A BIBLIOMETRIC AND TROPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF GLOBALIZATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper is concerned with the social construction of globalization as a management discourse. The nature and development of the globalization discourse is examined in two ways. First, a systematic content analysis of more than two decades of globalization-related publications using the British Library's OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue) system and the Social Science Citation Index is undertaken. Second, a framework based upon 'tropes' (i.e. figures of speech) is utilised to unpack the concept of globalization. The work reveals that the discursive construction of globalization in the literature presents it as 'something new' (an ironic framing), with 'universal application' (presented via synecdoche and metonymy) and producing positive outcomes (couched through seductive metaphors). The ideological and practical implications of the 'globalization discourse' for organizing and the process of managing are also discussed.

INTRODUCTION

According to David Collins (2000) the notion of globalization "encompasses a loose, diverse and, at times, contradictory package of ideas" (p. 345). Even within the homogenized world of business dictionaries and glossaries, the sound-bite definitions of 'globalization' offered lack the uniformity and consistency we have come to typically associate with such publications. If we look, for instance, in the *Oxford Dictionary of Business* (1996) we find it described as: "The process that has enabled investment in financial markets to be carried out on an international basis" (p. 231). By contrast, the *Collins Dictionary of Business* (Pass, Lowes, Pendleton, & Chadwick, 1995) places a different emphasis upon definition, suggesting that globalization is "the expansion of a firm into foreign economies by exporting" (p. 330). Hence, without recourse to critical and postmodern interpretations, it would seem that even positivist accounts of the phenomena are not as closely aligned as one might expect.

So, what is globalization? The central focus of this paper is not to provide an answer to this question. Nor does it attempt to report on the actuality of globalization (e.g. to empirically

evaluate the degree to which firms are internationalizing their operations through exports, financial investment and so on). Instead, this paper is concerned with the social production and social consumption of 'globalization' as a discursive phenomenon. More specifically, it explores the term as a management discourse which is deployed at a rhetorical and figurative level in relation to organizations and within organizational settings. This form of analysis is important because, as Fairclough (2007) has recently pointed out, there are "so many different 'voices' in the ongoing 'conversation' about globalization" (p. 6-7). Moreover, it provides a means of exploring the assertion that globalization "has been wielded as a heavyweight rhetorical resource, both in the wider practices and events of day-to-day life" (Fairclough & Thomas, 2004, p. 379).

There are three main parts to this paper. First, the nature and development of the globalization discourse is examined and the proliferation of the globalization literature is discussed. Then, a discursive framework based upon 'tropes' (i.e. figures of speech) is utilised to unpack the concept of globalization as a narrative formation. Finally, the ideological and practical implications of 'globalization *as* a trope' for organizing and the process of managing are subjected to critical scrutiny.

THE GLOBALIZATION OF THE GLOBALIZATION DISCOURSE

In her best seller, *World Class*, Kanter (1995) contends that: "Globalization is surely one of the most powerful and pervasive influences on nations, businesses, workplaces, communities and lives at the end of the twentieth century" (p. 11). Yet, as Held and McGrew (2007) have recently asserted, "Opinion divides over the evidence for, as well as the explanatory significance of, contemporary globalization" (p. 1-2). Hence, some commentators agree with Kanter's (1995) assertions on the prevalence of globalization, but for others, the impact is more hyped and socially constructed than it is concrete. For example, Bauman (1998) observes: "Globalization is on everybody's lips; a fad word fast turning into a shibboleth, a magical incantation, a pass key meant to unlock the gates to all present and future mysteries" (p. 1).

The significance of globalization for Bauman (1998) is the way that it is talked into being (i.e. as a buzzword). Steger (2003) reinforces Bauman's position, arguing that globalization has in fact "become *the* buzzword of our time" (p. 2). More specifically, it also resonates with Collin's (2000) view that it "has become a management buzzword" (p. 348) espoused by management gurus.

If globalization is a 'fad' or a 'buzzword' the expectation would be for it to follow the typical pattern observed for other so-called management fads (e.g. business process re-engineering, total quality management, empowerment). In particular, we might expect it to be characterized by a rapid upsurge in popularity, a levelling out of interest and then decline as it is superseded by another fad (Abrahamson, 1991; Huczynski, 1996; Kieser, 1997). Crainer (1997) asserts that: "It was only in the 1990s that pundits and academics began to take notice of the global reach of a growing number of businesses. They coined the phrase globalization and set about examining it" (p.133).

There are a number of anecdotal claims regarding: the emergence of globalization, its subsequent growth, and its pervasiveness. However, there is a paucity of empirical work in this area. Therefore, as part of the process of examining the discourse(s) of globalization, a systematic analysis of citations has been undertaken.

TRENDS IN THE GLOBALIZATION LITERATURE

In this section the results of an analysis of three decades of globalization-related publications are reported. Two main sources were used to establish a pattern within the literature. First, the British Library's OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue) system was used to identify all books published during the last 25 years in which the word 'globalization' (and/or 'globalisation' - the English spelling) appeared either in the main title or the subtitle of publications. Second, the Social Science Citation Index was analyzed over an extended period (from 1976 to 2006). A keyword search enabled instances where 'globalization' was cited - either in the title, abstract or as a significant theme of a journal article - to be identified.

The analysis of book publications produced several interesting results. As Figure 1 below reveals, there has been a proliferation of globalization texts. In total, 3,548 books have been written of the subject since the first volume on the theme appeared in 1986. The general trend has been one of a consistent and marked increase in the volume of books on globalization that peaked around 2002-2003 and which has been followed by a period of gradual decline. Interestingly, the publication trend is remarkably similar to that exhibited for management fads and fashions.
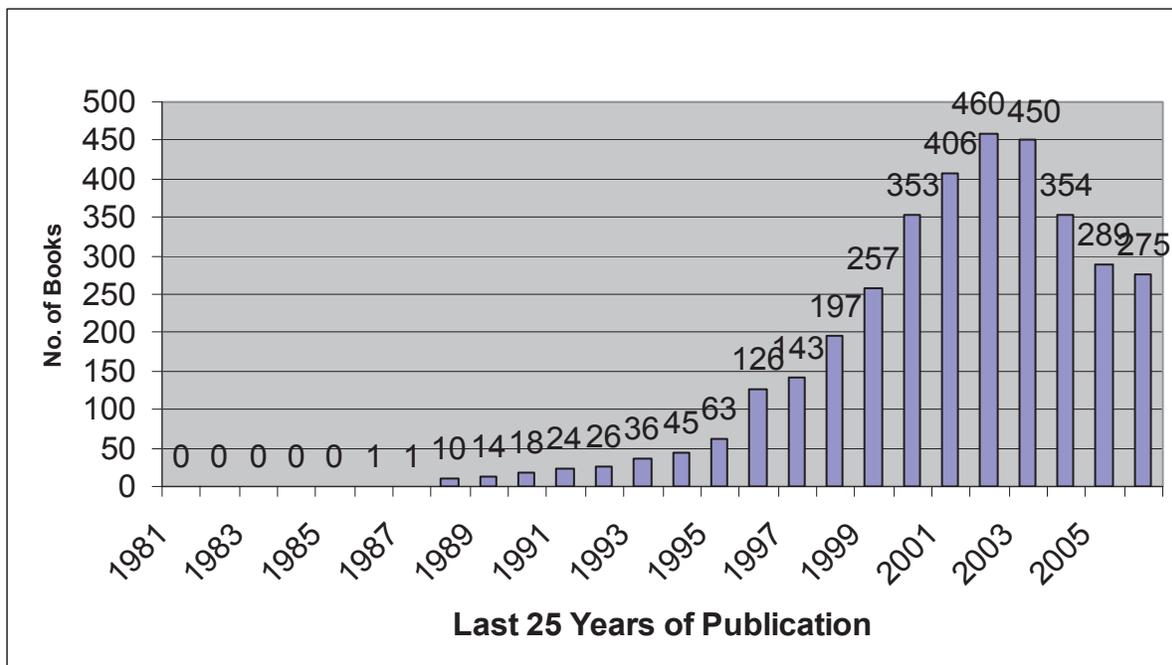

FIGURE 1– BOOKS PUBLISHED ON GLOBALIZATION SINCE **1981**

Although the second source of data incorporated a larger sample than that for books (i.e. 7,983 journal articles on globalization), the general pattern of citation is similar. Table 1 (see below) also supports the view that the upsurge in 'globalization' work occurred in the late 1980's. Furthermore, there is a comparable 'plateauing out' in the early to mid 2000's with some signs of modest decline in the last few years (see Figure 2).

TABLE 1. ARTICLES REFERRING TO 'GLOBALIZATION' APPEARING IN THE SOCIAL CITATION INDEX BETWEEN 1976 AND 2006

Year	Total no. of articles in SSCI	No. of articles with globalization reference	No. of articles with globalization cited in title	% of articles with globalization reference	% of articles with globalization cited in title
1976	122,110	1	1	0.001	0.001
1977	126,310	0	0	0.000	0.000
1978	127,241	0	0	0.000	0.000
1979	124,200	1	1	0.001	0.001
1980	118,072	0	0	0.000	0.000
1981	120,367	0	0	0.000	0.000
1982	125,930	0	0	0.000	0.000
1983	126,791	2	2	0.002	0.002
1984	121,432	1	1	0.001	0.001
1985	122,128	2	2	0.002	0.002
1986	129,122	1	1	0.001	0.001
1987	121,612	7	6	0.006	0.005
1988	116,384	3	3	0.003	0.003
1989	120,779	11	7	0.009	0.006
1990	120,975	9	5	0.008	0.004
1991	122,806	18	9	0.015	0.007
1992	125,931	60	11	0.048	0.009
1993	129,324	66	16	0.051	0.012
1994	127,848	91	19	0.071	0.015
1995	144,394	123	39	0.085	0.027
1996	147,685	192	41	0.130	0.029
1997	142,705	306	76	0.214	0.053
1998	141,930	458	88	0.323	0.062
1999	143,631	494	94	0.344	0.065
2000	145,280	713	156	0.491	0.107
2001	150,850	757	136	0.502	0.090
2002	135,692	855	153	0.630	0.113
2003	152,906	862	149	0.564	0.097
2004	132,707	923	137	0.696	0.103
2005	170,845	975	127	0.571	0.074
2006	164,804	1052	130	0.638	0.079

A feature of the popularity and pervasiveness of citation that is worth drawing attention to is the number of globalization articles expressed as a proportion of the total volume of social science articles. At the peak of the phenomenon, 1 out every 144 articles (i.e. 0.70% of all work

published in 2004 in the Social Science Citation Index) made reference to globalization as a central, or at least significant, theme. Given the range and breadth of social science research, this is a substantial level of citation.
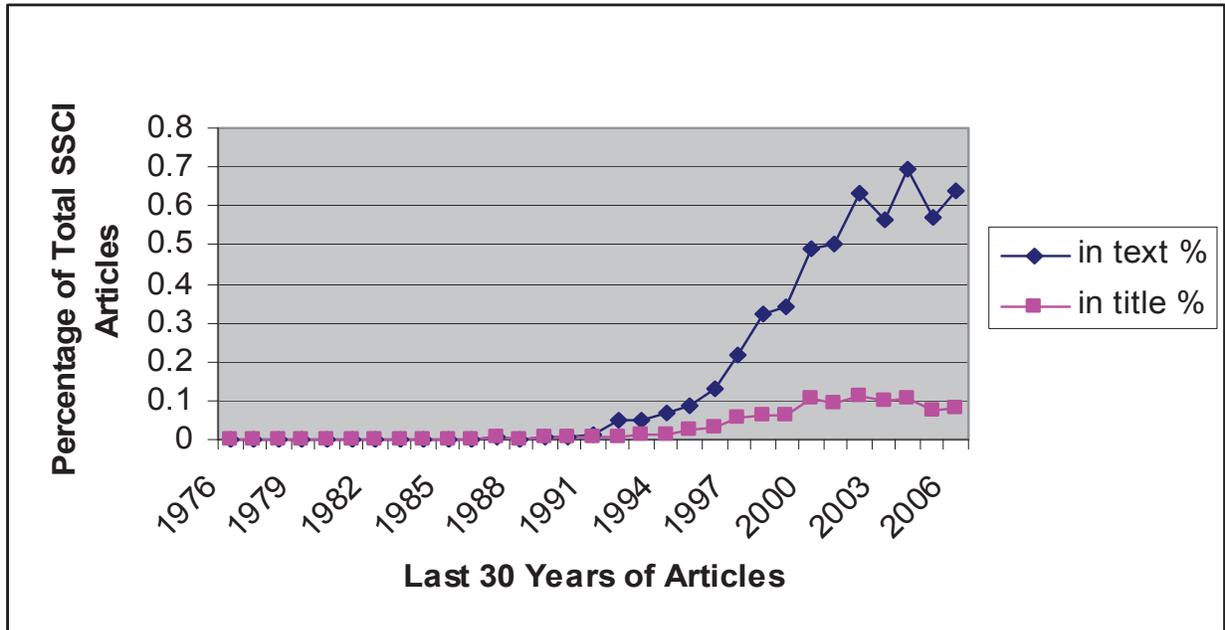

FIGURE 2. ARTICLES ON GLOBALIZATION IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCE CITATION INDEX BETWEEN 1976 AND 2006

The advent and rapid growth in popularity of globalization certainly bears the hallmarks of a fad (i.e. rapid growth, plateau, and then decline) albeit that at this juncture the evidence indicating significant decline is somewhat limited. However, this assertion is, to a certain extent, supported and anticipated by key globalization texts appearing in the early 2000's. In particular, the publication of *The End of Globalization* (Rugman, 2000) and *Beyond Globalization* (Henderson, 2000) perhaps explicitly signalled, and simultaneously contributed to, an imminent shift through the use of terms like "the end of" and "beyond". More recently, Ferguson (2005) has talked of 'sinking globalization' and Rosenberg (2005) has pronounced that "the age of globalization is unexpectedly over" (p. 35).

With a substantial proportion of the social science output appearing in journals over the past year relating to globalization, further questions arise about the nature, content and focus of these contributions. One of the implications is that with so much contemporary usage, the term 'globalization' has sufficient etymological license to enable it to be applied in a variety of ways to a variety of phenomena. It is to this latter point that we now turn our attention.

GLOBALIZATION AS TROPE

For our purposes a trope can be regarded as a figure of speech where a word is used in a sense other than the conventional or literal one for which it is intended (de Man, 1978; Gibbs, 1993).

The study 'globalization tropes' is central to understanding the motives and philosophy which underpin the faddish quality of the concept. This becomes possible on the basis that:

> "Every trope constitutes an impropriety, because a trope by definition causes a deviation from the proper meaning of the word; however, the propriety of literalness as a goal becomes subordinated to the effect that the speaker/writer hopes to achieve" (Rowe, 1997, p.125).

Although there is a bewildering array of tropes we shall concern ourselves with what have been described as the four 'master' tropes - metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony (Manning, 1979; Morgan, 1983; White, 1978). In the following sections these tropes are applied to the discourse of globalization.

GLOBALIZATION AS METAPHOR

Metaphor is the most popular and widely used of the master tropes (Oswick & Grant, 1996). It involves the mapping or projection of attributes from a relatively familiar domain to another less familiar one (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). This process of transference is used to generate new insight or meaning (Grant & Oswick, 1996; Morgan, 1980).

The power of metaphor resides in the potential to create 'vivid and compact' images (Ortony, 1975) and provide new 'ways of thinking and seeing' (Morgan, 1986). In particular, it is claimed that they have a 'generative quality' (Schon, 1993) and that they offer "an invitation to see the world anew" (Barrett & Cooperrider, 1990, p. 222). However, by illuminating particular properties and characteristics of a given object or subject they de facto overshadow and obscure others. Hence, metaphors create 'partial truths' (Morgan, 1996). As such they can reify and ideologically distort phenomena (Tinker, 1986).

Although not immediately obvious at a surface level, there appear to be two 'root metaphors' (Oswick & Grant, 1996) embedded within the dominant globalization discourse, namely; 'globalization *as* quasi-utopia' and 'globalization *as* golden opportunity'. The 'quasi-utopia' metaphor projects globalization as being beneficial for everyone. It is built upon the notion of convergence towards a 'global free market' (Gray, 1999). Moreover, the subtext of the metaphor conjures up evocative and seductive images of peace, prosperity and equality across nations united as a collective whole. This is exemplified in the more overt deployment of metaphors such as the 'borderless world' (Ohmae, 1994) and 'the global community' (Kanter, 1995). As Collin's (2000) notes, firms and individuals who do not endorse Kanter's (1995) notion of 'global community' are to be regarded as "misguided, parochial and, at times, xenophobic" (p. 357).

The 'golden opportunity' metaphor is constructed around the notion that businesses have the chance to 'buy in' to a special and unique development (i.e. globalization). Management gurus extol the virtues of businesses winning on the international stage and becoming 'transnational industries' (Ghoshal & Bartlett, 1998). They also warn of perils of not embracing 'the golden opportunity'. For instance, Kanter (1995) describes those who commit themselves to globalization as 'cosmopolitan groupings of business leaders' while those who do not are

dismissed as 'isolates'. Equally, Peter Drucker (cited in Crainer, 1997) rather ominously warns: "There will be two kinds of CEOs who exist in the next five years; those who think globally and those who are unemployed" (p.133).

The common feature of both the 'quasi-utopia' and 'golden opportunity' metaphors are that the 'partial truths' they create are inherently upbeat and in both cases those who do not embrace the metaphor are denigrated (e.g. isolated, parochial and xenophobic). In this regard, they do 'act as ideological distortions' (Tinker, 1986) by providing highly positive and optimistic images. These images rely on a contestable or false connection being made regarding the degree of overlap between globalization and the metaphor employed. For example, one of the subliminal connotations of similarity between 'globalization' (as the target domain) and 'quasi-utopia' (the metaphor) is that they both generate harmony and happiness. This appropriation of the 'positive' in turn leads to a marginalization of alternative readings which typically consider 'negative' issues such as elitism, poverty, disenfranchisement and subordination (Chossudovsky, 1996; Collins, 2000). However, with the emergence of the anti-globalization movement the marginalized voice is becoming less marginalized. Indeed, with the advent of high profile anti-globalization protests and best-selling books such as *No Logo* (Klein, 2000), *Fast Food Nation* (Schlosser, 2001) and *The Corporation* (Bakan, 2004) one might even say that anti-globalization position has become increasingly more appealing to a mainstream audience.

GLOBALIZATION AS METONYMIC AND SYNECDOCHIC

Unlike metaphor, which involves two domains, metonymy and synecdoche both rely upon an exchange between parts of the same broadly defined domain. Synecdoche is a contiguous mapping, which on occasions can relate cause and effect, but more typically involves a part-whole substitution (Gibbs, 1993). An example of this substitution is provided by Gibbs (1993), who suggests that 'referring to a baseball player as a glove, as in "we need a new glove at second base" (p. 258-259), uses a salient characteristic of one domain (the glove part of the baseball player) to represent the entire domain (the player). Metonymy occurs when a word denoting an attribute or an adjunct of a particular thing is used to represent the thing itself. For instance, the word 'Biro', which is the name of the Hungarian inventor, has come to represent the ball-point pen that he invented.

Given that metonymy and synecdoche attend to aspects of substitution (encompassing part-whole substitutions and cause-and-effect relationships), it would appear that within the extant literature the term 'globalization' has developed as an umbrella concept for a variety of disparate phenomena. As such, it has become the 'whole' which is used to represent a multitude of constituent 'parts'. In particular, anything which has a degree of dispersal or has widespread appeal is susceptible to the claim that it has been 'globalized' or is part of the globalization process. Notable examples of this tendency, drawn from the sample 'globalization books' (see figure 1), include the globalization of: the West Indies cricket team, (Beckles, 1999); Scandinavian social democracy (Greyer, 1999); Canadian universities (Bond & Lemasson, 2000); Korean values (Alford, 1998); charismatic Christianity (Coleman, 2000); and, Chinese food (Wu & Cheung, 2000).

There is also an interesting dynamic to the cause-effect relationship between the activities of business and globalization. On the one hand, globalization is presented as a phenomenon driving corporations and one which businesses are compelled to react to (i.e. globalization *as* 'cause'). Yet on the other, it can be argued that it is business activity which creates globalization (i.e. globalization *as* 'effect'). It is perhaps better to view globalization as both a cause and an effect, insofar as it forms a kind of mutually implicated, self reinforcing loop with business activity. This symbiotic relationship may, at least in part, explain the endurance of the 'globalization as golden opportunity' metaphor.

GLOBALIZATION AS IRONY

Irony, the final master trope, like metaphor entails mappings across two domains, but is based upon the 'juxtaposing of opposites' (Brown, 1977). It involves the use of the inappropriate in order to describe something in a paradoxical and contradictory way. An example given by Gareth Morgan (1983) is that of anarchy as a good form of organization.

If irony results from the juxtaposing of opposites, then globalization provides fertile ground for this form of inherent contradiction. As a starting point, it could be argued that, as demonstrated above, simultaneously being its own 'cause' and 'effect' gives globalization an ironic quality. The 'global versus local' dimension also has overtones of irony. We are told by Naisbitt and Aburdene (1991) to 'think global' and 'act local'. This presents a catchy coupling of the 'local-global' and 'think-act' dualisms, but what does it mean? It must be ironic. How can one do anything other than 'act locally'? As an alternative, what would 'acting globally' look like? Any global activity has to start with local action. For example, destroying the planet by detonating an atomic bomb (a 'global activity') has to commence with a local action (i.e. someone pressing the button). Equally, the world-wide initiatives of business corporations are manifestations of acting locally.

Arguably there is a deeper and more significant irony at work in the globalization discourse: a new phenomena which is actually quite old. For many, globalization is inextricably linked to new technology, deregulation and the opening up of new markets and, as such, is perceived as a relatively recent development (Kanter, 1995; Levitt, 1983). For others (Bauman, 1998; Waters, 1998), globalization is an old and well established phenomena rather than a new one. As Crainer (1997) puts it: "Globalization is nothing new. Business has been an international affair since the Phoenicians and the Roman Empire Inc. was a global organisation even without the miracles of instant communication" (p. 133).

As Collin's (2000) concludes: "Globalization is presented as a new departure when evidence suggests it is the continuation of an established socio-economic trend" (p. 373). This arguably reveals the ultimate source of irony: given the apparent longevity of globalization, it may not be a fad after all!

FROM GLOBALIZING TO ORGANIZING: THE MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, and Perraton (1999) have provided a classification of three orientations towards globalization: hyperglobalists (those who see it as something new), sceptics

(who question the significance and actuality of globalizing trends) and transformationists (who see it as a complex and variable phenomenon). These basic positions can be aligned to the tropological analysis presented in the previous section and the connections are summarised in table 2.

TABLE 2. SUMMARY OF AGENT, POSITIONS AND TROPES IN RELATION TO GLOBALIZATION

AGENTS (based on Held et al, 1999)	DISCURSIVE POSITION ON GLOBALIZATION	TROPOLOGICAL EMPHASIS
Hyperglobalists	Globalization is a real and significant epoch (i.e. dramatic changes in trade, finance and governance).	**Metaphor:** • Globalization *as* quasi-utopia • Globalization *as* golden opportunity
Transformationists	Globalization is constituted as a diverse and varied bundle of processes and practices (i.e. there are different types).	**Metonymy/Synecdoche:** • Part-whole substitution - globalization *as* umbrella concept for other phenomena. Cause-effect relationship - globalization *as* a driver of various forms of business activity.
Sceptics	Globalization is nothing new (i.e. it is part of an old, established and ongoing process).	**Irony**: • Juxtaposing of opposites – globalization *as* a 'new' phenomena which is actually quite 'old'.· Simultaneous 'cause' and 'effect' – globalization creates business and business activity creates globalization.

The globalization discourse, as an amalgam of tropes, offers considerable scope to be utilised by managers to exercise leverage over employees. It assists in the 'management of meaning' (Gower & Legge, 1983) by laying claim to the territory of the 'good' and 'proper' (Gergen, 1999) and, in doing so, creating a single uncontested 'univocal account' (Boje, 1995).

The privileging of the dominant trope-based meta-narrative of globalization enables management to colonize commitment and maintain the managerial prerogative in a subtle and seemingly non-confrontational way. Unlike overtly using the threat of competition, which is clearly negative and contestable, globalization allows management to present micro-level initiatives (e.g. flexible working, re-structuring, and so on) as positive and as unchallengeable. The activity has positive connotations because it is couched as enabling the company to grasp a 'golden opportunity' and it is difficult to challenge because globalization is such a pervasive and slippery concept it becomes difficult to grapple with something which simultaneously means everything and nothing.

The micro-application of the globalization discourse by managers has a further source of advantage when compared to other management fads. This advantage relates to attribution theory (Kelley, 1967). Most fads (such as TQM, BPR) can be construed as having an internal attribution (e.g. management *choose to* implement BPR). By contrast globalization permits management to create an illusion of external attribution (e.g. we *have to* respond to globalization - there is no choice!). As a force outside of the organization (i.e. external to it), the locus of control of globalization is beyond the boundaries of any single organization. The discursive construction of globalization as incontrovertible and uncontrollable is critical to establishing external attribution and, as such, a sophisticated strategy of management control. This parallels the way in which management gurus peddle fads through the creation of a 'grammar of imperatives' (Collins, 2000). In order to change the 'imperatives', we need to change the tropes by uncovering and promoting alternative readings of globalization.

CONCLUSIONS

The bibliometric analysis of globalization has revealed that there has been a burgeoning literature on globalization (i.e. more than 3,500 books on globalization since 1986 and almost 9,000 journal articles). That said, the trend is not one of ever-increasing popularity. The publication of work on globalization peaked in the early to mid 2000's and this has been followed by a gradual decline in published material. It has been argued that the reduced prominence of the term 'globalization' is, at least in part, attributable to the increasing momentum of an anti-globalization discourse.

Beyond the bibliometric work which has tracked the prevalence and trajectory of globalization, the tropological analysis of globalization has demonstrated how the term is typically used in a figurative and rhetorical, rather than literal, sense. The analysis of tropes revealed three main things. First, within the popular management discourse highly evocative and positive images of globalization are presented via the deployment of seductive metaphors. Second, as a synecdochic device, globalization is enlisted as a generic blanket term to represent and justify a wide, disparate and often dubious repertoire of concepts, activities and outcomes. Finally, the irony of globalization is that while most management-related fads seek to historically locate themselves as having some form of sustained continuity (i.e. not a passing fad), globalization denies its past by presenting itself as a recent development. In summary, globalization is presented as something new (irony), with universal application (synecdoche and metonymy) and consistently positive outcomes (metaphor). These attributes bear an uncanny resemblance to the archetypal set of truth claims made on behalf of all management fads.

Finally, as a macro-construct, which operates on a largely figurative basis, the concept of globalization has been utilized by managers to instigate micro-level initiatives and exercise their managerial prerogative. By drawing upon globalization, organizations are able to present localized change activities as positive and incontrovertible (i.e. as a response to global opportunities). Moreover, and in terms of attribution, globalization also enables managers to externalize the forces for change (i.e. as driven by 'external global pressures' rather than 'internal politics and preferences').

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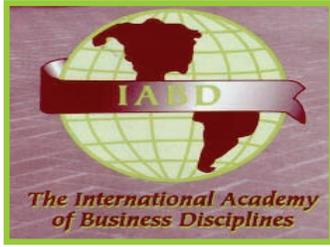Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

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