

Workplace Emotions in Postcolonial Spaces:
Enduring Legacies, Ambivalence, and Subversion

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Abstract

This paper analyses the emotions of work in postcolonial spaces, where enduring racial tensions, arising from white privilege, continue to shape people's experiences. Based on a close scrutiny of two interview extracts from field work in India, the paper applies a postcolonial perspective to illustrate that colonial dynamics and attendant power relations are daily reproduced or subverted at work. Postcolonial arguments are extended to organisational emotions, by demonstrating how everyday narratives, including those told to researchers, uncover a wide range of experiences of race that may go unnoticed or may not surface through more structured methods. Ambivalence and subversion feature in these extracts as core experiences of emotionally charged postcolonial relations, which are often reproduced or experienced unconsciously. The enduring legacies of colonial history on organisational spaces are discussed, with implications for the emotions of working across racial and geographic boundaries. In a globalised work environment, such legacies may go unnoticed, but their effects are manifest in individual experiences.

Keywords

workplace emotions, postcolonial, India, white privilege, story, lived experiences

Introduction

The application of postcolonial theory to management and organisation studies has provided a rich resource for describing today's power relations in organisations, which reflect 'older patterns of imperialist exploitation' (Banerjee et al., 2009: 12). Postcolonial analyses lay bare Western assumptions about normative management practices, which lead to regular stereotyping or misperceptions of non-Western working practices (Prasad, 2003). Countering these assumptions, and focusing more explicit attention on meanings generated in spaces where East and West meet at work, have become increasingly important in globalised work

environments which reflect the growing economic significance of countries like India. East and West have been conceptualised as discursive fictions, as in Said's *Orientalism* (1978), and they refer to imperial histories whose effects are longstanding and survive political and historical changes.

Frenkel and Shenhav (2006) provide an overview of the ways in which management practices emerged from colonial administration, and outline how the development of management and organisation studies has been heavily influenced by Western othering, negative stereotypes, racism, and attempts to universalise Western approaches, even in international management practices. For instance, Frenkel and Shenhav (2006) reference Ferrero, whose writings depicted, or othered, the non-westerner as "lazy" compared to Europeans, subsequently influencing later organisation theory (2006: p. 863). 'Othering' is a widely-used term to indicate the tendency of groups to construct their identity in reference to other groups by exclusion, denigration, and other actions (see for example Gabriel, 2008 on conceptualisations of the word 'Othering'). The concept of othering is crucial for postcolonial analyses of organisations, for it illustrates how non-Western workers – as represented in the thinking of Western, white workers – are othered; they are conceptualised negatively, as subordinate, with implications that Western ideas and practices are the ideal. The understanding of Othering in postcolonial studies has drawn significantly upon the work of Said, who relied on Foucauldian and Gramscian work on discourse and hegemony to emphasise the ideological uses of Othering (Jack et al., 2011). In this paper, the focus is on Othering as a highly emotional and embodied experience; viewing the other person - the other race – as different, as "not me", may be fraught with anxieties and lead to negative emotional interactions, as will be discussed below.

Frenkel and Shenhav (2006) demonstrated crucial insights about the colonial assumptions underlying organisational theorising, but the salience of colonial dynamics for

understanding organisations has not been engaged with substantially until recently. Jack et al. (2011) illustrate that postcolonialism is still underused for uncovering new meanings in management and organisation studies. Resistance to coming to terms with the legacy of the British Empire is one possible reason for the slowness of engaging more fully with postcolonial resources to enhance management studies. Indicating ‘the unpopularity of the term “imperialism” in Britain, Williams and Chrisman (1994) have pointed to the refusal, till fairly recent years, of sections of British academe to seriously analyze the processes of imperialism’ (Prasad and Prasad, 2003: 287). Colonization has been used as a metaphor in management research (e.g. Prasad and Prasad, 2003), but there has been insufficient examination of the actual processes and effects of colonialism on today’s work relations, or the ways in which management theory approaches them. As Srinivas (2012) has argued in his study of the challenges facing ‘a search for authentic management knowledge’ (2012: 154), ‘From a historical route there is only modest discussion of the impact of colonialism on self-formation and systems of knowledge’ (2012: 154).

Understanding working relations in diverse settings through the wider use of postcolonial theory can be enhanced by addressing its limitations. Postcolonial theory has not probed in depth the ‘emancipation resulting from such engagements [with the Other]’ (Gabriel, 2008: 227). Hence, encountering the other can have wide implications that are not narrowly defined by negative, predetermined outcomes. Postcolonial analyses of organisations may be strengthened further by more empirical studies of people’s lived experiences. Recent work has begun to address this point, such as the contributions in the 2011 postcolonial Special Issue of *Organization*, as discussed by Mir and Mir (2013): ‘The [2011] issue went beyond a mere accounting of postcoloniality into a pushing of its boundaries, challenging postcolonial theorists of organizational studies to avoid the traps of empty theorizing that remained unconnected to lived organizational experience’ (2013: 97).

This paper furthers the study of ‘lived organizational experience’ (Mir and Mir, 2013: 97) in postcolonial spaces by bringing into greater focus the impact of colonialism, especially in engaging explicitly with the legacy and traumas of the British Empire by addressing their lingering effects upon the emotions of cross-cultural work interactions today. To define postcolonial space, I draw upon discussions of space in previous work, such as Gabriel’s unmanaged spaces (1995) and Bhabha’s ‘ambivalent space’ (2004: 160) to refer in this paper to places where postcolonial dynamics, including resistance, occur, at times in unexpected and unconscious ways. This postcolonial space may physically be a work setting located in a country with colonial history, or it may be a space of emotion that is evoked in organisations where individuals with different colonial histories meet and interact with one another in embodied, ambivalent ways. This space may also be an intrapsychic space, where people maintain colonial images and assumptions in their conscious and unconscious minds.

The analysis of empirical data in this paper will demonstrate varied paths that are taken when colonial history is reproduced, or altered, in postcolonial spaces. Discussing the ‘postcolonial interrogative space’ (Jack et al., 2011: 275), Jack et al. ‘found no MOS [management and organisation studies] that explicitly address the psychological trauma of colonial and postcolonial experience’ (2011: 282), and this paper does so by extending postcolonial discourse to organisational emotions. Emotions that are experienced and performed in the here and now of postcolonial organisational spaces may arise from longstanding power relations that persist after official colonial rule has ended. Postcolonial organisational spaces, or organisational spaces as discussed below, are terms that I use in this paper to indicate specifically organisational places of working, where postcolonial dynamics, as outlined in the previous paragraph, occur.

To discuss the study of emotions in postcolonial spaces, I will first define terms such as emotion and ambivalence utilised in this article. Emotions in organisations have been

studied from a number of perspectives, notably social constructionist and psychoanalytic frameworks (e.g. Fineman, 1993, 1996, 2000, and Gabriel, 1998, 1999a). In this article, I use a concept of emotion in which emotion may be part of the lived experience, and may also involve unconscious dimensions (Fotaki, 2006). From this perspective, a conscious emotion of pride may conceal an unconscious emotion of hurt or shame. A conscious emotion of self-confidence may conceal unconscious anxieties. Emotions are often irrational, persisting in spite of cultural scripts, or defying logical explanations. Emotions are strongly dependent upon interpersonal relations; a worker's interaction with a figure of authority may evoke, unconsciously, earlier childhood or historical patterns of relating to authority, a point that will have resonance in the analysis below with regard to unconscious reproduction of colonial anxieties.

Ambivalence is the experience of both positive and negative emotions (such as admiration and resentment) about the same person/object/other, and the emotional experience of ambivalence may occur unconsciously. Having conflicted emotions about the same individual stimulates anxiety, which is met by defences, with the consequence of masking or redirecting negative emotions, an experience which will be analysed below. Bhabha, a postcolonial scholar, conveys ambivalence similarly as the intensity of both positive and negative emotions, as illuminated, for example, in his observation of 'that "otherness" which is at once an object of *desire and derision*' (2004: 96 [my emphasis in italics]). I will draw upon this conceptualisation by Bhabha – of wanting, *yet* (or perhaps *because of* the desire) condescending to the other – in my analysis of ambivalence in both British and Indian workers in their postcolonial interchanges.

Postcolonial studies have drawn upon a range of different theoretical resources, such as literary theory, discourse analysis, and psychoanalytic work. In this paper about emotions in postcolonial spaces, I rely on the work of Indian postcolonial scholars, such as Bhabha,

Kakar, and Nandy, who have often used concepts and principles from a psychoanalytic framework, such as the possibility of unconscious emotions, for analysing postcolonial experiences. Exploring unconscious processes, such as identification with the aggressor and the unconscious experiences of ambivalence, provides an in depth way to analyse ‘psychological damages of postcoloniality’ (Jack et al. 2011: 293), currently underexplored in management and organisation studies. Postcolonial interrogation of lived experiences benefits from psychoanalytic resources; notably, the persistence of white privilege and colonial patterns of working, despite the marking of independence and departure of colonial rule in India, may result from unconscious reproductions of past colonial relations. Emotions experienced in interpersonal ruler-ruled/coloniser-colonised encounters are sustained in the face of rapid social transformations, because, as argued for example by Nandy (1982), colonial roles become unconsciously internalised and subsequently enacted. In the analysis below, I refer to unconscious dynamics like these to help make sense of individual work experiences in postcolonial spaces, including my own experiences as a researcher in this space.

I will now outline the remainder of the paper. The guiding research question of this paper is: What are the meanings attached by people, consciously or unconsciously, to the lived emotional experiences that they encounter in postcolonial spaces? This question emerged from a research project which analysed more generally workplace emotions in India, through a close examination of workplace stories and narratives, which revealed powerful influences of colonialism on today’s seemingly global work environments. My empirical material prompted me to reflect at length about my own impact upon the conversations and interactions that I was experiencing. This reflexive effort is central to this present paper, which proceeds in the following way. In the next section, I discuss background to the data, including: the wider Indian research context from which the empirical material for this article

emerged; the focus on stories in the interviews; the process of data analysis and reasons for analysing two particular interviews in depth; interpretations of data; and reflexivity as a researcher. I then proceed to the story of “Rakesh”, followed by the story of “Abhinav”, in which I present interview extracts and analyse experiences of ambivalence and subversion, including challenges posed by my own emotional engagement with the research material. White privilege is central to the emotions of both extracts, including: discussions of white preferences at work; symbolic meanings of whiteness in stories about postcolonial spaces; and my own self-reflections about whiteness in relation to the data. As Leonard has noted, there are ‘difficulties... in challenging relationships built on power, privilege and ethnic whiteness, [yet] we can also see in the micro-practices and daily interactions of working lives that change is evident’ (2010: p. 355), and such a change is found in the material that follows. The conclusion returns to Leonard’s insights, linking them to the way whiteness features in my research. I end the paper with a summary and future directions of inquiry.

Background to the data

Data for this article are drawn from intensive field work of workplace emotions of Indian employees, in Delhi and nearby cities (in 2009 and 2010) and in Chennai, state capital of the Southern state of Tamil Nadu (in 2010), for a duration of six weeks across the 2009 and 2010 visits. I visited different areas and work settings to explore the cultural meanings of emotions, examining similarities and differences across organisational and state/linguistic boundaries. I conducted partly structured individual and group interviews (28 in total), using a free association approach (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000).

In the interviews, I focussed on the use of stories, which provide access to otherwise elusive aspects of emotion. Through the use of stories, taboo topics or work concerns that are painful or anxiety-ridden may emerge, and other methods may not uncover these telling

dynamics (Gabriel, 1999b, 2000). Example questions included: “Is there a story about a memorable time you had at work?” “What emotions have you experienced in your workplace?” I did not have a fixed order of questions, and I was guided by the direction of the participants in the interview, for example following up with their own words and phrases. I analysed the data by transcribing all of the audio files myself, which provided the opportunity to engage closely with the verbal and nonverbal data of the interview exchanges, and to note, through repeated listening of the interviews, persistent emotional themes. I recorded these themes on a spreadsheet, with accompanying transcript locations of the data. I avoided using prior sets of codes or emotion classification systems, but rather started blank and added themes as they arose from my repeated engagement with the data.

The analysis of these interviews unexpectedly led to rich insights about the lingering effects of colonialism upon organisational experiences. Colonial dynamics were alluded to in several interview exchanges with Indian employees, in which I was constructed as a female “white” person from the West. They also emerged more directly from time to time in responses to specific interview questions about emotions. In this article, I have chosen to focus on only two interview extracts which offer powerful insights into the enduring influence of colonial dynamics upon workplace emotions today. An alternative approach for this article might have been to offer a wider range of discursive turns from the data revealing colonial residues in contemporary expressions. However, instead of surveying a breadth of postcolonial manifestations, I have opted to analyse extracts from two interviews that pointed toward two unique ways in which colonial relations become re-enacted, in highly emotionally-charged ways, in contemporary organisations: ambivalence and subversion. The first is an interview with “Rakesh”, a CEO in Chennai in his thirties, which offers powerful evidence of the ambivalence arising from lingering colonial shadows. By contrast, the interview with “Abhinav”, an executive MBA student in Delhi in his twenties, highlights the

enduring dynamics of colonial roles by offering a revealing example of role reversal that captures the spirit of anti-colonial resistance. The interview with Abhinav also illustrates the enduring ambivalence in British workers' emotions in a space shared with the former colonised subjects.

The juxtaposition of two extracts has the further benefit of an opportunity to contrast the dynamics inherent in them, similar to the use in Srinivas' study of authenticity by using two 'disparate' examples (Srinivas, 2012: 147). Srinivas contrasts his first example, a review 'presented in the impersonal third person conventional to research writing' (2012: 147), with the second, 'a reflexive account of management representations in a yoga camp, and written in the first person' (2012: 147), to uncover probing insights. Thus, the juxtaposition of two different data sources or experiences is a viable and illuminative way in which to probe, in depth, postcolonial organisational dynamics, by which I mean the interpersonal, emotional and embodied, at times unconscious, interactions that occur in postcolonial space, as defined above. This approach of in depth analysis gives space to marginalized voices in non-Western contexts, and supports the study of lived emotional experiences in postcolonial spaces.

The extracts with both Rakesh and Abhinav illustrate that 'Organizations are not race-neutral entities' (Nkomo, 1992: 501), and they help to address 'Silenced Research Questions' such as 'How are societal race relations reproduced in the workplace?' (Nkomo, 1992: 506). In particular, the exchanges with Rakesh and Abhinav indicate both the endurance of colonialism's effects upon diverse work spaces, particularly through white privilege, as well as subversions of traditional authority and changing power relations. The exploration of postcolonial organisational dynamics thus reveals multiple, varied paths that are undertaken in contending with historically embedded geographical and racial work encounters.

Before proceeding with the stories of Rakesh and Abhinav, it is important to address the matter of interpretation, and its intertwining with reflexivity. First, I will acknowledge the

exemplary work of Ashcraft and Brewis about the importance of reflexivity in organisational scholarship. I will then discuss my approach to reflexivity, with its connection to interpretation. Ashcraft's work (2008) provides refreshing, instructive insights and guidance for critical organisational scholars. She raises crucial points about the problems of disembodied scholarship, rooted in gendered assumptions (e.g. 2008: 384-385).

Brewis strikingly illustrates reflexivity with reference to her own experiences, and with reference to researchers' insights about gendered and other markers of our researcher bodies (e.g. 2005: 498). The importance here of acknowledging embodied research shares resonance with Ashcraft's work. I share these concerns, reflecting below on how my gender and race influenced my field work and interpretations, and I embrace Brewis' call for 'the need for us to turn the academic lens back on ourselves from time to time' (2005: 508).

My specific engagement with the concept of reflexivity highlights unconscious possibilities for self-interpretations and unconscious motives for privileging certain interpretations over others. Exploring in depth our own responses as researchers invites us to consider anxieties and desires, not only of those whom we are studying, but also *our own*. In particular, it prompts us to consider those anxieties and desires that may not have been conscious at the time of interview, and which we may be tempted to disregard thereafter (see for example Gabriel, 2000, and Nandy and Bhabha on the centrality of the unconscious for analysing emotions like desire in postcolonial context). Hence, we can ask, how does a specific interpretation address our own anxieties and desires? I will start to answer questions like these in the following discussion.

Having reflected on my own emotional investment as a researcher, I have had to consider how my own gender and race influenced both the disclosures made by respondents, and also my interpretations of these disclosures. I have anxieties about my own white privileges as an organisational scholar; hence, I focus upon analyses of data which help us to

confront these privileges and their consequences. I desire to highlight the lived experiences of workers in postcolonial spaces, such as their resistance; for instance, I analyse individuals' subversions, which I interpret as challenging whiteness on multiple levels, as will be discussed below with Abhinav. With any theoretical approach, no interpretation is final. We can, however, build confidence in our interpretations through the meanings and possibilities that they provide for furthering our engagement with emotions and postcolonial dynamics. An interpretation is put forward when accumulating evidence provides *depth* which an alternative interpretation lacks. Described by Gabriel, signs will accumulate and point toward an interpretation that provides resources for engaging with the emotional meanings of an interviewee's story, meanings which may offer insights and openings for new understandings within, *and beyond*, the interview context (e.g. Gabriel, 1999a: p. 272). Through engaging with the data, I may consider alternative, strictly literal interpretations, but having considered these, may discard them in favour of deep probing and illustration of possibilities to take us further in postcolonial studies of organisations. For instance, disturbing the surface manifestations of a story may help to explore a depth of symbolic meanings about whiteness and emotions in postcolonial spaces.

Further points about specific interpretations related to Rakesh and Abhinav's experiences will be shared within the context of their stories below. Having outlined my approach to this article, including the interweaving of reflexivity and interpretation, I will now proceed to the stories of Rakesh and Abhinav, which begin with a discussion of the context in which the interviews occurred. In the interview extracts that follow, words and phrases in bold indicate direct or indirect references to emotions (particularly ambivalence), white privilege, and postcolonial working relations. Putting these parts in bold helped me to highlight themes for further scrutiny during analysis. Phrases and words in italics within the

data extracts indicate a respondent's particular vocal emphasis, like increased volume or stress upon the word(s).

Rakesh's story

In my field work in India, it was my preference to learn from women and men at middle and lower levels of the hierarchy, to explore multiple cultural and unconscious influences upon emotions at work, from both senior and junior workers and associated systems of authority. An exception to this preference was an interview of Rakesh, CEO of his investment company at the time of our meeting. In Chennai one of my contacts strongly recommended that I speak with him, as a highly successful person who worked in several countries and managed lucrative financial deals. In fact, she arranged my appointment to ensure I would meet him. My colleague described Rakesh as greatly admired for the feats accomplished and great wealth accumulated at a relatively younger age.

My study involved exploring the impact of personal biography upon emotion, and I became intrigued as I talked with Rakesh, learning that he was orphaned in childhood and did not inherit any family wealth to help start business ventures. Indeed, he started his working life with many debts. Our interview exchange was a rich one in which Rakesh was very interested in engaging with the questions and sharing his experiences. The topics discussed were guided by Rakesh's answers to questions about emotions, and they included fear and pressure as motivating factors of completing work, and cultural values affecting entrepreneurship in different countries.

I chose to focus on an extract from Rakesh as one of two extracts for this paper, because a broad question about emotion surprisingly led to rich insights about the meanings of working in postcolonial spaces. Rakesh offers a demonstration of the significance of

whiteness in organisations, which manifests as re-enactments of colonial authority. The following extract occurs 13 minutes into the interview.

A [the author]: In the work that you've done in any of your organisations, was there any time that you had a certain emotion but you had to hide it, or you couldn't show it at the moment, either with your colleagues, juniors, seniors, anything like that?

Rakesh replied that when working in Head Sales in the US, he repeatedly encountered preference given to whites to set up business meetings. The emotional impact of this preference is revealed in his comments:

R: What I was uh quite uh **puzzled** about, was the fact that irrespective of where they work,... for an opportunity to be opened... predominantly there was a **preferential treatment** ... given to Americans, Australians, British, especially **Whites**.

In fact when I opened my office in Middle East, I hired a lady by name Patricia [name changed] who was a **British**, who was a **White**. I made her as my Sales Head. She knew *nothing* about the business that I was managing, she was there **only because she could speak English like a British**. Irrespective of the fact whether a Sheikh could understand what she was speaking, she was able to [starts snapping fingers] get appointments like this [stops snapping].

She was not qualified. She had no domain expertise, she was *absolutely* fresh. She was meant to open gate of opportunities. And she did *just that*. Which was uh **puzzling**, and uh **quite disturbing also** about the fact that even after 20th and 21st century, you still have uh lot of people placed uh, various positions in these *big* companies. **The moment they hear British accent**, or American accent, or an Australian accent, they want to meet the person and give, give an appointment to be with you... had to be **White with an accent** to open the initial opportunity.

Rakesh then noted that the whites in these positions “started commanding a lot of Asians... do this, do that, do this, do that, [tapping hand several times on desk]”. He and his non-white colleagues “had to toe that line, and uh, and **they were right in what they did**, because uh they were opening opportunities”. This statement is contrasted with his next one in which he describes this process as “quite **disturbing, distressing and uh puzzling**”.

Privately reflecting on my own disturbed emotions upon learning of these preferences for whites in Rakesh's work space, I became interested to learn more about why these dynamics are continuing. I asked Rakesh for his assessment, and he responded:

R: It's still not got over this **colonialism** uh by and large... You will still find that prevalent uh in this country because, uh because of the influence of 400 years of **British Raj** in this country...

My next question was meant to probe how Rakesh interacted with Patricia given the preference for race and accent without considering qualifications, and his response helped to underscore how white privilege emotionally affects workers at different levels of the hierarchy. Rakesh expressed that top management was “never unhappy”, because deals were being generated, but “**middle management and people below them were unhappy** about the fact that, *here* is a woman who has no domain knowledge, but who is *doing* what she's doing *only* because she happens to have an accent that we don't have, and she happens to have uh, uh, **she belongs to a race that we don't belong to.**” Patricia's situation recalls Calvert and Ramsey's observation that ‘Dominant group members [like Patricia] have a different form of power... which precedes organizationally conferred power or power acquired by one's own efforts, capabilities or accomplishments’ (Calvert and Ramsey, 1996: 470); indeed, it is a power that ‘accrues from “being”, not doing - simply being born white’ (Calvert and Ramsey, 1996: 468), and they discuss dominant group membership in terms of race and gender; here, the focus is on Patricia's whiteness.

As the interview progressed, the depth of emotional conflict in this postcolonial space continued to emerge. In asking questions, I was very careful to reflect Rakesh's own words if I referred to any specific emotions, like “distressing, puzzling”. Although I did not suggest that Rakesh would feel bad, he stated in an unprompted way, “**If I felt so bad**, I should not have appointed Patricia... I went with the **winning formula**, because it was *my* company, I had to protect the interest of my, my company is greater than me. **So I never felt bad for it, I was in fact happy**”. There are also contradictions in Rakesh's interactions with colleagues. His distress about Patricia's racial advantage is in contrast to his remarks about enjoyment being in her company.

Rakesh expressed that some emotions about working have changed over time. He was excited in his early twenties when acknowledged by an American supervisor's interest in his work. Now in his thirties, however, his responses have changed to "Who are you", and he stated that he sees people equally. Yet, the reproduction of racial advantage in his current work appears to yield ambivalent emotions that are influenced by the shadows of these first encounters with racial others.

In the course of this exchange, I became curious to learn whether workers like Patricia openly acknowledged how their skin colour was advancing company interests, and Rakesh replied that yes, they were very much aware that "What god has given them was what was guiding them forward." Having established that both whites and non-whites were cognisant of these racial privileges, I wanted to learn what could happen for change, so that people would not automatically reward the presence of a white person. On this point, Rakesh replied that "Once uh education and poverty is knocked off, and people become uh self-reliant... I think this will change, but it's going to take time".

Before proceeding to the analysis of this exchange with Rakesh, it is worth adding a reflexive note about the possible meanings of my whiteness as interviewer, in relation to Rakesh. Did my presence as a white female person evoke emotions for Rakesh about Patricia and her privileged status? In our interview exchange, did I *become* Patricia to Rakesh? Was I similarly perceived as a privileged white person by Rakesh, and if so, did this perception foster a climate where openness about emotions of ambivalence occurred? Was I appreciated and/or resented? Did I have repressed emotions of guilt at the time that guided my interview style? It is important to pose these reflexive possibilities, and to note that the interview exchanges that result may be guided by the unconscious emotions of our interactions. Asking these kinds of questions during analysis is useful, as we may not consciously in the interview moment be aware of all interpersonal dynamics and cross-cultural assumptions. By asking

questions, we engage with an intimacy of self and other inquiry and possibility. Indeed, asking questions leads to further symbolic and deep exploration of multi-layered postcolonial encounters.

With regard to the quality of my exchange with Rakesh, the reader may perceive it as a distinctly ‘confessional’ one; my bodily presence as a white female may have prompted deeply personal emotional disclosures by Rakesh. Indeed, postcolonial dynamics intersect with gender dynamics; thus, with a male white researcher, the content and style of the exchange with Rakesh may have been markedly different, raising important points about how our knowledge generation from interviews is gendered, racialized and so on. Hence, an acknowledgment of intersectionality means that the effects of being white and being female, for example, are not additive, but interactive, upon interview exchanges. The work of Ashcraft and Allen (2009) is an exemplar of the importance of addressing the meanings of intersectionality.

Reflecting further on the interview situation and how it may have prompted Rakesh to reveal his ambivalence to me in a confessional manner, I was ultimately a stranger, an outsider to the Indian worker and would not see the individual again, which may have provided a sense of safety for offloading painful experiences. As a white professional female, I may have evoked the presence of Patricia in our exchange, but I was not her and could receive emotions of ambivalence about her role, without Rakesh having any concern about retribution. My previous training in counselling, which involved providing empathic, safe space in ways like acknowledging the respondent’s own emotion words and nonverbally conveying care, found expression in the interview and supported the possibility of sharing openly disturbing experiences in a confessional manner.

Proceeding now to the analysis of Rakesh’s story, his assessment that “It’s still not got over this colonial thing by and large”, is a “disturbingly” [Rakesh’s emotion word]

accurate diagnosis of the continued influence of preference for whites/westerners in positions of power. Kakar indicates the prevalence of colonial managers: ‘As late as 1895, 42.4 percent of the managers and mechanical engineers in the Bombay cotton fields were European, although only 6 out of 70 mills were under European managing agencies (Rungta, 1970: 50)’ (Kakar, 1971: 300-301). This preference for the European white manager continues today, as Rakesh appointed a white female in his own company, indicating that it guaranteed a “winning formula”.

Whiteness may further be tied to spirituality, as demonstrated by Srinivas (2012), who shared his reflections about attending a yoga camp in India, and most participants at the author’s session were students. At this camp, ‘the families shown [in PowerPoint slides] were mostly white people. Around me the room was filled with Indians. What did they feel seeing such images? Even the images of the Hindu gods were white’ (Srinivas, 2012: 151). Srinivas (2012) described the yoga camp as ‘conflat[ing] a *whitened* version of Hinduism with the qualities required for a managerial career’ (Srinivas, 2012: 155 [my emphasis in italics]). Srinivas’ study (2012) reflects tensions between whiteness and meanings about success.

These tensions are embodied in organisational spaces, as encountered by Rakesh in the insidious persistence of white privilege for successful “formulas”. Experiencing this repeated preference for whites unleashes ambivalence, which can be explored through attention to unconscious dynamics. Nandy addresses the psychological impact of colonialism, arguing that it is ‘almost always *unconscious* and almost always ignored. Particularly strong is the *inner resistance to recognizing the ultimate violence which colonialism does to its victims* - namely, the creation of a culture in which the oppressed are constantly tempted to fight their oppressors *within the psychological limits set by the latter*’ (Nandy, 1982: 198 [my emphasis in italics]). The fight against formal colonial structures has ceased, but the fight becomes internalised as one of deeply unsettling emotions about the limits to destabilizing

racial hierarchies; Rakesh's internal conflicts arise from ensuring a winning formula through the use of those power structures - limits - laid down previously. Rakesh's account suggests that a sense of superiority in the white colleague effected by advancing business, *I-have-what-you-don't-have-and-you-need-my-whiteness*, creates an emotionally charged space in which he is confined. His success comes from working within the boundaries reinforced by repeated preference for the white person. The British colonial ruler's assumptions of psychological superiority, alongside frequent denigration of the Indian (Hartnack, 2001; Kakar, 1971), become emotional impositions resettled in the working environment.

The internalisation of colonial roles may result in a defence mechanism called *'identification with the aggressor... often used by a normal child in an environment of childhood dependency to confront inescapable dominance by physically more powerful adults enjoying total legitimacy... Many Indians in turn saw their salvation in becoming more like the British, in friendship or in enmity'* (Nandy, 1982: 199 [my emphasis in italics]). Nandy discusses this process in reference to Indians relying on Indian martial ideologies in response to British occupation. Adapted to the specific, individual ambivalence of Rakesh, this powerful, unconscious defence is evoked to contend with the "puzzlement" and "distress".

Examining unconscious processes in Rakesh's experiences, we can adapt from Klein the dynamic of splitting objects into good and bad. Fotaki describes the work of Klein, who 'believed that, in periods of stress, adults might regress to the state of splitting and project bad objects to the outside' (Fotaki, 2006: 1717). Applied to Rakesh's story, he has split off the negative impact of colonialism; all that is bad about it is projected outwards as affecting the poor and the uneducated. They are the ones who harbour the ill effects. Rakesh, in contrast to the underprivileged victims, reports *not* being "unhappy", juxtaposed with his earlier reports of being disturbed. His ambivalence can be seen as driving this splitting, so

that the emotionally unsettling aspects of colonial dynamics are placed outwards as a problem of poverty, not as a spectre perpetuating unearned white privileges in his work space.

Gough's analysis of splitting in sexuality (2004) provides a further layer of meaning when applied to Rakesh's story. Discussing changing social roles for women and men, Gough outlines a possible response when traditional masculinity is under threat: 'The tendency of the heterosexual male subject to split off "feminine" attributes (e.g. nurturance) and locate these in women and gay men, where they can be safely rebuked and contained, may well be exacerbated where uncertainty about masculine identity is acute (see Hollway, 1989)' (Gough, 2004: 250). For Rakesh, the projecting outward of undesirable social dynamics similarly occurs onto subordinated others, in this instance the poor. Relating this process to Nandy's observation about colonialism and emasculation (1982), splitting can occur unconsciously as one response to ward off the discomforts of reproduced colonialism at work, where the usual privileges of maleness are altered racially.

Rakesh's story provides an account of white privilege in postcolonial working and the powerful emotions that result. Ambivalence can occur not only for Indian workers like Rakesh, but also for British workers, as will be demonstrated below in Abhinav's story. The shared postcolonial space can generate conflicting emotions of the British toward Indian colleagues, manifesting in stereotypes. Abhinav's responses to such stereotypes reveal not only emotional interactions on the ground, but they also illustrate the changing nature of power relations and wider organisational transformations.

Abhinav's story

During one of my site visits in the Delhi area in 2009, I met with an executive MBA class of approximately 50 students in a lecture hall, and I was sitting at a desk at the front, initially very doubtful about whether this layout could yield an enriching interaction. I was

pleasantly surprised that questions about emotions at work led to energetic responding, including group responses to individual stories, like collective laughter, which were reflected in the sharing of Abhinav's story. Six minutes into the interview with the class, following a colleague's discussion of a frustrating experience, Abhinav contributed the following:

Ab: Uh I work for a UK-based company, and the company has got its office over there in India... I frequent the UK quite often every 2 months probably, but I feel that people are slightly uh **scary** of the Indian people coming over to UK and probably taking you know their jobs.

So they often **keep coming** with the certain **sarcastic** remark about India. And I feel that, you know, we feel comfortable giving it back to them immediately. For example uh [some laughter from classmates starts] I was there last week in the UK and it started snowing.

Ab: Those people gathered around the window, and they said "India is a very hot country. I don't think that you guys get any snow over there." So I just, I simply explained to them very politely that the size of Britain, the area the size of Britain is almost partially covered in India every time it snows!

[Robust laughter erupted from his classmates along with hearty applause.]

Ab: But I feel comfortable giving it back to them, and they come, some other remark... that [how long] you haven't had any blast in India? I mean, sometimes we, we have to give. But then I... give it back to them.

A [the author]: Okay, so you have a natural humour that you can - so is that a way to deal with the stress of the situation then?

Ab: Uh I don't take any stress, I mean... if I have to point, like I do that.

A: ... How do those uh British colleagues react when, you know, you say something very witty like that? Do they understand then, you know that they need to be a little bit more aware or?

Ab: I mean I've seen it, if something happened, where there is a group of people who is particularly **averse** to the fact that they know their management tasks, their routine tasks, or their financial tasks have been **outsourced to India**, so you know they have got that kind of a feeling, that why these guys are coming over to UK and taking our jobs, we are in a recession.

You know, so there's a group of people who come with these **offensive** things. But then you can't bother that, because that's the way, **globalisation is not something which India had initiated, this is the product of those guys...**

I will first examine the meanings of the telling of the story itself, which helps to illustrate the deeply emotional aspects of work interactions in postcolonial spaces. In sharing the story, Abhinav enacts an emotional performance which achieves feelings of satisfaction for him as storyteller to an audience that included colleagues, the instructor, and me as the interviewer. Abhinav's story also influences the emotions of his audience. Through his calm, triumphant storytelling, he repositions the former colonial rulers in a manner that unleashes admiration in his classmates. Abhinav's story and his classmates' response illustrate that 'stories are always replete with meaning... and frequently elicit strong emotional reactions' (Brown et al., 2009: 325).

As earlier with Rakesh, it is important to add a reflexive note on the possible meanings of my embodiment as the only white person in the room during Abhinav's story. Did my presence amplify the mirth that the classmates experienced about Abhinav's riposte? In other words, apart from their enjoyment and identification with Abhinav's triumph, was there anything else occurring? Was the laughter in some way directed at me too, a white outsider crossing boundaries? Did they perceive me as similar to Abhinav's colleagues? Reflecting on my experience of this group interaction, it is possible that I became an object of laughter – a symbolic white outsider who should know her place and realize the consequences of making a move like Abhinav's colleagues.

Historical documentation of Indian jokes in the colonial context provides support for these interpretations of Abhinav's story and response. Interestingly, Hartnack makes reference to an Indian scholar, Matthew, in his analysis of 'the impact of the social and political situation of British India on jokes' (Hartnack, 2001: 169). Discussing an example of a specific joke in a science class about sea water, with reference to the current political climate about the British regulation of salt access, Matthew illustrated 'the mechanisms of condensation, displacement and symbolic representation' (Hartnack, 2001: 169); these are

defence mechanisms, in response to the anxieties of the political climate. This observation in pre-Independence India has enduring impact, as it illuminates the historical use of specific defences through the outlet of humour to subvert the colonial order. Abhinav's individual joke and collective laughter, therefore, may represent an attempt to unsettle the very interview space itself and its purpose – me as white female, professional outsider with an American accent, facing a group of mostly male Indian student-professionals, crossing into their learning space and asking questions. Some classmates may have questioned my goals; my contact for this group, their lecturer, introduced my research project, but some suspicion may have remained about the reasons for my presence. Consciously or unconsciously, for instance, my American accent may have stimulated assumptions, or projections [see below about projective interactive processes] of me as a symbol of [white] American imperialist agendas. Hence, there is much that is going on consciously and unconsciously in highly emotional cross-border encounters.

How did my own enjoyment of the story influence the emotions of the interview and the subsequent questions that I asked and responses that occurred? Did my repressed embarrassment at such comments by Abhinav's colleagues shape the interview dynamics? I will begin responding to these questions by discussing the unconscious impact of emotional interchanges upon interview dynamics. In my exchange with Abhinav above, when I asked "is that a way to deal with the stress of the situation then", it is possible that my own embarrassment and stress at hearing about this racist experience became projected onto Abhinav. Projection is a defence mechanism where we contend with our anxieties or troubles by safely projecting them onto another individual (or group/organisation/nation, and so on). I was upset to hear about this incident, and I dealt with my emotional distress by unconsciously projecting my distress onto Abhinav, as if he experienced it, rather than me. Reflecting upon this exchange, I was initially disappointed with myself, as my counselling sensibilities, and

diplomatic conditioning in multiple cultural work spaces, consciously prepared me to make open ended, non-assumptive remarks, rather than project assumptions.

Rather than focussing upon my disappointment, I realized that analysis of this interview dynamic offers important insights about interviews and unconscious processes. The experience of me asking questions, sitting by myself in a lecture theatre, facing a group of Indian students recounting various emotional experiences at work, including troubling and racist ones, likely stimulated anxiety for me that broke through my counselling sensibilities, manifesting in my projected question about stress. Hence, our study of emotions in postcolonial spaces not only results in knowledge about respondents' experiences of working, but also encourages us to consider how the interview interaction itself is emotional, and marked by unconscious interchanges that influence the subsequent interview patterns and sharing of specific work moments.

Returning now to further analysis of the effects of Abhinav's story, we can also engage with the unconscious spread of emotion in the collective response, as the intensity of laughter may signal the release of anxieties that have been experienced in relation to stereotyping and ignorance under the veil of "jokes" at work like "you have no snow". Gabriel's illustration of stories as potential wish-fulfilments (1999b) helps us to make sense of the audience response; an outlet for emotions like relief and pride is provided through fantasies, which can be unconsciously generated about achieving similar acts to put others in their place. Stories provide a psychic outlet for, and symbolic recovery from, past work injuries (Gabriel, 1995), and Abhinav's story provides an opportunity for overcoming vicariously attempts at organisational undercutting through cultural insults.

Fineman notes that a story 'symbolizes a gathering of power and voice which cannot be achieved within the normal constraints of the hierarchy' (Fineman, 1993: 22), and Abhinav's story indeed has provided a strong voice against overt and subtle racially charged

hierarchies. Fineman's observations on these symbolic functions of subversion through story have significant postcolonial implications, as he states that 'In small but significant ways, they *reverse* the conventional expectations of *who should be in awe of whom*' (Fineman, 1993: 22 [my emphasis in italics]). Applying these dynamics to Abhinav's interactions, the symbol of snow can be presented as an attempt at British cultural superiority: *We have snow/we are cool/we are white; you don't have snow/you are full of heat/you don't have our whiteness-power-greatness*. Abhinav then turns upside down these assumptions by not only challenging the factual information about snow, but going further by symbolically placing Britain as a space within the geography of India. Abhinav thus generates a new set of assertions: *We have more snow/white/power than the whole of your body; I see you who try to threaten as small compared to the white/power that we indeed do have*. Does the former colonial subject now become the new subject of 'awe'?

Here it is helpful to return to the above discussion about interpretation, to argue that an interpretation can give meaning beyond the literal, here and now sharing of an interviewee's story. As researchers, we may consider during data analysis a depth of symbolic possibilities that were not explicitly noted by the interviewee. This approach of course raises questions, such as: how can we be sure about our researcher interpretations? As argued by Hollway and Jefferson, this approach to interpretation allows us 'to do justice to the complexity of our subjects' (2000: 3). In contrast, presenting the interviewee words as a full, literal representation of the participant and her/his greater organisational and cultural experience, without interrogating possible symbolic, unconscious meanings, may greatly undermine the complexities of individuals, as many-layered emotional life in organisations is not always conveyed in a straightforward, explicit manner.

When we consciously share a story, we may not necessarily engage at that moment with the ramifications of unconscious meanings that extend beyond the story. Hence, a

reader may question whether the symbolic meanings of snow, with regard to whiteness, power, and new global relations, were consciously intended in the original joke by the British colleagues or its rejoinder by Abhinav. The interpretation of a story may have powerful implications beyond its conscious, immediate intent (e.g. Gabriel, 1999a). We can extract multiple layers, with potential to add rich meanings to our understanding of the emotionally charged tensions and possibilities of postcolonial spaces today.

As Abhinav's experience illuminates, and as Nandy (1982) has discussed, colonialism is not something which only affects the colonised, but it also powerfully shapes the people who occupy or inherit former colonial role status. One of Nandy's examples is that as 'Wurgaft and... Hutchins have so convincingly argued in the context of India, colonialism encouraged the colonizers to impute to themselves *magical feelings of omnipotence and permanence*' (1982: 209 [my emphasis in italics]). In the current global context, we can adapt Nandy's observation, and refer to Bhabha and hybrid spaces (2004) in terms of new colonial dynamics that defy constricted binary oppositions of ruler-ruled, in analysing the depiction of Abhinav's British colleagues. The fears experienced, when they face situations in which they do not embody the same roles of power in relation to Indians, create an unsettling new space which can unleash longing for status and security that now rest with the other.

Bhabha describes 'strategies of subversion *that turn the gaze of the discriminated back on the eye of power*. For the colonial hybrid is the articulation of the ambivalent space where the rite of *power* is enacted on the site of *desire*' (2004: 160 [my emphasis in italics]). Drawing upon Fineman's reference to desire, who notes that 'people who cannot obtain the formal positions they *desire* will create their own distinctions between *themselves and their neighbours – to help them look, and feel, better*' (Fineman, 1993: 22 [my emphasis in italics]), we can bring into sharp relief this emotional impact of desire upon the former

colonisers. Through the threat of job loss in the wake of recession and the arrival of the former subjugated Indians, the British employees create such distinctions from the other through disparaging jokes, which also help to distance them from their own emotions of desire, wanting what the other embodies. These attempts at humour often function unconsciously to overcome anxieties, like concerns about livelihood, as jobs are perceived to be taken away, by the former oppressed subjects, no less.

When colonial fantasies of omnipotence break down, especially by the jarring presence of successful, self-assured workers, who were the once ruled and are now transgressing the boundary of the rulers' land, threat and uncertainty about one's new position in shifting historical dynamics create anxieties, which may be addressed through the use of stereotypes. Bhabha's writings are central here: 'An important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of 'fixity' in the ideological construction of otherness... the stereotype, which is its major discursive strategy, is a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is already 'in place', already known, and *something that must be anxiously repeated*... it is the force of ambivalence that gives the colonial stereotype its currency' (Bhabha, 2004: 94-5 [my emphasis in italics]).

We can find this need to repeat the stereotype in Abhinav's account, where he points out that "they often **keep** coming with the certain **sarcastic** remark about India", which revolve around similar themes: India hot/not white; India as the other place of danger, and so on. Ambivalence toward Indian colleagues, which drives these repetitions, emerges through encounters with 'that "otherness" which is at once an object of desire and derision' (2004: 96): *I have snow/white/superiority... yet I want your ability to thrive in the face of our economic deterioration... I am white and better.... yet you are in my white land and succeeding... I know about your land... yet you calmly deflect my assertions...*

These dynamics of conflicted desire point to the potential for envy as prominent in the emotions of postcolonial organisational encounters, defined as the meeting and relating of individual workers in postcolonial spaces. Clarke (2003; 2004) depicts racism as a process of purging envy; applying Klein, the want for the strengths in others manifests in strategies of destroying the good. Indeed, ‘we may perceive others as possessing something good that has been *stolen from us: jobs...* We try to take it back, but we cannot have it all (greed), so we destroy it (envy)’ (Clarke, 2004: 111 [my emphasis in italics]). In the interaction of British workers with Abhinav, these attempts at destruction take the form of stereotypes to eclipse any consciousness of strengths of the racially different; envy of the Indian colleague is emotionally compounded by her/his former subordinated historical status. Clarke’s elaboration of envy evokes the ambivalence of Bhabha’s ‘desire and derision’ (2004: 96). Clarke refers to Dalal’s comment that ‘“the hated racialised Other is more often than not the more deprived of the two” (Dalal, 2002, p 44)’ (2004: 112); analyzing this observation, Clarke argues that ‘the racialized Other is attacked in envy because of its phantasized goodness, potential, potency and fullness’ (2004: 113). Colonial ambivalence thus generates a powerful source of envy that manifests in specific cultural work tensions.

We can find traces of desire, envy and repetition in a study by Cohen and El-Sawad (2007), which illustrates the lingering effects of colonial dynamics in the accounts of UK and Indian workers of each other. The interview extracts indicate that UK workers experience threats from their Indian counterparts, which can have multiple sources; for example, the Indian group overall was more highly educated than the UK group. Envy was not specified by the authors, but the UK workers’ accounts point to its possible manifestations, as awareness of differences elicits a variety of distancing responses. Several times the authors (2007) note UK workers infantilising the Indian ones, and the authors highlight that UK workers ‘talked about how India was often blamed for whatever went wrong, and used words

like “safety valve” and “*emotional release*” to describe this function... using Mumbai as a safety valve appeared to reduce tension amongst UK employees, and *make them feel more positive* about their own abilities and status’ (Cohen and El-Sawad, 2007: 1252 [my emphasis in italics]).

Cohen and El-Sawad draw upon Gopal, Willis and Gopal’s discussion of conditioning effects (2003), or hegemonic practices of ingraining a social process as something taken for granted, to render a postcolonial reading of their results. To illustrate, UK workers indicate that it’s unproblematic for Indians to engage in extensive work which the UK workers will not do, referencing the Indian work ethic. A seemingly positive stereotype about hard work serves to perpetuate new exploitation in a globalised environment that retains earlier patronising and appropriating manners of colonial rule (Banerjee and Linstead, 2001). Yet, the accounts do not only reveal these binary ruler-ruled perpetuations. There is ambivalence about the Indian colleagues that the authors (Cohen and El-Sawad, 2007) emphasize by significantly relying upon Bhabha, and their results resonate with the altered work spaces and attendant emotions emerging from Abhinav’s story, like perceived threat from, and anxiety about, the once Indian subject who is now colleague.

A study by McKenna (2011) in the North American context revealed similar dynamics of binary oppositions and othering by senior executives in the US or Canada, in their accounts of China and India. McKenna’s results bear similarity to the analysis of Abhinav, as he observes in his data, ‘A neocolonial reading of the discourse makes it possible to identify the ambivalence of *admiration for* the Chinese and Indian worker, yet also the *threat* that they pose... to admire them yet see them as a threat, perpetuates and feeds the paranoia of those in the West about the Other. Consequently, the Chinese and Indians (among others) must be demonized’ (McKenna, 2011: 399 [original italics]). This ambivalence

occurs against the backdrop of ‘recognizing the swift and fundamental changes taking place in the global balance of economic power’ (McKenna, 2011: 402).

McKenna’s writings provide important resources for Abhinav’s story. Referencing the insights of Banerjee, he notes that ‘Postcolonial theory offers ways of answering questions that privilege both the socially constructed aspect of globalization, emphasizing that it is not natural or neutral and, the historical connectedness of the colonial past with the globalized present’ (2011: 390). We find this socially-constructed, non-inevitable aspect of globalisation in Abhinav’s pronouncement that it is a “product of those guys”.

The depth of understanding about responses to these social developments is enriched through engaging with unconscious possibilities. The fullness of enjoyment with Abhinav’s story may satisfy significant intrapsychic needs for the listeners. For the part of the British colleagues, the motivations for their stereotypes and other significations of difference may occur unconsciously, in response to changes in historical roles.

Conclusion

‘The cages of white Britishness are being rattled, it seems’ (Leonard, 2010: 356)

The study of emotions provides a rich starting point to explore the lived experiences of postcolonial spaces and the divergent paths and possibilities that they elicit. Analysis of the interviews with Rakesh and Abhinav demonstrates that postcolonialism at work is not just a mindset; it is also a set of deep emotional experiences, sometimes unsettling and oppressive, at other times triumphant and performative. Hence, in relation to Leonard’s observation (2010) above about white Britishness, Abhinav’s story demonstrates the rattling of this cage, and Rakesh’s experience highlights the persistence of the cage. Here, I have

stressed that this persistence of white privilege defies the demise of the end of formal colonial relations, and is reinforced by unconscious stimulation of colonial anxieties. Unconscious processes include the internalisation of former colonial roles, and mechanisms like identification with the aggressor (Nandy, 1982), as analysed in the stories above.

Through a juxtaposition of Rakesh and Abhinav's stories, we face a paradox of enduring white privilege, alongside new spaces for subversion and changing power dynamics. The enduring impact of colonial assumptions of occupation and superiority influence today's working relations when unqualified people like Patricia advance through whiteness, and lingering colonial oppressions are found, for example, in Cohen and El-Sawad's study (2007), in which workers continue to blame India even when it's Britain's mistake. Some new dynamics, however, are surfacing. The seminal work of Said is useful for making sense of the UK workers in Abhinav's story, who discursively invoke binary oppositions to deal with threat (e.g. *us with snow, you without*); the symbolic implications of these binary oppositions (whiteness of snow) provide layers of rich meanings to pursue, for instance with regard to meanings of whiteness and privilege. Taking us further with Bhabha's hybridity applied to Abhinav's experience, the once colonised are finding ways, against the backdrop of changing financial and historical conditions, of subverting these binary categories of oppressor and oppressed.

Studying the emotions of lived working experiences helps to further the application of postcolonial frameworks for organisational research. Empirical studies provide space and voice to workers' emotionally-charged experiences in postcolonial settings. Abhinav's story illustrates and even celebrates his subversion; even when individuals are not able to dismantle fully racial hierarchies and white privilege, they find spaces in which to resist and redefine historically shaped roles. Abhinav's resistance in postcolonial context recalls Gabriel's

analysis that ‘within formal organizations, employees create *niches* that are unmanaged and unmanageable’ (Gabriel, 2005: 18; see also Gabriel, 1995).

These points should not obscure the ways in which postcolonial dynamics continue to shape today’s globalised workplaces. For instance, Das and Dharwadkar describe the training of Indian call centre workers, which includes adopting a Western name and learning new accents. They argue that the effectiveness of such training ‘partly rests on a continuing desire for “Westernization” in the postcolonial Indian subjects (Fanon, 1967). This desire is predicated on the elite status and continuing centrality of English as a language of power and upward mobility in postcolonial India in general (Viswanatham, 1989)’ (Das and Dharwadkar, 2009: 189). Language is emphasized in their study; for Rakesh, the power accompanying white skin and accent is central, providing a “winning formula” to carry his business forward – a formula associated with deeply ambivalent experiences.

The far reaching individual and collective emotional effects of these postcolonial work dynamics, and their implications for cross-border working, call for further study and analysis. Studies of the legacies of colonialism in management and organisation studies that explore the intersectionality of these experiences, such as the intersections of gender with race, also are an important area for future research. The contradictions between the enduring legacy of white racial privilege and increasingly globalised and multi-cultural organisational environments, and the emotional consequences of these contradictions, await more in-depth examination. Indeed, ‘The increasing economic power of formerly colonized countries is a further stimulus to the postcolonial analysis of global business, organizations and management’ (McKenna, 2011: 404). The lasting message of this article is that instead of dissolving colonial dynamics, today’s global work spaces show new ways of embedding these dynamics, which are emotional, at times unconscious, and await further inquiry.

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