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Stream 3: Beyond Otherness: Reconfiguring multiple criticalities from the periphery

HOW DO THE ‘NON WESTERN’ GLOBALLY MOBILE ELITE EXPERIENCE OTHERING? BROADENING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF ‘THE OTHER’

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Research adopting a post-colonial analysis within management and organization studies tends to focus on the relationship between the global ‘North’ and ‘South’, the center and periphery, or the ‘West and the Rest’ (Frenkel & Shenhav, 2006; McKenna, 2011; Özkazanç-Pan, 2008; Prasad, 2003). In examining this dialectic construction, the subaltern has mostly emerged as a group of marginalized, oppressed, often silenced, non-elite, non-White ‘Others’, although there are exceptions in historical analysis (Fischer-Tine, 2009). Consequently, many of these studies explicitly or implicitly attempt to legitimate “the knowledge systems of Others and of working towards progressive and radical solutions to economic and cultural inequalities between the ‘West and the Rest’” (Jack & Westwood, 2009, p. 13).

Looking specifically at research on self-initiated expatriates (SIEs), the majority of work has been undertaken in “Western” countries or has researched SIEs from “Western” countries (Doherty, 2012; Doherty & Dickmann, 2008; Inkson & Myers, 2003; Jackson et al., 2005; Jokinen et al., 2008; Richardson, 2009; Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010). In response to the lack of research attention focused on developing countries, several researchers have explored SIEs from developed countries who have moved to emerging economies, for example, Saudi Arabia (Bozionelos, 2009), the United Arab Emirates (Forstenlechner, 2010), and Turkey (Richardson, 2008). However, these studies still focus on SIEs who come from the ‘Global North’. There is much less work on SIEs who come from developing parts of the world (i.e. the ‘Global South’) and their experiences of expatriation are a hidden aspect of the current SIE management literature.

The SIE literature has not only overlooked mobile professionals from the non-West, but has yet to subject the ‘whiteness’ of the SIE to critical investigation. According to Leonard (2010), whiteness is, “revealed as a process through which white people are socially produced,
maintained and constructed as privileged” (p. 1250). However, as Fechter and Walsh (2010) argue, this focus on race with respect to the ‘whiteness’ of mobility often means that we neglect other factors such as class and skill when trying to develop an understanding of “privileged” migrants. ‘Whiteness’ then should be continually negotiated, not treated as a (given) racial position that “automatically awards a high status within the globalizing city” (Fechter & Walsh, 2010, p. 1200).

The scarcity of work in organization and management studies dedicated specifically to the professional SIE from “non-Western” countries, we believe, contributes to the fallacy that all ‘privileged’ expatriates are from the “West”, while the ‘unprivileged’ migrant originates from the “East”. Looking at the United Arab Emirates (UAE), we see that cosmopolitan cities such as Dubai are marked by “western migrant residents alongside other wealthy migrants” (Fechter & Walsh, 2010, p. 1206). They remind us that global cities comprise of “wealthy” expatriates from a wide range of ethnicities (Fechter & Walsh, 2010). Despite this image of racial diversity among globally mobile professionals, the persistence of racialized social and economic hierarchies among SIEs within the UAE is explicitly and implicitly evident. It is therefore important to unpack current taken-for-granted assumptions regarding the globally mobile professional from the “non-West”, or as Fechter and Walsh (2010) suggest, there is a need to “add privileged migrants and stir” (p. 1198).

Within postcolonial studies, the Other is constructed vis-à-vis the Self and is considered as someone who is not “us”. In an attempt to deal with Western representations and experiences of the Other, Said’s (1978) work entitled, Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient explores how Western scholars use a set of ‘representations’ such as categories, classifications, and images to construct the Oriental ‘Other’. In doing so, Said (1978) argues that ideas about the
Other are merely representations – cultural productions rather than reflections of reality. This ‘rhetoric of Otherness’ involves a, “particular way of representing the political and economic features of these Others” (Priyadharshini, 2003, p. 171). Orientalism is therefore a practice of Othering where “the construction of the Self is dialectically achieved through simultaneous construction of the Other and becomes naturalized” (Jack and Westwood, 2009, p. 22). Said (1978) contends that this is achieved through binary oppositions, which seek to create asymmetrical relations between the ‘West’ and ‘non-West’. The work of these binary oppositions often involves a process of Othering where the Other is discursively excluded, marginalized and often devalued (Jack and Westwood, 2009).

Said (1978) further suggests that representation through binary oppositions may create essentialization – “simplified and reduced categories of the objects/events in the world. It de-differentiates and offers up categories that smooth over differences and constitute sameness” (Jack and Westwood, 2009, p. 171). In this manner, we argue that the construction of the Other may therefore be discursively essentialized and thus reduced to a homogenous group. However, with developments in global neo-liberal capitalism we have started to witness the emergence of ‘new Others’ (Castles and Miller, 2009). Given their professional and privileged status, the “non-Western” globally mobile professional may constitute a ‘new Other’ (Castles & Miller, 2009). As Savage and Williams (2008) contend, “there has been little attention paid to the new or expanded group of financial elites who….are intermediaries, often operating without executive roles in giant corporations, and usually incentivized on the basis of sharing fees or profits” (p. 9). It seems to us that the global forces of capitalism are (re)shaping the complexity of Otherness. This study attempts to problematize the privileged globally mobile professional,
and broaden our understanding of Otherness beyond the exclusive categories of the colonized, peripheral, and ‘non-White’ groups within management and organization studies.

Within the context of neo-liberal global capitalism, we argue that the “non-Western” professional SIE in the UAE can be conceived as *globalizing professionals (the technical fraction)* within the transnational capitalist class (Sklair, 2001). Specifically, given their professional role as consultants within the accounting advisory industry, they serve as a ‘functionary’ of capitalism, operating in the interests of global capitalism (Savage & Williams, 2008). After all, these individuals are educated, professional, globally marketable individuals and in this manner have forms of capital such as education, prestige, and access to networks that does not, we think, put them in a homogenous ‘oppressed’ or ‘downtrodden’ category, (Bourdieu, 1984) which is often characteristic of the ‘subaltern’. Drawing from a qualitative study of thirty “non-Western” accounting professional SIEs situated in the UAE this study attempts to examine how “non-Western” professional SIEs experience both *Othering* and *Otherness* while working in the UAE. It is important to therefore ask, how do these individuals respond to ‘being’ and ‘feeling’ the Other? What does it mean to experience Otherness in the context of being a non-Western professional SIE in the UAE? Are they subjected to the colonial project or complicit in it?

The professional “non-Western” SIE therefore constitutes a somewhat contradictory, albeit interesting collective of the globally mobile elite. This paper seeks to contribute to the existing research on the “non-Western” global elite by demonstrating that within the context of global mobility, the Other may be both complicit *and* victim to the process of Othering. By anchoring this study within a postcolonial theoretical framework, drawing from the works of Said (1993, 1994), and Bhabha (1994), this study attempts to broaden our understanding of
Otherness. By critically analyzing the discourses used by “non-Western” professional SIEs working in the UAE, we examine how these individuals respond to not only ‘being’ and ‘feeling’ the Other, but also how they may actively engage in the process of Othering themselves.

The paper begins with an introduction to the main thinkers of postcolonial theory, with a discussion surrounding the applicability of their key concepts to the UAE and the globally mobile professionals that are situated there. It is important to note that ‘postcolonial’ for the purposes of this study is treated as an “interrogative space not a theoretical discipline” (Jack, Westwood, Srinivas, & Sardar, 2011, p. 278). This idea is central throughout the discussion as it is not our intention to impose an ‘overarching theory’ to the paper, rather an “interpretive sensibility” (Jack et al., 2011, p. 278) that is based on postcolonial thinkers, including Said (1978) & Bhabha (1994). The study’s research design and methodology is explained with an emphasis on procedures relating to data collection and data analysis. The presentation of findings is offered through the use of key themes identified in the study. Finally, the paper ends with a discussion section that interprets these findings using a postcolonial analytic frame.

**BROADENING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF ‘THE OTHER’**

**Said’s Binary Oppositions in Orientalist Practice**

Drawing heavily from the works of Foucault (1980, 1982) and Gramsci (1990), Said (1978) adopts a discourse approach to the West’s (the Occident) representations of the non-West (the Orient). Said (1978) argues that, “[I]n any instance of at least written language, there is no such thing as a delivered presence, but a re-presence, or a representation” (p. 21). According to Said (1978), any representation which refers to the Orient or Other never captures what it really is because they do not “exist as a natural fact” (p. 331). By organizing these classifications and categories into binary oppositions, Said (1978) demonstrates how colonial discourse represents
the non-West as backwards, inferior, and savable, while the West is considered developed, civilised, modern and liberated (Prasad, 1997). Progress and development are therefore key tropes within neocolonial discourse (McClintock, 1995) as the West is seen as taking on the “White man’s burden” to ‘save’ the non-West from its non-modernity.

Said (1978) argues that these juxtaposed representations inherent in the colonial discourse have become a fictional reality that then manifests itself into the way in which the colonized Other may start to see themselves. Orientalism then is “a practice of Othering where the construction of the Self is dialectically achieved through the simultaneous construction of the Other and becomes naturalized” (Jack & Westwood, 2009, p. 22). These ideas are important to the analysis of “non-Western” SIEs’ discourse in this study as we can identify the persistence of Orientalism in the ways in which participants account for their experiences of ‘being’ and ‘feeling’ the Other. It is interesting to note that in these experiences, there appears to be an acceptance by the Other of being the Other, perhaps because they have become appropriated by the colonial discourse.

However, Said’s binary oppositions have been subject to scrutiny as they have been critiqued for perpetuating Western colonial discourse (Özkazanç-Pan, 2008). Rather than give voice to the Other, Özkazanç-Pan (2008) argues that this singular binary focus on the colonizer versus the colonized may actually, “mute” the people Said seeks to represent. Further, it is suggested that Said’s binary oppositions need to be carefully considered given the specific contexts in which they may be applied. This idea is echoed by Coles and Walsh (2010) who argue that “the tropes of Said’s Orientalism cannot simply be overlaid on the Dubai context, either in the past or present; rather they are reconfigured” (p. 1319).
Currently, approximately 85% of the UAE’s population is made up of expatriates from many different regions including other Middle-Eastern countries, Europeans, Americans and Asians (Edwards, 2011). Asians and Arabs make up the largest expatriate group, comprising more than two-thirds of the total UAE population (Caplin, 2009). These include expatriates from India, Pakistan, Egypt, Yemen, Bangladesh, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Jordan, Palestine, Indonesia, Syria, Iran, Nepal, and Turkey (Kapiszewski, 2006). Given the diverse foreign worker population, and thus the multiplicity of ‘colonial imaginations’ (Leggett, 2010) found in the UAE, it would be rather simplistic to adopt Said’s singular binary categories within this context.

Further, the idea of who the colonizers and colonized are evokes certain images. As Fechter and Walsh (2010) suggest, “Western often stands as a synonym for white” (p. 1204). However, looking specifically at the UAE, it can be argued that globally mobile professionals, or “financial intermediaries” (Savage & Williams, 2008, p. 10) may assume the role of the “indigenous elite” (Jack and Westwood, 2009, p. 134). Jack and Westwood (2009) argue that “indigenous elites have simply reoccupied the structures of colonialism and acted in ways that sustain the asymmetrical relationships between themselves and the oppressed” (p. 134). Since the development of its oil sector as the primary source of income, local Emiratis may also be considered as the ‘indigenous elite’. An example of this asymmetrical relationship may include the specific laws pertaining to foreign workers that govern citizenship and employment, such as the Kafala system and ‘No objection certificates’ (NOCs). All foreigners working in the UAE operate under a system of employment called the Kafala system. Under this legal system, all foreigners who wish to move to the UAE to work must enter into a contractual agreement with a GCC local, institution or employer to obtain an entry visa and residence permit (Barria, 2008).
As a result of the Kafala system, expatriates are closely linked with their employer, who is also their ‘sponsor’, into the country through laws regarding employment and residency visas (Nagy, 2008; Longva, 1997). Employment visas usually last a determinate amount of time and need constant renewal. Employer-sponsorship coupled with immigration law restricts the movement of individuals between jobs (Fernandes & Awamleh, 2006) as expatriates wishing to change organization are required to obtain an ‘NOC’ to be able to work under another sponsor.

For Said (1978), representation of the Other may also involve essentialization – an attempt to categorize that “smooth over differences and constitute sameness” (Jack and Westwood, 2009, p. 171). Representations of the Other therefore results in effacing any individual uniqueness. As Sardar (1999) argues, Orientalism can be characterized simply as “wilful misunderstanding and knowledgeable ignorance” (p. 172). Rather than reducing the Other as a homogenous group, it is important then to move beyond such wilful ignorance and to examine the different permutations and representations of the Other. An examination of the Other therefore requires a fluid rather than static, monolithic understanding.

The ‘Globally Mobile Elite’

Robinson (2011) suggests that, “globalization represents a new epoch in the ongoing evolution of world capitalism distinguished by the rise of a globally-integrated production and financial system, an emergent transnational capitalist class, and incipient transnational state apparatuses” (p. 349). Within this ‘epoch’ of global neoliberal capitalism we have begun to witness the rise of transnational corporations and transnational managerial elite, (Harvey, 2005; Steger & Roy, 2010; Robinson, 2011) as well as new patterns of global mobility, which is facilitated by inter-company transfers within and between these transnational corporations (Beaverstock, 2005). Transnational class formation has become a major feature of capitalist
globalization (Robinson, 2011). Scholars describe these transnational managerial elite as a group of individuals who have a disproportionate control over political, economic, social, and cultural resources (Carroll, 2009; Khan, 2012; Robinson, 2011). Not only do these individuals have sufficient power to “drive the global economy” (Robinson, 2011, p. 355), but they are also a “well connected fraction” (Carroll, 2009, p. 308). While there is a large body of sociological work dedicated to the transnational elite (Carroll, 2010; Carroll & Sapinski, 2010; Khan, 2010; Sklair, 2001), critical scholarly work in business and management studies has only recently started to develop (upcoming special issue in Critical Perspectives on International Business).

While a further investigation of the transnational managerial elite is important within business and management studies, it is important to mention that this study is centered on “organic intellectuals – advisors to business owners and top management” (Carroll, 2009, p. 290). These ‘intermediaries’ of global capital may not occupy the political, economic, social and economic strata of the transnational elite, but they considered the “marine corps of an economy” (Savage & Williams, 2008, p. 16) who constitute a highly educated, highly skilled group of individuals with globally mobile careers that allow them to “extend their habitats from the world cities to other locations” (Beaverstock, 2005, p. 248).

Within the context of globalization, we have also started to witness an emphasis on professions and professionalization (Isin, 1999). Specifically, Castells (1996) notes that capitalism has led to an increase in professional-managerial occupations. While these individuals may not have the power of the transnational elite, as professionals they may constitute a ‘new Other’ (Castells & Miller, 2006) who “seeks wealth, status and power through their occupation”. The individuals in our study may be considered this ‘new Other’ as they act as the ‘functionaries’ of the globally capitalism. While they may be appropriated by a colonial
discourse, we argue that this may be influenced by ideas inherent within the global neoliberal system.

**Bhabha’s notions of Hybridity and ‘In-Between’ Spaces**

Leonard (2010) argues that the literature on transnational elites suggests that transnational corporations are inextricably linked with a “hierarchical system of binaries discursively produced in the course of Western imperialism” (p. 1250). However, Leonard (2010) also suggests that working identities need not be *essentialized* based on race or gender relations, but are “open to individual patterns of negotiation and difference” (p. 1250). On one hand, the ‘non-Western’ globally mobile professional situated in the UAE may experience Othering, which is discursively constructed through binary oppositions that may make them feel ‘less than’, excluded or devalued. However, these individuals are educated, professional, globally marketable individuals and in this manner have forms of capital such as education, prestige, and access to networks that does not, we think, put them in a homogenous ‘oppressed’ or marginalized category (Bourdieu, 1984). Their access to forms of ‘capital’ (Bourdieu, 1984) allows them to negotiate the process of Othering, and even engage in Othering themselves. Individuals in this study may therefore ‘teeter-totter’ between ‘being’ a victim and culprit of Othering.

Bhabha’s (1994) notion of hybridity captures the importance of the “fluidity of identities as the formerly colonized are now a central part of the colonizing metropolis” (McKenna, 2011, p 389). By being both complicit in and victim to the process of Othering, non-Western globally mobile professionals occupy an ‘in-between’ space that develops “through which the meanings of cultural and political authority are negotiated” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 4). Hybridity therefore suggests that “the authority of the colonizer and the agency of the colonized are recast as
Ambivalence is important to this study and highlights the potential duality in our understandings of the Other. A clear demarcation of the Other and colonizer is therefore questioned. As Parades-Canilao (2006) contends, “the notion of ambivalence dissipates the colonizer’s accountability to the colonized, who are now ‘complicitious’ in their own subjection” (p. 8).

A postcolonial view would suggest that ‘non-Western’ globally mobile professionals have been appropriated by the global neoliberal system that is driven primarily by the West. As accounting professionals, they have become part of the ‘Western’ agenda – acting as global functionaries who service the interests of global capitalism. However, Bhabha (1994) reminds us that that mimicry is key in capturing the ambivalence that may be inherent in colonial discourse as the colonized is reproduced, “almost the same, but not quite” (p. 86). Therefore, while ‘non-Western’ globally mobile professionals may seek to mimic the global neoliberal discourse, and arguably engage in a form of Othering, they may continue to be victims of the process of Othering. The ‘non-Western globally mobile professional situated in the UAE may therefore be situated in an ‘in-between’ or liminal space, “in which there is continual process of movement and interchange between different states” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1998, p. 130).

Participants, we think, appear to be negotiating their position between being complicit to the process of Othering, whilst simultaneously being victim to it.

Further, when considering the idea that UAE’s foreign workers move to this particular context, Lan (2011) suggests that people’s global mobility is an “ongoing process of negotiating their access to economic, political, cultural and social resources embedded in the movements and interconnections between places” (p. 3). Using Bourdieu’s (1984), concepts with respect to
migration, Lan (2011) suggests that only if migrants have sufficient economic capital, may be able to convert this into cultural and/or social capital to gain prestige in their new location.

**METHODOLOGY**

This paper draws on 30 interviews from a larger study investigating the career experiences of professional accountants from the non-West who self-initiate expatriation to the UAE. In-depth interviews provide an opportunity to gather descriptions of “deep meaning of experience in the participants’ own words” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 55). The specific value of this methodological approach is that it supports a more personalized account of participants’ expatriate experiences within the UAE. Consequently, rather than a specific set of questions, an interview agenda was used based on the study’s research objectives. While the initial study focused on participants’ lived experiences related to their professional career in the UAE, the nature of the interviews also allowed for other themes to emerge. This type of interviewing therefore provides a broad range of questioning and exploration and enables participants to raise their own issues related to their expatriation experience.

Through a snowball sampling strategy (Seidman, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994), the larger study was conducted with a group of non-West SIE accountants who hold a professional designation in the field of accounting (e.g. CA, CPA, ACCA) and are working and residing in the UAE. The participants in the sample were from three countries in South East Asia: India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. It is important to note that three of the participants have dual nationality – Canadian, British and United States respectively. Majority of the participants (n=17) worked in public accounting, or professional services firms with the remainder working in ‘industry’ (n=13), occupying positions that support the internal accounting and/or finance
departments of the organization. As Table 1 indicates, participants’ job titles greatly differ based on the type of organization they work for. Job titles among public accounting firms tend to be standardized, however in ‘industry’ these titles vary depending on the organization. The sample comprises of participants who occupy roles that include Partner, Senior Manager, Manager, Senior Auditor, CFO, Director of Finance, and Head of Financial Reporting. This is significant for the study as it demonstrates that participants occupy roles that enable them to be functionaries of global capital. With respect to the length of time living in the UAE, participants’ ranged from 6 months to 28 years, and are within the ages of 25-56+ years (see Table 1 for a detailed breakdown of the sample). In order to retain confidentiality and anonymity, all participant and organization names have been removed.

All interviews were transcribed verbatim and then analyzed using NVivo, a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) tool. A template analysis (King, 2004) was then used facilitate the development of themes. Through the use of “tree nodes” provided by NVivo, hierarchy coding was conducted whereby groups of similar nodes are clustered together to produce more general nodes (King, 2004). Drawing from both the current literature and the findings itself, template analysis therefore allowed for the systematic identification of key themes as expressed by the participants.

Given that the study was initially designed for another purpose, it was important to ‘mine’ the data for new ‘gems’ that reflected a neocolonial discourse (McKenna, 2011, p. 391). According to Lévi-Strauss (1966), “the rules of the game are always to make do with ‘whatever is at hand’, that is to say with a set of tools and materials which is always finite and is also heterogeneous” (p. 17). It is felt that this bricolage approach of interpreting the existing data through a neocolonial analytic frame adds richness to the study’s findings.
FINDINGS

Subjected to ‘Othering’:

On the surface, the UAE seems to inhabit much of the characteristics of Bhabha’s (1994) ‘Third Space’, where there appears to be a mutuality of cultures with no imposed hierarchy:

It’s a mixed culture. And, and you can see the Asian culture as well, as well as the cultures of the other countries. And as I mentioned, India and Pakistan has some sort of the same culture, and in India, you know there are different places in India where, which most parts are completely different with the other part of India. So you can find many cultures here in Dubai. I mean, you can see India, you can see Bangladeshis, you can see the European people, you can see Americans; so it’s sort of a mixed bag of cultures (M4).

It’s like working in the United Colours of Benetton (laughs)….You see people from all over the world (M7).

Digger deeper into this discourse reveals the presence of racial hierarchies within the working environment. For instance when discussing his experience during the recruitment and selection process, M23, states: “so there is a bit of discrimination that happens...like in the negotiation stages and all”. This idea is echoed by M8 who explicitly explains that during his time working in the UAE he has experienced a racial “pecking order”. This idea is further illustrated in the following quote:

But I think, based on my experiences with various clients that we had, you know, it was very evident: it was the British – or the white expats first, and then you know locals, who are often put in a position, not necessarily based on merit, and then it was, then it just filtered down there – the Indians and Pakistanis, and Philippinos, and so on (M8).

M8 also noticed an emphasis on Western experience as indicated in the following statement:

We were pitching for work, and there was an emphasis on putting more White people, White senior people on the proposal... It wasn’t explicitly said, but you know, it was unspoken – everyone knew why this was being done....So yeah, there is definitely and emphasis on Western experience (M8).
The presence of a racial hierarchy within the fabric of UAE’s culture therefore manifests itself into ‘non-Western’ SIEs’ career progression:

There, there are just too many glass ceilings. I mean, there’s the White thing, there’s the local thing. There’s the language. And there are just too many things and I think it’s all sub-conscious (M8).

M8’s account illustrates not only the preference for Western experience, but demonstrates how the Other is subjected to representations regarding the perceived (in)competency of these individuals. It is important to point out that during their accounts, participants expressed that this form of Othering was not explicit, but implicit in the discourse. For example, M9 states:

…there are differences. As per my gossip and information, from my friends, there is definitely differences based on nationality – locals are paid much more than the expatriates, and also the UK nationals, in some cases are paid more.. so…it’s not disclosed (M9).

While it may not be explicit, participants still ‘feel’ Othered. When trying to account for reasons that may be related to his lack of career mobility M1 states:

…maybe my nationality…because, umm, I, in my firm, the top management is European, mainly Brits, so they prefer advancing umm, Brit people…(M1).

While some participants explain the presence of a racial hierarchy in negative terms, one participant attempted to explain this in a rather neutral fashion:

I mean, I would say that umm – I caught on this, to the explorers when they were exploring the world initially. So if the Dutch got somewhere first, or the Britishers – I believe that the European market infiltrated the UAE earlier here – so that’s why they have – they are well positioned, they have the history, they have the precedence, and that’s why they’re all in key positions. So yeah, in that sense, from a historical point of view… it’s just easier, I mean, if you have people that have been – you come across a lot of British nationals that have been in the UAE or GCC for 20 years, so of course when they’re hiring, they’ll always have that soft spot for British nationals, I mean, plus it makes things easier – if I’m working with someone, I’d rather have someone that works in the same professional environment that I have – and knows how things are done, and it just makes things progress smoothly (M7).
Here M7 seems to be aware of the possibility of racial hierarchies, but seems to ‘rationalize’ it through a neocolonial discourse whereby British and Dutch workers came to the UAE before many other nationalities. The use of M7’s explorer metaphor is particularly relevant to this discussion as it may suggest the perpetuation of a neocolonial discourse whereby the West’s influence on the UAE seems to make sense given that they ‘infiltrated’ the UAE earlier.

While the accounts thus far have demonstrated how participants experience a sense of ‘being’ Othered mainly due to their nationality, it is important to highlight that some individuals also felt that simply being an expatriate in the UAE was also perceived as ‘being less than’ the local Emirati population:

I would say we are a working class with no particular rights…and with no citizenship benefits, let’s say, with no social security – nothing. It’s just a working class, so we are given a good environment to live, follow strict regulations, and we’re here to work (M1).

…everyone’s presence there is dictated by work, because they are all there to work…the structure of society, and the fact that everyone there is on a work visa…you know, and there is nobody – like everyone there is there from their home country, on a work visa. That’s their sole reason for existence (M8).

In this manner, we argue that the experience of ‘being’ the Other may not only be attributed to one factor, such as race, but could even be extended to an individual’s status in a given country. This finding is reinforced by Gramsci (1971) who argues that subordination should not be reduced to a “single relation”, rather as, an “intersectionality of the variations of race, class, gender, culture, religion, nationalism, and colonialism functioning within an ensemble of socio-political and economic relations” (cited in Green, 2011, p. 400).

Participants also expressed their frustration with not being able to be globally mobile to facilitate their career development. Due to their nationality (i.e. Indian and/or Pakistani), individuals described how they have experienced difficulties with trying to move to countries in the ‘Western’ world:
….and given the situation – the visa situation, the immigration in the UK, it is again difficult to move at the moment, so I would say that it would only be this country – the UAE or India.. no other place.. I mean, because London is somewhere where any finance would want to be… having experience working in London, but right now it is difficult to get a visa there, so it is definitely a barrier, yes (F6).

Even though these professionals are a highly skilled group of individuals, being “globally mobile” may therefore be more of rhetoric than a reality. Contrary to Beaverstock’s (2005) assertions, they may not be able to “extend their habitats from the world cities to other locations” (Beaverstock, 2005, p. 248). According to Mezzadra and Neilson (2012), borders can be seen as “devices that obstruct or block global flows” (p. 59). Restrictions on working visas primarily targeted to ‘non-Western’ nationalities suggest that the border creates a “certain intensification of political and even existential stakes that crystallize relations of domination and exploitation, subjection and subjectivation, power and resistance” (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2012, p. 60). We argue that individuals ‘feel’ Othering due to restrictions on working visas that make them feel ‘less than’ their ‘Western’ counterparts.

**Complicit in the process of ‘Othering’:**

Developmental discourse is one of the most prevalent tropes within colonial discourse.

When participants were asked whether they had any reservations about moving to the UAE they expressed concerns with respect to whether their career development in the UAE would be put on a stand-still because of the ‘developing’ or ‘inferior’ nature of its labor market;

…it was initially, because moving to the Middle East, you know, I had heard from people and all that Middle East experiences are not counted well in the professional world, in Indian markets, or even in the Western markets, because work over here, you know, there isn’t any laws or regulations to govern, no accounting bodies as such (M23).

Further, many participants discussed the need for the UAE to ‘model’ itself on the West:

So I mean I think that’s one thing that’s done better in North America – they’re very good at the training and the feedback…Umm, which I think is lacking over here (M5)
In my profession there is something which you call International Financial Reporting Standards based on which you have to do your accounts. So if they do not do their accounts according to those professional standards and we say, you are doing something wrong – do it right... but because it is this part of the world, if there is no regulatory authority, there is no law... well I mean, there is company law, there is law in this country, but since there is no authority that imposes them to umm apply a particular standard, then they’re like “whatever – we don’t need to care, just give us our audited financials as they are and we’ll show them to the bank and we’ll move on from there” (M3).

It may be the case then that the ‘non-Western’ globally mobile professional have expressed the importance of rules and the need to have a standardized accounting body because this type of discourse is embedded within neoliberal Western thinking. It is argued that this in itself may be a form of mimicry where the ‘non-West’ SIE seeks to adhere to a set of rules. Inherent within this discourse are Said’s (1978) Orientalist assumptions regarding the UAE as being somewhat backward because their lack of laws means that they ‘cut corners’.

The interviews therefore suggest an emphasis on the “Western way” (Jack et al., 2011, p. 286) and the comparisons made by participants with the West depict an attitude, “where the West is always the ideal against which Others are judged” (McKenna, 2011, p. 401). As McKenna (2011) argues, this is an example of how the development discourse of neoliberalism becomes infused with colonial discourse. Participants expressed a desire for the UAE to mimic the West with respect to stricter rules within their profession and better working practices. Perhaps this reflects a ‘false universalism’ (Said, 1993) that imposes a particular view of the world on to the Other.

While the interviews suggest the persistence of a neocolonial discourse in the construction of the Other, it is important to note that, it is the Other (i.e. the ‘non-Western’ SIE) who perpetuates this discourse:

Right so, umm, I think there is a lot more room for growth here, provided you’re willing to umm, deal with people, at a much… how do I say this – the problems you would be
dealing with will be at a much lower level. So things that appear very straightforward to you, may not be as straightforward to them (M5).

There’s a lot of things that when we go to the market in the US, we don’t need to educate our clients on what these services are, and how they add value for the firm. Over here, because the market is not that developed, we have to educate the client on a) what is important – why is this important to you, and how are we best suited to provide you with these services. So in that sense it is more of a developing environment (M7).

I mean, I was competing with people who, I don’t know, I felt they weren’t much competition. So it was good at the beginning, but then you know, once I reached a middle stage, you know, you want to be challenged, right. So you know, that was frustrating….Because there wasn’t much competition, people weren’t striving to do more – they were complacent – there was definitely complacency (M8).

Embedded within this developmental discourse appears to be Orientalist assumptions. For instance, by referring to colleagues as ‘them’, M5 discursively distances himself from the Other and assumes a superior position. In addition, M7 and M8 each make assumptions regarding the competency and complacency of other workers in the UAE. Using Said’s (1978), binary opposition terminology, these instances demonstrate how Others are perceived as inferior, inadequate and incompetent. In particular, it seems as though the way in which participants account for their experience in the UAE ‘gives’ the non-West an identity (Said, 1978). The ‘non-Western’ globally mobile professional therefore constructs a representation of the UAE based on a “web of racism, cultural stereotypes, political imperialism” (Said, 1978, p. 27). The creation of the ‘Orient’ (i.e. the UAE), seems to be a fiction that they (the ‘Other’) themselves perpetuate.

A further unpacking of participants’ accounts also reveals how participants perpetuate the process of Othering, but this time, do it onto themselves:

…but to be frank with you, I never imagined myself as a Partner at ****, my, my target was a senior really, and I went to Dubai saying I’d become a senior, and then move back to Pakistan. (Laughs)…. (M3)
I mean, I also notice that many people who grew up in India, or Pakistan, or the Philippines, there was often a sense of, almost like intimidation, which would affect their interaction with the other, with those people. So, it almost reinforced that position, you know. So that is actually quite common too. Because, I don’t know what the reasons for that are, but there was definitely a noticeable intimidation (M8).

I think that if you are a Westerner, you, again, I don’t want to generalize…but if I probably studied in a Western school, I would have had a better communication skill-set than what I have today. So, I think it does make a difference – if you are able to express yourself better… umm, so again, I cannot generalize that Asians will not have that, but I can attribute that – that communication skills, I definitely lack (F6).

Here we see examples of the acceptance by the Other of being the Other; or in Said’s terms, the acceptance of being an ‘Oriental’ as defined by the colonial Other. It seems that M3 has accepted ‘being’ the Other – as someone who may not have been capable of achieving Partner status in his Firm. Similarly, M8 expresses how people from the ‘non-West’ almost feel “intimidated”, or inferior (Said, 1978) based on their race. In F6’s case, she accepts this discourse:

…but in terms of expressing things, I really find that, because there are, like I said a couple of nationalities in my office, and where I work, it makes a lot of difference with the way they communicate and the way I communicate… so (laughs), at times when a person has a Western accent but is not prepared for the meeting – the way he would put that across is way better than the way we would who have actually prepared and done all of the hard work (laughs)…(F6)

While participants discuss accounts of being subjected to ‘Othering’, it is also interesting to note that participants themselves engaged in ‘Othering’ – either targeted to others or themselves. This finding is significant for this study because it suggests that the construction of the Other is never static, and subalternity need not be reserved to race but “variations of race, class, gender, culture, religion, nationalism, and colonialism, functioning within an ensemble of socio-political and economic relations” (Green, 2011, p. 400).
DISCUSSION

A neocolonial analysis of the findings has revealed the presence of Orientalist tropes (Said, 1978) as formulated by the non-Western SIEs themselves. By frequently referring to their colleagues as ‘them’, participants discursively distanced themselves from the Other. They also made assumptions regarding the competency and complacency of other workers in the UAE. Using Said’s (1978), binary opposition terminology, these instances demonstrate how these individuals engage in a process of Othering, whereby Others are perceived as inferior, inadequate and incompetent.

Participants continued to engage in a form of Othering by describing the UAE as being ‘backward’ with respect to the country’s accounting regulations, and the need for the UAE to ‘mimic’ the West in terms of stricter rules within their profession. By being part of this ‘global elite’, within the context of neo-liberal capitalism, the way in which they perpetuate a development discourse suggests that these ‘systems of truth’ have become embedded within their way of interpreting their working experiences in the UAE. In this manner, the interviews suggest an emphasis on the “Western way” (Jack et al., 2011, p. 286) and the comparisons made by participants with the West depict an attitude, “where the West is always the ideal against which Others are judged” (McKenna, 2011, p. 401). As McKenna (2011) argues, this is an example of how the development discourse of neoliberalism becomes infused with colonial discourse. By expressing how it is important for the UAE to ‘mimic’ developed countries with respect to their accounting rules and regulations, participants appear to be emphasising the importance of the ‘Western’ way as being an ‘ideal’ state (Frenkel, 2008), thus perpetuating a development discourse regarding the importance of modernization. Specifically, an Orientalist reading identifies the ways in which participants engage in a process of Othering by positioning
either their working practices in the UAE, or other colleagues against a ‘Western’ or ‘best’ way (Frenkel, 2008). Even though these participants are all from the “non-West”, they perpetuate and oftentimes reproduce the neocolonial discourse of Othering, which suggests to us that Orientalist assumptions are not reserved simply for the “West”.

However, given the implicit and explicit racial hierarchicalization in the UAE, these individuals are also faced with barriers that their “Western” counterparts may not experience. For instance, participants discuss the presence of an implicit racial ‘pecking order’ within their organizations. They further discuss how they feel assumptions regarding their race may restrict access to client work. These experiences, it seems, are indicative of how participants may be victims to Othering. In this manner, the ‘non-Western’ globally mobile professional not only partakes in, but experiences a sense of Othering. Participants express a sense of ambiguity and ambivalence in these two experiences while occupying this ‘in-between’ space (Bhabha, 1994) as aspects of these individuals’ sense of self are being, “disordered and reordered in the process” (Leonard, 2010, p. 1248). The movement between ‘being’ subjected to and complicit in the process of Othering therefore suggests that the Other is not a static or a homogenous group. This idea is reinforced by Gramsci (1971) who, “never reduces subordination to a single relation but rather conceives subalternity as an intersectionality of the variations of race, class, gender, culture, religion, nationalism, and colonialism functioning within an ensemble of socio-political and economic relations” (cited in Green, 2011, p. 400). In this manner, we suggest that the construction of the Other is never static, but fluid, always changing based on contextual and relational influences.
REFERENCES


Table 1: Sample Characteristics

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1 Participants with dual nationality include those who are American/Pakistani, British/Indian, and Canadian/Pakistani.
2 Countries include, Canada, USA, UK, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, India, Egypt, Venezuela, Jamaica, Bahrain.
3 Job titles among ‘public’ accounting firms tend to be standardized. However in ‘industry’ these titles vary depending on the organization.