

Living here, Working there: Elite Migrants at the Interstices of Global Trade and Culture

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Abstract

Twenty elite migrants, highly educated or highly skilled, explain how communication technologies are helping them manage multiple identities and readjustments as they interact with family, friends and co-workers in multiple locations across the world. Elite migrants' stories are often under reported yet their impact on societies is relevant because of the role they play in shaping societies. Two intercultural issues important to this distinctive group are explored: belonging and identity. Findings suggest elite migrants' experiences of living between and within cultures are creating more flexible, fluid identities and belongings and issues of citizenship, identity and loyalty have become more complex in the twenty-first century.

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Elite Migrants at the Interstices of Global Trade and Culture

More migrants are living in multiple places than ever before. According to the United Nations' 2014 report on the movement of people there were 230 million migrants in the world in 2013. In 2015 this figure increased significantly with the migration of peoples from the Middle East and Africa to Europe. The current movement of people renews concerns for what it means to belong to multiple societies at a time of heightened global conflict and security.

Distinct patterns of migration have emerged. One of those distinctions is the rise in the migration of elites from developing to developed countries. The movement of highly skilled elites, for educational and professional opportunities, symbolizes the phenomenon called 'brain drain.' The global movement of elites from developing countries to developed countries raises concerns among policymakers and social theorists about local versus global productivity and development [1]. When originating societies lose these assets many policymakers fear local productivity would decline and economic development slowed.

A second distinction in migration studies is the management of global and local forms of belonging among migrant populations. This study focuses on the global and local (glocal) experience of twenty elite migrants, highly skilled or educated migrants. Their immigration stories are often under reported yet their impact

on societies is important and relevant because of the role they play in shaping societies and economies [2]. Elites have human capital or currency and are often characterized as builders or representatives of political and economic power structures. Mills [2] classified them as power elites; they are usually professionals in societal institutions from business corporations to political and government agencies, including the military and educational institutions. More than forty years later, Castells [3-5] highlighted the role of this group in globalization and the impact they have on global capitalism through financial markets, technologies, trade and labor.

Robinson [1] proposed competing groups of elites have emerged in contemporary forms of globalization, national and transnational elites. Robinson, in his critical analysis of Saskia Sassen's work on the Sociology of Globalization, contends there is a "leading strata among national capitalist classes in both the North and South" who are experiencing "ongoing integration across borders into an emergent transnational capitalist class (TCC) and at whose apex is a transnational managerial elite". This study examines two intercultural issues among transnational elites: multiple identities and belonging. These issues have implications for how we interpret issues of citizenship, loyalty, and identity in the twenty-first century.

The multiple belongings thesis expands the cultural transient argument of Onwumechili, Nwosu and Jackson [6]. Onwumechili, Nwosu and Jackson contend there is very little research that

examines the phenomenon of re-migration of Americans or other Westerners to their home countries. Their study examines the frequent return to the home countries of Asians, West Africans and Mexicans and the negotiation of cultural identity as people move back and forth across cultures. Onwumehili, Nwosu and Jackson believe identity is complicated as a result of multiple reacculturations through frequent returns to the home countries. For the participants of this study, elite migrants, cultural transience is also evident not only through physical returns to their home countries but also through mediated returns through the use of communication technologies which helps them to simulate a cross cultural experience that immerses them in two or more cultures simultaneously. As such, several questions emerge, how frequently does the reacculturation process take place for these migrants in these simulated cross-cultural experiences? What impact do these frequent reacculturations have on identity and belongingness?

Today more elite migrants are living in multiple spaces at the same time than ever before. Researchers (Joseph 1999; Schiller, 2003; Sassen 2006, 2007; Sahoo and de Kruijf 2014) have identified this type of existence as active, simultaneous transnational living where migrants actively participate in more than one nation-state. While transnational lifestyles are not new, the recent movement of people is being transformed in a variety of ways through new developments in information and communication technologies. Modern day migrants have always had the ability to communicate with people in the societies they left behind however much of that communication occurred by mail or landline telephone. The former is a slower process; the latter is expensive. Post-1980, new developments in communication technologies, digital media and wireless telephony, provide migrants and non-migrants with the ability to connect with people all over the world, making communications easier, faster, interactive and less expensive Vertovec 2004. These developments provide users not only with the ability to communicate faster and easier but also build and sustain communities through the production and consumption of content and exchange of information.

improvements in transportation, information and communication technologies have contributed to significant advancements in the globalization of economies [7-11]. These changes have also induced migrants to live in multiple cultures and raise questions about citizenship, identity, and loyalties with consequences for long-term social and political marginalization [12]. Transnational migration is producing more cross-cultural interactions both within and between 'host' and 'home' cultures. Some scholars have identified several issues that have emerged from these cross-cultural interactions brought on by differences in communication style, language, worldview, beliefs, values and norms and barriers such as ethnocentrism, prejudice, stereotypes, and racism. These issues are collectively referred to as cultural disjunctures [13] or clashes [14].

As immigration increases at the high and low end with professional services, technical services and low-wage services in high demand by global cities [8,9], is globalization, as a process, as Robinson [1] purports, "restructuring space and place and

redefining relationships between production and territoriality, economic organization, institutions and social processes?" Amidst these changes, how are migrants experiencing belonging and identity? Twenty high-wage (elite) migrant workers were interviewed to find answers to these questions.

Communication Technology and Transnational Subjectivity

Transnationalism in this study centers on the concern for the effect of diaspora on the subjective perceptions of the self, reimagined through electronic mediation. Transnationalism is used here to refer to the "changing forms of cross-border mobility, membership and citizenship and the compatibility-or incompatibility- of migrant integration and cultural distinctions" [15]. Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton-Blanc [16] describe transnationalism as "a process by which migrants, through their daily life activities ... create social fields that cross national boundaries" [17]. Transnational subjectivity is used in this study to refer to a person's memberships and belongings in transnational space.

New communication technologies are creating transnational experiences where time and space are collapsed and the 'out there' is questionable [8,9,18,19]. Traditional media, or old media, connected people to far-away places but the owners of media companies or governments controlled the connection and content. Internet technology, new media, is still owned by powerful economic and political elites but the power of production has shifted to anyone with the technology. New media technology like the internet and wireless telephone are providing end users with the ability to create and distribute content as well as consume content created by others in real-time. Satellite television provides a similar real-time experience but without the interactivity of the internet and control of production. Watching live real-time satellite television programs from country of origin collapses time and space dimensions, that is, it removes or reduces points of location on a map that mark a specific place, but does not provide the same experience as the internet with its power to seduce the imaginative and transport us to participate in 'local life' through interactivity [20,21] believes the transformation of the 'web' into a user-oriented and user-generated platform that has continuously improved accessibility across the world has "turned the Internet in just two short decades into a paramount tool for cross-border interactions and exchanges in diasporic settings". Internet connectivity, which does establish some forms of proximity, is changing the nature of localities and identities. Some theorists [20,22] have identified this as globalization's transformation of the local order, which has led to the buzz phrase of the early twenty-first century, 'the global is the local.'

The intercultural perspective referred to here is the means by which elite migrant workers use internet technology to sustain their 'home' culture in a global setting. This mediation raises the question of how globalization through the use of communication technology has and is changing the way we live and work. It is not so much that migrant workers are using communication

technology to interact with their 'home' cultures, especially the internet, but that more migrant workers are using the internet to interact with their original culture and sustain cultural values while engaged in multiple locations.

They leave their 'home' country to live and work in a 'host' country. Through communication technology issues of time and space are collapsed as they redefine what it means to live and work in the twenty-first century within geographic boundaries that are dislocated through technology. Nkosi [23] defines dislocation as the displacement of people through emigration, exile, and labor migrancy, which he believes creates rootlessness as people are caught between worlds, living in a fluid present. In this study I use dislocation to refer to the displacement of elite migrant workers through labor migrancy and technology, that is, through the use of communication technologies like the internet to examine the fluid existence that has emerged among them as they interact with 'home' and 'host' cultures.

This fluid existence is supported by the argument for 'subjectivities in-transit' in post-colonial, global societies or what Patricia Hill Collins identifies as 'the outsider-within location' [24]. Hill Collins uses the latter concept to describe the marginalized condition of migrant Black women who no longer belonged to any group and lived at the intersections of multiple systems of subjugation. La Barbera [25] uses 'subjectivities in-transit' to describe the new social identities that populate global societies, with an emphasis on hybridism, multiple belonging and borderline-ness. La Barbera adopts the term 'within/out' to define a particular location for women who move across different nation-states and communities and belong to several groups at the same time. This study uses these concepts to explain the impact of shifting subjectivities or positionalities on elite migrants.

As Sahoo and de Kruijff [26] argue, migrant workers are developing new transnational communities and subjectivities through communication technology. These individuals, wherever they are, are sharing a sense of common belonging to a homeland where they are not physically present while simultaneously engaged in host countries where they are either living on the margins or have integrated, partially. This new phenomenon raises a number of questions about identification, identity and belonging on the individual and collective levels.

Methodology: Examining Cross Cultural Living in Twenty First Century

This study focuses on the experience of elite migrant workers living in transnational spaces in the twenty-first century. It provides greater understanding of elite migrant workers' interactions in 'host' and 'home' cultures through the use of information and communication technologies. Of particular interest are the patterns of identification that have emerged in the interstices between global work and global life. For this group of elite migrants, their ability to communicate and interact frequently within 'host' and 'home' cultures raises questions about the effects of these interactions on identity and belonging.

Qualitative method is useful in this research because of its

explanatory power [27], especially for questions that cannot be explained by numbers alone. Twenty elite migrant workers were interviewed to provide an understanding of their cross cultural experience using internet technology, in particular, to connect with family, friends and colleagues at 'home', in 'host' cultures and around the world.

I used a purposeful sample. The twenty participants were selected as representatives of the key dimension of this study, high wage migrants living away from their place of origin, 'home' country. Twenty interviewees accepted my invitation to participate in this study. This sample is too small to make generalizations about this phenomenon but this group of migrants provides us with information to help us understand how identification and belonging are changing in the twenty-first century. The participants were selected based on appropriateness, they were living transnationally and were 'good informants' who were willing to articulate, reflect and share their transnational experiences. As Patton [28] contends, the participants are information-rich cases from whom one could learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of this research. Participants were recruited through referrals via email and telephone. I started with a list of known elite migrants and requested referrals at the end of each interview. Participation was voluntary. The interviews were designed to identify how the participants use communication technology to stay connected to their 'home' countries and the impact of this usage on their ability to sustain cultural identity in 'host' countries.

The lived experiences of these high-wage migrant workers, or elite workers, also provide an opportunity for greater understanding of emerging patterns of intercultural relationships. They fit Sassen's [8] description of professional service providers. Their current locations and employers are not mentioned to protect their identity. Thirteen of the migrant workers in this study are female professionals and seven are male professionals. Nine are college professors, five work for non-profit organizations, two are employed with for profit organizations and four are administrative staff in higher education. At the time of the study, the participants had lived in a variety of locations around the world from five to thirty years.

The method of analysis is thematic interpretation. I used a thematic approach to identify themes evident in these migrant workers' experiences. The interviews were conducted in English and transcribed 'in-situ'; words were transcribed as spoken by participants who were native and non-native English speakers. I did not change the interviewee's conversational quality or speech pattern so as to accurately reflect the interviewee's experience.

Living Here, Working There: The Elite Migrant, Globalization and Identity

To provide a deeper understanding of identities and belongings in the twenty-first century, I explore elite migrants' mediated experience of reconnections with their 'home' culture and readjustments with 'host' culture when they disconnect. Although many scholars [28,29] believe migrants hold strong connections

to the 'home' culture, some elite migrants in this study do not hold strong feelings or connections to 'home' culture and prefer to think of themselves as global citizens who adapt to their environments base on their needs and wants. Others remained strongly anchored to their original cultural identity and preferred their culture of origin or 'home' culture.

Four major themes emerged: cultural transients: simulating real-time interactions; global versus national citizenship: adjusting to re-entry shock; frequent connection and belongingness; and in-between and multiple: negotiating identity. One of the prevalent themes was the use of the internet to stay connected to country of origin. The internet was the dominant method or channel of communication for all of the participants. The most frequent use of the internet was to maintain or sustain cultural connections. The majority of participants acknowledged the need to connect with their place of origin, 'home', while crossing multiple cultures, in the 'host' and global communities that affect their reasoning, lifestyle, behavior, values and perspectives.

Cultural transients: simulating real-time interactions

The internet experience induced a state of being 'there' while being 'here' in the majority of the participants. This is a common theme in the literature on transnationalism, diaspora and migration [13,16,30]. As Mitra [26] argues "a real-life person is being transformed from a 'real-life' individual to a digitally produced presence that dwells in a cybernetic space that is produced at the congruence of the real and the digital". The internet, and its various platforms-Facebook, websites, YouTube, WhatsApp, Skype, Facetime-simulate real-time experiences for the participants. Life at the congruence of the real and the digital induced a process, as Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc [31-37] describe, by which these migrants forge and sustain "simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement".

The participants selected the internet and its various platforms to communicate with their 'home' countries because of accessibility, affordability, instantaneousness, easy use, interactive capabilities, and the need to connect with 'home'. Their active engagement simulated real-time face-to-face encounters and it is this appeal that many of the interviewees referenced as their main reason for using it. "The internet is my preferred medium because it provides instant two- internet because "it is easily accessible, interactive and easier on the pocket. It allows me to engage with family and friends in real-time" (Benin, male). Participants also described the influence of 'real-time' internet communication in their life at home and work: "The real-time interaction that the internet allows me to have with my family and friends, who are not all necessarily at home in the Bahamas, is most amazing to me. I can shoot a question off to someone on the other side of the globe and get an answer back in about 5-10 minutes...wow!"(Bahamas, female 1). These participants are experiencing what Mitra [26] identifies as two realms of existence in transnational interactions-the organic carbon-based self, the real self, and the binary-based self, the virtual self.

Participants spoke of their experiences in both realms as powerful and important for restoring their cultural identity. Using communication technology to interact and engage with their home culture produced a longing to be 'there', at 'home', their virtual experience made it possible for them to simulate being at 'home' and thus they were able to relocate themselves there with the use of technology.

All of the participants used the internet to obtain information from their country of origin and to stay connected to family and friends. The majority of the participants, 14 out of 20, used online newspapers from their country of origin to stay connected to daily events and news from their country of origin. Email was the most popular medium for communicating with country of origin. Nine of the participants used online chatting, Skype, Facetime, WhatsApp or Facebook to communicate immediately with family and friends in their country of origin. Only five of the participants used internet radio and one participant used internet television to stay connected. The participants who used internet radio and television shared similar experiences of being transported to local space as an active participant while being located in the host country. The feeling of being 'transported' over time and space to be 'there' (meaning at 'home') was a common experience. These interactants liked the appeal of participating in real-time life in their countries of origin. As Mitra [26] argues, these elite migrants, transnationals, are living at the congruence of the real and the virtual. The real-time, real-life interactions online allow them to cope with living in their host country but their use of virtual reality also provide them with the opportunity to control which self they would become in the interaction. Their virtual life affirms their cultural connections and immerses them in cultural practices and discourse that allows them to fluidly move from one subject position to another. For, Mitra [26] explains, they are no longer powerless subjects in a specific structure or specific position as technology enables them to move between national boundaries seamlessly producing a 'trans-identity' as they adopt everyday lived practices that are fluid and open.

Global versus national citizenship: adjusting to re-entry shock

Virtual border crossings, like real-life physical border crossings, also require migrants to adapt to different cultural environments. The difference is virtual border crossings are taking place more instantaneously, frequently and quickly. Thus, the simultaneous occurrence of the real self and the virtual self requires frequent subjective adjustments by elite migrants; engagement with and disengagement from virtual 'home' societies introduces the process of re-acculturation to 'home' and 'host' societies. The re-acculturation could last from a few seconds to longer periods of time. Gibson [31] defines acculturation as "the process of cultural change and adaptation that occurs when individuals from different cultures come in contact". From the perspective of international migration, Phinney, Horenczky, Liebkind, and Vedder [32] identified two dimensions of this process of adaptation: 1) adoption of ideals, values and behaviors of the receiving culture, and 2) retention of ideals, values and beliefs from the immigrant person's culture of origin. These dimensions

are closely related to social and cultural identity. Bhatia and Ram [33] and Phinney [34] found that identity is an important issue among immigrant people but Bhatia and Ram [33] challenge the assumption that all immigrant groups go through the same 'psychological' acculturation process. This was true of elite migrants in this study; as noted some of the participants held strong connections to their 'home' culture and national identity, others referred to themselves as 'global citizens' and preferred a more fluid existence.

Re-acculturation takes place when migrants re-migrate to their home countries [6]. Communication technologies and improvements in transportation have increased the frequency and speed of re-acculturation among migrant people. The elite migrants in this study described the speed at which they could re-enter their home countries using communication technologies. Thus, the cultural transient argument of Onwumehili, Nwosu and Jackson [6] could be extended to include the complications of simulated experiences of return to 'home' countries through communication technologies.

The internet connectivity dislodged many of the participants in this study from everyday environments in their 'host' country and transported them to their 'home' culture. However, disconnecting often left them feeling disconcerted and dislocated. The 'instant connection' to 'home' culture produced a clash with the host cultural space when they disconnected from internet. "...When I disconnect I often feel disconcerted for a while and I have to readjust to the host culture at work and outside of work. I have to remember to change my way of speaking at work or if I am out with colleagues and friends in the host culture I have to code switch and sometimes this is exhausting and unsettling..." (Bahamas, female 1). Participants described a sense of re-entry shock when they disconnected from their 'home' culture. The internet allowed them to feel rooted and grounded in their 'home' culture during their connection. However, the disconnection from the internet brings with it a struggle to reconnect to the host culture. "It makes me feel closer to home or connected to what's going on at home. Basically, it helps to break that all too familiar feeling of isolation out here in this big, very often cold world." However, after disconnecting, "I struggle to reenter the host culture, which requires me to code switch my speech style and my emotional state to fit the appropriate context" (Bahamas, female 2).

Most of the male participants did not directly expressed sentiments about how use of the internet to connect to 'home' made them feel, however, male participants also valued the ability to connect frequently with their 'home culture' because they wanted "to know what is happening there and what are the changes" (Cameroon, male). One of the male participants indirectly indicated he re-adapts to the 'host' culture when he disconnected. "Granted, it takes a few minutes [to readjust] but then it's not too difficult [to assimilate again into the host culture]" (Guinea, male). More female participants described feelings of disconcertion than the male participants. But, one male participant described his discomfort. "Disconnection returns me to my immediate physical environment and it is hard

sometimes to adjust or adapt to this [the host] culture when I've just been engaged with my true home" (Jamaica, male).

None of the participants sought other cultures or countries' media on the internet to feel connected to their culture. All of the participants noted that they only looked at other countries' online newspapers or other internet sources as they pertain to the performance of their job, for research or in connection to friends and family who lived in other countries. Those activities were compartmentalized as work or connections with friends and family who lived in other countries. They did not seek information about the daily events in those countries unless those events had a direct impact on their work or their friends/relatives' lives.

These actively engaged communication participants agreed that access to the internet increased the frequency of their communication with friends and family at 'home.' Fifteen of the participants experienced increased satisfaction with internet technology because they were able to connect instantly and frequently to friends, family and culture. This interaction brought with it issues of re-acculturation, including the frequency and duration of w-curve [35] adjustment patterns (culture shock) via cyberspace and the impact of this on identity. These participants are virtual transients who move back and forth between 'home' culture and 'host' culture frequently and rapidly aided by new communication technologies. Instead of achieving frequent flyer miles, they are acquiring frequent virtual miles as they simulate their experience of 'home' via the internet and its various platforms. Virtual transience is important to cultural identity but few of us understand how important it is as this is an understudied area of research. The virtual transient identity complicates Onwumehili, Nwosu and Jackson [30] cultural transient argument of long-term and short-term cultural environments as the simulated reality brought about by virtual travel happens frequently and rapidly with various durations of time. Thus, some migrants in this study found themselves readjusting to home and host cultures multiple times during a day.

Frequent connections and belongingness

Historically, migrants have always maintained contact with people and institutions in their home of origin [30]. Today's digital or virtual connections allow migrants to continue these connections but have increased the speed and frequency of doing so. Like previous forms of communication, digital connection mitigates the loss of familiar relationships common to the diasporic experience [36] and causes changes in personal and social identity. Participants in this study valued the ability to connect anytime, anywhere to family and friends to retain or maintain personal, social and cultural identity.

When I get news from my country I feel as though I am keeping in touch with my 'roots'. This is what connects me to home. There is also a sense of nostalgia particularly when I hear about places or people I know. The moments I get each week helps me to feel grounded and somehow makes me feel as though although not physically there I still have a place somewhere; a place where I feel a sense of belonging to some extent. (Guinea, female)

Identity has received a lot of attention in post-colonial studies. Many scholars have attempted to nail down a firm definition of this concept but at times it still remains elusive. Schwartz, Montgomery and Briones [29] define identity as a synthesis of personal, social and cultural self-conceptions. They identify personal identity as the goals, values, and beliefs that an individual adopts and holds; social identity as “both the group with which one identifies, including its self-identified ideals, mores, labels and conventions as defined by Erikson [37] and the extent to which this identification leads one to favor the ‘in-group’ (i.e., the group to which one perceives oneself as belonging) and to distance oneself from ‘outgroups’ (i.e., groups other than the in-group)”; and cultural identity as a special case of social identity, the interface between the personal and cultural context. This definition fits the experience of the participants in this study but their identity now includes virtual identity.

The importance of identity maintenance was evident among most of the participants. Their connectivity alleviated the feelings of homesickness, marginalization or isolation that they experienced living in cultures that are different from their culture of origin.

As McLuhan’s global village, the world is much smaller now. You can be anywhere Iraq, England, Sweden, France, Nigeria, Australia and can communicate with all these people simultaneously and instantly. It’s not just that you can communicate with them but it’s the immediacy of communication. And that creates a network that perhaps would not exist without the internet. Through the internet I have been able to reconnect with a lot of family members and friends. It has facilitated a certain community and commonality that would not exist without it. It’s a virtual community but it is just as effective. If it weren’t for the internet I would not have reconnected with many friends. Now I am chatting with many of them and it is like face-to-face communication, the instant messaging intensifies the experience. (Jamaica, male)

Reaffirming their original cultural identity when they used the internet made them feel at ‘home’. “[I] feel a sense of connection to home and familiar things ... nuances of the language being read, the tone, the subtle implications of what’s being read, and the sense of history that I connect to in the [news] stories I read” (Antigua, female). As such, participants believe the internet has made living away from their original home country more tolerable. “The internet has changed my life tremendously; I couldn’t imagine being so far away from home without it and being faced with communication by post [snail-mail] only...” (Ghana, female)

In the midst of these interactions, these participants are changing the way they live and work in their ‘host’ country as the ‘connectedness’ of the internet allows them to shift between two or more cultures anytime anywhere as virtual transients. “The watchword is ‘connection’ as it keeps me informed on a demand-basis, I know where to go when I need stuff, and on some level I feel that I’m able to retrieve more information outside of my country via the internet than if I were home depending on traditional avenues” (Bahamas, female 3)

their membership in their original in-group through connectivity

of the internet, the values, beliefs and practices of their heritage culture remained relevant for most of these elite migrants. “The internet makes it easy for me to be in [a] foreign country as it helps me stay connected to my family, culture and country. Staying connected to my home culture has an impact on the quality of my work here, because it gives me a feeling of closeness with my culture and reduces homesickness” (US American, female).

The frequent visits to their culture of origin via the internet not only produced a feeling of connection to a place where they belonged or restored their original memberships it also produced tensions between the ‘host’ and the ‘home’ culture as return to the host culture and the re-assimilation of host values, beliefs and customs produce identity distress resulting from divided loyalties between two cultures [38]. Virtual reality or digital reality creates frequent re-acculturation, (as discussed in the previous section), and as Schwartz et al. believe with acculturation, re-acculturation causes changes to cultural identity; however, the extent of the shifting depends on one’s perception of the importance of one’s heritage culture values, beliefs and customs and one’s perception of the host’s culture values, beliefs and customs. As noted this perspective emerged among some of the participants who identified themselves as global citizens. This perspective is discussed more in the next section.

In-between and multiple: negotiating identities

Being dislocated from ‘home’ often requires migrants to negotiate multiple positions and identities via cyberspace. The internet offered these elite migrant workers not only a tool to validate their identity in their ‘host’ country but it also positioned them in an in-between-ness where multiple positions and identities co-exist.

When I talked with my friend [names her friend who is also from her ‘home’ culture and also lives and works abroad] from my office, I close my [office] door so that we could talk openly and privately. English is gone in our conversation as we get down to the ground with dialect... It is during these conversations via Skype or other technology that the rawest sense of who you are at your core comes out...but when I disconnect from that conversation almost effortlessly and instantaneously I put the mask back on and adapt to the environment I am in [names global company here]. I disconnect and it happens at the subliminal level. (Bahamas, female 1)

Participants admitted that it is exhausting to switch back and forth between identities but “it was not overwhelmingly so” (Bahamas, female 1) as working and living abroad in the host country requires one to assimilate and conform to the host culture. Some of the participants accepted this as part of the conditions for working in a host country. Other explanations of how migrants cope with multiple identities and positions are revealed in the following response:

Technology is filling the gap. People look for information they are interested in ...they go with what they can connect to ... where their memories are...that’s home and they can connect to it. People feel more like their original self-identity in their homes [physically inside] and switch to the assimilated identity of the

host country when they go outside. It's like what satellite TV did before the internet to Africans and Arabs who had relocated to France. Outside their apartment they are French, inside their apartment they are Nigerian or whatever Arab country they come from. (Benin, male).

One of the elite immigrants, who lived in his 'host' country for more than thirty years, deliberately searches for his 'home' culture to sustain his cultural identity as he moves between cultures, physically and virtually. Internet technology has given him the ability to transport himself emotionally to his country of origin anytime any place as long as he has access. He described what happened to him when he read an online newspaper from his home of origin.

I get emotionally involved because I can identify with the stories. I have emotional investment in the stories. I know some of the writers. Once I was reading a crime story [in an online newspaper] and the guy charged was the football coach at my high school, the judge was an ex-girlfriend and one of the witnesses was my brother-in-law. I said how can all these people be in one story? [Laughs] It seemed incestuous.

I may not be there physically but [I'm] there emotionally...it's as though I never left; 30 years later I am still there. I still have my accent and I move with people [from similar cultural background] in [host country] ... When I want news from home it's at my fingertips. I get it instantly I don't have to wait weeks, which is what we did when we had mainly letters. (Jamaica, male).

Connectivity brings with it the complexities of negotiating identity. Contacts with the home culture are not always pleasant as in-groups and outgroups are redrawn and migrants who left their country of origin are accused by those who have never left their home country of no longer having full rights to citizenship.

At times, negotiating citizenship with friends, family and peers at 'home' is complex. In some respect Jamaican people in diaspora are more patriotic than those who live at home, there's a certain amount of resentment towards those who live abroad. They believe we abandoned Jamaica because we live abroad. They often get defensive and hostile when we [those living in the diaspora] try to reach out and help the country on individual or collective level. They often say we don't live in Jamaica and have given up our rights [as citizens] to participate, assist, volunteer or help, except monetarily...That is, they are happy to take our money... but we should open our wallets and keep our mouths shut...because they don't want our advice, knowledge or feedback...(Jamaica, male).

Despite this antagonism the participant quoted above continues to retain his original cultural identity and assimilate to the 'host' country, making adjustments to his speech, in terms of the speed at which he talks when interacting in the 'host' country, but otherwise remaining "true to who I am in all settings."

Schwartz et al. [29] and Vertovec [30] refer to the bicultural tension that exists for migrants as they claim membership in more than one place. The phenomenon of multiple citizenships has led to a lot of public and scholarly debates on dual

citizenship, dual nationality, rights, obligations, national identity and transnationalism. There are a number of views on these issues, positive and negative. The negative perspective views transnational ties as weakening immigrants' integration in the receiving country [30] whereas the positive perspective claims "democracy is actually enhanced by public recognition and representation of migrants' transnational, multiple identities" [30].

The participants' experiences indicate they are living multiple parallel lives in the real world and in their virtual world. "I sometimes feel like I flipped a switch and moved from interacting in one space as one person and then become someone else in another space, sometimes within seconds or minutes and sometimes simultaneously" (Bahamas, female 1). These interactions are affecting their worldview, identity and communication patterns; raising a number of questions about identity, nationality, citizenship, nation-state, rights and obligations that future researchers will have to answer.

Discussion

Elite migrants in this study experienced flexible, fluid identities and multiple belongings. The lived experience of these twenty elite migrant workers reveals the complexities of identity and belonging in the twenty-first century. Their experience provides us with greater understanding of their interactions in 'host' and 'home' cultures as they move back and forth between multiple locations through the use of information and communication technologies like the internet balancing online and offline identities. Their experience also reveals the significance of virtual/digital reality in the maintenance and negotiation of identity and belonging. Salient aspects of their experience coalesced around issues of negotiating multiple identities and positions in various locations as they engage and interact with friends, family and colleagues using the internet and its various platforms. The results of this study indicate that communication technologies like the internet—Facebook, blogs, Skype, facetime, WhatsApp, websites, online radio and television—are dislocating elite migrant workers' lives. Elite migrants in this study are experiencing new social transformations and identifications as described by Giddens [18], Escobar [38] and Appadurai [13]. Online media is reshaping their diasporic experience as they create and sustain connections across national borders, producing virtual transient identities that co-exist with who they are in offline spaces.

Their experience also provides support for the ideas of Sahoo and de Kruijff [21], de Kruijff [21], Appadurai [13], Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton-Blanc [39,40], and Bauböck and Faist [15] who believe we are creating new forms of transnationalism, citizenship, and identity. De Kruijff [21] argues that migrants are using the internet not only to revive filial relations and community organization, but also as a channel for social and political influence. He believes "that the study of human mobility requires an approach in which online interactive platforms ('social media') are recognised as crucial additions to the instrumentarium of connectivity of contemporary migrants and diasporas". These elite migrants

are balancing and merging multiple identities offline and online, creating new hybrid forms of citizenship and belonging.

Issues of power are also connected to the influence of the internet on migrants' transnational interactions. Some participants referred to issues of citizenship and nation-state in their efforts to influence social, political and economic issues in their 'home' culture. Although, there may be some resistance to their interventions in their country of origin, the migrants in this study claimed, enacted and performed citizenship as purported by Joseph [41]. These reflections relate to Sassen's [9] and Ong's [42] arguments of the emergence of new kinds of citizenships that center on debates of post-nation state and flexible identities. The participants acknowledged the significance of online connectivity in their ability to engage and interact with friends and family across borders and described the impact of this interaction on their identity. Connectivity was viewed positively. However, despite the positive feelings brought on through the closeness connectivity imbued, participants identified some feelings of resentment towards diasporic citizens from citizens in the 'home' culture. Other scholars have reported similar findings.

The participants in this study are also living transnational lives as identified by Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc [40]. Glick Schiller *et al.* [40] identified a crucial shift in the character of migration that forces a reframing into a "process by which immigrants forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement". The internet, with its capacity to link many people interactively across great distances, seems to be the ideal tool for these elite migrant workers who want to sustain identity and connections with their home of origin. While none of the interviewees identified themselves as transnational, they are living transnational lives as described in the literature and are embracing the idea of fluid identities as proposed by Bradatan, Popan and Melton [17].

The twenty participants in this study are coping with the new cultural realities of globalization-multiple positions and fluid identities. Communication technologies play an active role in the maintenance of their cultural identity, the management of multiple identities and the adjustments or re-acculturations that frequently take place in global interactions. De Kruijff [21] argues communication via the internet and its various platforms should be seen as a force that transforms individuals based on the massive increase of speed and scale of exchanges. According to de Kruijff [21], "the impact of the internet on the experience of migrant transnationalism relates to spatial-temporal effects of online interactions". It is the internet's ability to transcend time and space limitations and generate social formations and attachments, facilitate digital reconstruction of existing ties and shape processes of identity formation [21] "to provide a continuous pattern of mediated interactions [e.g. SNS posts, e-mails, WhatsApp messages] that combine into 'connected relationships,' in which the boundaries between absence and presence eventually get blurred" [43]. Thus, the simulated experiences of being there while being here, the adjustments to re-entry shock, and the management of multiple positionalities may become normalized behavior for all migrants, not just elite migrants.

Four significant areas emerged from the interviews with elite migrant workers: the creation of cultural transients through interactions in real time, the impact of frequent connections and belonging, the need to negotiate multiple identities and adapt to re-entry shock. The participants in this study identified the need to use the internet to connect and continue relationships with family and friends at home in real time. They used the internet to strengthen, build and sustain identity. This connectedness is important to them because it helps them to bear to the cultural environments of their 'host' culture and build community with their 'home' culture.

However, what also emerged, and is just as significant, is the frequent need to adjust one's identity in global interactions. Communication technologies are allowing dislocated global citizens to maintain a greater sense of cultural familiarity thus changing the way they work and live. New communication technologies allowed the participants in this study to interact with their 'home' culture from any physical location in the world. These dislocated elite workers are immersed in a foreign virtual workspace, where language, time, rituals, and social networks are shaping new cultural identities, ones that are multi-perspective. As such communication technologies are also presenting new cultural realities: clashes and co-orientations. The frequent adjustments that result from these interactions produced complex feelings of dislocation that happens through connection, engagement and disconnection. Unlike Sawyer and Chen's [44,45] study which found these cyber connections helped participants to overcome adjustment challenges, the participants in this study also suggest something else, that is, these frequent connections made adjustment more complex and complicated when they returned to the 'host' culture or engaged with the 'home' culture. The intercultural communication explored in this study needs further research to extend our understanding of this phenomenon.

The elite migrant workers in this study are a part of a growing trend among migrant workers who use technology to maintain close ties to their 'home' culture. The internet permits frequent intimate connections that simulate real-time face-to-face interactions. As Levitt [12] explains, these interactions heighten the immediacy and frequency of migrants' contact with their home cultures and allow them to be actively involved in everyday life there in fundamentally different ways than in the past. However, these frequent 'cyber visits' include challenges of re-entry in both 'home' and 'host' cultures. The elite migrants in this study are coping with contrasting self-concepts, disconcerting adaptations and constant boundary maintenance through the creation of virtual identities and are creating new forms of identity.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. First, to be connected is, on the whole, an advantage. The internet connects us, yet many people face barriers to effective virtual engagement. Access is neither equitable nor ubiquitous and information literacy is far from universal. In any study of new phenomenon

brought on by technology we should always remember that any analysis of this phenomenon is inherently biased towards those who have access. However, access is expanding and as such this study should be extended to include the non-elite migrant worker experience. Second, elite migrant workers leave home with more economic, social and political capital. This gap between elite and non-elite migrants, brought on by social, political and economic differences, allows elite migrant workers to engage with their host country and culture in different ways than non-elite migrants. Elite and non-elite migrants leave home with a strong sense of identification with their country of origin. However, the elite migrant workers in this study indicate that class plays a role in the channels they select to communicate with home country, the frequency of the communication and the type of communication. Future studies should include this factor. Third,

further studies should include a wider range of countries, a larger study population and mix methods (ethnography, interviews and surveys) to provide a more in-depth cross cultural comparative analysis.

This study raises questions about our understanding of the use of communication technologies in transnational diasporic identity construction. It identifies an area that needs more understanding of the acculturation process that takes place through connecting and disconnecting from 'home' culture via the internet. This study points to a gap in the literature on migrant transnationalism by focusing on elite-migrant's use of communication technology, specifically the internet, to sustain or maintain 'home' culture and negotiate multiple identities, and highlights new areas for research.

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