

Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: *London Business School.*

Unit of Assessment: *C19 — Business and Management Studies.*

Title of case study:

Globalization, Technology, and Organizational Practice.

1. Summary of the impact

Lynda Gratton has examined how the transformational forces of globalization and technology are changing the nature of work and how organizations can prepare for this transformation. This has been particularly influential for multinational corporations that are seeking to become more innovative and productive in the face of the extraordinary transformation of their external context. *Gratton's research has achieved substantial and far-reaching impact via her highly influential books and practitioner-orientated articles; its significance is recognized by major prizes and awards from the business community; and it illustrates the use of specific channels (Gratton's Hot Spots Movement; and The Future of Work Consortium) to convert academic research into real-world impact.*

2. Underpinning research

This study refers to the work of Lynda Gratton (Professor of Management Practice) and covers two major research projects, from 2007 to the present, conducted at London Business School.

Gratton focused initially on the impact of globalization and technology on the context of performance in complex teams. She then broadened the scope to include the impact of globalization and technology on wider organizational practices and processes. A feature of the research has been the use of technology both to create a diagnostic platform (in the context of the first project) and to build a collaborative platform (the second project) to enhance co-creation and the flow of insights and knowledge between academics and executives. Here, the process of impact is bi-directional: the eventual impact beneficiaries were integral to the research process.

The first phase of the research focused on complex teams. Such teams are crucial since they are increasingly the primary engine of knowledge-based work and organizational performance. This initial research was funded in part by a grant from the Singapore Ministry of Manpower and a Senior Fellow award from the UK ESRC Advanced Institute of Management. A consortium of executives from twenty companies was assembled. This group met in a series of workshops. During this phase an initial high performing team model was developed; this was subsequently operationalized into a computer-generated team-performance diagnostic. This was used with over 200 teams with multiple stakeholder appraisal included. Two practitioner-orientated articles dealt with the issues of managing in complex teams ("Eight Ways to Build Collaborative Teams," Harvard Business Review, 2007) and managing specialist teams ("Bridging Faultlines in Diverse Teams," Sloan Management Review, 2007). With a view to achieving reach for the final impact, broad recommendations were made for executives in a subsequent book (*Hot Spots*, 2007).

The second phase of the research moved from the impact of technology and globalization on complex teams, to a wider focus on working lives, organizational practices and processes, and leadership. The primary vehicle for this research was the Future of Work Research (FoW) Consortium, launched in 2011 and running on an annual basis since then. Over this period, teams of at least five executives from more than 60 organizations from across the world have participated. A feature of this research has been the development of a collaborative platform that enables executives and academics to engage in an on-going dialogue. This platform (FoWlab) also hosts two-day intensive FoWlab conversations, whilst also serving as a knowledge repository library. Representative publications emerging from this phase included a broad overview of the impact of technology and globalization (“Workplace 2025: “What Will It Look Like?” *Organizational Dynamics*, 2011), and a more detailed description of the working practices (“The Third Wave of Virtual Work,” *Harvard Business Review*, 2013). Once again, the intention to achieve greater reach for the impact of the research led to an executive-focused book (*The Shift*, 2011)

3. References to the research

Key Books

Hot Spots: Why Some Teams, Workplaces, and Organisations Buzz with Energy—and Others Don’t by Lynda Gratton, 2007. London: Financial Times Prentice Hall. San Francisco: Berrett Koehler. ISBN: 978-0273711469

The Shift: The Future of Work Is Already Here by Lynda Gratton, 2011. London: HarperCollins Business. ISBN: 978-0007427956

Sample Practitioner Journal Publications

“Eight Ways to Build Collaborative Teams,” Lynda Gratton and Tamara J. Erickson, *Harvard Business Review*, November 2007.

“Bridging Faultlines in Diverse Teams,” Lynda Gratton, Andreas Voigt, and Tamara J. Erickson, *Sloan Management Review* 48(4), Summer 2007, pp. 22–29.

“The Third Wave of Virtual Work,” Tammy Johns and Lynda Gratton, *Harvard Business Review*, January-February 2013.

“Workplace 2025: What Will It Look Like?” Lynda Gratton, *Organizational Dynamics*, 40(4), 2011.

“The Future of Work,” Lynda Gratton, *Business Strategy Review*, Q3 2010, pp. 16–23.

Evidence of quality.

The two books are hugely successful, and have been translated into more than fifteen languages. For example, in Japan “The Shift” sold over 34,000 copies in less than two months following its release; in 2013 it went on to win Business Book of the Year Award. The Harvard Business Review and Sloan Management Review are top-ranked practitioner outlets. Funding sources included the Singapore Ministry of Manpower and the ESRC Advanced Institute of Management.

4. Details of the impact

(a) *Key Research Findings.* Exploiting her human resource expertise, the broad contribution of Lynda Gratton is to understand better how teams (in particular, complex teams) can operate more productively in a contemporary context; the impact is from sharing this understanding and from providing specific tools (such as the Gratton team-performance diagnostic) to organizations.

(b) *Beneficiaries.* The potential beneficiaries include all organizations that face the transforming forces of globalization and technology. Specific beneficiaries include the many thousands of readers of her practitioner-accessible books, and (in the context of the Hots Spots Movement) her clients and commercial partners. The illustrative examples specifically described in this case study are the Singapore Ministry of Manpower, Royal Dutch Shell, Tata Consultancy Services, and the members of the World Economic Forum; other leading client organizations include American Express, Centrica, Cisco, John Lewis, Microsoft, UBS, Vodafone, and many others.

(c) *The Research-Impact Interaction.* An important feature of this case study is that the eventual impact of the research has been intertwined with the research itself. The major beneficiaries of the research have been integral to the research programme. Moreover, a long-term aim of maximizing the reach of the impact was an important part of the research publication strategy.

(d) *Impact Channels.* Gratton's impact has been enhanced by her creation of channels to allow the effective communication of her research findings to the beneficiaries.

Hot Spots Movement in a specialist research and consulting team, founded by Gratton, that bridges academia and business. Gratton's research is used to build collaborative capability for clients, and to future-proof organizations. Hot Spots Movement has made a substantial investment into innovative learning platforms, and offers a suite of highly focused tools for clients' use.

A complementary channel is Gratton's *Future of Work Research Consortium*, which brings together the ultimate beneficiaries of the research; it unites academic research and organizational practice for its members. The associated *FoWlab* (Future of Work lab) platform is an opportunity to engage employees in an informed, focused, realtime debate. Traditionally, organizations have used surveys and focus groups, but these approaches are time-consuming, expensive, limited to pre-defined questions, and often lack actionable solutions. In contrast, FoWlab offers a powerful and creative alternative by providing a facilitated space for employees to experiment with ideas in an open and collaborative environment. It is a leading example of a jam platform: this is an internet-based platform for conducting conversations through "wisdom of the crowds" brainstorming. FoWlab offers opportunities to analyze the conversations and distill the key messages.

More generally, a distinctive feature of the research process and dissemination has been the use of social media. During the FoW consortium, a weekly FoWville Gazette goes to all consortium members. For a wider audience there is a frequently updated website, and a monthly Hot Spots newsletter goes to more than 10,000 executives and academics in more than 20 countries. Gratton also contributes a blog which is posted at Business Strategy Review, and on the Forbes site.

Recognition. Lynda Gratton's research has changed how complex teams are managed and has helped executives to prepare for technological transformation. This has been recognized by her positions and awards. For example: she is on the expert panel for the Wall Street Journal; she was (in 2008) selected by the Financial Times as a business thinker most likely to make a difference; she was ranked (in 2011) by the Times as one of the top 15 business thinkers; and in Human Resources magazine she topped (in 2011) the poll for the most influential thinkers.

Detailed Evidence for the Impact. Specific impact is achieved with client organizations that exploit Gratton's research. Four specific examples are reported here.

(i) *Singapore Ministry of Manpower.* The Ministry of Manpower (MOM) has made extensive use of the complex team diagnostic (developed by Gratton as part of the underpinning research) and has been a member of the Future of Work consortium since its inception. Gratton's research on the future of work has also been the keynote for Singapore's Human Capital Conference on more than three occasions. Gratton has served as a Fellow of MOM.

(ii) *Royal Dutch Shell.* Shell was a founder a member of the FoW research consortium. Gratton's research has been used with the human resources and scenario planning functions to think about the future of work at Shell. She has served as a member of their 'Great Minds' panel and has been an external member of the human resource strategy panel for the corporation.

(iii) *Tata Consultancy Services.* TCS, a founder member of the Freedom of Work consortium, has extensively used Gratton's research, particularly around complex collaboration and technology. Gratton has also worked with the CEO of TCS on a series of work-design experiments.

(iv) *World Economic Forum* The WEF is the premium CEO network, both through its councils and at its Davos meeting. Gratton has chaired the council on the Future of Leadership. In 2013 she developed a workshop on the Future of Work that attracted CEOs from across the world.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

The Hot Spot Movement's website is www.hotspotsmovement.com. The page [/clients.html](#) lists a selection of clients. The videos available at [/solutions.html](#) explain Gratton's work. The blog at lyndagratttonfutureofwork.typepad.com communicates Gratton's ideas on the future of work.

With reference to the four specific beneficiaries described above:

(i) The head of the Singapore Ministry of Manpower (now head of the Economic Development Board of Singapore) can be contacted to provide corroboration.

(ii) Shell's worldwide head of human resources can be contacted to corroborate.

(iii) At TCS, the European Head of Human Resources and has been an active member of FoW; furthermore the CEO is also able to corroborate.

(iv) The professor responsible for the WEF can be contacted to confirm Gratton's role in the WEF.