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# JUST LET US BE: DOMINATION, THE POSTCOLONIAL CONDITION AND THE GLOBAL FIELD OF BUSINESS SCHOOLS

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## **JUST LET US BE: DOMINATION, THE POSTCOLONIAL CONDITION AND THE GLOBAL FIELD OF BUSINESS SCHOOLS**

As business schools have developed across the world (Vaara & Faÿ, 2011; Wilkins & Huisman, 2012), their hierarchical structure as a field of power –i.e., a struggle of social relations (Bourdieu, 1983, 1984, 1986, 1990)– has become evident too, resulting in inequalities that need to be addressed. Particularly, within the field of power of business schools, an autonomous/dominant pole (Marginson, 2008; Naidoo, 2004), consisting mainly of elite Western schools, has usually been more successful in imposing on other groups its beliefs and dispositions –i.e., its “tendencies... to engage in some way with the world” (Barnett, 2009: 433). As the autonomous/dominant pole (the privileged group) has imposed its tendencies as rules of the game, the field’s doxa, naturalizing the hierarchy as self-evident, has been formed. Doxa represents underpinning beliefs that are generally taken for granted by everyone in the field (Lyke, 2017). In the field of business schools, doxa includes different beliefs (e.g., the superiority of publishing in certain journals); yet, perhaps the most interesting one is the belief in continuous improvement (Emiliani, 2005; Imai, 1989; Suárez-Barraza & Rodríguez-González, 2015), which is epitomized by the rise of quality accreditations (Cret, 2011), including AACSB, EQUIS and AMBA. Sadly, alternative/oppressed groups in this hierarchy, although having different forms of capital (i.e., assets to achieve status), habitus (i.e., a set of dispositions) and beliefs, eventually find out that their improvement within the hierarchy is linked to their compliance with the field’s doxa, and thus, usually end up imitating the autonomous/dominant pole, while partly repressing who they are. This process turns alternative/oppressed groups into a heteronomous pole(s), as they get locked into the bottom of the hierarchy, lacking autonomy, because they live in the shadows of rules set by others.

Interestingly, the field of business schools today is not only a hierarchy, but a global hierarchy. In short, autonomous/dominant business schools dominate not only schools within

their own countries, but in other cultures too. Hence, in this paper, we develop a critical exploration of the **global** field of business schools. We suggest, particularly, that the postcolonial condition (Bhabha, 1994; Fanon, 1967; Go, 2013; Hook, 2008; Joy & Poonamallee, 2013; Lee, 2013; Özkazanç-Pan, 2008; von Holdt, 2013) is one of the key enablers of the internationalization of this hierarchy, as the identity struggle on which postcolonial subjects historically dwell, enables a disposition to comply with foreign norms that are imposed on them. Regarding this, we focus specifically on the role of local/native intermediaries, who enable foreign domination by promoting the interests of the Western autonomous/dominant pole within their postcolonial business schools. We call these intermediaries local/native doxosophers (or malinchistas), and suggest that any effort to set postcolonial business schools free, requires first the awakening of doxosophers. Thus, we ask, **how may local/native doxosophers in postcolonial business schools wake up from their doxa-aligned roles and start enabling heteronomous poles to defend who they are?** We explore this question using autoethnographic research done in México.

For all that has been said, regarding “the false universalism of the West” (Bourdieu, 1998: 19), and how it insists, as García Márquez claims, “on measuring us [non-Westerners] with the same yardstick with which they measure themselves” (1982: 3), not enough has been done to produce understanding, from the perspective of the oppressed, on the power struggles of the field of business schools. Thus, by blending Bourdieu with postcolonial theory, the purpose of this study is precisely to generate understanding, through our in-depth situated Latino autoethnography, on the power struggles of our field. Particularly, we contribute by shedding light on a process through which local/native doxosophers could wake up from their oppressed states. Three important findings emerge from our research. First, that the submission of postcolonial business schools is not only the result of an autonomous/dominant pole that does not allow alternative expressions to emerge, but also of postcolonial business schools, as

they do not allow themselves to be who they want to be. Second, that the awakening of local/native doxosophers might occur naturally, as they eventually feel betrayed by the autonomous/dominant pole, once they have complied with its demands but remain excluded from the group of elites. Third, that the betrayal of local/native doxosophers entails that the doxa of continuous improvement is deceitful, and that what makes such a pole autonomous/dominant is probably other arbitrary factors. Finally, the implication of this study, hopefully, would be to trigger a debate, among business scholars, on the need for equity in business schools, and the role that we all –dominant or non-dominant groups– might play, intendedly or unintendedly, in the power struggles of our field.

The paper begins by presenting Bourdieusian theory and the structure of the field of business schools. Then, we take a detour into the postcolonial condition, to explain partly why the field of business schools has turned into a global one. Next, we present our research design, followed by findings on how local/native doxosophers could wake up from their submissive roles. We end with implications and conclusions.

### **BOURDIEUSIAN THEORY**

Pierre Bourdieu developed one of the most comprehensive theories on social stratification (1983, 1984, 1986, 1989, 1990). Despite Bourdieu's unmatched acceptance in education studies (Marginson, 2008, 2013; Naidoo, 2004; Naidoo, Shankar, & Veer, 2011), his influence on management education, although existent (see, for example, Vaara and Fay (2011)), is not widely prevailing.

For Bourdieu, different strata in society “distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make” (1984: 6). For example, in art, the taste to differentiate what makes a piece of art worthy varies across social classes. Particularly, lower strata value anything that teaches them about reality, because they are fighting on a day-to-day basis for survival, and thus, appreciate what represents that struggle. By contrast, higher strata, because they have their basic needs covered,

create distance between their taste and reality. Thus, they value, for instance, abstract art, to differentiate themselves from the tastes of others. As social classes develop different ways of seeing the world, the separation between them increases. Hence, Bourdieu claims that each social group develops dispositions that are consistent with those tastes that its class values. The set of these dispositions is what Bourdieu calls habitus (1983, 1998). Habitus is “a system of lasting and transposable dispositions” (Naidoo et al., 2011: 1146). Thus, different classes possess different habitus, which one needs to share to belong to them (Bourdieu, 1984: 243). Furthermore, to be accepted into a class one needs certain capital, including cultural, symbolic, social and economic (see, Bourdieu (1986)), where each type is “frequently converted into other kinds” (Vaara & Fay, 2011: 30).

Societies are intricate systems and, therefore, we have hierarchies of many types. For example, there is a hierarchy of football clubs. Yet, people belonging to the highest stratum of that hierarchy, will not necessarily belong to the highest stratum of the academic hierarchy. Usually, we say that similar/related activities form “a field of power [, which] is a social universe with its own laws of functioning” (Marginson, 2008: 304). Those laws of functioning are the result of the struggle between different groups to impose their habitus and its underpinning beliefs, as the legitimate ones. The group that (partly) wins this struggle becomes, thus, the highest stratum of the field, and the underpinning beliefs of its habitus usually turn into doxa, naturalizing, like this, the hierarchy and its inequality. For instance, universities form a field, where the habitus of elite universities makes taste-distinctions that value prestige, famous alumni, or publishing in top journals. These dispositions are underpinned on beliefs that such arbitrary criteria define what makes a top university. Moreover, since elite universities have (partly) won the social struggle, their underpinning beliefs tend to be imposed on everyone else as truth (i.e., orthodoxy, what is right). As others within the field accept (partially or fully) such beliefs, then the elites’ orthodoxy turns into doxa (i.e., what is taken for granted by

everyone in the field). Doxa emerges by rendering the elites' "beliefs natural and self-evident" (Eagleton, 1991: 58). We see this, for example in higher education, on how desperate most universities are to comply with doxa, and how those that do not (e.g., mass-online universities) voluntarily accept themselves as not as good as, for instance, the Ivy League or the Russell Group. Additionally, anything different believed by the underdogs (i.e., the heteronomous pole(s)) is relinquished to illegitimate heterodoxy, so that "the dominated class assumes the party of opposition to the misrecognized arbitrariness of the doxa" (Lyke, 2017: 170). The option the heteronomous pole(s) allegedly have to get up the ladder is usually to imitate the autonomous/dominant pole (Bourdieu, 1984, 1990), while sacrificing their own beliefs and habitus (i.e., losing their autonomy).

### **THE GLOBAL FIELD OF BUSINESS SCHOOLS**

A spinoff field of the higher education one is the global field of business schools. Again, here we find an autonomous/dominant pole that includes elite business schools, such as Harvard Business School or London Business School, which are the ones that vastly influence the field's doxa. Other schools absurdly desire to get into the autonomous/dominant pole, or feel inferior for believing in different things (Wilkins & Huisman, 2012). This triggers, therefore, the imitation process, where one particular taken-for-granted belief (i.e., an element of the field's doxa) that is popularly mimicked, is the prominence of continuous improvement to yield a disposition towards alleged quality. In short, it is accepted that top global business schools have achieved –presumably– outstanding levels of quality, and therefore, everyone wants to imitate this to become one of them.

Now, to understand the global field of business schools, we need to understand first the prominence of continuous improvement as part of the field's doxa and what continuous improvement actually means. It turns out that it was originally Masaaki Imai who coined the term Kaizen, which means precisely (1989: 23): "a means of continuing improvement in

personal life, home life, social life, and working life”. Imai’s definition emerges from two Japanese words, KAI (改) –i.e., change–, and ZEN (善) –i.e., Good (improvement) (Lillrank & Kano, 1989: 28; Newitt, 1996). This is why Suárez Barraza summarizes continuous improvement as (2007: 91): “management philosophy that generates... small incremental improvements in the work method (work processes) that reduces waste”. The use of the continuous improvement ideology in service industries, such as business schools, can be traced back to the seminal work of Bowen and Youngdahl (1998), who coined the term Lean Service to refer to efforts to apply continuous improvement in service organizations. In recent years, different authors have approached continuous improvement specifically in higher education institutions, such as business schools (Emiliani, 2005; Suárez-Barraza & Rodríguez-González, 2015). One of the first attempts was the work of Kells (1995), who argues that a culture of measurement/evaluation in higher education is a basic pillar for continuous improvement. The theoretical contribution of these authors is likely to have influenced the business school accreditation AACSB, especially in its 2003 standards. Thus, in business schools, continuous improvement has become highly sought-after.

The prominence of continuous improvement in the field of business schools, has been epitomized by the rise of accreditations. The fever for accreditations shows that continuous improvement is something business schools take for granted (i.e., is part of the doxa of their field). Allegedly, the fad of accreditations emerged as business schools felt the pressure of turbulent competitive environments in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, when competition for better students became stronger (i.e., the Bourdieusian social struggle for supremacy intensified). Due to such pressures, business schools turned their efforts to improve continuously (Evans & Lindsay, 2001) and aimed to evidence that through accreditations, which are simply a conversion of operational quality into symbolic capital. The most important international business schools accreditations are AACSB, EQUIS and AMBA.



AACSB, Association to Advance Collegiate School of Business, was founded in 1916, yet it began operating in 1919. This international accreditor groups nearly 1490 members around the world (AACSB, 2016), from which only 746 are accredited. On the other hand, EQUIS is operated by the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD), which objective is to improve international management/business education standards (EFMD, 2016). By July 2018, EQUIS had been awarded to 177 business schools around the globe. The last accreditor is AMBA or Association of MBAs. AMBA is the global standard for MBA degrees (and now DBAs and MScs too), currently accrediting programmes from around 80 countries (AMBA, 2016). Overall, these three “Accreditations are conceived... as a means of legitimization or a means of differentiation and grading” (Cret, 2011: 415).

In sum, the field of business schools, through its autonomous/dominant pole, has developed and imposed doxa, where as part of it, business schools comply with the continuous improvement belief. Something most aim to achieve by accumulating the symbolic capital of accreditations. The latter gives us, so far, a robust panorama of the field of business schools and its doxa. However, there is still something about the field that we do not understand: why is the field global? Bourdieusian theory explains how hierarchies are formed within the same cultural context. Nevertheless, when we see that members of AACSB come from all around the globe, that EQUIS has an international mission, that AMBA has accredited programmes in dozens of countries, or that league tables such as QS include business schools from many different cultures, then we know that this is a global field. But, we still do not know why would Indian or Nicaraguan or Pakistani or Mexican business schools be willing to accept doxa and the supremacy of the Western autonomous/dominant pole?

There are multiple answers to this question, including that educational markets are now global (see, Marginson (2008)) and that this is about an issue of consumption (Sturdy & Gabriel, 2000). However, the latter are economics/marketing answers, while Bourdieu

demands a sociological one. A dimension of such a sociological answer would entail an exploration of the role of the postcolonial condition, as this is one of several enablers of the internationalization of the field. Focusing on the postcolonial angle of this debate, will allow us to connect in a novel yet much needed way, Bourdieusian theory with postcolonial theory (for some earlier attempts, see Lee (2013), or Go (2013)). To do this, however, we need to be patient, make a stop, and take a detour, starting by understanding first what colonialism is and how it produces the postcolonial condition.

### **A DETOUR: FROM COLONIALISM TO THE POSTCOLONIAL CONDITION**

To understand colonialism and its long-term ramifications (i.e., postcolonialism), let us jump into a time machine and go back 500 years in time. Back then, early in the sixteenth century, in the name of the King of Spain, Hernán Cortés invaded México. Cortés' success was aided by his capacity to understand and manipulate the local culture (Carrasco, 2008). Epitomizing the latter, the legend of La Malinche was born. She was the daughter of an Aztec Lord in Painala. After the death of her father, her mother remarried, giving birth to a son, and decided it would be La Malinche's stepbrother who would rule, robbing then La Malinche of her natural right. To achieve this pre-emptive coup d'état her mother sold La Malinche as a slave. Time went by and La Malinche ended up in the hands of the Spaniards. The Spanish conquerors, before taking over the Aztec empire, had faced a problem: they could not understand the local languages. They say Cortés relied on a colleague who translated Mayan. Yet, as the challenge was the conquest of the Aztecs, Cortés needed a way to communicate in Náhuatl, the Aztec's dominant language. La Malinche spoke several languages, and became a translator for Cortés: they translated Spanish into Mayan and she translated it into Náhuatl (Gerson, 2004). Later on, the influence of La Malinche accrued, as she became Cortés' lover. Some argue that without her the Spanish conquest would have been impossible, as it was La Malinche who promoted a message among the natives to cooperate with Cortés. Therefore, the neologism of **malinchista**

arose to denote native intermediaries disposed to deny their own cultures in favor of a foreign one. **Malinchistas** have enabled probably most colonial conquests, beyond the Mexican one where the term originated. Malinchistas, arguably, have developed, in Bourdieusian terms, a disposition of openness and automatic respect for foreigners (Reyes, 2011). Thus, to understand colonial conquests malinchistas are essential, because they are the ones who usually first become local allies of conquerors. Bourdieu, additionally, would recognize malinchistas as a type of local/native doxosopher –i.e., an uncritical intermediary that is willing to defend and spread doxa (1998).

As malinchistas enable conquests, these turn into powerful events, where both the colonized and colonizers play a crucial role in colonial domination. On the one hand, colonizers refuse to understand new cultures (Joy & Poonamallee, 2013). Therefore, reducing natives to underdeveloped savages that need to be educated. On the other hand, malinchistas, from colonized cultures, welcome foreigners with open arms, only to be used to spread their disposition towards foreigners to other natives. Other natives do not necessarily cave to malinchistas' seduction immediately. Yet, most resisters realize that refusing to accept the power of colonizers sometimes only derives in violence (von Holdt, 2013), thus, they eventually –although not necessarily– conclude that it would be simpler to mimic/imitate colonizers to get on their good side. Like this, the colonial mask-psychology arises: natives wear a figurative mask to pretend they are like their conquerors. The latter encompasses a process of a “damaging ego-ideal integration [by the oppressed] of the oppressor’s racist cultural values” (Hook, 2008: 275). So that now natives even imitate the spite colonizers feel for them (see, Fanon (1967)). Or, like Ramírez summarizes it, the native “Vehemently makes himself/herself owner of that which used to be of the conquistador” (2005: 3858). Interestingly, not all natives necessarily surrender to colonial powers. Some might keep defending their cultures and refusing to wear the mask. Yet, if the colonial effort has succeeded, then, it is

likely that the malinchistas and those seduced by them have overshadowed persistent resisters, and the mask has become dominant across natives.

As time goes by, oppressed natives have worn the mask for so long that it becomes part of who they are. The habitus –i.e., the dispositions– of colonizers become the dispositions of the colonized too. As Fanon argues, the native starts to feel here “elevated above his [‘]jungle[’] status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country’s cultural standards” (1967: 9). Yet, assimilating a mask is always an incomplete undertaking, as natives can only be like colonizers insofar as they repress their native ways, which never fully die. Thus, the end result of the colonial event is a state of hybridity, where aborigines become “almost the same [as their oppressors] but not quite” (Bhabha, 1994: 89). Producing, like this in the colonized, “‘hybridity’ rather than sameness” (Boussebaa, Sinha, & Gabriel, 2014: 1155; Frenkel & Shenhav, 2006), and alienating, in solitude, colonized people, as they cannot be fully native, yet cannot truly be the oppressor either.

### **Residues of Oppression: Colonial Identity and its Permanence**

It is important to understand here the relationship between habitus and another key colonial/postcolonial concept: identity. Habitus, as Bourdieu defends, is “embodied history, internalized as a second nature”, so that who you are is embodied by things you are willing to do (1990: 56). By contrast, identity, as the answer to the “who am I” question (Smerek, 2013: 374) , is an effort to make our dispositions –habitus– affable, summarized in a narrative/story, or as Kothiyal et al. claim, identity “is crucial to understanding the meanings that individuals reflexively attach to themselves” (2018: 138). Yet, identity more than capturing who someone is, is simply the result of social processes where actors grant/claim different stories of who they could be (Derue & Ashford, 2010), so that other people know how to relate to them. Put differently, identities are “constructed around the illusion or fantasy that the self can be defined” (Driver, 2009: 56). Now, trying to define an identity for colonized people evidences

precisely the illusory character of the concept. Because hybridity, even if it could stand as a reasonable simplification of the colonial subject, by complexifying the habitus of those that are colonized, makes it impossible for its narrative to put fully into simple words who the colonized are. Or as Özkazanç-Pan argues, hybrid “identities exist in a state of ambivalence and cannot be determined or categorized” (2008: 968). This is why Monsiváis, reflecting specifically on the Latino identity, wonders: “¿de qué modo se aplica la identidad, que es fijeza, a los requerimientos del cambio permanente? ¿Hay identidad o identidades? (In which way is identity, which is fixity, applied to the requirements of permanent change? Is there an identity or identities?)” (2005: Location 4814).

Interestingly, this conflicting hybrid qua identity does not leave oppressed people once colonizers leave their territories. By contrast, despite decolonization efforts, the split/conflicted habitus, poorly simplified into the hybrid identity, stays with us. This is the postcolonial condition, which represents the permanence of the conflicting, qua schizoid, dispositions developed during colonial times. It is this condition which postcolonial theory studies, focusing precisely on the “the importance of the colonial experience and its persisting aftermath” (Alcadipani, 2017: 536). Tragically, as the colonial mask remains with us despite independence, an opportunity opens up for new, yet subtler, colonial efforts. This time physical violence is not necessary, because due to the postcolonial condition –having people who already know how to repress their native dispositions in favor of those of colonizers–, all that is needed is symbolic violence. Symbolic violence, according to Bourdieu “is the gentle, disguised form which violence takes when overt violence is impossible” (1990: 133). In the case of symbolic violence, it is because of status, legitimacy or the residues of the malinchista dispositions that postcolonial cultures willingly cave to the influence of new/modern covert empires. Figure 1 summarizes the colonial to postcolonial condition process.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

## **POSTCOLONIALISM AND THE GLOBAL FIELD OF BUSINESS SCHOOLS**

We took a detour to explore the postcolonial condition, as the question emerged on why some business schools in different cultural contexts would accept an oppressed state within a global hierarchy of business schools. Having taken this detour, the insights that we have developed on postcolonial theory, allow us now to answer partly the latter question. Postcolonialism, particularly, would suggest that a field of power could structure not only people in the same cultural context, but also people across cultural contexts, if it uses/leverages factors such as the postcolonial condition. Like this, therefore, a possibility exists for the emergence of global fields, such as the global field of business schools, where the postcolonial condition is precisely one of the enablers for the emergence of a cross-cultural field. Thus, in the global field of business schools, the doxa of continuous improvement is accepted by postcolonial business schools, because they are used to repress their native dispositions through mask psychology. (Figure 2 summarizes the relationship between Bourdieusian theory and postcolonial theory).

[Insert Figure 2 about here]

As the novel fusion between Bourdieu and postcolonialism provides us with an understanding of why postcolonial business schools struggle to get into the autonomous/dominant pole, and end up, by contrast, confined to the heteronomous one, a natural question looms: what is necessary for such business schools to rebel against their submissive state? The answer to this question has multiple dimensions. However, in this paper we would like to contribute to this broader question, by focusing on a specific dimension of it. For that, we need to go back to the local/native doxosophers (i.e., the malinchistas).

Key within the process of a global field of business schools to develop, is the role of malinchistas or local/native doxosophers, who by being native have a connection to locals, yet by being local/native doxosophers are fierce defenders of doxa, and thus, make sure that locals comply with it. The relevance of local/native doxosophers in the expansion of contemporary

colonial efforts has been studied in other contexts. For instance, Boussebaa et al. found (2014), in their exploration of the spreading of colonial Anglo-Saxon values in call centers in India, that local/native doxosophers were essential for these modern/gentler colonial efforts to be successful in that industry. In business schools, doxosophers are equally essential.

In postcolonial business schools, local/native doxosophers are members of staff who are native, yet they have studied in Western countries, where they did their PhDs or MScs, which prepared them for their eventual doxosopher roles. Thus, to understand how postcolonial business schools could be liberated from their submissive status, one key step is to assimilate first how local/native doxosophers could wake up. So that instead of being instruments of the autonomous/dominant pole, they become instruments of the heteronomous pole(s) and enablers of a rebellion against doxa. Hence, we ask more particularly, in this paper, **how may local/native doxosophers in postcolonial business schools wake up from their doxa-aligned roles and start enabling heteronomous poles to defend who they are?**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

Our research question is an open question, for which, first, a qualitative case study would be adequate, since such an approach enables the in-depth understanding of the subjective, emotional and constructed realities of local/native doxosophers that the question demands. Second, it is also clear that this is a controversial subject of study, and that to collect transparent information might be challenging, as people may not be open. It is because of the latter two conditions that we decided that a case that satisfied the necessary requirements was our own.

Both of us (i.e., the authors) used to work together in a business school in México. This particular business school belongs to a heteronomous pole. While working there, one of the authors was appointed head of the international business department and the other programme director of the international business dual degrees. Our university in México was possessed by the doxa of continuous improvement, which means that during one year (from summer 2016

to summer 2017) we worked on implementing a quality improvement programme in the international business dual degrees. Thus, we realized that we were our own subjects of study (i.e., we were local/native doxosophers).

### **Context: The Dual Degrees and our Business School**

Our Mexican business school is part of a private university. Being private means it caters to privileged sectors of Mexican society, but not exclusively. More than 40% of students in the university are sponsored by scholarships, enabling an unmatched level of widening participation. Furthermore, we would define particularly our business school in this university, as a typical middle-class business school in México that is an exemplar of how middle-class business schools in Latin America would like to escape the heteronomous pole(s) by legitimating themselves by embracing foreign ideas. Consistent with this, our business school has been relentlessly trying to get one of the top three international/Western accreditations. Other types of business schools in México, might try different things to escape the heteronomous pole(s). For instance, some started a Mexican accreditation called CACECA. Regardless of how the latter might look as a different strategy, it is probably simply a different type of mimicry, as it has been argued that the Mexican accreditation promotes similar doxa as the three top Western accreditations do. A more radically different group of Mexican business schools might be those that are vocational (and usually for-profit). These might not care about complying with doxa, but simply about keeping the business afloat. One would suspect these business schools remain under the power of the autonomous pole, as nevertheless, they usually accept themselves as non-elite institutions instead of defending their different models.

In terms of international/Western accreditations, it is important to say that in México, by 2015 there were only 14 members of AACSB, and of those, only 4 were accredited. Something similar happens with EQUIS, where there are only 2 accredited business schools in México. Some Mexican business schools have been successful by achieving the triple Western



accreditation (e.g., EGADE). However, most by far have struggled to comply with everything that this doxa demands. At our then business school, every new strategy was focused on using it as a step towards one of these international/Western accreditations. Therefore, when we were appointed as programme director of dual degrees and head of department, we were given the mission of introducing continuous improvement ideals –i.e., doxa– into the management of the dual degrees.

Regarding dual degrees in international business, we had two kinds. One was BSc. dual degrees, and the other was postgraduate dual degrees (including MSc. and MBA programmes). For any type of these programmes, the aim was to confer two degrees. One of such degrees would be from our business school in México, where students did half of their programme. The second would be from our overseas partner, where students did the other half of their studies. The latter meant that we had to service two kinds of students. On the one hand, we had the incoming students: i.e., foreign students that had already done the first half of their BSc., MSc. or MBA at one of our partner universities abroad. These students came to México to do the second part of their degrees, and thus, we had to transfer their credits to México to cover the first part of our Mexican curriculum. On the other hand, we had the Mexican students, also called outgoing students. They had started their degree with us, and now they were going abroad for the second half. However, because of Mexican regulation, they were required to come back to México to do community service before graduating.

For our dual programmes, we worked with overseas business schools that were members of an international consortium. We joined this consortium in the early 2000s, when the university began an internationalization process to create mobility for local students and bring foreign students to our campus. When entering this international consortium, the possibilities for expanding our internationalization efforts increased, as we had opportunities to build dual degrees with any business school in the partnership, including those in countries

such as Italy, the US, the UK and Germany. This was seen as an opportunity to increase revenue, as local students would be interested in the programmes, and enhance our position in league tables, as the programmes would increase our internationalization metrics.

## **Data**

For the purposes of data collection, we engaged in a co-constructed auto-ethnographic exercise. Consistent with Moors, we consider autoethnography as different from conventional participant observation, where researchers might end up embedded in the context but are not originally part of it. By contrast, in autoethnography the researcher is a participant, who “Then moves from participating to reflecting upon one’s experiences” (2017: 388). As Karra and Phillips argue, “autoethnographic approaches have four important strengths—ease of access, reduced resource requirements, ease of establishing trust and rapport, and reduced problems with translation—” (2008: 541). Autoethnographies are “highly personalized revealing texts in which academics tell stories about their own lived experiences, engaging in high levels of reflexivity about the research process” (Empson, 2013: 233). Particularly, what we did was to write a diary throughout a year (from summer 2016 to summer 2017), as the continuous improvement project/strategy was implemented.

Our diary was approximately 9,000 words. It included three sections: background, co-constructed narrative, and analytic reflexivity. The background section was written individually, and in it, both of us reflected on how we got into these posts. Additionally, the background evidenced that we complied with the features of local/native doxosophers, as we did our graduate studies overseas and have been widely influenced to believe in the doxa of the field. Then, the co-constructed narrative was the main section, which was divided into Fall, Spring and Summer Terms sub-sections, where we documented the relevant events throughout the year of implementation. This section is highly important as it shows that we did not simply do an autoethnography, but a co-constructed one. To do this, we followed Snoeren et al., who

describe the exercise of building a co-constructed autoethnography as follows: “In a co-constructed auto-ethnography, each participant shares their personal, incomplete and historically situated version of the shared experience, and after which, in collaboration, these individual perspectives are integrated into a co-constructed narrative” (2016: 7). Finally, the third section of the diary was the analytic reflexivity, which “entails self-conscious introspection guided by a desire to better understand both self and others through examining one’s actions and perceptions” (Anderson, 2006: 382). Particularly, in our analytic reflexivity section, we wrote individual reflections about how our own fields of research and systems of beliefs could be influencing our understanding of these events. Additionally, the analytic reflexivity section was important for us to acknowledge our critical roles as local/native doxosophers, because originally we were obsessed with our uncritical roles as managers/reformers. The latter was due to how the job and its pressures absorbed us. Therefore, in our analytic reflexivity one of the authors reflects about how this critical conception of the role we actually played was “not a simple reflection to identify, due to the volume of the operation of these academic processes, and therefore, any manager is blind”. Like this, the analytic reflexivity prevented us from the inertia to develop a romanticized version of the events here described.

### **Data Analysis**

We analysed the diary through thematic analysis, partly inspired by the Gioia method (see, Gioia, Corely & Hamilton (2013)), and its variations (see Abreu Pederzini (2016, 2018a, 2018b)). Here, similar to a grounded approach, first-order codes (usually in vivo codes) are developed. These codes describe the data. Such codes are then distilled, and eventually allow researchers to put order on the narrative. Additionally, first-order codes enable researchers to identify critical incidents in the narrative. The timeline of critical events that we distilled during the analysis of our diary is shown in Figure 3. Finally, as part of this thematic analysis, first-

order codes are clustered into second-order theory-themes, which encapsulate key higher-order findings that allow researchers to generate an explanation of the case. Some second-order theory-themes are further clustered into an aggregate category, to enhance explanatory power. Table 1 shows a summary of our data structure.

[Insert Figure 3 about here]

[Insert Table 1 about here]

### **FINDINGS: IN HIBRID HABITUS WE REMAIN DOMINATED**

As the management of the dual degrees was a shared responsibility, the diary emphasises the importance of both of us forming a partnership from the outset, especially because of the challenges ahead. It was clear to us, as we started, that our business school already had various types/amounts of capital, which allowed it to begin to compete in the global field of business schools. Particularly, it had human capital, as us, who were local/native doxosophers ready to be aligned with the autonomous/dominant pole, as well as reasonable economic capital, and a special type of symbolic capital that was the capacity to award, in addition to Mexican degrees, American degrees too. Now, for us, as local/native doxosophers, our original and shared aim was perfectly aligned with the field's doxa: to bring continuous improvement, mainly through standardization, to the administration of international business dual degrees. Nevertheless, we identified several roadblocks in this journey, which could be grouped into four main categories:

- **Inertia from Previous Ineffective Management:** Previous administrations did not produce standard protocols about various issues regarding dual degrees. This is evidenced by the fact that when we took over, there were no protocols. Their priority, based on observed practices, seems to have been perhaps to provide personalized solutions, which caused inefficiencies (we know this because we faced these inefficiencies). One was, for instance, regarding modules our Mexican students going

abroad should be taking. As there were no protocols to do this, sometimes students going to the same university would be given a different list of modules to take.

- **Regulatory Framework:** We faced difficulties fitting in our Mexican international business curriculum with those from overseas partners, and to develop a new curriculum that would fit in better with partners' programmes. Our university in México did not have (full) degree-awarding powers, which meant that changes to our curriculum had to be approved by the Mexican government, entailing massive bureaucratic processes.
- **Problems with Students:** Students were uncooperative when we interacted with them (based on what they told us, this was perhaps because they were tired of having problems with the department). For example, sometimes we had to remind students to comply with regulations of which they were aware, yet they would get upset for no apparent reason. An example would be telling them that the law in México requires them to come back to do community service, and they did not want to.
- **Unintended Inheritance:** Some new university policies had unintended consequences for us. For example, the university decided to change its academic calendar for Master's degrees and reduced the number of weeks that international MSc. students would be with us. Because of this, new dual Master's students told us they felt like they had—in those few weeks—too much work. These were decisions that were not made by our department (i.e., this is different from the first category, Inertia from Previous Ineffective Management); yet, they impacted us.

Table 2 provides a summary of roadblocks-categories and illustrative quotes from the diary.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

Judging by the practices—which as Bourdieu argues express people's habitus (1990)—that permeated the department when we arrived, it is possible that prioritizing the continuous

improvement doxa was at least partly absent from the habitus of various stakeholders at our business school. From our data it is impossible to know precisely why the latter happened, but we can make an educated guess and say that it was probably because people lacked the relevant cultural capital. As Bourdieu argues “the best hidden and socially most determinant educational investment...” is “the domestic transmission of cultural capital” (1986: 48): i.e., the culture we inherit is of most benefit when it transmits the dominant dispositions. However, some of our Mexican colleagues might/perhaps come from families/educational backgrounds that do not necessarily predispose them to prefer/prioritize the ideals of the field of business schools. The important point is that, because of this, as our initiative met previous practices, we realized that there would be roadblocks for our doxa-promoting strategy to be successful. This was a first wake up call.

Now, consistent with the postcolonial state of hybridity, as much as we found roadblocks to introduce certain doxa-aligned activities, we also found that some activities aimed at this, were, by contrast, significantly successful. The actions we took that were successful in inculcating doxa, are grouped into 4 categories of paths to overcome roadblocks:

- **Dialoguing:** We arranged a series of meetings with students to hear them out. For instance, the programme director of dual degrees arranged an individual meeting with each student to hear his/her feedback, comments or complaints.
- **Setting Limits:** One was regarding the time that it should take to respond to a student query or complaint. As the diary describes, “The rule was that all student queries (including complaints) would need to be responded as soon as possible, and if possible, within 24 hrs”.
- **Fulfilling our Responsibility while Caring:** As we pushed students/staff to think differently, it was important that they felt that we cared for them.

- **Process Improvement:** We delved into understanding through block diagrams the processes that were involved in the management of dual degrees. This exercise along with feedback we had gathered allowed us to produce guidelines for our dual degrees.

Table 3 provides a summary of the four paths to overcome roadblocks.

[Insert Table 3 about here]

The paths we took to get to the promised land of standardization and continuous improvement were not enough to take us there. We did accomplish a lot, and the operation improved significantly. Yet, there was something missing, which was probably that true habitus change. Thus, our analysis evidenced that underpinning roadblocks and paths to overcoming them was something else: a struggle of identity.

### **The Doxosophers' Awakening: A Revealing Identity Struggle**

The findings, so far, are supportive of the value of blending Bourdieu and postcolonial theory to explain the oppressed state of some business schools in international cultural contexts, as apparently the postcolonial condition is in our case precisely an enabler of our continued subjection in the global field of business schools. An enabler that we (the authors) embodied by being the local/native doxosophers, materializing the dispositions of the autonomous/dominant pole and forcing everyone else to follow them. Thus, we can see in our data the “presence of the particular political, economic, cultural, and educational processes that led to the creation and maintenance of colonies, operating in the creation and dissemination of knowledge, thus perpetuating intellectual colonization” (Joy & Poonamallee, 2013: 398). The underlying problem is perhaps that we, as Mexicans, still conceive ourselves by how others see us. The latter is the central tenet of Said’s postcolonial theory, where he describes how, in his case, the Orient has become what the West thinks and says of it, producing “the ‘normalization’ of Western representations and knowledge claims about the East” (in Özkazanç-Pan, 2008: 966). The same has been widely said of México. For instance, Reyes (2011) documents the

tragedy of Mexicans not understanding their own pre-Hispanic culture, except through the lens of what the Spanish allowed us to know. In short, this is the tragedy of looking for our self-definition (i.e., our identity) through the concept that others have of us, instead of accepting our native dispositions and releasing them. Furthermore, what others expect from us, is “a reductive view of the ‘Other’ based on stereotypical characteristics (‘they all look the same’)” (Wareing, 2009: 922).

It is here that we feel we have found the root of what some have called our inferiority complex, or as Octavio Paz calls it, “Our sense of inferiority –real or imagined–” (1961: 19). Yet, we know better than them, we know it is not an inferiority complex, because as local/native doxosophers in this case, trying to overcome roadblocks so that we could comply with our field’s doxa, we realized what this was for us: an expression of the scopic drive. Described by Bhabha as the “desire... too look/to be looked at” (1994: 47), our scopism has been with us Mexicans forever. The power of our scopic drive has been encapsulated probably for eons in that alleged ancient Mayan greeting that said: *in lak’ech* (I am another you), which was answered with, *hala ken* (and you another me). In a word, in many ways it seems like it was not warrior Aztec blood that stayed with us, but the phantasmagorical Mayan one, which conceived life as finding yourself in others and others through yourself in a qua early connectionism. We find, hence, in that alleged Mayan greeting, the possible essence of our scopic drive: we need to be seen, we want to see you, and we think we see ourselves in you.

Now, to understand our scopism and how it builds an identity struggle, we need to analyse two dimensions through which this identity struggle was expressed in our diary. The first dimension is our incapacity to accept ourselves as Mexicans, which is simply about the postcolonial inertia of not valuing ourselves, unless we look like our captors. This was expressed, for instance, in our seeing of Mexican regulation as a problem. Why did we as local/native doxosophers see our curricula and the laws governing them as worse than other



countries'? We have seen, in our opinion, terrible regulatory frameworks in other countries too (e.g., the tuition fees reforms in the UK in 2010). Yet, it is about our regulations that we complain in the diary: "This nuisance within which most private universities in México work, makes it more difficult for them to adequate or change their curriculums, and, when doing it, they need to comply with certain requirements and constraints that the Ministry of Education sets."

Furthermore, let us look at the problem of the community service. In their interactions with us, Mexican students expressed seeing this as a nuisance, and complained about having to come back to México to do it. Eagerly, as local/native doxoshopers, we saw this as an additional Mexican injustice. But, why should it be interpreted that way? Our constitution demands that we do community service to give something back to those less privileged that have not attended university. Coming back to México for this reason, after finishing your dual degree, should be motivating.

Then, there is the second dimension of the identity struggle, which is that, for us, it seemed like other people in other countries would not accept us: they seemed to refuse to see us for who we are, and it felt like they would only consider looking at us if we looked like them. In a word, we felt like we could only aspire to be looked at if we repressed who we really were. This is what our Aztec, Mayan, Olmec or Toltec ancestors had to do to survive the Spanish conquest: to repress themselves. It is impressive that hundreds of years after the Spanish conquest, the dynamics are the same. For example, the first time that one of us went to a meeting of all partners, the representative of an American university said to him in public that he was going to regret joining a sinking ship (referring to our business school). Would they make such a comment regarding a British business school? Yet, it seems to us as if they felt they had the authority to say it to the Mexicans. Why? Now, if we simply think about continuous improvement, this ideology has been imposed by Westerners on us too. The

Mexican way, at least at our university, had usually been about personalized treatment, because Mexicans probably do not care so much about liberal ideologies of pretending everyone is the same and treating people through mass-policies (Reyes, 2011). Yet, as we came into the management of these programmes, as local/native doxosophers, we were convinced that standardization was what we needed to do. And although, there is nothing wrong with standardization, there is also nothing wrong with different cultures wanting to approach things in different ways.

These events, looming from the two dimensions of the identity struggle, led eventually to the local/native doxosophers' awakening. The successes we had in finding certain paths to introduce doxa in our school, were for us great achievements, for which we expected the autonomous/dominant pole to praise us. Yet, it felt to us like this did not (fully) happen. This was evidenced in various instances in the diary. For example, we faced a cohort of international students in the MSc. degree, who were problematic, they kept complaining about everything. So, we organized a forum to hear them out, only to realize that:

*“During the meeting, other concerns emerged, particularly regarding the quality of the teaching in the Business Statistics course. [The head of department] had frequent talks with this particular lecturer in order to try to improve the students' experience. Yet, the complaints about this particular lecturer continued, one after the next. Nothing would satisfy international students, most of them European. At the end of the term, nevertheless, we found out why. Apparently, based on all the evidence provided by the lecturer (including marks on exams, attendance, and assignments) most of the students were doing poorly in this course. It turns out, therefore, that the complaints emerged from some urban legend that says that starting your degree in México was good because you would get really high marks, which would boost your final degree classification”.*

Then, with our German partner, we had another issue. Their dual degrees programme director expressed to us that s/he did not like the marks students got in México. The programme director wanted lower marks: “Our German colleagues wanted us to give the students lower marks. Nevertheless, at this point, a sense of pride finally emerged in [our university]”. This

moment when we realized that our colleague was making demands for our lecturers to change their marks for, in our opinion, no good reason, was a critical incident. An inflexion point, which evidences our awakening. We had been working hard to obey the rules of the field, and yet, it seemed to us like they still had little respect for us. It felt like a betrayal.

One of us during a meeting with international partners had another issue that was experienced as terrifying:

*“During the first meeting I attended with the consortium partners, our French, German, Italian, Irish and American partners, discussed the issue of cultural differences, which their students lived while being in México. The discussion was heated and interesting, but always taking as point of departure the assumption that most foreigners have of México. For example, the most important one being **that in México we work less than in other countries**”.*

It was, to us, simply unbelievable. Our efforts did not matter, it still felt like little respect was offered to us. In the end, the local/native doxosophers’ awakening, hence, was for us all about a feeling of betrayal. As local/native doxosophers –i.e., malinchistas– we were used to defend foreign doxa. Yet, what we conceived as a betrayal from the autonomous/dominant pole awakened us. Because it felt like no matter what we did or how we did it, they still did not (fully) respect us. Because it felt like regardless of the accreditations we could aim for, there is something else that has nothing to do with effort, but simply luck (the luck of where you were born), which is what probably defines who is in the autonomous/dominant pole and who is not. In short, because **doxa is a mechanism of domination through deception: telling us that we need to believe this and that and develop such dispositions, only to realize that even if we do, that is still not enough to get a seat at the table of the elites**. It was here, within the hurricane of our identity struggle and our awakening, that the “let us be” cry emerged, in the sense of how the autonomous/dominant pole needs, in our opinion, to let us be, instead of selling us this potential delusion of doxa. But, also in the sense that we need to wake up and let ourselves be, because we had been the ones who, overwhelmed by our

own identity struggle, allowed this domination to happen in the first place. In the end, we realized that our mission was not to enable a habitus change, but to motivate our colleagues to accept our Mexican habitus. Or, as we conclude in the diary:

“The latter meant to let them know of all the amazing opportunities behind a dual degree, but also to make them aware about cultural differences, and how these could derive sometimes in unexpected events during their dual degree studies. Furthermore, it was also essential to teach students about the value of our own culture and to respect the ways things are done in México”.

Figure 4 provides a summary diagram of the findings about the awakening.

[Insert Figure 4 about here]

### **AN ELEGY TO SOLITUDE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

In a wonderful research by Khan, Munir, & Willmott (2007), the authors explored Western efforts to eliminate child labour in the football stitching industry in Sialkot Pakistan. There they found that the West, apparently disgusted by how children stitched footballs, moved to eliminate child labour. Yet, the West did not seem to understand that actually most children were working with their parents, that for some parents stitching from home was their only way to find a job, and that for some parents asking their children to help was a way of educating them. In a word, this as well as other experiences, sometimes lead us to feel like the West rarely understands anything else but itself and that in our times, most importantly, business/management policies and initiatives have been turned into new (intended or unintended) colonial efforts. Yet, sadly, it all seems to begin with management education and the place where this takes place: business schools. The global field of business schools, as the conventional Bourdieusian definition of field demands, has become **a space of domination**, where postcolonial schools, among others, have been imprisoned in an illegitimate status. Remaining, thus, willing to sacrifice who they are to satisfy the deceptive doxa set by the autonomous/dominant pole of the field. If one day we want to understand how to set free postcolonial business schools, we have suggested that we need to ask: how may local/native

doxosophers in postcolonial business schools wake up from their doxa-aligned roles and start enabling heteronomous poles to defend who they are?

What our empirical study, blending Bourdieu with postcolonial theory through an in-depth situated Latino autoethnography, has taught us about this question, is that the awakening is probably unavoidable, as it might be triggered by events that are felt as betrayals and which might be doomed to happen. This awakening represents the key conundrum of Bourdieusian theory, as Bourdieu's theory is underpinned on the idea that oppressed classes are condemned to their oppression due to dispositions from which they cannot set themselves free (1984). In the case of postcolonial business schools, the awakening comes from a particular event that is felt as a betrayal: no matter what we do, we seem to remain at the bottom of the hierarchy. Because in the end, accreditations and the doxa of continuous improvement might simply be psychological drugs: doxa might work as a device of domination because it is deceitful, and it may only exist to distract us. To make us feel like there is something we can do, through hard work, to be part of the elites, while this eventually ends up feeling like a lie. If one is sceptical, one should simply look at the so-called top business schools in prestigious rankings, and then try to find them in the list of triple-accredited business schools. You will find that many are not there. Especially, elite business schools in the US do not seem to bother to get the capital of the triple accreditation. This might be because they know already what local/native doxosophers only find out after feeling as if they had been betrayed: that actual elites do not need accreditations, that is not the capital that makes them elite.

Thus, the main implication of this study is that no one might be able stop the betrayal of local/native doxosophers. But, the question is, when that happens, what will come next? For postcolonial business schools, this awakening could be key to get over damaging consequences that doxa has had on them. For instance, one damaging consequence being that doxa does not only affect how we operate business schools, but what/how we teach in them too. In her

enlightening personal reflection of the anxiety she felt when moving to South Africa, after teaching leadership in the US for 20 years, Nkomo stresses her surprise at realizing that South African business schools were using exactly the same texts and theories to teach leadership, despite how “grossly inadequate, embarrassingly so” they were (2011: 366). Because in the end, Western theories formed in elite business schools would probably not capture how stitching functions in Pakistan, or how leadership unravels in South Africa, or why the Mexican man/woman starts a “changarro” on a sidewalk to sell quesadillas instead of a “legitimate” business. The awakening of the local/native doxosopher could help us liberate our theories/teaching from excessive Western influence. However, the risk is that in the betrayal and the anger it might cause, local/native doxosophers may turn their backs against the West. Do we really want the malinchistas to turn their frustration against everything foreign and go back to a world where different cultures cannot talk to each other? We doubt that would be good for anyone.

Hence, what we need is an awakening of doxosophers that does not turn them into revolutionaries, but into philosophers. As Bourdieu argues, “the philosopher questions the things that are self-evident... This [by contrast] profoundly shocks the doxosopher” (1998: 8). Therefore, a philosopher, having awakened might stop selling his country to foreigners, but given his/her criticality, s/he will also recognize when we gain and grow from interacting with foreigners. Yet, if betrayals are the triggers of the awakening, we doubt we could expect to get the philosopher as an outcome.

Hopefully, this paper could trigger a debate, among business school scholars, on the need for equity in business schools, and the role that we all –dominant or non-dominant groups– might play, intendedly or unintendedly, in the power struggles of our field. It is here, therefore, that a call is made for other types of intermediaries to reflect on their roles too. For instance, AACSB, EQUIS or AMBA, need to reconsider whether their mission is to convert

precolonial “savages” into obedient disciples, or to use their interactions with other cultures to (actually) learn from them. So far, accreditation standards seem to do their best (sometimes) to convince the rest of the hierarchy to behave like they tell us to; but who is doing their best to convince elites to behave like the rest of us? Is there really nothing elites could learn from us? Certainly, in our case study, we were shocked to feel like we were supposed to learn from foreigners, but that they did not seem to think there was much to learn from us. The same call goes to elite business schools opening satellite campuses. Are you doing this because you want to be missionaries reducing other cultures, like colonizers did, to “undeveloped natives” needing to be educated, or are you willing to learn something from those other cultures?

In the end, who knows what the future holds for us postcolonial subjects. Yet, so far, this story looks simply like the proverbial Latino epic of our quintessential state of unescapable solitude. A solitude that emerges from natives, such as local/native doxosophers, and their desperation to make their lives credible: “the major challenge before us”, García Márquez once claimed, “has been the want of conventional resources to make our life credible. This, my friends, is the nub of our solitude” (1982: 3). Chasing doxa is precisely the use of conventional resources to make our lives credible, and it leaves us in solitude because we cannot be ourselves—they do not let us be, we do not let ourselves be either. Yet, the awakening from doxa might also incestuously return us to solitude once more and reveal solitude for what Octavio Paz always argued it was, an unescapable labyrinth (1961). Because the awakening from the phantasy of doxa might simply become a reminder that we stand in separateness: disjoined from who we were while they and ourselves do not let us reach who we were promised we could become...

*... 'oh que soledad, siento el corazón que ya no late más, que deja de latir, ven anda soledad'*

(oh what solitude, I feel the heart that beats no more, that it stops beating, come on solitude)

—Alberto Aguilera Valadez

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