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Postcolonial feminist analysis of high-technology entrepreneuring

High-technology
entrepreneuring

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155

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine identity formation and networking practices relevant for high-technology entrepreneuring or the enactment of entrepreneurship in Silicon Valley by Turkish business people.

Design/methodology/approach – Guided by postcolonial feminist frameworks, the author conducted a combination of ethnographic and auto-ethnographic fieldwork at high-technology conferences in Silicon Valley by focussing on talk and text as relevant for understanding entrepreneuring. Through a reflexive stance, the author analyzed observations, conversations, and experiences inclusive of her own positionality during the research process as they related to entrepreneurial identity formation and networking.

Findings – During business networking conferences taking place among Turkish business people in Silicon Valley, women and older males became marginalized through the emergence of a hegemonic masculinity associated with young Turkish male entrepreneurs. In addition, local context impacted whether and how actors engaged in practices that produced marginalization and resistance simultaneously.

Originality/value – The research is of value for scholars interested in understanding how identity formation and networking in high-technology entrepreneuring take place through gendered practices and ideas. Scholars interested in deploying postcolonial feminist perspectives will also benefit by understanding how key analytic tools and research methods from these lenses can be used for conducting fieldwork in other contexts.

Keywords Gender, Entrepreneurship, Identity, Postcolonial, Feminist, High-technology

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

High-technology entrepreneurship associated with Silicon Valley is made possible through a nexus of hard-working and educated entrepreneurs (i.e. science and engineering degrees), market institutions (i.e. venture capital), and intellectual labor (i.e. innovation, creativity). In effect, the explanation for how high-technology entrepreneurship happens is that entrepreneurial traits and abilities are coupled with the extraordinary labor, financial, and intellectual resources, capabilities, and institutions found in the Silicon Valley area (Adams, 2005; Kenney, 2000; Lee *et al.*, 2000; Sydel, 2012). At least so goes the Silicon Valley start-up story whose “mythic” hero is based on the experiences of young (white) male engineers and computer scientists.

Even more nuanced and “inclusive” approaches to the study of high-technology entrepreneurship, such as those that examine experiences of women-owned high-technology start-ups (Mayer, 2008) rely on gender categories (women and men) in order to determine if differences exist (Aspray and Cohoon, 2007). In effect, these approaches neither acknowledge gendered assumptions in entrepreneurship theory and research (Ahl, 2006; Ahl and Marlow, 2012; Bird and Brush, 2002; Bruni *et al.*, 2004; Lewis, 2006; Rouse *et al.*, 2013) nor consider how gender relations and identities are relevant to entrepreneuring or the enactment of entrepreneurship through



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participative social actions and interactions (Johannisson, 2011) within the context of high-technology work.

Within this vein, a growing number of scholars have examined the ways gender and technology intersect (Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2007; Wajcman, 2007) including the gendered production of software “expertise” (Ruiz Ben, 2007), gendered work ideals in information technology firms (Peterson, 2007), and gendering of social networks in the “knowledge” society (Walby, 2011). These contributions within the broader critical entrepreneurship literature (see Tedmanson *et al.*, 2012), raise concerns over equality in the face of continued gender stratification in the information technology field (Koput and Gutek, 2011) as women struggle toward inclusion in the very activities, such as networking, that define high-technology entrepreneuring.

Despite these important contributions from feminist and critical scholars, there is a dearth of studies that examine gender and technology entrepreneuring in relation to globalization processes including the mobility of people across a variety of borders. Arriving out of postcolonial feminist perspectives, one important area of consideration within this context is entrepreneuring by non-westerners in the “West” as they aim to have a legitimate “voice” in high technology. Who speaks for and about high-technology entrepreneurship and how do individuals (co)construct their entrepreneurial identities on gendered terms during encounters between “West” and “Rest”[1] in the space of high-technology entrepreneuring?

To examine these questions, I focussed on Turkish business people and their enactment of entrepreneurship in Silicon Valley. Based on a larger ethnographic research project on global mobility and the formation of entrepreneurial selves, my focus here is to understand how gender relations are relevant to the ways Turkish business people enact entrepreneurship order to speak back as “legitimate voices” in high technology in Silicon Valley. Understanding the processes, practices, and ideologies relevant to high-technology entrepreneurship in the specific local contexts they occur is key for the “formulation of autonomous, geographically, historically, and culturally grounded feminist concerns and strategies” (Mohanty, 1991, p. 51) that can be enacted in order to resist and challenge gendered entrepreneuring.

Despite these aims, seeing agency and resistance is complicated under postcolonial feminist premises as “speaking back” issues requires engagement with researcher reflexivity, power, and positionality in the field (Sato, 2004). Who defines what constitutes agency and resistance during fieldwork? Beyond these concerns, how individuals engage in resistance and whether such localized strategies can eventually lead to inclusion and gender equality in high-technology entrepreneuring merit discussion. To address these issues in relation to my research, I articulate the guiding assumptions of postcolonial and feminist frameworks with respect to epistemology, identities, and reflexivity.

Postcolonial and feminist intersections: gender, identity formation, and reflexivity

In general, postcolonial frameworks attend to questions of subjectivity and knowledge production with respect to representations of the non-west and non-westerner in western texts (Loomba, 1998/2005). In this sense, postcolonial approaches, particularly those that deploy textual analyses and focus on language, embark upon critique of and recovery from western knowledge production endeavors on and about the non-west (Said, 1978, 1991). More importantly, such approaches speak to how encounters played out in social, cultural, and political spheres between the West and “Rest” can lead to the colonization of non-western notions of self-hood under cultural labels imposed upon

them through western approaches to knowledge (Said, 1978; Bhabha, 1994). However, attempts to “recover” knowledge that may have been effaced under colonizing forms of western knowledge and practices are precarious at best as notions such as “truth” and “authentic self” are contested ideas under postcolonial premises (Bhabha, 1994).

In effect, postcoloniality attends to concerns over what constitutes knowledge and ways of knowing with respect to how “identities matter in practices of knowing” (Alcoff, 2010, p. 156). Put differently, postcolonial approaches highlight how “ways of knowing” (i.e. epistemology of knowledge) enable particular forms of identity to take shape as people understand themselves and others through historically grounded relations of gender, race, class, and power (Mohanty, 2003; Spivak, 1985). In this sense, postcoloniality adopts a constructivist approach to identity such that identities are produced through language and are relations of difference rather than properties of individuals (Felski, 1999).

Feminist inscriptions into postcolonial critique attend to gender and incorporate reflexivity in order to interrupt representations of the “Third World” as a unitary cultural place (Narayan, 2000). This approach is made necessary by western feminist lenses and their inability to address the specific historical, socio-economic, and geo-political realities faced by postcolonial subjects (Lewis and Mills, 2003; Mohanty, 2003; Narayan, 1997). Reflexivity allows for recognition of differences in how gender relations take place within various contexts, and concurrently to recover knowledge that may have been effaced. However, resisting hegemonic forms of representation and recovering what may have been marginalized under unitary labels, such as “Turkish women,” are challenging acts that may end up reproducing the very hegemonic forms of knowing they aim to dismantle (Spivak, 1988). Specifically, by speaking back from a position deemed “silent” or “oppressed,” an individual may come to represent all “those” people and thus be put “back” in his/her place, textually and materially. Thus, reflexivity based on these premises as a means for recovery and resistance is not an innocent act of retrieving “lost knowledge” by the researcher.

Rather, reflexivity based on feminist frameworks is necessarily an ethico-political intervention (see Ferguson, 2000) that “unseats” knowing difference “from a position of privilege” that has long been afforded the researcher (Felski, 1999, p. 12). This intervention implicates the researcher, who is in effect, writing back with and for the postcolonial subject. Moreover, it requires examination of relationships among people such that “diverse renderings of domination and subordination, as well as negotiations and contestations of authority” are recognized in their constitution of “dominant and subaltern identities” (Dube, 2010, p. 129) during encounters between Turkish business people in the space of high-technology entrepreneurship.

While subalternity has its roots in Gramsci’s (1971) *subalterno*, the Subaltern studies group (i.e. Ranajit Guha) deployed it to examine subordination of people through race, class and so forth in (post) colonial South East Asia. Spivak further developed this concept through a sustained engagement with gender such that the “subaltern” became those people embedded in the gendered global division of labor and beyond the representational reach of both western and Third World academics (Guha and Spivak, 1988; Spivak, 1987, 1988, 1990, 1996, 1999). “The subaltern” can be deployed to interrupt and question dominant subject positions, such as the “high-technology entrepreneur” and, through it, inquire into the formation of subjectivities and various forms of subordination with respect to gender as they take shape during encounters among people embedded in different contexts. Understanding

how gender subalternity takes place can highlight processes through which women become marginalized in high-technology entrepreneurship (Ozkazanc-Pan, 2012) and whether resistance to such processes is possible.

To this end, I studied Turkish business people in their endeavors to participate in high-technology entrepreneuring in Silicon Valley by voicing themselves as knowledgeable in entrepreneurship (identity formation) and engaging in business networking. Next, I discuss ethnographic and auto-ethnographic fieldwork methodologies, data collection practices, and data analyses approaches utilized during the research.

Fieldwork and methodology

I relied on a combination of critical ethnography and auto-ethnography as loosely borrowed tools from cultural anthropology to study high-technology entrepreneuring through identity formation and networking practices. Critical ethnography recognizes the limits of researcher authority when carrying out field observations and collecting material artifacts (Holmes and Marcus, 2005) while auto-ethnography reflects “the study, representation, or knowledge of a culture by one or more of its members” (Buzard, 2003, p. 61). To examine entrepreneuring (Johannisson, 2011; for an overview, see Steyaert and Landstrom, 2011) based on these approaches, I utilized observations and participant-observations while being mindful of the researcher’s role during fieldwork and in the production of knowledge (Lal, 1996; Sato, 2004). As a Turkish-American woman scholar located institutionally in a US-business school, these approaches allowed me to acknowledge my own position and privilege during the research process and engage with feminist aims of social change and gender equality (Jones, 2005) in the local context, Silicon Valley, under study.

Data

Guided by these above concerns, I focussed on talk and text as data to study entrepreneuring through identity formation processes and networking practices. To clarify, I understand talk as “face-to-face social interaction” whose study can yield insights into the realities and experiences of individuals while texts are “written materials” that represent artifacts relevant for understanding “the cultural world of which the textual material is a specimen” (Perakyla, 2005, p. 870). These two forms of data provided rich materials for examining and analyzing the various ways individuals engaged in identity forming behaviors through their talk and texts. In this sense, data gathering was guided by the assumption that identities are produced through language (du Gay, 1996) as manifest in talk (e.g. conversations) and texts (e.g. speeches).

For the purposes of this paper, I discuss findings based on observations, conversations, and experiences at technology business conferences in Silicon Valley that aimed to bring together Turkish and Turkish-American entrepreneurs and business people to network. Each conference had various panels on high-technology start-up stories in the USA, investment opportunities in Turkey, and strategies for becoming successful technology entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley. These conferences form the background for the exchanging of ideas among and between different people engaged in high technology and are suitable sites to study the enactment of high-technology entrepreneurship, especially with regards to the networking aspects. Specifically, the conferences represent sites of encounter among different Turkish business people in the USA and thus, can serve to illustrate the different ways “non-Western” women and men aim to enter the space of (western white male) high-technology entrepreneuring in Silicon Valley.

The first conference took place at Stanford University in Palo Alto, California in May 2005. The Turkish-American Business Association[2] (TABA) in Santa Clara, California was the main organizer of the conference and I received information about it through a Turkish-American e-mail list. Following this initial conference, I attended two more TABA-sponsored conferences in Silicon Valley in 2006 and 2007 to continue data collection. At each conference, attendance ranged from 150 to 200 people of which 20-25 were women. Male attendees were a mix of entrepreneurs, middle management (below VP), students, journalists, and Turkish state officials (consul general of Los Angeles). Most women were wives of male attendees while a few women attendees were mid-level managers at various organizations, doctoral and masters' students, real estate agents, and journalists. During these conferences, I observed individuals and groups by engaging in conversations (in English and Turkish) and observing ongoing conversations (talk) among attendees and collecting textual data (e.g. presentations, pamphlets, written, and/or transcribed speeches, etc.). Participant-observations lasted from around 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. for each of the TABA conferences.

In addition to recording conversations and observations, I noted how my own participation in the conference and informal gatherings and various positions (i.e. identities) during conversations impacted what was "seen" and recorded. Throughout the research process, I introduced myself as an academic researcher from a US-business school interested in understanding high-technology entrepreneurship and focussing specifically on Turkish entrepreneurs. Depending on the conversation and context, this identity shifted and was at times challenged as I occupied a variety of positions during fieldwork including woman, Turkish, American, researcher, secular (non-headscarfed/veiled), and so forth. These varying positions in the field had consequences for the kinds of conversations I could participate in and experience.

Data analysis

Guided by the privileged position language occupies in postcolonial feminist perspectives, the focus during data analysis was to understand how talk and text produced particular individuals as authorities (knowledgeable entrepreneurial selves) about high technology while marginalizing others. The extended fieldwork and data gathering allowed me see the relevance of language for identity formation and networking practices that became hegemonic and gendered over time and in different contexts (see Ainsworth, 2002).

To chronicle these processes, I analyzed observations, materials from conference proceedings, and my own experiences. About 120 pages of field notes were produced and transcribed based on conversations and observations. In addition, I examined various materials from conference proceedings (e.g. presentations, speeches, handouts), ten hours of video recording from conferences (only available for TABA 2007), 25 PowerPoint presentations (available only for TABA 2006 and 2007), and 250 pages compiled from TABA's web site between 2005 and 2007 (checked weekly). Adopting a reflexive stance, I also interpreted my experiences during conversations, networking activities, and speeches with a focus on gender relations and gendering processes. Next, I discuss my findings with respect to gender and identity formation, networking, and resistance in high-technology entrepreneurship.

Emergent masculinities in high-technology entrepreneurship

Masculinities can be conceptualized as particular norms, ideas, and behaviors associated with men and over time, valued more than those associated with women

(Connell, 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005) including those arising in work situations and organizations (Alvesson and Billing, 2009). Yet the production of masculinities is not necessarily a singular process or the same across different contexts. In this sense, there could be competing forms of masculinity such that the emergence of one type of masculinity as the norm would signal hegemony, or a hegemonic masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). As Cooper (2000, p. 379) suggests, Silicon Valley is the hub of “male-dominated, turbo-capitalism” and the site of different emergent masculinities that enable particular men to participate in entrepreneurial activities and organizations more generally.

Gender as organizing principle in high-technology entrepreneuring

To clarify this above point, I expand on the notion that gender is an organizing principle in the very practice of entrepreneurship (Calás *et al.*, 2009) and implicated in the production of entrepreneurial selves. The conceptualization of gendering entrepreneurship posits, “[entrepreneuring] activities and their everyday manifestations in particular social contexts produce and reproduce gender and gender relations in specific ways through the actual ‘doing’ of entrepreneurship” and that “micropractices and processes of entrepreneurship [...] contribute to produce and reproduce normative gendered social expectations about what/who is an entrepreneur” (Bourne and Calás, 2012, p. 1). Within the context of my study, the stories and experiences of males who became successful in founding high-technology ventures legitimate and normalize gendered entrepreneurship. Narratives of entrepreneurial success are good examples to understand how gendering takes place as they focus on activities that can lead to the (re)production of gender segregation in entrepreneurship (Mirchandani, 1999) within the high-technology field.

For example, the following quotes from male entrepreneurs describe how they “do” entrepreneurship, that is, how they are able to carry out the activities necessary for high-technology entrepreneuring. “I don’t leave before eleven pm and I’m back at eight, nine am” (Hakan), “You should forget your family and your friends [...] I sleep four hours a day, every day” (Kemal), and “In this type of environment, first of all, you can’t go home at five, second thing is doesn’t matter what hour you go, the job is still not done” (Ismail). In fact, Ismail states this idea even more concretely during his panel presentation at TABA 2007:

When I said more commitment, when an entrepreneur really identifies with his venture, [it] becomes a very personal thing, you can’t separate yourself, sleepless night[s], long hours and frankly, it takes an awful lot away from your family [...] To give you an example, when I started Company A in 1971, there were four of us, our three partners in the first two years went through a divorce and their families broke up. I was the only that came out unscathed out of the whole venture. Second time around in 1980, Company B era, our third partner, our chief technical guy, he came, he started, his family broke up our first year of our formation. When I started the third one, Company C, my partner had a divorce within the first two months of our operation. Secondly, you really have to have your spouse for a partner [...] This commitment from your family to help you out is key to it.

Such narratives highlight that in order to become high-technology entrepreneurs, men have to work long hours and that these long hours are only possible if the (female) spouse is assumed to be responsible for the family.

In effect, being successful in technology start-ups is possible by entrepreneuring unfettered by commitments at home and by caregiving. This underlying assumption is based on gendered and socially accepted norms and roles assigned women and men

with regard to family within the Silicon Valley context of long-work hours in technology jobs (Cooper, 2000). During the conferences and the stories of “success,” there was no doubt that technology entrepreneurship requires long hours. Yet missing from the stories was a discussion around how long-work hours are sustained with respect to formal and informal work arrangements locally and globally (i.e. technology production networks) and how such arrangements enable particular men to participate in entrepreneurship in Silicon Valley.

“Young Turks” in Silicon Valley: the new entrepreneurial identity

The lack of discussion around this issue was perhaps the most salient aspect of the TABA conferences with respect to gender, entrepreneuring, and identity formation. Ismail spoke to a room of mostly young male Turkish entrepreneurs and entrepreneur hopefuls. Within the community of Turkish business people, the new entrepreneurial identity that emerged as having the potential and possibility for success was a “Young Turk” (a young unattached male). Such an entrepreneurial identity was made possible through the subalternization of gender locally. In this case, subalternization took place through silence or lack of discussion around gender as relevant to entrepreneurship when in fact it was/is an organizing aspect of entrepreneuring.

To clarify, in Silicon Valley, gender is subsumed and silenced as not relevant to entrepreneurial personhood and activities despite being central to married (straight) men’s abilities to practice entrepreneurship as women are expected (and assumed) to “keep the home.” This practice of entrepreneurship can be labeled as masculinity in practice. However, the rise of young single males as the emergent segment of entrepreneurs who can devote all their time to their ventures can be conceptualized as a hegemonic masculinity. The above examples from the conferences are good illustrations of the subalternity of gender whereby a hegemonic masculinity was emerging as the voice for high-technology entrepreneurship in Silicon Valley while silencing other voices that could have also spoken for high technology. My observations with respect to Turkish male entrepreneurs’ behaviors and the assumptions with regard to “what it takes to succeed” are evidence for the emergence of a hegemonic masculinity associated with high-technology entrepreneuring in a capitalist and hyper-competitive context.

That is, to be successful on the terms outlined by Ismail and echoed by others, having a family is a liability that needs to be mitigated either by the woman assuming all/most household responsibilities or by not having a family at all. As Kemal points out, the entrepreneur should forget his family and friends – his notion of “forgetting” in the context of what constitutes success in high-technology entrepreneurship speaks directly to the emergence of masculinities. Within the Turkish business context in Silicon Valley, the hegemonic masculinity of “Young Turk” emerged supported by the success stories of male entrepreneurs and micro-practices of entrepreneuring including networking. Next, I expand upon this idea by focussing on business knowledge and networking at the TABA conferences.

Women and feminized Others: gendered technology knowledge and networks

At each TABA conference, attendance was between 150 and 200 people with the number of women attending usually around 20-25. During the 2005 and 2006 conferences, there were no women panelists. In 2007, the conference included two different panels where one of the four panelists was a woman. At these panels, one of them spoke about venture capital funding in Turkey, while the other discussed working for a US-based non-profit that identifies “high-impact” entrepreneurs in

developing nations (e.g. Turkey). Despite the inclusion of women on the panels, the 2007 lunch break coupled with my experiences around networking proved to be a turning point in the experiences of women and older men attending the conferences over the course of three years.

At previous TABA conferences, lunch arrangements were not formalized but during the 2007 lunch break, a self-serve buffet was set up with about 20 large round tables with ten seats each arranged throughout the room. This arrangement allowed attendees to have a choice in where and with whom they sat but it also produced gender-segregation. While there were a few women sitting next to men at tables, me and three other women (two mid-level managers and one real estate agent) joined Mary, the honorary consul for the Turkish republic, and another woman (Ayse) sitting at a table in the far corner of the room. Throughout lunch, about ten men came by to say hello but did not sit with us even though our table had available seats. As lunch continued, I observed men pulling seats from unused tables in order to join ongoing conversations at other tables that were already “at capacity” rather than join our women-only table.

Women’s networking: path to inclusion or continued marginalization?

In light of this, some women in the lunch group decided to ask the men coming by to say “hello” to join our table but most declined. Only two men accepted the invitation: an American friend of Mary who was in his late 70s and the Turkish husband of a pregnant woman sitting with us. We cheered when the husband decided to sit down but he left before lunch was over to join another table. Based on these experiences, the main topic of conversation in English and Turkish was why men did not want to join our table. Mary suggested, “men talk about what they know.” Ayse, the woman sitting with Mary when I joined the table, suggested that we should become part of the Global Women’s Leadership Network (GWLN) taking place at Santa Clara University and that this way we (women) would also have a network. Mary suggested that at next year’s conference, she wanted to have a panel on women, entrepreneurship, and leadership. Ayse then commented that her husband had stopped coming to the conferences since he felt old, did not think he could contribute anything to the events, and thought that the conferences were now the domain of “young Turkish guys.” This was quite significant in that her husband, who was in his 60s, was one of the best-known and most respected Turkish technology entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley and his name had come up numerous times in conversations over the course of my research. These comments by Mary and Ayse were a reflection on the change in the attendees since the 2005 conference. Since then, the conference had attracted more and more of these young Turkish males (under the age of 35) as attendees.

To this end, I suggest that despite the intentions of women like Ayse, having a women’s technology and leadership network through GWLN would only work to signal a separation: a women-in-technology network vs a technology network produced and utilized mostly by young males. While research has shown there are no significant differences between women and men technology entrepreneurs, one area of difference is women’s ability to access professional (male) networks (Cohoon *et al.*, 2010). These networks and relationships are key to knowing what kinds of high-technology opportunities are available in the Silicon Valley area and gaining access to capital funding (Miller, 2010; Saxenian, 2006). In effect, a women’s network might work to further marginalize women in general in the Silicon Valley context as young males dominate the entrepreneurial landscape.

This issue is quite relevant since women still receive a “disproportionately low share of the venture capital available in the United States” (Brush *et al.*, 2004). Moreover, recent reports suggest that “pattern matching” in venture capital funding may end up providing start-up funds to those individuals whose traits and background match those of previous successful entrepreneurs (Millian, 2011). In Silicon Valley, the successful prototype tends to be the white male graduating from elite schools in computer-science related fields (Millian, 2011). Recently, the success of new Bay Area start-ups (e.g. Instagram) has been linked to the social and business networks of mostly young white males who rely on each other for ideas, support, and capital (Sengupta *et al.*, 2012). In this context, women and minority technology entrepreneurs are still rare despite some inroads from male immigrant (i.e. Indian, UK) technology entrepreneurs (Hart *et al.*, 2009).

In this sense, networking activities in high technology also speak to relations of gender and ethnicity such that Turkish women may be doubly marginalized as women and as Turkish. Thus, while the GWLN promotes “galvanizing women” for purposes of social justice and economic stability (GWLN, 2012) through leadership and coaching activities, women and sisterhood are thought to be universal concepts without consideration of differences based on race, class, ethnicity, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, and so forth. The GWLN and other women-only associations reflect a path to “inclusiveness” based on a liberal feminist approach whereby feminist concerns invoked by privileged (white) women and men in the West are thought to be shared by (cultural) Others/Rest (Mohanty, 2003; Spivak, 1996). This approach manifests itself in the “women-in-management” discourse (Calás and Smircich, 2006) and in current calls to establish women’s entrepreneurship networks in order to address challenges women face in obtaining capital and engaging in entrepreneurship (Pines *et al.*, 2010).

The women-in-entrepreneurship approach is important in that it signals recognition of the inequalities women face, provides interventions in the form advisory panels and resources for women-owned high-technology start-ups (i.e. women2.com) and can offer ideas by women and for women on how they can succeed in technical fields (Simard and Gilmartin, 2010). Yet this approach and its liberal feminist foundation neither “see” the very practices of entrepreneurship as gendered (e.g. men are still the referent group), nor challenge assumptions and the material practices (i.e. networking) related to the production of inequality (Calás *et al.*, 2007). In effect, having a separate women’s network, coaching, or other liberal feminist strategies for career advancement do not necessarily challenge the subalternity of gender produced through gendered discourses and material practices with respect to technology. That is, despite the fact this solution reflects “local”/Silicon Valley business norms for how women can participate in technology and business fields more broadly, it does not address gendered and ethnic differences in the “unequal distribution of the benefits of social networks” (Gray *et al.*, 2007, p. 156) nor the institutionalization of silencing gender. Next, I expand on this point and address the relevance of ethnicity to marginalization.

Making sense of marginalization: a reflexive stance on gender and ethnicity

Through my interactions at the conferences and during the 2007 table episode specifically, I observed that we (women and feminized Others) had performed as “non-tech people” such that our conversations did not reflect the norm of high-technology talk as expected by the males who had approached our table. As a table, we did not have anyone actively involved in high-technology entrepreneurship as was evidenced during our introductions to each other and to the men who came to greet us.

In effect, subalternization of gender took place through the intersections of gender and high-technology knowledge. That is, the assumption that only people involved in high-technology work could “know” or have something to contribute to conversations about technology entrepreneurship seemed exemplified when young males’ conversations and information-seeking questions did not yield the results they desired. As non-techs, our potential to contribute knowledge about high technology or to access networks became limited. Through these encounters and exchanges, we were “doing gender” (Butler, 2004) while simultaneously “undoing” ourselves as knowledgeable about technology (Powell *et al.*, 2009). Yet being involved in high technology was no guarantee of inclusiveness in networking either as older males had also stopped attending the conferences despite being well-known successful members of the Turkish and Turkish-American business community.

My argument, based on my own position in the field, is that gender is quite relevant to understanding why and how a table of women and feminized Other (older male) emerged. While the example I cite may be interpreted as “insiders” who do not want to sit with “outsiders” rather than necessarily about gender relations – in this case, high-technology entrepreneurs and entrepreneur hopefuls do not see the use or value of speaking with those of us who are not high-technology entrepreneurs. Yet what makes the table episode an illustration of gender relations is that we, as a table of women and one older man, interpreted the behaviors of young males who came to greet us as based on gender. The evidence for this is that the “solution” emerging out of the discussion among the table was to engage in “*women’s* networking and leadership” activities. Thus, being unable to participate in the networking taking place among the young male attendees was seen as a gender issue. More importantly, as a researcher my aim is not to prove or deduce the reasons for young males’ choices in networking among themselves but rather to expose that our interpretation of their behavior was based on gender.

In addition to gender, the role of ethnicity is quite relevant for understanding why Turkish males would want to network and present themselves as successful in Silicon Valley. Based on my observations and conversations, most of the Turkish males participating in the conferences and networking were born in Turkey and came to the USA based on education or employment reasons. At the conferences, Turkish flags were displayed prominently next to the USA and California state flags during the presentations. Moreover, TABA conferences were formal high-profile gatherings of Turkish and Turkish-American individuals (i.e. consul generals, entrepreneurs, CEOs, media personalities, journalists) such that when the exclusion of women and older males took place, it did so in a public and political context. Journalist interviewed the TABA president (also a young Turkish male) and high-ranking male Turkish state officials about high-technology activities in order to feature them on Turkish and US media outlets (and advertised this on TABA’s web site). This was a way to demonstrate how “successful” Turkish businessmen were in the USA and a testament to the modernity of Turkey in terms of its development aims, both at home and abroad. Through the TABA conferences, the immigrant Turkish business community aimed to present itself as not only successful in Silicon Valley, but also “authorities” about which national innovation policies were necessary for Turkey to become a major economic player in the global high-technology sector.

In effect, TABA’s efforts under the leadership of Kemal reflect his strong secular ideologies (based on my conversations with him and through his use of Atatürk’s images and commemorative events to headline TABA’s web site) in promoting high-technology entrepreneuring as a form of nation building. Conferences not only

functioned as networking events but as political manifestations tying entrepreneurial identity formation to ongoing Turkish national dialogue on Turkey's role in the global economy. Thus, West/"Rest" encounters were not confined to individual Turkish men (and women) coming to Silicon Valley to become successful entrepreneurs, but more broadly also included Turkey with its aims to become recognized globally as a high-technology producing nation.

Moreover, within the competitive environment of Silicon Valley, ethnic entrepreneurship ties and social capital are quite important for fostering relationships that can lead to successful venture capital funding opportunities, partnerships, and start-ups (Saxenian *et al.*, 2002). The production of a hegemonic masculinity and entrepreneurial identity, "Young Turk," as representative of potential and success in the Turkish business community in Silicon Valley needs to be contextualized in this regard. For young Turkish males, fostering social and business ties through networking can lead to success in financially competitive environment that is not as inclusive or necessarily welcoming for immigrants and women.

Yet there is more to this story in that "Young Turk" also signifies adherence to gender norms within a deeply patriarchal culture in Turkey that is espoused by secular and religious Turks alike. Women are seen as caregivers and mothers even if they are working outside the home. Like people, ideas and practices also travel. In this case, gendered cultural norms from Turkey "arrive" in Silicon Valley and are enacted through the gendered division of labor and space. Labor in the home is naturalized as women's work while gender segregation dominates the interactions of unrelated men and women in public spaces. As such, Turkish women become doubly marginalized within the hyper-competitive masculine environment of high technology and within the Silicon Valley Turkish business community. Within this context, I discuss possibilities for agency and resistance in challenging masculinities and subalternity of gender in high-technology entrepreneurship.

Challenging gendered high-technology entrepreneurship: possibilities for voice and change?

While the TABA conferences were aimed to "bring people together" in order to discuss business opportunities and expand professional networks, the kinds of people they brought together were, over time, the same: young Turkish men. The very practices aimed at "giving voice" ended up silencing and putting the "Other" back in their place (Lal, 1996; Spivak, 1988) as conferences aimed at inclusion with regards to the Bay Area Turkish community produced "exit" rather than "voice." These "Other," the women and older men who felt marginalized and placed in a feminized position, were produced through gendering in which a more "macho culture" (young Turkish males) created subalternity of gender, which was then silenced.

In this sense, gender was silenced as women and older males were denied the opportunity to voice themselves as knowledgeable in and relevant to entrepreneurship efforts. Consequently, there was no participation available to those feminized Others existing in the margins of the "Young Turk" identity that became associated with high-technology entrepreneurship. In effect, they were subalternized as unable to speak for high technology since they were not equal participants in the networking and relationship-forming that was occurring among the younger Turkish males. Consequently, the events at the table during lunch represent one manifestation of gendered micropractices in entrepreneurship based on normative male practices around business networking during conferences.

Exit, voice, and the subaltern: entrepreneuring alternatives

What possibilities exist for change within this context? With respect to hegemonic masculinities, the subaltern's marginalization and "exit" (older males) in this situation may be interpreted as out of choice (i.e. opt out theory). Problematically, such an interpretation rests on the assumption of agency on behalf of the subaltern to resist or challenge his/her own marginalization. From a postcolonial feminist perspective, seeing such agency and recovery of marginalized selves requires researchers acknowledge their own position or reflexivity in the very production of knowledge (Ozkazanc-Pan, 2008, 2012). Thus, what would the subaltern "speaking back" look like? Within this context, my role as researcher could be seen as complicit in the subalternization process as I did not ask young men why they were not sitting with us.

In this case, speaking back from a subaltern position would require that those who put me/us there (i.e. Young Turkish males) recognize my voice and those of feminized Others as legitimate. To enter the conversation on and about high technology as equals necessitates that the very group enabling exclusion grant epistemological authority to those of us on the outside (of knowledge). Such a requirement still puts the onus of inclusion on women and Others rather than "see" how the discourse of technology know-how, networking, and relationship-forming activities were already gendered. It also acknowledges young males as the epistemological authority in high-technology knowledge and entrepreneurship. As case in point, technical women (i.e. women with STEM degrees) are still unable to move into upper echelons of technology companies (Simard *et al.*, 2008) and women engineers still experience marginalization (Hatmaker, 2012). Thus, it is not the "lack of technical knowledge" that produces marginalization. Rather, it is processes and practices of gendered entrepreneuring that lead to exclusion. To challenge and resist such institutionalized exclusionary practices at the local level requires more than "speaking back." Next, I expand upon the notion of resistance and propose that there may be on-the-ground, local possibilities for change with respect to inclusion and gender equality in the Silicon Valley context broadly and within the Turkish business community specifically.

Complicating and enacting resistance

First, entrepreneuring as a form of collaborative identity forming activity through personal networking (Johannisson, 2011) requires acknowledgment of the ways in which control and resistance are "mutually implicative and coproductive" (Mumby, 2005, p. 21). In this sense, the formation of high-technology subjectivities operates as consensus-building acts that can marginalize and render silent those whose performance and language do not conform to the "norms" of entrepreneuring. Paradoxically, enacting resistance within these contexts involves disrupting hegemonic entrepreneurial selves while simultaneously voicing new selves that may end up silencing another group of people (Prasad and Prasad, 2000, 2003). In effect, there is no authentic entrepreneurial self but rather, competing epistemologies and practices regarding who speaks as a legitimate voice in the space of high-technology with respect to relations of gender, ethnicity, class, and so forth. As such, resistance is also a moving practice enacted based on local conditions that may change over time.

To clarify, a dialectic understanding of resistance acknowledges and investigates the ways resistance is shifting and contextually defined (see Kondo, 1990). From this perspective, how resistance takes shape depends on the guiding norms of the context and the (historic) relationships between and among people relevant for the production of (resistant) subjectivities (Prasad and Prasad, 2003). In the context of my study, the

ideas I presented with respect to challenging subalternization of gender do not necessarily signal that women's networking is always ineffective in Silicon Valley or that Turkish women (and men) cannot change or challenge the different terms of their marginalization (see Elias and Beasley, 2009). Rather, a dialectic understanding of resistance provides ways to see how the strategies adopted by particular women may make sense for the local context and that these practices do not necessarily constitute effective resistance, lead to change, or even make sense for other contexts or for other women (and men). As such, my findings suggest that local forms of entrepreneurship and resistance are mutually constitutive practices and processes of identity formation.

Finally, gender performance and gendering processes are relevant to understanding how dialectic resistances take shape and whether they can ultimately lead to gender equality. Consequently, how gender "gets done" and "undone" in high-technology entrepreneurship matters to whether or not gender equality is possible. From this perspective, practices such as women's networking and leadership programs that aim to challenge masculinities may not necessarily dismantle or resist gendered entrepreneurship but in fact, contribute to its maintenance (Powell *et al.*, 2009). However, there still exists the possibility for producing entrepreneurial identities that draw upon situated epistemic locations (Lewis, 2011) that value feminized discourses of difference with respect to high-technology selves. The construction of such identities can be seen as resisting the marginalizing effects of masculine norms of entrepreneurship while simultaneously opening space for gender equality in high-technology entrepreneurship activities within the environment of Silicon Valley.

Conclusion

Guided by postcolonial feminist perspectives, my aim was to outline how the nexus of gender, identity formation, and networking practices relate to high-technology entrepreneurship in the Turkish business community in Silicon Valley. Within this context, the hegemonic masculinity of the "Young Turk" emerged as the voice and identity for successful Turkish entrepreneurship activities in high technology through unchallenged gendered assumptions around women's role in family and caregiving and micro-practices of business networking. Moreover, subalternity of gender with respect to high-technology entrepreneurship took place when women and feminized Others become marginalized through networking and relationship-building activities that were considered the norm during conferences. Within this context, there were few possibilities for enacting dialectic resistance as a strategy for dismantling hegemonic masculine ideologies and practices that guide high-technology entrepreneurship activities in the Turkish business community in Silicon Valley.

Broadening from this specific manifestation of marginalization in high-technology entrepreneurship, this paper contributes to an understanding of how gender inequality takes place through micro-practices related to identity formation and networking with respect to exchange of ideas among different people. By expanding on the idea that taken-for-granted norms and practices in technology entrepreneurship (i.e. war stories regarding start-up experiences, networking activities), may in fact (re)produce and maintain gender inequalities, I offer insights into possible strategies for social change. Guided by this notion, it is imperative to examine whether and how challenging such practices can lead to a more inclusive entrepreneurial environment for women, minorities, and immigrants.

In addition, the findings from this paper can yield insights into how local conditions and practices impact marginalization such that strategies to promote a more inclusive

approach to entrepreneuring need to be grounded-locally. That is, strategies that may work in one location or context may not necessarily work or work in the same way in others. High-technology entrepreneuring as a practice realized through the enactment of particular entrepreneurial identities and networking potentially looks different in different contexts. Consequently, recovering voices for and about high-technology entrepreneurship as a means of inclusivity and gender equality is a complex endeavor.

By addressing how the production of particular inequalities takes place, researchers can perhaps offer solutions and possibilities toward their mitigation. With this aim in mind, my paper offers some ideas while simultaneously raising doubts about others in regard to specific practices of high-technology entrepreneuring and their impact on women's inclusivity. In doing so, I demonstrate that marginalization in high-technology entrepreneuring is a complex process that takes shape through gendered identity formation practices (i.e. sharing of start-up stories) and networking rather than necessarily purposeful actions aimed at disadvantaging particular people and groups. The implications are that taken-for-granted ideas and practices in entrepreneurship may indeed (re)produce inequalities rather than allow for everyone to take part in the entrepreneurial process on equal terms. As such, this paper provides some new ideas and directions for achieving inclusivity and equality in the business and social realm.

Notes

1. I rely on West and Rest as categories of analyses and constructs produced in relation to each other rather than necessarily markers of specific geographic locations, cultures or people. These concepts enable discussion of postcoloniality as a set of historically grounded relations between and among particular people and nations rather than a marker of temporality and experience that can only be applied to study certain people and cultures.
2. I use pseudonyms to denote this organization and study participants.

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