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Inheriting Domestic Workers:

A Study of Norm Transmission among Expatriates in India

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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

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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; Moscovici, 1961/2008; Zittoun 2006). 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. My previous work has looked in detail at how the expatriates' sense of self is challenged in this context. As a result of the new normative expectations and behaviours they encounter in this novel social identity position (Duveen, 2000), their experiences of identity become threatened, leading them to engage in actions (Holland, 2010) and justifications to hold on to a familiar identity and self-understanding as (morally) good people. I found that, over time, most of the expatriates managed to retain a coherent experience of their identity, and that it thus became possible for them to internalise novel representations and practices. In the current article, I turn to look in more detail at how the expatriates' negotiation of their new employer practices is deeply embedded in the expatriate community that they become part of when they move to Delhi. 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 (Cohen, 1977; Grover, 2018a). 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 Schliewe'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 Schliewe'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.

SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS 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.

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. I describe in detail elsewhere (Schliewe, forthcoming) how I used my own experiences in

the field strategically as an additional research tool to gain an (embodied) understanding of expatriates' everyday encounters with staff. Among other things, I kept a separate field log for my own staff encounters. I never expected that my experiences directly reflected those of my informants, but I always investigated whether or not our experiences were comparable, seeking out themes common across the group of informants rather than my own idiosyncratic experiences[1].

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 [2]. Singles 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 I). 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.

[1] I found many similarities between the informants' experiences and my own, such as feelings of shame arising from the inequality of the work relationships, and experience of the efficiency (and normative expectations) within the informal system of inheritance.

[2] 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 Delhi (2008-2016). One was a female working long-term in a hippie-style, Marxist organization. Another was an experienced expatriate who had lived oversees 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.

Table 1.
Pathways to Domestic Worker in Delhi

Arranged by Organization	• Serviced apartment, including a part-time cleaner. • Organization Guest House, including a maid. • Maid/housekeeper employed by an organization. • Driver/s employed by organization. • Guards employed by organization.
Suggested by Organization	• Housing arrangements including domestic staff.
Pre-departure Inheriting	• Email from expatriate predecessor or expatriate contact before arrival.
Inheriting in India	• Word-of-mouth recommendations (from expatriates). • Online platforms.
Other	• Word-of-mouth-recommendations (from Indian colleagues). • Word-of-mouth recommendations from other domestic workers. • Domestic workers arriving at one's doorstep asking for employment. • Placement agencies.

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.

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 2 outlines key areas where expatriates normally experience ambiguity and problems in relation to their staff.

Table 2.
Typical Challenges of Managing Domestic Workers in India

Existential and Personal Dilemmas	Poverty vs. privilege. Intimacy vs. professionalism. Privacy vs. publicity. Transgression of personal boundaries (e.g., gifts not reciprocated, or the discovery of manipulation or

	fraud).
Being a Novice	Household management in Delhi. Not knowing the needs of one's family. Amount of people related to the household. Staff acting in unexpected ways.
No Rules – but Expatriate Norms	Domestic work belongs to the grey economy in India. Diversity of practices. Representation of 'anything goes' alongside the expectation of (expatriate) standards of employment.
Inheritance	Success in one family does not automatically lead to success in another. Ensuring future job possibilities for staff.

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 Schliewe, 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.

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 with four interviews during (approximately) their first half-year, and a fifth, follow-up interview after just over a year in India[3]. The couples were interviewed together. 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.

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

[3] Case 1- Interviews (time after arrival): 10 days, 2 months, 4 months, 7 months, and 14 months. Case 2 – Interviews (time after arrival): 1 month, 2 months, 3 months, 6 months, and 14 months.

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—maked 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.

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 find 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.

> *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 (Schliewe, 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. But 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 accidently 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.

> *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 (Schliewe, 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 Schliewe, 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.

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 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 3.
Social representations and norms continued beyond and individual expatriate

Social Representations	Expatriate Employment Standards
India is different • Things works differently here. Having domestic workers is a necessity in India (due to the amount of tasks required to keep a house in Delhi and to provide jobs for the poorer part of the population). **Different employment standards** • There are no rules and regulations in the domestic work sector. • Indians and expatriate employers have different standards in regard to domestic workers (e.g., salaries, days/hours, and responsibilities). **Indian domestic workers are different** • Alternative employer techniques are necessary due to the potential risk of theft, fraud, and manipulation. • Alternative employer techniques are necessary due to differences of culture, traditions, socioeconomic status, and education levels. • Detailed supervision, control and training of staff often required. **Expatriates are better employers than Indians** • Expatriates pay a higher salary. • Expatriates provide better work conditions (e.g., fewer days/hours of work). • Expatriates treat their staff respectfully (e.g., speak politely to their staff and do not engage in caste-based discriminatory practices). • Expatriates understand the value of manual work (e.g., expatriates have experience with cleaning/housework themselves).	**Salaries** • Salaries should be on the high end, but not unusually high, as this would inflate the market. • High salary in general or tips/overtime money are given to compensate for extra work/odd work hours. • One bonus a year (Diwali/Christmas) often equal to a month's salary. Farewell bonus/gifts are optional (e.g., money or used furniture). **Days and hours** • 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 • 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. **Responsibilities** • Written contracts are not necessary. • 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. • Not responsible for long-term economic security. Nevertheless, one should send staff on to a new expatriate family upon departure.

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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