religion, ethnicity etc. with transnationality. For example, women migrants may have more restrictive experiences compared to men as their capitals are more devalued (Riano & Baghdadi, 2007), and they end up having to take more marginal positions in the labour markets (Liversage, 2009). Riano and Baghdadi (2007) found that fewer household resources were given to women who wanted to undertake further studies; and Qureshi, Varghese and Osella (2013) found that while male homosociality and freedom of movement helped men to accumulate capitals through ethnic economies, women were unable to do the same. Thus, in addition to testing our propositions, there is scope for future researchers to build on our contribution and further extend the present conceptual framework.

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