The politics of knowledge, epistemological occlusion and Islamic management and organization knowledge

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Abstract
This article argues that Islamic management and organization knowledge (MOK) is relatively under- and mis-represented in the literature. This conclusion is reached following a detailed literature survey and analysis which also examines some of the core representational practices used to account for Islam in the literature: the persistence of essentialism and orientalism; the disposition to refract instances of Islamic MOK through Northern lenses; and the tendency for some Southern scholars and institutions to become intellectually captive to the North’s knowledge system. We discuss this in the context of a politics of knowledge that bears on knowledge production and dissemination processes in MOK. This reveals continued intellectual and cultural imperialism, sustained Western hegemony, and the exclusionary practices of the North’s associated discourses and institutional frameworks that valorise and elevate Northern epistemology, theory and method, but devalues and marginalize alternatives. We argue that any neglect of Islam is unwarranted given (a) its global significance on a range of dimensions, (b) the particularities of its relations to the North—characterized by orientalism and Islamophobia and (c) the presence of a distinctive Islamic worldview, epistemology and ethics that informs practical action, including management and organization. This entails that an Islamic MOK offers prospects of an alternative or complement to the North’s orthodox perspective and is deserving of a proper voice in the literature. We conclude by offering practical suggestions for change.

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We demonstrate in this article that a politics of knowledge operates which constructs a particular structure of management and organization knowledge (MOK) production. This is on account of continued intellectual and cultural imperialism, sustained Western hegemony and associated discourses and institutional frameworks. The consequence is a colonizing knowledge system and an invasive epistemology that occludes, marginalizes or silences alternative knowledge frameworks of the Global South in general and of Islam in particular. We maintain that these structures of asymmetry and dominance are sustained both through institutional frameworks that constitute Northern MOK systems, and discursively through a variety of strategies by which the South’s MOK is appropriated, translated and represented. It is further argued that they are reproduced not only through the Northern intellectual apparatus, but also by some Southern intellectuals and their institutions through processes of cooption, collusion and/or mimicry. The means by which these processes and structures are maintained remains under-analysed and underappreciated. Despite its importance, questions of the politics of knowledge and the power relations between North and South in terms of knowledge production, remain largely unexplored in MOK (exceptions include Alcadipani and Rosa, 2011; Ibarra-Colado, 2006; Jack and Westwood, 2009; Merilainen et al., 2008). The article makes a contribution by addressing this relative neglect generally and also specifically in relation to the distortions and misrepresentations of MOK in Islam.

The article proceeds as follows. We firstly explain our focus on Islam and why we think considering Islam in MOK is important. One crucial aspect in this regard is Islam’s particular relationship with the North, a relationship characterized by orientalism and Islamophobia. Secondly, we note that Islam represents a distinctive worldview, epistemology and ethics that inform practice, including matters relating to management and organization. We discuss this in relation to a politics of knowledge and the location of any putative Islamic MOK within that politics. The article next moves to examine the limited and unbalanced representation of Islam in existing management and organization studies (MOS). It does so through a detailed survey and analysis of the literature of Islam in MOS. This is followed by an evaluation of the institutional context for the production and dissemination of MOK, which we argue is dominated by the North and which operates on an inclusion-exclusion practice with respect to the South in general and Islam in particular. Next we examine the representational practices through which Islam is considered in the literature. We focus on three keys issues: the persistence of essentialism and orientalism; the disposition to refract instances of Islamic MOK through Northern lenses and the tendency for some Southern scholars and institutions to become intellectually captive to the North’s knowledge system and to reproduce it through their own un-reflexive practice. We finish by drawing some conclusions.

Before proceeding, there is a need for some reflexivity since we run the risk of being perceived as exemplars of that about which we seek to critique. We write in awareness of the politics of knowledge and admit to reservations about doing so; reservations partly explained by the issues addressed in this article. The fact that one of the authors enjoys a privileged location within the Northern academy is an aspect of our subject positions and engages us, ineluctably, in those very structures and processes of intellectual dominance that we seek to challenge. We are also mindful of the place of representational practices in the politics of knowledge and of falling foul ourselves of appropriative, essentializing or totalizing tendencies. We have already noted the use of terms such as ‘The Global North’ and ‘Global South’, and it needs to acknowledged that such terms and others such as ‘Islam’ or ‘Muslim’, plays to those tendencies. As Gottschalk and Greenberg (2007)
suggest, we ought to use language with greater specificity thereby representing the true variability and diversities that exist among Muslims worldwide. This is difficult in a general overview such as this and perhaps we can claim to be using strategic essentialisms (Spivak, 1996) in order to interrogate other mis-representational practices. Our anxieties are somewhat ameliorated by the fact that we are not seeking to represent Islam within MOK—something we intend to undertake in a future article—but rather to critically examine the extant representational space of Islam within the MOK literature and its framing within a politics of knowledge. Whatever failings and traps we might be guilty of; we intend this as a critical, emancipatory project.

**Considering Islam**

In this article we focus on the under- and mis-representation of Islam in Northern MOK for principally three reasons and from two points of view. We focus on Islam firstly because any demonstrable neglect and distortion of Islam would be worrisome, given its prominence and importance on a whole series of dimensions, from numerical scale to its historical, cultural, social, political and economic significance. Secondly, a consideration of Islam has acuity given the particular nature of the relationship between Islam and the North/West which has frequently been troubled; a relationship that can be signified by the related practices of orientalism and, more recently, Islamophobia. Thirdly, Islam is of interest because it represents a distinctive, holistic worldview, ethics and epistemology that, in principle, inform the everyday practice—including those related to business, management and organization—of its adherents. It has a long history of sophisticated engagement with epistemology and ethics and their relationship to practice. This offers the prospect of alternative conceptions, models, theories and practices in relation to MOK. Such an Islamic conception of business, management and organization has been acknowledged in the literature, but remains emergent and rather limited. Furthermore, and as we will argue, there is a politics of knowledge at work that serves to valorize the North’s knowledge systems, epistemology and resultant practices whilst simultaneously devaluing, occluding and even suppressing alternatives from the South in general and in Islam in particular.

The first perspective through which we consider Islam is the relative neglect and slanted representation of management and organization in MOK from locations that are Islamic or Muslim-dominated. Analysis shows that the South and its management and organization systems and practices are very poorly represented in Northern MOK, and this neglect extends to Islam as a major component of the South. The second perspective considers the extent to which Islam as a worldview, ethics and epistemology is represented within Northern MOK and the possibilities for it obtaining a legitimate voice therein. That is, it considers not just the representation of work from Islamic contexts, but of an Islamic MOK informed by the philosophical, ethical and epistemological principles of Islam. These perspectives become apparent as we move into the analysis of the literature.

**The significance of Islam**

Any occlusion or distortion of Islam from MOK would be worrisome given that it is the world’s second largest and fastest growing religion with 1.6 billion adherents, constituting 23% of the worlds’ population (Pew Research Centre, 2009). There are approximately 50 countries with a Muslim majority and most are situated in the South (Williams et al., 2009) although there are Muslims across the North: for example, about 4 million in Germany, 3.5 million in France, 2.5 million in the USA² (Pew Research Centre, 2009). Its place as a major component of the South
justifies our consideration of the barriers and exclusions of the Northern MOK and its apparatus in relation to the South in general since what applies to the South in general applies to Islam in particular in this regard.

It is important to recognize that Islam provides its adherents with a set of principles by which to live that directly and profoundly impact all aspects of human behaviour, including both social and economic activities, and the knowledge required to produce and represent them. As Sardar (1991: 223) argues, Islam is a ‘religion, culture, tradition and civilization all at once’ and it should not be disaggregated from this holistic totality. He continues: ‘Islam is best appreciated as a worldview: as a way of looking at and shaping the world; as a system of knowing, being and doing.’ (Sardar, 1991: 223), implying that Islam constitutes an epistemology and praxis.

The importance of considering Islam for MOK also resides in its long history of engagement in the advancement of knowledge and practice and in sophisticated forms of trade, business and administration (Ali, 2006). This engagement has been felt globally and was expansive and penetrative particularly between the 8th and 13th centuries when Islam developed as a rich civilization and as a centre of learning and culture (Esposito, 1983). Muslim intellectualism made enormous contributions to the fields of mathematics, economics, medicine, botany, geography, history, and philosophy as well as fundamental contributions to technology. In agriculture, for instance, Islamic innovation led to a revolution in methods and techniques (Watson, 2008). Similarly, technological and engineering innovation, and the Islamic scientific tradition played a big role in the development of human civilization (Al-Hassan, 2001; Hill and King, 1998; Saliba, 2007). Some authors have even referred to the early forms of market economy, mercantilism and monetized economies within Islam, during its ‘Golden Period’, as proto-capitalistic and ‘Islamic capitalism’ (Labib, 1969). These are seen as instrumental in the development of European capitalism (Banaji, 2007; Heck, 2006). However, there are differences from subsequent forms of capitalism, particularly through the ethics inherent to Islamic trade and economic exchange, a system that emphasize both individual economic freedom and the requirement to serve the common good (Hamid, 2003). It is in part this differentiating ethical framing of the economic that continues to be of interest to the Northern academy.

Throughout history, then, the Muslim world has engaged in trade and economic exchange across its borders and conceptualized about such matters, as well as matters of management and organization, from a distinctly Islamic purview (Ali, 2006, 2010). Contemporarily, Islam continues to play a significant role in the running of business and management of organizations in a distinctive manner, especially with respect to finance and accounting (Budwhar and Fadzil, 2000). Much of the literature in relation to an Islamic MOK revolves around this issue, as we will see. It is also argued that the success of organizations and businesses run on Islamic principles is becoming more apparent and so an alternative model is available and can be learnt from (Haron, 1996).

Any neglect of Islam in MOK is also concerning given its economic clout. The 57 member states of the Organization of Islamic Conferences have a combined GDP of US$7,740 billion and Muslim countries dominate the world’s oil resources and production. However, the economies of many Muslim countries are not mere petro-economies but are actually quite diverse (Noland and Pack, 2007). Despite this, there have been neo-Weberian arguments suggesting that Islam contains values incompatible with modern economic development (e.g. Guiso et al., 2003; Voigt, 2005). However, this view is challenged by scholars who conclude that ‘despite some assertions, Islam has not been inconsistent with growth in the Middle East—nor in other areas’ (Noland and Pack, 2007: 139), and that ‘Islam does not appear to be a drag on growth … ’ (Noland and Pack, 2007: 144); elsewhere Noland (2005) argues that ‘If anything, Islam promotes growth’ (p. 1215).
Islam is of immense significance on many dimensions and not merely on the grounds of historical contribution and sheer demographics, but also contemporarily on the grounds of economic, social, cultural, philosophical and ethical considerations. Any MOK that claims to be comprehensive and fully international cannot neglect Islam. What is the justification for the relative neglect and distortion of such a significant component of the world system and one with such economic, political, cultural and social significance? Furthermore, there are aspects of an Islamic worldview, epistemology, ethics and praxis that potentially provide a different foundation to economic, organizational and management practice and constitute an alternate mode of MOK that does not currently have an adequate voice in MOK. It is not our intention here to explicate what an alternative Islamic MOK consists of; that is something we will undertake subsequently building on existing work (e.g. Ali, 2006, 2010). Our intention is to examine the current place and representation of Islam within the literature. We locate this discussion within a politics of knowledge that reveals systemic asymmetries, exclusionary and distorting practices, and structures of dependency that operate on a broad North-South dynamic, but also with a particular relationship to Islam.

Relations with Islam: from Orientalism to Islamophobia

The second reason for focusing on Islam relates to the particularities of its relationship to the North/West historically and contemporarily. As noted, the nature of that relationship is perhaps exemplified by the notions of orientalism and Islamophobia. These practices and the nature of the relationship may account for any under- or mis-representation of Islam in MOK, or at least be part of the context that enable and permit such neglect and do so in a manner that is distinct from the more general problems within North-South relations.

There was a time when Islam’s relations with the North were more positive, indeed Islam, Judaism and Christianity productively co-existed in a shared intellectual, cultural, economic and geo-political space. The intermingling of their respective traditions was embraced in a multicultural civilization—for example under the Umayyad dynasty on the Iberian peninsula (Imamuddin, 1981; Lowney, 2005). The glory of this civilization, however, faded with the expulsion of Muslims from Spain by 1492 and relations since have been at best distant and fractious, and often antagonistic (Saikal, 2003). Indeed, it is argued that Islam has been the West’s quintessential, antithetical ‘other’ for several centuries (Salvatore, 1997). Certainly the prime focus of Said’s (1978) corrosivating and seminal exposure of the damaging practices of orientalism was the polluted relationship between the West and Islam; although orientalism has extensionality beyond that (Sardar, 1999). As Sajid (2005) says, ‘hostility towards Islam and Muslims has been a feature of European societies since the eighth century of the Common Era. It has taken different forms however at different times and has fulfilled a variety of functions … It may be more apt to speak of “Islamophobias” rather than of a single phenomenon’. The toxicity and rampant Islamophobia that characterizes much of Western-Islamic relations contemporarily is quite pervasive (Gottschalk and Greenberg, 2007; Poynting and Mason, 2007). Said has exposed how Western media controls and distorts Islam through its representations: Islam is represented as dangerous, oppressive, outmoded, pre-modern, backward, conflictual, anti-intellectual and extremist (Said, 1997).

Historical and contemporary orientalisms and Islamophobias are conditions of postcoloniality that contribute to the particular location and exclusions of Islam in Northern discourse and knowledge systems. Whilst we do not expect to find overt Islamophobic sentiments in peer reviewed articles of MOS, we do suggest that Islamophobia pervades the contemporary zeitgeist and legitimates the neglect or distortions and misrepresentations that Islam is subject to, when the Northern gaze is cast upon it.
Epistemic coloniality and epistemic occlusion: barriers to an Islamic alternative in MOK

Any analysis of Islam in MOK discourse needs to be located in a politics of knowledge that has operated since the ascendency of the North’s knowledge systems post-Enlightenment and as facilitated, concentrated and transported by its colonial and neo-colonial projects. An intellectual and cultural hegemony developed which valorizes the North’s knowledge systems and consolidates them in the practices of knowledge production and dissemination. This has been apparent with respect to Northern science in general, but also across the spectrum of knowledge disciplines, including MOK and associated realms of practice.

Said’s (1978) Orientalism can be read as a critique of this Western epistemological project that coterminously occludes the epistemological systems of others. It is a project that is reductionist, appropriative and distorting. Said has persistently challenged the knowledge generated in the discursive and institutional systems of the North. He and other postcolonialists have striven to recover the history of the marginalized ‘other’ against this politico-epistemological project through, amongst other things, a provincialization of the North’s knowledge production system(s). Such critique demonstrates that the North’s knowledge system(s) attained and sustains dominance through participation in colonialism and through persisting intellectual and cultural imperialism that has marginalized, occluded and in some cases eradicated alternative knowledge systems. Postcolonial theory has done much to expose the provincialism of the North’s knowledge systems, re-surface alternatives, and demonstrate a multiplicity of knowledge systems that have always been interactive (e.g. Chakrabarty, 2000; Figueroa and Harding, 2003; Gilmartin, 1994; Harding, 1996, 1998; Kumar, 1991; Nandy, 1988; Sardar, 1988). However, these revelations have not been acceded to within the North’s dominant knowledge system(s). Indeed, globalization has witnessed the expansion of Northern education systems and paradigms which have served to further entrench intellectual imperialism and hegemony (Alatas, S.H., 2000; Alcadipani and Rosa, 2011; Altbach, 1987; Kipping et al., 2008; McConaghy, 2000; Rizvi, 2007; Selveratnum, 1988).

A consequence of this intellectual imperialism and hegemony has been the development of unbalanced, ‘vertical’ relationships (Loubser, 1988) between the institutions, academics and systems of knowledge of the North and the South. It has led to core-periphery relations (Alatas, 1996) and relationships of dependency (Alatas S. F., 2000, 2003). As Loubser argues, the social science community is characterized by limited and elitist ‘patterns of participation’ and ‘exclusive networks of communication and domination by the European and North American centers, perpetuating the glaring asymmetries and dependencies … ’ (Loubser, 1988: 187). Alvares (2002) has been unstinting in his critique, expressing it starkly: ‘The intellectual centers are located in the West, and they supply the categories and terms for all intellectual debates. We play along. They remain the center, while we keep ourselves at the periphery. They create; we copy and apply’. These dependency relations are created, supported and sustained by the institutional frame of the North’s knowledge systems such that ‘developing nations become positioned as consumers of knowledge—rather than producers and disseminators’ (Altbach, 1987: 84). Often local elites aspire to what the North offers and collude with these flows and resultant dependency structures, failing to support local academics, academic institutions and knowledge systems (e.g. Blaut, 1993).

These dynamics are as apparent in relation to MOK as they are in other knowledge domains. MOK, as an academic discourse, has clearly been a construction of the North, and in particular of the USA (Engwall and Zamagni, 1998; Ibarro-Colado, 2011; Jack and Westwood, 2009; Kipping and Bjarnar, 1998). As such it has particular ontological and epistemological lineage and preferences. At its orthodox and still dominant core it is a discourse characterized by a realist and
positivist epistemology operating in a functionalist paradigm; albeit with increasing challenges (Hassard, 1993; Knights, 1992; Westwood and Clegg, 2003). However, Northern hegemony with respect to MOK is simply an extension of its hegemony in relation to science and education more broadly as instantiated through colonialism and cultural and intellectual imperialism (Alatas, S. H., 2000; Altbach and Kelly, 1984; Carnoy, 1974). Furthermore, MOK has been almost uniformly produced and controlled by the North’s academic institutions (Jack and Westwood, 2009; Kipping et al., 2008) and has been extensively exported globally, particularly through publishing and higher education (Engwall and Zamagni, 1998; Hedmo et al., 2005; Kipping et al., 2004, 2008; Üsdiken, 2004), including the Muslim countries (Neal and Finlay, 2008). For some, Northern MOK participates in globalization processes and carries the corollary that ‘management knowledge and practices generated and developed in Western countries, especially in the United States … can then be seamlessly transferred to other contexts [and that] … knowledge in management can be universally applicable and is, supposedly, neutral’ (Alcadipani and Rosa, 2011). In the face of such insistencies, alternative and indigenous MOK systems have been occluded and marginalized. Indeed, Ibarro-Colado (2011) goes so far as to suggest that ‘The role of management knowledge beyond the Anglo-Saxon scene [was] as an international epistemic weapon to subjugate the people of the South, conceived as the premodern minds and souls of the savages that inhabit the margins of modernity’ (p. 155). These dynamics in the politics of knowledge within MOK have only recently received attention (e.g. Banerjee and Prasad, 2008; Cooke, 2004; Frenkel and Shenhav, 2006; Ibarro-Colado, 2006, 2011; Prasad, 2003; Westwood and Jack, 2008). In highlighting these dynamics and asymmetries we are mindful not to reproduce a monolithic and totalizing relationship. In encounters of difference, including colonial encounters, there is rarely simple unidirectionality and unilateralism, but rather an interchange resulting in ambiguity and hybridization (e.g. Alcadipani and Rosa, 2011; Bhabha, 1994). However, such interchange does not signify balanced exchanges or symmetrical and equitable structures.

As we will see, the inclusion-exclusion practices of the North’s knowledge systems have entailed the exclusion or marginalization of much of the South, and of Islam particularly. Such practices are multifaceted, but fundamentally rest on the elevation and valorization of the North’s worldview, knowledge systems and epistemology along with a devaluation and occlusion of alternatives which are held to be somehow inferior or inappropriate. This is despite the existence of sophisticated alternatives around the world and their objective success (in sustaining cultures and social systems). Islam is a case in point since it has an extensive and sophisticated philosophical engagement with epistemology (Fakhry, 2004; Inati, 1998; Nasr and Leaman, 1996). As noted above, Islam is best considered a ‘worldview’, ‘a system of knowing, being and doing’ and thus an epistemology (Sardar, 1991).

An Islamic ‘system of knowing, being and doing’ is embedded in its theological sources, including the Qur’an (considered as the word of God as transmitted to his Prophet, Muhammad—peace be upon him) and the Sunnah (the acts and sayings of the Prophet, as transmitted through traditions known as hadith) (Ali and Leaman, 2008). Hence, any alternative Islamic system of knowledge, including MOK, will perforce be rooted in these theological sources. It might be argued that a theological epistemology has no place in the academy and in MOS, but that is a restricted view of epistemology, reflecting faith in forms of secular rationality that have guided Western knowledge systems since the Enlightenment elevation of reason as the sin qua non of human endeavour. The historical and cultural specificity of this fact needs to be acknowledged as does the presence of metaphysics and theological epistemology within Northern philosophy throughout its history (e.g. Boeve et al, 2005).
It also needs to be noted that, recently, interest of management researchers in spirituality has grown significantly (Calás and Smircich, 2003). Evidence of this shift can be seen in the increase in popular business and management literature during the 1990s that explicitly addressed the emerging theme of workplace spirituality advocating a corporate soul (Whyte, 1994), spiritual leadership (Fairholm, 2000), stewardship (Block, 1993) and spiritual laws of success (Chopra, 1994). The growing interest in this area has also been reflected in the creation (2000) of the ‘Management, Spirituality and Religion’ interest group in the Academy of Management. However, Benefiel (2003) bemoans the fact that academic work in this area is driven mostly by instrumental values seeking to evaluate the contribution of spirituality to performance. She notes that since the Enlightenment, the discourse of science and spirituality ‘dwell together uneasily in an atmosphere of mutual denial of significance and validity’ (p. 385) and argues for a reintegration. She cites the philosopher Lonergan (1957, 1985) who maintains that the notion of spirituality being subjective and science objective is mythical, and that they share a common trajectory and foundation in consciousness. He ‘weaves a seamless web of relationships among the various branches of human knowledge, demonstrating how they complement and enrich one another’ (Benefiel, 2003: 388).

The counterpoint to self-interest and an integrative, totalistic view of forms of knowledge are both inherent to Islamic epistemology. Other work supporting the inclusion of spirituality in MOS includes articles in the special issue of Organization cited above, Ashmos and Duchon (2000), Cash (2000), Hawley (1993) and Mitroff and Denton (1999).

Although an unequivocal and consensual Islamic epistemology does not exist, there are aspects that have been broadly discussed in Islamic philosophy in a manner which marks a distinctive difference from the dominant epistemology of Northern science. In that sense it offers possibilities both as an alternative and complement to standard Northern epistemology, but it is currently mostly occluded within MOK. We only have space for a brief sketch here.

Firstly, the notion of ‘knowledge’ itself, and as Rosenthal (1970) points out, the Arabic term closest to ‘knowledge’, ‘ilm’, has a broader meaning and encompasses a unity of theory, action and learning. Different schools of Islamic philosophy have elaborated on other concepts associated with ilm when it is used with a modifier. For example, the term al-ilm al-huduri, (presential knowledge) implies intuitive knowledge based on immediate experience and presence, which is different from al-ilm al-husuli (representative knowledge) which depicts indirect knowledge based on mental concepts (Yazdi, 1992). Secondly, Islamic epistemology presupposes a holistic and theistic base since Allah (God) is considered the source of all knowledge. Hence, the highest source of knowledge in Islamic epistemology is revelation. It is suggested that ultimately ‘Knowledge is the intellect’s grasp of the immaterial forms, the pure essences or universals that constitute the natures of things’ (Inati, 1998: 384). Whilst the human senses provide access to material forms, they only ‘prepare the way for the reception of the immaterial forms, which are then provided by the divine world.’ (Inati, 1998: 384), but sometimes the divine enables the human intellect to apprehend the immaterial forms without the mediation of the senses. However, this does not necessarily diminish other faculties of knowing, including al-aql (a term used to denote both reason and intellect), firasah or hads (intuition) and ma’rifah (knowledge of the heart). These are hierarchically structured from the sensual to the spiritual (Nasr and Leaman, 1996). However, in Islamic epistemology, the possession of al-aql is considered very positive and the Quran frequently refers to it and its importance in one’s religious life (Nasr, 1981). Firasah or Intuition is also highly valued since it refers to the ‘immediate and unitive experience or apprehension of the forms of the intelligibles (ma’qulat) or the essences (ma’ani) of the spiritual realities or beings without the mediation of mental conception, representation or validation’ (Moris, 2003: 4). The difference between firasah and ma’rifah is that the former is generated through intellect while the latter is a function of the heart (Qalb).
The great Islamic scholar, Al-Ghazzali, emphasizes the importance and the capacity of Qalb to transcend the natural world (mulk) and know the heavenly world (malakut). Due to this capacity, humans are capable of transcending the dualisms between mind or body and reason or emotions. Islamic epistemology is holistic in the sense of encompassing these different forms of knowing, but also through the notion of ‘immanent unity (tawhid)’ (Anees, 2004: 135) which implies that whatever form of knowledge is operative it ultimately rests on the same source. One implication is that ‘while religion and science are two different epistemic categories in the Western mind, they are, in the Muslim eye, parts of a continuum complementing each other’ (Anees, 2004: 135). This echoes Benefial’s (2003) observation and proposed reintegration noted above. Indeed, Islam’s concerns regarding the North’s post-Enlightenment epistemology which has driven its science and technology and attained dominance, centres on its secularization, the separation of scientific reason from the spiritual, and the fragmentation and atomization of modes of knowing. It is a secular epistemology ‘that claims for men the right to create values and legislate rules for collective behavior, as well as the authority to define how life is to be lived’ (Euben, 1997: 35). All knowledge systems rest upon epistemological foundations and assumptions. Any alternative to the North’s knowledge systems perforce emanates from an alternate epistemological location. A properly Islamic MOK must rest upon and incorporate such epistemic principles as those outlined above and in doing so offer an alternative to Northern MOK and its provincial epistemological foundations, one deserving of space and voice within organization studies. There are, however, significant barriers to any such challenge and to addressing a politics of knowledge that is exclusionary.

In what follows we examine the current state of Islamic MOK in the Western literature. This reveals firstly, the relative neglect and under-representation anticipated and secondly, that the limited representations are often distorted. More often than not, the work is weakly located within Islam as a system of knowledge and ethics, and the potential for a properly Islamic epistemology is occluded. We then seek to explore and explain these absences and distortions. We begin by reflecting on issues of exclusion and under-representation and examine the institutional/material conditions giving rise to that and which reproduce the asymmetries. We then critically examine various practices of signification and their distorting effects.

**The limited and unbalanced representation of Islam in management and organization studies**

Here we provide an examination of the status of Islam within the literature of MOS. This is based on a literature survey conducted by the authors and thus we firstly present that survey and its dominant parameters. This already reveals the anticipated relative neglect and distortions. We then provide an analysis of the institutional frame for Northern MOK and a fuller account of some distorting representational practices.

**Overview: survey of the literature**

We conducted a literature review of work within MOS that purports to deal with Islam and/or Islamic perspectives. Our review began by entering the search terms ‘Islam’, ‘Islamic’ and ‘management’ into the Web of Knowledge with an open starting date and up until 2010. Search protocols were confined to abstracts of scholarly journals. The results were supplemented by other database searches, including EBSCO Host and Proquest using the same protocols. Cited-reference searches in Web of Knowledge and Google Scholar were utilized to further build the population of articles. The search identified 203 papers, however, preliminary analysis revealed that some did not fulfil
our intention since Islam was of only minor significance or they had only marginal relationship with management, organization or business. Others were duplicates due to our search approach, and still others could not be located in readable form. Consequently our final analysis was of 154 articles. Our analytic procedures followed Webster and Watson’s (2002) advocacy of a staged review. We initially viewed article abstracts and made a concept matrix of articles against the key concepts of a topic. The concept structure evolved as we worked through the articles. Once satisfied with the concept structure, we then read the articles in depth to analyse the content. Articles were analysed and coded according to the framework represented in Table 1.

Whilst we do not claim our search to be exhaustive, it was extensive and hence the first notable thing is the relatively small number of articles identified. The second noteworthy factor is the significant slant in terms of field/topics covered. Almost one-third of articles were classified as dealing with finance/accounting issues and if economics is included then about half the articles are accounted for. This focus reflects Northern MOK’s preoccupation with the workings of capital and the financial sector and an interest with Islam’s presumed alternative ways of handling capital, finance and banking. There are substantial, monograph-length treatments of both Islamic banking (e.g. Iqbal and Mirakhor, 2007; Iqbal and Molyneux, 2005; Siddiqi, 1983) and Islamic economics (e.g. Haneef, 1995; Nomani and Rahnema, 1994; Siddiqi, 1981). We are not disavowing the relevance of an Islamic approach in these areas, but the relative weight given to them is a distortion possibly reflecting Northern preoccupations.

The second most recorded topic category was organizational behaviour (OB) (23%): if HRM is added 27% of articles are encompassed. Each of marketing, HRM and general management accounted for less than 8% of articles; we located no articles focused on operations, strategy or MIS. Within OB there was a focus on work ethics and work-related values, partly in consequence of Ali’s (Ali, 1988, 1992) development of an Islamic work ethic scale. Interest certainly exists in supposedly different ethics and values informed by Islam and the relationship to business and organization (Rice, 1999).

Forty-four percent of articles had empirical content, the remainder were conceptual with most being essays or opinion pieces: less than 10% were concerned with theory development. Reflecting the positivist predilections of Northern social science, more than half of the empirical articles involved surveys and quantitative analysis, with another one-quarter analysing secondary sources (typically financial data sets). Qualitative studies were less in evidence and only four articles were classified as based on ethnographies. In terms of the geographical location of investigation, most (60%) were not focused on a particular country/region, but were non-specifically focused on Islam or on ‘Arabic’ countries/culture or the ‘Middle East’. The most popular specific countries were Iran (ten articles), Malaysia (seven articles) and Egypt (five articles).

In terms of authors, we sought to identify their background and current affiliation with an assumption that this might have a bearing on their intellectual and ideological location. We did this in two ways, firstly by classifying authors as being either of Western or Non-Western ethnic backgrounds based on their names; recognizing this to be a potentially flawed procedure. We estimate that three-quarters were non-Western. This may seem a high proportion, but ethnic background alone is not necessarily an indication of intellectual and ideological location. We therefore also classified authors by country of institutional affiliation as recorded on the article. This revealed that 30% were affiliated to US academic institutions, 15% to UK institutions and 4% to Canadian institutions. There were a further 5% of authors from Europe and a similar proportion from Australia. Thus even when the focus is on Islam, more than half of the authors are institutionally located in the North.

Given the Northern presence in authorship, a predominance of Western sources (as determined by the authorship and place of publication of references cited), both for theory and empirics, is not
Table 1. Coding structure for the literature review

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surprising. Many articles did cite non-Western sources (≤ 30% non-Western theory sources and about 13% non-Western empirical sources), and often both Western and non-Western featured in the same article. Rarely, however, was an article driven by non-Western sources. It is clear that much of what has been written about Islam in MOK has been framed and driven by Western theory, research and methods. Naturally, since the focus is on Islam, many authors cited core Islamic sources, although it is notable that there were articles which made no such reference at all. The most popular core Islamic source was *The Qur’an* followed by the *Hadith* and then Islamic jurisprudence, the *Sharia*. However, a close reading of the articles shows that many of these sources were only referred to in a cursory manner (e.g. one or two short quotes from the *Qu’ran*) and there were a very limited number of articles where the analysis, theory or discussion was driven by what could be considered a fully Islamic perspective.

This overview shows, amongst other things, that even when Islam is included in the MOK literature it is often, a) written/co-written by Northern scholars, b) primarily draws upon Northern theoretical frameworks, c) makes cursory use of core, traditional Islamic sources, and d) fails to locate discussions of ‘Islamic’ management, organization and business holistically within a properly considered Islam. Having briefly looked at the structure and broad content of the Islamic MOK literature, we now examine the institutional frame that supports Northern MOK and its exclusionary effects.

**The institutional framework of MOK and its exclusions**

The survey shows a very limited representation of work from Islamic contexts in the Northern MOK literature as well as limited work from an Islamic perspective incorporating fully an Islamic worldview, epistemology or ethics. We argue that the institutional frame of Northern MOK in part explains this relative neglect. We locate the institutional exclusion of Islam from MOK within the wider context of the exclusion of the South in general, believing that the institutional barriers that apply to the South in general also apply to Islam. We begin at the heart of the MOK academy—the professional academic associations that are involved in multiple ways in defining and policing the discourse. Principal among these are the USA-based academies—The Academy of Management (AOM) and the Academy of International Business (AIB).

The AOM has in recent years claimed an international orientation. However, the AOM is located in the USA and its officials are almost uniformly from the North. All past, present and elected presidents are USA-based and currently only two members in its Board of Governors are located outside the USA (in Europe) and the Chairs and Chairs Elect for its 25 ‘professional divisions’ are almost exclusively from the North. It reports having 17,271 members (AOM Online, 2008) from 102 nations. That may look healthily global, but closer scrutiny shows that the vast majority are from the North and from a limited number of countries therein: North America (68%) and Europe (18.1%—mostly from the UK). Combining North America, Europe and Australasia accounts for about 90% of membership (AOM, 2008) and although over 8% are from Asia, membership is skewed with most coming from Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan. Less than 1% of the membership comes from South America and less than half a percent from Africa. Many Middle Eastern countries have no members.

The AIB claims to be a ‘global community of scholars’ and asserts a membership of 3,394 from 84 countries (AIB, 2010). But again, even for this definitionally international association, 40% are from the USA, rising to 73% with the inclusion of Canada, Australasia and Western Europe. Asian membership is relatively small and distorted with the largest proportions coming from Japan, Taiwan, China (including Hong Kong) and South Korea. There are 164 (≤ 5%) members from
Latin America (mostly Brazil), and less than 1% of members from each of Africa, The Middle East/ North Africa, Asia-Central or the Pacific Basin. All of the AIB’s past Presidents were from the USA or Western Europe, as are almost all its other officials.

In terms of exclusion-inclusion practices and sustaining the hegemony of Northern knowledge systems in relation to MOK, it is perhaps the publishing apparatus that is most significant. It includes various media, but is pinnacled by journals. It needs to be immediately noted that the professional academies themselves produce lead journals and are Northern dominated. For example, all editors of the Journal of International Business Studies have been located in North America. Northern pedagogy has followed the exportation of Northern education around the globe. Many programs and courses rely upon Northern design and textbooks—based on Northern theory, methods, research and interests. It is suggested that texts from the ‘centre’ are automatically taught in the ‘periphery’ simply because they originate in the ‘centre’ and not because of any inherent quality of the texts or originality of the authors, or their relevance to our part of the world’ (Alvares, 2002: 2). Texts are directly imported, reproduced as local editions, or modified with local content. In parts of Asia, an alternative is for local academics to produce texts. However, these are often Northern-educated ones thoroughly imbued with Northern theory, method and research such that Northern thought is reproduced and local, indigenous materials, research and theory paralysed (Gopinath, 1998; Lee, 2000). In Islamic contexts, Ali (1995: 8) argues, most written materials are ‘mere translations and repetitions of American, and to some extent, European management theories’. Thus, the continued reliance on Northern texts and Northern control of the institutions of the academy contribute to perpetuating the hegemony of Northern knowledge systems and limiting the production of local, indigenous theory.

There have been claims that Northern journals have become more international (e.g. Kirkman and Law, 2005), but this is sustainable only if significant caveats are held. Such increase, as there have been, reflects more the growth of business education and the spread of the North’s performance management regimes which impel academics to publish in Northern journals. There has been an increase in published articles by authors from non-British, western-European universities and from other countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong and Singapore. This does not necessarily signal a new inclusiveness and the South continues to struggle to be included. The restricted and parochial nature of MOS journal publishing has been attested to in numerous reviews over the last couple of decades. For example, Wong and Mir examined 16 international management (IM) journals for the period 1954–1994 (Wong and Mir, 1997). They concluded that the field is dominated by US scholars and a small number from Western Europe and the dominant focus was on issues of interest to them. The review also lists those countries excluded from IM research either through not participating directly (98 countries) or through not being included in published studies (89 countries). The vast majority are countries from the South and a significant number are Islamic-dominated countries with 55 Islamic-dominant countries recorded as not participating in IM research and 24 ignored in IM research.

Another survey of 79 leading journals also noted North Atlantic dominance, that almost one-quarter had no international content, and roughly two-thirds less than 10% (Pierce and Garven, 1995). Clark and colleagues’ 1999–2000 examination of management and HR journals also reports low levels of international material, but makes other pertinent observations. Firstly, even when there is an international orientation, the focus is on a limited set of countries (US, UK, Japan, France and Germany accounting for nearly 50%)—countries of the North or those with which the North has a significant economic/strategic engagement. Secondly, most studies were ‘ethnocentric’ with an Anglo-Saxon bias, in the sense of using the theory and methods from one location to examine those in another in search of etic conclusions. Analysis of seven lead journals (four North
American, three European) showed that non-North American authors were significantly under-represented in North American journals (less than 10%) whereas North-American authors were not under-represented in European journals (60% of authors were from North America) (Baruch, 2001). The ‘almost non-existent representation of the Third World’ was noted (Baruch, 2001: 118). A more recent analysis of the same journal set shows 54% of authors from the US, rising to over 60% with the inclusion of Canadian authors (Gantman, 2009). Authors from Western Europe accounted for a further 30%, so 90% of all authors are from core Northern contexts. The author relates the production of MOK knowledge empirically to a country’s level of economic development, size of their economies, and whether English is an official language or not.

Kirkman and Law (2005) analysed AMJ from 1970–2004 and assessed its international content positively, claiming that it displays a marked increase in international work and has become a ‘truly international journal’ (p. 380). This despite only 14% of articles being classified as dealing with IM topics. Tellingly, an article is classified as ‘international’ if it meets any one of the three criteria: ‘1) at least one author is a non-North American scholar, 8 (2) the sample is collected outside North America or (3) the topic is related to international or cross-cultural management issues (regardless of authorship or data collection location.’ (Kirkman and Law, 2005: 377). This means inter alia that if an article has one author affiliated to a university outside of North America at the time of publication it meets these criteria—even if they are a US-citizen currently working, for example, in a UK university. In fact, almost one-half of the ‘international’ authors came from Europe and about one-third from ‘Asia’, but two-thirds of those came from either Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan or Japan, and another 29% from Australia or New Zealand. There are no other country clusters, just ‘other countries’ with Israeli authors having the largest representation, South America just two authors, and all of Africa but one. To interpret this as signalling a significant internationalization seems at best a stretch. The analysis actually reveals the continued major dominance of the North and the severely restricted presence of the South.

In addition to the location and background of authors, the role of editors is also important since they police the boundaries of the discourse. A survey of 22 leading international HRM and general management journals revealed the ‘skewed geographic distribution of editorial membership’ (Özbilgin, 2004: 205). Of all editorial members, 55% were from the USA; if Canada and selected Western European countries are included, the figure rises to 87%. All chief editors were from the North. Much of the South—all of Latin America, Africa and the Middle East—were classified as ‘blind spots’ with very ‘rudimentary level(s) of editorial participation’ (Özbilgin, 2004: 214). Other surveys support Özbilgin’s analysis. Pierce and Garven’s (1995) survey of 79 international business (IB) journals revealed that 76% of the editors were from the USA, 18% from the UK and the rest from elsewhere in Europe. A recent study of 30 leading IB journals showed 63% US, 25% from Europe and 9% from Asia (Chan et al., 2005). Finally, a survey of the top 25 MOS journals showed that 20 of the editors-in-chief were from the USA with the remaining five being from Europe and general editorial composition was heavily slanted to the North Atlantic (Meyer, 2006).

The citation conventions of Northern publishing are also complicit in inclusion-exclusion practices (Özbilgin, 2009; Wong and Mir, 1997). For reasons of convention, networking, and latterly for journal rankings and career progression, Northern authors cite colleagues who have already published in relevant journals. This results in the sedimentation of a canon as a legitimised knowledge domain. It is exclusionary since studies that do not cite or fit with the canon struggle to find a place and so the dominance of the North’s knowledge systems and its scholars is perpetuated.

The control of MOK through the North’s academic apparatus is further apparent in more indirect ways. For instance, one important recent intrusion has been the performance management and other HR systems that a corporatized higher education system in the North has installed. Academic
careers are now largely determined by journal publishing and the North has instituted related metrics and ranking regimes. Southern academics are encouraged to participate in this and are assessed by their own local institution in those terms (Nkomo, 2009). A consequence is often that research agendas, modes of theorizing, methods and epistemological and paradigmatic positions are driven by what is publishable in those journals rather than by genuine local concerns and problems (Nkomo, 2009; Ozbilgin, 2009). Further, mimicry of the North’s academic practices results in the affirmation of its dominance (Merilainen et al, 2008). Another example is in training and recruitment. There are significant international flows of academic labour, and governments of the South often support the training of their academic staff in the North’s institutions, especially at the PhD level, where they become imbued with the prevailing theories, methods and approaches.

It is clear that core elements of the institutional frame of MOK constitute a structure that works on an inclusion-exclusion practice and helps sustain the hegemony of the North’s knowledge systems and its provincial discourses. The whole discourse and its domains of activity are constructed by the North; those not of the North are obliged to either conform and play the game or not be given entry and voice (Adler and Harzing, 2009; Nkomo, 2009; Özbilgin, 2009). Much of the South in general and the Muslim world in particular, have been so excluded.

Representing Islam in the literature

Having discussed the under-representation and marginalization of the South and Islam through the institutions of the Northern Academy, we now examine how Islam is actually represented when it does get into the literature. Whilst there are various discernible strategies and practices, we highlight three here. The first is the continued deployment of orientalist and essentialist practices through which Islam is represented in modes akin to those initially revealed by Said and others. Secondly, the inclusion of work on Islam depends on it being refracted through a Northern theoretical lens and conforming to its epistemological, theoretical and methodological conventions. Thirdly, in part due to the institutional frame discussed above, much of the work is conducted by scholars who have been imbued with the paraphernalia of the Northern academy, both its institutional and its intellectual requirements, and appear to be willing to so participate in a somewhat unreflexive manner.

Still the ‘other’: Orientalist Practices

Our examination of the literature revealed work which adopted a stance of orientalism, which Said (1978) has discussed as a set of Western practices for appropriating, interpreting, restructuring and dominating Islam in Western terms. This work reproduces some of the familiar tropes, binary constructions and essentialisms of orientalism.

Work by Kuran, a Professor in Islamic Studies at Duke University, is illustrative. He argues in his 1997 article, that the ‘economic’ institutions of the Middle East failed to match the advanced transformation of the West. He notes that several restrictive institutions rooted in Islam contributed to this economic backwardness. These include: (a) the Islamic law of inheritance (Kuran, 1996) which inhibited capital accumulation and the transformation of Arab corporations into joint-stock companies; (b) the absence of the concept of corporation in Islamic law (Kuran, 2005), which hindered organizational development and contributed to keeping civil society weak; (c) the waqf, Islam’s distinct form of trust, which locked resources into inflexible organizations that tended to become dysfunctional over time. He also maintains that the insistence on consensus weakens debate and due to this the ‘truth’ gets distorted and Muslims are unable to see the inherent flaws in
their economic structures. He concludes that ‘an Islamic society would inevitably contain seeds of disharmony’ (1989: 171) and that Islamic ‘injunctions rest on a faulty model of human civilization’ (1989: 171). In other words, there are ‘economic’ and ‘cultural’ reasons why Islam should be thought defective and fail to function in a modern ‘capitalistic’ fashion. This work repeats familiar orientalist tropes and implied binaries related to stagnation, backwardness, lack of a civic society, lack of truth, dysfunctional values and failure to modernize. It also participates in that culturalist discourse that aligns economic under-development and a failure to modernize with cultural values and beliefs. This has roots in Weber’s analysis of the relationship between religious values/traditions and economic development, but similar arguments have persisted: for example, in McClelland’s (McClelland, 1961; McClelland and Winter, 1969) work on the achievement need; Hofstede’s analysis linking cultural values to economic development (Bond and Hofstede, 1989; Hofstede and Bond, 1988) and Redding’s cultural limits to organization and development among the Chinese (Redding, 1993, 2002).

The tendency towards essentialisms is very apparent in the literature and we could offer innumerable examples. It is apparent, for example in Javidan and Dastmalchian’s (2003) article on culture and leadership in Iran, which reports on aspects of the GLOBE project with its dimensionalizing of culture. It is replete with essentialisms in which Iranians are described in an undifferentiated and homogenous fashion as possessing a discrete set of characteristics and attributes; thus ‘Iranians’ are deemed to be characterized by ‘large power distance’, ‘low uncertainty avoidance’, ‘low assertiveness’ and the like. Other forms of essentialism are present, such as ‘Iranians tend to avoid direct confrontation and conflict’ (Javidan and Dastmalchian, 2003: 133) and the absence of institutional collectivism with the implication of an under-developed civil society. It is maintained that ‘due process either does not exist or is blatantly ignored’ (Javidan and Dastmalchian, 2003: 131). Iranian executives are said to be ‘persistent but unclear in terms of their demands’ (Javidan and Dastmalchian, 2003: 134). This dimensional approach also leads to rather banal statements such as ‘Being a member of a family and of a close group of friends is important’ (Javidan and Dastmalchian, 2003: 130). There are also intimations of classic orientalist tropes such as stagnation, inertia, backwardness, pre-modernism and authoritarianism as well as the more recent Islamophobic ones of militancy, extremism, fundamentalism and confrontation. We encounter other examples subsequently. An essentializing tendency to construct eternal cultural characteristics of Muslims was inherent to European Enlightenment thinking and has persisted in the construal of Muslim history. Such an orientalist approach to Islam impoverishes its rich diversity by producing an ‘essentializing caricature.’ (Sayyid, 1997: 32).

Another essentializing tendency is to use concepts such as ‘Islamic women’ as a category of cross-cultural analysis. For example, in Essers and Benschop’s (2009) collected life stories of 20 female entrepreneurs of Moroccan and Turkish origin living in the Netherlands, the women were determined a priori to belong to a homogeneous group identifiable before analysing their life stories. What is presumed to bind this group together is their ‘Islamic background’ (2009: 404), where Islam is presented as a ‘category of oppression in relation to gender and ethnicity’ (2009: 404). Hence these women are constituted homogenously as ‘Islamic women’. Conclusions about this small group of women are then attributed to Islamic women in general. However, such a move erases social and historical differences both among these women and between women across Islamic contexts. Furthermore, it does so in an orientalist fashion by portraying these women as ahistorically endowed with certain common traits, for example, having an uneasy relationship with their gender, ethnic and religious identities. Such a presentation ignores the ways in which these women have been differently positioned in history, materially and culturally and the differences in the lives they have lived. Furthermore, labelling them ‘Islamic women’ invokes stereotypical
essentialisms such that Islam is seen as problematic from a gender point of view. Their conclusion is that only those able to learn and digest the Western/modern ethos are able to ‘stretch the boundaries of what is allowed for female entrepreneurs in order to resist traditional, dogmatic interpretations of Islam’ (2009: 403).

Other orientalist biases are evident in the use of terms such as ‘traditional Islam’, ‘dogmatic Islam’ or ‘revolutionary Islam’, which are offered as explanatory devices for the attitudes and actions taken by different actors, and each carries particular connotational and essentializing baggage. Such terms are used as stable categories of analysis based on their assumed consistency and in the process there is a failure to situate particular Muslim groups within a specific socio-economic, political and historical milieu. In their article on the cultural politics of ‘Islamic fashion’ and a supposed ‘Islamic consumptionscape’, Sandikci and Ger (2001) use the categories ‘traditional Islamists’ and ‘modern Islamists’ (2001: 147). The former are associated with stereotypical and pre-modern aspects of Islamic culture such as the turban and the headscarf, the latter with ‘modern’ dress codes. However, modern actually equates to Western so that to be a modern Islamist is to be Western whereas, to be a traditional Islamist is to be stuck in the past. Binary constructions are apparent in the language and images used along with the stereotyping of the traditional and the modern. It is important to note here that this binary opposition is a critical part of the discourse of Othering since it works in a particular setting, such as fashion, as a manifestation of power relations between the North and the South.

Refracted through Western theoretical lenses

Epistemological occlusion of an Islamic worldview also takes place when aspects of Islamic management and organization are refracted through western theoretic, ideological and epistemological lenses. This has already been hinted at in noting the over-reliance on western sources in the literature and the presumed need to cite and locate in the Northern canon. Once again innumerable examples exist in the literature. Many articles are not only full of references to western literature, but the work is grounded in and driven by Northern epistemology, theory and method rather than any Islamic worldview. Again, we are compelled to use a few examples to illustrate.

A article by Bakhtari (1995) is a work clearly embedded within orthodox, Northern empiricism and epistemology. It is a study of the presumed effects of national culture on leadership style wherein, ‘The dependent variable was management style’ and the independent variables included ‘culture’ (Bakhtari, 1995: 103). A sample of 153 managers from the US was surveyed: 95 US-born, 58 were ‘Middle Eastern immigrant subjects … primarily of Arabic culture, but included many Persians and a few of Turkish background’ (Bakhtari, 1995: 103). However, only 4% did not consider themselves permanent residents of the USA and most had come to the USA between 10–20 years ago. Culture was not measured but was simply inferred from background demographics. It is presumed that management style can be measured and the Management Style Inventory (MSI), developed in the USA by McBer and Company (1980), is adopted. Quite apart from the embeddedness in Western theory and method, essentialisms and implied orientalisms are inherent again. These are rampant in the discussion of culture and exemplified in two tables representing the ‘specifics’ of ‘American’ and ‘Middle Eastern’ cultures (Bakhtari, 1995: 101–102) with statements such as: ‘Americans are achievers’, ‘Americans are competitive’, ‘Americans value cleanliness’ and ‘Middle Easterners are very conservative in risk taking’, ‘Middle Easterners are traditional’, ‘Middle Easterners value friendship’. The article has a classical, neo-positivist orientation and follows the hypothetico-deductive method. The discussion of culture is rudimentary, confined mainly to the table of stereotypical characteristics, some discussion of languages spoken at home, and
religious affiliation. Islam is very rudimentarily treated. Indeed, Islam/Islamic are only mentioned 13 times in total, each representing superficial and rather clichéd aspects of Islam such as the presumed commonality and general significance of Islam for peoples’ lives, the non-separation of the spiritual and the secular, gender relations, and traditions of consultation.

Another example is provided by some of the work of Ali of Indiana University at South Bend. Studies conducted by Ali and colleagues (Ali, 1988, 1992; Ali and Al-Owaihan, 2008) suggest that Arab managers are highly committed to an ‘Islamic work ethic’ for which he developed a scale (Ali, 1988). The scale was developed using Islamic sources and scholars, but was tested with a sample of 150 USA-based Arab students. Subsequent studies have examined the Islamic work ethic and its impact on human behaviour and economic development. Ali’s work offers an interesting example since he has championed the case for the inclusion of Islamic and Arabic management and organization within the Western academy longer and more consistently than almost anyone. His work is often nuanced and certainly at times constructed in full awareness of Islam and the alternative possibilities its worldview provides (e.g. Ali, 2006). However, the development of the Islamic Work Ethic Scale and associated work is located squarely within the paradigmatic orthodoxy of Northern MOK. It is constructed in relation to the central canon of western organization theory and pursues an epistemology and methodology that sits comfortably within the western academy.

In these and in many other articles in our review, there is significant dependence on western epistemology, theory and method. Such dependence reflects the concerns of the likes of Laubser, Alatas, Ibarro-Colado and Alvares in relation to intellectual imperialism and asymmetrical relations and dependencies in the global politics of knowledge discussed earlier. There is little indigenous theorizing or consideration of alternative epistemologies and methods, such as have become apparent elsewhere (e.g. Henry and Pene, 2001; Smith, 1999) and which not only interrogate the universalistic presumptions of orthodox Northern science, but provide grounds for an alternative, one grounded in a different ontology and epistemology (see also Alcadipani and Rosa, 2011; Ibarro-Colado, 2006). This enriches and broadens MOK and it is our view that Islam offers a similar opportunity if allowed a fuller voice within the field.

**Intellectual captivity**

It is clear, then, that in order to be accepted in the journals of the Northern academy, explanations of the South’s and Islam’s modes of business, organization and management seemingly need to be refracted through the theoretical lens of the North. There are processes of translation involved which further serve to occlude any alternative epistemology or worldview. However, sometimes there is more at stake than processes of translation. Some Southern scholars not only translate ideas into forms acceptable to the Northern academy, at times there is a more radical absorption of the North’s epistemology, knowledge systems and worldview such that the Southern scholar is held captive within it. These Northern systems are not merely taken on pragmatically, but are absorbed and valorized as preferred, better or truer ways of knowing. The consequence is that alternatives are fully occluded, and not merely through strategic choice, neglect or blinkeredness, but through devaluation. These are situations of absorption leading to what Alatas (1974) refers to as captured minds—wherein people are so imbued with the knowledge system of the North that they cannot find value in or be motivated to pursue indigenous alternatives. So captured, Southern scholars are restricted in their capacity to develop local research and theory or even address issues of local importance and relevance. Furthermore, they engage in work that reproduces the North’s knowledge systems. Gantman and Parker (2006) have documented some of these dynamics in the context
of MOS scholars in Argentina, particularly noting the dissemination and infusion of popularist managerialism through a part of the publishing machine. These dynamics echo Blaut’s (1993) assessment that Western-educated elites in Southern contexts are imbued in terms of economic and political thinking. They come to view the development of their countries as isomorphic with western models, leading historically to the maintenance of colonial structures and institutions, and under conditions of postcoloniality to still view development as dependent upon the adoption of Northern knowledge systems and its produce.

The structures of international academic knowledge production and dissemination in conjunction with academic performance regimes, further means that the South’s MOK scholars are seduced into producing for the North’s journals with the corollary that their research conforms to the North’s methodological parameters and refracted through its theoretical lenses. Their work participates in the production and reproduction of the North’s knowledge system and as Meriläinen and colleagues (2008) suggest, mimicking the practices of the academic centre serves to reaffirm and strengthen its hegemony. In addition to these intrusions, considerable numbers of the South’s MOS scholars are educated in the North. A consequence is that many are socialized into its theories, methods, values and assumptions and imbued with its knowledge systems; their research agendas and outcomes are informed by this.

Alatas (1977) had discussed the problem of ‘captive minds’ in relation to the South in general. In a similar vein, but focusing specifically on ‘Arab’ management thinking, Ali (1995) suggests that Arab management scholars can be divided into two groups, each containing three sub-categories. In the first are the categories of ‘palace servants, western imitators, and alienated scholars’. Of most interest to us are the western imitators who form the largest group. These scholars have most likely spent time studying abroad and Ali criticizes them, saying that their work is not original ‘merely a translation of Western theories’ and that they resort to the ‘easy collection and translation of foreign contributions instead of engaging in critical thinking’ (Ali, 1995: 13). Ali’s second group consists of the sub-categories of ‘Westernized’, ‘Arabized’, and ‘Islamicized’ scholars. The former, he says, attempt to ‘analyze and develop management in the area, adopting modes of Western thinking and practice’ (Ali, 1995: 14). The Arabicists are a newer group who have sought to develop MOK in ways relevant to ‘Arab culture’. However, although he sees this as a ‘step in the right direction’, they still ‘rely too heavily on Western orientations while attempting to ‘Arabize’ theory’ (Ali, 1995: 15). ‘Islamicized’ scholars have tried to Islamicize MOK by examining the use of Islamic principles and traditions in management and business. Ali maintains that such an examination leads to the revelation that leadership and administration in Arabic societies has not been conducted according to Islamic principles and this has been responsible, in part, for ‘cultural alienation and disorientation’ (Ali, 1995).

Our review revealed many Westernizers, some Arabicists, but very few genuine Islamicists. There are numerous examples of work resonant with the notions of ‘captive minds’, intellectual captivity, and Ali’s Westernized scholars. Our analysis revealed that the literature is almost totally informed by a Northern purview; from the questions asked, the theories and sources utilized, methods employed, modes of representation selected, and audiences aimed at. To illustrate, we can take a article by Dedoussis (2004) that compares the organizational cultures of universities in Japan, Saudi Arabia and Lebanon. Dedoussis, an ethnic Greek, was located at the American University of Beirut, but claimed to have had the ‘opportunity to observe and ‘live’ the organizational culture of each university for a relatively long period of time’ (Dedoussis, 2004: 20). The central hypothesis is that a relationship exists between national and organizational culture. The article cites a mix of sources, but all are from Western publications: the major theoretical source for organizational culture is Schein and for national culture, Hofstede. In terms of method, O’Reilly and colleagues’
Organization Profile is used in addition to a rather lose reliance on personal experience and observation and an informal interview schedule conducted by email. These are mixed methods to an extent, but with a clear neo-positivist component.

The article makes a number of statements that are problematic, again deploying essentialisms and orientalist tropes. For instance, drawing on Hofstede’s data and other cultural dimensions, it is oddly argued that ‘Arab countries and Japan are, in at least some important aspects, culturally similar’ (Dedoussis, 2004: 17). Further, although acknowledging the risks of assuming Arabic cultural homogeneity, he then states that Arab countries are ‘by and large, culturally homogenous’ (Dedoussis, 2004: 17). The adoption of the dimensionalizing of culture inevitably results in typical essentialisms: Arabic culture is collectivist, diffuse, affiliation oriented and the like. The use of Hofstede is noteworthy. His cultural dimensions are widely used as a basis for describing national cultures and a country’s dimensional positioning is used to assert differences in MOK-related phenomena. The availability of this framework often seems to drive scholars’ work, even though there is no country-specific data for ‘Arab’ countries, just Hofstede’s aggregated ‘Arabic’ grouping. Dedoussis deploys the Hofstede material in this manner even whilst discussing the cultural diversity within and between Arabic countries.

Another example is the article by Saeed et al. (2001) who developed an ‘Islamic’ framework of International Marketing Ethics. They argue that ‘at the heart of Islamic marketing is the principle of value maximization’ (2001: 127), but go on to imply that marketing can be Islamized and interpreted as a practice that can be performed to please God, almost devotionally. They claim that marketing ethics has resonance with Islam, but also that it is represented by ‘innate universal moral values in every human being’ (2001: 129). They further suggest that Islamic ethics, based on revelation, fits neatly within existing marketing ethics, based on self-interest—a rather unpalatable synthesis. A clear case has been made for the dominant marketing paradigm being neo-positivist (see Hunt, 2003) within which any transcendental aspects of humanity are anathema (see Becker and Barnes, 1961). There are arguments here that work to incorporate Islam and Islamic values into market and consumer capitalism, and make Islam reside within rational economic market mechanisms. There are even instances of a virtual commodification of Islam and its incorporation into branding and competitive positioning. For example, Wilson and Liu (2010) discuss the principle of Halal in terms of branding strategies and competitive advantage. Islamic practices and patterns of consumption, with their own spiritually-derived rules and standards, are subsumed under the principles of consumerism.

One final example is a article by Javidan and Dastmalchian (2003) which uses data from 300 Iranian middle managers for the GLOBE project to discuss the supposed relationship between Iranian cultural values and aspects of management and organizational behaviour. We firstly note that although the GLOBE project involved 150 international scholars from 61 ‘cultures’, it was conceived and developed by House in the US and is firmly within the positivist tradition of operationalizing culture through the use of surveys (House et al, 2004). Even Hofstede (2006) argues that it reflects a US hegemonic research effort. Javidan is a key figure in the GLOBE Project, being a Co-Principal Investigator and now GLOBE President and CEO. Both Javidan and Dastmalchian were born in Iran but educated in the West and are senior US academics. The article, then, is driven by mainstream Northern theory with strong ties to the work of Hofstede and US leadership theories. It follows a neo-positivist epistemology which assumes that constructs like culture and leadership can be measured and the results statistically manipulated, and sits squarely within the paradigmatic orthodoxy of Northern MOK. In terms of an audience, as the abstract makes clear, it is expressly aimed at ‘Western executives and corporations’. The extent to which the article is written from a Northern perspective and from within its knowledge systems is signified by a
deceptively simple statement in the abstract: ‘Little is currently known about the country …’ —referring to Iran. It is noteworthy that the article relies mainly on one Western-authored source for its discussion of Iranian history and culture. They performed cluster analysis on the data to find that although Iran is ‘geographically located in the Middle East and can be studied as a Middle Eastern country, its culture is similar to that of its eastern neighbours in South Asia’ (Hofstede, 2006: 130). As noted earlier, the article is replete with essentialisms.

Conclusion

In this article we have analysed and discussed the position and status of Islam within the Northern MOK-related literature following a survey of that literature. We have shown a relative under-representation and when represented significant systemic distortions. The discussion focused on three representational strategies/effects: persisting orientalism and essentialism; refraction through Northern epistemic, theoretic and methodological lenses and intellectual captivity. Specific illustrative examples were presented and discussed in each case. This situation is worrisome for the field given its international aspirations and the global significance of Islam. Of most concern in relation to this situation is Islam’s potential to offer an alternative worldview, epistemological platform and ethics through which to locate the theory and practice of MOK. Also of concern is the continued cultural and intellectual imperialism which persists in constituting asymmetries, dependency relations, and inequities which occlude, marginalize and silence much of the Global South in general and Islam in particular.

In view of this analysis and findings, the obvious question is what can be done to change the situation? There is only space here to sketch an outline and we can begin by suggesting that the question can be looked at from the perspective of the Northern academy and its scholars and communities, and it can be looked at from the perspective of Islamic scholars and the institutions of the South.

Taking the latter first, one response from Islamic scholars and institutions is to disengage and not participate in the North’s knowledge systems and institutions and to pursue Islamic MOK independently and within its own frame of reference and set of institutional arrangements. This is a position that might be endorsed by those such as Qutb (1964) who see a radical incommensurability between (Western) modernity and the principles of Islam. One can sympathize with such a position given history and the barriers inherent to contemporary structures. It is a somewhat reactionary position, however, and one that would seem both hard to sustain given the inter-dependencies attendant on the current order of things, and a missed opportunity for learning and betterment through engagement and cross-fertilization. Certainly, individual Islamic scholars already engaged in the profession would find such a trajectory difficult since all the signals they currently receive would suggest a different course of action. However, there is a need for Islamic and Southern scholars to create a space for a more autonomous approach, one freer from the dictates and logics of the Northern knowledge production system, and one more informed by an Islamic worldview and epistemology and more anchored to the local concerns and orientations of Islamic communities and enterprises. It is also incumbent on local institutions in Islamic contexts to facilitate that space through developing an appropriate and strong local institutional frame. For example: more resources and support need to be given to local universities and scholars to promote and pursue a more local and Islamic research agenda; PhD programs at the local level need to be supported so that scholars have options other than to go overseas for training; local universities do not need to follow the Northern performance regimes and only reward those publishing in so-called international journals; local networks of scholars with additional formalized events such as conferences.
and seminars can be fostered. All this requires to be reinforced by appropriate government policy, but local research councils can play a part by supporting and rewarding local, independent research. Local universities need to attend to their recruitment and progression strategies, rewarding indigenous theory development. These are practical steps and are further outlined in Jack and Westwood (2009). As with all things though, change requires both material adjustments and a change in mindset. A context and environment needs to be engendered which enables some Islamic scholars to resist intellectual captivity and have the confidence to pursue more autonomized intellectual inquiries rooted in their own cultural and intellectual traditions. All this can be done without severing ties with Northern MOK and its institutions: there are commonalities and opportunities for mutual learning.

We fully recognize that this is easy to say, but enormously difficult to enact. The weight of existing formations militates against progression in this manner. As our survey and assessments reveal, there is scant work that currently offers a genuine and thorough account of Islamic MOK. Hence, young scholars who would seek to pursue the task of a fully Islamic MOK are faced with a frightening bare terrain and scant support. They do, however, have a rich tradition of philosophy—including epistemology—and practice to draw upon. They also often face the additional problem that their own political environment is one beholden to Western interests and voicing alternative perspectives is difficult.

Looking at the question from a Northern position, the analysis suggests the need for greater inclusiveness within Northern-dominated MOS, one that provides a legitimate space for the articulation of a fully Islamic MOK informed by its own worldview and epistemology. Again potential solutions (which we can only gesture to here) include both material/institutional shifts and alterations in mindset, which calls for a greater open-mindedness and preparedness to engage with difference. It is important to recognize that in our critique we are not apportioning blame or even attributing intentionality. There are structural factors and questions of power-knowledge dynamics that account for the neglect and distorting effects that the literature reveals. Indeed, our analysis of the institutional frame is perhaps the most telling and it is there that the more practical steps can be taken to change things.

Turning firstly to the major academies, a positive shift will include a change in orientation and ethos so that a more genuinely international and all-inclusive approach is pursued. However, more concrete steps include: a) careful examination of mission and policy statements to ensure inclusiveness of the South and of Islam; b) greater proactivity and outreach in locating members from the South; c) greater proactivity and outreach in locating and appointing academy officials from the South; d) similar scrutiny and proactivity with respect to the journals that the academies support, for example in securing a wider range of editors and editorial board members; e) locating conferences and other events in the South and Islamic contexts; f) providing editorial and translation services; g) providing a portal for and facilitating genuine research partnerships; h) offering reduced prices for services and/or offering financial support (e.g. bursaries) to members from the South (adapted from Jack and Westwood, 2009: 292–293). Secondly, in terms of the publishing machine, which so impacts MOK materially, intellectually and ideologically there are again practical steps that can be taken to generate greater inclusiveness. In terms of textbooks, the whole business is dominated by the North’s publishing houses (Altbach and Hoshino, 1995). There is a difficult circuit to break here. There is a tendency in Southern universities to rely on the North’s textbooks. The provision of good local textbooks requires both the will to produce and material support. However, an initial barrier is often the lack of local content due to a deficiency of local theoretical frameworks. Locally-driven research is lacking because scholars are rewarded for publishing in international journals and meeting those expectations diverts activity...
away from the local. International publishing houses can become more open and sensitive in their editorial and publishing policies. More practically they can: establish more local and regional branch operations; recruit more commissioning editors from the South/Islamic contexts; outreach to locate Islamic writers; modify some of their copyright policies; offer editorial and translation services; publish in a wider range of languages. Local publishing houses can be established, but need local support. In terms of journals, some similar points can be made, for example with respect to editorial policy, editorial membership and support services. Again, localized journals are another option, but they again need support, particularly in terms of legitimacy and valorization by local institutions.

As we sought to demonstrate earlier in the article, Islam is too important to be excluded from MOK, deserves to be properly represented, and offers the potential for valuable alternatives in perspective, theory, ethics and practice. There is greater promise for all in open engagement with that potential.

Notes

1 ‘Global South’ is used instead of ‘Third World’ to designate the less-developed countries located primarily in the Southern hemisphere, whereas the term ‘Global North’ refers to the world’s wealthy, industrialized countries located primarily in the Northern hemisphere. According to the World Bank, Global South countries are home to 85% of the world’s population but only 20% of the globe’s wealth. After this first use we will use the shorthand forms—‘South’ and ‘North’. We are very conscious that this is heuristic shorthand that is not without its problems.

2 The USA figures are subject to much dispute and varying estimates, some even have a figure as high as 10 million.

3 Chairman, Muslim Council for Religious and Racial Harmony, UK

4 Examples of texts that fuel Islamophobia are legion in the Western media: e.g. Bawer, 2007; Bynum, 2011; McCarthy, 2010; Reilly, 2010; Schmidt and Olasky, 2004; Spencer, 2008.

5 Most are from the USA, Canada or selected European countries, there are one or two from Australasia or Singapore.

6 Defined in terms of having a population where more than 50% identified as Muslim (Pew Research Centre, 2009)

7 This excludes those relatively newly independent Turkic states of Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Tajikstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan that Wong-MingJi and Mir did not include in their review.

8 Determined by the stated institutional affiliation of at least one of the chief authors being outside of North America.

9 Oddly categorized as part of Asia.

10 Two universities in Japan and one each in Saudi Arabia and Lebanon.

11 *Halal* means allowed or permissible

12 Javidan was also elected to Business for Diplomatic Action, a non-profit group that seeks to combat anti-Americanism and improve the standing and reputation of the USA in the world. Dastmalchian is at the University of Victoria, Canada, and Javidan at the Thunderbird School of Global Management, USA.

13 Specifically, the Philippines, Malaysia, India, Indonesia and Thailand.

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