2009

Postcolonial redirections in international management research and fieldwork

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4: POSTCOLONIAL REDIRECTIONS IN INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT RESEARCH & FIELDWORK

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Introduction

Globalisation is an important topic of discussion and research across the social sciences, as sociology, anthropology, political science, history and economics scholars examine the complex geopolitical, social, and cultural activities taking place across integrated national economies (Adler, 2002; Castells, 1996; Hardt & Negri, 2000, 2004; Massey *et al.*, 1999; Schiller, Basch & Blanc, 1995).

Within the business and management academic community, there has also been a growing interest in understanding globalisation. These interests expand from Adler & Graham's (1989: 515) earlier concerns that, 'as the proportion of foreign to domestic trade increases, so does the frequency of business negotiations between people from different countries and cultures' to recent arguments about business functions now taking place over geographical and temporal distances in a 'virtual' world as global production chains span the globe. Through the circulation of technologies, ideas, and people, global business activities are thus made possible.

Appadurai (1990) puts forth his notion of 'scapes' to view globalisation as flows of people, technology, finance, media, as well as political ideas. In this sense, doing business under globalisation relies on a set of interconnections and exchanges between people and places, where, as suggested by Pieterse (1994: 161) 'a process of hybridization … gives rise to a global mélange'. Thus migration, immigration, and hybridisation become important and relevant ideas in thinking about globalisation, for as 'transnational connections' (Hannerz, 1996) and new relationships between people and places occur, new ideas about who they / us are in those relationships also emerge.

State of the IM Field: Studying People & Globalisation

The approach to the study of people and globalisation within United States (US)-based international business and management research seems to lack dynamic conceptualisations of globalisation and the people involved in these processes. Traditionally, the literature has emphasised cross-cultural and comparative approaches, as scholars try to differentiate business people and business practices around the world (see Tsui, Nifadkar & Ou, 2007, for an overview). At the level of theory, this has meant a static and compartmentalising approach to the study of culture. Yet, this theoretical approach has also had effects on the way such studies have been carried out in the field. Namely, methodologies aiming to study culture and 'cultural differences', inclusive of both quantitative and qualitative work, have extended the unquestioned assumptions of

theories to fieldwork. Below, I expand upon the problems of existing international management (IM) theoretical approaches as well as accompanying methodologies.

To be specific, the cross-cultural research I mention above addresses micro-level similarities and differences in / among individuals and groups 'across cultures.' In such work, 'culture' is generally defined as collective mental programming (Hofstede, 1980, 1998; Hofstede & Bond, 1988) or underlying norms and values individuals share with members of their own nations, regions, and groups (Triandis, 1983; Triandis & Suh, 2002; Trompenaars, 1996). The majority of this research focuses on similarities and differences in managerial behaviours / practices (Hofstede *et al.*, 2002; Huo, Huang & Napier, 2002; Kovach, 1994; Lee, 1999; Lowe, Milliman, De Cieri & Dowling, 2002). Others have been concerned with personal traits (Black, 1999; Oliver & Cravens, 1999; Soedarsono, Murray & Omurtag, 1998; Yousef, 1998), and attitudes (Hofstede, 1998; Kuehn & Al-Busaidi, 2000; Ramamoorthy & Carroll, 1998).

The cross-cultural and comparative international management literature also includes a subset of work focusing on gender differences in management values and practices across different cultural contexts. Scholars in this area examine gender differences regarding individualism / collectivism (Kashima *et al.*, 1995), self-regulation (Kurman, 2001), organisational justice (Lee, Pillutla & Law, 2000), and leadership activities (Bartol, Martin & Kromkowski, 2003; Gibson, 1995; Zander & Romani, 2004) across cultures. These scholars are, in effect, attempting to delineate how gender *and* culture make a difference in work-related values and management practices in diverse people around the world.

Thus, in general, questions around values in different countries have been of great interest (d'Iribarne, 2002; Gamble & Gibson, 1999; Kirkman & Shapiro, 2001). Notable among these is, no doubt, the enormous amount of publications generated by and through Geert Hofstede's frameworks and, more recently, through the GLOBE project (*cf*. JIBS, 2006) in an attempt to delineate what difference culture makes for leadership, among many other constructs (e.g., House, Javidan & Dorman, 2001).

In the light of these various research efforts ongoing in the IM field, there have also been

voices from within the field that have questioned existing theories and approaches used to study people in a dynamic, globalised world. For instance, as Boyacıgiller & Adler (1991: 263) note, 'Americans have developed theories without being sufficiently aware of non-US contexts, models, research, and values'. Unfortunately, while some scholars have recognised that a problem exists, most solutions have been focused on finding appropriate theories and methods that fit the 'culture' or people under study, rather than on underscoring the possibility that all people in the world may not conceptualise themselves in the same way (e.g., Geertz, 1983). In other words, questions over the constitution of self / identity in the management literature have not been addressed, while the study of the self continues in a culturally-relative, but essentialist fashion (e.g., Americans are individualistic, Asians are collectivistic, see Hofstede, 1980).

Meanwhile, globalisation has been studied through decontextualised and comparative cultural approaches that privilege management ideas and practices from the West, while silencing those associated with the non-West. For instance, in the IM field, globalisation has been studied as a movement of management theories and practices from 'industrialised nations' to the 'rest of the world' (i.e., best practices) or as a 'global / local' dichotomy. Often these ideas have been presented as 'convergence' and 'divergence' with

US management ideas and practices (*cf.*, Blyton, 2001; Khanna & Palepu, 2004; Leung *et al.*, 2005; Shenkar, 2004). That is, business ideas and practices have often been thought of as moving from the 'West' to the 'Rest' or as having identifiable aspects, which can be called either distinctly 'global' or 'local.' The global often implies universal applicability, while the local is frequently considered as idiosyncratic or lesser practices or ideas. In this same vein, the global / universal is more likely to be thought of as coming from dominant 'industrialised nations,' while the local / idiosyncratic is more likely to be associated with specific 'cultural practices' functioning as referent of non-dominant societies.

In these arguments, *the complex and necessary interconnections between all people and nations*, which make 'doing business' under globalisation possible, have not been sufficiently recognized. Under the current approaches, the study of these business activities has been based on cultural comparisons between people (i.e., cultural differences) that assume a static, Western-centric world of peoples and cultures, without consideration for the historic and ongoing relations among nations.

To clarify, there is no dearth of concerns over these issues. Recently, one important focus of US-based and Western international management scholarship, cross-cultural and comparative IM in particular, has been to outline how to think about people *from* and *in* different parts of the world engaged in international business transactions. A pressing issue is how to conceptualise such 'international business people' within international management theory and research: How can cross-cultural and comparative international management scholars represent the people they want to study? What must they consider in order to conceptualise and understand different people in international management? (Boyacıgiller, *et al.*, 2004; Earley & Singh, 2000). However, these questions are not innocent, but, rather, are implicitly sustained by strong *a priori* assumptions about the subjects scholars intend to study.

Guided by these latter remarks, I suggest that meta-theoretical considerations are needed before international management theory and research can articulate alternative approaches to understanding business people and practices in the context of globalisation. I further argue that an appropriate focus of analysis to address these encounters is through the notion of *identity formation* in relationships between people in the world. Therefore, I consider a relevant research question to be: How do business people in the context of globalisation *form* their identities?

Specifically, since globalisation involves the movement of people and ideas, these flows result in encounters and exchanges all over the world and give way to a series of *relational processes* as people engage in economic, cultural, and political activities more generally. As people interact with each other through these activities, new *identities* are produced, which perhaps better represent 'international business people' in the world today. To study identity formation in ways that recognise the voices of the various participants in 'the encounter,' including the researcher, it is necessary to go beyond theoretical and research approaches currently available in the IM literature.

Even when they may appropriately identify the problem (i.e., need to examine multiple contexts and move beyond US-based management theories), as a group, international management scholars do not seem to be able to break loose from formulating nation-specific theories and methodology to solve their predicaments. This is seen in calls to 'determine which management theories *de facto* embrace the North American cultural

context' (Doktor, Tung & Von Glinow, 1991a: 260) and 'develop management theories that are effective and functional when applied in culture settings' (Doktor, Tung & Von Glinow, 1991b: 363). This emphasis on culturally-specific theories and new methodologies does not allow for a reconsideration of the Western philosophical assumptions guiding a more general assumption: that it is altogether possible to do cross-cultural and comparative international management theories and research. Paradoxically, even the articulation of *international* is done *in relation* to the US, and North America more generally, as suggested recently by the editors of the *Academy of Management Journal*:

> This journal has made a successful transition from being primarily North American in focus to being a truly international journal—one with (1) many authors who are international scholars, (2) many samples collected outside North America (Kirkman & Law, 2005: 7)

Evidently, scholars do not reflect upon the fact that their problem is that assumptions embedded within these very 'international' management theories end up reflecting back their own creators. Representations put forth in the cross-cultural and comparative international management fields already create a research subject / identity based on assumptions regarding the 'self' from Western modernist philosophy, no matter how 'culturally sensitive' (another modernist assumption) the specification. While this has not gone unrecognised, such recognition does not change the modernist philosophical assumptions (i.e., based on Humanism and Enlightenment philosophies) that imagine 'culture' as pure, fixed, and identifiable. Thus, 'the problem' is articulated more as a matter of the quantity of 'variables' that must be accounted for rather than a matter of re-thinking meta-theoretical assumptions in conceptualising the situation. Consequently, the issue at hand when carrying out fieldwork is not necessarily the choice of methods, but rather how methodological choices should reflect the underlying meta-theoretical concerns of research projects. In this sense, the question is not whether quantitative or qualitative work is better, but a concern over the goals of the research and the ability to use methods appropriate for the research questions at hand.

Postcolonial Frameworks

Postcolonial scholars highlight the importance of historical experiences among nations and peoples in critiques and analyses of Western philosophy. By highlighting the relevance of the 'non-West' to any theoretical argument guided by Western philosophical assumptions, postcolonial studies can offer another way to conceptualise the formation of international business identities under conditions of globalisation based on historic colonial relations between nations (for examples of research studies using postcolonial frameworks, see Banerjee & Linstead, 2001; Calás, 1992; Chio, 2005; Frenkel & Shenhav, 2003, 2006; Jack & Westwood, 2006; Kwek, 2003; Mir, Mir & Upadhyaya, 2003; Moulettes, 2007; Prasad, 2003).

Both international management and postcolonial approaches consider 'the rest of the world', but differ significantly in their theoretical approaches to the topic. Postcolonial studies, as a field of inquiry, is made up of diverse theorists engaged in critiquing Eurocentric and Western representations of non-Western worlds. As a group, these theorists want to call attention to privileged canonical knowledge that makes claims about non-Western peoples and to articulate, instead, knowledge that has been marginalised by

Western epistemological interventions. In order to accomplish these objectives, postcolonial scholars rely on several theoretical approaches having their roots within Marxist, postmodern and poststructuralist frameworks (for an overview of postcolonial frameworks and their relevance for IM, see Özkazanç-Pan, 2008). Postcolonial studies is concerned not only with relations between former coloniser and colonised, but also with cultural representations of the 'non-West' from the perspectives of the 'West'. However, in order not to essentialise and reify these nation positions, it is important to recognize that 'non-West' countries and powers may themselves have engaged in colonising practices during their histories.

Not all postcolonial scholars agree as to what time or which people constitute 'post-colonial.' In addition, there is debate within the field about textual *versus* material approaches to resistance and reflexivity in the light of colonial encounters. Finally, key terms such as 'West' and 'non-West' are not unproblematic concepts for a number of postcolonial scholars, whose works challenge pure notions of culture. Moreover, although the postcolonial studies field may seem united by shared concerns of Western epistemological hegemony and knowing differently, as well as their emphasis on the formation of 'others' identities as a relational practice between colonisers and colonised, the analytic strength of postcolonial studies lies in the distinct theoretical approaches of various scholars to these very concerns and debates. To illustrate the importance of these differences, I rely on three key theorists who have made significant contributions to the postcolonial field: Homi K. Bhabha (1990a,b, 1994), Edward W. Said (1985, 1988, 1991, 1993a,b,c, 2000), and Gayatri C. Spivak (1985a,b,c, 1987, 1988, 1990, 1996, 1999).

Bhabha, Said, and Spivak each make distinct theoretical contributions to postcolonial studies and these contributions have different implications for international management theory and research (Frenkel, 2008; Özkazanç-Pan, 2008). In brief, Bhabha's work explores the connections among writing, identities, and nation-building. His framework for analysis considers psychoanalytic dimensions and repercussions of colonial rule, while simultaneously focusing on textual / theoretical manoeuvres, such as binary oppositions and mimicry as attempts to legitimise differences between Western and non-Western people. Bhabha's work challenges the rules by which Western texts create essential characteristics for people and focuses instead on the indeterminacy of identities. More importantly, his framework highlights how people produce culturally-based meanings around various practices and thus problematises the notion that ideas can be imposed or transferred mimetically between cultures.

In contrast, Said's postcolonial framework helps uncover the connections between Orientalism, as a discourse based on modes of representation, vocabulary and imagery, and Western material structures. His analytics also highlight the ways in which Orientalist discourses emanating from Western academic knowledge rhetorically feminise the non-West (i.e., as weak, in need of help) and, based on this, influence macro decisions, such as foreign or business policies embarked upon by Western nations and institutions.

Finally, Spivak's theoretical work focuses on the textual production of the gendered postcolonial subject as she outlines how this subject exists at the margin of Western feminist and academic writing. Rather than focusing exclusively on Western narratives and their consequences for postcolonial subjects, Spivak is equally determined to address the material. Her framework links texts to the material world, as she examines the living

and working conditions of female postcolonial subjects with respect to the international division of labour and the interventions that are made on their behalf. To these effects, however, rather than becoming the 'native informant' within a Western academic institution, Spivak questions her own privileged position in studying the 'Third World.' In her arguments she highlights the 'Third World' as existing only in relationship to a 'First World' of Western invention, produced by a Western imagination that also produces 'native' populations and 'knowledge' about them. Consequently, one of the main contributions of Spivak's framework is the reflexive position and questioning that she requires of researchers who want to study postcolonial subjects. In effect, Spivak's work speaks directly to the problematic of representation: giving voice is neither an academic methodological issue nor necessarily possible to do. It is a practice that attempts to address the gendered power relations among different people and nations embedded in the global economy.

In terms of identity formation, each scholar allows for a different examination of identity / representation and resistances to dominant Western forms of knowledge, based on their distinct frameworks. Despite these differences, postcolonial scholars share theoretical assumptions regarding representational strategies and historic power relations. Firstly, postcolonial theories pay close attention to the language of representation in texts / writing and, in particular, to the theories, concepts, and words used to represent non-Western people textually, including how 'the research subject' is formed through specific signifiers. This focus allows theorists to consider who may benefit from a particular representation of the non-West / non-Westerner in Western academic writing and to highlight connections among academic theory, epistemology / research, and education regarding the 'Third World.'

Secondly, postcolonial theories focus on particular historical, economic, and political relations among nations in order to provide a context for relational differences. In other words, 'cultural differences' can only be understood by acknowledging the relevance of encounters between peoples under colonial / postcolonial and imperialist conditions. How are such 'differences' formed? In relationship to what? Who articulates them? In which ways, and for what purposes? Postcolonial theories thus highlight power relations that are embedded in these relationships.

Altogether, I argue that postcolonial theory is immediately relevant to understanding 'international management'. That is, from these perspectives, international management discourse of 'cultural differences' is another Western linguistic practice, whereby certain conceptualisations of self / difference are considered management 'knowledge', while other ways of understanding relationships among people in the world are marginalised.

Examining Postcolonial Concerns in Context: The 'Non-West' & 'Non-Westerner'

Taken together, postcolonial frameworks emphasise how power relations and historic political and economic relationships among nations are relevant to present-day representations of the 'non-West' and contribute to the study of contemporary encounters between West and non-West under globalisation. As a way to demonstrate my concerns about existing approaches to IM theory and fieldwork, I focus on studying the US and Turkey through postcolonial lenses as an examination of postcolonial meta-theoretical

concerns around West / non-West relationships and an articulation of identity-formation narratives in the context of such encounters. While the US and Turkey do not have an historical colonial relationship *per se*, postcolonial frameworks nonetheless help to acknowledge historic power relations, i.e., neo-colonial relations, which include political, military and economic issues – as important and relevant to academic writing, research, and education about Turkey in US business representations (i.e., IM literature about the 'Other'). By studying this ongoing relationship, I can also highlight experiences of globalisation related to identity formation that take place within the context of history and the present. To accomplish this and illustrate the analytical value of postcolonial approaches, I focus on a subset of the IM literature addressing the international entrepreneur.

The International Entrepreneur: A Case in Point

Within the context of globalisation, entrepreneurs often reflect the movement of people and the interconnection of places. Such international entrepreneurs characterise simultaneous lives / identities: they know the 'native' business practices of their societies while travelling globally. The flexibility of identity formation can be represented by this group of people, who are doing business on 'their own' and are less constrained to identify themselves by the structural limitations of multinational organisations. Thus, international entrepreneurs are a good way to examine globalisation processes related to identity formation.

In recent years, there has been a growing academic interest in international entrepreneurship, as evidenced by management journals producing special issues on this topic, including the *Academy of Management Journal* (2000) and *Entrepreneurship: Theory & Practice* (forthcoming 2010). More importantly, the growth of the field has been marked by scholars attempting to define international entrepreneurship conceptually as the field continues to emerge, mainly by borrowing concepts from strategy, entrepreneurship, and international management / business fields (McDougall & Oviatt, 2000; Zahra & George, 2002). Thus, one of the pressing concerns in the field is how to conceptualise and study international entrepreneurship in light of globalisation. Despite these concerns, most work within this nascent field does not focus specifically on the mobility of business people and ideas through migration and movement, but, rather, on the static aspects of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship, even if they acknowledge the existence of ethnic or immigrant aspects of entrepreneurial activities. As I will discuss, this subset of the literature brings to visibility, at its most immediate, the problems created by fixing 'identity' and 'culture' in the extant IM literature when addressing globalisation.

To this end, each postcolonial scholar promotes a different theoretical lens to study how identity / representation is formed within the context of this relationship. Bhabha's framework offers the possibility of understanding people through hybridity, rather than pure cultural selves (i.e., Turkish *versus* American identities). Hybridity is not only a self-construct, but a strategy for resisting colonising representations that offer no voice or agency and questioning mimetically-imposed cultural ideas and practices that assume business ideas and practices that exist in one part of the world also exist in the same way and have the same meaning in other parts of the world. By studying international entrepreneurs in the US and Turkey, I can uncover (or recover) other ways of understanding self and business practices as they occur in the West / non-West encounter.

Said's theoretical focus on historic power relations highlights how globalisation is a set of dependencies and relationships, such that people, nations, and cultural differences need to be understood within this particular context. Furthermore, his articulation of the terms of knowledge production (i.e., science is not neutral) highlights how cultural differences, as they exist in the IM literature, may perpetuate Orientalism and silence non-Western voices, particularly as Western management ideas and practices circulate hegemonically in the global economy through media and business school knowledge. Based on Said's work, studying the international entrepreneur in the US and Turkey allows for consideration of how such individuals exist in relational aspects in the context of historic geopolitical and economic interdependencies among nations.

Spivak's lens adds another layer of complexity to understanding the self and the West / non-West encounter in the context of globalisation. Her theoretical focus on the gendered postcolonial subject and the subaltern (i.e., that group of people existing beyond capitalist labour processes) highlights how gendered discourses (i.e., epistemological violence) and material practices (i.e., division of global labour) enable particular identities and practices to become the norm by marginalising others. More importantly, Western representational strategies of the 'Third World' produce a subaltern subject who occupies a gendered place in the text and in the world. By examining how discourses of international entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship take place in the US and Turkey, Spivak's lens uncovers a self embedded within gender(ed) relations among people and nations. Moreover, she calls attention to the role of the researcher in producing such academic knowledge about the 'Third World' and thus highlights power relations between an institutionally-located and privileged researcher and a research subject located institutionally in the gendered division of global labour.

In summary, although each postcolonial scholar offers a distinct theoretical approach to the examination of identity, as a group they find some common ground in their epistemology of conceptualising relational aspects of identities. This stands in contrast to the conceptualisation of research subjects under international management research. To demonstrate the value of postcolonial analyses for international management theorising and research, this chapter attempts to answer the following questions: How do international entrepreneurs in the context of globalisation form their identities? How are these possible identities formed and represented? Through these questions I examine Turkish entrepreneurs as an exemplar of international business people in the context of globalisation, and contrast the representations of their identities made in the IM literature with other possibilities allowed by my research questions. In other words, my project has a dual purpose: to show the limits of existing IM approaches to theorising and researching globalisation and business people under globalisation *and* to uncover the ways in which global encounters allow for the production of new identities (i.e., processual, hybrid, gendered).

My research question, 'How do international entrepreneurs in the context of globalisation form their identities?', is guided by postcolonial theoretical frameworks, and methodologically answering this question must attend to constructivist critical epistemology. To this effect, I examine narratives of identity formation occurring under globalisation. How are people telling stories about themselves in the context of globalisation? What stories do they tell? To whom do they tell them? Where do they tell

them? For what purposes? To attend to these concerns, however, is more than a matter of choosing methods that can address the research question, e.g., ethnography: for postcolonial frameworks also highlight that issues such as the seemingly simple act of retrieving information from research participants, i.e., 'informing', is also in question. For instance, how do researchers speak for others and how do they speak of particular places? (Appadurai, 1988). That is, postcolonial positions (Spivak specifically) problematise how 'the researcher', the actual writing of the research, and the audience for whom it is written, are implicated in the very research that is conducted and, therefore, are part of the process of identity formation (Khan, 2005; Lal, 1996). Below, I discuss how the study design I employed addresses the research question *and* these other concerns.

Methodology: Study Design

The postcolonial frameworks I rely on share a common interest with poststructuralist frameworks in the primacy of texts and language and, thus, allow me to make the argument that language constructs reality and is implicated in representing 'knowledge'. Yet, each of these postcolonial theoretical positions engages with texts written by the West about the Rest through distinct analyses. These philosophical arguments translated into the material reality of data collection mean that I needed a study design allowing me to pay attention to language and text to examine how identity formation happens through hybridity / mimicry, gender and subalternity, and historic power relations. Further, this meant that to study identity formation, I had to pay attention not only to its textual construction in the participant's narratives, but also my very implication in these processes. The design that enabled me to fulfil these aims was a combination of ethnography and auto-ethnography (see Henry-Crowley's chapter in this book for further discussion of ethnography). I use ethnography loosely as a borrowed methodological tool from anthropology to engage in in-depth fieldwork through participant observations, interviews, and collection of artefacts (i.e., physical objects from sites). Although postcolonial positions have a problematic relationship with ethnography, as it was often the handmaiden of colonial rule (see Prasad, 2003a) and assumed a universal notion of culture (see Sokefeld, 1999), I rely on methods available from more recent reflexive and critical ethnographic approaches, such as Clifford's (1992) in 'Traveling Cultures', to examine identity formation as it occurs among encounters of different mobile people.

Yet ethnographic approaches focusing on mobility, rather than fixed place, are not sufficient in this case, for I am very much an interested participant in the research project. In other words, I am an (assumed) 'native' of Turkey, who has 'culture' in 'common' with study members and who returns 'home' to carry out this research. Yet these assumptions are quite problematic assumptions, as voiced by postcolonial positions. Specifically, guided by Spivak's theoretical concerns around this very issue, I take a reflexive stance that complicates the information retrieval function of ethnography; no longer could I simply report identity formation as the other's voice (identity) even if in mobile places (cultures) for, as researcher, I occupy a subject position parallel to, and in interaction with, that of the other participants in this project. For this reason, I took further recourse through auto-ethnography, 'the study, representation, or knowledge of a culture by one or more of its members' (Buzard, 2003: 61), or ethnonarrative (Hansen, 2006). Both of these approaches refer to a reflexive practice of considering the researcher as part of the context, both materially and textually (i.e., representations and language). Auto-ethnography

materializes as the intersections of researcher's voice, place, and privilege that need to be considered in contacts with participants (i.e., observations, interviews) and in the writing of the research (i.e., informing, reporting).

Based on this position, gaining access to the research sites and participants is part of the question of researcher involvement and needs to be addressed. It is the story of the researcher's identity formation, as well as an entrance into the story of possible selves under globalisation.

Gaining Access: Entering the Field

I limited my research to an examination of high-tech entrepreneurs in the United States and Turkey. Since the high-tech sector is associated with modernisation, innovation, and Western-ness, high-tech entrepreneurs were a good test case to examine relational identity formation from postcolonial perspectives. Given the expected role of high-tech entrepreneurs in 'developing and commercialising technologies worldwide' (Kropp & Zolin, 2005: 1), was there convergence towards US modelling of their international high-tech entrepreneurial business activities? In other words, was there mimicry?

To accomplish these various inquiries into identity formation, from 2005 to 2008, I attended annual high-tech business conferences in the Silicon Valley area and a similar conference in Antalya, Turkey. I learned about the conference that ultimately became the first data collection site for my research upon receiving an email from a Turkish community listserv in 2005 discussing an upcoming high-tech conference in Silicon Valley. The fieldwork for the research began in the following conference, 'Bridging Silicon Valley & Turkey,' that took place at the Stanford University Schwab Residential Center in Palo Alto, California on 21 May 2005. The conference was organized by the Turkish American Business Connection (TABC) Association in Santa Clara, CA, the Stanford Turkish Student Association, and the Stanford Graduate School of Business High Tech Club. I attended the conference as a participant, after contacting members of TABC about my research interests. They forwarded me the names and emails of three entrepreneurs who wanted to speak to me during the conference. The conference aimed to bring together high-tech Turkish entrepreneurs to network and discuss investment opportunities in Turkey.

My initial contact was with Baris,[1] an entrepreneur with whom I had exchanged emails regarding his participation in my study prior to arriving in California. He told me to call him once I arrived in Palo Alto, CA on 20 May 2005. Upon doing so, he invited me to a pre-conference gathering held at the hotel I was staying at for the duration of the conference. I found out that this gathering was for TABC members, conference speakers and organisers only. He introduced me to members of TABC, including the president of the organisation. Once I told the president of TABC that I had emailed them in the previous months about my research project, he welcomed me to the gathering and started to introduce me to all the Turkish entrepreneurs, as well as other TABC members, who had come to this pre-conference social. The president of TABC at the time, Kemal, was also one of the three entrepreneurs who agreed to be interviewed. The third entrepreneur, Hakan, said he had a business meeting and would be out of town during the conference.

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[1]   To keep the anonymity of interviewees, I changed their names.

However, he agreed to be interviewed later on, if I came back to the area to carry out the rest of my project.

The next day, I attended the conference from 8am to 9pm, including welcome speeches by the Los Angeles Consulate General of Turkey, the president of TABC, and the chairman of the board of Cisco Systems. The conference ran two parallel tracks of panel discussions, including 'Turkish technology sector and opportunities' and 'Entrepreneurship and high-tech ventures'. I attended all the discussions and presentations in the second track, 'Entrepreneurship and high-tech ventures'. I chose this track, based on my research focus on high-tech and the related discourse around modernisation and Western-ness. All the presentations and discussions were carried out in English, although there were some Turkish phrases / sayings that were used intermittently to make certain points. During the conference, there were several breaks, which gave me the opportunity to have conversations with other conference attendees and to expand my contacts.

During the cocktail hour and networking session at the end of the conference, I was invited to a post-conference barbeque to be held the next day (Sunday, 22 May 2005) at the house of one of the TABC members, Cem (also an entrepreneur). During this time, I met members of TABC that I did not have the opportunity to meet at the conference. In addition, I was able to schedule an interview with Cem upon my return to the area and to obtain the names of other Turkish high-tech entrepreneurs who would be in the area at that point. During and after the conference, I made additional contacts with several other members of this entrepreneurial community for possible participation in my fieldwork.

I came back to the Silicon Valley area from July to October 2005 to carry out further preliminary interviews and, through these, I gained access to still other Turkish high-tech entrepreneurs in the area. I also attended First Thursdays, which were free, informal meetings where individuals got together to discuss social and cultural events affecting the Turkish and Turkish-American community. The conferences, in contrast, were formal gatherings (i.e., had to pay to attend) with sponsors, high-profile Turkish entrepreneurs, and Turkish politicians. Further, I went to Turkey from November 2005 to January 2006, and established links with high-tech entrepreneurs there, based on contacts provided by

my interviewees in Silicon Valley, as well as other links obtained through a faculty member contact at the School of Management at Sabanci University in Istanbul, Turkey.

This initial access, and consequent returns to conferences put together by the TABC in 2006 (Turkey's Role in the Global High Technology Market) and 2007 (Financing our High-Tech Future: Investments in Turkey), as well as email communications throughout the course of the research, allowed me to become part of the conference over the several years of data collection. I became a participant observer, for instance, as members asked my advice about what they should present for topics, rather than treating me as a guest, as I was initially seen in 2005. In addition to attending the conferences in the Silicon Valley area put together annually by TABC, I attended a Turkish high-tech sector conference in January 2008 in Antalya, Turkey put together by Sinerjiturk.[2] I learned about this conference through the TABC website.

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[2]   Sinerjiturk was a recently-formed (2007) non-profit Turkish organisation with members from business, academia, government branches and NGOs that aimed to foster dialogue and action in Turkey's technology sectors. See www.sinerjiturk.org.tr.

Data Collection Method & Sites

During the fieldwork, I carried out participant observations, self-observations, and interviews and collected various material artefacts (i.e., books, pamphlets, videos, PowerPoint presentations) at various empirical sites in the United States and Turkey. Since each of the postcolonial frameworks values language and text, I focused on discourse (language in use and in texts) during the data collection in order to understand how identity formation takes place through different narratives. Specifically, in order to study identity formation at the level of hybridity and mimicry (culturally-based meanings), I focused on the empirical sites themselves as allowing particular narratives of identity formation to take place. Next, to study identity formation at the level of historic power relations between nations, I examined economic and political historic events / relations between the United States and Turkey. I observed participant behaviours and material practices during the interviews, conferences, and get-togethers, e.g., the First Thursdays (see **Table 4.1**).

Year	Conferences	One-on-one interviews	First Thursday meetings
2005	20-22 May, Palo Alto: 2nd TABC conference, pre / post conference events (Bridging Silicon Valley & Turkey)	July-October, Silicon Valley; November-December, Istanbul and Ankara	July-October, Silicon Valley
2006	27 May, Berkeley: 3rd TABC conference, pre / post conference events (Financing our High-technology Future: Investments in Turkey)	January, Istanbul and Ankara	
2007	26 April, San Jose: 4th TABC conference (Turkey's Role in the Global High-technology Market)	January, Istanbul and Ankara	
2008	18-19 January, Antalya: 1st Sinerjiturk conference (Turkey in the Global Communication Sector)		

Table 4.1: Study Sites & Data Collection Venues

Data

As part of the fieldwork, I collected data in the following empirical sites, depending on which postcolonial lens I was using: interviews, conversations, participant observations, websites, and conference materials (artefacts), including presentations, handouts, and any other text materials. The interviews took place one-on-one, while conversations took place either one-on-one or with me participating in small group (three to four people) discussions. Participant observations took place at the pre and post conference social

gatherings, during the conferences, and at First Thursdays. Text data was obtained during the conferences through field notes, presentations, handouts, and by examining the TABC, Sinerjiturk and entrepreneurs' own corporate websites (if available) (see **Table 4.2**).

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400 pages of interview transcripts.

45 hours of video recording from conferences (only available for TABCON 2007 and Sinerjiturk 2008).

40 PowerPoint presentations from all conferences (2005 to 2008).

250 pages from the websites of the organisations involved in putting together the conferences (TABC and Sinerjiturk) and from the corporate websites of the high-tech entrepreneurs (if available).

180 pages of fieldnotes from all conferences in the US and Turkey, including pre and post conference events (such as cocktails and dinners), First Thursdays informal gatherings in Silicon Valley.

Multiple conference handouts (such as pamphlets, reports, and advertisements from sponsors).

Table 4.2: Data Collected During Fieldwork

During the interviews I carried out, I chose to use open-ended questions, such as 'Can you tell me about yourself?', in order to focus on how entrepreneurs decided to go into the business they did and become entrepreneurs. Follow-up questions focused on how entrepreneurs came to identify themselves as entrepreneurs and as business people, how they thought of themselves as 'Turkish' entrepreneurs in the context of the US and Turkey. I chose to focus on such open-ended questions, followed by more specific ones based on each of the distinct postcolonial lenses and the different contribution each made to understanding identity formation in the context of the US and Turkey. By using different methods depending on the postcolonial position, the act of producing data becomes inextricably linked to the theoretical assumptions guiding my fieldwork. Thus, what I pay attention to and how I pay attention to it in terms of what becomes called data can be properly called the 'politics of evidence' (Denzin & Giardina, 2008). It is questions such as 'for whom do "we" produce knowledge?' and ''what are the consequences of such claims of knowledge?' arriving out of postcolonial concerns that sets apart postcolonial fieldwork as a political project from being simply a qualitative approach to fieldwork.

Research Participants: Interviewees & Conference & Meeting Attendees

Research participants in this study can be separated into two kinds: those who participated in one-on-one interviews and those whom I observed during ethnographic fieldwork at conferences and meetings. For the one-on-one interviews, I interviewed a total of 15 individuals I had contacted either directly during the conferences or through contacts I established at the conferences and meetings. All 15 participants interviewed during the study identified themselves as entrepreneurs in the high-tech sector and as Turkish or Turkish-American when I initially asked them (either in person or via email) whether they would participate in my study. During my fieldwork in the US from July 2005 to October 2005, I carried out interviews with eight male Turkish high-tech entrepreneurs. The one-on-one interviews allowed me to collect textual data and make ethnographic observations

during moments of encounters while they were participants attending the conferences and meetings could be observed using ethnographic field methods. Such observations allowed me to examine encounters among different people as I became embedded in the research process (see **Table 4.3**).

Location	One-on-one interviews: Text data and ethnographic observations	Conference and meeting attendees: Ethnographic observations
California	Ismail, male, 55 years old, bachelors degree, US and Turkish citizenship Fatih, male, 50 years old, PhD, US and Turkish citizenship Baris, male, 34 years old, MBA, Turkish citizenship Cem, male, 45 years old, PhD, US and Turkish citizenship Kemal, male, 31 years old, bachelors, Turkish citizenship Hakan, male, 36 years old, PhD, US and Turkish citizenship Tamer, male, 42 years old, PhD, US and Turkish citizenship Selim, male, 54 years old, PhD, US and Turkish citizenship	About 200 attendees at each of the TABC conferences from 2005 to 2007 About 20-25 individuals at First Thursday meetings in 2005
Istanbul and Ankara, Turkey	Bora, male, 40 years old, bachelors degree, Turkish citizenship Murat, male, 48 years old, bachelors., US and Turkish citizenship Osman, male, 46 years old, PhD, Turkish citizenship Zeynep, female, 45 years old, bachelors, Turkish citizenship Turgut, male, 59 years old, PhD, Turkish and German citizenship Alp, male, 47 years old, MBA, Turkish citizenship Semra, female, 50 years old, PhD, US and Turkish citizenship	About 150 attendees during the Sinerjiturk conference

Table 4.3: Summary of Fieldwork Participants and Types of Data Gathered

Data Analysis

In order to address the shared textual concerns of the postcolonial positions and to pay attention to their distinct approaches framing my argument, I use narrative analysis (see Czarniawska, 2004), as this type of analysis allows me to speak to the theoretical arguments I raise in regards to subjectivity / identity formation. If identity formation is positioned as a discursive process, whereby identities are formed through language and the stories people tell about themselves, then narrative analysis would allow me to analyse this process. As such, narratives do not await discovery by researchers, but are co-created among participants and researchers out of oral renditions when people tell stories about their experiences (i.e., through interviews, conversations, speeches) and tell stories about events (see Riessman, 2007, for an overview of narrative approaches).

I took the following steps in order to uncover identity formation processes. First, all audio recordings were transcribed into text format in the original language of the interview. In addition, fieldnotes based on conversations and behaviours and practices that I observed during participant observation, as well as materials from websites and conference proceedings (such as PowerPoints and handouts), were all recorded on paper and thus turned into written texts that could be read and analysed.

One important issue here is whether selves, ideas, concepts, and practices articulated through one language can be translated or made sense of in another, as postcolonial frameworks foreground the limits and, at times, impossibility of cultural translations and epistemological impositions. Nonetheless, translations were still necessary when using direct quotes given that I am writing in English for an international management audience. Such translations, when I used them, were verified by my contact at Istanbul's Sabanci University, who is a native Turkish speaker. Thus, part of the methodological concern in this study is *how* to translate and whether such translations (i.e., conceptual equivalence) are possible, despite the researcher's claims to be able to translate. Based on postcolonial frameworks, translation is not merely a methodological issue, but also a concern over researcher reflexivity and subaltern agency. Whose interpretation is valid? Whose voices have a say when 'the native speaker' can no longer speak as a native?

Understanding of Findings Gained Through this Research

Having carried out the fieldwork, what can be said about postcolonial lenses and their contributions to IM theory and research? What about my own experiences in this project? Along the way, what seemed self-evident in terms of who I was and what my role would be in the fieldwork (i.e., business scholar) was challenged in different ways, particularly as I came to understand better what postcolonial analyses could illuminate about my own experiences. The notion of the native-self returning to her home nation to collect data on people-like-her never existed – instead, what I experienced and wrote about was the emergence of a hybrid gendered self that denied such an innocent return. The place I came to understand as home was not a stagnant and static nation, but, rather, my 'return' was much more akin to a dislocated state of being.

These attempts to 'get out' or 'become someone / something else' bring me to a concern I had over whether I was a tourist, a native, a traveller, or someone else in the research process. I never figured this one out, but understood that who I became during the different encounters was not necessarily out of choice as I had imagined – at times, I did

not have the choice about which position I occupied, about which voice I had to speak from, and about which place I represented. Reflexivity in practice was much more difficult than I had imagined – there was no gauge to tell me that I had been reflexive or a moment where I felt comfortable doing the research reflexively. Moving back and forth among nations is an exhaustive process, physically, emotionally and epistemologically. Attempting to study this process as it relates to identity formation and exemplifies complex and contradictory processes of globalisation through the lens of the international entrepreneur is a much more difficult task than leaving one location and showing up in another; it necessitates examining displacement and placement, which cannot be done with the existing approach in the international entrepreneurship literature. This being said, to actually drop my theoretical tools and pick up another set was perhaps the most difficult challenge I faced in this research project.

The theoretical positions of Bhabha, Spivak, and Said each allowed for a distinct view of how identity formation processes take place in the context of globalisation. To clarify, Bhabha's postcolonial concerns establish that different hybrid selves take form in different sites of encounters between the West and the Rest. Moreover, his lens depicts how hybridity allows for a particular kind of resistance against mimetic impositions of ideas that dictate how individuals should understand themselves and particular practices – in the case of Turkish high-technology entrepreneurs, different hybrids evolved that were inevitably called the same name: Turkish-American. Yet, becoming Turkish-American looked different in Silicon Valley than it did in Turkey, depending on the site of encounter (i.e., Silicon Valley, TABCON conference, Turkey, Sinerjiturk conference) and the relational role of the individual in that encounter. The hybrid self emerged as a way to refuse the gaze of the West that had immobilised Turkey and Turkish entrepreneurs in a position they did not want to occupy: not known for their innovation and technology production. Yet, being Turkish was a slippery slope as how individuals understood what being Turkish meant changed with the particular context they were negotiating. Equally important was the fact that what or who was considered the embodiment of that immobilising Western gaze changed. For example, the excerpt below from an interview highlights how identities shift in the context of global encounters:

> **Ismail:** There was so much that both countries have given you that at some point, maybe I would identify myself as Turkish-American with the emphasis on the Turkish side. But depends on where I am. Here in the US, I'm Turkish-American and overseas, everybody knows that I'm from Turkey. But they look at me as American, not as Turkish.
>
> **BOP:** How about in Turkey, would you say you're Amerikali Turk (the American Turk)? Or how would you?
>
> **Ismail:** Except when I'm with my mother. People also look at me, too, except few friends that I still have that they may still see me as I was rather than Amerikali Turk (the American Turk).
>
> **BOP:** But not your mother?
>
> **Ismail:** Yeah, she doesn't want to see it any other way.
>
> **BOP:** Just the Turk?

Ismail: Yeah.

Another example of shifting selves or identities is the following:

BOP: how would you identify yourself?

Semra: Well, that's a tough question. If I wanted that – because I lived 25 years in the US – when I went to US, I was 24, 25 years old, and then I lived 25 years there, so my life is almost – well, now considering I'm two more years, maybe I'm more Turkish now. It's sort of my adulthood, raising my child, enjoying income, having a career, building a career. Everything happened there, so the real enjoyment of life and learning to be a citizen, voting, understanding politics, and everything else as an adult happened there, so the aspect of – and I'm an American citizen, that is very American, and that will stay as it is, but there's also the cultural aspect. Being born here, raised by a Turkish family, learning my first language in Turkish, the culture, the religion, all the aspects of my upbringing, that brings that Turkish in me, so I have both identities, and can identify with both of them. I go to the US, I am the perfect US citizen. I come here, and I'm almost the perfect Turkish citizen … the company I'm in actually is very different than the rest of Turkey. We're like a little America here. It's an adventure.

In contrast, Said's focus on historic power relations among nations allowed for consideration of how relational identities form differently in Silicon Valley and Turkey. In Silicon Valley, Turkish high-technology entrepreneurs attempted to get out of the Orientalised position they were put in through visa status and the ethnic immigrant label associated with them by Orientalising others. This was accomplished by differentiating themselves from other Turks, other ethnicities in Silicon Valley, and through a cultural / political identification of self as 'technologically capable' in the context of ongoing US / Turkish geopolitical and economic relations. For example, one of the Orientalising discourses that enabled the Turkish identity to form was accomplished in reference to a Mexican identity. Individuals described themselves as a Turk by saying that they were not undocumented, which in the context of California meant not Mexican. One example of this is Kemal, who was having difficulty obtaining a green card but had nonetheless formed his own start-up while working for a major technology corporation in Silicon Valley. When I asked what being a Turkish entrepreneur meant, he stated:

> What does it mean? Well it means, do you mean my visa status? [laughs] It annoys the hell out of me, 'coz I can't do much. I have a company which I can't work for in reality, I can own the company, I can be a stakeholder but I can't work for the company, I have to hire people … Right now, I'm here with an H1-B, so it's sponsored so that means I'm a slave of some corporation. I find the green card process humiliating, I don't know, I resisted it, I don't know, I've been offered it two times.

This situation of being unable to get a green card when he wants to be documented as a legal immigrant who could work for his own corporation was complicated by the fact that he saw himself as different from the Others, the 'undocumented' people in California. In effect, he was trying to get out of an Orientalised position by Orientalising another group of people: the Mexicans as 'undocumented' workers.

In Turkey, entrepreneurial identity formation occurred in relation to the West as Turkish entrepreneurs tried to overcome hegemonic Western high-technology business knowledge that Orientalised business practices in Turkey. As such, through Said's lens, entrepreneurial identity formation processes needed to be seen as cultural / political acts of agency, and at times acts of resistance to Orientalism, that highlighted how and why it was necessary to position oneself as Turkish or Turkish-American, depending on the context of national relations between the US, Turkey, and other nations (i.e., EU, Turkey-Greece-Armenia, US-Mexico). In this sense, globalisation did not mark the separation of nations, as implied by the 'cultural differences' approach to identity formation. Rather, entrepreneurial identity formation processes highlighted that context is relevant for understanding how and why different identities emerged in Silicon Valley and in Turkey (e.g., Tsui, 2007). Further, it also highlighted that 'context' is an ongoing process as well, in this case, as the interdependence of nations.

In contrast, Spivak's concerns over gender, subalternity and the postcolonial subject allowed for an examination of how gendering and subalternity functioned differently in different sites of encounters. As a site, Silicon Valley enabled the formation of a macho male culture (i.e., Young Turks), which became associated with high-technology entrepreneurship. This took place by silencing the Other of young, male high-technology entrepreneurs: women and older men. In contrast, the issue of women and gender was immediately articulated in the Turkish context, where the subaltern spoke back to the masculinity associated with the high-technology sector. Moreover, gendered practices of high-technology work came to light in distinct ways in Silicon Valley and Turkey, but were both nonetheless inscribed, albeit differently, in a broader context of global competition, division of labour, and 24-hour production cycles for high-technology goods and services. For example, based on my interviews, men have to work long hours in order to become high-technology entrepreneurs. These long hours are only possible if the spouse is assumed to be responsible for the family. Yet, how these high-technology selves emerge is not only based on the gendered assumptions about how to or who can become an entrepreneur – high-technology entrepreneurship already assumes a particular global division of labour that places Silicon Valley as the centre of technology innovation and the rest of the world as potential places for low-cost outsourcing. This global division of labour allows for US firms to stay competitive, as high-technology workers outside the US complete the job. Thus, the global division of high-technology is based on those nations that produce the innovation versus those that manufacture it. These activities are documented in the following ways:

> **Hakan:** Most of the work is done outside the country, we have, we outsource to two, three different teams in Russia, in three different cities actually, three in India, two in Pakistan, about two in Ukraine and one is about to go to China, oh, one is in Romania, so this, but getting the work done there is the cheapest thing you can imagine … as a start-up you have to watch out for resources and

the money, how you spend, so they do good work, they do much better work than people here, they work hard, those people, and they are, actually managing them is easier, they're scattered and they don't have actual offices here, they finish their work … so most of the work here is integration and testing, things related to customer side here, other than that, the work is distributed.

In effect, global flows of capital (FDI) and labour (outsourcing) enabled Silicon Valley to become *the* place of technology and innovation and for Turkey to be left out. Within this context, the gendered high-technology entrepreneurial self in Silicon Valley emerged by disavowing spouse and family, while simultaneously subalternising high-technology entrepreneurship in Turkey as 'behind.'

Thus, each of the lenses highlights a distinct way of understanding identity formation processes and globalisation as processes taking place through encounters of people and ideas. Yet using each of these postcolonial frameworks separately does not imply that these processes are taking place separately at one point or another, depending on which lens one uses. Rather, these lenses also highlight that globalisation is a contradictory process, such that there is no neat set of ideas one can use to study it. In effect, it is impossible to use each lens one after another as if they were nested—the assumptions about self, translation, and resistance under each of the lenses are at times at odds with one another. Thus, what can be learned from these lenses that could be useful for international management?

Conclusion

Among one of the important issues that arise when conducting qualitative work is how to carry out the fieldwork, including questions on which methods to use, how to make sure these methods of choice are appropriate for the theoretical framing of the research project, and how these methods will help you address the research questions posed. To this end,
there is no postcolonial method. Rather, researchers are reminded that the choice of methods depends very much on the meta-theoretical assumptions, theoretical framing, and research questions guiding the research project. Carrying out fieldwork based on postcolonial concerns is about realizing the political and gendered complexities of entering the field and the repercussions of representing people and their practices through particular lenses.

Equally relevant is the fact that postcolonial contributions to international management emanate from the complexity and contradictions they highlight, rather than from providing neat, stacked lenses. That is, postcolonial frameworks not only challenge assumptions about international management theory and research, but the very notion of what kind of research can be produced. In this sense, research context is not about including more variables or more levels of analysis (see Oviatt & McDougall, 2005). Based on postcolonial concerns, it is not, as Rousseau & Fried (2001: 11) suggest, possible to contextualise international research based on three tiers, including rich description of the setting, followed by analysis of contextual effects, and finally, through comparative studies in order to highlight 'powerful institutional and cultural differences'. In other words, postcolonial frameworks make impossible the micro, macro, and meso approaches or the

level of analysis argument, as these arguments, more generally, prevent understanding the full complexity of business phenomena, particularly in the context of globalisation (see Kyriakidou & Ozbilgin, 2006).

Postcolonial frameworks highlight that 'the production of theory is in fact a very important practice that is worlding the world in a certain way' (Spivak 1990: 7). They also make relevant that ethico-political considerations are part of producing theory, particularly in international management, as the imposition of Western management concepts and the circulation of Western business ideas can end up colonising, and thus silencing, those very ideas and practices non-West scholars claim to value. Postcolonial work, then, attempts to dismantle this 'desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite' (Bhabha, 1994: 86). In this sense, postcolonial research projects are always political and attempt to 'make concurrent those views and experiences that are ideologically and culturally closed to each other and that attempt to distance / suppress other views and experiences' (Said, 1993: 33). Altogether, thus, this research was a political project that attempted to speak back and recover (however problematically) the right to speak about 'the self' by rearticulating it, such that it fully questions the terms under which representation and knowledge have taken shape in the international management field as we know it. How 'the other selves' would reclaim the field is another project waiting to be written.

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