Unveiling Third Space: A Case Study of International Educators in Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Mary Gene Saudelli

Brock University

Abstract

This article highlights one aspect of a case study of international educators at Dubai Women's College (DWC), United Arab Emirates (UAE). It examines perceptions of international educators in third space teaching female Emirati, higher-education students in the UAE. Drawing on third space theory (Bhabha, 1994), this study explored the nature of their hybridity and their accommodation processes. Findings reveal that these international educators in third space perceive the salient elements of their experiences are: educators' cultural curiosity, seeing beyond the veil, the global meets the local "here," heading home, and mediating tensions.

Résumé

Cet article souligne un des aspects d'une étude de cas sur des éducateurs internationaux du Collège de femmes de Dubaï (DWC), aux Emirats Arabes Unis (EAU). Il examine les perceptions d'éducateurs internationaux dans le troisième espace qui enseignent à des femmes émiraties, étudiantes dans l'enseignement supérieur aux Émirats arabes unis. S'appuyant sur la théorie du troisième espace (Bhabha, 1994), cette étude a exploré la nature de leur hybridité et de leurs processus d'adaptation. Ces résultats révèlent que ces éducateurs internationaux dans le troisième espace perçoivent les éléments essentiels de leurs expériences comme étant: la curiosité culturelle des éducateurs, voir au-delà du voile, le mondial rencontre le local « ici », rentrer à la maison, et la médiation des tensions.

**Unveiling Third Space: A Case Study of International Educators in
Dubai, United Arab Emirates**

Globalization has had a profound impact on education. Educators and students alike are crossing international borders for higher educational opportunities (Sawir, 2011). Crossing a national border to live as a participating member of a new and very different community can be challenging for the most seasoned educator. Due to the potential joys and stressors of living an international life, it is crucial to understand the nature of hybridity and accommodation (Bhabha, 1994) from those who have made an international existence their preferred lifestyle. Exploring perceptions of international educators in third space has never been so relevant. This paper reports one aspect of a case study of international educators teaching at Dubai Women's Campus (DWC), United Arab Emirates (UAE). It sought their perceptions as international educators in third space teaching to Islamic, Emirati female students and illuminates their considerations, beliefs, and tensions as they navigate their international existence.

Background

Geographically, the former Trucial States is located at the littoral of the Persian Gulf. On December 2, 1971, the tribal regions of the Trucial States federated and became the seven Sheikhdoms of the UAE: Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Fujarah, Ajman, Ras Al Khaimah, Sharjah, and Umm Al-Qaiwain (Al Fahim, 1995; Kazim, 2000). Complete transformation of society occurred within the next 20 years; the UAE went from existing as an impoverished Bedouin society to becoming an independent country with the world's highest per capita income (Gardner, 1995). Dubai, arguably, is the most developed Emirate (Davidson, 2008; Gardner, 1995; Patai, 2002).

Social-culturally, education for Emirati (the national people of the Emirates) women in the UAE is publicly promoted, government supported (UNESCO, 2003; Whiteoak, Crawford, & Mapstone, 2006), and socially desired (Al Fahim, 1995; Salloum, 2003). Today, a highly educated Emirati woman is considered to be a national symbol of strength, prestige, and family honour (Nashif, 2000; Salloum, 2003; Whiteoak et al., 2006). However, this philosophical stance is not represented historically in the UAE, nor is it widely accepted throughout the UAE in general (Salloum, 2003; Godwin, 2006; Whiteoak et al., 2006). Rather, it is a cultural repositioning emanating from rapid transformation and globalization that has affected the Emirates, particularly Dubai.

Dubai Women's College (DWC) is one campus of a governmental, higher-educational college system, the Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT). HCT is exclusive to Emirati students indigenous to this nation. All students at DWC are exclusively Emirati females. Most of the educators working at DWC are foreigners from across the globe, many with citizenship in several countries. The HCT system functions as an English-language medium, vocational institution operating to prepare Emiratis for three purposes: (a) to work in technological and professional occupations (Diploma program), (b) to build skills to enter university (Higher Diploma program), or (c) assume leadership and supervisory positions (Higher Diploma program) (HCTAS, 2007). There are 16 gender-segregated, HCT campuses in the Emirates, with DWC widely regarded as a premier educational institution (Macpherson, Kachelhoffer, & El Nemr, 2007).

The curriculum at DWC is specifically designed to embrace educational innovation, and frequently pushes the boundaries of cultural limits. DWC endorses a task-oriented approach to curriculum with students completing large-scale, open-to-the-public tasks as their expressions of

learning. Philosophically, DWC asserts that students need to consider, evaluate, and address global and local controversial issues in a public forum. As an example, the primary task for the second semester is a three-day, open-to-the-public Current Issues Forum, which is a student-driven conference of issues affecting the global and local society. Many of the issues students are required to research and present focus on highly controversial and culturally sensitive topics in this region, such as: environmental degradation and commercial development in the UAE, consanguineous marriage and genetic birth disorders, English dominance in education and loss of culture, labourer rights and abuses, women's rights and roles in the Emirates, and foreign management in the UAE.

How do these international educators—as foreigners in this region—accommodate the complexities of teaching this controversial curriculum in this context? Most of the educators at DWC are foreigners to Dubai, trans-national, and understand the impact of globalization on educational theory and practice from a very unique perspective, third space. Discovering these international educators' perceptions about teaching this controversial curriculum has the potential to contribute to knowledge regarding the nature of third space and teaching sensitive but crucial issues in this time of global interaction. This is particularly relevant given the "cultural divide" (Al Fahim, 1995, p. 127) existing between the East and the West.

This is significant to Canada as, according to Statistics Canada (2003), during the 1990's, immigrants to Canada from the Asian continent, which includes the Middle East, accounted for 58% of the total immigration, while 8% emigrated from Africa. Both continents represent a strong Islamic religious demographic. In addition, according to the 2001 Canadian census, those who identify themselves as Muslim represented the largest gain in religious affiliation among citizens of Canada, from 253,000 in 1991 to 579,600 in 2001 (Statistics Canada, 2001). Therefore, this study provides insight for Canadian teachers and international teachers alike.

Globalization, Third Space Theory, and International Educators

As the global world becomes increasingly networked and interconnected, it is important that knowledge gleaned from international contexts be shared. English (2003) defines international educators as global educators who practice in diverse geographical locations and function in "third space" (Bhabha, 1994). English further states that this third space is "neither northern or southern, global or local, left or right, liberatory or colonized" (p. 68). Given the unique life of international educators, Bhabha's (1994) third space theory underpins the nature of their perceptions of their experiences.

Third space theory, according to Bhabha (1994), is a place of hybridity emanating from cross-cultural interaction that manifests as an internal and external state of being. It is in this hybrid space where opposing or diverse beliefs, thought processes, lifestyles, ways of knowing, and experiences interact and find symmetry. Bhabha (1994) argues that "the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity … is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge" (p. 211) and new knowledge to grow. Understanding this third space, Bhabha argues, may allow us to "elude the politics of polarity" (p. 39) for improved international social and cultural understanding.

Wang (2007) discusses third space as a space wherein a person discovers a sense of symmetry between what may be seemingly oppositional forces, ideologies, or thought processes. She argues that the underlying principle or purpose of third space is not to infer consensus but to move "between, beyond, and with the dual forces simultaneously" (p. 30). International educators as an aspect of their lives constantly move between, beyond, and within contexts,

cultures, and learning environments as they move from one geographical location to another, living amongst their new communities as active members of society.

With this movement, international educators bring with them a wealth of experiences and ways of knowing which become shared. According to Vadeboncoeur, Hirst, and Kostogriz (2006), through this global flow of human movement, "our memories and experiences, identities and identifications, discourses and social languages" (p. 163) are situated within diverse and shared discourses. Thus, with international movement the essence of our self and our experiences are shared with others in the new context. This shared discourse builds a bridge among experiences, culture, time, space, and geography to form a third space (Bhabha, 1994). Third space functions through social interactions, shared discourses, and new experiences; hence, "there is no dominant correct meaning prevalent" (Knain, 2006, p. 657) to the exchange—rather, a new construction of meaning is negotiated. This is of crucial importance given the complex impact of globalization on education.

With the advent of globalization, there is a concern about the transference of "Western" educational theories and practices (Bleakley, Brice, & Bligh, 2008; Garson, 2005; Halbach, 2002) with "embedded Western values into foreign countries" (Garson, 2005, p. 322). This debate extends across educational disciplines, methodological approaches, and geographical boundaries. According to Halbach (2002), "exporting methodologies" (p. 243) is problematic because this "ignores the importance of personal and cultural factors in learning" (p. 243). Due to recognition of different belief and value systems, this is a valid concern. It is crucial to understand how international educators in diverse contexts mediate their roles in education and how third space is involved in that process.

Conversely, several theorists (Kamis & Muhammad, 2007; Merriam, 2007; Sim, 2009; Sun, 2008) have made connections between elements of "Western" theories and various international philosophies and religious tenets. For example, concepts such as lifelong learning, reflection, critical thinking, and experiential learning connect to other, non-Western philosophies, ways of knowing, and religious traditions. Kalupahana (1986) has written about the comparisons between Buddhism and constructivist epistemology, and Cheng (2005), Chinn (2006), Sim (2009), and Sun (2008) have written comparing Dewey's ideas regarding reflection on experience and Confucianism discussions of learning from experiences. Kamis and Muhammad (2007), Hague (2004), and Albertini (2003, 2005) have discussed Islam's mandate for lifelong learning and learning through experience. These comparisons have been critiqued in terms of the theories and ideas being absolutely interconnected (Sim, 2009). Divergences between the theorists do exist.

The discussion of "exporting methodologies" (Halbach, 2002, p. 243) and "Western values" (Garson, 2005, p. 322) is complex and caution is warranted. Merriam and Ntseane (2008) and also Taylor (2007) assert that many questions remain to be answered in terms of international education, particularly in relation to the roles of spirituality, context, "and relationships in the process" (Merriam & Ntseane, 2008, p. 184) of learning. Their call exemplifies the rationale underlying this study: if the perceptions of international educators in third space are better understood for the complexity, sensitivity, and embrace of difference requisite in their international roles, we may be better prepared to engage in education that crosses boundaries of cultural, religious, and political differences that abound with the advent of globalization. International educators in third space offer a compelling voice to this discussion.

The Research Design

This study followed a qualitative case study research design (Stake, 2005). Data were collected during the 2008-2009 academic year in the form of textual materials and qualitative interviews with DWC educators. This study was guided by the following research question: What are Dubai Women's College educators' beliefs, considerations, and tensions regarding teaching to Emirati, female higher education students in Dubai, UAE.

All of the educators teaching at DWC, with the exception of one Emirati supervisor, are foreign to the UAE. In total, data were collected from 19 participants, of which four were from "Western" countries—Canada, United States, Australia and United Kingdom—and two were from European countries of Poland and Czech Republic. The rest were from various regions in the Middle East, North Africa and Asia. All 19 participants, including the lone Emirati participant, have taught in geographical contexts other than their homeland including: Japan, South Korea, Lebanon, France, South Africa, Egypt, Singapore, China, the United States, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and many other locations worldwide. All have lived, taught, and thrived in diverse contexts for most of their professional lives.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews at the beginning and end of two semesters of the academic year. Data were also collected via lesson notes, memoranda, and field notes (Creswell, 2005) taken during the interview process. All participants' transcripts were member checked (Creswell, 2005) for additional commentary or clarification. Data analysis was constant-comparative (Glaser & Strauss, as cited in Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and occurred during data collection because of the inclusion of a reflective interview with participants. All participants have been assigned gender-neutral names; thus, no assumptions should be made regarding the gender of any participant.

Description of Results, International Educators in Third Space

As all participants are international educators, third space is the lens through which they approach their work as they mediate between and among the boundaries and influences of their professional and personal lives. This section discusses the following themes in the data that characterize third space for these participants: (a) educators' cultural curiosity, (b) learning to see beyond the veil, (c) the global meets the local in education, (d) heading home, and (e) tensions for international educators.

Educators' Cultural Curiosity

Findings indicated all 19 participants believed their ability to live this lifestyle rested with their eagerness to embrace, adapt, and learn. Jordan discussed: "We call it 'cultural curiosity.' People say they want to learn about culture. Do they really want to experience it? Do they expect it to be like the current place where they live?" Eleven participants reported their love of the adventure of moving to a different country and experiencing different cultures as the prime motivating factor in their decision to go abroad and stay abroad. According to these participants, international educators must sincerely embrace the cultural context with all of its distinctiveness, including the tensions. Kelsey explained,

> You have to come with an open mind and you have to stay long enough to drink in the culture. Many come—culture shock hits and they run. Or they come with expectations that are unrealistic. Come, stay, learn, and embrace their way. That's how one grows.

Similarly, Spencer stated, "You have to pay attention to their feelings and put yourself in their place, as a foreigner wanting to avoid causing offense. It does make you aware of the ease with which profound cultural mistakes can happen." Cassidy explained, "What you perceive as harmless in your homeland may be highly offensive here and mistakes can be costly—international incidences can and do occur."

These participants were driven by cultural curiosity; that is, the opportunity to learn as participating members of a new cultural group. This is a crucial element of third space; this cultural curiosity leads to a willingness to embrace the new, and a commitment to stay long enough to understand the new. These educators in third space also recognized that potential blunders can be costly. Thus, these participants attempted to place their mindset in the position of the new community as an aspect of third space in order to avoid mistakes.

Learning to See Beyond the Veil

All 19 participants identified that becoming international educators broadened their worldview, particularly in relation to their understandings of teaching in an Islamic country. It is interesting to note that only six participants described themselves as Muslim, but every participant spoke with great respect the role of Islam in this country. All participants acknowledged that their ability to see beyond the veil requires a willingness to embrace aspects of Islam, regardless of conversion to that faith, or other religious beliefs. Corey explained, "In the Qur'an, one of the purposes of humanity is to investigate and think. Use your brain for a higher purpose." Fourteen participants spoke with admiration of students' respect for education and their desire to assume participatory and active roles in their country. Jaden stated, "Here, culturally and religiously, there is great respect for education. Students want to use their education and advance their country. But, they want to do this according to their values, which are based on Islam. I think that is admirable." All participants freely discussed the role of Islam in teaching and in life. Twelve stated that they had read the Holy Qur'an. All had attended weddings and participated in religious festivals and holidays. Fourteen participants fast during Ramadan regardless of their religious persuasion. Spencer states, "We learn to see beyond the veil because we are willing to learn about Islam."

All participants reported that a crucial aspect of seeing beyond the veil is recognition of the ease with which colonialist ideas can surface. Kelsey noted the internal struggle "To not take an attitude that 'my way' is the right way, which is really hard—colonization in education can be deep in the subconscious but you have to be on guard against that attitude." Interestingly, a theme that emerged in the data related to how people "back home"—wherever that place may be geographically—were not willing or able to comprehend this frame of mind. Morgan commented,

> Educators back home can be narrow in their willingness to open themselves to other ways of seeing the world. Part of their job is to see the world through others' eyes; but I am shocked by how narrow people in developed countries are in their vision of the developing world.

These comments were mirrored by 12 other participants. Cassidy reported, "They want to hear about veiling and nothing else. They are actually affronted when I talk about all the amazing things our students do." Corey discussed some of these false perceptions:

This part of the world is developing its own style. People say, "It will be years before they catch up." They don't want to "catch up." There are far too many ideas about the developing world wanting to "catch up" with the first world. The interpretation [back home] is that I have been 'Islamisized.'

Thus, these educators in third space have developed a sense of being able see beyond the veil of their own belief systems. In fact, these international educators embrace and defend the religious ideals, conventions, and traditions of their community of residence. This is an integral element of international educators in third space: recognition of the ease of colonizing and an embrace of blending values based on new experiences. This ability is problematic for international educators when they described their experiences upon returning home, as this ability does not appear to extend vicariously to others. Seeing beyond the veil as international educators did broaden their perspectives, which was uncomfortable or distasteful for those who are not capable of this same worldview.

The Global Meets the Local, Teaching "Here" in Third Space
Participants were adamant that in-depth knowledge of context is integral for international educators teaching in third space. This was exemplified in the data with the preponderance of participants' use of the word "here" to direct that their comments pertained exclusively to this context during this spatial moment. Not only did the word "here" dominate discussions, but it was also emphasized with vocal inflections.
All 19 participants specifically identified the importance of teaching that acknowledges the fact that all students are female Emiratis and all educators are foreign. This is important even if the educator also has an Arab cultural background. Bailey stated, "Although I come from a similar Arab background, my background is still very different." All participants identified that education for Emiratis is unique due to the rapid economic and social changes that have affected the Emirati people and drawn many foreigners to the UAE. Drew explained:

Thirty years ago [they were] Bedouins, our students. Our students 30 years ago, they would not have been at school ever. That depth of understanding is necessary. Outside of this country, people don't realize how far it has advanced in 30 years.

As international educators in teaching in third space, participants stressed the importance for in-depth learning about the impact of cultural aspects on teaching practice. They spoke of two primary considerations of teaching in third space in this context: Emirati graciousness, and faculty embracing students' experiences.
Teaching in third space, Emirati graciousness. Fourteen participants specifically discussed the gracious nature of Emirati students to the foreign faculty. Alex states, "Emirati graciousness is second to none and must always be respected." In the words of Addison: "The people of the Emirates are very welcoming people. They welcome you and share their most personal occasions." Five participants discussed how students include foreign faculty through sharing information related to their culture, particularly when they observed faculty interest. Corey related a recent field trip experience:

We went to an art exhibition of Emirati artists. This is something that is so beautiful about teaching here: our students are inclusive, even as a foreigner they want you included. Students were very interested in the names [of the artists]. Here, names are

incredibly important. From names, students know if you are from slave origin, or from what they call the "Bedouin." They were explaining all of this to us as they went along.

Fifteen participants noted that issues occasionally surface in relation to the interaction between foreign faculty and Emirati students, particularly relating to social conventions. Addison, an Emirati participant, explained: "Foreign teachers don't understand that in this culture we like greetings. We acknowledge a person's existence. That really matters here. It is shameful to me [when greetings are not exchanged] and we do take it personally." Teaching in third space requires adopting Emirati social conventions. This represents significant moments of embrace of students' gracious culture as an aspect of teaching in third space and has an impact on the interactions between teachers and students. Cassidy related an example:

> I used to feel annoyed when students arrived late to class with a greeting to all of 'Salam Alaikum' [Arabic, peace be upon you]. Until I learned that it is seen as extremely disrespectful here not to express this greeting regardless of what it disrupts. Learn and adopt their social graces.

These international educators in third space identify that it is crucial to delve into learning the significant aspects of the cultural context. Participants reveal that students are inclusive with faculty and willing to share this information, particularly when they note foreigner interest. This could indicate an element that encourages third space development among faculty and students.

Teaching in third space, embracing students' experiences. Participants identify that Emirati students have had different life experiences. Third space teaching requires recognition of students' different experiences in order to create educational moments relevant to students' lives. Alex explained, "When children grow up in other parts of the world, they learn how to ride bicycles. They had part time jobs and household chores. Not here – they have had other experiences." According to 13 participants, all students had participated in events such as: planning and organizing weddings, organizing servants, welcoming and entertaining guests, and organizing for religious events such as Ramadan. Twelve participants identified that educationally capitalizing on these experiences is crucial. Addison explained:

> If I am teaching them about teamwork, an example that they can associate with is a wedding. An Emirati wedding requires teamwork. Throughout the wedding plans, all members of the family are involved. Somebody has to take care of the cards, flowers, cake. Somebody must supervise. During the wedding, they make sure that their customers are satisfied, their guests. The following day is a feedback session, who came, who didn't, what went wrong. How they can improve for the next wedding. Otherwise, what is teamwork? They have never played sports. They have no concept of teamwork. If you want to teach them something you have to start with concepts that are close to their heart, close to their environment.

Thus, international educators understand their teaching practice through third space, which involves a privileging of the host culture's experiences as educational resources. These international educators learn and incorporate students lived experiences and scaffold them into their teaching practices. Teaching in third space fostered a bridge between the content of instruction and students' experiences, which in turn created optimal learning opportunities.

Heading Home?

No participants reported any inclination to return to their homeland in the foreseeable future. In fact, until the question was posed, many were not sure what to say, as they had not considered the idea. Ellis stated, "There used to be a time when I thought about [my nationality] as home. When you have lived overseas, there comes a time when you just don't feel it anymore. The boundaries disappear." This indicates a full embrace of third space on the part of these international educators. Taylor relayed a prolific story to explain:

> A friend was driving into the car park area, looks up and she sees one of the workers up in a tree. Babu is that you up in the tree? "Yes I am collecting leaves. If I collect these leaves and put them in a bath my [chicken pox] spots will go." Where would you find that back home? Back home is too cleansed for me.

Four participants acknowledged no intention to return to their homeland, but rather moving on to the next homeland. Kelsey stated, "I'm not going back, I'm going on. I will be taking on whole new experiences there as well so I won't get dispirited and down-hearted as I do when we go home." These participants appear to have fully embraced third space; they desire to continue their international journey and do not appear to feel compelled to return "home."

Tensions for International Educators

Living and teaching in third space is not a utopian existence. It is sometimes a challenging, contested and difficult space, particularly during tense moments of conflicting values. According to 17 participants, the life of an international educator requires finding some way to mediate these tensions or "you will just suffer" (Sam). This study disclosed that the most confounding tensions for these participants related to: (a) social justice, equity, and human rights; and (b) employment insecurity.

Social justice, equity and human rights. Seventeen participants experienced tension due to different beliefs in relation to equity and human rights. Alex commented, "In the community you have supporters and detractors—people who think there shouldn't be men in a Women's College for instance. Consequently, we are always walking on a tightrope." According to Nat there are times, particularly in relation to human rights issues, when you just have to "switch off. There are zero human rights in this country for some people, and I can't do anything." Izzy manages this through "denial" and Cassidy states, "I do what I can when I can, but I also forgive myself when I can do nothing—this is not hypocritical. It is reality."

A very challenging aspect for international educators in third space relates to beliefs regarding social justice. Dubai is a developing country and some issues arise that caused intense feelings of tension for these participants, particularly as their ability to intervene is constrained.

Employment insecurity. Eighteen participants disclosed that their role as international educators is impacted by employment insecurity. There is no employment security in international education and therefore all actions and behaviours, whether personal or professional, are mediated by this circumstance. Spencer commented, "Even in my personal life, I am guarded. For example, profanity is illegal here. A person will go to jail, be fired, and deported." Professionally, 18 participants reported that mistakes can and will be construed negatively against them, which lends to a fear of consequences. This was an aspect of life as an international educator, regardless of country of residence according to 14 participants. Corey explained, "You can want to do things in class that will extend thinking, but. … and, when the backlash hits. … We all know people who have suddenly been walked off campus, and given 1

week or less to clear out, Visas cancelled." Nat commented, "When I taught in [a different country], my university fired 80% of the faculty. And that was a typical thing." Morgan stated, "We are aware that if we can be blamed, we will be. You can be on the next plane out that day and everybody here knows it." Morgan elaborated, "We are totally on our own and personally held responsible for everything. Thus, we have become excellent [self-censors]."

A profound tension for participants in third space related to fear of mistakes or reprisals for mistakes attributed to them regardless of merit. These participants were well-aware that they could expect no employment security in their international experiences and operate with that understanding as international educators in third space. This is a crucial element of third space: it is not utopian. Tensions exist, mistakes are costly, and interactions are carefully moderated.

Discussion

This study describes the perceptions of international educators in third space as they teach Emirati nationals at Dubai Women's College. The international educators/participants in this case study come from across the globe. All have lived and taught in different nations as "the Other" and have a finely tuned sense of hybridity as occupants of third space (Bhabha, 1994). These participants disclosed what they perceive as integral understandings of teaching in an international landscape. They further disclosed the tensions and complexities that affect the symmetry (Wang, 2007) of the accommodation process.

As a function of their international identity, these participants exist and operate between, beyond, and within contexts, cultures, and the learning environments, a position which has the potential to create profound learning experiences and confounding tensions. Learning opportunities are generated as international educators quench their cultural curiosity about different ways of being and knowing. Tensions emanate when values, beliefs, and insecurities clash with their international experiences in a manner that, for some, can disturb the accommodation process. Some manner of hybridity is necessary for the survival of an international educator. This study confirms this element of third space theory; however, this study also indicates there is more to third space theory than currently conceived.

Based on the data collected from these multinational, international educators, third space is not utopian and involves more than hybridity. Discussions of third space warrant consideration of: cultural curiosity, self-censorship, and the development of a sense of "home" in "homelessness."

Cultural curiosity. Interestingly, this study disclosed that these participants in third space chose to go international to quench their cultural curiosity, a salient characteristic of third space for international educators. They expressed that international educators must be diligently aware of the propensity for colonialist ideas to surface and articulated that international educators must learn about the nuances of sensitivities of culture in a given context.

However, quenching this cultural curiosity also proved troublesome. Particularly troublesome were participants' discussions with friends and acquaintances in their "home" nations regarding their decision to live and learn in the Middle East. This tension was identified in 13 participants' discussions and seemed to dominate regardless of the participant's nationality. These 13 participants indicated that they encountered ignorance and/or distain for the Middle East, Arabs, and Muslims among people in home countries. In particular, Arab women, their roles in society, and their choice to wear a veil or not were topics of debate upon the return home of these participants. These moments were filled with tension for these participants as they attempted to inform through their third space lens.

All participants acknowledged that various assumptions of life, learning, and living in the UAE or in other international contexts do not necessarily conform to ideas held on the global landscape (Getty, 2011). Data indicated a lack of willingness on the part of those who have not lived an international life to hear that their perceptions may be misguided, or to learn that they are not as open-minded as they initially consider themselves to be, a finding Getty (2011) also observed. Twelve participants disclosed the animosity others feel when their assumptions about women in the Middle East were discredited. Two participants discussed being accused of "going Arab" when they attempted to enlighten certain values Muslims hold. It appears that an integral aspect for international educators in third space is the recognition that others may treat their hybrid nature with animosity.

Thus, while these international educators discussed with sincerity their desire to quench their cultural curiosity as part of being in third space, it appeared that their third space mindset was not welcomed, appreciated, or understood upon their return to their homelands. In some cases, international educators in third space have had their sincerity perceived negatively by some people, both at home and abroad, who have difficulty conceptualizing an international educator respecting Arab culture and religion.

Self-censorship. The working life of an international educator does not have any sense of employment security and both personal and professional mistakes are costly; thus, self-censorship is a matter of survival for international educators in third space. Participants believed that self-censorship is a fact of an international life; a skill international educators discover and incorporate quickly into their day-to-day and professional, communicative exchanges. Perhaps this burgeoning ability to self-censor is an essential characteristic of moving into a third space position? These international educators in third space recognize their need to develop advanced self-censorship skills, and a nuanced ability to understand what cultural boundaries they can explore and where the limits exist. This is a matter of survival for international educators in third space due to their recognition of how their actions and behaviours can be perceived.

"Home" in "homelessness." Current discussions of third space theory (Bhabha, 1994; Wang, 2007) do not consider an aspect that dominated participants' responses in this study: A sense of being at "home" in "homelessness." A sense of the nomad appeared to be present in all these participants who had lived in international settings for many years. When questioned about their intentions to return home, surprise was the most frequent reaction. Twelve participants were clearly taken aback and returned the question: what is home, and also why? For some participants, going home may mean returning to political turmoil, or difficulty in obtaining employment, which are relevant and valid concerns. However, these issues do not explain the reactions of other participants entirely.

"Homelessness" was not discussed with discomfort by participants in this study. Rather, it was seen as an element describing who they are, the life they lead, the learning they continue to acquire, and the beliefs they hold from their international experiences and their identity in third space. In speculating about this, third space occupation for international educators may mean embrace of this sense of being at "home" in the global landscape.

First, several participants observed that people from their homelands do not understand their lifestyle, and, in some cases, distrust the nature of their new global perspectives. International experiences have become part of these participants' sense of identity with an internalized desire to continue the adventure. Participants seemed to have developed a sense of "home" as being the global landscape, which contributes to these educators' sense of identity and their occupancy in third space. This is crucial, as rarely does "going international" become a lifestyle unless the person is capable of thriving in third space (Lovering, 2012).

The accommodation process involved with an international life aligns with Bhabha and Wang's (2007) discussion of third space. However, current discussions of third space are incomplete. This study contributes a new layer to discussions on third space: international educators in third space appear to feel a sense of "home" internationally. This sense of "home" goes beyond accommodation, symmetry, or hybridity to a sense of being at "home" regardless of where they reside or what comes next. This is an original contribution as this illustrates the nature of international educators in third space. Indeed, it appears that the globe is an international educator's home.

Implications

This study offers a nuancing of third space theory. These international educators actively seek the opportunity to become the other of themselves (Bhabha, 1994) and sincerely embrace their learning in new contexts. These international educators in third space have transcended nationalism. Participants identify cultural curiosity as a prime motivating factor for going international. This study indicates that these international educators in third space have a nuanced sensibility toward others' knowledge, and strive to avoid colonialist agendas while recognizing that this is challenging. These participants in third space embrace a willingness to let go of "their" way and embrace "other" ways while they learn about their communities of residence. Thus, third space is not a neo-colonialist space—it is a space of learning about our global community.

While participants acknowledged that development of self-censoring skills is integral to their ability to thrive as international educators, they also had a highly attuned sense of cultural boundaries, and how and when those boundaries can be explored. Further, participants disclosed that one of their tensions regarding their hybridity involves their roles as defenders of their hybrid nature to those who cannot understand an international life. This was perceived as uncomfortable to those "back home." As well, these international educators appear to feel little desire to return to their homelands. Many discussed their feelings that they were already in their homelands, the global landscape. All of these important inclusions to third space theory have a direct impact on the following discussion of educational theories and practices in our globalized world.

Final Remarks

The United Arab Emirates is a fascinating country deserving of great respect. This study contributes to our understandings in several ways. First, international educators' cultural curiosity, tensions, and their sense of "home" in "homelessness" gives insight into the nuances of third space as they experience it. Second, these educators were adamant about the necessity to learn about context in depth in order to thrive from an international experience. This knowledge is crucial in this time of globalization and international migration.

It is imperative to learn from international educators in third space in order to develop a nuanced perspective. These educators embrace with sincerity their roles as they live, teach, innovate, and interact in new landscapes as "the Other." Their knowledge represents significant contributions to conceptions of educational theory and understandings of educational theory across the globe, across disciplines, and across educational mandates. Gee (1994) believes that English teachers stand at the heart of some of the most complex educational, cultural, and political movements of contemporary society. I extend Gee's statement to international educators

and supervisors across disciplines as they stand at this forefront of all the complicated conversations (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2004) of curriculum affected by our globalized world.

References

Albertini, T. (2003). The seductiveness of certainty: The destruction of Islam's intellectual legacy by the fundamentalists. *Philosophy East & West*, *53*(4), 455-470.

Albertini, T. (2005). Crisis and certainty of knowledge in Al-Ghazzali (1058-1111) and Decartes (1596-1650). *Philosophy East & West*, *55*(1), 1-14.

Al Fahim, M. (1995). *From rags to riches*. Dubai, UAE: London Centre of Arab Studies.

Bhabha, H. (1994). *The location of culture.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Bleakley, A., Brice, J., & Bligh, J. (2008). Thinking the post-colonial in medical education. *Medical Education*, *42*(3), 266-270. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2923.2007.02991.x

Cheng, C. (2005). Confucian ren & Deweyan experience: A review essay on John Grange's Dewey, Confucius & the global philosophy. *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, *32*(4), 641-648.

Chinn, E. (2006). John Dewey and the Buddhist philosophy of the middle way. *Asian Philosophy*, *16*(2), 87-98.

Creswell, J. W. (2005). *Educational research: Planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall.

Davidson, C. (2008). *Dubai: The vulnerability of success.* Dubai, UAE: Hurst & Company.

English, L. (2003). Identity, hybridity, and third space: Complicating the lives of international adult educators. *Convergence*, *36*(2), 67-80.

Gardner, W. (1995). Developing a quality teaching force for the United Arab Emirates. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, *21*(3), 289-320.

Garson, B. (2005). Teaching abroad: A cross-cultural journey. *Journal of Education for Business*, *80*(6), 322-327.

Getty, L. J. (2011). False assumptions: The challenges and politics of teaching in China. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *16*(3), 347-352. doi:10.1080/13562517.2011.560058

Godwin, S. M. (2006). Globalization, education and emiratization: A study of the United Arab Emirates. *Electronic Journal on Information Systems in Developing Countries*, *27*(1), 1-14.

Hague, A. (2004). Psychology from the Islamic perspective: Contributions of early Muslim scholars and the challenges to contemporary Muslim psychologists. *Journal of Religion and Health*, *43*(4), 357-377.

Halbach, A. (2002). Exporting methodologies: The reflective approach in teacher training. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, *13*(3), 243-250.

Higher Colleges of Technology Academic Services. (2007). *HCT learning model*. Dubai, UAE: Higher Colleges of Technology.

Kalupahana, D. (1986). The epistemology of William James and early Buddhism. In J. Runzo & C. K. Ihara (Eds.), *Religious experience and religious belief: Essays in the epistemology of religion* (pp. 160-184). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Kamis, M., & Muhammad, M. (2007). Islam's lifelong learning mandate. In S. B. Merriam & Associates (Eds.), *Non-western perspectives on learning and knowing* (pp. 21-40). Malabar, FL: Krieger.

Kazim, A. (2000). *The United Arab Emirates: A socio-discursive transformation in the Arabian Gulf.* Dubai, UAE: Gulf Book Centre.

Knain, E. (2006). Achieving science literacy through transformation of multimodal textual resources. *Science Education*, *90*(4), 656-659.

Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Lovering, M. (2012). *Beyond the veil: A case study of context, culture, curriculum, and constructivism at Dubai Women's College*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada.

Macpherson, R., Kachelhoffer, P., & El Nemr, M. (2007). The radical modernization of school and education system leadership in the United Arab Emirates: Towards indigenized and educative leadership. *International Studies in Educational Administration (Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration & Management (CCEAM)*, *35*(1), 60-77.

Merriam, S., & Ntseane, G. (2008). Transformational learning in Botswana: How culture shapes the process. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *58*(3), 183-197.

Merriam, S. (2007). An introduction to non-western perspectives on learning and knowing. In S. B. Merriam & Associates (Eds.), *Non-western perspectives on learning and knowing* (pp. 1-20). Malabar, FL: Krieger.

Nashif, T. (2000, April). *Technological education for women as a tool of upward social mobility with reference to the Middle East.* Paper presented at the Technological Education and National Development (TEND) conference, Abu Dhabi, UAE.

Patai, R. (2002). *The Arab mind.* New York, NY: Hatherleigh Press.

Pinar, W., Reynolds, W., Slattery, P., & Taubman, P. (2004). Understanding curriculum: An introduction to the study of historical and contemporary curriculum discourses. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Salloum, H. (2003). Women in the United Arab Emirates. *Contemporary Review*, *283*, 101-104.

Sawir, E. (2011). Academic staff response to international students and internationalising the curriculum: the impact of disciplinary differences. *International Journal For Academic Development*, *16*(1), 45-57. doi:10.1080/1360144X.2011.546224

Sim, M. (2009). Dewey and Confucius: On moral education. *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, *36*(1), 85-105.

Stake, R. (Ed.). (2005). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Statistics Canada. (2001). *Religion in Canada.* Retrieved from http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/analytic/companion/rel/pdf/96F0030 XIE2001015.pdf

Statistics Canada. (2003). *Census of population: Immigration, birthplace and birthplace of parents, citizenship, ethnic origin, visible minorities and Aboriginal peoples*. Retrieved from http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/030121/d030121a.htm

Sun, Q. (2008). Confucian educational philosophy and its implication for lifelong learning and lifelong education. *Lifelong Education*, *27*(5), 559-578.

Taylor, E. (2007). An update of transformative learning theory: A critical review of the empirical research. *International Journal of Lifelong education*, *26*(2), 173-191.

UNESCO-Beirut, Regional Office for Education in the Arab States. (2003). *Literacy and adult education in the Arab world.* Retrieved from http://www.unesco.org/education/uie/pdf/country/arab_world.pdf

Vadeboncoeur, J., Hirst, E., & Kostogriz, A. (2006). Spacializing sociocultural research: A reading of mediation and meaning as third spaces. *Mind, Culture & Activity*, *13*(3), 163-175.

Wang, H. (2007). Self-formation in a creative third space. *Studies in Philosophy & Education*, *26*(4), 389-393.

Whiteoak, J., Crawford, N., & Mapstone, R. (2006). Impact of gender and generational differences in work values and attitudes in an Arab culture. *Thunderbird International Business Review, 48*(1), 77-91. doi:10.1002/tie.20086