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# **PRIVILEGED MIGRATION**

DANES AND THEIR DOMESTIC WORKERS IN INDIA

**BY**  
**SANNA SCHLIEWE**

DISSERTATION SUBMITTED 2019



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**SANNA SCHLIEWE**



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DISSERTATION SUBMITTED

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# ENGLISH SUMMARY

## *Privileged Migration: Danes and their domestic workers in India*

The number of high skilled people moving between countries to work on temporary contracts is increasing. However, we know little about the phenomenological experiences and psychological dynamics of temporary migration. This thesis contributes to the limited literature in this field, with a particular focus on the psychological processes that take place when people from the Global North move to the Global South; a move that includes not only novel cultural encounters but also a rise in socioeconomic position. Based on extensive (phenomenological) fieldwork and a longitudinal interview study, the project explore how privileged migration is experienced and negotiated in everyday encounters between expatriates and local domestic workers in India. Furthermore, the complex dialogical relationship between the expatriates' subjective experiences and the sociocultural settings of which they are part is illuminated through cultural psychology theory.

The thesis consists of an introduction to privileged migration, an explanation of the research design and cultural psychology theory, followed by four articles (Chapters 4-7). In Chapter 4 embodied ethnography is presented as a method to investigate expatriates' affective- and sensory experiences during migration, and it can thus provide additional insight into the phenomenon of privileged migration. In Chapter 5, to get close to the concrete (spatial and temporal) dimensions of expatriate everyday life, the Mobile Life-World Map is proposed as a useful conceptual tool. With this in hand, it becomes clearer how and why integration into the local society is often difficult for expatriates and how and why other expatriates so easily become ready-made friends (and with this, central mediators of novelty). In Chapter 6 it is described how Danes employ a range of strategies (e.g., leveling) to sustain the experience of themselves as (morally) good persons when placed in the novel (and highly ambiguous) privileged position of employers of domestic staff in India. In Chapter 7 the expatriate community's collective sharing of staff and social representations is outlined. An informal system of inheriting domestic workers exist in Delhi that seems to keep certain social norms quite stable over generations of expatriates in spite of active individual negotiations of this informal practice.

Ultimately, privileged migration may be pictured as a (liminal) situation in which the usual norms are loosening up. However, rather than a move away from pre-existing norms, this change may be more due to a selective adaptation of additional norm systems over the time of the posting, e.g. norms from the local expatriate community, the local (Indian) society, and norms related to the temporariness of the sojourn (minor-moral holidays).

The concluding section provides suggestions on how this novel knowledge may be used in applied settings.

# DANSK RESUME

## *Privilegeret migration: danskere og deres hushjælpere i Indien*

Antallet af højtuddannede folk der rejser ud i verden for at arbejde på midlertidige kontrakter er stigende, men vi har ikke meget viden om de udstationeredes oplevelser eller de psykologiske dynamikker i privilegeret migration. Denne afhandling bidrager til den begrænsede litteratur på feltet, med fokus på de psykologiske processer der er tilstede når mennesker rejser fra det globale Nord til det globale Syd; en rejse der ud over nye kulturelle møder også indebærer et skift til en (ny) og højere socioøkonomisk position. Ved hjælp af et større fænomenologisk feltarbejde og longitudinale interviews undersøges det hvordan privilegeret migration opleves og forhandles i hverdagslivets møder mellem udstationerede og deres lokale hushjælpere i Indien. Den komplekse dialogiske relation, der er mellem de udstationeres subjektive oplevelser og de socio-kulturelle kontekster de er en del af, belyses ved hjælp af kultur psykologisk teori.

Afhandlingen består af en introduktion til privilegeret migration, en beskrivelse af forskningsdesignet og den kultur psykologiske teori, samt fire efterfølgende artikler (Kapitel 4-7). I Kapitel 4 bliver embodied ethnography præsenteret som en metode til at undersøge udstationeredes affektive - og sanselige oplevelser under deres udstationering, hvilket kan give yderligere indsigt i de psykologiske processer i privilegeret migration. For at komme helt tæt på de (rumlige og tidslige) dimensioner af hverdagslivet under udstationering foreslås the Mobile Life-World Map i Kapitel 5 som et brugbart begrebmæssigt redskab. Med dette i hånden bliver det tydeligt hvordan det kan være svært for udstationerede at integrere sig i det lokale samfund, og hvorfor andre udstationerede så nemt bliver til ready-made friends, og i dette centrale oversætter af alt det nye som den udstationerede møder i Indien. I Kapitel 6 bliver det beskrevet, hvordan danskerne benytter en række strategier (f.eks. leveling) til at fastholde en oplevelse af sig selv som (moralisk) gode personer, på trods af at de nu er placeret i en ny (og tvetydig) privilegeret position som arbejdsgiver for hushjælpere i Indien. Kapitel 7, beskriver hvordan lokale hushjælpere og sociale repræsentationer bliver delt kollektivt i gruppen af udstationerede. Der eksisterer et uformelt system, hvor ansatte arves (inheriting) fra hinanden, som ser ud til at vedligeholde specifikke sociale normer omkring det at have hushjælpere i Delhi, ret stabilt over generationer af udstationerede, på trods af at de enkelte udstationerede aktivt forhandler disse uformelle praksisser.

Ultimativt kan privilegeret migration ses som en (liminal) situation, hvor der sker en forandring med de udstationeres norm system, uden at det dog forgår som en bevægelse væk fra deres eksisterende normer, forandringen skyldes rettere en selektiv adaptation af ekstra normsystemer –således at normer fra det lokale privilegerede migrant miljø (og indiske samfund) såvel som normer relateret til det at rejse midlertidigt (minor-moral holidays) bliver inkluderet over tid.

Afslutningsvis kommer afhandlingen med nogle forslag til, hvordan vi kan bruge denne nye viden i praksissammenhænge.



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# PROLOGUE

The purpose of this dissertation is two-fold. Firstly, the aim is to provide empirically sensitive descriptions of how Danes experience and negotiate becoming employers of domestic workers in India. The intention is to go behind dominant stereotypes and instead make qualified descriptions, from a first-person perspective, and to provide typologies and conceptualizations that are close to the expatriates' concrete everyday experiences. Secondly, this extensive empirical work ought to provide background for suggestions on how privileged migration can promote certain psychological dynamics central to expatriates' experiences and negotiations in their everyday life and encounters during their postings.





# CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

*We are not going to live like this for the rest of our lives. That is one hundred percent sure. This is how it is right now. Then [after this posting] we will be like we were before, where we might have to clean our own toilets. (...). [Now] you can take it as an experience. Just like when you go on vacation and stay at a very fancy hotel that is more expensive than you normally can afford, knowing that this is a luxury you can only give yourself for a brief period. (Anne, interview)*

The above citation comes from a Danish expatriate who was a little more than a year into her four- year stay in Delhi, where she had moved, accompanied by her family, for work. Her quote underscores some major themes related to the psychology of privileged migration; firstly, that individuals' experiencing it do not automatically welcome such sudden and dramatic gains of privilege. They first have to legitimize it. In the citation above, Anne notes that their current life is only temporary – afterwards they will again be who they had always been. She implies that how they are living now is not really comparable to who they really are. Discrepancies between the privileges related to being a Western expatriate in India and the Danes' (moral) dilemmas related to it, is a major theme in my study. Thus, privileged migration from the global North to the global South can be said to bring forth the *moral ecology* (Brinkmann, 2004) of human life – so often forgotten in psychology. This is the perspective that the human world has moral properties that (implicitly) guide our actions. We will see how the Danish expatriates' everyday encounters with staff are deeply shaped by a moral unease related to the inequalities existing between domestic workers and employers in India. This is part of a larger (global), unequal power distribution with which the Danes don't feel comfortable, but of which they are nevertheless now a visible part. Naturally, expatriates have to find strategies to deal with it.

Secondly, in the citation above, Anne uses the frame of temporariness to legitimize their current lifestyle, interpreting it in terms of an experience; an experience that you are allowed to enjoy as it is so rare, even though in other situations one might consider four years an extended period of time and not an exceptional event. This points to the important case that the temporary (work) contract within privileged migration positions expatriates in a certain symbolic relationship to the host society, thereby creating a different relationship to the migrants' current experiences and encounters than those of the settlers traditionally in focus within migration research.

Thirdly, what is not possible to deduce from the interview quote in itself, but will be unfolded below, is that a community of foreign peers have been a central part for Anne's negotiation (and interpretations) of her novel privileges. Foreign peers not only provide generous support for the arriving Danes, but also concrete advice on how best

to conduct expatriate employer practices in relation to domestic staff – a work arena with very little official regulation in India. Underlying such advice are social norms and representations created over generations of expatriates in Delhi. Thus, the individual negotiations of novelty and staff encounters do not occur in a vacuum.

Until recently, psychology has not focused much on the above issues, which is strange considering the immense movement of people in our times. With globalization, the number of people travelling overseas for work is increasing and this is especially true for privileged migration (Levitan, 2018; Furnham, 2010). Privileged migration refers to the movement of well-educated migrants from stable economic backgrounds, who choose to move – more or less – voluntarily, motivated by the organizational needs of their workplace, individual career opportunities, personal interests (Amit, 2007), or their spouse's career trajectories. These immigrants – often referred to as *expatriates* – occupy a range of different job functions in areas such as diplomacy, business, academia, research, journalism, and development work and human aid. What links this diverse group is the fact that they are all temporary immigrants, living a transnational life between their countries of origin and the countries where they work.

This globally-mobile group of professional temporary migrants has emerged as a field of study within the last decades. However, it is only very recently that privileged migration had received attention in psychology. Research is now being conducted from a sociocultural- and cultural psychology perspective (Zittoun et al., 2018), this current doctoral work included. Cultural psychology provides a theoretical framework that can explore inter-cultural encounters in ways that go beyond the socio- cognitive and more simplistic acculturation models used in mainstream psychology. It emphasizes the complex processes of sense-making within migration that have been missing in traditional psychology (Schlieve et al., 2018; Märtsin & Mahmoud, 2012). According to cultural psychology, meaning making processes are the foundation for humans' higher psychological functions and can thus not be neglected (Valsiner, 2007). In other words, our common sense understandings of the world derives from such sense making processes (Bruner, 1990, 1986). In addition, we need to study human meaning making as it occurs in people's everyday life within the dialogical relationship between existing societal, historical, and material structures (Zittoun et al., 2013). It is not a matter of which level is most important – is not a question of either-or – but rather, it is a question of how these levels of analysis are inter-related. This means a focus on both subjective experiences as well as the social worlds in which they unfold, thus the research also crosses traditional borders within academic disciplines. To cite Nancy C. Much (1997):

*A cultural psychology is needed because neither psychology nor anthropology alone has covered a crucial region of psychological bedrock: the interpenetrations between social structures, cultural meaning systems and the lived personal experience that creates what we call “psychological organization” ( p. 65).*

I provide such an approach by combining ethnographic methods and psychological perspectives in this study. In the following, we will see how this combination can bring forth novel insights about privileged migration. Privileged migration is an understudied field within psychology, and it entails particular social representations (and normative ideas) among researchers as well as the people who migrate. Essentially, this is migration not only over national borders but also up the socioeconomic ladder. People moving to the Global South find themselves not only in economically better positions, but also with high status vis-a-vis the local population (Fechter & Walsh, 2010). Gaining such social status and economic privileges may require a form of legitimization that goes against common ideas of rich people as obsessed by status struggles and generally complacent about their wealth (Sherman, 2017, pp. 24-25). Thus, according to Sherman (2017) such dynamics are largely overlooked in the social sciences, including contemporary expatriate research (Johnston, 2013). Yet, Erik Cohen already noted in 1977 that gaining novel privileges requires adaptation on the part of the expatriates:

*[...] ordinary people, who do not stand out at home suddenly come to entertain a status in the host society, owing to the colour of their skin, or their role, for which they are often not really prepared and to which they may find difficulties in getting accustomed. (p.23)*

Cohen sees this new gain of privileges as a major defining characteristic of expatriate communities. He argues that the struggles related to this are exemplified in examples of accompanying wives complaining about servants and their troubles with being in the novel position of “the lady of the house.”

In general, the movement of people from affluent societies to developing countries creates new platforms for inter-cultural contact and friction. The case of Danes moving to India is a particularly illustrative case. The dilemmas they have to navigate in relation to privileged migration comes clearly into the foreground due to the striking difference between their prior life in Denmark and their present one in India. Currently, only few (mostly elite) households in Denmark have domestic workers (such as au pairs) employed (Liversage et al., 2013). The adults in this study did not grow up in a family with full-time domestic workers, nor had they really reflected upon what such relationships entail before coming to India<sup>1</sup>. In general, public discourses in Denmark disregard having full time domestic workers, or anything that could resemble an unequal “servant-master” relationship. The exception to this is the occasional baby sitter, or housecleaner<sup>2</sup>. In contrast, in Delhi domestic workers is the norm among upper

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<sup>1</sup> The exception being one family with prior experience with au pairs. However, besides being prepared for the (mutual) work such a work relation can entail, this family found their novel position just as foreign and challenging as my other informants.

<sup>2</sup> Hiring a cleaner (two to four times a month) is increasingly portrayed in Danish media as a great solution for overburdened dual working couples with small children.

middle class Indians (and expatriates). Moreover, Denmark is a small, affluent society with a well-developed social well-fare system<sup>3</sup> – a major difference to the enormous divide found between wealth and poverty in Delhi. We also find these two nations at opposite poles regarding labor regulations; the strong traditions for labor regulations in Denmark and the informal (and scarcely regulated) sector of domestic work in India. Accordingly, the move from Denmark to India involves a confrontation with enormous class divisions and privileges which manifest themselves in the expatriates' overseas homes, and more specifically, in their everyday encounters with domestic staff.

## 1.1. RESEARCH QUESTION

This leads to the main research question:

How do Danish expatriates experience and negotiate becoming employers of domestic workers in India?

This broad and open-ended question is explored from different analytical and theoretical angles in my four articles (in Chapters 4-7) – from discussions of how to conduct research on privileged migrants' experiences, to an investigation on the individual and collective negotiation of this novel privilege and the moral conflicts it entails.

In addition, in the introduction and conclusion of this thesis, I try to combine and extend some of the overall themes of my research articles, by drawing on the following meta-questions:

What can we learn from the Danes' encounters and negotiations with novelty – about the psychology of privileged migration – more generally? How can this knowledge be useful in interventions aimed at expatriates?

## 1.2. STRUCTURE OF DISSERTATION

The rest of the introduction (Chapter 1) will provide important background information and a selected literature review. In Chapter 2, the theoretical framework is outlined followed by, in Chapter 3, an in-depth presentation of the research design and field site. Next come Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 containing the main articles of the thesis:

Chapter 4: Schlieve, S. (Accepted) Embodied ethnography in psychology: Learning Points from expatriate migration research, Culture & Psychology.

Chapter 5: Schlieve, S. (2018). The Mobile Life-World Map: A dialogical tool for understanding expatriates. In S. Schlieve, G. Marsico, & N. Chaudhary (Eds.), Cultural psychology of intervention in the

---

<sup>3</sup> Although, changes have been made within this system the last decades, and the percentage of people, living within the lower economic range in Denmark is on the rise.

globalized world (pp. 223-244). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Chapter 6: Schlieve, S. (2017). Resisting inequality but loving those cheap ironed shirts: Danish expatriates' experiences of becoming employers of domestic staff in India. In N. Chaudhary, P. Hviid, G. Marsico & J. Villadsen (Eds.), *Resistance in everyday life. Constructing cultural experiences* (pp. 181-201), Singapore: Springer.

Chapter 7: Schlieve, S. (Accepted). Inheriting domestic workers among expatriates in India: A study of norm transmission and negotiations, *Papers on Social Representations*.

Chapter 8 ends the thesis with some concluding remarks and suggestions for future directions.

## **1.3. BACKGROUND**

### **1.3.1. DANES IN INDIA**

India has attracted a growing number of foreign migrants since it opened its borders to the global market in the 1990s (Grover, 2018a), but the exact number of Danish migrants in India is difficult to estimate. The number of people who signed up with the Danish Foreign Ministry from 2013 to 2015 was around 250 each year, although this number does not at all reflect the actual number, as signing up is voluntary (the Danish Embassy in Delhi, personal communication). However, Danish settlement in India is not new. The two countries have a shared history. Denmark ran two small scale trading posts through its East Indian Company for approximately 200 years; Tranquebar (1620-1845) in Tamil Nadu and Serampore (1755 - 1845) in West Bengal (Jørgensen, 2014; Aalund & Rastén, 2010). In general, it is possible to trace some of the many historical continuities between contemporary expatriate practices and former colonial living (Fechter, 2010; Fechter & Walsh, 2010). However, in Denmark, these trading posts have not been part of the public collective memories until very recently (Andersen, 2017; Bricet, 2012).

Looking at contemporary Danish expatriates relocating to Delhi, much has happened in the organizational structures the last couple of decades. Expatriates are no longer the exclusive elite they once were. Within the diplomatic force, the lavish expatriate packages have been cut down. Thus, although diplomats still receive benefits such as free housing, schooling, and shipping of furniture, the general structures and economy around postings abroad are changing. They may be appointed for shorter time periods to avoid the need for accompanying families, and local contracts are more frequently used with young professionals (Levitan et al., 2018; Hindman, 2013; Walsh, 2008).

Furthermore, the accompanying spouse is not anymore only an incorporated wife (Callan & Ardener, 1984) a (non-working) spouse supporting the working husband and his employing organization, for decades during postings across the world. The accompanying spouse is now more often also male (Cangia, 2018), working during the posting or only taking a temporary break from work-life. Consequently, expatriate communities today consist of people within a wider range of salary levels, work trajectories, and levels of organizational support (Savinetti, 2018) than at Cohen's (1977) time. Nevertheless, what is central for this thesis is that Danes (and other international expatriates) moving to the Global South still experience a considerable raise in social and economic status – including becoming employers of domestic workers. It should be noted though, that the Danes' privileged position in India not only emerges in relation to the Indian society. Danes also get easier access to the political (and elite) scenes of Danish society – due to their posting. For example, Danes living in Delhi are typically invited to participate in festivities at the Danish embassy, where such dignitaries as Danish ministers may be present.

### 1.3.2. DOMESTIC WORK AND DOMESTIC WORKERS IN INDIA

There exists a rich global literature on domestic workers and their employers (e.g., Anderson, 2000; Parreñas, 2000; Adams & Dickey, 2000) including a growing number of studies in India (e.g., Grover et al., 2018; Barau et al., 2017, 2016; Neetha & Palriwala, 2011; Mattilia, 2011, 2009; Ray & Qayum, 2009; Frøystad, 2003). These studies show that domestic work in India occurs in a grey and unregulated work sector of society. Although some regulation does exist (e.g., in terms of minimum wages in some professions) these are seldom enforced. Furthermore, in many spheres of society, boundary making in terms of class (and caste) is performed, including explicit displays of hierarchy between domestic workers and employers (Dickey, 2000; Dumont, 1970). In upper-class Indian households, several people may be employed to take care of a variety of tasks related to the household (e.g., car washer, staircase cleaner, house cleaner, cook, gardener, etc.), although all-around maids who take on a variety of tasks themselves are becoming increasingly popular. Only a few studies on expatriates and their domestic workers in India exist, but Kidder (2000) concludes – on the basis of her own small scale study and personal experiences in South India in the 1960s – that there is not a clear-cut linear relationship in power asymmetries between expatriates and their staff. Although expatriates no doubt have a large socioeconomic advantage, they are just as dependent on their domestic staff for local knowhow (e.g., regarding language, traditions, and the everyday running of a household in India), as the staff are on the expatriates for money and employment. Furthermore, a recent study in Delhi (Grover, 2018b) illustrates that the domestic workers working for expatriates tend to be more educated and less poor than many of their colleagues. A high level of English is a requirement for most jobs within the international environment. Thus, the expatriate households can be seen as a particular job niche – or career trajectory – within the domestic work sector.

### 1.3.3. EXPATRIATE TERMINOLOGY AND STEREOTYPES

The *expatriate* terminology is often criticized – from the point of view of critical schools of thought – for positioning Westerners as *if* their migration trajectories belongs to a particular form of migration or class of migrants *above* other migrants, and for its association to White people relocating from the Global North to the Global South (Grover, 2018a). However, I agree with Cohen (1977), who says that in contrast to other migrants, expatriates often *gain* rather than lose status due to their migration (p.22), and many of them have potentially wide-ranging influence in their global workspaces (Savinetti, 2015). Thus, from my research perspective it would not make sense to try to take out this privilege. Thus, I maintain the expatriate terminology in my study. Moreover, the term expatriate (or expat) is commonly used by expatriates themselves in their everyday conversation (Foote, 2017) – also among the Danes in Delhi. The representations associated to this terminology themselves become interesting from a psychological perspective. Originally, expatriate refers to the Latin *ex patria* – someone who lives outside their country of origin (Fechter, 2007). Today, stereotypical images of expatriates flourish in media and lay representations of expatriate life abroad as being linked with luxurious segregation or debauchery (Fechter, 2010; Schlieve, 2009; Walsh, 2008). In short, the stereotypes link with the image of people losing their morality due to their expatriation and/or of living a life that is strongly associated to colonial times. Accordingly, some expatriates actively resist the normative association of these stereotypes (see Fechter, 2007), e.g., categorizing themselves as “anything but a typical expatriate.”

### 1.3.4. EXPATRIATE COMMUNITIES

Expatriate communities are difficult to grasp analytically and literally; their members constantly change in accordance with the rhythms of their contracts, while the community’s formal infrastructure exists more permanently in structures such as international schools, clubs, organizations, and online networks. Adding to the muddiness is the case that expatriate communities are based in very different settings and countries, and consist of a variety of people and subgroups. The consequences of this in terms of method and theory when we want to understand the expatriate experience is a theme I take up in Chapter 5. Here I will outline what we may be able to say on a more general level about such complex and diverse communities. Cohen (1977) provided an initial sociological conceptualization of expatriate communities that works in the way it highlights major similarities in expatriate communities, rather than their many differences. Underscoring a potential function of these social networks that I have found to be much in line with my findings, Cohen points out that: “*The strangeness of the foreign environment is the key element in the expatriate’s experience as well as the principal problem with which he and his community have to cope*” (1977, p. 15). Cohen divides the strangeness that the expatriates are collectively up against into three dimensions. One dimension is related to the rupture inherent in the change of sociocultural setting, when the expatriates’ taken-for-granted assumptions are shattered. Another dimension is a normative dimension, wherein the expatriate may find the expectations of the

host unacceptable or even repulsive. Lastly, Cohen posits a social dimension that highlights the fact that the expatriate is far from his or his prior social network and bonds. However, Cohen does not go concretely into how these international communities may help translate, protect, or enable the newcomer in their negotiations of this novelty. He mainly states that expatriates – like tourist returning to a hotel – can seek shelter in the familiarity of the expatriate environmental bubble. Furthermore, Cohen points to the transiency and privileged status of the expatriates as a defining characteristic of these communities. I will be discussing at length, and considerably expanding, these observations in this dissertation. For example, we will see how the existing expatriate community provides concrete guidance to make the unfamiliar familiar (Moscovici, 2008) for the newly arrived Danes.

#### 1.4 SELECTIVE REVIEW: EXPATRIATE EXPERIENCE

In the last decade, a wave of ethnographic research focusing on expatriates' everyday experiences has emerged within the social sciences – in anthropology and human geography in particular (e.g., Foote, 2017; Meir, 2015; Fechter, 2014; Hindman, 2013; Fechter & Walsh, 2012; Fechter & Hindman, 2011; Coles & Fechter, 2008). Characteristic for this research is that *expatriate experience* is situated in concrete everyday living. Places, bodies, and emotions are highlighted as central in expatriates' sense-making processes (e.g., Meir, 2015; Walsh, 2012; Fechter, 2007). This is in contrast to the earlier focus on transnational elite networks of global fluidity (e.g., Urry, 2000). In psychology, expatriates only get minor attention in traditional migration research, where emphasis is mainly on refugees and low-skilled migration (with international students being an exception). Furthermore, (embodied) sense-making processes is not in focus here, as the research is primarily conducted within a mainstream psychology framework. Instead, themes such as push and pull factors, personality, motivation, verbal and non-verbal communication, cultural learning, stress, coping and acculturation models, as well as social identification theories have been used to investigate the psychology of migration (e.g., Ward et al., 2001; Carr, 2010; Sam & Berry, 2006), just as the literature within international human resources primarily relates to predicting and reinforcing successful fulfillment of expatriate work assignments abroad, e.g., in terms of recruitment, intercultural training, intercultural management, and family adjustment abroad (e.g., Brewster et al., 2007; Black & Gregersen, 1991). Roughly stated, what binds all of these approaches together is that culture in most cases is defined as a kind of “variable”. Culture is seen as shared among a group of people and related to the specific context of people's upbringing, thereby “causing” them to act on, and experience, the world around them in certain ways (Heine, 2012).

In contrast, in cultural psychology, *culture* is not approached as something to which people belong. Rather, culture belongs to people as a semiotic device or meaning-making tool that enables people to understand, co-create, and act in their social, historical and material worlds (Valsiner, 2007). Thus, it is an approach that goes beyond the more static or simplistic models of mainstream psychology (e.g., Berry 1997, 2001), and it



emphasizes the complex processual nature of human sense-making (Valsiner, 2014). At present, novel sociocultural and cultural psychology studies on expatriate experience are appearing (e.g., Schlieve, 2009; Adams & Fleer, 2015). These studies provide a “human face of migration” (Favell et al., 2007) that differs considerably from traditional migration psychology and its mainstream theoretical frameworks and models. The new research approaches expatriate experience from a holistic and dialogical perspective, by focusing on the sociocultural dynamics as well as the subjective experiences of the migrant (Zittoun et al., 2018, p. 5.). Switzerland has recently served as a base for significant contributions in psychological research on mobile families within a major cross-disciplinary research project on highly skilled migrants in the country (see <https://nccr-onthemove.ch/>). These psychological studies on mobile families are mainly qualitative, including interviews and fieldwork. They take up issues such as the importance of “imagination” in migration (Cangia, 2018), the continuations of “familiar spheres of experience” in rupture situations (Levitan, 2018), mobile families symbolic boundary work (Cangia et al., 2018), family members’ different experiences of mobility (Zittoun et al., 2018), as well as discursive constructions of what mobile life (Cangia, 2017) and intercultural encounters (Levitan et al., 2018) entail. Below, I will go through selected parts of these studies alongside other relevant research, and I will do so in accordance with the three main concerns of the dissertation set out above, namely: 1) mediation of novelty; 2) the problem with privilege; and 3) the case of temporary and in-between migration.

#### 1.4.1. MEDIATORS OF NOVELTY

Contemporary research generally emphasizes how the expatriate experience of migration (and the encounter with novelty in this process) is dialogically created in relation to the current sociocultural environments. For example, employing organizations often lay the foundation for specific migration trajectories and for the promotion of certain “western international” living through such things as diplomatic packages and specific housing provisions (e.g., in expatriate-dense areas) (Savinetti, 2015, 2018, Hindman, 2012, 2013). Intervention agents such as culture trainers and relocation experts have also been examined, e.g., in relation to the representations of culture, they promote during pre- departure – and cultural training programs (Levitan et al., 2018), and ideas about how expatriates are to encounter *culture shock* (Cranston, 2016). The latter is a phase model of acculturation (Lysgaard, 1955; Oberg, 1960), long empirically and theoretically outdated within psychological migration research (Ward et al., 2001; Märtsin & Mahmoud, 2012). However, this model remains very influential, as it is widely used by intercultural trainers, and because the metaphors it provides are often used by expatriates to understand their cultural encounters experienced abroad (Fechter, 2007).

Expatriate online networks can be seen to promote certain discourses. For example, Cangia (2017) points out how emotional display rules by which relocation abroad should be seen as an “adventure” do not really reflect the actual situation for accompanying spouses going through difficult times in Switzerland. In general, metaphors,

discourses, and other symbolic elements shared in books, media, and through other means are understood within cultural and sociocultural psychology to be important aspects of people's everyday life that may be actively used in idiosyncratic ways during major transitions periods (Zittoun, 2006). This includes guidebooks (and blogs) that can become important parts of the traveler's imagination about the places they are about to visit (Gillespie, 2006). Along similar lines, advice for adapting to life in India as an expatriate can be found in an array of guidebooks for expatriates as well as in a plethora of international and national online groups. This is not a new phenomenon; the vast historical literature on servants and their colonial employers shows, among other things, that guidebooks on staff management were widely popular during the British rule of India (that ended in 1947) (e.g., Sen, 2009). For example, *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook* by F A. Steel and G. Gardiner came out in several editions from 1888-1921. It gives detailed advice on how to create an English home on Indian ground, and how to manage the often large number of staff and their various duties (Steel & Gardiner, 1898).

In addition, social resources, such as the people whom the migrant encounters, have been emphasized as important in terms of providing access to symbolic resources during transition periods, for example, in relation to the negotiation of cultural identity (Hale & de Abreu, 2010). Findings generally show that other foreigners often become the main network for expatriate migrants during their postings (e.g., Kirk et al., 2017; Ryan & Mullholland, 2014; Fecther, 2007; Cohen, 1977). Accordingly, formal and informal expatriate networks and organizations have been highlighted as key providers of practical, emotional, social, and identity support for many expatriates (e.g., Schlieuwe, 2009; Adelman 1988; Hindman, 2013). This is due in large part to the fact that expatriates in places like India – are often introduced to other expatriates early in their migration, and because expatriates often live in close proximity to other foreigners (Savinetti, 2015; Schlieuwe, 2009). Furthermore, expatriates often work at the same workplaces, frequent the same leisure spaces and share the same or related social circles (Beaverstock, 2002). This is even more the case in closed settings – such as organizational compounds – where expatriates live and work within the same walled space (Lauring & Selmer, 2009). Parts of the ethnographic literature describe the segregation that occurs in expatriate-dense settings from a normative perspective; treating segregation from the local communities as problematic from the outset, and as a sign of the expatriates' "exclusive or small world views", and supposed conscious distance taking to the local societies (e.g., Lundström, 2014; Smilye, 2010). Many of these researchers highlight how such community practices can become promoters of certain (mis)representations – e.g., in terms of fear of the local societies (e.g., Shut, 2015; Latvala, 2009; Hindman, 2012).

As mentioned above, Cohen (1977) was a pioneer in conceptualizing these foreign communities as functionally sharing the task of dealing with the strangeness of expatriate migration. Interestingly, Cohen forefronts internal friction occurring among expatriates. He does not find the cohesion he would normally suspect in communities

so dependent on each other. I emphasize this here, as in my prior research on accompanying expatriate spouses in Delhi (Schlieve, 2009) I have reached opposite findings. Namely, I found that strong mutual attraction, bonding, and helping emerge considerably frequently between foreign peers in expatriate communities in India. This might have something to do with the particular expatriate communities under study. Cohen builds his argumentation on a review of the expatriate literature at his time and from personal observations around the world. However, Fechter (2007) also points out the internal (status) struggles and boundary making that occurs between different members of sub-communities (e.g., diplomats v. development workers) in the city of Jakarta; a city with a considerable expatriate population that in many aspects bears resemblance to Delhi. Thus, such a discrepancy in these two sets of findings may rather be related to our different analytical foci. For example, in my prior (and current) research, I do not attend much to people's working life, including their professional relationships to colleagues. These are areas of everyday life where status struggles and other social strategies might be more pronounced.

#### 1.4.2. THE PROBLEM OF PRIVILEGE

Migration is commonly pictured as a major rupture where migrants have to re-establish (embodied) experiences of continuity and familiarity alongside novel aspects in their everyday life (Märtsin & Mahmoud, 2012). Such ruptures can be approached from different analytical angles, for example "identity" and "boundary work" (Cangiá et al., 2018; Märtsin, 2009; O'Sullivan-Lago & de Abreu, 2010; Schlieve, 2009; Fechter, 2007). Interestingly, that privilege within expatriate migration can also pose such a rupture (and challenge) has generally been overlooked within contemporary research with the exception of a small number of studies focusing on expatriate employers and their domestic workers, and a handful of studies on expatriates working within international development and humanitarian aid (e.g., Fechter, 2017, 2016a, 2016b, 2012). What characterizes recent studies on expatriates and domestic workers is that they are often based in intersectional- and critical approaches (e.g., Grover, 2018b; Johnston, 2013; Lundström, 2012; Latvala, 2009). Of particular interest is Johnston's (2013) largescale intersectional ethnographic study of Western expatriate employers and their (migrant) Philippine maids in Singapore. Her study underscores the ambivalence experienced by the Western employers, and how they use stereotypical images of local Chinese employers to position expatriates as better employers. The creation of a dichotomy between local and expatriate employers has also been found in other studies (e.g., Grover, 2018b). Furthermore, such ambivalence and feelings of guilt – has among Finish and Swedish expatriates – been analyzed in relation to discourses about equality in their home countries (Lundström, 2012; Latvala, 2009). In addition, ethnographic research on expatriates in the Global South usually (peripherally) mentions encounters with domestic workers as both challenging and rewarding. Challenging e.g. due to lack of shared common knowledge about the local setting and what to expect of domestic workers. Rewarding e.g. as the housework become outsourced the expatriates gain more time to do leisure (and family) activities in their free time (e.g. Savinetti, 2015; Gritti, 2018; Schlieve, 2009).

Fechter (2016a) takes up the moral labor inherent in expatriate migration in her latest studies, focusing primarily on international aid workers in Cambodia. She conceptualizes moral labor as when expatriates provide some kind of help (economic or otherwise) to the local population that goes above and beyond their professional work (e.g., paying hospital bills for the family members of their domestic workers). Interestingly, Fechter notes that such volunteer actions can include additional benefits for the expatriate in terms of giving them access to the local societies where they live. Furthermore, Fechter (2016b) investigates how children of aid workers understand and negotiate their experiences of privilege, concluding that (p. 504): *“being highly mobile, and having parents whose jobs’ mandate was directed at global justice, does not necessarily furnish young people with the reflective capacity or motivation that would allow different engagement with their position between privilege and poverty.”* She explains further that the children describe themselves as more aware of the issues of global inequality and poverty, due to their global-mobile experiences and their parents’ professions. However, simultaneously she found that those children attending international schools (and their parents) were avoiding (or bracketing) potentially disruptive subjects (e.g., corruption or human rights) in their interaction with their local (elite) classmates. Fechter (2012) also found a general sense of (moral) unease present among many aid workers, a feeling that was due to the apparent contrast between their motivation for doing aid work and the comfortable lifestyle and privileges they have. However, Fechter (2016a) explicitly creates a sharp distinction between such moral unease and emotional or mental experiences - she defines morality as primarily related to “questions of what is the right course of action when faced with morally complex situations” (p. 239). In this sense, a deeper psychological dimension or understanding of morality can be seen as missing in her work, although she has a very sharp analytical eye for the everyday negotiations and expatriate experiences generally – being a key scholar in this field within anthropology.

#### 1.4.3. TEMPORARY AND IN-BETWEEN

Expatriate communities (and expatriate everyday life) are often pictured and experienced as some sort of unreal or liminal sphere (Turner, 1974). Scholars, as well as expatriates themselves (e.g., Fechter, 2007; Foote, 2017) use metaphors and discourses of an “unreal” life, a “bubble life,” or other metaphors linked to an experience of existence that is not only in-between societies, but also in-between what people consider normal living (Amit-Taalai, 1998). As I outline in Chapter 4, the concept of liminality originates in Van Gennep’s (1961) work on a three-phase model of rites of passage – used to picture how people in traditional societies (African villages) go through three successive rites during traditional rituals, e.g., when reaching manhood. These are: 1) a symbolic and concrete separation from society; 2) a middle phase, where one no longer belongs to where one was before, but where one does also not yet belong to the place where one will be in the future, and; 3) the reincorporation into society again, e.g., as an adult man. Victor Turner became renowned for emphasizing the middle phase (limen) as “any kind of condition outside or on the peripheries of everyday life” (Turner,

1974, p. 47). In the literature, traveling is often pictured as a liminal situation along the lines of Turner's concept (e.g., Märtsin & Mahmoud, 2012; Boström et al., 2018; Tutenges, 2012; Beckstead 2012). For example, Foote (2017) emphasizes the freedom (including ideas about being above the local laws) experienced by his expatriate informants in Shanghai, as being a consequence of their liminal and privileged position in Chinese society. In general, there is a tendency to conceptualize Turner's liminality concept as a distinct space where people (e.g., tourists) are liberated from their former social positions, and thus can play with different roles and identities (Gillespie, 2006, p. 63), thereby linking such a liminal position to feelings of liberation and the absence of norms (Beckstad, 2012; Beckstead, 2010; Rudmin, 2010; Yeoh & Khoo, 1998). Furthermore, the imaginative, affective, and symbolic dimensions in relation to liminal experiences during travel and migration are emphasized within cultural psychology (Beckstead, 2012; Cangia, 2018). Interestingly the temporary time dimension – as a possible part in the creation of such liminal experiences – has only recently received attention within expatriate research. In regard to the time dimension, focus has generally been given to the consequences of such global temporary mobility, e.g., in terms of the fluidity of these communities (e.g., Cohen, 1977), the expatriates concrete work assignments (e.g., Breslin, 2018), as well as in relation to transitional experiences and issues such as belonging, home, kinship, family, and the development of identity in (repeatedly) mobile global living arrangements (e.g., Amit-Taalai, 1998; Adams & Fler, 2017, 2015; Korpela, 2016).

Two recent studies have taken up the temporary time dimensions from a sociocultural and psychological perspective. Levitan (2018) uses the concept of spheres of familiarity developed by Zittoun and Gillespie (2015) as a lens to analyze how mobile families create comparable (familiar) spheres of experiences over different global settings (as part of a serial mobile lifestyle). From another angle, Cangia (2018) attends to the experiences of immobility of international accompanying spouses during their partners' postings in Switzerland. These spouses are unable to make long-term plans for themselves due to the unpredictability of their partners' mobile and global work trajectories. In the literature, several studies highlight the challenges that accompanying spouses may encounter during their sojourns due to the particularities of this specific temporary migration position, such as issues of identity (Schliewe, 2009; Fechter, 2007), the ambivalence of being an accompanying partner (Arieli, 2007) and issues related to family dynamics (Walsh, 2008). This also highlights that migration experiences can be experienced very different by different family members (Zittoun et al., 2018). At the same time, expatriate migration is also commonly described as funneling experiences of freedom and new possibilities, also within (parts of) the everyday life of accompanying spouses (e.g., Grover, 2018a; Schliewe, 2009). This could be related to emotional display rules and discourses that picture travelling as an adventure, as mentioned above. Yet, the amount of literature describing (voluntary) travelling (at least in parts) as entailing liberating elements is so dominant that there may be more at stake. I will go into this below.

## 1.5. MY CONTRIBUTION

I contribute to the current research with a long-term qualitative psychological fieldwork, focusing directly on the psychological dimensions of expatriates' encounters with privileges in the Global South, using the case of Danes and domestic workers in India as an illustrative example. My work adds a processual dimension – as I include a longitudinal study – making it possible to follow the Danes' negotiations of their new everyday life and staff encounters. Furthermore, I approach expatriate experience, and their negotiations of novelty, from a dialogical perspective, taking into account both micro and macro aspects in their everyday life. I try to go as close as possible to their concrete experience. This includes proposing a conceptualization of liminality that takes the expatriates' embodied experiences (e.g., of unease) and the temporary nature of the migration trajectories into account. This focus on sense-making and dialogical processes makes my study quite different from traditional migration research within psychology. However, my study is also slightly different from the current sociocultural migration and travel research. This research tends to start out with a more clear-cut theoretical lens with which to interpret the empirical research. My line of inquiry is, however, initially based on a phenomenological exploration, rather than particular pre-defined constructs or theories. Only later in the research process do I take out particular elements from the broad cultural psychological framework to further discuss and develop my conceptualizations. These theoretical elements are presented in the next chapter

## CHAPTER 2. THEORY: CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY

As stated above, cultural psychology is an approach to human psychology emphasizing that: “*human experience and action cannot be explored independently from the cultural canvas on which they take form*” (Wagoner, Chaudhary, & Hviid, 2013, p. ix). Cultural psychology is not a coherent theoretical framework, but it consists of different theories that have emerged as fields of interest several times in the history of psychology (Valsiner, 2012). In my use of cultural psychology, I draw on Valsiner’s (e.g., 2007, 2014) semiotic understanding of *culture*. Here the cultural canvas refers to the fact that humans always use different kinds of meaning-making processes (e.g., signs) in their everyday life to understand, act on, and co-create their life-worlds. Thus, meaning making is embedded in all layers of human development and higher psychological functions (Valsiner, 2014, 2007). Like Valsiner, I identify the human psyche (and experience) as something both internal (and personal), as well as a part of a shared and collective reality – defined as individual (personal culture) and collective culture. Personal culture comes to be through the individual’s unique experiences (including both internalizations as well as externalizations) and encounters during their life trajectory, including idiosyncratic internalizations of dominating collective values (or moral horizons), as I go into below.

In my study, I work with two levels of analysis when presenting and discussing my empirical findings: 1) the individual experience of the expatriates, and 2) the psychological dynamics (the expatriates’ current material, social, and historical environment) enabling such experiences. Below, I present different concepts to refer to different aspects of these processes. First, in line with a phenomenological methodology, I focus directly on the individual experience, referring to the perspective of the individual expatriate, their descriptions of how everyday events, actions, and negotiations appear for them from the point of view of their concrete (embodied) first person perspective (e.g., Jackson, 1995, 1996). In doing so I am leaning toward Jackson’s description of the human lifeworld as: “*that domain of everyday, immediate social existence and practical activity, with all its habitually, its crises, its vernacular and idiomatic character, its biographical particularities, its decisive events and indecisive strategies*”. (1996, p. 7-8). I will go more into this in the method section below.

Secondly, I leave the first-person perspective to more broadly investigate the expatriates’ immediate material and social environment in Delhi, looking for what may have significance in relation to their present experiences. I am particularly interested in the psychological dynamics promoting (affording and constraining) typical experiences in the spatial and temporal field of expatriate life in Delhi. In a sense, like Kurt Lewin (1927), I am looking after “general laws of human conduct that are unique – [and] conditionally bound to the present situation” (in Cabell & Valsiner, 2014, p. 4). However, instead of referring to metaphors of forces within physics, I understand the notion of

promoters as it has currently been used within culture psychology (Cabell & Valsiner, 2014; Beackstead et al., 2009). Here the promoter metaphor is inspired by chemistry (Kadinaki & Zittoun, 2014) and genetics (Valsiner, 2004) referring to causality not as a uni-directional relationship, but rather a set of complex processes, wherein it should be possible (at least in theory) to map out certain conditions wherein (under specific simultaneously occurring events) a phenomena is likely to emerge. To illustrate, I describe in Chapter 5 how migrants' (idiosyncratic and) particular positions in spatial and temporal dimensions (and the dynamic interplay between these) during temporary migration opens up avenues for different patterns of experiences. Experiences may become comparable in so far as other expatriates share similar aspects in their current life-worlds, such as the particular cities in which they live and the particular job they perform or position they hold. Moreover, what also stands out in my study is the importance of social others – particularly the experienced, “old hand” expatriate. In a prior study within the Indian context (Schlieve, 2009), I have argued for the central role of other accompanying spouses in shaping expatriate spouses' experiences of well-being. In my present doctoral research, I develop this notion further. As I go into below, other expatriates play a central role in relation to mediating, translating, and interpreting the novelty that newcomers are to navigate while living in Delhi. A vital part in this mediation is the collective sharing of social representations and norms within the expatriate community. Social representations can be seen as macro aspects of the expatriates' life-world that are negotiated in concrete micro-events within the expatriates' everyday life. Thus, the dialogical relationship between what is present in a person's life world in broader structural terms and what is present in that individual's meaning making processes are deeply interconnected.

## 2.1. SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS VS. SYMBOLIC RESSOURCES

As Zittoun, Gillespie, Ivinson and Psaltis (2003) write, it is not a new idea in psychology that ruptures situations where the normal flow of common sense and familiarity is broken – require some kind of re-creation of meaning (p. 417). I focus on *social representations* (Moscovici, 2008) as a way to conceptualize what I found to be profound among my informants in their (collective) negotiations of the novelty, ruptures, and ambiguity of becoming employers of domestic workers. As I outline in Chapter 7, central in this is an informal system of inheritance – where domestic workers, as well as staff stories, informal guidelines, recommendations, and advice, are shared within the expatriate community. Inherent in all this are specific (expatriate) community representations and social norms.

Moscovici (1981) approaches social representations not as a concept, but as a real phenomenon in the social world that guides and in particular constrains human common-sense experiences. I will provide a more detailed discussion of social representations in Chapter 7, where I also attend to the individual negotiation of these collective representations. Here, I will briefly outline important differences between Moscovici's



concept of social representations and Zittoun's (2006) notion of *symbolic resources* – as the latter has received a prominent place in the development of theory regarding, and research on, ruptures and transitions within cultural (and sociocultural) psychology. In cultural psychology, both social representations and symbolic resources are seen as cultural elements present in the human life-world. Thus, they can become a symbolic resource when used by individuals in personal and symbolic ways in specific situations. However, Zittoun et al. (2003) also make a clear distinction between these two concepts by highlighting that:

*Epistemologically, a social representation is a structure emerging from patterns and programmes of communication and practices that take place within a given social space. They are identified by researchers through a long process of distillation, and are conceptualized as distributed systems of meaning and action, as social facts that exceed the symbolic activity of any one individual.* (p. 420)

This way, social representations function like social facts present at a macro level that researchers can investigate and map out in a given social setting. Thus, research on social representations tend to focus on broader societal macro patterns, i.e., how representations are spread, shared, and changed in society and its different subgroups. Importantly, social representations seem to provide a kind of boundary in terms of how far it is possible to divide them from the reality of a given community. Denise Jodelet's (1991) study on French villagers hosting mentally ill lodgers in their homes provides a good example of how difficult it is to venture too far out from what is considered possible within a community's existing social representations. To illustrate this point, Jodelet found social representations promoting a need for (strict) segregation between villagers and their lodgers (e.g., madness as possibly contagious). Thus, most villagers were engaged in such practices, and those who cultivated a different (less segregated) relationship to their lodgers could not escape still being governed (on some levels) by the dominating social representations present in their environment. In contrast, symbolic resources (e.g., drawn from such things as books, films, or songs) can entail symbolic meanings for the individual person that can extend far beyond the common representation within the given social setting (Zittoun et al., 2003; Zittoun, 2012). For example, Kaidanaki and Zittoun (2014) show how a migrant in Greece uses symbolic elements from Kurdish songs to situate himself in a certain temporal space with a specific past and a specific future direction (related to his own personal history within the struggle of his people) that is far removed from his present situation. Thus, it is the (micro) personal symbolic use and its wide-reaching imaginative (and affective) capacity that distinguish symbolic resources from social representations.

However, Zittoun et al. (2003) also acknowledge the connection between the two analytic distinctions. Using Jodelet's (1991) study as an example, they note how the separate cutlery Jodelet sees villagers give to their (mad) lodgers – from their individual (micro) perspective – can be a highly personally pragmatic (and symbolic) act of

trying to move away from something that feels wrong – without being able to articulate it precisely as an attempt to establish distance. The researcher can look at the same artifact and interpret the villagers’ acts (and feelings) according to the overall (macro) organizations of social representations (of madness) in the community. In this particular case, the fear of being contaminated with madness – if they share cutlery with their mental ill lodgers – is related to the existing social representations of madness in the community. In my study, I deal precisely with such overlaps; looking both at individual negotiations but also taking into account the broader structures and social dynamics present in the expatriate community. In the present research, I do not do this in terms of artifacts like cutlery, but with guidelines and stories (in relation to staff) derived from other expatriates, from books, and from online media that come to be novel social facts the newcomers encounter.

## **2.2. MORAL HORIZONS AND VALUES AS AFFECTIVE SEMIOTIC REGULATORS**

In my research, it became very clear that during privileged migration expatriates’ pre-existing (and embodied) value system – or moral horizons – becomes important. Thus, here I introduce some different concepts related to values that are related in specific ways to this issue. Before clarifying how I use these concepts in detail, I will first present a brief overview. Moral Horizons is a term I apply with inspiration from Svend Brinkmann’s (2008) work on identity and morality (Brinkmann’s work is strongly inspired by Taylor, 1989). Brinkmann (2008) proposes seeing identity as related to a framework (or horizon) of different normative opportunities (p. 11); notions regarding “how the world ought to be” that people use to judge the events and choices they encounter in their everyday life. Thus, in my use, the term moral horizons refers to a macro normative meaning framework that provides the background of people’s social realities (including social norms inherent in dominant social representations). The metaphor of a horizon gives an impression of it as something towards which people collectively can orient themselves, even though the exact experience and negotiation of it is deeply personal (and embodied). I use Valsiner’s (2014) notion of hyper-generalization of affective signs, to refer to such personal micro process of internalization of these collective normative frameworks. As will be presented below, these internalization processes are deeply embodied, and come to relate to the persons experiences in all aspects of their life and actions, including their experiences of identity.

My analytical understanding of *identity* is closely related to action (Holland, 2010). As I outline in Chapter 6, all acts can be evaluated against moral horizons, and thus reflect identities that may appear more or less attractive (and acceptable) by the individual person. I recognize experiences of identity as personal experiences of a plethora of different identity positions (Harré, 2012; Harré & Langenhove, 1999; Gillespie, 2006) which are actively and constantly negotiated in relation to people’s moral horizons. This negotiation includes the stories that people can create about their actions, positions, events and experiences in their life (Bruner, 1986) – multiple narratives which

may be more or less coherent and consistent over time. This understanding of identity derives its main inspiration from narrative therapy (and theory) as depicted by Michael White and David Epston (e.g., Epston & White 1992). White and Epston base their work on a combination of anthropology, cultural psychology, and post-structuralistic theory, such as the writings of Bruner (1986, 1990), Foucault (1980), Myerhoff (1986, 1982), and Vygotsky (1986). What in their narrative approach is approached as more stable in relation to a person's experience of self (in contrast to a fluent and changeable identity), are values implicitly present in people's actions and experiences (White, 2007). This idea is comparable to (semiotic) cultural psychology, where all that humans experience is seen as intrinsically linked to (underlying) beliefs about "what really matters" (Wortmeyer & Branco, 2016; Brinkmann, 2004, 2016).

This does not mean that moral meaning frameworks are necessarily all the same for people (growing up) in different ecological settings. Instead, moral horizons should be seen as internalized during the life-course; as people develop and participate in specific sociocultural settings. For example, Shweder and Much (1987) famously demonstrated in interviews with East Indian Brahmins (high caste) that their moral meaning systems ran through very different logics, than would have been predicted in the Western developmental models on morality at the time. On the other hand, this does not also imply that value systems are very fluent or flexible when first established (Branco, 2012; Branco & Valsiner, 2012). This also becomes clear in my study. In Chapter 6 I present how the Danes – during their migration – evaluate their actions (and identity positions) in relation to pre-existing (Danish) moral horizons.

Importantly, in my study, this orientation toward moral horizons implies a deeply embodied and affective dimension. Using Valsiner's (2014) model of hyper-generalization of affective signs, values can be pictured as affective semiotic regulators that can guide the orientation of the individual in subtle ways. I will not go into details about Valsiner's model here (for this see Wortmeyer & Branco, 2016; Branco, 2016), but I will only briefly note that embodied experiences, (e.g., of identity positions that immediately "feel" wrong), within this framework are defined as a hyper-generalized feeling. One might observe these processes, for example, in the case of someone transgressing their (internalized) notions about "right or wrong", where affective experiences, then emerge immediately and spontaneously (as meta-sign field). To illustrate, a newly arrived (Danish) expatriate relaxing in a couch at home, while the maid cleans the floor, may experience immediate feelings of unease. If these feelings are attended to, they might reflect an underlying moral evaluation along the lines of: "I ought not to just sit here (like a rich spoiled person) while she is doing all the hard work." Thus, it may not only be a question of socially internalized (class) positions or *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1977), a concept I discuss in passing in Chapter 6. Rather, in the instinctively and embodied reactions, there is an additional deeper, affective, and moral (psychological) layer of evaluation of such everyday events. As Wortmeyer and Branco (2016) write:

*The meanings related to what is moral, immoral and indifferent in this sphere of experience guide feelings and reflections oriented to the future (what could be, what should be, and what must not be), performing a normative function. These affective oppositional tensions (moral – non-moral) orient our feeling-into-the-world and drive our personal constructions related to the environment and our own psyche. Although staying in the background or most of time of our daily lives, values work to the emergence, maintenance, amplification or attenuation of all relations between the person and the environment. (p. 452)*

As already mentioned in the introduction, in complex rupture situations, such as migration, there can be many situations in everyday life where the pre-existing moral horizons become illuminated as it clashes with the expectations or actions of (foreign) social others. However, there may also be part of such experiences during temporary migration, in which experiences of (moral) clashes or the absence of such clashes are more directly related to the liminality of the situation than to the local society.

### **2.3. LIMINALITY AND READY-MADE-FRIENDSHIPS**

As already mentioned, the liminal dimension of travels and expatriate sojourns is often pictured as a loosening of moral frameworks. I discuss this more in Chapter 4 where I argue for including sensory experiences, affective dimensions, and generally the body in the conceptualization of liminality<sup>4</sup>. Among things, Turner does not interpret liminal experiences as an “everything is possible” situation. Along similar lines, Gillespie (2006) also does not see the possibilities to play with novel identity positions during tourist travels as unlimited. Nevertheless, Rudmin (2010) describes how sojourns can be seen as a move away from prior norms, as a person may experience that their societal norms become less influential due to the geographical distance to the person’s kinship networks in the home country (see also Beckstead, 2018). In my understanding – along the lines of cultural psychology – the notion of *social norms* refers to the social, collective (omnipresent and more or less explicit) enactment and promotion of a social group’s (in a specific setting) shared value orientations (moral horizons) by means of speech, everyday actions, etc. (Shweder & Much, 1987; Much, 1997). According to this perspective, it is not possible to move away from normativity in human life.

How then can we understand the subjective experience of the loosening of norm systems during expatriate migration that is described in the literature? As I understand it on the basis of my empirical data, the liberating or norm loosening experience can be seen as deriving from a broadening of possibilities of acceptable actions and social

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<sup>4</sup> *In this thesis, I stick to the term liminality although Turner later applied the term liminoid to refer to all liminal experiences outside of ritual settings in traditional societies (e.g. Turner & Turner, 1978). The latter never caught the same attention in the social sciences as Turner’s (1969) term of liminality.*

positions, as additional norm systems are encountered, used, and negotiated by the expatriates in their everyday life. To explain, the migrants position as “betwixt and between the categories of ordinary social life” (Turner, 1974, p. 272), can literarily be seen as referring to a position in-between their passport country and the local society where they are posted. An in-between space of temporary migration that in expatriate-dense settings may often be concretely related to a given expatriate community and its international, global, and mobile infrastructure is popularly called the *third-culture* (Useem, 1966). In the position of being in-between such different societal structures, the expatriates are exposed to a diversity of meaning frameworks (and social norms) that they then selectively (learn to) apply, beside their existing moral horizons, during their temporary migration. I go more into this in Chapter 5, 6 and 7, where I explore how the expatriate (over time) draws on additional normative frameworks derived from the local expatriate community (and the local Indian society), and how the situation of being a temporary migrant in itself also mediates certain orientations for the expatriates during their sojourns.

In addition, in my study, expatriate peers become vital meditators of novelty for the Danes. Turner (1974) also emphasize that *communitas* – or the bonding that occurs between people undergoing the same (ritual) transitory experiences – is an important part of liminal processes. Turner defines *communitas* in slightly different ways in his work, but at the core is “a bond uniting... people over and above any formal social bonds” (p. 45). According to Turner’s understanding, this social bonding should be seen as a contrast to the normal structure of society (its laws, norms, etc.), possibly including experiences of spontaneity and freedom or the leveling out of internal social hierarchies, as well as intense forms of emotional and intuitive qualities (see also Olavsen, 2001). Turner (1974) depict *communitas* as a natural counterpart (or anti-structure) to the formal society. *Communitas* is a transitory phenomenon emerging outside of the normal social norms and hierarchies – for example among people going on pilgrimages together (Turner & Turner, 1978). Turner’s understanding has received criticism for his positive (and utopian) view on the potential of such *communitas* (e.g., St. John, 2001). I will not go into further detail on this debate, nor further into Turner’s concept. The relevant point is that Turner emphasizes that a special bonding occurs between people going through the same transitory phenomena – or those being “in the same boat” – that may make them relate to each other in different ways than during normal everyday life. This seems comparable to the mutual collective bonding that can occur among expatriates. As mentioned above, I find some of the collective dynamics in the expatriate community in Delhi quite profound in relation to the un-initiated help you would normally expect from strangers (and distant acquaintances) during ordinary everyday life events – for example, in terms of providing help and assistance to newcomers (see also Schlieve, 2009). Such mutual bonding can play an important part in the mediation of collectively conveyed norms in closed coherent settings (see also Wortmeyer & Branco, forthcoming). In Chapter 5, I use the term ready-made friendships to describe such psychological dynamics that (among other things) bond the expatriates together, and thus promote a collective sharing of norms. Turner’s concept of *communitas* could

be useful to underline the strong affective bonding that often happens in such collective co-liminal experiences, as I discuss in Chapter 4. Yet, I find Turner's emphasis on anti-structure to be purely positive from outset, and his neglect of the possible micro conflicts within such groups to be potentially misleading and problematic in the present context. Thus, it might be more adequate to refer to ready-made friendship as I picture it within temporary migration as referring to: the mutual attraction, pro-social aid, and actions in which people engage. The immediate ease with which the initial contact is created (e.g., approaching strangers in street or market place) stands in contrast to the effort with which it takes to create local contacts and with the possible challenges one encounters when interacting with a strange (unfamiliar) local other. Importantly, such immediate attraction to seemingly similar peers can be difficult to resist. It may take a conscious effort not to follow it almost automatically, as people are also strongly drawn to each other due to comparable needs (logistical, local skill-wise, socially, emotional, etc.). In short, ready-made friendships refers to the notion that new coming expatriates seem to fit so easily into the existing expatriate community.

## 2.4. MINOR-MORAL HOLIDAYS

In general, as mentioned above, the temporary nature of expatriate migration in terms of its potentially symbolic meaning for the person's (moral) experiences of their present situation have not been explored in depth. Beckstead (2012), like Turner and Turner (1978), describes how religious artifacts within pilgrimages can elicit deeply affective (and symbolic) experiences of something out of the ordinary for the pilgrims. What then with the temporary work contracts- that expatriates hold? That may be a less explicit artifact or visible symbol in the everyday life of the expatriates. Nevertheless, the temporary time frames of these work contracts seems to constitute the fundament for important affective and symbolic experiences. In my research, I find that the temporariness of expatriate migration seems – in small micro events in everyday life – to be able to create minor symbolic brackets of exceptions whereby the otherwise omnipresent and embodied experiences of (moral) ambiguity do not emerge. Concretely, an event might be experienced as unproblematic if it is framed as occurring within a situation of temporary migration – wherein other rules apply.

Accordingly, I suggest that we make use of William James' (1906) and Randall Collins' (2009) concept of *moral holidays* to see if there are aspects of this concept that could help shed additional light on these (minor) areas of expatriate experiences during temporary migration. William James (1906) came up with the term moral holidays in relation to those instances where a (religious) person occasionally relaxes their anxieties by letting down – or bracketing – their normal (moral) obligations and considerations for a moment due to an overall meta idea of Good already ultimately being the caretaker of all human action:

*In short, they mean that we have a right ever and anon to take a moral holiday, to let the world wag in its own way, feeling that its issues are in better hands than ours and are none of our business. (p. 18, my underscoring)*

The interesting dimension here as I see it is the notion of it being “none of our business.” This stands in contrast to legitimization and neutralization strategies (e.g., Copes et al., 2008), because within those concepts, as I see it, is an active negotiation one undertakes so as to appear in line with one’s moral horizon. Such efforts arise from an explicit unease that has to be overcome. For example, one can explicitly state the conflict in order to legitimize the current events, along the lines of “We don’t mind X as this is what everyone here does.” The moral holiday, as I understand James’ use of it, may not reach the level of the need for explicit legitimization, as there are no embodied moral reactions. Using Valsiner’s (2014) model, you could say that the symbolic realm associated with temporary migration has already created a hyper-generalized field that acts as more than just justification, as it prevents discomfort from emerging in the first place. In other words, a bracket – in time and space – is created, on a hyper-generalized level so that the unease that would normally be experienced does not emerge. Thus, “temporary migration” may work to inhibit emotions, e.g., of ambiguity and unease in certain situations.

This interpretation is in line with sociologist and violence researcher Randall Collins’ (2009) use of James’ moral holiday concept. In his research, he sees moral holidays as occurring when a group of people doing atrocities – one way or the other – have succeeded in going around the normal affective (and hardwired physiological) barrier that otherwise would hinder such actions. To illustrate this understanding, it may not be because they are losing their moral ground (or rather horizons) that young Danish males go to prostitutes (for the first time) during party holidays at the Black Sea (Hesse & Tutenges, 2011). Or that Danish and Finish expatriates engage in corruption activities at their work in India (Savinetti, 2015), and Swedes neglect pre-existing values of gender equality and family democracy during temporary postings (Boström et al., 2017). These actions may be part of the expected (and accepted) behavior among other foreigners in these settings, and may fit to the widely-held images, global representations, and narratives regarding these kinds of sojourns and travels (Löfgreen, 1999; Tutenges, 2012). In other words, this may create a certain form of symbolic bracketing. Yet, such colorful references to violence and prostitution and corruption may actually blur the overall purpose, and risks supporting the prominent stereotype of the morally decedent expatriate. This is not my intention. The idea is to see if the notion of moral holidays might function as an additional concept to describe the micro instances in expatriates’ everyday life – where the expatriates do not immediately react, think, or reflect upon issues or actions that in other circumstances (e.g., in their passport country) would most likely have created an (embodied) moral reaction. Thus, it may be more useful to edit James’ original framing, to a less catchy, but maybe more accurate framing such as for example minor - moral holidays as a way to refer to the (embodied) experience of exceptions as they occur during temporary migration. To illustrate this idea, although the Danish expatriates engage in extensive moral labor in relation to helping their staff into new employments, there may also simultaneously exist brackets of feelings related to their understanding that as soon as they leave India, the staff will no longer be their responsibility. Another possible example relates to the general acceptance of a six-day workweek for domestic staff in India – an interesting contrast to the strong representation among Danes (in Denmark) of normal workweeks (and contracts) being only five days a week.





# CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY, METHODS, AND FIELD SITE

One overall aim of my research is to avoid stereotypical and superficial representations of expatriates. Instead, I attempt to understand the process of becoming employers of domestic workers from their perspective; as they experience it in their concrete everyday lives. To do this, I use my own concrete presence in the field, observations, interviews, and a qualitative longitudinal study as complementary methods. I describe my use of embodied ethnography as a research strategy in participant observation in Chapter 4. For this reason I will not unfold it here, but rather discuss some limitations and boundaries in relation to embodied ethnography as a method. In addition, I present a few emerging insights from my research on the perspective of domestic workers (working in expatriate households), a part of my initial research design that I had to abandon late in the research process due to time constraints. Lastly, Delhi is introduced as field site.

## 3.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

### 3.1.1. METHODOLOGY

As mentioned above, the overall intention behind my research design was to come as close as possible to the Danes' experiences of becoming employers of domestic workers in Delhi. This was a bottom up approach. While the cultural psychology framework was of course present as a background in my general understanding of human psychology (as a general theoretical horizon), I did not set a fixed point at the start of the research towards which I needed to navigate. My interest was not to develop a pre-defined theory through my fieldwork. I rather, along the lines of a phenomenological approach, I wanted to be driven by the experiences that were emerging in the field for my participants, and to collect rich data regarding their concrete actions and everyday experiences (Jackson, 1996). This included using my own presence in the field as a tool to gain insight in my informants' affective and sensorial life-worlds (Davies & Spencer, 2010; Jackson, 1989).

Epistemologically, phenomenology and cultural psychology may be viewed as incompatible. Phenomenology is characterized by an inductive research approach where bracketing one's own foreknown theories is seen as necessary in order to approach other people's life world (Jackson, 1996), while cultural psychology, on the other hand, emphasizes the theoretical framework as a prerequisite for empirical research (Valsiner, 2017). However, I use my phenomenological ethnographic approach as a concrete method to collect rich empirical data of expatriates' everyday experiences. From this I build conceptualizations and typologies that are later analyzed and further developed within a cultural psychology theoretical framework. I see this as possible, as both approaches are founded upon explorations of everyday life, and they use

idiographic analysis and in- depth case studies of individuals and groups. However, in my approach I go beyond a more traditional phenomenological approach, just as I differ a little from more theoretical oriented cultural psychology.

### 3.1.2. FIELDWORK

I planned a prolonged fieldwork (13+ months) with long-term visits to the field (see Box 3.1), making it possible for me to immerse myself deeply into expatriate life in Delhi. In addition to my formal interviews, I spend time with Danes in their free time, in their houses, and during different kind of activities. For example, I visited popular pools, hotels, restaurants, playgrounds, picnics in local parks, birthdays, private dinners, and the occasional roof top party. I also attended the more formal events of the Danish and international expatriate communities, such as a monthly dinner for Danes in Delhi, festivities at the embassies, and general activities at the Nordic Women Club and Delhi Network. As a Danish woman living in Delhi with her accompanying family (husband and two children), it was very easy for me to initiate contact with other Danes and expatriates. I always presented my project when I met new people, to be transparent about my position as a researcher, and I generally experienced that people happily shared their experiences.

Box 3.1 - visits to the field

#### VISITS TO THE FIELD (2013-2016)

1. **Five weeks** (September/October, 2013). Intensive Special Designed Hindi course (to interview domestic workers). Pilot studies with expatriates. Initiating longitudinal study. Only me in the field.
2. **Six months** (July–January, 2014-2015). Fieldwork focusing primarily on expatriates (and the longitudinal study), but also spending time with a driver’s family. Lecture at the Nordic Women in Delhi Association. With accompanying family in the field.
3. **Three weeks** (March/April, 2015). Follow up on expatriates. Two weeks of fieldwork focusing on domestic workers (living in an international family with live-in staff). Only me in the field.
4. **Five months** (August-December,2015). Finalizing longitudinal study with expatriates. Initiating fieldwork on domestic workers. Invited talk at the American Embassy (with other experts on the issue on expatriates and domestic workers). With accompanying family in the field most of the time.
5. **Three weeks** (January/February, 2016). Last informal interviews. Participation in a labor conference at Delhi University (Sociology department). Only me in the field.

### 3.1.3. LONGITUDINAL STUDY

I included a longitudinal interview study in my fieldwork, to be able to closely follow the Danes' processes of becoming employers of domestic workers. I aimed for a heterogeneous group of people from different work and life positions, who shared being relatively new to India and the case of having domestic workers in the Global South, to see what was different and similar across the cases. Through snowballing, I established contact with 12 key informants. The expatriates were in the age range from 24 to 56. They were people working for diplomatic missions, international corporations, and non-working accompanying spouses (male and female). Three of them were staying in India for six months, while the others were to be in India from 1.5 to four years. A few were single, but most were with their partner in India. Two families brought children along – the others not. Except in one case, I always interviewed the adults together. I also included a couple of focus group interviews in the cases where (single) young professionals were living together. It gave me the chance to see how they collectively draw on certain stories, ideas, and images in relation to their family's (or house's) particular way of being employers.

One may object that this approach seems a little bit off in respect to the classical phenomenological image of diving into the head of an individual to dig out the person's own (individual) experiences (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). However, Michael Jackson (e.g., 1995) sees social relationships as fundamental for human existence, experience, and meaning making. Thus, his approach is in some layers compatible with a more social constructionist perspective of human experiences. Thus, it is possible, in (in my use of) Jackson's existential phenomenological approach, to include the ongoing processes of interpretation, negotiations, and meaning making in everyday life. All this happens in-between people, in their relationship with their social and material worlds. This is one more reason why I find it fruitful to link cultural psychology theory and Jackson's approach. However, the fundament of my research is still the conviction that we as researchers can look at how people negotiate their social worlds, and that language can still be a valid epistemological tool to understand human experience. Thus, I adhere to the ontological stance that there *is* a kind of solid world (and truths) beneath our social constructions and patterns of meaning making, although we may not always be able to grasp it.

### 3.1.4. INTERVIEWS (LONGITUDINAL STUDY)

I used semi-structured interview guides that I developed continually during the research processes to explore in detail the Danes' everyday experiences with their employees. In line with a phenomenological approach, it was important for me to approach my informants with genuine sympathy and interest for their perspective (Maffesoli, 1996; Tutenges, forthcoming). This is not to say that such professional interest, engagement, and initial sympathy is unproblematic (Duncombe & Jessop, 2002), but it illustrates how my approach stands in contrast to a pre-defined critical perspective on the hegemonic structures within domestic work (e.g., Cox, 2006.), and stereotypes

of what expatriate life may entail, e.g., in relation to segregation living practices (e.g., Lundstrøm, 2014). It may seem basic that expatriates’ everyday experiences and actions are deeply connected to their concrete everyday settings, positions, and encounters during the posting, but this is often neglected. Thus, I dedicate Chapter 6 to this vital theme.

Half of my informants in the longitudinal study were interviewed the first time within 14 days of arrival, and the other half within their first 6 weeks. The three people staying 6 months in India were interviewed 4 times in total, one of these a fifth time after relocating to Delhi for the second time during my study. All the others staying in-between 1.5 to 4 years – were interviewed 5 times in total (until 14-18 months into their stay) – with the exception of one. See Box 3.2 for a detailed overview of these interviews. I aimed at interviewing people with the same (time) intervals, when possible. However, these people still started out in different places in regard to their domestic staff encounters, with some already having inherited staff before arriving (see Chapter 7) and others employing staff after their arrival. All formal interviews, except one, were taped on a digital recorder (in the case of the exception, extensive notes were taken immediately after the interview).

Box 3.2. Interviews longitudinal study

<b>Time in Delhi</b>	<b>Maja</b>	<b>Anne &amp; Anders</b>	<b>Signe &amp; Andreas</b>	<b>Karen &amp; Eskild</b>	<b>Sara &amp; Kasper</b>	<b>Pelle, Eya &amp; Mette</b>
<b>Interview 1</b>	2 weeks	4 weeks	1 month	6 weeks	10 days	1 week
<b>Interview 2</b>	4 weeks	2 months	2 months	2 months	2 months	3 weeks
<b>Interview 3</b>	12 months	3 months	4 months	4 months	4 months	3 months
<b>Interview 4</b>	18 months	6 months	6 months	7 months	7 months	5.5 months
<b>Interview 5</b>		14 months	14 months	14 months	14 months	(Eya): 12 months

### 3.1.5 TRANSCRIPTION

While I was in India, I had student assistants in Denmark to do most of the interview transcriptions, due to the large amount of work hours this required. My longitudinal study consists of 29 interviews (one- to two and a half hours each). I also have 11 other interviews with other expatriates, three interviews with agents working with training and placement of domestic workers, 10 interviews with domestic workers and my field notes (see Box 3.3. for an overview of the data). The students were instructed to transcribe the data verbatim (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015), and to change details such as names and workplaces. They all signed a contract indicating they would keep the

material confidential. I always listened through the latest interviews before finalizing a particular interview guide for the next interview. I also re-transcribed and re-listened to passages that were of particular importance in my later analysis.

### Box 3.3. Data overview

#### DATA OVERVIEW

##### **Expatriate Employers**

- Longitudinal study. Twelve Danes interviews with 4-5 times from arrival up to 6-18 months into their stay (29 interviews).
- Interviews. Eight Danes & 1 Swedish woman interview 1-3 times (11 interviews).
- Participant Observation in houses, pools, playgrounds, restaurants, hotels, informal social events, formal events in the Danish, Nordic and expatriate networks and at embassies.

##### **Domestic Workers**

- Participant observation in playgroups, in one driver's family, in one international family's house (and servant quarters), in one training workshop, in maid organized playgroups.
- Interview Domestic Workers. Four maids and one driver (1-5 times each) all except one in Hindi with translator/research assistant.
- Agents Interview. Two domestic work recruitment and placement agents (1 expatriate + 1 Indian – a former domestic worker) and 1 training agent (expatriate).

### 3.1.6. ANALYSIS

The analysis process was ongoing during (and in-between) the fieldwork. I listed important themes that emerged over time in the individual and family interviews, as well as across the interviews. I discussed these themes with the informants themselves, and informally during fieldwork with other Danish and international expatriates. Thus, I included more participatory-like approaches in the analysis process (e.g., Stringer, 1999; Schlieve, 2009). Furthermore, beside the longitudinal study, I conducted (taped) interviews with 8 other Danes (old hands and newcomers, individual and group interviews) one to two times each (for a total of 10 interviews). One interview was on SKYPE but the rest were face to face. All interviews were conducted in relation to themes emerging during the fieldwork and ongoing analysis of the longitudinal interviews. In one case, I added an interview with a Scandinavian expatriate – as she had experienced a remarkable case of theft from her employees. Later in the analytical process, I combined my phenomenological descriptions, typologies, and themes more rigorously with what I found to be relevant theory. I identified relevant theory as existing theoretical ideas that could help illuminate nuance and develop the potential implications of my empirical

findings. I did so in a way that would further qualify my conceptualizations of the expatriates' typical experiences (and psychological dynamics promoting such experiences), without moving too far away from these experiences as they are experienced by the expatriates. In a sense, I was looking for, "*the least false words to describe things as they are and in the manner they are sensed and made sense of by certain people*" (Maffesoli, 1996, p. 59; see also Tutenges, forthcoming).

Several times during the analysis process and writing of articles, I contacted key informants, to hear their view and ideas about my current analysis. In line with my phenomenological ontology it was important for me to provide descriptions that would feel representative of these expatriates' experiences abroad – at least in the typologies and descriptions provided (before more abstract levels of interpretation and theorizing), and taking into account that I am only dealing with a limited part of my informant's everyday life experiences. For some of my informants the encounters with their domestic workers took up more space (e.g., in the form of worries, imaginations, strategies, and negotiations) in their everyday life than for others.

## 3.2. EMBODIED ETHNOGRAPHY

### 3.2.1. EMBODIED ETHNOGRAPHY VS AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

Key figures in autoethnography draw on Michael Jackson as I do (see Chapter 4) to argue for a research approach that "includes the ethnographer's experience and interaction with other participants as vital parts of what is being studied" (Ellis & Bochner, 2003). However, an important difference in my embodied ethnography approach and traditional autoethnography is, as I see it, that in autoethnography the researcher becomes the primary center of research in all layers of the research process. To exemplify this from Ellis and Bochner's (2003) chapter on autoethnography:

*I start with my personal life. I pay attention to my physical feelings, thoughts and emotions. I use what I call systematic sociological introspection and emotional recall to try to understand an experience I've lived through. Then I write my experience as a story. Be exploring a particular life, I hope to understand a way of life. (p. 206)*

The author (Ellis) here uses herself in a first person perspective to exemplify her method of using her own personal experiences as a significant case. Hoping that she will later end up with more universal results. In contrast, I use embodied ethnography with the intention from the outset to gain (additional) insight into my informants' life-worlds (see also Lorimer, 2010), including important sensorial and affective experiences that might at first be difficult to grasp with words alone. Thus, in my approach, the researcher's experiences during research is an additional tool, rather than an end in itself (see Chapter 4 for more details).

In addition, I never expect that my experiences directly reflect the life-world of my informants – I always investigated if there were similarities. To give an example, during my first months in India, I was overwhelmed by stories of hardship from my maid. Becoming interested in such “stories of hardship” and what they might do in the encounter between expatriates and employees, I looked further into it. I found out that the former employer of my maid recognized such stories as an important part of their prior everyday interaction. However, when I asked about similar experiences among my key informants, I found it that hardship stories were not as major a theme in their staff encounters. Thus, I turned toward other experiences more commonly shared among my informants at the time.

### 3.2.2. LIMITATIONS

In my research design, from the beginning I decided not to focus much on expatriate children and their relationships to domestic workers. I felt that I had too much at stake personally connected to this topic, thus, in relation to this issue I would potentially not be able to create space for the reflexive distance necessary in ethnographic research (Atkinson, 2017). Anthropologists have always used different strategies of withdrawal to create breaks from their immersions into the field (Davis, 2010), including moving away geographically from the field. To give examples, in my earlier fieldwork in Delhi (Schlieve, 2009), where I initially discovered the benefits of an embodied approach (see Chapter 4), I was living at a Nordic Research Center. Thus, I literally went out to meet up with the expatriates I was studying (accompanying spouses of diplomats and business people), while at home I was in a sphere of the expatriate field (Nordic researchers and students) that was not my primary focus of research. In contrast, during my doctoral study I was directly *in the field* at home. As mentioned above, I planned this deliberately to be able to experience and follow processes similar to those that the expatriates were going through as they settled into Delhi. However, I knew that the areas concerning my accompanying children could become delicate – as they did from time to time. My children were 6 months and 4 years the first time they accompanied me to India. My husband was on paternity leave. As many families who travel abroad, we then had to get used to and negotiate a new family dynamic. This was not only due to the migration, but also occurred as novel people entered our family system. As parents, we did not always agree on what might be the best possible way to handle this new situation. At times we were happily surprised by how things turned out, but at other times we regretted our choices. Thus, I had the feeling that I could easily be caught up in my own defense mechanisms (Devereux, 1967) or agendas.

My choice to steer away from a deep investigation of expatriate children in relation to domestic workers was reconfirmed during my second long stretch of fieldwork. During my initial research into the domestic workers’ perspective of expatriate-domestic worker encounters (see below), I attended a first aid-training workshop for nannies working for expatriates. The facilitator, an Australian-Indian nurse, very clearly underlined that the most important thing for the participating nannies to understand was that;

*In case of any kind of emergency. Fatal or non-fatal. It was their obligation to stay at the scene of the accident, with the child. Until the parents and medical assistance had arrived. Instead of fleeing the scene, as the first instinct very likely would tell them to do. (Field notes)*

I came home from that workshop, with a novel selection of “catastrophic thoughts” to draw on in vulnerable (and ambiguous) moments. At the time, I was clearly not able to distinguish between what might be reasonable worries and what was maybe more related to my (partly) bad conscience of having dragged my family abroad to an unfamiliar world. I find this a telling example of the grey zones existing when using one’s own concurrent emotional experiences during fieldwork. In addition, albeit not surprisingly, I have found that distance in time, geography, and proximity, makes it easier for me – as a researcher – to attend (more critically) to my own experiences. For example, during the field trips to India – without the family – I found myself observing nanny-child interactions without hesitations. I generally used my field diary during fieldwork to note everything down that seemed relevant, including events involving children and domestic workers. Furthermore, two years after my fieldwork, I can now in retrospect look at our experiences as a family with much greater distance.

### **3.3. ETHICAL REFLECTIONS**

Participant observation in the heart of people’s homes and among domestic staff in an economically vulnerable situation requires special attention to ethical dilemmas. Below I have outlined some central concerns I attended to during my research. These considerations also have important impact on the research design and results (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

#### **3.1.3. EXPATRIATES**

Having earlier conducted research among expatriates in Delhi (see Schlieve, 2009), I knew that in a small community (like the Danes in India), real anonymity could prove difficult. Even though details and names are changed, prominent stories or examples from everyday life or the housing situation will very likely be recognizable for other (Danish) people living in Delhi. Thus, I used a strategy of pseudo-anonymity whereby in the written consent (that I got from all of the people interviewed on tape), as well as in my verbal introduction to the study, I explained that real anonymity would be difficult to uphold and thus that they should be prepared that most likely they would be recognizable by other expatriates. This is not an approach without problems, but as I initiated my study it was the best solution I could come up with at the time.

Furthermore, I made a point of telling the Danes that I was not looking at their work life or workplaces. I knew that the issue of one’s employing organizations is a touchy arena for expatriates, in terms of their own career possibilities, organizational confidentiality issues, the colleagues they meet and interact with in the international expatriate



community, as well as the general public branding of their work places. In addition, I told them that very intimate events such as major personal crisis were also not focus of my research. I was primarily interested in their relationships with their domestic workers.

This initial framing turned my direction toward some aspects of their everyday experiences, rather than others. Most notably, there was a sharp division between workspaces and everyday life outside of this area. As there generally is a lack of knowledge about this (outside of work) part of expatriate life, it is not a bad choice of focus, except for the fact that the organizational framework in which expatriates work of course shapes many aspects of their everyday life (e.g., Savinetti, 2018, Hindman, 2013). In addition, there is also the question of whether it is possible to explore the relationship between expatriates and domestic workers without attending closely to family events and dynamics that are occurring simultaneously. As you will see, in my case stories in the articles it is not possible to separate this fully in the written presentations, although I have taken care not to go into very intimate events. I do, however, in my work outline negotiations that relate to very personal, ambiguous, and emotional areas in the expatriates everyday life in relation to their domestic workers. However, such kinds of vulnerability relate, as I see it, to broad existential questions about human life, mutual relationships, morality, and identity. Thus, rather than an intimate portrayal of one specific family, it encourages a wider discussion of such phenomena in the context of privileged migration.

### 3.3.2. DOMESTIC WORKERS

I was a novice in relation to research among Indian domestic workers, and I simultaneously belonged to the same international group as their employers. I therefore joined a three-day long seminar on “fieldwork and ethics in the South Asian context” before my fieldwork to get additional advice and strategies that I might use (Chaudhary, 2012). I already knew that I could try to position myself a little differently from the classic expatriate in India, do to my extensive knowledge of India (from prior research, studies and travels), including an above beginner level of spoken Hindi. This was confirmed during the seminar, when I was encouraged to use my learning of the Hindi language to position myself more as a novice than as a potential employer in relation to the workers. Furthermore, I was advised to always use an interpreter, to help me to detect small cues, e.g., if the interview persons actually did not want to participate in my research, but said “yes” due to my potential (imagined) influence on her/his employers. I will not here follow up on how it actually unfolded in relation to these issues as I have not yet written any articles about what I actually did manage to investigate. However, what I want to point out is that, interestingly, this lack of publication is actually my current foremost ethical concern. Not unheard of among anthropologists – although rarely spoken about – is the case of the informants the fieldworker “leaves behind,” when they leave the field (Birch & Miller, 2002; Crapanzano, 2010; Pollard, 2009.). In my case, it is the question of not having written an article about one maid who took the initiative

herself to take part in our interviews, as she wished so dearly that I would write about her life-story. Looking back in my ethical protocol, I can see that one of my points was to be careful not to promise anything that I might not be able to fulfill. However, in this case, I did not know as I did the interviews that I would be skipping the domestic worker part seven months later.

### **3.4. THE PERSPECTIVE OF DOMESTIC WORKERS**

My original idea was to include an exploration of the expatriate-domestic worker encounter from the domestic workers' perspective, to get a deeper understanding of this encounter, and to be able to outline possible discrepancies and similarities in the employers' and employees' experiences (see also, Gillespie, 2006). I had planned to dedicate the second half of my fieldwork to domestic workers working in expatriate households. During my fieldwork, I was often met with the excitement at the possibility of being able to provide the expatriates with knowledge about what actually went on inside the heads of their domestic workers - a major, mysterious theme for many expatriates in Delhi. This constituted a kind of void of unknowingness that almost functioned like a Rorschach painting, in so far as many projected all kinds of fears, hopes, and imaginations onto it. To give an example, I could point to my own experiences at the first aid training work-shop mentioned above. Furthermore, the staff seemed to keep surprising their expatriate employers in unforeseen ways, in spite of their immense reflections, thoughts, and careful considerations in an attempt to understand and predict their employers' perspective and wishes. To illustrate this point, one woman provided her security guards with a heater during the cold season. The heater was placed in their little guard shed outside the house. What she did not know, however, was that the guards had to draw the electricity from an electricity chord used by several of the security guards in the street. Thus, a conflict arose among the guards on the street due to the extra electricity bill. The employer's initial intention of doing something good for her security guards ended up creating additional problems for them instead. Accordingly, my future work was frequently imagined by the expatriates as a potentially helpful tool for their everyday interactions.

Yet, the research on the domestic workers' perspective took a much longer time to initiate than I had imagined. First, it took quite some time during my second long stay in Delhi to follow up upon the expatriates in my longitudinal study, and to continue my ongoing analysis of those interviews. Then after several trials and errors, interviews, fieldwork – including a two-week stay with an international family – different research assistants and transcribers, thought-provoking interviews with agents working with recruitment, placement, and training of domestic workers, etc., I finally found myself in a position where I was ready to begin the in-depth study “for real.” However, I was now close to the end of my second long stay in Delhi. Consequently, I then decided to dedicate my full attention to the expatriates' experiences. Of course, my existing data on the domestic workers provided me with additional insights that afforded me important background for my general understanding of the field.

### 3.4.1. ROADS NOT TAKEN

I came up with some interesting conjectures on the basis of the data I collected among the domestic workers that would be interesting to follow up on at a later time. For example, I found shame to be a prominent theme for a maid who in all other aspects was extremely satisfied with the family for which she worked. Remarkably, in spite of this maid's genuine happiness with her work (and with the expatriate family), she still lied to her own extended family and friends about the content of her work, telling them that she was doing office work (for similar findings see Grover, 2018b). This maid generally felt uneasy when she was out shopping with her employer, as the nature of her work was so evident in the eye of the local others. "*Nobody wants to be a servant*" she said to me. Most foreigners are not aware that such experiences of stigmatization can be present among their domestic workers. Expatriates normally perceive of stigmatization processes of domestic workers as related to cast and class traditions (and struggles) in the Indian society, and thus an issue primarily relevant in relation to Indian employers. Furthermore, Danish expatriates often talk about their drivers as people who really do not mind the overtime, as earning money is of such a high priority for them. However, an Indian family I have befriended for several years often complained when the father (during most of my fieldwork) worked as a driver for an Asian embassy in Delhi. He was often not home for dinner and he was always on call when he was home. Interestingly, the father later chose to become a regular taxi driver at the airport (not prestigious and lowly paid), as it gave him more time with the family. These are examples of discrepancies between the perspectives of the domestic workers and the expatriate employers that would be interesting to explore more in depth.

I also noticed similarities that would be interesting to examine in greater detail in future research. I conducted five interviews with a maid who was working for the international family with whom I was living, an arrangement that allowed me to closely follow her everyday work life. I here saw how in her everyday actions and imaginations she was juggling with several frames of references, norms, and legitimizations strategies in relation to her work conditions, obligations as an employee, as well as in her expectations toward her employers. One moment she might be referring to a more traditional, Indian style of doing employer-employee relationship and the next moment she would be speaking about representations of Westernized employment models and market logics (just as I present my Danish expatriates doing it in my findings). It may be that these representations are widely available in India, as similar discourses are found among Indian employers (Barua et al., 2017), but it would be interesting to go into this matter deeper. In spite of their in no doubt precarious and vulnerable position (economically and socially), domestic workers in foreign families also gain opportunities (in actions and imaginations) through their in-between positions (see also Grover, 2018b; Dalgas, 2015).

### 3.4.2. LABOUR RIGHTS

It is difficult to research issues related to the lower ranges of the labor market, such as

domestic work, without encountering perspectives that are critical toward the present state of events (e.g., Goldstein, 2003). Critical perspectives and phenomenology can be seen as conflicting, both ontologically as well as epistemologically. Phenomenology primarily strives to describe what unfolds in people's life-worlds, and to do so in a manner that is as free from pre-conceived bias as possible. Critical perspectives on the other hand have, more or less explicitly from the onset, decided on the character or essence of a given phenomenon, for example that (male) gender is dominant (and problematic), or that "human rights" are universally good. Along these lines, labor rights such as the ones proposed by the International Labour Organization (ILO) belong to such a category of pre-defined good conduct. While I was in my research process, I became interested in the collective dynamics related to the inheritance of domestic workers and work contracts (see Chapter 7). On this basis, as well as the research I did conduct on the domestic workers' perspective, I found it very difficult not to agree on certain parts of the ILO's labor rights platform (ILO, 2019), for example, the benefits of a rest day during the week or a maximum limit of weekly workhours. Hence, in this case my perspective in the concluding part of the dissertation could be criticized for sliding over into a more critical position, when I recommend using such international standards as the ILO as a guideline for basic contract creation. However, my position is hardly a fundamentalist one. I see such potential official regulation of the organizations employing expatriates as an intervention that would also be welcomed by expatriate newcomers. They often feel bewildered precisely do to the general lack of such official standards during their time in India.

### 3.5. FIELD SITE

#### 3.5.1. DELHI

India's capital Delhi is a megacity with more than 16 million people in its large metropolitan area, according to the last census (Census, 2011). In the so-called "cow-belt" of India's northern plains, the capital sprawls along the Yamuna river. Close to the desert, farmlands, and the Himalayan foothills, Delhi is part of Delhi NCR – *the national capital region* – that includes nearby cities in the neighboring states of Rajasthan, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh. One such city is Gurgaon, a modern office town and home of many international companies and their international employees, including Danish expatriates. Gurgaon is well-connected with Delhi via metro and highway. I selected the city as part of my Delhi field-site as it is an important part of the Delhi NCR, especially in terms of Danish migration to Delhi. I use Delhi, New Delhi, and Delhi NCR interchangeably to refer to my fieldsite, as this is what many expatriates do. Strictly speaking, *New Delhi* refers to a part of central Delhi built by British architects during colonial times; an area with many straight lines, broad boulevards, and colonial buildings, including the parliament house. Being the political center of India, Delhi has many diplomatic and foreign missions. In addition, the city attracts many internal- and regional (South Asian) migrants, many of whom work in construction and the domestic work sector (Banerjee, 2018). The relatively new metro makes public transportation around

Delhi easier than in many other Indian megacities, however, traffic jams on the roads are frequent. The journey from central Gurgaon to South Delhi may take more than an hour in rush hour. The northern part of the town “Old Delhi” is generally crowded and chaotic, except for the “Civil Lines” – an area first build and used by the British, but later taken over by Indians working for the British administration. Today, most embassy staff live in central (New) and south Delhi, close to the major embassy areas.

In spite of the elite population found in the city, poverty is explicitly present everywhere. Beggars are common, just as are many types of slums. These slums range from more “proper” neighborhoods with houses made of stone and TV antennas on the roofs, to temporary camps made of plastic and scrap metal along the roadside. Poor people also live under the city’s many fly-overs. Newcomers (not familiar with explicit poverty) are commonly shocked on the drive from the airport to central Delhi, during which it is not unusual to see babies crawling more or less unsupervised on the pavement, whole families camped at the street cooking their dinners in small stoves, children knocking on cars stopped at red lights in order to sell small items or to beg. There are several leprosy camps in the city, so beggars on the streets and outside of the cities’ temples and major attractions are often missing limbs or rolling their disabled bodies on home-made skateboards. Such scenes stand in sharp contrast to the modern high-rise skyline and tech offices in Gurgaon, to the majestic old colonial mansions and buildings in New Delhi, to the cozy tree-lined upper-class elite neighborhoods called “colonies” (Waldrop, 2004) in central and South Delhi, and to the guarded condominiums of Gurgaon, where elite Indians and expatriates live side by side, often equipped with a local pool, gym, and playground. Upper-class markets in central and south Delhi provide both quirky art shops, biodynamic vegetables, and specialized Western products, besides international restaurants, cafes, and drinking dens. Delhi’s many five-star hotels are used for their restaurants, bars, nightclubs, and pools. Pools are particularly popular among the families with children, just as air-conditioned venues (including the shopping centers in South Delhi and Gurgaon) may be sought as an escape from the unruliness of the Delhi climate, as well as due to health concerns (see Fecther, 2007). Delhi has five seasons: a short dry spring, a very warm summer (up to 48 degrees), a wet monsoon season, a warm autumn, and a short cold winter (down to zero at night). Since Delhi topped Beijing on the 2014 WHO’s list of the most polluted city in the world, air pollution has been an important theme within the talk of the foreign population in the city. Air-purifiers are normally used at home, and some of the expatriates are beginning to use masks on the streets, and while riding the open auto-rickshaws.

In spite of its alarming pollution, Delhi is in parts a surprisingly green city with many parks and trees. However, outside of the monsoon season, the leaves are dusty and there is the general problem with trash (and a lack of public toilets) in public spaces in India. Furthermore, Delhi has a considerable number of old monuments and heritage buildings, in more or less well-preserved stages, such as old mosques and tombs. The city’s history goes back more than a thousand years; from Rajput (1000 BC 1192), the Sultanate period (1192– 1320), the Tughlak Dynasty (1320-1398), the Sayyid Dynasty

(1414-1451), the Lodi Dynasty (1451-1526), the Mughal Dynasty (1526-1803), British colonial domination (1803-1947), to Independence in 1947 (Peck, 2005). Many religious groups and symbols are visible in public spaces, from small roadside temples, Hindu icons, and flower garland sellers, to Mosques, Christian churches, Sikh temples, and the odd Sufi Shrine. Although Delhi lost many of its Muslims during the participation of the country, there is still a considerable number left in the city, beside the majority of Hindus.

### 3.5.2. THE EXPATRIATE COMMUNITY

Although not at all in the league of cities like Dubai or Singapore – where the expatriates make up a high percent of the total population (Walsh, 2007; Yeoh & Khoo, 1998) – Delhi does have a considerable expatriate population. In 2008, 35,973 American citizens registered themselves at the Foreigner Regional Registration Office (FRRO) in Delhi (Grover, 2018b, p. 189), a registration needed if living in Delhi with a short- or long-term work, research, or accompanying family-visa. Delhi also has American, British, French, and German schools to cater to such temporary international families. They are not cheap, and it can be difficult to get a place in them, due to the high level of demand. Danish expatriates encounter international expatriates from an array of different countries when they go to these schools and other venues used often by the expatriates (and Indian elites) in the city. Although on one hand, there is a tendency to group together along national (language) and sociocultural lines among the expatriates in Delhi, as noted by Fechter in her study in Jakarta (2007), the picture is more mixed among the Danes in Delhi. In my research, the expatriates work position (e.g., business, diplomacy, research, or non-working accompanying spouse) and the exact location of their housing (e.g., where in the city, which neighborhood) seemed to be stronger promoters of specific social interactions (with mostly Danes, mixed, or more international), than nationality itself. I found that more often a division seemed to emerge more between the Danes living and working in Gurgaon (mostly business people) and the Danes working in diplomatic missions, who primarily live in central (New) or South Delhi. However, South Delhi also is very popular among business people, researchers, young professionals, and students, so it is a division with many exceptions. Furthermore, Danish events such as *Stambord* attract Danes from all sides of the work spectrum. *Stambord* is a global event for Danes to network with other working Danes. Normally it is aimed at creating business connections and allowing for the discussion of issues about working in the given country (DABGO, 2019). However, during my research in Delhi it functioned broadly as a social event for Danes working in Delhi, as well as for their non-working spouses.

This does not mean that national lines and language do not play a role, for example, in what may be seen as proper (or familiar) ways of conveying advice to one's expatriate peers. To give an example: at the time of my research, the American Women's Association (AWA) had a link on their webpage to "staff management" that was written with phrasings and words that one of my key informants found disturbing. Even

though she started out using some of this advice, such as not letting her live-in maid have access to the family's washing machine for personal use – a thing she would normally have allowed without even reflecting about it – in many other ways she dismissed much of the advice, characterizing them as too harsh and unbecoming of a Dane. Another informant told me that she had stopped being a member of an international online group, as all the ongoing scary stories and anecdotes about domestic workers were making her un-reasonably paranoid. I have not made an extensive analysis of all of the guidebooks (e.g., Rewal, 2013; Caulfield, 2013; Delhi Network, 2012), Facebook groups, and online forums (e.g., Yunni.net, Gurgaon Connection, Delhi expat network, Danes in Delhi) that are available for expatriates in Delhi, however, I have been a reader and member of several and used this material in my general analysis.

### 3.5.3. INDIAN EMPLOYERS OF DOMESTIC WORKERS

The number of domestic workers in India has been estimated from 4.5 to 90 million people (Barua et al., 2017). Most of these people work in Indian households. Indian families are not the focus of my dissertation, but they still have a prominent place in the everyday life of the Danish expatriates; social representations of “the Indian other” is, as mentioned above, often used by the expatriates to contrast their own employer practices, and especially to position themselves as better employers than the locals. Thus, the reader will get to know the Indian other through a more stereotypical presentation in this dissertation. Hence, a word of caution is needed. Domestic work belongs to the grey informal economy in India, thus it is open to explicit abuse and to more hidden structural constraints (such as no enforced regulations and the effects of a still caste dominated society), making work and living conditions poor for a broad section of these workers (Neetha & Palriwala, 2011; Wiego rapport, 2011; Neetha, 2010; Frøystad, 2003). Yet, many Indian employers (like expatriates) do their best to create decent conditions for their staff. Furthermore, the young professionals (elite) Indians I met engaged in progressive changes of the work conditions of their employees. They looked at the old segregation practices (such as separate cups for employers and employees) as old fashioned, and something belonging to their parents or grandparents generation. However, it is normal for singles and young professionals, in a city with lot of commuting time and long workhours, to have someone to come by to take the dishes and maybe do a bit of cleaning and cooking (e.g., 1-2 hours) during most days of the week. “My maid is my backbone. I cannot do without her” a young woman told me. She normally arrived home at 6.30 PM from work. Most (upper-class) house wives also have one to several people to help them during the day – for example, to do the chopping of the vegetables, so the employer can do the cooking afterwards. Cleaning and dishwashing are usually outsourced, if it can be afforded. Most privileged people in India are brought up with someone to care for the manual tasks. It is a structure present in all areas of Indian society (Dumont, 1970), where service personnel and other people in low jobs take care of the physical, strenuous work and everyday chores, e.g., dog-walking, grocery delivery, and car washing (Ray & Qyaum, 2009). Accordingly, service personnel and domestic workers are a common-sense part of life. This can be

pleasant in many ways, as one of my Indian friends jokingly noted to me: “a good butler is the key to a good life.” His mother had the same male staff employed for 30 years. Now my friend had recently hired a man (beside his cleaning lady), who packed his bag for work, served breakfast, and did a lot of other things, such as serving dinner when he was having friends over. My friend told me his quality of life had improved significantly since he employed this man.

Nevertheless, domestic workers are also a reason for worries. Indian employers may find it difficult (as expatriates do) to find trustworthy people. Occasionally, stories of employers being murdered by their employees hit the headlines. Our Indian landlord suggested us setting up CCTV (surveillance camera) to spy on our maid, in order to check if our children were being treated well when we were not at home. Furthermore, theft is frequent. I can provide a couple of examples from my time in Delhi. The young nanny of our Indian neighbors’ daughter stole from the family and her employer knew it. She gave her many chances to change her behavior until one day the limit was reached. Another neighbor had to fire her cook after several years, due to the same problem. Therefore, when an Indian family finally finds good employees they become just as keen as the expatriates to uphold these relationships. The payment is generally lower than the typical expatriate family, and workhours may be longer (although not always), but there is a potential that the employment can stretch over many more years than what is possible for the temporary expatriates.



# CHAPTER 4. EMBODIED ETHNOGRAPHY IN PSYCHOLOGY: LEARNING POINTS FROM EXPATRIATE MIGRATION RESEARCH

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## 4.1. ABSTRACT

Interviews and observation are often the preferred methods when psychologists conduct fieldwork. However, psychology can learn from recent developments in anthropology and sociology. Here researchers use their own embodied sensations in participatory research as a way to investigate less verbalized, more hidden, sensorial and affective aspects of the life- worlds they are studying. In this article, I use case examples from research on privileged migrants (expatriates) to demonstrate how significant insights can emerge when we apply an embodied approach in our research. Migration is not only behavioral, social, verbal or imaginative events but includes the migrant's body - its sensory experiences and emotions. Thus, we need to embrace additional methods to investigate multifaceted psychological processes such as migration.

**Keywords:** Embodiment, psychological ethnography, phenomenology, expatriates, liminality.

## 4.2. INTRODUCTION

Ethnography is not anymore a domain primarily reserved for anthropologists and ethnographers (Atkinson, 2017). During the last decades, ethnographic methods have become increasingly popular in the human sciences (Gøhler, et. al. forthcoming), including psychology. Ethnographic methods enable psychologists to “study the constitution of psychological phenomena in social practices across time” (Tanggaard, 2014, p. 167), and may facilitate surprising discoveries beyond what is seen in the light of dominating Anglo-American psychological models (Shweder, 1997; Fish, 2000). Accordingly, participant observations are integrated into many contemporary psychological research projects (e.g., Højtholt & Kousholt, 2014; Levitan et al., 2018), just as scholars from psychology contribute to the development of ethnographic methods (e.g., Gergen, 2018). In this article, I will not be propagating novel methods, but instead inviting the reader to integrate *embodiment* as a part of psychological ethnography.

*Embodied ethnography* as a fieldwork method has gained popularity within anthropology especially over the last decade (e.g., Stodulka, Selim, & Mattes, in press; Davis &

Spencer, 2010). Embodied ethnography invites us to see human experience as including material, sensorial and affective involvement in the world (Davies, 2010; Pink, 2015). Thus, it highlights a dimension often marginalized, as researchers favor talk and observation alone (Thurnell-Read, 2011). In general, science prefers to avoid ambiguous experiences as bodily sensations are often difficult to grasp conceptually and do not fit into coherent systems and words (Jackson, 1995). In addition, within psychology, the “material presence” of the people we study tends to be forgotten, as verbal accounts and “meaning-making” have become the prime lens for our qualitative research (Aagaard & Matthiesen, 2016; Brinkmann, 2014). However, this creates a rather distorted picture of the life worlds that we actually live in. Everyday human experience is much more than just words (Lehman, forthcoming) or observable actions. It is also feeling the summer sun on our skin, going to art museums, eating ice cream, and giving hugs to loved ones. Thus, within psychological research, we need to embrace alternative methods to attend to such experiences.

In the following, I draw on the work of anthropologists Michael Jackson (1995) and Sarah Pink (2015), and that of sociologist Thomas Thurnell-Read (2011), and invite the reader to consider a multisensory and affective approach in psychological ethnography; where the researcher attends to their own embodied experiences during fieldwork, as a supplementary pathway to understanding the everyday experiences of participants. What I suggest is an approach that not only emphatically feels into the bodily experiences of our informants during observations (Matthiesen, 2015) and interviews (Finlay, 2006), but that also strategically uses the embodied experiences of the researcher during research. This includes paying attention to a broad spectrum of everyday sensorial and affective experiences during the ethnographic fieldwork, especially the researcher’s sensations and emotions in relation to places, practices, and social encounters shared with their participants. This method borders on an old school approach to fieldwork (i.e., Whyte, 2012) where prolonged time and immersion in the field is seen as a crucial epistemological tool.

I will present two case examples from my own research on expatriates in India to illustrate how attending to embodied being can propel significant findings during fieldwork. *Expatriates* are highly skilled migrants who voluntarily move to another country once or repeatedly so as to work on temporary contracts or to follow their working partner. They are so-called privileged migrants (Amit, 2007), and include (among others) researchers, journalists, diplomats, international business people, and human aid and relief workers. This mobile migrant group has, until recently, received very little attention in psychology. The fact that they do not settle permanently positions expatriates differently than the migrants traditionally researched within psychology, where focus is upon integration into, and adaption to, the local society (Ward et al., 2001). In contrast, for the temporary migrant who stays in the new country anywhere from a few months to several years it may also be a question of creating strategies for a repeatedly mobile life (Levitan, 2018). However, this does not mean that these migrants are “placeless.” Their everyday experiences are deeply grounded in the concrete settings where they live and work (Meir, 2015; Schlieve, 2018).

In addition, as will be demonstrated below, migration is a complex process where embodied experiences such as emotions can play a major role, for example in the establishment of social networks and in the moral interpretations of novel encounters. Accordingly, the case examples I have chosen illustrate my own attempts to use and integrate an embodied method during psychological ethnographic fieldwork, and some of the important results that came out of these efforts. The article is shaped as follows. First, I will outline the theoretical foundation of embodied ethnography as it is used in this paper. Then, privileged migration is introduced with a focus on body and liminality, followed by the case examples of how embodied ethnography may unfold in practice. The paper concludes with the assertion that in order to explore the complex dynamic experiences of migration we need to embrace embodied experiences.

### 4.3. EMBODIED ETHNOGRAPHY IN THEORY

Ethnography is the study of social realities and social life-worlds (Atkinson, 2017). These social realities can, from the perspective of cultural psychology, be seen as constructed in mutually interdependent relationships between their material embodied environments (Valsiner, 2007; Schlieve et al., 2018). This ontologically implies a world existing concretely in its material core, but which is also simultaneously symbolically constructed in our semantic/imaginative engagement with it. Everything is interconnected. Consequently we are never really able to epistemologically grasp what comes first in human experience—the affordances of the world (Gibson, 2015), the pre-reflexive experiences of it (Merleau-Ponty, 1962), or our semiotic engagement with it (Valsiner, 2014) and our sense-making in relation to it (Bruner, 1990). I will not attempt to answer this grand question here. Rather, the aim is to pragmatically provide space for a methodology that includes the material embodied being in the world. As mentioned above, this is something which is often neglected in contemporary psychological research.

My contribution to an embodied ethnography emerges from a phenomenological tradition, if we define *phenomenology* as an attempt to get close to people's everyday lived experiences (Jackson, 1996), and describing their life-worlds in ways that include doing justice to their embodied and sense-making experiences, at least as far as this is possible (Tutenges, forthcoming). For Michael Jackson (1995), the human encounters during fieldwork are key for generating such understandings. All that we learn about human social worlds as researchers arises from our relationships to informants and to our shared world. Thus, we need to be present in the field with our informants, maybe even for a long period of time, to let such understandings emerge. This perspective implies that intersubjective dynamics – including the experiences of the researcher during fieldwork – are part of the overall generation of knowledge. This is a methodological position of *radical empiricism*, wherein the epistemological division between subject and object in research is rejected (Davies, 2010, p. 3; Jackson, 1989). This includes seeing emotions as having analytical and epistemological worth in ethnography (Davies, 2010). However, although central attention is given to the embodied experiences of the researcher, the goal here is not to promote radical auto-ethnography (i.e., Ellis &

Bochner, 2003). Instead, the researcher's personal introspection and reflections on their multisensory and affective field experiences are to be seen as an additional method for further enquiries into the participants' life worlds.

Sarah Pink (2015) points out that sharing sensation in mutual moments is crucial for getting closer to one's participants during fieldwork. Pink promotes a sensory ethnography, whereby all senses are used during research. Researchers not only listen attentively in an interview, but they also notice the different sensations that they are sharing with their informants during the interview, for example, the smell of the place, the sounds that surround, or the taste of the tea that they are drinking. Such experiences may not at first seem meaningful in terms of a story line, but they have an epistemological value. This is true for attempts to understanding the experiences of the other, but also when trying to communicate about these experiences. As Thurnell-Read (2011) notes in his research on British males' binge tours in Eastern Europe, by being part of their common-sense world during these trips, he gained access to a joy arising in the group, one that may very well have otherwise remained hidden from him. Moreover, Thurnell-Read also expands Pink's methodological approach by emphasizing the analytical importance of ambivalent or negative emotional experiences during fieldwork – as seen for example, in his reactions of disgust toward the British men vomiting on the street or their harassment of locals, personal reactions he found to be not unlike the massive critique of this kind of tourism in the cities visited by these tourists. Thurnell-Read thus concludes that these reactions also could teach him something about the broader social dynamics of the phenomena he was studying (see also Stodulka, 2015; Lorimer, 2010).

However, this does not mean that we as researchers should be naïve about what our personal and emotional experiences might mirror during our fieldwork. As Devereux (1967) emphasized, our initial affective experiences (and connected analyses), may have more to do with our own personal history (and psychological defense mechanisms), than with the present life-worlds of the informants. Accordingly, we should engage in self-reflective processes during our fieldwork. This includes the strategic use of interviews to check up upon whether the researcher's currently embodied experiences also strike a relevant chord in the informants' life-worlds. In general, the method I here propose does not imply that other methods of knowledge generation in the field, such as interviews and observation, should be abandoned. Rather, the different methods should be seen as complementing each other. When we manage to do so, we may even learn about the communities we study by reflecting on our own coping strategies toward our current concerns (Jackson, 2010). This can be seen when the anxieties of the researcher are very similar to those of the informants – as found in the limbo of temporary migration.

#### **4.4. THE (LIMINOID) BODY IN PRIVILEGED MIGRATION**

Migration is a multifaceted, dialectic and embodied event. Expatriates move (and live) in-between different geographical and sociocultural spaces, staying in a given location

on temporary terms as long as the length of their contracts. During this time their bodies – its physical features, feelings and sensory impressions arising as the expatriates engage with the concrete foreign place in which they live – become central to their experiences of themselves and of their present lifeworld. In her seminal anthropological study of Westerners in Jakarta, Anne-Meike Fetcher (2007) describes how “their bodies become a key site, as well as an agent, through which their understanding of Indonesia and their identities as Western, white expatriates are produced and articulated” (p. 60). Drawing on Merleau-Ponty, Fetcher shows how expatriates’ experiences of Jakarta are framed by their negotiations of their spatial boundaries during their movements through town. For example, expatriates use of air-conditioned cars to move through the city and the hosting of expatriate events in five-star hotel venues derive from a wish to be sheltered from such things as traffic, smog, humidity, heat and sensorial chaos of the public sphere, but they also come to shape the expatriates’ experiences of distance to the “real” local life in the city. This also creates a general feeling of being in an unreal (expatriate) “bubble.” Furthermore, as locals gaze at the expatriates’ white bodies, those bodies are racialized, thereby standing out in new ways, ways that the expatriates have often never experienced before.

Notably, encounters with novel people, places and smells become part of not only the identity work at stake, but also the whole negotiation of the rupture encountered within the migrants’ normal flow of being (Märtsin & Mahmoud, 2012). This rupture is conceptualized by many scholars on the basis of Turner’s (1978) notion of *liminality* (e.g., Cangia, 2018; Beckstead, 2010, 2012; Märtsin & Mahmoud, 2012). Turner builds on Van Gennep’s (1961) three-phase model of rites of passage. Van Gennep pictures how people in traditional African villages during transitory rituals go through three different successive rites; the separation from society, a middle phase (*limen*); and the reincorporation into society again. Turner highlights the middle phase of *limen* as a process where the one is “betwixt and between the categories of ordinary social life” (Turner, 1974, p. 53), and further extends this notion of *limen* to include experiences outside the ritual sphere of traditional (African) societies, such as during pilgrimages, and other *liminod phenomena* (Turner & Turner, 1978). There is no question of the pivotal role of Turner’s concept of liminality in relation to transitory processes and all the research it has propelled. However, Turner is also criticized for his lack of (enough) embodiment in his conceptualizations of liminality (St Johns, 2001). To illustrate this point, Turner describes how co-liminars experience strong feelings of togetherness or *communitas*, however, in doing so he focuses more on what he sees as ruptures of the existing social hierarchies (Turner, 1974) and the semiotic power of (religious) symbols in eliciting strong (similar and shared) emotions (Turner, 1978), rather than exploring the (embodied) processes of social bonding and its possible consequences. However, as will be explored below, the strong affective connections that can emerge between people as they share liminal circumstances are important.

In addition, St. John (2001) argues that Turner neglects the carnivalian aspects of the body during liminal experiences. In his research on an alternative lifestyle festival in

Australia, St. John argues that embodied events such as defecating together – including the full olfactory, auditory and sensorial experience – can be an important part of the liminal experience during such festivals. Similarly, playing with novel forms of erotica can also play this role. However, Turner – like Durkheim (Olaveson, 2001) – seems to make a division between two interrelated poles; a more normative structural form of being versus a more egoistic (or impulse driven) side of experience. In Turner’s view, these two conflicting sides of human life need to be brought together by ritual means. Thus, in rituals individuals’ (embodied) desires are transformed into supporting the norms of society (Turner, 1974). Ultimately, he leaves out the more grotesque or erotic sides of human embodiment as a dimension worth exploring in their own terms.

If we look at how Turner’s concept is applied within travel and (privileged) migration research within cultural psychology we see that the affective dimensions of liminal situations are commonly used in relation to imaginative and symbolic processes. For example, Cangiá (2018) describes in depth the interplay between imagination and feelings of precarity (or immobility) as experienced by expatriate spouses following their partner’s unpredictable work trajectories, something akin to a *liminal hotspot* (Stenner et al., 2017) or the case of being stuck in transition. Following Turner and Turner (1978), Beckstead (2012) explores how concrete physical pilgrimages sites, their emotionally laden symbolic objects, and the pilgrims’ expectations together promote alternate relationships with the world for the pilgrim, including religious experiences.

In addition, Turner’s notion of liminality is often broadly conceptualized as a situation in which normal ways of being, social norms, and social practices are temporarily up in the air (Gillespie, 2006), where travelers can be “free to play with their identity and how they present themselves, since they move beyond their home community and the social expectations” (Beckstead, 2012 p. 718). There exists a popular representation of traveling as a move away from the bonds of (prior) social norms (Beckstead, 2010; Rudmin, 2010). Yet, I would question these interpretations. Turner does not, as I read him, see liminoid spaces as a situation in which everything is possible. Rather, although there is the potential for making (more lasting) societal changes (Turner & Turner, 1978), this is still occurring within certain constraints (Turner, 1977). Moreover, based on my research, it does not seem likely that people depart from old value systems during temporary migration (see also Wortmeyer & Branco, forthcoming). Rather, as I have argued elsewhere (Schlieve, 2017), these old norms are selectively adapted alongside new social norms as the migrant works to understand, manage and legitimate their current lifeworld. Notably, the migrant’s original value system is present all the way down to their embodied reactions, as we will explore more below. Thus, although Turner’s concept of liminoid processes almost intuitively captures the phenomenological experience of a privileged migrant or traveler, we need to include more “body” into his concept if we are to use it in migration research.

## 4.5. EMBODIED EXPATRIATE RESEARCH

The following case examples derive from two different research projects on expatriates in Delhi. I chose these two examples for the following reasons: the first case focuses on well-being strategies of Scandinavian accompanying spouses, and it illuminates my first introduction to an embodied focus in the field; the second case shows how I integrated this approach more strategically in my next study on Danish expatriates in India. As I will demonstrate below, my informants' experiences of strong bonding with other expatriates and their (moral) uneasiness about their privileged position in India would have been much more hidden, subtle, or difficult to comprehend, had I not had similar experiences of my own body during my fieldwork.

### 4.5.1. BOMBS AND BONDING

Michael Jackson (1996) emphasizes how the researcher should aim to approach informants' experiences in order to get close to their life-world. His phenomenological orientation – being truly curious about the perspective of the other – framed my research design when I went to India to do expatriate research for the first time. I did five months of fieldwork among accompanying spouses in 2008 (see Schlieuwe, 2009). I had set my attention on getting as close as possible to the accompanying spouses' experiences in India, and I set out to do so by listening to them in an explorative fashion, approaching their perspectives in a non-judgmental way, and getting close to their everyday life through participant observation. My focus was therefore initially more attuned to the spouses' perspectives than to my own experiences, although I noted the many shared experiences we had due to our positions as (white and rich) migrants in a foreign city of the Global South (Fechter, 2005). A vital event, however, turned my attention more toward the analytic usefulness of such similarities in embodied experiences. The significant moment happened for me early on in my fieldwork. I had been a little more than a month in India, still new to my research field and filled with all the anxieties and eagerness that often characterize entry to fieldworks (Crapazano, 2010), when five synchronized bomb blasts occurred in several places in the city. Several people were killed at market areas often frequented by expatriates. I was unaware of the event – out dining with a research colleague who was living at the same research centre as I – until my mobile phone suddenly rang. I was surprised to find one of my Swedish informants on the line. Agitated, she asked me where I was and then advised me to go home immediately, telling me that several bombs had just exploded in the city. I did not know her very well at that time, but she had nevertheless called to check if I was OK. Going home from the restaurant, I felt – beside the sudden adrenalin rush I had due to the news and the relief that I was not near any of the the terrorist attacks – a soothing warmth emerging inside my body. I was new and alone in a mega city. And she – a person whom I had met only a few times – had thought of me when she heard the news of the bombings. I felt protected in a situation where I should have felt very vulnerable. It touched my heart profoundly and I felt deep gratitude toward her (Schlieuwe, 2009, p. 24).

This event provided a “eureka” moment in my research that directed my attention to the vital importance of peer networks among the accompanying spouses in Delhi. During my many interviews and observations after the incidence, it became clear that other accompanying spouses compose a key element within the experiences of well-being during the posting. Such relationships are important in terms of help with practical and logistic issues, but also in terms of psychological experiences of security and mutual emotional support, e.g., they can help to normalize novel experiences, they can provide a needed oases of familiarity and comfort, and they can lay the groundwork for leisure experiences. Furthermore, this points to essential dimensions of expatriate life, e.g., the importance of one’s own “tribe” (Maffesoli, 1996) during migration: the immediate connections with familiar peers, and the strong bonding and mutual support between them. In other words, these relationships exemplify the experience of *communitas* that can materialize in urban expatriate settings like Delhi, group dynamics which in turn can have an immense impact on how the individual expatriates relate to the places they are staying. Their social realities abroad become mediated to a considerable degree by expatriate peers. These are insights that have formed an important base of my research (e.g., Schlieve, 2018, forthcoming).

#### 4.5.2. UNEASY ENCOUNTERS

I conducted my second fieldwork – on Danes’ experiences of becoming expatriate employers of domestic workers – over 13 months in the years 2013-2016. The use of my own embodied experiences as an additional method in the field was a strategy that I intentionally adopted from the beginning of this study. I planned prolonged fieldwork with deep immersion. On the two longest fieldtrips (5 and 6 months) I lived in an apartment in a popular expatriate neighborhood in South Delhi with my husband and two children. Bringing children into the field is a methodological consideration worthy of discussion in itself (Cornet & Blumenfield, 2016). Nevertheless, what I want to highlight here is that it made me (and us) settle into town in similar ways to those experienced by the expatriate families I was studying. Importantly, in relation to my research focus, like other expatriates we were expected (from locals and expatriate peers) to have staff while living there. I therefore automatically entered the efficient and unofficial system of *inheriting* domestic staff from other expatriates. This enabled me to investigate this formerly “invisible” system (see Schlieve, forthcoming). In addition, I was immersed in the subject I was studying – even when I was at home. Thus, just like my informants I had to negotiate this novel work relationship, but with the notable difference that I was strategically attentive to my own experiences of it (Tanggaard, 2014).

The field notes from this time contain just as many pages of descriptions and reflections from within the walls of my house, as pages devoted to ethnographic notes and thoughts derived from the international and Danish expatriate community around me. Probably due to this initial strategy, key insights did not emerge from *one* spectacular embodied event as they did in the previous study discussed above, but rather from a plethora of daily micro events – from banal to more surprising – all directing different areas of my attention during my research.



We had a couple of different maids and nannies during our time in India, experiences that ranged from successful to frustrating. In general, I went through numerous different affective states, such as confusion, frustration, fear, suspicion, discomfort, shame, trust, warmth, care, irritation, joy, gratitude, and thankfulness, sometimes even during the same day. These emotions appeared during situations that were often similar to those described to me by many of my informants during our interviews. This helped me to understand the diversity and richness of the processes I was researching. This was particularly relevant in relation to the embodied experiences of morality: feelings of guilt and shame within the Danish expatriates' experiences of their novel higher social position in India, combined with their (novel) encounters with domestic workers in Delhi (see Schlieve, 2017). The unease about their position exists alongside the many benefits, comforts and joys that come with that position, and this combination is central to this type of privileged migration; expatriates from the Global North moving to the Global South. Contrary to common beliefs or stereotypes, privileged and rich people often spend quite some time legitimizing and negotiating their privileged positions (Sherman, 2017).

To illustrate how such significant fieldwork moments could arise, I noted several episodes involving intense emotions of shame in encounters with my first maid whenever we touched, one way or the other, the subject of my (superior) socioeconomic position versus her less privileged position. For example, one day she asked me if I wanted my blouse included in today's wash, while I was working in my home office. She then came back and handed me bills she had found in my pocket, bills from in-room dining at a luxury hotel I had been at with my family during the weekend. Our youngest was a six-month-old baby at the time, so being able to afford in-room dining during a weekend trip was a luxury we really appreciated. Nevertheless, it suddenly felt like an unnecessary excess when confronted with the big bill in front of my maid. It was such moments of confrontations with our radically different positions that raised intense unease in me, which in turn made me employ an array of actions to level out my bad conscience, e.g., raising her farewell bonus in my imagination or deciding not to scold her for her many illegitimate leaves of absence. These personal embodied experiences of "sensuous morality" (Pink, 2015) made me turn to potential similar experiences of shame, uneasiness, and different means of leveling strategies among my (also) newly arrived key informants. Through interviews, formal and informal, as well as general observations, I found out that experiences of shame over one's privileged position, and the employment a range of strategies (including hiding shopping bills from staff) to level out such unease, were extremely common among the Danish expatriates I was studying. These expatriates were not only engaged in cultural encounters in general, but with a temporary migration into a new (higher) social position, which also had to be negotiated on several levels (see Schlieve, 2017). Furthermore, due to my longitudinal design, I could track how my informants found alternative ways over time to understand and legitimize their current privileges; ways that made them able to keep a feeling and picture of themselves as the same morally-sound people they were before the migration in spite of the inequalities they now participate in every day (although

their ambiguity never fully disappears). Practices of inequality may be a case specifically problematic for Danes and other Scandinavians raised in small, rich, and quite homogenous welfare societies. Nevertheless, as Sherman (2017) highlights, the (psychological) negotiations of privilege are largely understudied.

#### 4.6. CONCLUSION

The human body, with all its multisensory and affective experiences, plays a prominent role during privileged migration. I have presented an understanding of embodiment as the sensorial and emotional experiences emerging as expatriates move through their everyday life abroad, both concretely as well as in the imagination. Thus, the migrant's body as a site of negotiations can be explored in its own right. Furthermore, I have proposed including the embodied experiences of the ethnographic researcher. By being fully immersed in the common-sense world of our informants – by sharing their material, sensorial, and affective experiences – we are able to ask new questions and gain different (rich) understandings of the fields we are studying. Yet, the researcher's experiences constitute an initial guiding tool, not an end in itself. Using these experiences successfully requires the rigors of any scientific endeavor (Atkinson 2017), e.g., to validate if our emerging hypothesis illuminates the experiences of the people we are studying. Consequently, I suggest using interviews (alongside self-reflective practices) as a mean to investigate such relevance. If we take a look at the expatriate literature, researchers' personal experiences with migration are already used more or less implicitly during interviews with informants (e.g., Cangiá, 2018, 2017; Levitan, 2018). My agenda in the current text is to explicitly highlight such methodological tools and to bring them to the front of our research.

Making the privileged migrant's body an explicit anchor in our empirical research includes the affects and sensory experiences emerging when expatriates move through different social layers and sociocultural landscapes. In other words, we should take into consideration within our research their concrete experiences of liminality as they move in-between (novel) positions, encounters, possibilities, and obstacles in everyday life. These migrant experiences may initially be difficult to put into words. Nevertheless, they carry important psychological relevance for the people involved. For example, for Scandinavian expatriates in India, this would include their experiences of deeply-felt social bonding with other foreign peers and their (moral) troubles about their newly gained privileges. It is my claim here, that by engaging in not only what is said, not said, or not possible to say, but also, in what is felt or not felt (Valsiner, 2014), as psychological researchers (and fellow human beings) we can slowly begin the real quest of phenomenologically mapping the complexities and dynamics of migrant life.

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# CHAPTER 5: THE MOBILE LIFE-WORLD MAP: A DIALOGICAL TOOL FOR UNDERSTANDING EXPATRIATES

Schlieve, S. (2018). The Mobile Life-World Map: A dialogical tool for understanding expatriates. In S. Schlieve, G. Marsico, & N. Chaudhary (Eds.), *Cultural psychology of intervention in the globalized world* (pp. 223-244). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing

*Signe and Andreas are a young Danish working couple posted in New Delhi. For them, India is a place of professional opportunities and interesting experiences. They are career-minded and find their work in managerial positions both challenging and exciting. They often go to high-quality restaurants, hotels and spas during weekdays, and they explore the Indian region during holidays. They talk about extending their one and a half year contract in New Delhi, and they dream about relocating to another country later in their careers. Andreas works much harder than he used to do in Denmark, yet the new surroundings and warm weather makes him feel as if he were on holiday. Signe works equally hard, but finds the first half year more strenuous. There are a lot of practical problems with settling into their new apartment. They are met with constant repair work without the time to meet with the repairmen. Furthermore, they employ domestic workers, but have to fire them again due to problems with communication and unauthorized absence from work. However, they finally find a maid who runs their household the way they like it. She was recommended to them through her former employers – a Danish family now leaving India. One Sunday morning, a year after their arrival, they sit in their big SUV on the way to a five star resort and are asked whether they have any local friends in New Delhi. Signe says with a laugh that they have almost no friends at all in New Delhi. They used to hang out with some other Danes, but they had now left the country. Signe adds that, since they spend all their weekends and holidays exploring the Indian subcontinent, they have limited time to meet and bond with new people. Though, they often join the monthly Danish (Stambord) dinner in New Delhi. (field notes)*

Signe's and Andreas situation is common for many expatriates working in foreign countries. The living conditions abroad can be exotic and adventurous, but also challenging and at times grueling. Do to demanding jobs, household obligations and touristic explorations of the host society, not much time is left to initiate contact with the

local population. This chapter offers a conceptual tool to understand the actions and experiences of expatriates. I call this tool the Mobile Life-World Map to emphasize its' broad focus on the lived complexities, practical activities and everyday sociality among expatriate populations (Jackson 1996: 7-8). The concept of the map refers to a holistic guideline for the exploration of the landscapes of human life (Morgan, 2000) – or here, expatriate life.

Research on expatriates has grown as a field of research within the social sciences in the last decade. Expatriates<sup>5</sup> can be defined as highly skilled professionals who migrate to other countries to live and work for a temporary period of time, alone or with their families. Expatriate groups may for example include diplomats, international business people, researchers, journalists, humanitarian aid workers, and development workers. Phenomenologists and social scientists have long been interested in cultural encounters and adjustment to novelty (e.g. Schuetz, 1944). However, with a few exceptions such as Cohen's classic work on *expatriate communities* (1977), only few extensive studies were done on expatriates before the late 1990s. This has changed over the last decades, which has seen an array of ethnographic studies that look into the everyday life experiences of expatriates (e.g. Fecther, 2007a; Fecther & Hindman, 2011). Also, the last decades have seen a growing awareness of the need to conceptualize these privileged migrants as embodied in concrete life-worlds (Walsh, 2012), rather than as a "placeless elite" (Meier, 2015). Furthermore, expatriates' experiences of time and transience are upcoming areas of research (Yeoh, 2017; Foote, 2017).

There exists a vast literature on forced migration, but this literature is not easily applicable to the situation of expatriates, since expatriates are generally not subjected to the same level of uncertainty, personal tragedy and loss that people fleeing from hardship and war can experience (e.g. Mohammed, 2018). Furthermore, the existing psychological approaches focusing on voluntary migration tend to overlook the fact that the life of any human being always and inevitably stands in an intimate, dialogical relationship with specific places and sociocultural settings (Zittoun et al. in press; Schlieuwe et al., 2018) and that meaning making processes unfold in concrete life-worlds (Cole, 1996; Shweder, 1991). To illustrate, the crux of John W. Berry's (e.g. 2006) widely used Acculturation model is to place individuals and groups in a four fielded matrix. Where people fall on this matrix depends on their orientation toward keeping or rejecting heritage culture and identity, and their rejection or relationship sought with the host culture: (Integration) maintaining one's own heritage culture while seeking a relationship with the host culture; (Assimilation) rejecting one's own heritage culture and seeking a relationship with the host culture; (Separation) maintaining one's own heritage culture and rejecting the host culture; and (Marginalization) rejecting both one's own heritage culture and the host culture. Underlying this model is the assumption that the individual and cultural context belong to two different levels of analysis (Berry, 2010). Thus, the focus is on measuring how these levels may influence each other, rather than

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<sup>5</sup> I use the expatriate term here as it is frequently used by the people that I study (see also Fecther, 2007)

qualitatively exploring how migrants may utilize the cultural, social and material tools available in their environment to understand and manage adaptation processes.

In cultural psychology (Valsiner 2014) there are no analytic distinctions between human experience, actions and culture. *Culture* is approached as a semiotic process taking place at the individual level. Thus, culture is actively used to co-create personal and collective life-worlds, rather than being seen as something to which an individual belongs. A problem with models like Berry's is that they do not help us to get closer to understanding how expatriates' experiences are created in dynamic processes of negotiations with the concrete places, situations and people they encounter. For example, from the perspective of the Acculturation model eating familiar food items could be ranked as belonging to a motive of maintaining heritage culture, while in a particular case it could be an attempt by expatriate parents to create a transition process as smooth (and familiar) as possible for their children. When Berry states that temporary migrants like expatriates "(...) may only have a minimal interest in engaging in serious intercultural contact and change" (2010, p. 195), he does not actually explore whether this motive is also reflected in the individual migrants' experiences, or how such rejection may have developed in the particular persons' migration trajectory. Therefore, in this chapter, I follow the phenomenological call to get experientially close to the people under study in order to understand things from their viewpoint and in order to describe their life-worlds without unnecessary abstraction and reductionism (Jackson, 1996; Schlieuwe, 2009). All too often, expatriates are described in abstract terms and with little attention to their perspective on things.

Catrin Lundström writes in her ethnographic study of Swedish female expatriates in Singapore (underscore added by me): "*When white migrants choose to self-segregate, it is a part of a long tradition of white colonizers and settlers, even though this is not always inherited from a direct colonial relation*" (2014: 171). In this account, expatriates' living conditions are pictured as emerging from a combination of personal choice and historical hegemonic structures. To this, I would add that expatriates' migration trajectories have to be understood as promoted (Cabell & Valsiner, 2014) through a complex dialogue between an individual and his or her wider life-world. I am sceptical, in other words, of the tendency to interpret the actions and experiences of expatriates as simple outcomes of their colonial inheritance and their privileged positions in the global economy. A central argument in this chapter is that it is a strenuous and complex affair to integrate as a temporary migrant in a foreign country. From my own research among expatriates in India, I can see that integration into host societies often takes considerable effort and a constant conscious choice to do so, and it also often seems to require some kind of a direct link to the local society, such as an educational or occupational background that makes the initial contact smoother. This is why it is so important to try to set aside prejudices and preconceived ideas when studying expatriates in order to examine their lives attentively and with an eye for the complexities of their lived experiences (Tutenges, 2010). This approach may be fruitful both for researchers and practitioners who wish to understand or conduct interventions among populations living and working abroad. Therefore, in this chapter, I propose a tool for exploring expatriates' experiences during their migration: The Mobile Life-World Map. I would

like to emphasize that this map should not be understood as providing final conclusions about expatriate experiences, but rather as a tool that may be used to explore the concrete life-worlds of expatriates in different geographic and social settings. It is thus meant to encourage further discussions and in-depth studies in this direction. In all probability, the map is in need of further adjustment when applied to specific cases, for everyday expatriate life and experiences are extremely varied, complex and nuanced, even within a single city such as New Delhi.

This chapter is organized as follows: firstly, I introduce the Mobile Life-World Map, and its theoretical and methodological background; secondly, the different sections and categories of the map will be presented through a range of case examples and references to relevant literature; and lastly, I conclude the chapter with a brief discussion. The case of segregation among expatriates will be an ongoing thread in the chapter.

## 5.1. THE MOBILE LIFE-WORLD MAP: A DIALOGICAL TOOL FOR RESEARCH AND INTERVENTION

The Mobile Life-World Map is based on my own fieldwork among expatriates in New Delhi, as well as a selected review of the literature on expatriates<sup>6</sup>. Furthermore, the topographic approach of the Mobile Life-World Map derives inspiration from work on how human life-trajectories – or here migration trajectories – can be seen as a combination of constraints and affordances in inner and outer environments (Zittoun, et al. 2013). The metaphor of a map gives the impression of a guideline that points to important directions we need to investigate in concrete expatriate life-worlds, but without the fixed boundaries as found in a cartographic model. I borrow the metaphor of a map from White (2007), who uses *position maps* in narrative therapy as a way to investigate clients' understanding of themselves and the problems and possibilities they encounter through these understandings. His postmodern approach uses the map as both an explorative tool and as an intervention in itself. I use the map metaphor here primarily as a tool of exploration.

The dimensions and categories of the map (presented below) are aids for a holistic exploration of the experiences of the individual expatriates under study. The map is presented as a list of factors, but the reader should keep in mind that they combine in particular ways for each case and that they need to be used together, thereby forming systemic relationships. In line with phenomenological methods, the map is based on different themes that emerged as important markers of differences in experiences among the expatriates.

The map (Figure 5.1.) is divided into two main dimensions. The first part of the map

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<sup>6</sup> *The case examples presented in the chapter are derived from my work with expatriates academically and practically; I have worked with temporary migrants and international students as a psychologist in Denmark and Greenland, studied Scandinavian accompanying spouses in New Delhi (Schliewe, 2009) and my ongoing doctoral research is a qualitative longitudinal study of Danes relocating to New Delhi (e.g. Schliewe, 2017).*

relates to the expatriates' *spatial* location at the time of the research, including the concrete geographical places (Place), their position in the life course (Person) (e.g. middle-aged manager relocating with wife and children), and the social positions they enter and their encounters with other foreigners during their time abroad (Social Positions Abroad). I focus on encounters with other expatriates in the latter to underline how foreign networks can have a major importance in expatriates' migration trajectories and experiences. In the second, *temporal* section, I take up the importance of temporary timeframes in the expatriates' meaning making processes during migration (Temporariness), and touch upon how relocation creates ruptures to the expatriates' familiar experiences of themselves, such as in encounters with locals and experiences of home (Ruptures and Adaptation). The subthemes of the categories in the map refer both to concrete as well as symbolic levels of experiences, actions and events in the expatriates' everyday life. As maps are abstract and artificial constructions of complex realities, major categories and subthemes often overlap.

Figure 5.1. the Mobile Life-World Map

<b>Spatial Dimensions:</b>	
<b>Place</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economy, infrastructure and laws of receiving country etc.</li> <li>• Immigration policies of receiving country</li> <li>• Geopolitical events (situational risk etc.)</li> <li>• Climate</li> <li>• Level of cosmopolitanism</li> <li>• Actual location (e.g. urban vs. rural location, type of neighborhood etc.)</li> <li>• Level of expatriate infrastructure (e.g. international schools)</li> <li>• Cultural traditions and social norms</li> </ul>
<b>Person</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life trajectories</li> <li>• Position in life course (e.g. age, career and family status)</li> <li>• Travel experiences (e.g. first time, repeat migrant)</li> <li>• Meaning frameworks (e.g. expectations and values)</li> </ul>
<b>Social Positions Abroad</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work- and socioeconomic position (e.g. accompanying spouse, access to privileged neighborhoods)</li> <li>• 'Ready-made' friendships with other expatriates</li> </ul>
<b>Temporal Dimensions:</b>	
<b>Temporariness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timeframe of posting (e.g. time to pack/unpack, make friends)</li> <li>• Temporary time horizon (e.g. experiences of priorities and obligations during relocation)</li> </ul>
<b>Ruptures and adaptation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home making (e.g. settling in and moving out)</li> <li>• Belonging (e.g. in-between societies and repatriation)</li> <li>• Identity negotiations (e.g. the gaze of others)</li> </ul>

In short, the overall aim of the map is to provide a dialogical tool to be used between researchers and researched to explore the concrete life-worlds of the expatriates and thus the meaning making processes that give rise to their particular experiences. The different categories and subthemes should be seen as concrete suggestions of directions that can be applied – asked about and explored more in depth – in research and interventions. For example, with regard to integration into host societies, one line of enquiry could be “who do they actually encounter on an everyday basis?” The rest of the chapter will focus on illustrating and elaborating on the different dimensions of the map.

### 5.1.1. SPATIAL DIMENSIONS

The sections below are related to where the expatriate is physically and symbolically located in their life, as well as the migration trajectory at the point of investigation.

#### 5.1.1.1. PLACE

- The local geopolitical atmosphere, climate, material surroundings, societal structures, migration policies, spoken languages, historical and sociocultural setting, as well as the employing company’s organizational structures and the existing level of expatriate infrastructure all provide a particular landscape for the expatriate in which they understand themselves and the world around them during their temporary posting.

To exemplify:

*A young Norwegian female development worker living in Kabul, in Afghanistan, describes her everyday life as entailing considerable restriction of movement. Due to security reasons she does not have many places where she can be driven to in the city. There are also very conservative gender expectations. Her fluency in the local language and her Middle Eastern appearance place additional expectations on her from the local side. The experience of restriction is also present in her home environment. She lives in a guarded house with international colleagues and several local domestic workers. Thus, she has to consider her social surroundings at home much more than she has been used to before. She feels that the intensity of the place can wear her down at times. However, being in Kabul is also experienced as a personal project and as a chance to start an international career. (SKYPE interview)*

The above outlines how the immediate environment in Kabul provides certain landscapes the young development worker has to navigate in her everyday life. A vast amount of literature deals with divergent social norms, for example ideas about body covering in public spaces (e.g. Valsiner, 2014) and the mediation between different cultural traditions (e.g. Bertholdo & Guimarães, 2018), so the matter will not be explored

further in this chapter. Instead, I will underline that these differences in one's present surroundings (e.g. risk levels, political instability, local traditions, and the housing situation), present constraints and possibilities that provide very different foundations for the expatriates' experiences. This has to be taken into account when looking at this migrant group. For instance, countries with stable governments, well-functioning welfare structures or low levels of crime may promote experiences of security. For example, expatriate families with small children in Denmark often praise the well-functioning and relatively cheap public daycare system for making dual careers possible. But, such expatriates also often note how the long, dark winters can be hard to get used to. This does not mean that high-risk destinations cannot also offer considerable possibilities in everyday life, as that is often in fact the case. For instance, young professionals, as in the example above, may experience conflict zones as an opportunity to build an international career, and such experiences may be an occasion for some expatriates to present themselves as tough (Roth, 2011, Breslin, 2018). Even war zones can become attractive places. To illustrate this point, a newly returned staff member of Doctors without Borders told me how he had experienced his posting in South Sudan as being so full of purpose – due to their everyday lifesaving activities and his strong connection with fellow colleagues – that life outside of the field became meaningless in comparison.

Furthermore, different locations within a country can also provide very different scenarios for expatriates, for example, the routines of everyday life in a rural setting versus an urban neighborhood, or in terms of national diversity. In rural areas, there may be fewer foreign peers, but on the other hand more interaction with locals. The opposite may be the case in big cities with a well-developed expatriate community. The level of expatriate infrastructure – often referred to as the “expatriate bubble” (Fechter, 2007b) – also provides a specific landscape for the newcomer. For example, the presence of international schools, the existence of expatriate-dominated neighborhoods or compounds, as well as the existence of informal and formal networks, can provide newly arrived expatriates with easy access to other foreigners. That, as we shall see later, can be of major importance for the individual expatriate's migration trajectory.

Lastly, but crucial for the everyday experiences of expatriates, are the national migrant policies they have to navigate, or are led by, during their stay abroad, as well as the social policies of their employing organizations. Savinetti (2018) demonstrates how organizational policies become entangled into the everyday life of expatriates (e.g. in terms of housing opportunities) and thus become an important partaker in co-creating the expatriates' experiences of the host country. National regulation in relation to (migration) work permits, residence permits, and visa regulations for spouse and family also provides possibilities and constraints for the expatriates that naturally have a great impact on their everyday life. For example, in India, attaining a work visa for an accompanying spouse is a difficult process (Grover, 2018).

## 5.1.1.2 PERSON

- An investigation of an expatriate's personal life-world should take into account the expatriate's current position in the life course and their unique life trajectories, including their travel experiences and the most important meaning frameworks.

To illustrate the point:

*Nana, a Danish woman, tells me that when she told colleagues about her family's upcoming posting in Ghana, everyone was excited in her behalf. Ghana was pictured as a great destination. An African treat due to its relative political stability and a high level of donor infrastructure. Nana had been living temporary in Nepal before the posting to Ghana. In hindsight, she finds her earlier stay in rural Nepal with her partner, which was marked by limited access to extra perks, but included simple things such as the enjoyment of cool cucumber in season, as somehow more interesting than their life in the capital of Ghana. However, their current life is also very different from the last relocation. Nana speaks Nepalese. She does not master any local language in Ghana, beside English. They stayed in rural Nepal before they had children and were in contact with the local population there. In Accra, they mostly spend their free time with other foreign families, for example, in a pool in a gated community where one of the foreign families lives, or on weekend trips to beaches in nearby resorts, as this is great to do with children. Nana and her family live in a guarded house, as do most of their friends. And here they have a constant stream of family and friends visiting from home. (field notes)*

In the case above, we see how the different positions in the life course in the two postings create very different frameworks for the relocations. Thus, issues such as age, family situation and where the expatriates are in their career trajectory are important to take into consideration, as well as the expatriates' prior travel experiences and expectations. The affordances in a certain destination may more or less match with what is considered important to the expatriate at the present time. The expatriates overall migrant trajectory is also important to consider. For example, there is a difference between whether their current placement is a first time experience or part of a repeated pattern of temporary migrations. In the latter case, mobile families may employ strategies for the next move already at the current location. Prior experiences with travelling can also make the initial entry into a new place and the settling period a more familiar process. The opposite can also be the case if there are big changes in the expatriate's social position or life course stage.

Furthermore, when we approach human experience ontologically as intentional, negotiated and situated in material, social, historical and imagined worlds, we need to consider the meaning frameworks people utilize to understand themselves and the



world around them. This includes their life trajectories up to the point of investigation and their imagined futures, as well as the voices (White, 2007) and people they bring with to them (Zittoun et. al, in press). Possible lines of analytical inquiries could be to look into the expatriates' expectations of their migration, the major narratives with which they identify, as well as the value systems<sup>7</sup> they use to navigate along in their everyday life. To illustrate, in my research Danes initially experienced a lot of discomfort with their novel positions as employers of domestic workers in India, and with their general rise on the socioeconomic ladder due to their relocation to India. This can be interpreted as linked to their previous lack of face- to-face encounters with visible servitude and poverty, as well as because most of them had not really thought about becoming employers of domestic workers abroad. They also used to identify themselves with moral values according to which the practices of "inequality," in which they are now engaged, were not a (moral) option. Therefore, in this case the Danes had to find ways to restore a familiar sense of self within these novel positions and practices, for example by putting effort into creating a good work environment for their employees (see Schliewe, 2017).

### 5.1.1.3. SOCIAL POSITIONS ABROAD

The expatriate's social positions abroad are crucial when we aim to understand their migration trajectory and related experiences at the posting. Social positions here include their work and socioeconomic positions, and their access to ready-made friendship networks consisting of other expatriates.

For example:

*Menaskshmi, an Indian female university student who got her Master's degree in Denmark, described how being in the Danish setting made her feel extremely free, which she understood to be related to the security that the welfare state provided, and to the liberating aspect of being away from enquiries about future marriage from her extended family. She enjoyed the years of her Master's degree studies in which she was part of a class consisting most of other international students. She found her stay so positive that when she got an opportunity to work in a temporary position in Denmark directly after finishing her degree, she stayed on. However, this included an (unforeseen) shift in setting and position in Denmark. She moved out of the international environment to a provincial town in Denmark, where everyone expected her to learn Danish immediately. This new work life was very different from what she expected and she ended up going back to India as soon as her contract finished. (field notes)*

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<sup>7</sup> In this sense we are defining values as affect-laden beliefs that are socially constructed, cultural bonded and constantly negotiated (Branco, 2012; Branco & Valsiner, 2012 in Schliewe, 2017) rather than static internalized traits.

As seen in the example above, differences in social positions and access to foreign networks may create very divergent experiences of the migration – even for the same person within the same country. This is also the case for expatriates living in the same city, but occupying very different work and/or socioeconomic positions. The particular work assignment an expatriate is to perform at the destination provides a distinct form of access into the place. For example, in New Delhi people in high-profile jobs with organizational benefits (expatriate packages) primarily move into expensive and well-established expatriate neighborhoods – areas with many other foreigners and elite Indians. This gives them direct access to the higher levels of society and their privileged spaces. On the other end of the spectrum are people relocating globally to work on humanitarian aid and disaster relief – such as the organization Doctors without Borders – who are guaranteed lower salaries and very basic accommodations (see for example <http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/work-us/work-field/life-field>). These differing housing arrangements not only provide a base for the concrete everyday experiences of the expatriates, but the expatriate’s broader impressions of the place can be linked to the spaces in which they move around (Meir, 2015; Savinetti, 2018). The relative proximity to other expatriates also contributes to the formation of migrant networks (Schlieuwe, 2009).

The particular kind of work the expatriate performs also influences their access to the surrounding society during their time abroad. For example, those working within missionary work or as part of ethnographic projects may have the establishment of relationships within the local population as an explicit objective of their work (e.g. Beckstead, 2018), while this may not be as important at an international office servicing global clients. Similarly, the expatriate’s focus can be directed on domestic issues if the expatriate travels as a non-working accompanying partner. The term *accompanying spouse* has become more complex as many accompanying partners only take a temporary break from their own working life, while some work during the period of the posting, and because males have entered the scene (Savinetti, 2015; Cangia et al., in press). Many non-working accompanying spouses still engage more in emotional labor (Arieli, 2007; Hochschild, 2012) and in the general practicalities of the everyday life of the family. This may not only create more divided roles during the posting but also potentially very divergent migration experiences within a couple. To illustrate this point from my research: when a non-working accompanying partner with small children arrives New Delhi, the perspectives of the city’s limitations and possibilities may be seen more through a lens of re-creating familiar routines and promoting the well-being of the whole family. Suddenly, housing facilities, playgrounds, familiar food items, the educational system and the availability of trustworthy nannies may emerge as very important issues. Whereas for a working partner, his or her work may stand out more than domestic arrangements, and the working partner may even experience a boost in social status due to the new job (Walsh, 2008). Furthermore, working expatriates enter a pre-defined setup due to their work, including defined work tasks, colleagues and time structures, whereas accompanying spouses often have to re-invent everything themselves in a foreign environment. For this reason, access to other accompanying

spouses can come to play a vital role in nurturing well-being abroad (Schlieuwe, 2009). The importance of well-functioning social networks to personal well-being has been known for decades in social psychology. Expatriates can be said to provide each other with *ready-made friendships*, in the sense that they very easily become attracted to each other (Maffesoli, 1996) due to their similarities, their need for practical, emotional and social support, their comparable migration situations, and their familiar sociocultural backgrounds. In New Delhi, other non-working accompanying spouses provide necessary help and friendship for newcomers. They can also normalize experiences of emotional turbulence during the establishment of a new home and new everyday life in India. Learning that others have gone through the same thing, and that one's reactions in such situations are normal, can make these experiences all the more bearable and can create strong bonds among the expatriates (Schlieuwe, 2009). Additionally, other foreigners provide familiar spheres of interaction where mutual understanding can be immediately experienced. For example, during my fieldwork in New Delhi, the monthly "Stambord"<sup>8</sup> dinner functioned like an open forum for Danish expatriates (working and non-working) to meet and socialize. The following is part of an interview I had with Anne (a hard-working Danish female expatriate) and Anders (her accompanying husband) 14 months after their arrival in India:

*Anne: It feels a bit silly to go out and meet other Danes. Even though it is only once a month (...)*

*Anders: But it is nice to relax. Anne: That you can... Anders: Trust your instinct.*

*Anne: ...be sure of the universe you are in (...) without all these impressions all the time.*

Many formal and informal events are made for, and by, expatriates (e.g. Van Riemsdijk, 2015; Levitan et al., 2018). Numerous online platforms and groups exist that deal with issues related to life as an expatriate in a given place. Expatriates are often very proactive in meeting each other, for example, by readily approaching other foreigners they do not know when they encounter them, in order to invite them to social events, or to give them practical and emotional advice. In New Delhi, the ease with which such contacts are made, and the straightforward nature of such communication, often contribute to the conditions in which expatriates primarily stay within foreign networks during their time in India. The expatriates I met who had established local friendships had made a conscious decision to avoid other expatriates, where engaging in the local nightlife or had access to local social circles before their relocation through their Indian partner, through other Indian connections or through their work as researchers or volunteers. Families or dual working couples without such prior access may never fully start the effortful process of making local connections, aside from their interactions with local service providers, domestic workers and occasionally with their Indian neighbors. It is often far easier to ask another expatriate than a local to go out for a coffee. The reliance

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<sup>8</sup> *Stambord is a worldwide event for Danes to network with other Danes working internationally ([www.dabgo.com/stamborde](http://www.dabgo.com/stamborde)).*

on other expatriates can be even more pronounced if the locals are perceived as being very different, or if the encounters with them challenge the expatriates' experience of their own identity. I will return to these issues below.

Other expatriates can be seen as important mediators – providing interpretations on life at the given place – that contribute to the newcomers' experiences and that help to direct their actions, both concretely and symbolically. Hence, a place can be experienced very differently, depending on who introduces the expatriate to it and how they move around in it (e.g. Shut, 2015; Hindman, 2008). To illustrate, a Danish Anthropologist doing research in West Africa told me how some of the expatriates she met who were living in guarded compounds were very surprised to hear that she used the local mini-buses, as they conceived these buses as way “too dangerous.”

### 5.1.2. TEMPORAL DIMENSIONS

The next sections of the map focus on how temporal rhythms and geographical movements may guide, enable and challenge the everyday actions of expatriates, as well as their understandings of themselves during migration. Alternative experiences are promoted, alongside mundane and familiar everyday activities.

#### 5.1.2.1. TEMPORARINESS

- Temporary timeframes are crucial in expatriate experience, both concretely and symbolically. They generate concrete durations and rhythms of the expatriate's everyday life, and can act as a catalyst for certain priorities or novel actions related to the duration of the stay – thereby resembling a liminal situation.

To illustrate the first point:

*In Denmark, many of the international expatriates in Aalborg and Copenhagen consider learning Danish a waste of time. In the big cities in Denmark it is often possible to communicate in English, and learning Danish requires hard work, and one has to set time aside to do so, in addition to putting off all the other everyday obligations of work and/or family. What is more, the language has limited usability outside of Scandinavia. (field notes)*

The temporary timeframes are fundamental organizers of expatriates' experiences and actions during their migration. Explicitly knowing that one arrives today and leaves tomorrow (Simmel, 1971) sets the expatriate in a different relationship to the places they currently reside than migrants aiming to settle more permanently. From an organizational point of view, this can become problematic when short-time assignments create obstacles to humanitarian aid workers' local language learning, as Breslin (2018) argues.

The temporal rhythm of expatriate migration is structured by the expatriates' employment contracts and the conditions of their visas. These temporary timeframes indicate when it is time to pack or settle, time to create new friendships or to say farewell to existing ones. We can see temporary timeframes as signs (Valsiner, 2007) that mediate the migration experiences by subtly suggesting certain ways of thinking and feeling – foregrounding some actions, aims or obligations during the period of the posting more than others. For example, they can act as an assessment tool in expatriate environments where people are constantly arriving and leaving. As Foote (2017) describes, many long-termers in Shanghai learn to look for other long-termers, so they would not lose good friends too often.

Additionally, the combination of geographical mobility and temporary timeframes can create an experience of being *betwixt and between* societies (Turner 1979) – in a liminal space. Liminality has been used as an analytic lens to discuss travel experiences, from pilgrimage (Beckstead 2012; Turner & Turner, 1978) to party tourism (Tutenges, 2012). Liminal experiences are often conceptualized as a distinct space where social norms and values are up in the air and open to change in new directions and relations (Gillespie, 2006; Yeoh & Khoo, 1998). To exemplify, Beckstead (2018) demonstrates how the limited timeframe and the change of sociocultural and geographical setting makes it possible for missionaries to do and say things that they normally might not, such as knocking on the doors of strangers. Foote (2017) points out that liminality positions the expatriates as privileged – here not only understood in economic terms, but also in the sense that many of the expatriates he met felt above the law in Shanghai – and thus entitled to do things they might not have done had they lived in another place.

In my own research, I find that many expatriates express their experience with their current way of living as very positive or even liberating – I will discuss common obstacles in the next section. Hence, in contrast to recent work in psychology focusing on the potential negative aspects of being trapped in processes of transition (e.g. Greco & Stenner, 2017; Szokolczai, 2017), my research suggests that the extended liminality of temporary migration can potentially provide the individual expatriate with experiences of (novel) opportunities. However, I understand expatriate liminality not as an “everything is possible situation,” but rather as a space where novel actions and interpretations – that are deeply embedded in the concrete life-worlds of the expatriates – can emerge. Therefore, the particular forms of liminal experiences may not be surprising when we closely study the particular situations and life-worlds of the expatriates. I will provide a couple of examples from my research in what follows.

Danes often arrive in India with expectations of adventure. Exotic traveling discourses are prominent among the expatriates in New Delhi, something that may be related to global representations of India as an exotic place, and due to culturally produced patterns of how to be a tourist (Gillespie, 2006; Löffgren, 1999). On one hand, expatriate travel trajectories differ from other tourists or long-term travelers in the sense that the ruptures occur along different lines. Expatriates are not looking for a new place to eat

and sleep each day (Gillespie, 2007). Rather than creating distance to the everyday quotidian routine as backpacker tourists often do (Tveit, 2002), they may place greater emphasis on recreating everyday routines in the foreign location (in regard to work, housing and leisure, etc.) (Schlieve, 2009). On the other hand, touristic exploration during free time is often prioritized and emerges as a natural thing to do among the expatriates in my study. At social events, much advice is shared about great weekend escapes from New Delhi and many expatriates travel in and around India for their vacations. Furthermore, the limited timeframe may urge some people to get as much as possible out of the stay. For example, an accompanying Danish wife, who in total spend 1.5 year with her family in New Delhi, made a “must see in India” list that she hung in their living room during the last six month of their stay to ensure that they got around doing some of what was on the list before they were to leave the country; including visiting a popular national park in the hope of seeing a tiger.

In another case, Anne and Anders – who where to stay in India with their two children for four years in total – noted after one year how happy they were that they had this long timeframe. In many ways, they did not feel that they were doing anything differently than if they had stayed in India for ten years. For example, Anders was currently involved in a large rebuilding project of their terrace in collaboration with their domestic workers. However, the overall idea of having to “experience” India, in addition to living their everyday life there, was present in their reflections. For instance, when they compared themselves to a couple that was only to stay in India for two years, they noted that such a timeline must be really awful, as it would place considerable pressure on them from the beginning to do all the things that they would like to experience while there.

Additionally, the temporariness in expatriate migration can also provide the basis for novel experiences of obligations and duties. The temporary time horizon also came up explicitly as an underlying organizer of Anders and Anne’s reflections on their responsibilities as employers of domestic workers. It was important for them to provide some kind of medical insurance for their staff, which is quite complicated in India. The medical insurance found on the market in New Delhi is of varied quality, and the different policy models can be hard to decipher for a newcomer. Many locals and expatriates help in crisis situations out of their own sense of goodwill. For example, Anders and Anne had just provided emergency advance payment to an employee in order to help the employee’s family when their hometown was hit by an earthquake. At the time of the interview they were debating whether to buy official medical insurance for him as well. He was currently having medical problems that resembled a more serious chronic condition. If it turned out to be a previously-existing chronic disease, the insurance would not cover it, as the insurance company would only start to cover initially healthy clients. What should they do if he became seriously ill during his time in their house? How could they help ensure that he is once again employed by a new expatriate family after their departure from New Delhi? It would be problematic to recommend him to

another family if he was seriously ill<sup>9</sup>. Nevertheless, while they currently felt a deep responsibility to help their domestic workers, both in dealing with their current crises and with finding subsequent employment, they were also clear about not being able to support their current employees after they left the country.

The future employment of domestic workers was a topic of concern among many of the expatriates who took part in my study. They often wished to secure their staff's ongoing employment in their company, or with other foreign families. Consequently, the explicit knowledge of the temporary timeframe can be said to constrain the expatriates in terms of what they may consider right conduct in relation to their domestic workers, as well as in relation to expatriate peers who may become future employers of the domestic workers. However, at the same time it may also bring relief in relation to how to handle employer responsibilities (and other complex moral issues) in a country without effective state regulations or social security—as the expatriates will potentially leave the scene and never come back again.

#### 5.1.2.2. RUPTURES AND ADAPTATIONS

- Temporary migration creates ruptures in the expatriates' everyday lives, as well as in their familiar sense of self. They have to negotiate novel tasks related to their move, as well as alternative experiences of belonging and identity.

*We talked to some Indians [who said]: 'well, it will take you three months to get settled.' And my husband and I have moved a lot so we [answered] 'Three months? It has never taken three months. No, it will take three weeks.' It took three months!.* (Scandinavian accompanying spouse, in Schlieve, 2009 p. 35)

Moving away from “home” – a familiar environment with all it's taken for granted aspects (Schutz, 2005; Bruner, 1991) – creates a rupture in the expatriates' everyday lives and experiences. Practical and symbolic efforts may be initiated to deal with this rupture. Making a new home abroad involves spending time preparing for the move, settling in, and then moving out again. The immigration paperwork may be extensive, and finding a new house or school for children is not always easy. The actual amount of time expatriates have to spend on these matters depends on the exact places to which they move, whether they are traveling alone or with others, and the amount and type of organizational support provided during the process.

Making a home is also an act of meaning construction (Joerchel & Dietrich, 2018). Even though migration and home-making constitute a well-known theme within the social sciences (e.g. Mahmoud & Märtsin, 2012; Rapport & Dawson, 1998), less research has focused directly on expatriates' experiences. The existing research shows

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<sup>9</sup> A major part of domestic workers in expatriate households in New Delhi get their next job position through their employer's recommendations to other expatriates at the time of departure.

that experiences of home and belonging often become more delicate in expatriate living. Expatriates describe, even after having lived for several years in a place, that although they feel at home, they do not feel a part of the local society. Expatriates often refer to the expatriate “bubble” metaphor – mentioned above – when describing their life within the foreign communities. This includes expatriates who extensively use (privileged) expatriate infrastructures, such as international schools, networks and housing. It can also refer to experiences of not living in a real or authentic part of the host society – of existing somehow outside the normal living situation (e.g. Fechter 2007b; Amit-Talai, 1998). Some expatriates start to identify themselves in terms of a global mobile Western community, rather than, or in opposition to, the sedentary communities from which they originally moved (Foote, 2017; Fechter, 2016). Additionally, expatriates may also extend their feeling of belonging, so that several locations may be experienced as “home.” A Norwegian psychologist, who had studied in Denmark and later came back to work temporarily in the country, stated that “when I am in Norway I miss friends and places in Denmark, and when I am in Denmark I miss my family and friends in Norway.”

Moreover, adaptations to expatriate life may take place not only before and during, but also after the posting. Repatriation – or “coming home” – is described in the literature as a potentially challenging and often overlooked process. To cite Schuetz (1945):

*(...) the homcomer's attitude differs from that of the stranger. The latter is about to join a group which is not and never has been his own. He knows that he will find himself in an unfamiliar world, differently organized than that from which he comes, full of pitfalls and hard to master. The homcomer, however, expects to return to an environment of which he always had and – so he thinks – still has intimate knowledge and which he has just to take for granted in order to find his bearings within it. (p. 369)*

However, not only the home country but also the expatriate may change during the time of migration. Significant ruptures can question people's sense of self and continuity (Mahmoud & Märtsin, 2012; Levitan et al., 2018). Accordingly, when we define identity as not only socially and symbolically constructed, but also related to the expatriate's phenomenological embodied experience of coherence and familiarity, many of the events and social encounters happening during the migration must be re-negotiated. For example, expatriates may experience strong emotions that they feel are alien to them, such as frequent aggressive outbursts – as I found in my fieldwork among Scandinavian accompanying spouses in New Delhi (Schlieve, 2009). Furthermore, the expatriates also enter novel social positions (Gillespie 2006) that have to be negotiated, such as when Danes become employers of domestic workers in India as discussed above. The gaze of the local “other” can also racialize the expatriates in a way they have not previously experienced. Expatriates moving from the Global North to the Global South may be exposed to their “whiteness” – its possible links to imperial pasts and



to global privileges – for the first time (Fletcher, 2005). Such experiences may bond the expatriates closer together (Schlieve, 2009), and novel strategies may also be used to negotiate the expectations of local others, for example in relation to gender and work positions as Gritti (2018) highlights. Along these lines, the expatriates' relationships with family and friends “back home” may also further change as their everyday life experiences suddenly become worlds apart (Schlieve, 2009). One Danish family in my research decided never to mention anything about their domestic workers on Facebook during their 1.5-year in New Delhi, to avoid possible prejudice from family and friends at home.

The above may seem like strenuous exercises, but the novel practices promoted by expatriate life also affords expatriates alternative ways of being in the world. Not only may the expatriate draw on alternative or novel meaning frameworks to negotiate the ruptures and the liminal experiences they are going through, but alternative practises can become further legitimized due to the transition processes itself. As Schuetz (1945) points out, a newcomer knows that things will be different when they arrive in a new setting. Similarly, expatriates often expect that some things will be different than they were before. Thus they are prepared for changes in their everyday life.

## **5.2. CONCLUSION**

The primary aim of this chapter has been to provide the readers with a tool to explore expatriates' migration experiences. The Mobile Life-World Map is not a fixed and final account of expatriate life- worlds. Rather, it is meant as a tool to think with. The Mobile Life-World Map guides our focus to the spatial and temporal dimensions that shape the everyday lives of expatriates. Instead of being an abstract model distancing us from everyday human experiences, the Mobile Life-World Map directs our awareness to areas in expatriate life-worlds that we need to explore more if we want to better understand their experiences. As such, this map can be a useful tool for those of us working with this diverse globally mobile population.

Expatriate life-worlds and experiences are incredibly complex and varied, even within a single setting such as New Delhi. Furthermore, the complexity of expatriates' migration experiences discussed in this chapter is not trivial. When we take seriously the emergence of these complex experiences in everyday life, we gain new insight not only into the everyday lives of expatriates in particular, but also into the psychological processes of global migration more broadly.

A key thread throughout the chapter has been to explore how processes of segregation can come to be seen as natural – though often not consciously reflected upon – when we enter the expatriates' concrete life-worlds. I have argued, by means of the cases presented in this chapter, that this can happen when expatriates live primarily within the expatriate infrastructure, befriending other foreigners and trying to get as much out of their temporary stay as possible. This may be a more intuitive choice compared

to effortful attempts to go more native – especially if one does not already have some sort of direct access to preexisting local networks.

This does not mean that we should not engage in discussions about segregation and its potential effects on local and global levels in terms of unwanted group dynamics and conflicts. Nor should we avoid critical discussions of the global structures that are created in temporary privileged migration. The important point is to set this discussion aside when our focus is on exploring the individual expatriate's everyday experiences during temporary migration. Critique and presumptions are not constructive platforms to approach life-worlds in research or in intervention (e.g. Mosgaard, 2018; Bertholdo & Gumiarães, 2018). Instead, we need to get closer to the people we are studying before starting up processes of collaboration and change – if change is indeed necessary.

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# CHAPTER 6: RESISTING INEQUALITY BUT LOVING THOSE CHEAP IRONED SHIRTS: DANISH EXPATRIATES' EXPERIENCES OF BECOMING EMPLOYERS OF DOMESTIC STAFF IN INDIA

Schliewe, S. (2017). Resisting inequality but loving those cheap ironed shirts: Danish expatriates' experiences of becoming employers of domestic staff in India. In N. Chaudhary, P. Hviid, G. Marsico & J. Villadsen (Eds.), *Resistance in everyday life. Constructing cultural experiences* (pp. 181-201), Singapore: Springer.

## 6.1. ABSTRACT

This chapter is based on empirical findings from a longitudinal study of Danish expatriates and their domestic staff in Delhi. The premise is that most Danish Expatriates strongly react – or resist -when they move to India and encounter what they experience as obvious inequality or inhumane work conditions in domestic service. I argue that *resistance* can be used as an analytical tool to explore transformative life situations, such as privileged migration when moving is not only a question of crossing national borders but also about moving up the social ladder in a place where poverty and inequality is explicitly present. The empirical findings show that the Danish expatriates have to negotiate embodied habits, moral values and images of themselves in their encounters with domestic staff. In their everyday life they go to great lengths to provide decent work conditions for their domestic staff during their stay, and they use leveling strategies to overcome the uncomfortableness of their new social position. Moreover, the Danish expatriates draw on familiar discourses from back home along with novel local frameworks of understandings from middle class – and elite Indians - and other expatriates to justify their re-actions and actions as employers. Thus, they seem to re-narrate their novel practices into frameworks that fit their prior value system, rather than transforming it.

**Keywords:** Privileged migration, domestic workers, experiencing inequality, resistance, transformations, moral values

## 6.2. INTRODUCTION

*During her first week in New Delhi Jane feels uncomfortable with the case that her driver every time she calls him to go for a ride, he will hurry - sometimes even almost run - down the street to get the car. He*

*drives the car up in front of her, and then he hurries to her side to open the door. She feels perfectly capable of opening the door herself. On top of this, he calls her Madam. Just as many other people around her do, such as at the office and in the shops. Jane tries whenever they reach their destination to open her door as quickly as possible, before the driver is able to get out of his own door and around the car to open hers. Sometimes he reaches her side in the last part of the process, holding the door handle when she is almost out of the car. She finds the situation that someone else is opening the door for her unsettling. It is like she is supposed to be someone superior. However, a few weeks later she has begun to let her driver open the door for her “He really thinks it is his job. And I really do not want to make obstacles to him feeling that he is doing his job probably”. (field notes)*

The above field note passage comes from my longitudinal qualitative research on how Danish people negotiate their encounters with domestic workers when living abroad as expatriates and privileged migrants (Amit, 2007) in Delhi, due to their own or their spouse’s work in private business, NGO and diplomacy sectors. The term expatriate comes from Latin *ex patria* referring to a person who lives outside his or her native country and is commonly used to refer to highly skilled people often from Western countries who live in another country for a limited period of time (Fechter, 2007). Research on highly skilled people moving from “the West” has been sparse (Fechter & Walsh, 2010), but is now an upcoming field within the social sciences. My study seeks to explore the psychological dynamics of privileged migration. It focuses specifically on the case of Danish migrants, who, as a result of their relocation, move up in the economic hierarchy and simultaneously encounter socio-economic inequality in a way they did not experience before. This new exposure not only occurs at street level when they encounter beggars and poverty in the streets of Delhi, or at their workplaces with its novel forms of social organization, but also in the heart of their new homes when they employ domestic staff. Domestic work refers to service jobs within the households, where people are employed as, for example, maids, housekeepers, nannies, cooks, security guards, gardeners and drivers.

I found that the Danish expatriates very clearly react against – or ‘resist’ – some of the domestic work practices they observe among local employers that they perceive as inhumane or unequal treatment of the domestic workers; for example, when domestic workers have ten to 12 hour shifts six days a week, or when their employers give them orders in a rough tone. The term *resistance* is here understood within a psychological framework linked to psychological processes of change and transformation (Gillespie, Kadianaki & O’sullivan-Lago, 2012; Valsiner, 2014). In this chapter, I broadly use *resistance* to refer to all kinds of counter-reactions that the Danish expatriates experience and enact in relation to domestic service in India - for example, emotional uneasiness in the body or being judgmental toward others behavior. More broadly, I will refer to various counter-actions Danish expatriates perform in the outside world against

the existing practices of domestic services, from automatic responses to well-planned strategies of action and verbalized justifications.

My research approach is a combination of a phenomenological methodology and cultural psychology theory. First, I approach the Danish expatriates with curiosity, aiming to describe their process of becoming employers of domestic staff, using resistance as a lens to unfold their experiences. Secondly, I move beyond their experiences adding a theoretical layer. Here I try to outline the psychological processes at play in temporary privileged migration, while bearing in mind that human meaning making occurs within a complex web of material, historical and social events and settings (Valsiner, 2014; Zittoun, 2012; Bruner, 1990). The empirical findings come from my doctoral research where I have both been conducting a longitudinal study of 12 Danish key participants and been a participant observer in the Danish Expatriate circles in Delhi and Gurgaon – a modern satellite town 30 km south of Delhi – for more than seven months during the years 2013 to 2015.<sup>10</sup>

In my longitudinal study, I am following 12 people closely through interviews and participant observations from the time of their arrival in India to six month to eighteen month into their stay. At the time of writing this chapter, each of these participants have been interviewed four times. Six of them had their first interview within 14 days of arrival and the others within six weeks of their arrival. Their second interview was approximately 14 days after the first. Besides these key participants, I interviewed eight other Danish expatriates – long termers and newcomers – one to two times. And I had several informal talks with other Danish people during my fieldwork. This data is also included in the following.

This chapter is organized as follows: firstly, I provide the theoretical and contextual background for my empirical findings; secondly, I present my research findings with a detailed description of the most common resistance strategies that the Danish employ, as well as typical situations of non- resistance; lastly, I discuss how the Danish expatriates transform over time and conclude the chapter.

### 6.2.1. MIGRATION, IDENTITY, VALUES AND MEANING MAKING

Migration is often described as a major rupture, in which significant changes in migrants' everyday life takes place. In this way, migrants' common sense experience of their lifeworld can be radically shaken (Schütz, 2005). Everyday routines have to be re-established in the new setting where new social others are encountered. It is a process

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<sup>10</sup> *Gurgaon is often considered a suburb to the capital even though it belongs to a different state. And I will use the term Delhi in this chapter, also when I refer to Danes living in Gurgaon. As Gurgaon is a main center for international companies in the National Capital Region (Delhi NCR) many Danes working in the private sector chose to live there when they move to Delhi*

of both embracing novelty, while simultaneously holding on to continuity with life as it was before (Mårtsin & Mahmoud, 2012). An important finding for this study is that what Danish expatriates seem to react upon is closely related to their experiences of how the world around them ought to be, and their own positions within it. From this standpoint, resistance is closely connected to identity processes.

In line with meaning-centered approaches to psychology, such as cultural psychology, I understand identities as different angles or positions that the individual experiences him or herself through. These positions are dialogically and socially constructed (Harré & Langenhoven, 1999; Davis & Harré, 1990) and may be experienced as more or less comfortable and attractive, all depending upon the collective images and associations the particular positions evoke (Gillespie, Kadianaki & O'sullivan-Lago, 2012; Markova, 2003; Moscovici 1984), and the real and imagined social others (Gillespie, 2006; Mead, 1925) that partake in the particular social setting. For example, being served a gin and tonic while the sun goes down under a hazy sky on a roof top in Delhi could evoke images of colonial times in a way that can be experienced as a kind of play that may be enjoyed by the participating expatriates. While on the other hand, the case of sitting at home on the couch and reading today's newspaper while the maid serves the midday tea may, through the eyes of friends and family back in Denmark, evoke uncomfortable images of an exploitative master and servant relationship.

Resistance emerges when the identity position provided for the individual reflect social representations and identities at odds with people's experience of themselves, and as they would like to be seen and described by others. Bruner's (1986) notion of *the dual landscape* is useful here. According to Bruner a narrative consist of two layers or landscapes: the first is related to the concrete actions unfolding, and the second to the various interpretations and meanings that are linked to these events by the narrator of the story as well as its audience. Therefore, as I use this here, it is in-between the different actions that people perform (or do not perform) and the possible interpretations of the *intentions* of these actions that divergent stories about people's identity can be created. When we create alternative stories of the intentions behind our actions, novel positions which may be more attuned to our preferred image of our self can emerge out of these new interpretations – a case which has been used directly in postmodern-narrative therapeutic settings (e.g. White 2007). Along these lines, when people perform certain actions, they may be able to actively transform their identities (Holland 2010) and change the impressions they make on others (and themselves) (Goffman 1959). For example, making a raise in the monthly payment for a driver in can be interpreted as an active re- negotiation of a possible identity of an “exploitative employer”.

However, everything in the human life world is not just free-flowing or easily changeable. Values – here defined as affect-laden beliefs – can be seen as constituting personal and collective *moral horizons* that, even though they are ultimately culture bound and socially constructed, provide objective points for the individual to orient him or herself in relation to (Branco, 2012; Branco & Valsiner 2012). Moral horizons thus

become notions of how the world ought to be. They make it possible for people to evaluate individual life choices and the collective societal events they encounter (Brinkman, 2008). Angela Uchao Branco (2012) points out that values, when first established, seem particularly resistant to change as they create a sense of personal continuity through the life course, and as I will show in this chapter, instead of changing their values and moral horizons over time. The Danish expatriates seem to transform their experience of the practices that initially evoked discomfort and struggles for them.

If we want to explore the interconnectedness between values, beliefs, intentions and settings (Macintyre, 2011) in everyday human experiences, then processes of meaning making need to be taken into account. In my view, this focus on meaning creation is where cultural psychology sets itself apart from traditional psychology (see also Bruner 1990). It offers a more fluent and holistic entry into the topic of privileged migration processes than might be the case if we only used traditional American social psychology with its more schematized models of cognitive discrepancies, group dynamics and social identity (e.g. Festinger, 1957; Sherif, 1936; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Here the notion of the individual person as an active meaning creator within social settings and groups is easily lost. The same can be said to be the case within the traditional psychological approaches to global mobility and cultural adaption in psychology. The focus of this literature tends to be on culture shock, stress and coping, cultural learning and acculturation (e.g. Carr, 2010; Ward et al. 2001; Sam & Berry, 2006) without considering individual experiences of migration from a meaning-centered and social constructivist angle. This chapter is an attempt to illustrate the usefulness of the meaning-centered approach in this research field.

## 6.2.2. MOVING INTO A RADICALLY DIFFERENT SOCIOCULTURAL SET UP

The existing differences between Denmark and India in relation to state structure and economy, as well as historical practices and social organization, collective values and social representations, are important to outline briefly if we are to understand the transformation Danish expatriates go through as they become employers of domestic staff. Domestic work in general in the literature is described as an ambiguous type of work due to the mix of the intimacy, emotional care and professionalism inside another family's house (see for example Adams & Dickey, 2000; Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2003; Mattila, 2011; Hochschild, 2012). But I found that in the case of Danish expatriates their resistance was also a reaction to the overall encounter with poverty and inequality in everyday life in Delhi. India has one third of the world's poor population. This is quite a change from the socioeconomic landscape in the small affluent kingdom of Denmark, where poverty pales in comparison. Danish people are brought up in a system with extensive labour regulations and laws, and they carry a strong image of the welfare state with them to India (Savinetti, 2015). However, by hiring domestic staff they become a part of the unregulated informal work sector in India where few labor laws exist and work conditions and terms of employment are extremely diverse. This

change in set-up in itself provides a predictable existential shock for the arriving Danes (Jaen Valsiner, personal communication, 2015).

Furthermore, scholars such as Louis Dumont (1970) point out that the social organization in India is hierarchical at its core. This has consequences for people's expression of their social position: their class and caste. In their well-known study of domestic service in Kolkata, Raka Ray and Seemin Qayum (2009) argue that having domestic servants in India functions as an important sign of belonging to the middle-class. Having people to carry out menial tasks for you creates symbolic boundaries between yourself and others below. This is at odds with the Danish expatriates' common sense in two ways. Firstly, it is the case that conducting everyday household tasks in a Danish setting may signify "competence", "autonomy" and "non-laziness" rather than loss of status. Secondly, the social structures appear in the Nordic countries in general as very egalitarian. The notion of equality among the Danish expatriates is linked to moral values, which at the core means that people ought to be treated equally and considered of equal worth no matter their social origin. Thus, the explicit difference in social status made between the service provider and the service receiver in domestic work is experienced as problematic. Furthermore, it is also in some Danish settings experienced as troublesome to promote superiority explicitly (for instance in terms of money or social status). As Pelle, a man in his twenties, put it, "In Denmark you do not get special privileges just because you earn more" (interview). However, when Danish expatriates are placed high in the Indian social stratum special privileges do follow, such as access to cheap household labour.

### 6.2.3. GETTING STAFF: A PART OF THE PACKAGE

The terms of employment between expatriates and their drivers and housekeepers come in many forms and arrangements. The point to make here is that most expatriates end up experiencing that getting staff is mandatory when relocating to India. Also concretely, as Marianne experienced it. When renting the furniture for her new overseas home a housecleaner was included in the deal. Meaning that not only did she get furniture, but also a person who came to clean during the week. Other expatriates move into guest-house set-ups where a housekeeper is already installed. This is a common set-up for short termers staying in Delhi between one to six months. Many Danish expatriates get a driver from their organization, or move into apartments with staff that have been working for the same company for years. For those whose organization does not have some sort of predefined system regarding maids and drivers, an extensive informal network exists. It is common that predecessors at a work place contact newcomers before arrival to offer them to take over the contract with their staff. In the end, it is only very few who end up not having any sort of domestic help - at least someone to clean and do the dishes. However, only a few of the participants in my study had given it much thought prior to their travels that they were to have domestic staff. None of them was really prepared for the reactions they got on arrival.

### 6.3. RESISTANCE

*Ella, an elderly lady who has spent a considerable time in India, tells me the story of her first visit to her neighbor one evening when we meet at a Danish event at a posh restaurant. The Indian neighbor wanted to offer her tea, but he could not get a hold of his housekeeper. He spent a considerable amount of time on his mobile phone, calling the housekeeper until finally he finds out that the housekeeper who lives in the house and works 24/7 is having a midday nap in his bed on the rooftop. Finally, the neighbor gets him down to make the tea. It was Sunday. Ella found it horrifying. She would have been perfectly OK with being offered a glass of water or a cold drink that the neighbor could have taken himself in the kitchen. Waking the housekeeper was to make too much of an effort for all of it she thinks. (field notes)*

Most Danish expatriates react – in one way or the other - towards practices they witness within the domestic work sector in India that they experience as obvious exploitation or inhumane work conditions. In this section, I will present some commonly occurring experiences among Danish expatriates in Delhi. It should be noted, however, that everyone does not experience everything that I present here. People's unique life stories and their particular way of being in the world make them more prone to some experiences than others. That said, I heard many stories along the lines of the above. Nevertheless, I have to add that many Indian employers also go great lengths to secure the well-being of employees. Furthermore, there are structural features, such as long-term security, that only can be provided by local Indian employers (Shalini Grover, Personal communication, 2015)<sup>11</sup>

#### 6.3.1. CHANGING WORK CONDITIONS

A classic reaction in those first weeks was to change the work conditions of their domestic staff in one way or another. For example, newcomers often notice that drivers often are called upon to wait outside the house from early morning until the employer knows where he might be going that day, or the case of having people work seven days a week or 10 to 12 hours a day. All the Danes in my study started to create more regulated work conditions, for example by telling their drivers when they would need him next time in order to avoid having him wait the whole day in front of their house or office without any fixed hours. Some of the people who have staff on seven days a week contracts started to do all their shopping and outings when possible on Saturdays, so that they could ensure that their driver could have most Sundays off. Many also regularly let their staff go earlier than the contract stated, so the working day became an eight-hour shift. Giving a pay rise or an additional bonus and tips as compensation for odd work hours, overtime and extra duties is also very common

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<sup>11</sup> *In addition, employer practices that may seem radical from an outsiders' perspective may run by logics that make sense for people living in the local setting (Shweder & Much, 1991).*

Overall, the Danish expatriates put up a great effort to secure good work conditions and ensure the well-being of their staff. Many of them spend quite a lot of time thinking about how to be good enough employers throughout their stay in India. However, no matter which actions the Danish expatriates take, the gap between employer and employee is always there. It is materialized in the architectural layout of the houses. Most houses in Delhi's nice neighborhoods come with servant quarters, and the fancy new high rise condominiums in Gurgaon often have separate elevators for the domestic worker that lack the wall paint and cleanliness that is usually provided for the residents of the building. In the beginning the Danes react immediately and strongly to these new structures that they suddenly are a part of, not only by changing the work conditions for their staff, but also through subtle reactions and strategies in their everyday life.

### 6.3.2. LEVELING STRATEGIES – EMBODIED REACTIONS AND PERSONAL VALUES

*Dennis recounts how he during his first day in the guesthouse raises from his chair at the morning table, holding his finished bowl of oats in the hand intending to place it in the kitchen sink. "Let it be [on the table]" his fellow colleague tells him, "That's the maid's job". (interview)*

With Bourdieu's (1977) concept of *habitus* in mind, we can see Dennis' reaction as an embodiment of cultural traditions, values and practices. Dennis does not think about getting up from the table, his hand just automatically takes the bowl of oats as he was brought up to do, and he is used to placing it by the sink himself. Three months into his stay, Dennis still took the dirty dishes from his dinner out to the sink, and he would pour some water over it, so it was easier to wash the next day. As he said when I asked about this practice: "*You just know how difficult it is to clean up a bowl of cooked rice the day after – if you haven't soaked it. And it only takes a few minutes to do so*" (interview). People's prior experiences with manual labour – be it the household chores at home or experiences from service jobs – often played a role when the verbalized why they soaked their used utensils as many of them did. Almost everyone seemed to have small everyday practices they felt were important, such as not letting their staff take the plates and cutlery out to the kitchen after dinner or washing their dirty underwear. Other strategies seem to be focused on leveling out their relationship with the domestic staff directly, for example: telling their staff to call them by name and to call people Madam and Sir back; asking their driver or housekeeper to eat with them; or placing themselves in a novice position by asking their driver to teach them Hindi words.

Thus, it seems that it is not only a lack of embodied knowledge that makes the Danes behave in certain ways when others perform services for them; the actions taken by the Danish expatriates could, besides the genuine intention to treat other people fairly, also be understood as a way of re-creating and connecting to familiar discourses from the Danish societal setting. Thus, by actively creating good work conditions and good relationships, they also become able to narrate more comforting stories of their



relationships with domestic workers in India. How these everyday strategies are related to values is exemplified below:

*It is Saturday morning. The second time Pelle encounters the woman who comes to clean and do the dishes normally during weekdays when he is at work in addition to Saturdays. Pelle is in the living room when he heard a short knock, followed by keys opening the door. He just made coffee and in the process spilled a huge part of it on the floor in the kitchen. So he immediately runs back to the kitchen, starting to wipe the mess on the floor up. He finds it impolite not to. When Savitra comes in, she signals to him with hand movements and Hindi words that he should not clean the floor. She will do it. Pelle tells me afterwards that he did not feel comfortable letting the cleaner clean up his mess: she should not do it since it was him that had soiled the floor. (interview)*

The expatriates' positions and everyday life may have changed more or less drastically, but they still hold on to the values that they experience as part of who they are. This pattern emerged both in their immediate embodied reactions as well as when reflections were more prominent. For example, as Marianne told me as we stood together in her kitchen while the cook stood behind us chopping vegetables: "*I am always attentive towards always saying 'hi' to my own driver and other people's staff. I have to acknowledge their presence, you know. We are three people in this room, you know: the cook, you and me*". However, in a setting where people's core values becomes challenged on a regular basis, they need additional means of negotiation – besides leveling strategies – to resist experiencing too much discrepancy between their own actions and identity. It is here the strategies of neutralization, excuses and justifications come in (Maruna & Copes 2005).

### 6.3.3. NEUTRALIZATION STRATEGIES – HOLDING ON TO A FAMILIAR IMAGE OF YOURSELF

Generally speaking, people are *not* congruent in terms of doing what they say they are doing and what they actually do. Narrative and verbal strategies to keep up your self-image are a part of everyday life, not an exception. Furthermore, the resistance strategies I present in this section here could be seen as a reaction to protect ones familiar images of oneself, rather than as direct resistance toward established structures of domestic service in India. Several of the neutralization strategies I present below may be linked to objective reality, such as: "Yes, we DO pay our staff more than our Indian neighbor". I am not, however, interested in the validity of the different verbalizations here. Instead, the focus will be on the content of typical verbalizations as they may help us to understand the experiences of privileged migrants more fully (Maruna & Copes, 2005). For example, the first two categories seem related to the specific structures Danes are placed in when moving to India and the liminality (Turner, 1979) inherent in the expatriate position, such as living in-between societies. These strategies follow.

### 6.3.3.1. NON-RESPONSIBILITY

For people who have not hired their staff directly, for instance if they are living in a guesthouse or if their driver is placed by their company, neutralization strategies of non-responsibility may be used along the logic lines of: *I have not hired these people, their work conditions [e.g. work hours] are not my responsibility (interview)*. At the same time, it is also common for people to simultaneously apply leveling strategies, such as those mentioned above in relation to their maids and drivers. In the cases where the organization provides the domestics salaries, but it is the expatriate who is responsible for giving the daily tasks and instructions, the expatriates may oscillate between being a colleague and being the boss him or herself; One situation may be explained by a reference to the company's overall responsibility and another in terms of the expatriate's position as employer of the domestic worker.

### 6.3.3.2. SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Special circumstances such as being in the process of moving into your new house, thus not yet knowing the actual needs of the household, can be used to justify why the final contract with one's employees has not been made; or the temporary nature of one's stay in India may provide foreground as excuse for not providing medical insurance.

### 6.3.3.3. BEING GOOD EMPLOYERS

This is a category used in many ways: "we give a high salary" or "work hours are less" and such are very common, as are statements about being an employer who focuses on creating a good mental work environment for the employee for example, by showing appreciation (for instance by smiling and saying thanks) for their work and thus treating their workers with respect despite the unequal social status. This is in line with what other social researchers have found: people from the Nordic countries tend to draw upon discourses linked to "equality" when they narrate about their own performance as good employers of domestic staff. Barbara Johnston (2013) in her study on expatriate employers in Singapore shows that expatriate employers in general tend to construct themselves discursively along racial lines as "better employers" than locals, but the reference in these processes to equality or home country labour practices seems unique for people from the Nordic countries; see Lundström (2012) research on Swedish women expatriate employers in Singapore, Latvala (2009) on Finns in Kenya, and Gavanas (2010) on Swedes employing au pairs in Stockholm, Sweden.

### 6.3.3.4. COMPARISONS

Comparisons can be seen as a more general strategy to preserve a positive identity position. These are very common. For example, to other (worse) employers' practices - be it the predecessor expatriate, other expatriate nationalities or elite Indians. Many stories concern locals (or other expatriates) using harsh language with their staff or demanding hard work for low payment. Comparison strategies may be a way to distinguishing

one's own identity from a negative "other" that one otherwise may seem very similar to (Copes et al. 2008). For example, an exploitative employer who takes advantage of the availability of cheap labor in an informal unregulated market, or colonial masters speaking about their domestic staff as if they were animals or children as Anne and Anders talked about their predecessors doing. Another typical comparison strategy is comparing down for instance to people who live in poverty on the streets or in slums: compared to these people the domestic servants' general life conditions, salary and work tasks may start to appear quite appealing and good.

The last two frameworks below relate to the Danish expatriates' engagement with new social others at work and during leisure time. The local middle class, the elite Indians and other expatriates introduce the Danes to alternative interpretations of the employer – employee relationships. Thus, they function as "moral guardians" (Shweder & Much, 1991) who help transform the newcomers' ideas about right and wrong conduct. With time, these novel frameworks are incorporated into the Danes' narrations about their experiences and actions in India.

#### 6.3.3.5. ADAPTION TO LOCAL IDEAS

Many expatriates refer to local practices among Indians or other expatriates as neutralizing strategies: "In India working six days a week is normal", "Their former employer said this [...] is what they are used to", "We have an oral contract, this is how they do it here in India", "My Indian colleagues says that [...] Other expatriates also [...]" and so forth. Thus, in this type of verbalization, it is the local practices that become the framework for justification rather than the expatriates' practices and values from Denmark. Local Indians and expatriate peers could be seen as two different frames of reference where the Danish expatriates can find divergent practices and ideas: for example, in terms of the level of salary and whether the education of the staff's children is an employer's responsibility. Furthermore, the expatriates may start to use "cultural explanations" (Paugam et al., forthcoming) to position the employees along the lines of radical otherness as a way to understand and justify, for example the need for long work hours. As Kathrin said to me: "*They work so slowly here that you need to have a fulltime maid in order to get done what you yourself could do in a few hours*".

#### 6.3.3.6. NECESSITY AND MORAL OBLIGATION

Local stories about the impossibility of fighting the ever present dust in Delhi without daily cleaning are very common. This links to the "myths of impossibility" (Fechter, 2007) to live in Delhi without any kind of domestic help. Household chores, such as shopping, cleaning and washing vegetables as well as having someone at home to help with the constant flow of repairmen in one's apartment are often verbalized along the lines of being too much to handle on your own. Maids or drivers are often spoken about as useful translators with regard to culture and language. Furthermore, the case of employing staff is also presented as a moral obligation: a way to create jobs for the

huge ever expanding Indian population. Furthermore, for some people, providing jobs becomes similar to small- scale charity projects. Instead of having to deal with the immense masses of poverty outdoors, expatriates may experience that they can support a low income Indian family directly by providing work.

As mentioned previously, some of the verbalization may be linked to a kernel of truth. However, the interesting thing here is that the Danes, due to the temporary nature of their stay, their relocation situation as well as their exposure to local people (expatriates and Indian) gain additional meaning frameworks that they – as I will show below – use to re-create familiar experiences of themselves. Moreover, it is important to underline the complexity of these neutralization strategies. The Danes switch very fast and smoothly between the different frameworks of explanations. In one instance, they may compare their own Danish values as superior, as opposed to local practices, and in the next use the local ideas and practices as justification. These different frameworks provide a mosaic of “symbolic resources” (Zittuon, 2006) the Danes can use to reinvent themselves with when the novel setting imposes obstacles and discrepancies. As Maja said after having spent almost a year in India: “*It is by far so much easier to be ‘a good human being’ in Denmark*” - there you don’t have to negotiate around poverty, servitude and inequality in the same explicit way in everyday life.

## 6.4. NON-RESISTANCE

It is important to note that privileged migration does not mean that people just walk around as if in a war zone, having to protect themselves constantly. Relocation is also in many instances experienced as a vitalizing, freedom-filled and learning experience. And expressions of resistance occur alongside episodes of non-resistance. Thus, in the following I present typical situations where non-resistance in relation to domestic staff emerges.

### 6.4.1. NON-REFLECTION

Non-reflection is here defined as *not* re-acting to the set-up surrounding the domestic staff. Part of this seems to happen to newly arrived expatriates for a long time, as they can be quite busy setting up their new careers and their new homes and everyday life in India. Thus, the process of hiring and having domestic staff – for example how the oral or written contract is formulated – only gets attention when the circumstances require it. Inherited staff’s original work routines is often continued with changes occurring only where they employers have felt compelled to make changes, as referred to in the section on work conditions above. The issue of not feeling responsible, also mentioned previously, plays a role in non-reflection. Examples include, for instance, people in guesthouses reporting that they have not thought at all about the wages or bonuses their housekeepers get, as they do not experience these issues as their responsibility, or, cases where staff is employed through a third party, the expatriates may not know the salary of their household staff even after years of service.

#### 6.4.2. CONFLICTING NEEDS

Non-resistance also emerges when the employer's needs conflict with the needs of the employee. For example, as mentioned under change of work conditions, many people let their staff go earlier every day after 8 hours of work. Only a few change the original contract. Thus, people have (and use) the opportunity to keep their employee for longer if something special comes up such as having guest for dinner. In addition, when staff request extra holidays, they may only be given it if it do not conflict too much with the employers' schedule or plans. Another typical example is asking the driver to work late hours if the expatriate was going out for dinner in spite of knowing that he would have to get up early the next morning. Another example is using the driver on Sundays even though the employer knows that he might prefer be with his family. These instances were often justified in terms of the extra tips for overtime that the driver is motivated to earn. I need to underline that most of the time the expatriates go to great lengths to include a concern for their employees' well-being as mentioned in terms of changing work conditions.<sup>12</sup>

Employers also often change their schedule so that they are not out dining too late, too many nights a week, or they get a taxi instead. However, in cases of major conflicts of needs, it is mostly the employers' interests that come first. In one case, a couple had to move from their current housing. When searching for a new home, they looked very carefully for a place where their two live-in housekeepers would have a room at least as good as the old one. They eventually found the perfect place in close proximity to the husband's work. Everything was great, except the low quality of the servant's quarters, which they interestingly enough did not really notice was lower until they were confronted with explicit sadness from staff when they saw their new quarters. To solve this problem, the couple immediately decided to pay for a better room outside the housing complex. Thus, the relationship between resistance and non-resistance is in a constant oscillation. In addition, the particular situation influences whose needs are in focus. Furthermore, the expatriates quickly start to experience new possibilities for well-being that emerge as a result of the service their domestic workers provide.

#### 6.5. GETTING USED TO AND STARTING TO ENJOY HAVING DOMESTIC WORKERS

The expatriates get accustomed to having people around them doing manual service work all the time, and it does not take long before they also begin to experience the conveniences of domestic service. I present the most common instances below. Please note that this does not mean that Danish expatriates do not experience frustrations in relation to their staff. As in any other work relationship, negotiations are ongoing between employer and employee. In the line of domestic work, it can, for example, be difficult for the employer to create feelings of privacy when there is a maid in the

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<sup>12</sup> *This relationship can become really caring over time. In times of major crises - for example the death of a close relative - the employer may provide financial support to help their domestic worker cope with the situation.*

house, and a driver and guards outside who know all about the family's whereabouts and general preferences.

### 6.5.1. BEING TAKEN CARE OF

Having a person caring for your personal needs can be very comforting. Eskild, a middle-aged manager living in a high rise building, explained that he just loved the fact that when he comes home from work there is cold coke in the fridge and someone to fetch cigarettes if he forgets them in his car 13 floors down. Many expatriates expressed immense gratitude of having to think less about practicalities in their daily life. As Karen portrays it: *"It is like being a teenager. In principle, I could just throw my clothes on the floor and someone would come and pick it up"*. For people who have had many responsibilities for many years, such as demanding jobs and children to take care of, the new situation feels very liberating. Dual working families could now spend their free time doing leisure activities with each other and their children, thus being liberated from "the second shift" (Hochschild and Machung, 2012) of household chores. For young, single expatriates or couples without or with grown up children, the chance to focus fully on their work and free time was also appreciated. Although their experienced need for someone to clean up and cook was not as present, several of the latter played with the idea of reducing their maids' and housekeepers hours or maybe do without.

### 6.6.1. NEW TREATS

Not only can domestic staff make life easier and more comfortable as they take over the everyday household tasks, new daily treats may also become possible. For example, the easy access to ironed shirts – either done by the household maid or a press-wallah on the street who in his outdoor stall uses brown coal to heat the irons and do it for five rupees a piece – became a daily pleasure, especially for the men. Most men I spoke with had never used shirts that needed ironing back in Denmark, but had taken this habit up in India. All enthusiastically exclaimed how they had started to love the feeling of these daily fresh-ironed shirts. Another treat was having a driver. Drivers can be tricky in the sense that they provide a buffer between the expatriate house and the city outside that the expatriates depend upon, while at the same time the expatriates also need to feel as master of their own movements around. Several people also had conflicts with their drivers, and some decided it was easier to do without a driver completely. Not having to drive oneself was experienced as a major bonus in two cases in particular. Firstly, the considerable time that is often spent in the Delhi traffic could turn into a calm period for the expatriates to unwind from work, check mails or chat if the partner was in the car; Secondly, when dining out or going to a party, there was no need for a designated driver. Furthermore, the uneasiness that people experienced in the beginning about having a driver to sit and wait for them several hours in a row disappears with time.

## 6.7. TRANSFORMATION OVER TIME

*During the first days of her maid's employment, Maja reported much discomfort about having an all-around live-in maid in the apartment all the time. Nevertheless, after only two weeks, she had become quite used to it. Maja actually ended up a year later really enjoying the company of her maid who she liked very much as a person. (field notes).*

I noticed a considerable change in the Danes' embodied reactions within the first few weeks of their stay in India. After a week or two, all the "door openers" - people at hotels, shops and restaurants employed to open doors for guests, as well as security guards - are not noticed as much anymore. The Danes are now more at ease with having domestic staff inside their houses. People also get more used to the general encounter with poverty. Just as a soldier has to adapt to moving around in a killing field with dead bodies, the expatriates get used to having beggars knocking on the car windows or seeing families living on the pavement under flyovers. However, although the Danes find their ways to live beside poverty and social inequality, most do not express this as a deep-felt acceptance of its presence. As Anne said six months into her stay when she was describing how she did not get emotional anymore when the beggars approached her as she had done in the beginning: I guess I have become more harsh, a comment that points to a change in her in a potentially negative direction. Another interpretation could also have been that she had become more realistic in terms of how the world around her is. Therefore, although Danes' daily practices in some aspects may change dramatically, it seems like they still navigate according to the same moral horizon. Their values have not been changed or modified during their stay. Along similar lines, Maja noted a few days before she left India after one and a half years: "*I do not feel I have changed, in the sense that my core values are, thank God, still the same. I still feel awful when I see poor people living under the flyovers*". Maja was one of the people I met who most actively supported different Indian NGO's during her stay, and her family had worked out very extensive and well thought-out contracts for their employees. Treating her staff well and fair was essential for her. Still, some of her practices changed over time. For example, two days before our last interview, where she mentioned the above sense of not having changed, I was at her apartment. We sat and talked about her maid in Danish, frequently mentioning her name while she was in the kitchen within earshot. Something a newcomer may react against, as mentioning a person's name in a language they don't understand seems to reduce the domestic worker to an object.

However, it does not mean that the expatriates just let go of all of their resistance strategies. As mentioned above, people often continued to provide their staff with what they experienced as good working conditions, as well as continually engaging in other actions that reflect their ideas about how the world around them ought to be. In this regard, Pelle's case is illustrative. Pelle's change over time seems related to his success in creating personal relationships that reflected the kind of person he considers himself to be: As a young professional, Pelle felt deeply disturbed by being placed

high in the social hierarchy despite his junior position. During the first four months, he experienced a lot of emotional uncomfortableness with everything that may have made him resemble a “colonial white male”. Six months later, he found himself in a position where being called Sir or being treated like a superior did not make him shiver in the same way anymore. Pelle tells me how he has managed to establish a very good relationship with some people who were very low in the hierarchy at his work place. This was a situation he was very satisfied with, as it underlines his experience of who he is and his ideals about human interaction. Moreover, Pelle’s acceptance of his new life style may have been further supported by upcoming prospects of an international career and a girlfriend who herself grew up with domestic staff.

Experiences with the domestic worker employer – employee relationships over time also open up for novel interpretations of the “right conduct”. In a classic case, Maja got cheated by her driver who tried to make her pay for fake hospital bills. After this episode she noted that she had been more naïve in the beginning. She and others also described how they became stricter with time. Thus, practices of local Indian elites and old-time expatriate employers, such as close supervision, concrete direct orders and lower monthly salaries, now do not look as unfounded or foreign as before. In addition, new actions become acceptable with time; for example, Signe, who for several months could not bear the thought of having someone else wash her dirty underwear, started to let her maid do it eight months into her stay.

## **6.8. CONCLUSION**

The cases presented in this chapter demonstrate the enormous flexibility human beings have to transform and adapt to new settings. By focusing on the dynamics of resistance, I have been able to unfold the experiences Danish expatriates go through when they move abroad as privileged migrants to a country where socio-economic inequality and poverty is explicitly present. Many of the Danes in my study had not thought before leaving for Delhi that they would start to accept and also enjoy having domestic workers, as practices of domestic service work in the Indian setting in several aspects seems in opposition to their values about equality in human relationships. However, as shown above, Danes do change when they arrive and become employers of domestic staff. First, immense resistance is experienced on a concrete embodied level: they start to change work conditions, and they apply various leveling strategies and use neutralization techniques to justify their novel social status as expatriate employers of domestic workers. Later on through interaction with local Indians and expatriate peers, the expatriates expand their interpretation repertoire. These additional meaning frameworks make it possible for the Danes to accept - and also enjoy - everyday practices that beforehand were experienced as out of tune with their familiar sense of self. Accordingly, their resistance in many situations dissolves. However, this does not mean that all of their actions are changed. Holding on to some resistance practices can become important semantic anchors in their narratives about themselves abroad.



Furthermore, the expatriates' use of these different narrative angles, social representations and justifications is complex. For example, a person may embrace the clean-ironed shirt in the morning with gratitude and enjoyment, and in the next instance criticize another expatriate's way of talking about his staff as servants, even though having shirts ironed by a personal helper each day could have been perceived as a servant situation before arriving in India.<sup>14</sup><sup>13</sup> The shift between different meaning frameworks is ongoing and constant. The only consistent thing, I would argue, is the case that the transformation in these people's experiences does not imply a change of their value system. Rather, the novel additional meaning frameworks make it possible for the Danish expatriates to interpret their new employer practices as consistent with the *moral horizon* of a Danish sociocultural setting. Analytically we can understand the moral horizon as clusters of values in specific sociocultural settings, that although socially constructed in appearance seems consistent over time. The moral horizon is connected to common sense and everyday action in these local spaces. Furthermore, just like a horizon, these values cannot be reached; rather they function as a set of guidelines toward which the collective or individual can orient themselves and evaluate their actions. This constant orientation in a specific direction can help to create experiences of continuity and coherence over time and settings. However, it does not imply that these meaning making processes are simple. As the individual persons move toward a moral horizon, they, at the same time, have to continuously reorganize their actions, relationships and experience of being in the world.

Moreover, I argue that this process has to be hidden in order to be successful. In my study, the Danish expatriates do not change their experience of themselves over time – in relation to their core values – when they become employers of domestic staff.<sup>15</sup><sup>14</sup> On the contrary, the Danes get used to and start to accept many novel practices related to employment of domestic staff, that they first found so difficult exactly *because* they do not experience themselves as transformed.

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<sup>13</sup> Here my findings link strongly with the work of Alex Gillespie (2006) on divergences of perspective in Western tourists' experience of themselves and of other tourists in Northern India, where Gillespie's tourists distanced themselves from 'the others' (real or imagined) and their ridiculous tourist behavior

<sup>14</sup> This does not mean that expatriates do not experience being changed by their stay abroad. Many report experiencing being changed in many other matters related to their everyday life, such as getting used to and maybe starting to appreciate more unpredictable schedules, less fixed time plans, and so forth.

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# CHAPTER 7: INHERITING DOMESTIC WORKERS: A STUDY OF NORM TRANSMISSION AMONG EXPATRIATES IN INDIA

Schlieve, S. (Accepted). Inheriting domestic workers among expatriates in India: A study of norm transmission and negotiations, *Papers on Social Representations*.

## 7.1. ABSTRACT

Based on an empirical study of Danish expatriates, this article explores how the social representations of domestic work are transmitted, shared, and negotiated in the expatriate community in Delhi. Domestic work belongs to the informal economy in India, which is largely unregulated. Expatriates often inherit domestic workers directly from each other, copying and re-constructing their predecessor's contracts. What is also passed on, along with the workers and their contracts, are social representations and norms linked to being an expatriate employer in India. These social representations and norms are central for the newcomers' ability to navigate the unfamiliar and difficult situation of managing domestic staff. Furthermore, the inheritance and sharing of social norms may protect the expatriate community from major changes and critiques. Thus, although the individual expatriate is only in India for a limited time, core structures of the work relationship and employment standards are continued and re-created by the ever present – but constantly changing – group of expatriates.

**Keywords:** expatriate communities, domestic workers, social representations, norm transmission, negotiation of novelty, India

## 7.2. INTRODUCTION

Human life is, and always has been, marked by contingency (Jackson 2013a) and negotiations of novelty. We never know what awaits around the corner – who we will meet or what will be required of us. There are times, however, when these encounters with the unknown are more strongly felt than others - for instance, when we travel away from home and resettle in unfamiliar environments (Märtsin & Mahmoud, 2012). An important strategy to handle such transitions is to share stories, images, and symbols with other people in order to transform the unfamiliar into something recognizable, relatable, and thus more manageable (Jackson, 2013b; Zittoun 2006; Moscovici, 1961/2008). This strategy is widely used when high-skilled individuals from the Western hemisphere move as expatriates to the Global South to take on new jobs. Here they find themselves not only in a foreign country, but also in a situation where they have to manage what for many is a completely new type of relationship, that of

being the employer of domestic workers such as maids, cooks, and drivers. Employing domestic staff is a taken-for-granted practice among middle- and upper-class Indians (Ray & Qayum, 2009), and expatriates are expected to take on domestic staff during their stay (also when they are accompanied by a non-working spouse). Therefore, most expatriates become managers of one or several domestic workers during their stay in India. This relationship requires that intercultural encounters and work relations have to be negotiated at home. Hence, the ruptures and liminality (Turner 1967) of migration is accentuated. Furthermore, as I have illustrated elsewhere (Schliewe, 2017) for Danish expatriates this includes the adaption to a high socioeconomic position in India. It is a position they have to initially negotiate when they become an employer of domestic staff in India, and this often becomes a point of moral conflict for the Danes, due to the obvious social inequality of which they find themselves a part. Under these circumstances the local expatriate community becomes a central mediator of the migrants' new social reality, providing initial guidance and with it underlying norms and social representations. Social representations are socially constructed systems of values, ideas and practices that are projected out to the world enabling people to orient themselves and master their social worlds (Moscovici, 1961/2008). In India, domestic work belongs to the grey and sparsely regulated informal economy, meaning that whatever existing policies actually do exist, they are often neglected by the local population, leaving domestic workers largely unprotected by labour laws (Wiego report, 2011). There are differences between states in India in this regard, and policy changes have been made in recent years, but the general picture is that existing labour regulations are seldom enforced. In Delhi a very efficient and widely used practice exists among expatriates of inheriting domestic workers from each other, passing them on from one generation of expatriates to the next. In this process representations of local domestic workers and the norms related to employment standards in India are transmitted along with the staff. This previously unexplored informal system of inheritance is the focus of this article. More specifically, we go into the processes of transmission, analyzing the negotiations that occur between individual expatriate families and the wider expatriate community. I then outline social representations and norms that seem to be stable across expatriate generations and explore why this may be so.

Expatriate communities provide a rich arena for social psychology to study the dynamics of social realities. Expatriate communities heterogeneous; people work in a range of different fields (e.g., academia, business, or diplomatic missions) or accompany their working partners (Fechter, 2007). Expatriate communities are also transitory with a frequent change of members (e.g., in Delhi people often have a two- to four-year contract, if not an even shorter one). What distinguishes these communities is the shared position of temporary migration and of being a privileged outsider group in the local societies of the Global South (Grover, 2018a; Cohen, 1977). Furthermore, expatriates can become very dependent on each other as primary sources for practical and emotional support during their postings (Schliewe, 2018). Consequently, norms and representations of what it entails to be living (as an expatriate) in the given place are often negotiated in these social networks. As Sherif (1936) observed in his classic



social psychology experiments, social groups may co-create collective standards as a way to deal with ambiguous environments. There is of course a long way from Sherif's experimental setting (focusing on perceptual stimuli) to the complexities of the everyday life of a temporary migrant. But the tendency to unconsciously support the norms of the expatriate community is precisely what is found in the study presented below. Research on contemporary expatriates and their domestic workers in the Global South is still sparse. Existing studies focus mainly on the relationship between employer and employee through lenses of mutual dependency (e. g. Kidder, 2000), boundary work, and intersectionality (e.g. Johnston, 2014; Grover 2018b). Thus, this article illuminates an area that has received little attention to date, but one that is of considerable psychological importance; the triangular relationship between expatriate families, the wider expatriate community, and their domestic workers.

Social representation theory underlines the significance of analyzing such triangular relationships. Of particular relevance is Jodelet's (1989/1991) work highlighting the community's role in transmitting and maintaining social practices and representations. In many ways her study on French villagers living with mentally ill lodgers bears striking resemblances to Schlieve's (2017) doctoral study of Danish expatriates and their domestic workers. In both cases, symbolic transgressions can be seen to pose a danger within individual households. In Jodelet's research, proximity to a 'foreign' other (and madness) threatens the established borders of personal identity, social systems, and hierarchies. This dynamic is very similar to that observed among Schlieve's Danish participants, who were disturbed by encounters with poverty and their own privilege as expatriates in India. Furthermore, in both studies seniors of the community were found to provide recipes to novices regarding how to deal with these potentially unsettling encounters, and this guidance would then serve as the foundation for an elaborate normative system. Hence, this article expands the extant research by focusing on the expatriate community as a mediator of individual expatriate employer practices and by using social representation theory as an interpretative framework.

Furthermore, the article is written in an alternative style giving space to two case stories. These case stories exemplify the processes of stability and change as social representations are transmitted between newly arrived expatriate families and the wider international community. The aim of presenting the results this way comes from the idea that story telling can get us closer to people's concrete lived experience than can abstract theory (Jackson, 1996). Thus, we may get a fuller understanding of the expatriates' negotiations of their social realities when we follow these processes more closely. The article is organized as follows: First social representations theory is introduced, followed by a brief outline of the research design. Second, to set the scene, the circulation of domestic workers is outlined and the ambiguity of being an expatriate employer is presented. Then come the case stories. The article ends with a discussion of practices and representations that are kept socially stable beyond the stay of any given individual expatriate.

### 7.2.1. SOCIAL REPRESENTATION THEORY – MAKING THE UNFAMILIAR FAMILIAR

Social representation theory provides an elaborate and complex social psychological framework for understanding how people share, negotiate, and transform social knowledge in their everyday life. For Moscovici (1981) social representations do not refer to a concept, but a phenomenon. He describes social representations as:

*(...) a set of concepts, statements and explanations originating in daily life in the course of inter-individual communication. They are equivalent, in our society, of the myths and belief systems in traditional societies; they might even be said to be the contemporary version of common sense. (p. 181)*

Moscovici points to two main processes generating social representations: *anchoring* and *objectification*. Anchoring is the process of turning unfamiliar social knowledge into something familiar. Moscovici explains that such processes are strategic maneuvers where social groups selectively integrate aspects of the novel social representations depending on their specific values, personal orientations, and needs. It is a fundamental point for Moscovici (1981; 1961/2008) that novelty is always encountered through existing belief systems. It is by integrating what is threatening into well-known categories that the unknown becomes manageable, which also allows for a shift in feelings about the novel social object, for example, when Catholics understand Freudian analysis ('talk therapy') in the light of Christian confession. In addition, objectification refers to how representations are reproduced and projected out into social reality and treated like building blocks of reality itself (Moscovici, 1981). As Moscovici (1984) writes: "*In creating representations we are like the artist, who bows down before the statue he has sculpted and worship it as a god*" (p. 27).

Objectifications can be images shared in the media, e.g. of "colorful India", or more abstract entities, such as the idea widely shared among international expatriates of India as "a different place - where other rules apply" (as we will see demonstrated below). Furthermore, social representations are shared through a variety of communication channels. Importantly, these transmissions are never frictionless and it is this tension that makes change possible (Marková, 2003). Thus, in contrast to Durkheim who originally introduced the concept of collective representations to the social sciences (and who believed the processes of change to happen over long periods of time), Moscovici provides a dynamic view on social representations, where the processes of change and exchange take place continually between different social groups. Accordingly, the current article focuses on how the international community's representations of domestic work are transformed and maintained as new expatriates enter the scene in India.

### 7.2.2. THE STUDY

The presented findings come from a study of Danish expatriates' experiences of

becoming an employer of domestic workers in India. The data were gathered over 13 months of ethnographic fieldwork in Delhi (2013-2016). The research focuses on the expatriates' everyday encounters with their staff – including, among other things, the management of novelty, their mutual relationship, and changes over time. A bottom-up approach inspired by phenomenological methods (Jackson, 1996) was used to collect the data. Accordingly, interviews and field-notes were first analyzed thematically and theoretical frameworks (e.g., social representation theory) were applied later in the process. Additionally, several parts of the findings were discussed with participants during and after the research. The fieldwork included participation in expatriate networks, social events, and online groups. The fieldworker also conducted formal (taped) interviews with Danish and international expatriates and their domestic workers.

Furthermore, a longitudinal study was conducted to follow transformations of, and developments in, the expatriates' experiences over time. Nine Danes were followed from shortly after their arrival up to a year into their stay (five interviews), and three other Danes were followed during the whole duration of their six-month stay (four interviews). The two families presented below are from the longitudinal part of the study. Their cases were selected to be presented in the current article as they represent typical ways of how social representations and norms are transmitted and negotiated among Danish expatriates in Delhi. For example, these two cases nicely demonstrate how domestic workers are inherited over generations of expatriates and how norms and social representations derived from the wider expatriate community are anchored according to the individual family's needs and preferences. Importantly, similar dynamics were also found among the other Western expatriates who took part in the study. Thus, the findings seem to be generalizable to the international community in this Indian city, that is, after taking into account such additional factors as divergent home country norms and different levels of prior exposure to domestic work and poverty. Lastly, it should be stressed that my position as a white (female) Dane living temporally in Delhi (with my family) gave me easy access to the Danish and international expatriate community. As is typical for many newcomers, I myself inherited a maid from a research colleague.

### 7.3. INHERITING DOMESTIC WORKERS

As mentioned above, expatriates are expected by locals and other expatriates to have domestic staff while in India. In general, all expatriates (no matter their nationality) employ domestic staff. One seldom encounters expatriates in Delhi who do not have any form of domestic staff hired by themselves or by their organization<sup>15</sup>. Singles

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<sup>15</sup> *International students may not have domestic workers during their (short) stays. But beside this particular group, I have only encountered very few expatriates without any kind of staff during more than 18 months of fieldwork in New Delhi (2008-2016). One was a female working long-term in a hippie-style, Marxist organization. Another was an experienced expatriate who had lived overseas in many countries for many years. She told me that she preferred to do the things herself – well-aware that the others in the community found her choice very odd.*

who spend much of their time away from home may only employ a part-time cleaner, who comes by only a couple of hours each day to clean the house and do the dishes. Daily cleaning or dusting is seen as an imperative in India, and shopping, cutting and cleaning vegetables, and cooking are considered very time-consuming tasks (by Indian nationals as well as foreigners). Traditionally, domestic workers in India were assigned to specific areas, where one employee may be the one cleaning bathrooms and another employee the one taking care of the garden. Currently, all-round maids are now becoming increasingly popular among both expatriates and Indians (Grover, 2018b). Many foreign families have a full-time, all-around maid who does the cleaning, shopping, and cooking (and sometimes taking care of children). Several families also have a driver, while others also have additional workers to take care of different aspects of the household (e.g., cook, gardener, and nanny). There are several means by which newcomers become managers of domestic staff (see Table 7.1). The two categories called ‘pre-departure inheriting’ and ‘inheriting in India’ are of particular interest for us here. It is through such informal arrangements that domestic workers (and knowledge about them) are circulated among the expatriate community, although, social representations and norms also are shared during social events and through other communicative platforms.

Table 7.1. Pathways to Domestic Workers in New Delhi

<b>Arranged by Organization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serviced apartment, including a part-time cleaner.</li> <li>• Organization Guest House, including a maid.</li> <li>• Maid/housekeeper employed by an organization.</li> <li>• Driver/s employed by organization.</li> <li>• Guards employed by organization.</li> </ul>
<b>Suggested by Organization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing arrangements including domestic staff.</li> </ul>
<b>Pre-departure Inheriting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Email from expatriate predecessor or expatriate contact before arrival.</li> </ul>
<b>Inheriting in India</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Word-of-mouth recommendations (from expatriates).</li> <li>• Online platforms.</li> </ul>
<b>Other</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Word-of-mouth-recommendations (from Indian colleagues).</li> <li>• Word-of-mouth recommendations from other domestic workers.</li> </ul>

The first category (*Arranged by Organization*) refers to arrangements whereby the given expatriate’s organization is the employer of the domestic workers. The expatriate enter into an arrangement that is paid for, and organized by, their organization – which in turn may use third party actors, such as local companies, to provide drivers, guards, or housekeepers. Here the expatriate’s position become like a middle manager, as they

may have influence on the employees' work conditions (e.g., employment status and salary levels). Thus, the relationship can become just as intense as in direct employment, although, this is not the case in organization-owned guest houses, which are often managed more like a hotel. In the second category (*Suggested by Organization*) the organization recommends that the expatriate take over an arrangement previously set up by their predecessor. For example, a group of three young professionals was the seventh group to take over an apartment from the team preceding them, and the apartment in effect came with a part-time cleaner hired through the landlord. The next categories refer to employer positions where domestic workers are inherited directly from other expatriates. Firstly, quite a few expatriates are contacted by their predecessors before arrival who encourage them to take over their staff (*Pre-departure Inheriting*). Secondly, newcomers also receive recommendations from other expatriates upon arrival (*Inheriting in India*). Below is a typical advertisement from a Delhi expatriate Facebook group:

*Hi everyone,  
The world's best driver will be available when I leave India on February 19th. I have had five different drivers during my time here, and no one could match Rahul. He is totally reliable, speaks – and understands! – English. He can find his way around Delhi and Gurgaon without problem. And not the least his driving is excellent.  
Rahul mobile: 98 98 XXX XXX*

Lastly (*Other*), expatriates also use recommendations from local Indian colleagues and domestic workers, but rarely from a local placement agency. Only one placement agency catering directly to expatriates existed at the time of research. In general, expatriates prefer to receive recommendations from other foreigners as it is literally a way of encountering novelty through familiarity. Advice from other expatriates appears more trustworthy due to similarities in sociocultural background, and because a recommendation from such a “familiar” source intuitively increases the hope of future success – knowing that the domestic workers have functioned well in other foreign families increases their perceived fit with a new foreign family. However, as we will see below, *inheriting* the domestic workers of others is never a simple process.

## **7.4. UNFAMILIAR WORK RELATIONSHIPS**

Becoming an expatriate manager of domestic staff in India is far more ambiguous and demanding than the migrant would ever have imagined beforehand. Hence, to understand the dynamics behind the transmission of social representations we need to understand the typical challenges that are found within the relationship between expatriates and their domestic workers. Table 7.2 outlines key areas where expatriates normally experience ambiguity and problems in relation to their staff.

Table 7.2. Typical Challenges of Managing Domestic Workers in India

<p><b>Existential and Personal Dilemmas</b></p>	<p>Poverty vs. privilege. Intimacy vs. professionalism. Privacy vs. publicity.</p> <p>Transgression of personal boundaries (e.g., gifts not reciprocated, or the discovery of manipulation or fraud).</p>
<p><b>Being a Novice</b></p>	<p>Household management in New Delhi. Not knowing the needs of one’s family.</p> <p>Amount of people related to the household.</p> <p>Staff acting in unexpected ways.</p>
<p><b>No Rules – but Expatriate Norms</b></p>	<p>Domestic work belongs to the grey economy in India.</p> <p>Diversity of practices.</p> <p>Representation of ‘anything goes’ alongside the expectation of (expatriate) standards of employment.</p>
<p><b>Inheritance</b></p>	<p>Success in one family does not automatically lead to success in another.</p> <p>Ensuring future job possibilities for staff.</p>

The first reason that challenges arise is that for many expatriates getting domestic workers in India is an existential and deeply personal encounter. Employing domestic staff reflects the presence of structural inequality and poverty, while simultaneously being an inauguration to privilege. This can be very disturbing. Not only may this relationship contradict the expatriate’s self-image (Schliewe, 2017), but their managerial decisions can significantly impact the work-life balance and economic situation of the worker. Moreover, domestic work operates at the boundaries of intimacy and disclosure. Having maids, cooks, and other staff inside the house for many hours most days of the week can expose the expatriate family’s habits and personal trajectories in a way that the expatriates have never experienced before. As a Norwegian female noted: *I think my maid knew I was pregnant before I did myself*. This can create an atmosphere of surveillance. People employed at diplomatic missions have guards outside of the house who check everyone that goes in and out of the house. Furthermore, many families (not only diplomats) have drivers who follow the expatriates’ every move. Additionally, intense emotions often arise when personal boundaries are transgressed, e.g., when actions of trust or extra benefits are not reciprocated as expected (Mauss, 1954/2002), or when manipulation is suspected, or fraud or theft discovered.

The second reason for many of the challenges is the fact that the expatriates are often novices in India. Most expatriates arrive with no prior knowledge of the requirements of managing a house in India, including local everyday knowledge, such as how to operate the pump to the roof-top water tank, how much vegetables at the market normally

cost, or when you normally pay trash collectors. This has to be learned alongside contract negotiations with their employees. Likewise, the amount of people they have to deal with beside their own staff often comes as a surprise (e.g., repairmen, trash collectors, staircase cleaners, and road cleaners). Furthermore, the domestic workers often behave in surprising and unexpected ways, which forces the expatriates to change their original ideas.

Thirdly, as mentioned above domestic work in India belongs to a grey area in the economy. Thus, there is a wide diversity of employer practices (e.g., salary levels), even among Indian families in the same neighborhoods. Adding to this confusion is the encounter with the expatriate representation of domestic work in India as being totally unregulated. Furthermore, expatriates are expected to adhere to a certain employment standards, which they are told are much better than the local variety. Expatriates in Delhi share a representation of expatriates as being better employers of domestic workers than local Indians. Linked to this is the belief that expatriates provide higher salaries, better work conditions (fewer hours/days a week) and more polite management (not caste based) (see Schlieve, 2017). Thus, this representation supports taking over work contracts from other expatriates and minimizes the reasons to change their content.

The fourth reason challenges can arise between expatriates and domestic staff is that the transition of domestic staff between families is not easy. Many expatriates expect that taking over staff (and contracts) from predecessors will be easy, just as expatriates who are leaving India feel responsible for helping their staff to find new expatriate employers after their departure, since by then they know how difficult the process can be. However, this practice entails taking over a person who has worked in a different family dynamic (maybe even for years). Success in one family setting does not automatically lead to success in the next, and the unfamiliarity and ambiguity the relationship involves still have to be dealt with by the newcomer. Therefore, social representations derived from other expatriates become essential for the expatriates to master the unfamiliar encounter with domestic workers, and in turn, to co-create their social reality in India.

## **7.5. TRANSFORMATIONS OF SOCIAL REALITIES**

It is through communication and cooperation that individuals and groups create and maintain social representations (Moscovici, 1984). Thus, we will now explore how social knowledge transmitted among the expatriate community is negotiated by two families during their first year abroad. The reader should take notice of how the processes of anchoring are strategically governed by the families existing values and experiences during their stay. The interesting point here is that on one hand these families transform – rejecting or changing – several aspects of the norms and representations from their predecessors and the wider expatriate community, while on the other hand many aspects seem to be preserved, such as the practice of inheritance (Case I), the core

representations of the employer- employee relationships (Case II), and the flexibility of employment standards (Case I and Case II). The two case stories presented below are from the longitudinal study. The families were thus followed from shortly after their arrival in India until a little more than a year into their stay in India. Each family was interviewed (in Danish) five times during this period. The interviews centered on their everyday experiences of becoming employers of domestic staff and their relationship with their staff, including their current negotiations about the nature of the work and the contracts with their staff. The ongoing nature of these interviews made it possible to follow the different episodes and events outlined below as they evolved over time.

### 7.5.3. CASE I: PRACTICE OF INHERITANCE

*When you get someone strongly recommended from someone who knows what he [the expatriate predecessor] is talking about – when you are going into an unknown territory where you don't know anything, then you feel like – it is a good advice, I better take him [the driver]! Treat him well, because I am going to need him. 'You cannot do without' as you hear. (Kasper after one year in India)*

As echoed by Kasper, advice from other expatriates is initially taken very seriously by newcomers. Kasper was contacted on email by his predecessor before leaving with his wife Sara for India to work for four years. His predecessor described in great detail the staff that had been working for him, and he encouraged Kasper to take them over. Kasper said yes to the driver (who was described as very reliable moneywise), but not the others, as Kasper and his wife were starting out living in a serviced apartment and therefore did not know what their needs would be later on. Already before arrival, Kasper had the feeling that they might have to change the driver's contract. The former family had him mostly during the daytime, a time when Kasper and his wife would primarily be at work. However, Kasper and Sara started out using the predecessor's contract (wage, days, hours, etc.), of which they had a copy. This document was actually a copy of the contract used by the predecessor's predecessor (with only the salary having been changed over the years). The driver had already been in circulation among employees at Kasper's workplace for seven years. Kasper and Sara did not physically sign the contract, not that this is unusual. Oral contracts are common in India, and expatriates are quite free to choose whether they prefer to have a written contract or not. But Kasper and Sara *did* intend to get a written contract later on.

In the beginning they visualized negotiating a contract where the driver would work less but later during the day, for example just four evenings a week, while keeping the same high salary. Yet, to be sure that they were providing proper work conditions, they investigated existing labour policies. Normally newcomers just ask their foreign peers and local colleagues about such matters. But Sara's professional involvement in social work – and her related ethical codex – made them turn to official government policies as an additional source of information. To their surprise, they found out that



– in contrast to what is normally believed by expatriates – there *is* a minimum wage for drivers in India. It is 9,000 INR, making their driver’s salary of 15,000 INR rather high. They later changed this salary to 14,000 INR. After pressure from Kasper’s expatriate colleagues, who told them that their drivers (who received around 12,000 INR) were jealous and were demanding salary raises. Kasper and Sara also read that according to the International Labour Organization (ILO) one should work a maximum of 48 hours a week. On account of this, they reduced the driver’s working hours which has been until that point more than 50 hours per week.

Despite their initial intentions of being fair, it was not long before a conflict emerged between them and the driver. The driver’s extended knowledge about his previous employers, which he generously shared, gave them the feeling of being watched all the time. Moreover, he behaved in a manner they understood to be racist and sexist. On several occasions, they experienced the driver being prejudiced toward South Indians and Muslims, and Sara did not feel that she was treated with the same respect (as a boss) as her husband because she was female. These issues became a point conflict, especially for Sara. On top of this he always arrived 20 minutes late – even when they had to travel to the airport for a flight. For several months, they considered either making a new (written) contract that is more aligned to their actual needs, or firing him. They ended up postponing the negotiation of a new contract for several reasons: to give him a chance to change his ways and because it was easier to keep him while they were moving houses. They also received the following advice from expatriate peers: *“Don’t give the staff anything on paper, if you know that you are going to fire them, as it may create a lot of troubles. You will be sure to have legal troubles afterwards”*. The postponing of the written contract very clearly reflects the strategic anchoring of local (expatriate) norms. It is convenient and legitimate to wait to write the actual contract. However, as written contracts *are* important for the couple, they immediately provided their maid with a written contract after having her on trial for but one day.

Things did not get better with the driver and after eight months they fired him. Sara and Kasper did not wish to ruin the driver’s future career (he had not done anything really bad). As drivers and staff circulate from one international organization to another, being fired (or blacklisted) by one family could easily undercut all future work possibilities (Grover, 2018b). Consequently, they chose not to tell anyone that he was fired. Instead they explained to other expatriates (and to their domestic workers) that they wanted to drive themselves. Kasper recommended the driver to another expatriate family that eventually hires him. Hence, the couple continues the overall tradition of inheritance. Furthermore, in this case we also see how the wider community provides central (normative) guidelines. Sara and Kasper listen to recommendations from others and they give into peer pressure. Such a tendency to work toward consensus as part of familiarizing the unknown is emphasized by Moscovici (1981), and the need for a relatively stable social reality may be accentuated in such migrant settings. As mentioned above, expatriates in India often depend on each other in terms of practical advice and emotional support. However, as we will see below, the representations

circulating within the expatriate community are sometimes too far removed from the existing values of a given expatriate family.

### 7.5.2. CASE II: EMPLOYER-EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIPS

*The advice we got from the last employer was control, control, and control. Keep books, write everything down – check and count. We ended up doing exactly the opposite. This would also be the advice I would like to pass on [to be trustful]. The alternative seems dreadful. (Anne, after a year in India)*

The statement above illustrates how social representations of Indian domestic workers can be strongly opposed, and advice regarding such workers transformed as they are passed on between expatriate generations. Before moving to India with her accompanying husband and two children, Anne's predecessor recommended that she take over his staff: a driver, maid, and cook who had worked for Scandinavian families for more than eight years. Furthermore, they are invited to a hand-over meeting to get advice on the management of staff in India. Anne and Anders are grateful for the offer. They are totally unprepared for the representations that come up during this meeting. Similar to Jodelet's study – where she finds the French villagers subjecting their mentally ill lodgers to clearly discriminative practices – Anne and Anders encounter plain mistrust and demarcation attitudes toward domestic workers in India. Anne recalls:

*Never trust them. Never let them come inside your home – they are dirty. (...) Make sure that they will not get to know you. Never ask them anything. If they show interest in you they will use it as an opportunity to ask for something – favors or money.*

Anne and her family were genuinely shocked. These are representations that they had to resist on moral grounds (Schlieve, 2017). Generally speaking, concerns regarding hygiene and contamination are present in expatriate representations of Indian workers in Delhi, however, categorizing staff as a direct threat to the purity of the household is not common (Douglas, 1966/2002). Such worries are more typical of traditional Indian households and can be seen as related to negotiations of caste and class (Ray & Qayum, 2009). However, as also reflected above, a major point of concern present among expatriates in Delhi is the concern about being manipulated and used as "an ATM machine". General mistrust toward staff is widespread in the international community. Just how a given individual expatriate anchors these ideas is influenced by their personal encounters during the posting and to their general approach to life in India. For example, Anne and Anders carried over Danish labour norms and values in their attitudes as employers, seeing employees in general as autonomous, trustworthy, and independent.

During the hand-over meeting, they were told that they should never let their (teenage)

daughter drive alone with the driver, as it would not be safe. They asked if there is any suspicion that the driver would be of risk to their daughter. No, they were told – it is just something “*you don’t do in India*”. However, during the first weeks of employment, Anders got the impression that the driver is very respectful. Thus, they told me, they would probably end up letting their daughter drive alone with him. As Anne explained: “*It is also a question of how much you want to be governed by fear and control instead of just living*”. From other expatriates, they heard how most drivers cheat with gasoline bills, or may use their employer’s cars for unauthorized taxi driving on the side. Anders made one checkup upon the gasoline bills, whereby he counted the kilometers the drive had used. Everything seemed to be in order. After this, they let their teenage daughter drive alone with the driver:

*We trust other people quite a lot. Listening to other expatriates out here can make us groggy and start to doubt our own judgments. Maybe it is good to make initial inquiries, and to checkup upon things, such as we have just done with the driver. But being able to get back to the initial gut feeling of trust again – that is really nice.*

Being able to hold on to their attitude of trust was very important for the couple. Nevertheless, as representations of mistrust are strong and consistent in the expatriate community they had to re-negotiate their trust (Markova & Gillespie, 2012) after ambiguous micro-events with their staff. This included explicitly accepting the possible loss of (a minor amount of) money. Anne and Anders never checked the shopping bills, even after accidentally finding out that the cook had bought bread with their money (he gets around 100,000 INR to buy groceries each month). They were generally very uncomfortable with their economic privilege, just as many other expatriates in Delhi are (Schliewe, 2017; see Sherman, 2017, for similar findings among rich Americans in New York).

Interestingly, no matter how much Anne and Anders oppose the discriminatory attitudes of their predecessors toward local staff, they end up creating clearly segregated practices of their own. This is partly based on the fact that Anders – who is at home and not working – prefers to be involved as little as possible in the daily running of the household. The daily routine of the maid and cook starts by their opening the front door, and saying “good morning” out loud (to announce their presence). They never go into the living room if anyone is there. Anne explained that it took time for her to feel relaxed about having such a distant relationship to her employees. She recalled how one day the cook opened up by telling her the story of how he met his wife. She thought that was really nice, but also observed she did not tell her own story in return as she would do in a normal encounter, reflecting about it in the interview:

*The difficulty in this relationship is that we have to find a relationship that is relaxed and comfortable for everyone without it being close and equal. We are not equals; they get a ridiculously low wage. A wage that*

*is good, but still absurdly small. We are not equals, so therefore we cannot have a conversation like equals. We need to retain some distance.*

Without knowing it, Anne reproduces the norms of distance provided by her predecessor, but she points to their income level as the major cause of the distance, rather than the character of the Indian workers. Thus, the couple transforms the necessity of personal distance and spatial segregation into a question of divergent life worlds and the need for privacy. Creating such interpersonal and intergroup distinctions is not just a practice within parts of the expatriate community, but also a tradition within Indian society. It is a strategy to protect caste and class positions (Ray & Qayum, 2009; Adams & Dickey, 2000; Dumont, 1970), e.g., using by different plates and cups for employers and employees (see also Jodelet, 1991). Few expatriates engage in such extreme symbolic separation. Instead, their everyday practices in relation to staff (in terms of distance) typically range on a continuum from very segregated everyday living arrangements to engaging in daily private conversation or even inviting staff as guests to private house parties.

A representation that appeared with much more general consistency in the current research is the image of Indian employment standards as something “apart” from normal regulations. Expatriates normally tend to adapt to this representation rather than changing it. As Anders initially noted: *“I have to work with the fact that these are the conditions here. Those 12 hours of work, six days a week, for 15,000 INR equaling 1,500 Danish Crowns. This is how it is”*. Like in the case above, Anne and Anders copied their predecessor’s contract, which among other things included high salaries and a six-day work week. However, to still be (and feel like) good employers, it became important for Anne and Anders to create a good work environment for their staff, for example by having the maid and cook work from 9.30 am to 5:00 pm on weekdays and less Saturdays – in contrast to the 12-hour workdays that appeared in the contract (Schlieuwe, 2017). They later changed the driver’s contract to a seven-day work week with one Sunday off a month, and they raised his salary to 19,000 INR. I asked them after a year if they ever considered not having their maid and cook work on Saturdays, but it’s a scenario they cannot imagine. It would mean that they would have to do more themselves, something they had deliberately decided not to do while in India (see Schlieuwe, 2018). Anne acknowledged the privilege underlying their choice. She called them spoiled, but simultaneously emphasized that she will encourage newcomers to reflect upon what they spend their time on in India. This way she communicates social norms supporting and legitimizing their current social practices. Thus, the transient expatriate community can be understood as relying on newcomers to maintain its existing social reality.

## **7.6. DISCUSSION**

Situated in the unequal class- and caste-based setting of India, without the support of clear governmental rules or enforced labour regulations, and confronted with the

unfamiliar and ambiguous matter of domestic work, the expatriate community leans inward, acting a source of its own support and guidance (see also Jodelet, 1991). On one hand, the informal practices of inheriting staff among expatriates in Delhi could be read as an individual attempt to create consistency within a diverse and complex web of (better or worse) work relations. By handing staff down directly, expatriates can be seen as trying to establish a certain level of stability in an unpredictable and unjust world. Attempts to ensure such transitions are undertaken not only for the sake of their immediate expatriate peers (with whom the departing expatriates can easily empathize as they have been novices themselves), but also for the sake of their staff's future economic security. Furthermore, for newcomers taking over staff and contracts from familiar peers appears to be the most obvious (and easy) choice. These impressions arise when we take into account the experiences of individual expatriate families. These continuities can be understood not only as an act of individual convenience and benevolence, but also as actions of a defensive collective character. As demonstrated above, the handing over of domestic staff is anchored in the personal preferences, needs, and experiences of the individual families during their time in India. However, at the same time the families' representations simultaneously carry over several central aspects of the wider expatriate community's representations, norms, and practices. Jodelet (1991) argues that we need to disclose such underlying (objectified) representations in order to understand the social logic of a community. Here we might call them 'codes of expatriate life' (see Table 7.3 for an overview of core representations continued over generations of expatriates). The left column outlines the social representations in headlines, and the right column provides a detailed description of the social norms related to expatriate employment standards.

Table 7.3 Social Representations and Norms Continued Beyond the Individual Expatriate

Social Representations	Expatriate Employment Standards
<p><b>India is different</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Things works differently here. Having domestic workers is a necessity in India (due to the amount of tasks required to keep a house in New Delhi and to provide jobs for the poorer part of the population).</li> </ul> <p><b>Different employment standards</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are no rules and regulations in the domestic work sector.</li> <li>• Indians and expatriate employers have different standards in regard to domestic workers (e.g., salaries, days/hours, and responsibilities).</li> </ul> <p><b>Indian domestic workers are different</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alternative employer techniques are necessary due to the potential risk of theft, fraud, and manipulation.</li> <li>• Alternative employer techniques are necessary due to differences of culture, traditions, socioeconomic status, and education levels.</li> <li>• Detailed supervision, control and training of staff often required.</li> </ul> <p><b>Expatriates are better employers than Indians</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expatriates pay a higher salary.</li> <li>• Expatriates provide better work conditions (e.g., fewer days/hours of work).</li> <li>• Expatriates treat their staff respectfully (e.g., speak politely to their staff and do not engage in caste-based discriminatory practices).</li> <li>• Expatriates understand the value of manual work (e.g., expatriates have experience with cleaning/housework themselves).</li> </ul>	<p><b>Salaries</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Salaries should be on the high end, but not unusually high, as this would inflate the market.</li> <li>• High salary in general or tips/overtime money are given to compensate for extra work/odd work hours.</li> <li>• One bonus a year (Diwali/Christmas) often equal to a month’s salary. Farewell bonus/gifts are optional (e.g., money or used furniture).</li> </ul> <p><b>Days and hours</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A six-day working week is normal. Saturday is often a half-day. Drivers can work 7 days a week, with only 1-2 days off per month</li> <li>• Within contracts, it is OK to employ staff at a 8-12 hour daily rate, with fixed time schedules for in-house staff. Driver schedules can be more flexible.</li> </ul> <p><b>Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written contracts are not necessary.</li> <li>• No obligation to provide medical insurance/pension/maternity leave or other forms of support. However, many expatriates provide some sort of economic support or loans in periods of crises or as additional help to their staff and their families.</li> <li>• Not responsible for long-term economic security. Nevertheless, one should send staff on to a new expatriate family upon departure.</li> </ul>

One collective strategy stands out when focusing on the core representations and norms identified in the current study. Danish expatriates are generally pre-occupied with normative reflections on their own actions and those of other employers – foreigners as well as Indians (Schliewe, 2017). However, comparisons to the employment standards of their home country seem to be quickly pushed out of mind or hidden behind the strong and consistent representations of “India as different” and “expatriates are better employers” – implying, among other things, that their employer practices in India cannot really be compared to other places in the world and that expatriates generally follow superior employment standards. One exception that can be pointed out are the few expatriates I encountered who were deeply involved in labour rights at their work, and who then tried to raise awareness of these issues during informal discussions with their expatriate peers. Based on their own accounts, these efforts did not end with much success.

Taking the risk of circular argumentation (Wagner & Hayes, 2005) it will be argued that the informal practice of inheritance seems to play a major role in preserving such representations over generations of expatriates. Not only do newcomers often (but not always) copy parts or all of their predecessors’ contracts, but they also enter a system where they are expected to be employers of domestic workers from day one – a novel manager position about which few expatriates gave much thought beforehand. Thus, they turn towards other (seemingly) familiar expatriates to help them negotiate and interpret this strange and ambiguous work relationship. Hence, inheriting staff and thereby becoming employers gives rise to a number of questions the new arrivals have to answer (Jodelet, 1991). Additionally, voluntary migration usually includes a pre-departure awareness of the need to adapt to new practices. Thus, the expatriates are normally ready to take over some of the local assumptions they will encounter. In the case described here, this refers specifically to the social reality of the wider international community, rather than its Indian counterpart. Not that it is necessarily a conscious decision. Expatriates often learn about India primarily through the local expatriate community. As I have argued elsewhere, most expatriates spend their leisure time with other internationals as it is not easy to establish local connection as a temporary migrant (Schliewe, 2018).

What is more, although direct attention to formal labour regulation is remarkably absent, the fear of judgement seems to be always there, just beneath the surface. In everyday talk (including the interviews conducted as part of this study), expatriates provide numerous justifications for why their employment conditions are the way they are, and Danish expatriates generally acknowledge their responsibility as employers (including the effects on their staff’s work/life balance when they ask them to work odd or flexible hours). Here again these findings are strikingly similar to Jodelet’s (1991) research. She highlights how the fear of madness and the mad is hidden; buried within the everyday language and conversations of the French community. In this way, the community attempts to distance itself from this fear. In the case of the expatriate community, the main problem to be avoided is not the mistrust of domestic workers – such fears

are explicit present in collective representations. Rather, the elephant in the room may be the comparisons of their current employment standards to formal labour policies. It is likely that the insecurity and doubt related to these employment practices (and the moral struggles they imply) are set at ease when the collective representation of the situation suggests a lack of norms, and all the more so when expatriates are represented as better employers. Cultivating this kind of ignorance on a collective level may thus make it easier to apply employment standards that, from the point of view of other (normative) lenses, would border on exploitation. Many of the occasions when the services of the domestic worker would be convenient for the expatriate employer, are at precisely those odd hours that most likely conflict with the employee's work-life balance (e.g., late evenings, flexible hours, or very long days). This is, of course, an open question. It is remarkable that individual expatriates generally refer to work conditions as being much harsher in India, and that they make improvements to it where they find it necessary and appropriate (Schliewe, 2017), while at the same time they so readily accept the community's representations of work standards for expatriate employers. Thus, a strange dance may be initiated between the individual and the wider expatriate community, that is, one whereby people do not see the lack of formalized employment standards as (really) problematic, while they simultaneously fear being judged for supporting this system.

In conclusion, the "cultivation of ignorance" is not a personal fault, but rather a collective defense strategy; a social dynamic promoted by the situation of migration and the highly developed informal system of inheritance in which the wider expatriate community operates. Danish and international expatriates become members of an expatriate community. Within the uncertain and potentially disturbing situation that is their lot in India, expatriates are highly dependent on each other. It is possible that by clinging to, supporting, and re-constructing the norms and employer practices handed down to them from their fellow familiar peer group, they are able to reassure each other that, despite the unfamiliar ocean they are crossing together (including alarming encounters with privilege and poverty inside their own homes), they will manage to sail their ship in the right direction. This can help to protect them against major collective critiques or anxieties related to their current employment practices (and affluence); a social reality that can only be maintained when there is general support for it in the expatriate community.



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## CHAPTER 8. CONCLUSION AND DIRECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Migration can be seen as a multifaceted and liminal experience. Furthermore, privileged migration seems to illuminate the moral ecology of human psychology (Brinkmann, 2004), that is how moral frameworks (implicitly) may guide human action in everyday life. In this thesis, we have seen how the dramatic gains in socioeconomic position that appear within privileged migration from the Global North to the Global South is not automatically welcomed by Danish expatriates. Rather, the expatriates' encounters with domestic workers are deeply connected to a moral unease related to the inequalities existing between domestic workers and employers in India (and the global unequal power distribution this relationship reflects). Thus, the gain of privileges first has to be legitimized by the expatriates, and such legitimization strategies have to be continuously maintained. Furthermore, the expatriates position as temporary migrants provide important means for them to legitimize their novel (privileged) everyday life.

Concretely, I have focused on the overlap between micro and macro levels in the encounter between expatriates and domestic workers; looking at the expatriates' individual negotiations over time, as well as the broader structures and social dynamics present in the expatriate community. I have outlined typical experiences of (Danish) expatriates in Delhi, from a first-person perspective, trying to avoid a re-creation of stereotypes and pre-defined normative conclusions about expatriate everyday life and actions, and attempting to emphasize their concrete (and embodied) everyday experiences. Furthermore, I have expanded Cohen's (1977) functional description of expatriate communities by providing detailed examples of how expatriates use each other and the existing practices and social representations in the expatriate community to mediate, re-create, and negotiate the novelty (and uneasiness) they encounter in Delhi. Hence, I have attended to gaps in the current literature and demonstrated how privileged temporary migration positions expatriates in certain symbolic relationships to the host society that are different from those of the settlers traditionally examined within migration research.

Below, I summarize the key findings from the thesis. I will then present a brief discussion of the methodology of cultural psychology and phenomenology, some limitations in the study, as well as the transferability of my research findings. Lastly, to point to the wider-reaching implications of this study, not only in academia but also beyond, I end the thesis by introducing how my findings could be used in interventions aimed at expatriates (and their organizations). Additionally, this also exemplifies how the combination of cultural psychology theory and phenomenological research may provide research results that are especially useful for interventions in a globalized world (Schliewe et al., 2018; Valsiner, 2018; Fini & Salvatore, 2018).

## 8.1. SUMMARY

The phenomenological and cultural psychology approach I have employed in this study provides the basis for an extensive empirical exploration of the experiences and dynamics of privileged migration. The research findings consist of descriptions, typologies, and tools to understand and discuss (individual and collective) processes related to privileged migration – with the primary focus on Danes in India. First, in Chapter 4, *embodied ethnography* is presented as a method to investigate the expatriates' affective and sensory experiences during migration that can provide additional insight into the phenomenon of privileged migration. Secondly, in Chapter 5, to get close to the concrete (spatial and temporal) dimensions of expatriate everyday life, *the Mobile Life-World Map* is proposed as a conceptual tool. With this in hand it becomes clear how integration into the local society is often difficult for expatriates and how other expatriates so easily become *ready-made friends* (and with this, central mediators of novelty). Thirdly, in Chapter 6 it is described how Danes employ a range of strategies (e.g., *leveling*) to keep up a familiar image of themselves as (morally) good persons when placed in the novel (and highly ambiguous) privileged position as employers of domestic staff in India. The Danes' experiences over time are unfolded and it was found that they seem to re-narrate their novel practices into frameworks that fit their prior value system, rather than transforming it. Fourthly, in Chapter 7 the expatriate community's collective sharing of staff and social representations are outlined. Newcomers lean on the other foreigners to navigate the novel (and uneasy) encounters with staff. An informal system of *inheriting* domestic workers exists in Delhi that seems to keep certain social norms quite stable over generations of expatriates – this, in spite of active individual negotiations of these practices. It is difficult for the individual expatriate to deviate too much from the expatriate community's social norms due to their specific position as (temporary) migrants.

Lastly, across all the articles above, privileged migration may be pictured as a (liminal) situation, wherein the usual norm system is loosening up. However, rather than a move away from norms, this may be due to a selective adaptation of additional norm systems over time during the posting, e.g., norms from the local expatriate community, the local (Indian) society, and norms related to the temporariness of the sojourn (e.g., *minor-moral holidays*).

## 8.2. METHODOLOGY

It is very seldom (not the least within psychology) to have the opportunity to conduct long-term (longitudinal), in-depth qualitative field research, and I would therefore claim that my empirical data (and related research design) is a major strength of the study (Gaskell & Bauer, 2000). However, scholars outside of ethnographically and phenomenologically oriented circles (including parts of cultural psychology) may find that the extensive concrete descriptions and typologies take up too much space in this thesis, and they may argue that there is not enough room left for further (central) theoretical elaborations and discussions. To address this possible critique, I point to the

fact that different schools of thoughts disagree on what is the preferred way to create scientific knowledge (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015; Jackson, 1996). For example, phenomenologically inspired research may point to the necessity of first creating a solid base of empirical research before going into more abstract theoretical elaborations (e.g., Katz, 2002). However, this does not mean that major empirical (and inductive) projects – such as ethnographic research – should be without theory (Atkinson, 2017). The (less obvious) case is that different research traditions also diverge in their definitions of what *theory* and *theorizing* may actually entail. Swedberg (2012) argues for the importance of discovery and the processes of creating (one’s own) interpretations of one’s empirical work (as theorizing) – rather than only applying other scholars’ finished products (theory) – at least within the social sciences. Furthermore, in parts of phenomenology, the creation of new concepts and typologies is an essential part of the theorizing process because it may make explicit implicit features of social realities.

### 8.3. LIMITATIONS

In this section, I focus my discussion (of limitations) in relation to methodological questions, such as the trustworthiness (or validity) of my data, below I will go into the transferability of my research findings. The reason for this is two-fold. First, as the phenomenological quest is to illuminate phenomena as they appear in the world (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015), it makes sense to discuss the degree to which this goal has been achieved. Secondly, as I aim to make a scientific contribution with this thesis, not only within the field of privileged migration, but also beyond, it is also relevant to discuss what parts of the empirical research findings may be transferable to other fields within migration research and applied psychology.

In general, I provide transparent research; I describe my research design, research process and position as researcher in the field, in detail (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Furthermore, I present empirically based and nuanced descriptions of typical experiences and psychological dynamics, which was the main purpose of the present research. Moreover, I find strong evidence in all of my fieldwork material for the notion that expatriate-domestic worker relationships in the given settings *are* experienced as problematic and require a lot of individual (and collective negotiations). However, the specific focus of my research also creates limits in the extent to which types of empirical (and theoretical) elaborations that can be included in the project. Thus, I will here highlight one central observations that I neglected in my present study, but which deserve attention and further elaboration. The fact that I followed expatriates from their arrival implies that a central part of the employer-employee relationships explored here is directly related to negotiations of novelty. Had I focused on expatriates already in (yearlong) established work relationships, I am quite sure that other vital themes would arise as well, for example, issues related to the nature of the relationship. For example, I saw different versions of warm relationships (and the occasional opposite development) emerge among the families who had long-term relation to their workers. Some Danes explained how, after some years, they had come to “function as a

bank”; lending money to their staff and their families. Some home-making accompanying spouses told me how the maid became a significant person in their everyday life – keeping them company and in some cases becoming quite emotionally close. Other expatriates became quite protective of their staff, e.g., giving them many additional chances in spite of major incidents, such as not showing up for work for weeks without notice, or drivers turning up drunk at work to drive the family. From the other side, I heard stories from maids of how they cried at the departure of the families they had gotten to know so well and had come to feel so comfortable among (and the children to whom they had developed such close bonds). This mutual bonding would be interesting to look more into, especially in relation to the dynamics of reciprocity (Mauss, 2002; Stodulka, 2015) and sense-making processes in general within developmental interventions (Fini & Salvatore, 2018).

#### 8.4. TRANSFERABILITY

Turning to the question of generalization of scientific research, Flyvbjerg (2006) highlights that it is a general misunderstanding that (single) case studies cannot be used to illuminate broader dynamics, which is a view also supported in general by current methodological discussion in culture psychology (Valsiner, 2017). Thus, the question here may then be, which aspects of my research might be *transferable* to other contexts? Briefly, I would argue that methods such as embodied ethnography and conceptual tools such as the Mobile-Life-World Map could be useful supplements in all kinds of migration research, and that they can help to get close to people’s concrete and embodied everyday perspective. However, these tools most likely have to be adjusted to fit the given purpose. For example, if using the Mobile Life-World Map outside a group of expatriates, the temporal dimension of *temporariness* should most likely be understood in alternative ways, e.g., in terms of a constant uncertainty about the current life conditions and future events (e.g., often found among asylum seekers and illegal immigrants: Mohammed, 2018; Sargent & Larchanché-Kim, 2006).

Regarding the specific migration dynamics I have presented here, such as the importance of ready-made-friends and the symbolic position as a temporary migrant – in terms of mediating the newcomers’ experiences of novel foreign settings – this would require going more into the existing literature and expanding the current research to see where and how such a dynamic seems transferable. Such a literature review extends beyond the scope of the current thesis. However, from a cursory glance at this literature and on the basis of my knowledge of other expatriate (and migrant) settings outside of India, I do think it will be possible to find many occasions where these particular analytical approaches would be of relevance. To provide an example of this from the expatriate case, over the years I have often been surprised by the striking similarity of content in threads of expatriate online forums in Denmark and India. To mention a few recurrent themes; the rudeness of the local population, strange local customs, difficulties in becoming friends with the local population, lack of some central kind of food or other everyday items and mistrust towards the local healthcare or daycare/



school system. These issues are just as prominent among expatriates living in the welfare state of Denmark as among expatriates living in the economically more diverse and less legally regulated state of India.

## 8.5. INTERVENTION

Throughout this research project, I have aimed at challenging common stereotypes related to privileged migration, and instead focused on the expatriates' sense-making processes in their concrete everyday lives. This approach is not only prominent within phenomenological and cultural psychology research, such as I have presented it here, but is also present in (clinical) interventions centered on human meaning making processes (e.g., White, 2007). Accordingly, the findings of the current thesis are also valuable for practitioners working with interventions directed at temporary and privileged migrants. Valsiner (2018) broadly defines interventions as any action that is undertaken to promote changes to a current state of being – thus basically an intended change to a person's (or group's/organization's) sense-making processes and related action/practices. According to Salvatore and Valsiner (2014), interventions are ideally done by dialectically combining theory of meaning making processes with professional action. To this, I would add that we also need to take into consideration careful (and non-judgmental) explorations of the clients' subjective experiences.

Below, I outline a few central points based on the findings in the study that may be useful within interventions with expatriates (such as Danes in India). This includes a list of suggestions specifically aimed at pre-departure training for expatriates who are to become employers of domestic workers in the Global South. However, it will not be a guideline that directly helps the expatriates to understand, manage, and supervise their staff more easily (as hoped for by my informants). Instead, it constitutes a list of suggestions for interventions focusing on the expatriates' (individual and collective) sense-making processes and strategies to deal with the general encounters of novelty within privileged migration, in particular, the unease related to becoming employers of domestic workers in the Global South. Furthermore, pre-departure programs for expatriates have been criticized for their static presentation of culture and dichotomous presentation of intercultural encounters (e.g., Levitan et al. 2018). Thus, I emphasize the necessity in such interventions to (try to) present some of the means by which human beings try to make sense of encounters with novelty.

### 8.5.1. GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

In general, interventions can be directed toward individual, social, and structural levels – while also taking into account the dialogical relationships between these layers (Schlieve et al., 2018; Mangone, 2018). For example, one may focus on the individual level during preparation courses, when the aim is to enhance and support the expatriates' well-being during their postings. Here it would be useful to educate people about the immediate attraction (and helpfulness) of *ready-made friendships*. Such trainings

could encourage people to use such available sources, but they could also help to make people reflect upon the fact that the immediate shine of comparableness between expatriates in fact often covers interpersonal differences in life-trajectories, wishes, and everyday habits. Instead of taking other people's advice for granted, as some novice expatriates may do (e.g., where to live in a city, how many staff to employ, etc.), the new expats could more proactively reflect upon such advice in relation to their own (family) needs and preferences. This is also relevant in terms of domestic staff. As mentioned above, taking over staff from another family (who had a successful work relationship with them), is not a guaranty of a similarly successful experience.

Thus, it is important to not only focus on the "strange other," but also to teach future expatriates about the encounters that await them with other expatriates, and this way to challenge their existing worldviews and expectations in advance (Singla & Rasmussen, 2018). Furthermore, it should be noted that there are often some interesting discrepancies in what is often experienced as good, natural, or easy from the individual perspective of the expatriate and what may be considered "proper" or a "common good" for the local societies or the broader macro-structures of which the expatriates are part. A telling example is the experience of personal well-being the expatriate may gain through everyday interactions with (similar) foreign peers, which can stand in contrast to the concerns that may come from political sources, the public media, and academia, about the possible consequences of (elite) segregation and the privileges of certain migrant groups. Such ambiguities can be relevant to present in pre-departure intervention with expatriates. In general, I suggest providing future expatriates a space for reflecting on such issues as the ones presented below, already before they leave for their postings. Additionally, when such advice is provided during orientation meetings, examples underlining how expatriate experiences can be very different (depending on their concrete positions, placements, settings, etc.) should be used to illustrate the case in point. Stereotypical presentations of expatriate life and experiences should be avoided. In general, taking people seriously and listening with curiosity to how the world appears from their perspective is not only a pre-requisite for good phenomenological (and ethnographic) research, but it is also a foundational element of psychological interventions (Mosgaard, 2018; Bertholdo & Gumiarães, 2018).

### 8.5.2. EXPATRIATE EMPLOYERS OF DOMESTIC WORKERS

As a structural directed intervention, I recommend that organizations hiring expatriates (in unregulated settings like India) incorporate official standards such as the ILO as a primary guideline that their expatriate employees may apply in their private domain with domestic workers<sup>16</sup>. This way, expatriates are more likely be given and to *inherit* formal (internationally recognized) standards for domestic worker contracts. This would, of course, not solve all problems, as there would still be (plenty of) ambiguity related to the employer-employee relationship and new grey zones would emerge

<sup>16</sup> *Such an intervention strategy could be promoted as part of the organization's global CSR (corporate social responsibility) profile.*

(e.g., Liversage et al., 2013). However, by providing such guidelines from the organizational side, the individual expatriate would be given a clearer official standard with which to navigate their contracts from the outset, instead of having to do this in a new and complex terrain all by themselves and in close dialogue with the given expatriate community's collective practices and norms.

Lastly, below, I outline the central points – from this thesis – that would be helpful to include in interventions aimed at expatriates who are going to be employers of domestic workers in the Global South:

**Make people prepared – already before departure – of the many tasks awaiting them as employers of domestic workers.**

For example: A) Be aware that it takes time and supervision to get the everyday work going smoothly. Furthermore, contract and work negotiations happen at a time when the expatriate is in the middle of the settlement process, and when the expatriate may not yet be aware of her/his (and family's) needs in the new setting. B) Another person will never conduct the work in exactly the same way the expatriate would do it himself or herself. It can take time to find a middle-way between these two approaches. The key is to not go below what should be the expected standard in the setting (and salary level), but also to not expect the tasks to be performed as it would be done at home by a person with a different background. C) Acknowledge that bringing more (foreign) people in one's household can promote novel dynamics among family members, as well as conflict in relation to the personal need for privacy.

**Highlight the typical ambiguities of such work relationships – which are often enhanced with extra dimensions during privileged migration.**

For example: A) Expatriates may initially approach the local worker from an “aid position,” rather than as a professional employer. B) The encounter with the domestic worker may function as a mirror reflecting all the expatriate's doubts, fears, and insecurities with the novel foreign setting, including unease in relation to poverty. C) That the expatriate may feel bad (morally) does not necessarily mean that they are good or doing the right thing in the given situation. D) Regarding the staff as “one in the family” is not a solution in itself, but entails additional grey zones (e.g., in relation to expectations and to the rights of a family member vs. a worker). E) Educate people about the different (and changeable) positions from which they may relate to their staff during the day (employer, middle manager, benefactor, friend, temporary migrant, etc.). F) Highlight that domestic work can be experienced as stigmatizing from the worker's position

(even in good families and even with decent work contracts). G) Talk about the many grey zones and possible conflicts between the family's needs and the needs of the domestic workers (e.g., the time schedule, number and selection of work days, etc.). H) Discuss the possibilities of fraud, theft, and the staff taking advantage of the employer's inexperience and temporary situation in a way that does not enhance general paranoia.

**Underline that there is often no straightforward way to provide extra additional support to one's employees – beside the official work relation.**

If such extra aid is intended by the expatriate, the outcome of such development work is never easy to predict.

**Make people aware of the (normal) dynamics (of employing actions and narratives) whereby an expat employer may attempt to justify and sustain their own self-image as (still) the same good moral person as before.**

This includes mentioning possible exceptions made due to the temporary nature of the posting (*minor-moral holidays*).

**Make people aware of the (logical) immediate tendency to rely on the experiences and advice of expatriate peers in similar situations.**

This is all the stronger when expatriates are new to a foreign place, when they are in the midst of relocation and settling in, and while they are starting a new job (and/or taking care of a family). What may likely be inherited in the given situation? Include reflections upon when advice from peers is useful (in their own particular situation) and when it is not.

**Make people aware of typical dynamics within expatriate communities.**

For example: A) Stereotypical narratives of expatriates as better employers than the local population. B) The collective need to protect expatriate traditions and norms in such a fluid and temporary, but highly internally dependent, community.

**Illuminate typical psychological dynamics when encountering novelty.**

For example, highlight the tendency to approach novel situations from within familiar representations, including the norms and representations one received from seemingly comparable peers.

**Underline that the pathways to creating good work relationships with one's employees are manifold, and that every domestic worker and expatriate family represents different constellations thereof.**

Encourage the future expatriate to think more broadly about the different actions they may undertake during their everyday life abroad in order that those actions might better fit the individual family's current needs, and so as to avoid supporting specific unhealthy dichotomies, certain employer practices, or specific expatriate stereotypes.

**I suggest using internationally acknowledged standards, such as the ILO guidelines (and local policies of minimum salary, etc.), as a frame of reference if the expatriates are to create work contracts themselves in unregulated settings like Delhi.**

Other expatriate contracts can surely be used as inspiration (also in terms of problematic issues such as "what to do with insurance/pension/maternity leaves" during temporary employments, etc.), but outside (official) standards of reference are good to include. They can provide an internationally recognized point of reference for how to identify the best conduct in the given case (e.g., in relation to work hours). Ideally, internationally acknowledged standards for expatriate work contracts with domestic workers should be provided by the employing organization.

To conclude, I would like to emphasize that (privileged) migration to another country often is an enriching experience. It comes with its challenges and difficulties, but preparation and more knowledge about these challenges can make the transition easier.

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## **SUMMARY**

The number of high skilled people moving between countries to work on temporary contracts is increasing. However, we know little about the phenomenological experiences and psychological dynamics of temporary privileged migration. Based on extensive fieldwork and a longitudinal interview study, this thesis explores how privileged migration is experienced and negotiated in everyday encounters between expatriates and local domestic workers in India.

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