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## Publishing without betrayal: Critical scholarship meets mainstream journals

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## DISCUSSION

# Publishing without betrayal: Critical scholarship meets mainstream journals

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**Summary** In this paper, I discuss challenges critical scholars face with respect to publishing qualitative research in 'top tier' mainstream journal outlets. Relying on ideas and insights from postcolonial and feminist thinking, I discuss how these theoretical positions inform reading, writing, and reflexivity in the production of critical management scholarship. To this end, I use examples from reviewers' comments on work I've submitted to the *Academy of Management Journal* as well as conferences to demonstrate specifically the problematic assumptions that guide qualitative research expectations particularly in 'top tier' management outlets. Adopting a reflexive stance that recognizes the limits of individual agency, I suggest that engaging in interdisciplinarity across social science disciplines may promote critical and socially engaged scholarship as legitimate business knowledge.

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Those of us who stand outside the circle of this society's definition of acceptable women; those of us who have been forged in the crucibles of difference...know that survival is not an academic skill. It is learning how to stand alone, unpopular and sometimes reviled, and how to make common cause with those others identified as outside the structures in order to define and seek a world in which we can all flourish. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. And this fact is only threatening to those women who still define the

master's house as their only source of support. (Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, 1984)

Publishing academic work, especially in mainstream and 'top tier' journals, has become one of the main tenets of gaining tenure, securing research funding, and being recognized as an "expert" in a particular area in the North American scholarly context (see Adler & Harzing, 2009). Given these expectations, particularly as a condition of continued employment, what are the possibilities for dismantling the hegemony of the master's (theoretical) tools (Lorde, 1984) in management publications while espousing a critical research agenda? As a junior/tenure-track woman scholar attempting to 'achieve' these goals in a U.S. business school setting, publishing work that espouses critical dimensions has been and continues to be daunting. As Parker and Thomas (2011) suggest, critical work comes in many different forms and approaches depending on one's frameworks, aims, and institutional location. On broad terms, I understand critical organizational work as research that challenges existing orthodoxy in management

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theory and methods, and has implications for social change with respect to equity and inclusion. Guided by this notion of critical, I use it to describe my theoretical frameworks, methodology, and research aims arriving from postcolonial and feminist traditions.

In general, scholars working at the intersections of postcolonial and feminist thought call attention simultaneously to epistemology and materiality by bridging "feminist thinking and activism" to postcolonial concerns over representation (Lewis & Mills, 2003). Specifically, such scholars critique Western representations of Third World<sup>1</sup> subjects which render them silent and without agency (Bhavnani, 2004), highlight living and working conditions facing Third World women and men (Mohanty, 2003; Spivak, 1985a, 1985b, 1990), and raise concerns over subaltern agency or whether/how the subaltern can speak for themselves (Loomba, 1993; Spivak, 1988).

While there have been a growing number of scholars who voice how these intersections contribute to organization studies, these contributions are small in comparison to other critical approaches (i.e., postmodern and poststructuralist). Early postcolonial feminist contributions to organization studies critique representations of Hispanic women in management texts (Calás, 1992), examine the ethics of international development (Ferguson, 1996), demonstrate the "limits of cooperation" in Third World settings (Mir, Calás, & Smircich, 1999), and examine power relations between First and Third world academic women (Mendez & Wolf, 2001). More recently, scholars working at these intersections critique concepts of diversity (Mirchandani & Butler, 2006; see also Zanoni, Janssens, Benschop, & Nkomo, 2010), highlight gendered postcolonial subjectivities (Leonard, 2010), and raise concerns over reflexivity and subaltern agency in management research (Calás & Smircich, 2004, 2006; Özkazanc-Pan, in press). Given these concerns and guiding aims, how can scholars guided by postcolonial feminist aims and critical approaches more broadly publish research in mainstream journals? To clarify, mainstream journal ranking systems (Nkomo, 2009; Wilmott, 2011) and issues of rigor, relevance, and impact have already been examined and critiqued by a growing number of scholars (Bell, 2009; Thorpe, Eden, Bessant, & Ellwood, 2011).

In joining this ongoing debate, I'd like to focus on the specific challenges facing scholars who want to publish critical qualitative work. To clarify, I utilize an understanding of qualitative research as one that rejects the positivist approach to social science (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Morgan & Smircich, 1980) and instead deploys various traditions of inquiry to examine and address social problems (Creswell, 1998). Recently, qualitative research has become more acceptable in business academia and includes complex new approaches and methods (Cunliffe, 2011). Yet using qualitative methods on their own is not equivalent to conducting socially engaged research, or "research that holds itself ethically and politically accountable for its social consequences" (Harding & Norberg, 2005: p. 2010). My focus then is to engage discussion around qualitative research guided by this notion of criticality. To this end, how can

the epistemology, methodology, and research aims guiding critical works be made accessible to an audience who may not be familiar with reading and "writing differently"? (Grey & Sinclair, 2006). Simultaneously, how can researchers who are not versed in critical theories and approaches 'learn' them in order to engage in meaningful reviews and conversations within and across different academic communities?

Despite claims by top journals and conferences of being open to 'alternative' theoretical frameworks, reviews of papers that espouse critical approaches and postcolonial feminist aims in particular are still articulated through the norms and conventions dedicated to producing "positive science" (see Burrell & Morgan, 1979). That is, the production of scientific knowledge in the social sciences through concepts and methods associated with normal science including concerns over reliability, validity, and replication. Within this context, as long as critical approaches engage in "mimicry" (Bhabha, 1994a, 1994b) such that they resemble enough of mainstream positivist approaches but still contribute something different, they may be publishable. In effect, critical researchers are told to use the "master's [conceptual and methodological] tools" (Lorde, 1984) to build difference. As Spivak (1999) suggests, perhaps what is necessary is to show the limits of (Western) theoretical tools and intentionally misappropriate them (i.e., catathesis) in order to open up space for new meanings. Without this kind of critical engagement with existing normative approaches to conducting organizational research, there is no consideration over what 'reading' and 'writing' critical work should look like or an examination of how (Western) normal science knowledge production dominates many management publications (Fougère & Moulettes, 2009; Wong-Mingji & Mir, 1997). Moreover, there is little room to address reflexivity and its different modalities during fieldwork and writing (Alvesson, Hardy, & Harley, 2008). From a postcolonial feminist position, reflexivity can be understood as addressing power relations and positionality in the field (Sato, 2004) coupled with self-awareness about the role of the researcher in the constitution of knowledge (Khan, 2005; Lal, 1996). Without a clear understanding of its theoretical, epistemological, and methodological manifestations, reflexivity can be equated with self-reflection or worse yet, seen as a way to mitigate "researcher bias".

I believe these are concerns shared by other critical scholars regardless of their theoretical frameworks since the challenge, as articulated by the AMJ editor (Eden, 2003), is for critical scholars to follow the same rules guiding normal or positive science research to produce "good" critical research. Without a reflexive stance, there is no debate over the very production of knowledge and pursuit of science as political endeavors (Said, 1978) as researchers are forced, unnecessarily, to differentiate between "good politics" and "good science" (Harding, 2004). As such, attempting to publish critical pieces in mainstream 'top tier' journals in general can take extraordinary amounts of time and effort just to produce a faint shadow of the original paper submission. With these concerns in mind, I'd like to propose some ideas and suggestions to address challenges facing critical scholars with respect to having the opportunity to publish their work in mainstream outlets. My aim is to adopt a reflexive approach while clarifying my own critical position such that the ideas I present are not taken to be authoritative or prescriptive remarks with respect to publishing critical work.

<sup>1</sup> I use Third World to denote subjects in contrast to First World subjects. These conceptual divisions have also been considered through other labels such as the North/South and one-third/two-thirds worlds.

To this end, using examples as 'evidence' from editorial decisions and reviews, I voice concerns over reading, writing, and reflexivity with respect to critical qualitative research. My aim is to foster conversation around how critical scholars may challenge prescriptive approaches to qualitative methods that follows assumptions of "normal science" without consideration of the critical epistemology guiding the research or an understanding of what constitutes reflexivity. As one way to address these challenges, I discuss interdisciplinarity or the reliance on multiple academic disciplines to conceptualize social phenomena as a means of overcoming theory and research silos in organizational scholarship. Such an approach is necessary given the complex and contradictory aspects of globalization that underlie contemporary organizational and management research. Interdisciplinarity can be one way for non-critical scholars to become aware of how their work connects to broader conversations in the social sciences. Such an engagement beyond traditional business boundaries may allow non-critical gatekeepers, particularly of top-tier business journals, to become aware of how organizational research can be conceptualized "differently".

### From reading critical work to reading critically

Many journals show interest in encouraging and publishing new approaches to study various dimensions of business and organizations. Despite this aim, can editors and reviewers alike read critical submissions, whose theoretical foundations challenge the very concepts they want examined, as legitimate contributions to organizational knowledge? To expand on this notion of reading critical work, I include the below excerpt from 2011 call for papers in the *Academy of Management Journal* (AMJ) for a special issue on relational pluralism:

We define relational pluralism as the extent to which a focal entity (whether a person, a team, or an organization) derives its meaning and possibility of action from relations with other entities. . . We are interested in work at different levels and work that derives from psychological, sociological, economic and other traditions. Relevant theoretical perspectives that explore relational pluralism could include social identity theory, distinctiveness theory, leader-member exchange theory, institutional theory, resource dependence theory, relational demography, the resource based view of the firm, and social network theory. Relevant methods could range from qualitative (participant observation, interviews, case studies) to quantitative (analysis of text, survey or archival data). We particularly welcome combinations of methods (e.g., the use of diary data together with social network analysis) in order to capture relevant phenomena such as the emergence of multiplex relations. (Gulati, Kilduff, Li, Shipilov, & Tsai, 2011)

Using a postcolonial feminist framework, the paper I submitted to this special issue examined the production of hybrid identities in Turkish and Turkish-American international entrepreneurs as a means of understanding how individuals create a sense of self through their encounters with

'Others'. As a Turkish and Turkish-American woman situated in a U.S. business school, the study underscored my own questions over shifting identities under globalization, and the constitution of selves and identities through encounters between West and Rest or the U.S. and Turkey. Specifically, the research framework offered hybridity as a relational approach to the study of mobile people under globalization and engaged in auto-ethnographic and ethnographic fieldwork as means to uncover novel notions of self. As such, hybridity redirected the study of identity by offering a historically situated relational approach to the study of self and simultaneously acknowledged how individuals may resist culturally and psychologically imposed identities on them (i.e., a culturally 'pure' Turkish versus hybrid self). Ultimately, the theoretical framing of my research through hybridity and its extant critique of studying identity based on Western humanist cognitive self were at odds with relational pluralism as conceptualized by the guest editors.

Below, I share the e-mailed response from the corresponding AMJ special issue editor with regard to my submission:

Unfortunately, I will not be able to enter your manuscript into our full double-blind review process, because it falls outside the mission of the special research forum. Your paper does not build theory of relational pluralism because there are no social exchange relationships within your paper from which the identities of actors might emerge. (Guest editor, AMJ special issue)

Reading my submission with respect to the call for papers and the editorial response raises concerns for a junior critical scholar like myself whose ambitions to publish in 'top tier' mainstream journals results in confusion and frustration. I could assume that the editors simply "did not understand" my work and that my only recourse is to publish in those journals that are explicitly open to critical traditions.

Yet this would be defeatist and end possible conversations across institutionalized divides between critical scholars and those who do not identify themselves as such (Adler, 2008). Rather, a reflexive approach requires reconsideration of the "rules of recognition" (Bhabha, 1994b) or how we recognize what gets called "good" theory and research in organizational work. The issue is not simply how to read critical work but also how to read critically. While reading (and by extension judging) critical qualitative work, and theory in general, may indeed be difficult or even impossible for non-critical scholars, reading critically is an active process that requires understanding of the guiding philosophy and aims of the research. Reading critically entails acknowledgment of and discussion around the meta-theoretical assumptions that underlie various different theories or frames for understanding the social world. Understanding how to read critically is a different approach than 'choosing' theory to fit the phenomenon and is an onus that should be shared by *all* scholars no matter their intellectual position. It requires understanding how theories end up "worlding the world" (Spivak, 1990), or (re)producing a particular view of the world as *the* epistemological authority such that other views are marginalized in relation to it. The intersections of postcolonial and feminist positions highlight this notion of criticality through notions of knowledge production: What constitutes knowledge? How is it constituted and by whom? Who benefits from particular approaches and who is silenced or marginalized? Reading



critically then is a simultaneously reflexive reading in terms of understanding one's own assumptions and those that guide the work under review.

Using the above rejection as my example to expand on this idea, the AMJ special issue editors decided that hybridity was not equivalent to relational pluralism. Put differently, what became recognized and called relational pluralism was not equivalent to hybridity. Hybridity challenges the "rules of recognition", or the notion of self and identity in this case, on which social exchanges and thus, relational pluralism are based. Reading critically would necessitate uncovering the rules of recognition that determine that something is or is not relational pluralism. That is, an understanding of what assumptions guide the concept of relational pluralism with respect to ontology, epistemology, and the nature of man (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Such a reading by the editors would have (hopefully) fostered a conversation around how the notion of relational pluralism already assumes a particular kind of social exchange. Specifically, an exchange predicated upon Western psychology's concept of self (i.e., based on rationality and cognition). Despite claims that scholars could investigate these social exchanges through a variety of theoretical frameworks as outlined above by the special issue editors, these approaches do not necessarily offer alternative ways to investigate relational pluralism.

To clarify, while these above theories (e.g., social identity theory and relational demography) may seem different from each other, they share fundamental assumptions with regard to their view of the social world: ontological realism and epistemological positivism (see Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Thus, while their Western philosophical foundations may be the same, these approaches can still be critical if they are voiced with respect to gender, race/ethnicity, class, and power relations and challenge existing assumptions with regard to social relationships. However, relational pluralism as conceptualized above does not aim to foster such a conversation. Rather, the special issue editors reproduce hegemony of Western concepts around self and identity despite calling for new avenues of research into exchange relationships between and among people. By already suggesting which theories and approaches would be appropriate for studying relational pluralism, there was no possibility for postcoloniality and feminist positions to inform and challenge the very concept. Ultimately, there was no way for me to voice an alternative critical approach to the study of self and identity within the confines of the AMJ special issue. Within the context of publishing critical qualitative work, the challenge of "reading" is further complicated by the challenge of writing.

To clarify, even if/when editors send out such papers for external review, they may end up sending them to "qualitative experts". At first, such an approach may make sense such that those who have carried out qualitative work are chosen to read/judge another example of it. The "qualitative turn" so to speak has also found resonance within AMJ but the conversation still centers how to determine methodological rigor—the answer to this question as put forth by AMJ editors Bansal and Corley (2011: p. 236) is to offer "thick descriptions" (i.e., Geertz, 1973) as a means of ensuring transparency and discussing the "who, what, where, when, and how" such that readers can "connect raw data to theoretical insight". Yet this approach, which is a conversation around how to do qualitative work, may end up choosing

individuals who are "experts" on methods rather than those reviewers who are able to read theory and epistemology critically *and then* decide if the methodology follows them. The challenge in writing postcolonial feminist qualitative work is how to 'get it passed' through editors and reviewers who may read such work as simply another *qualitative* study without attending to the critical constructivist epistemology guiding the research. That is, critical work may be understood through its methods rather than its guiding theory, and ethical and political aims. Admittedly, writing critical work must do so without "complacency" in terms of the audience for whom it is written: not all readers are critical "insiders" (Adler, 2008). Yet it should also not have to be written for a broader non-critical audience by betraying the very ethical and political concerns it aims to address. Next, I examine this challenge using another example of a rejection and reviewer comments by focusing on a paper submitted to the 2011 Academy of Management (AOM) conference in San Antonio, Texas.

In general, papers submitted to these AOM conferences can be a good way for scholars to get feedback and reviews as they continue developing papers in hopes of publishing them. Moreover, submitting critically positioned papers to conference streams that favor more mainstream approaches can be informative in elucidating how such a paper might be received by external reviewers and readers if it were to be submitted to top-tier journals. Next, I share the outcome of this approach with respect to postcolonial feminist concerns around ethics.

### Writing critical work: is there a need for an ethical compromise?

Doing critical research, particularly research based on postcolonial feminist agendas, requires an ethico-political commitment to dismantling hegemonic regimes of representation and knowledge while simultaneously attending to material consequences of gendered globalization processes through writing and activism (Mohanty, 2003). One route would be to perhaps submit to the AOM conference divisions, such as the critical management studies (CMS), that are more explicit in their aims of voicing critical perspectives related to a variety of organizational issues. However, what happens when scholars such as myself submit to divisions, such as entrepreneurship (ENT), which adopt more mainstream theories and approaches in their examination of business activities? Below, I share reviewers' comments on an earlier version of the hybridity paper that I submitted to the entrepreneurship division of the Academy of Management conference in 2011:

It has been unusually difficult to write a review of this paper, for reasons that reflect a fundamental challenge that the author has to resolve. . . The author argues that we need to have an ethnographic approach to study identity formation in international entrepreneurs, but does not provide a compelling reason for why that is important. . . the author does not convince the reader of why we should care about this, what we are missing by not understanding the processes she (the author reveals she is a woman) seeks to study, or why our knowledge about international entrepreneurship is flawed without it. . . The lack of a clear puzzle and a clear structure was most

salient in the presentation of the data. . . The *raison d'être* of ethnographic work is to uncover the mechanisms that render a puzzling pattern understandable. This means presenting the puzzle, highlighting what is missing or difficult to understand, and then presenting the 'view from below' to clarify the real mechanism driving the issues. (Reviewer comments from ENT division paper submission, 2011)

The ENT division rejected my paper despite two favorable reviews in addition to the above negative review. Based on this review, which seems to have "counted" more than the two positive ones, what is required of me is to write a paper that follows a gap-spotting approach and ultimately, in my view, betrays the very ethical and political commitments which guide my work as a postcolonial feminist scholar. As a Turkish-American woman scholar in a U.S.-business school setting, my research aims with this paper include addressing issues of Western cultural hegemony, processes of voicing/silencing in identity formation, and representation with respect to the 'non-West'. Yet the reviewer does not consider these as relevant when she suggests I identify "what is missing" in the international entrepreneurship literature and understands the aims of the paper as addressing a methods problem when s/he states, "The author argues we need to have an ethnographic approach". Writing such a paper would privilege method over critical aims and prohibit the kind of theoretical critique necessary to redirect Western notions of self that are replicated in the study of cultural "Others" in international entrepreneurship. Such a paper would end up reproducing the gap-spotting rather than the "assumption-challenging" approach to formulating research questions and agendas (Sandberg & Alvesson, 2011). When the incremental accumulation of knowledge through gap-spotting, a hallmark of normal-science knowledge production, is seen as the norm in organization studies, what possibilities and opportunities are there for making a contribution through critical approaches? Given that the epistemology of normal science as deployed by organizational scholars has already been critiqued through postmodern and poststructuralist frameworks (Alvesson & Deetz, 2006; Calás & Smircich, 1999), has it become "easier" for us junior critical feminist scholars to make inroads into 'top tier' journals? The answer is not necessarily as there is still a paucity of feminist scholarship in organization studies particularly in respect to approaches that employ transnational and postcolonial feminist frameworks (Calás & Smircich, 2006, 2011).

With this in mind, critical work at the intersections of postcolonial and feminist thought need to make explicit the assumptions they challenge and why challenging these assumptions is important with respect to ethical, political, and activist aims. In effect, we need to state/write explicitly how the "assumption-challenging" approach is about problematizing the norms and conventions of *theorizing* as they exist in mainstream business academia rather than just critiquing a particular theory or method. This can be challenging given 'top tier' empirical journals may require critical scholars to forgo the complex theoretical and methodological write-up in lieu of a stylized methods and analysis section disconnected from broader social relevance and implications.

For example, the recent Publishing in AMJ editorial series aim to "give suggestions and advice for improving the quality

of submissions to the Journal" and offer "bumper to bumper" coverage, with installments ranging from topic choice to crafting a Discussion section" (2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2011d, 2012a, 2012b). In addition, AMJ's information for contributors suggests scholars examine "compelling management issues" and that "authors should make evident the contributions of specialized research to *general* management theory and practice, should avoid jargon, and should define specialized terms and analytic techniques" (AMJ website, 2012c).

Given these rather formulaic suggestions and guidelines, a postcolonial feminist research agenda would be understood as specialized since it focuses explicitly on local strategies and struggles of Turkish and Turkish-American international entrepreneurs in terms of identity formation processes. My intention is not to generalize to 'other cultures' but rather, to discuss how the findings expose the challenges faced by cultural 'Others' in the context of West/Rest relations with respect to international enterprise activities under globalization. Forcing me to come up with a *general* managerial implication or address why this is a compelling *management* issue requires relinquishing the ethical and political aims I adopt and dictates which/whose knowledge will be considered a legitimate contribution to management and organizational theory in a global context (Ozkazanc-Pan, 2008). Conceptually, this means empirical contributions and implications are considered separate from theory and theorizing. The expectations with respect to writing are a conundrum: a detached description of methods and professing limitations are seen as rigor but researchers are somehow expected to have insights as to implications and future research. Such expectations, as adopted by 'top tier' empirical journals such as AMJ, separate the actual research from its connection to "good theory" and theorizing in management and organization fields (Bacharach, 1989; Corley & Gioia, 2011; Kilduff, 2006; Reed, 2006; Whetten, 1989). From a postcolonial feminist framework, the expectation that the data and discussion are conceptually separate from the very theories and theorizing that produced the research in the first place is specious. I discuss this point next under the concept of reflexivity.

## Doing reflexivity

Reflexivity arriving out of postcolonial feminist positions requires "erasing the boundaries between theory, methodology, and political practice" (Lal, 1996: p. 123) such that theorizing, fieldwork, and writing are part and parcel of a socially committed research agenda. That is, reflexivity requires turning the gaze back on one's self during the research process as well as during the analysis and writing stages by addressing power and positionality between researcher and "subjects". This notion of reflexivity requires acknowledging the "politics of evidence" (Denzin & Giarina, 2008) or voicing what I pay attention to and how I pay attention to it in terms of what becomes called data. Questions such as "for whom do 'we' produce knowledge?" and "what are the consequences of such claims of knowledge?" arriving out of postcolonial and feminist concerns set apart postcolonial feminist fieldwork as a political project from being simply a *qualitative* approach to fieldwork.

In the context of organizational scholarship, postcolonial feminist reflexivity means turning the gaze back on the

organizational field itself in terms of questioning the norms guiding academic research in the business and management field when these conventions see the researcher as a source of "bias". Thus, to engage in a research project that is meaningful and connected socially, culturally, and politically to the researcher becomes quite problematic. This was the case for my own research project as my aim was to voice and dismantle hegemonic regimes of representation produced through the Western discourse of entrepreneurship deployed internationally under the guise of "international" management. Using Turkish entrepreneurs as my exemplar, I wanted to demonstrate how this U.S.-based discourse could efface or colonize identities in the context of historic West/Rest relations continuing under contemporary forms of globalization. Thus, while Turkey and the U.S. do not have a colonial relationship, postcolonial and feminist lenses illuminate the processes through which Western hegemonic discourses and practices with regard to entrepreneurship are produced and how they are challenged by entrepreneurs deploying novel notions of identity (i.e., hybridity). With this in mind, I share below further reviewers' comments from the hybridity paper submitted to the 2011 AOM conference ENT division:

In terms of data selection, the author needs to have a clearer discussion on why the individuals who were interviewed can best illuminate the issues (empirical or theoretical) at stake. There needs to be a clearer discussion on selection biases and on the 'criticality' of the cases chosen—given that there is basically no 'matching' case... The discussion on the author's personal connection to the phenomenon and her involvement with the study subjects seems, in my view, out of place, as is the description of 'entering the field'. The field access, data collection, data analysis, and methodology sections should be cut to a fourth of its current length. (Reviewer comments from ENT division paper submission, 2011)

Similarly, another reviewer of the paper suggests the following: "the respondent group is heavily skewed in the direction of one culture" (Reviewer comments from ENT division paper submission, 2011).

Both these comments highlight how researcher and subjects are conceptualized as separate such that any relationship between them is seen as either inappropriate (i.e., bias) or skewing the data. From a postcolonial feminist perspective, this separation is conceptually problematic since the very production of knowledge about and with subjects requires construction of the "field" in fieldwork (Aggarwal, 2000; Visweswaran, 1997). Reflexivity, from this perspective, requires acknowledgement of or self-awareness in how the researcher constitutes the field, the subjects, enacts the research aims in fieldwork settings, and gives 'voice' to findings through writing. Despite the label of reflexivity, not all critical scholars share this above conceptualization. That is, how reflexivity 'gets done' in the field and in writing depends on favored theoretical positions of scholars and can signal divides between critical scholars. Thus, scholars such as myself who work at the intersections of postcolonial and feminist positions may find themselves at odds with not only mainstream researchers but with other critical scholars as well.

To this end, while attending the 2011 European Group for Organization Studies (EGOS) conference in Sweden, reflexivity emerged as self-reflection during research rather than

necessarily self-awareness with respect to power relations and agency in the production of knowledge during my conversations with critical scholars located in European business schools. This concept of reflexivity was quite different than the one I had espoused and while both these approaches may be considered critical, they are not critical in the same way. Reflexivity arriving out of postcolonial and feminist intersections raises questions of power relations, positionality, and subaltern agency (Alcade, 2007; Patai, 1991) particularly within management research (Özkazanç-Pan, *in press*). Thus, doing reflexivity from this framework involves challenging the separation between researcher, subjects, and data assumed by mainstream researchers *and* writing for other critical scholars who may not share the same approach. The challenge then is how to conduct and write research that does not replicate the researcher/subject hierarchy and power relations under the guise of critical research (see Wray-Bliss, 2003). Postcolonial feminist frameworks acknowledge this problematic aspect of reflexive research by speaking directly to notions of subaltern agency: how to produce research with 'Third World' subjects rather than about them (Spivak, 1985b, 1996).

Reflexivity and subaltern agency then are not only relevant to addressing Third World subjects but offer systematic examination of the ways in which critical voices are virtually absent from 'top tier' management journals or how such voices have become subalternized. To clarify, particular critical frameworks (i.e., postcolonial and transnational feminist) that challenge mainstream *and* favored or fashionable critical approaches may become rendered subaltern by both. These include focusing solely on discourse and discourse analysis without addressing material and structural aspects of hegemonies, inequalities, and so forth. Consequently, the question is how to write-back to both mainstream and other critical researchers so as to engage in dialogue and disavow the subaltern position. To this end, the spaces in which the "subaltern" can write-back are varied. They include the articles themselves, our responses to editors' and reviewers' comments, and the strategic ways in which we frame our critical research questions and agendas without following the formulaic guidelines required of non-critical work. For me, these acts constitute reflexivity and resistance to hegemonic forms of academic warrant that dictate what is or is not 'legitimate' critical work. My aim with these acts is to perhaps offer redirection in the ways we read, write, and produce knowledge as management scholars.

### Learning from others: considerations for a dialogue

As a junior woman scholar, my aims here were to speak to and about the challenges I faced and continue to face in writing postcolonial feminist/critical research while being situated in a U.S.-business school setting. While I am fortunate to have colleagues and peers in my department and broader institution who espouse similar critical views and activist aims, I still face the challenge of publishing and editors and reviewers who do not necessarily share such views or aims. Thus, my strategy is to write without jargon to convey complex ideas, write without pretense, and write without betraying the guiding ethical and political aims of research projects. One



way to achieve this is through interdisciplinarity or the practice of 'reading' and 'writing' beyond one's own disciplinary boundaries to produce socially engaged organizational scholarship. Rather than an integrative notion of interdisciplinarity that attempts to "synthesize" knowledge from various disciplines, I understand this practice in a similar vein to neo-disciplinarity (Organization editors, 2003) and hybrid disciplines (Czarniawska, 2003) such that knowledge inhabits a new third or liminal space between disciplines. In order for this approach to foster dialogue between and among various scholars, reflexive considerations around educating and training organizational scholars are necessary. Reading current debates and conversations across social science fields can offer management and organizational scholars new ways of theorizing and researching beyond their own disciplinary training.

For example, as a discipline, anthropology adopted a reflexive stance when starting in the mid-1980s, scholars challenged existing notions of the etic/emic split and attended to the role of the researcher in ethnographic fieldwork (i.e., Clifford (1992); Clifford & Marcus's *Writing Culture*; Clifford's *Traveling Cultures*; more recently, Holmes & Marcus, 2005). These concerns were further complicated by feminist approaches to anthropology that attended to power relations and positionality (i.e., Behar & Gordon's *Women Writing Culture*). Yet as I suggested in the previous section, "good" qualitative research in management is still conceptualized through the conventions of an old anthropological approach to fieldwork that heralds thick-descriptions (e.g., Geertz, 1973). The reflexive turn in anthropology has found resonance within organization studies (see Calás & Smircich, 1999) but has yet to be realized in the various different 'divisions' of management scholarship, such as entrepreneurship, international management, and so forth.

Failure to engage in these critical conversations around the constitution of research continues to perpetuate hegemonic structures of "inequality and disadvantage" in the academic labor process (Ozbilgin, 2009). It also contributes to researching difference/differently through sameness and does not 'dismantle the master's [theoretical] house' (Lorde, 1984) as it heralds normal science conventions for the production of critical research. To this end, interdisciplinarity can expand upon the formulaic approach to socially engaged research that plagues theorizing and publication in the management field. This approach can be one way to create conversations across research silos as critical and non-critical scholars alike continue to debate the responsibilities of management scholars with respect to "political issues across the globe" (Dunne, Harney, & Parker, 2008). As such, perhaps the line between critical and non-critical is tenuous and defined through the aims of the researcher rather than necessarily the theories they deploy. This makes Grey's (2007) suggestion of "engagement" quiet relevant: we need to engage with colleagues who may not acknowledge or recognize critical voices as valid contributions to management knowledge in order to achieve the very ethical and political aims we hold dear.

In terms of publishing in 'top tier' management journals, this requires feminist praxis or joining theory and practice. Rather than feel disenfranchised from a publication system that values myopic managerialist contributions or dictates the form of research, as critical scholars we need to become

change agents through activism related to 'top tier' (mainstream) management journals. Ultimately, we have to (mis-)appropriate the "master's tools" through catachresis (Spivak, 1985a, 1985b) since dismantling the "house" is not necessarily possible. This might entail becoming editorial board members and putting together special issues to showcase critical research in mainstream journals. Such issues could adopt an interdisciplinary approach and focus on broad themes (e.g., social movements; gender, work, and globalization; postcoloniality and transnationalism) in order to demonstrate the variety and quality of socially engaged research on its own terms. In my humble opinion, this is one way for critical scholars to enter the politics of mainstream academic publishing and foster dialogue among a broader community of organizational scholars.

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