Constructing the postcolonial manager.
Orientalising Latin America in the textbooks.

Stream: Postcolonialism

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Introduction

Global businesses have reached an influential position in defining the conditions of contemporary society. Their managerial discourses and business practices play an important role in shaping forms of relationships between different players, local and global businesses agents in the global market (Clarke & Clegg 1998, Dicken 2003). In this context the impact of business organisations on everyday life and social relationships needs to be analysed in order to understand how business interests, and the ideologies which legitimise their actions, are affecting the economic, political, social and cultural practices at both local and global levels. Latin American societies, as the focus of this paper, have been increasingly influenced by the ways that multinationals define the rules of the game in relation with work practices and forms of negotiation between local business and global business partners, local managers and corporate managers, and employees and workers.

The approach used is discourse analysis (Hodge & Kress 1993, Coronado 2003, Carbó 1984, Fairclough 2001; Macdonell 1987). The instances of managerial discourse analysed are textbooks which represent cultures from the perspective of business interests. As important discursive products used to orient, socialise, train, and educate potential members of business organisations, textbooks have a global impact, themselves part of a global industry with distribution to business schools around the world, and used in similar ways. These global business texts reproduce the hegemonic ideologies of business which influence how many countries and corporations function. To illustrate the argument the paper focuses on representations of Latin American national cultures, particularly Mexican culture, in the context of international business exchanges as they are manifested in the discourse of the textbooks.

Managerial Discourse and Ideological complexes

The relevance of cultural representations in management textbooks goes beyond the specific interests of business organisations. As they are learned and taken for granted they become ideological tools defining the kind of relationships between business organisations across borders: defining forms of relationships between different players in the global market through which local and global businesses interact with each other. The managerial discourse of the textbooks carries ideologies informing social and cultural representations of contemporary society and the kind of social relationships that are expected inside business organisations and between them. Even though the groups most influenced by this discourse are students in business schools, the construction of ideologically-framed can also affect other areas of social life and sectors of society as transmitted in everyday behaviour and workplace social exchanges.

Foucault (1971 describes discourse as a regime that constrains the forms and contents of specific acts of communication, defining who can say what to whom, delimiting the boundaries of what is accepted as ‘truth’ or ‘sense’ for the specific community. In these terms, the discourse of business is organized
as a discursive regime carrying specific ideologies. These ideologies, ‘dimensions of social experiences in which meanings and values are produced’ (Williams 1977) represent the interests of specific groups; multinationals, (AmericanUS\(^1\) in this case) as complex ways of interpreting, making sense of or constructing the meanings of social reality and relations of power (Bell 1992:37). Hegemonic representations of those ideologies are found in the managerial discourses of the textbooks taught in schools of business.

However, even if ideologies are hegemonic they are not homogenous, and inside them it is possible to find simultaneously consensus and opposition, since the dominant need to sustain their interests to manage both relations of power and solidarity. As pointed out by Hodge and Kress: ‘In order to sustain these structures of domination the dominant groups attempt to represent the world in forms that reflect their own interests, the interests of their power. But they also need to sustain the bonds of solidarity that are the condition of their dominance’. (1988:3). Hegemonic discourses need to be dynamic, sustaining the power/solidarity paradox, responding explicitly to counter-hegemonic oppositions, using solidarity as a strategy to reinforce dominance. When trying to understand the ideologies contained in the managerial discourse it is better then to conceptualise them as constituting an ‘ideological complex’. According to Hodge & Kress (1988) ideological complexes contain multiple versions of reality in which social interactions are constructed by regimes of truth, expressed through redundancy and contradictions, which as a whole reproduce a dominant view on behalf of the interests of hegemonic groups.

The managerial discourse tries to reproduce the interests and values of diverse business organisations, managing potential conflicts with relevant but subordinate sectors of the business community. Through the ideological complex, which includes a set of ideological schemas (ibid: 266), businesses represent opposite interests, their own and others’. As such, the ideological complex of business includes different representations of the relationships between business and other sectors of society, and different representations of cultures. The discursive strategies used are not homogenous, full of contradictions, and in dialogue or competition with alternative discourses outside the business discursive community.

It is important to emphasize the complexity of any discourse and the business one is not an exception. There are in the managerial discourses multiple positions which sometimes appear as contradictions but that are just part of the ideological complex to reproduce domination through solidarity. In terms of ideologies of interculturality, the discursive strategy to sustain the relations of power and solidarity includes contradictory messages that create a sense of horizontal forms of relationship across borders, as among equals, and simultaneously reproducing the asymmetrical forms of relationship in which one is dominant and the other subaltern.

Managerial discourses combine two ideological complexes, interrelated but working at different levels: globalisation and Postcolonialism, or Orientalism. The ideological complex of globalisation is based on the capitalist ideology of

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\(^1\) I prefer to use AmericanUS instead of American, considering that Latin America and Canada are also part of the American continent.
economic growth, expansion and free markets as the defining quality of the
global system (Heilbroner 1985; Spich 1995, Bartelson 2000, Wallerstein
ideological complex of postcolonialism or orientalism (Said 1987, Mishra &
Hodge 1991; Hodge & Mishra 1991) reproduces older ideological forms from
colonialism in the present through discursive regimes that use similar patterns
domination and subalternity, while claiming solidarity with the ‘other’
through appreciation and ‘cultural sensitivity’ to the value of alternative
practices.

The Business Ideological complex and the orientalisation of
cultures.

In International business and specifically cross-cultural management texts,
recommendations to business on how they should deal with cultural issues
are strongly influenced by cultural representations informed by an academic
tradition imbued with the ideologies used to represent former colonial cultures
from the perspective of their colonial masters. Most textbooks in cross-cultural
management follow this tradition. They include the same definitions of culture,
the same models and figures, and similar crude generalizations of different
cultural behaviours. At best they warn about the limits of generalisation of
cultural behaviours, but still show a mainly essentialist concept of culture,
coming from now outdated and stereotyped views of non-western cultures.
They were filtered through the lenses of binary distinctions between
primitivism and civilization used by classic anthropologists who used
evolutionary models to study cultures, such as Lewis H. Morgan (1877), who
defined ‘the stages lines of human progress’ (mentioned in Schneider and
Barsoux 2003 as “Levels of barbarism’). Whether consciously or not, classical
anthropologists reproduced an evolutionary model of culture which served the
colonial interests of the ‘civilised’ (the highest stage of human progress in
Morgan’s terms) in colonised societies, where the ‘primitives’ were living. Some examples are Margaret Mead studying Samoan culture (1928) and
Kluckhohn (1967, first published in 1944) and Kroeber on Native American
Indians (Kroeber & Kluckhohn1952)

Analyses of contemporary national cultures still draw on this ideology,
emphasising behaviours that are different to ‘ours’, as if this fact linked them
to ‘primitive institutions’ fully determined by the culture. Some definitions of
culture included in the textbooks imply deterministic views of culture which will
be the basis for intercultural problems for businesses operating across
borders. Culture is ‘that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art,
morals law and custom and other capabilities acquired by man as a member
of society’ (Tylor 1871 cited in Hill 2001:98); a fixed ‘design for living’ (Hill
2001:88), which contains ‘shared values, understandings, assumptions and
goals that over time are passed on and imposed by members of a group or

As well as essentialising cultures, managerial discourse locates them in a
global framework of relationships between nations, constructing a worldview
informed by an ideological history of global political and economic
relationships between dominant and subordinate. This managerial discourse represents world cultures through the two interrelated ideological schemas: globalisation and postcolonialism. These two complexes interact in a discursive regime, which represents the world today as the result of historic evolution, driven by the success of the fittest in the capitalist system, leading to a division between those who have progressed and won, the hegemonic powers that ‘developed’, and the ones who lost and did not progress, the ‘less developed or developing countries’. In this evolutionary history the non-developed ‘losers’ occupy the place of the ‘primitives’, far from reaching the stage of high civilization, even if they are ‘developing’. Linear representations of this kind are in the core of globalisation discourse: ‘As more and more countries open up to the borderless world, the prospects for humankind – or at least for those able to adapt - are steadily improving’ (Connelly and Kennedy 1994:70 in Spich 1995:12). As a consequence, the only way for nations to ‘prosper’ and their business to win, or at least survive in the global marketplace is to follow the guidelines contained in the dominant discourse, in the ‘wisdom’ of the fittest, transmitted through AmericanUS textbooks.

In managerial discourse the global economy, a single marketplace where countries and corporations need to compete, countries are divided according to their position in the world economic map and the evolutionary stage of progress. The divisions and the cultural representations associated with them have a long history. They can be tracked back to early capitalist expansion (see Marx & Engels 1971) through forms reproduced in colonisation, neocolonialism, and imperialism, and now globalisation (Cohen & Kennedy 2000). In different historical stages the same relational model between nations and their cultures is used, reproducing the relationship between the dominant as civilised and the subaltern as primitive. Cultures are represented accordingly in terms of what Said (1978) called ‘Orientalism’, the strategy of former colonial powers to appropriate representations of the ‘Other’, distorting their culture and excluding the voice of native cultural agents. The discourse of management becomes a form of orientalisation of the culture of the ‘Other’, usually those from former colonies, now ‘less developed’ economies.

This strategy defines positions of power in global dynamics, constructing contradictory roles. The more developed gain access to the resources of the less developed, pursuing their interests, and at the same time determining the conditions of development for those countries. For the less developed, this in practice impedes their chances of reaching a higher level of development, since that would oppose the interests of the more developed. The discourse of neoliberalism that states that globalisation will enhance the conditions of life of everyone is contradicted by the distinction between countries according to their ‘competitive advantage’, a competition to serve the interests of multinationals from developed economies (as emerging markets, sources of materials, export zones, producers or providers of knowledge, according to Porter 2001).

According to the ideological complex of globalisation they have not developed enough to survive in the free market, so that the dominant need to express solidarity with them. Without the help of the fittest (business corporations from developed countries) less developed countries will not survive: ‘Multinationals already have a positive impact on LDCs by providing managerial training,
investment capital and new technology as well as by creating jobs and improving the infrastructure’ (Deresky 2002: 37 my emphasis). From the logic of the ideological complex of postcolonialism, the knowledge, technology and managerial skills that Multinationals offer represent the one legitimate way to do business. They demonstrate the ‘superior’ culture of the civilised that the primitives, apparently, need to acquire. But the teaching of this superior culture incorporates discursive strategies from orientalisation by representing the ‘Others’ culture in ‘positive’, politically correct forms. Western developed economies are presented as the apex of civilisation, worthy to lead the global market through their exemplary ways of doing business, and their cultures are represented as the only real foundation for success.

The Other’s cultures, in this case Latin Americans, are at the other extreme of the evolutionary continuum constructed by narratives that represent, or rather misrepresent, their culture from the perspective and for the interest of the dominant. The ‘American Way’ is normalised as the only efficient way to manage economies, nations and business organisations. It is called ‘universalist’ and as such can be generalised to measure other cultures, which in contrast are ‘particularist’ (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars 2000).

To show how the textbooks reinforce these ideologies I will focus on the strategies of managerial discourse, analysing how they reproduce the role of the West, (in fact American Anglo West, as the contemporary ‘colonial’ power), and the continuity of ‘colonisation’, now with less developed or developing countries as the new colonies: as potential customers, partners or providers of natural resources or intensive labour for global corporations. Inside this logic, cross-cultural management texts teach how different cultures must be managed for corporations to succeed, basically analysing cultural difference as a problem and the managerial approach as the solution. As Holden (2002:xiii-xiv) points out, in traditional writings on culture and management in the context of international business ‘we can find that culture is about fundamental differences, which hang like swords of Democles over international companies, poised to undermine their negotiations and pervert their strategies’.

Reinventing the ‘primitives’

I will discuss some discursive strategies used in management textbooks to represent global players in international business using the binary logic of managerial ideological complexes. Through these strategies management textbooks reinforce the dichotomy between developed and developing countries as if economic growth were inherently linked with cultural evolution. They represent contemporary society as divided between more economically developed, more ‘civilised’ countries, vs. less economically developed countries which are the ‘primitives’. In the textbooks the voice of the author represents the perspective of the dominant discourse, taking the authority and legitimacy to speak on behalf of the whole management community (potential managers of American corporations, or their partners) to the ‘Other’, who must learn passively how to do business by adopting the culture of the civilised manager.
The discourses in international management textbooks emphasise the perspective of business organisations entering the markets of other countries, mostly ‘less developed’ ones. Their focus is therefore to inform global business players how to relate with those cultures to succeed in business, or as it has been put, to prevent cultural differences ruining a partnership that otherwise makes perfect economic sense (Hall 1995). I will illustrate the argument with some examples from International Business texts used in Australia, especially those with a cross-cultural approach: International Management. Managing Across Cultures by Helen Deresky (with 5 editions) and Global Business by Charles Hill (3 editions, translated into Spanish).

The discursive strategies representing cultures can be found at the macro level of the textbook as a whole in the way they are structured through a single authoritative voice addressing a single audience is considered, with specific language usage to signal covert meanings. They present culture as a static, homogenous essence which determines social behaviour as an inherent part of a culture. This representation of other cultures is made through ahistoric and highly selective statements presented as facts. The strategy, I call scientific stereotyping, is discursively constructed by taking for granted implicit values that are assumed positive (e.g. democracy) as inherent qualities of the ‘civilised’, describing the different qualities of the ‘other’, then subtly indicating a negative evaluation. Other elements of the strategy are overgeneralization, use of verbal ideological signs, explicit expressions of ‘tolerance’, and use of fictionalised case studies to illustrate those ‘truths’.

Scientific stereotyping, or culture as essence

Cross-cultural management texts have been strongly influenced by Hofstede’s Culture’s Consequence. International Differences In Work Related Values (1980 and its versions in 1983, 1991, 2001). Hofstede conducted a study to evaluate the impact of cultures on workplace behaviour, using a psychological approach with a deterministic and essentialist definition of culture: ‘the collective programming of the mind which distinguished different members of one human group from another’ (1980:21). His work was based on a survey applied to 100 000 employees in 72 countries between 1968 and 1972 in subsidiaries of BM. The author of this research, and a simplified version of his results are referred to in all texts I have encountered in cross-cultural management, with few criticisms, except for Holden (2002), who criticises the dominance of his view of culture in cross cultural management studies (see also Dorfman & Howell 1988).

Hofstede’s status as authority on culture for management studies can be seen from the extensive use of his models. The Preface for the second edition of Culture’s Consequences claims: ‘the book has become a classic and one of the most cited sources in the entire Social Science Citation Index.’(Hofstede 2001). Characterizations of national cultures for the business community are mainly based on this ‘classic’, whose interpretations are reproduced as taken for granted truths. His ‘truth’ is legitimised by his ‘scientific’, rigorous application of an exhaustive positivistic method on a huge sample, producing generalisations about cultures which in practice are largely stereotypes. They are simplistic external views of behaviours of others coming from
interpretations, made through the lenses of western, Anglo ideologies. His stereotypes of national cultures are repeated and expanded by other authors, in every re-edition and new edition of textbooks. In all of them, the model is explained and complemented with other concepts, based on similar research or application of the model to new data (Fernandez et al. 1997). In some cases different texts use similar examples to illustrate qualities of different national cultures.

As if assuming that cultures cannot change, management textbooks still construct interactions between businesses from different countries as a relationship between homogenous cultures separated by impenetrable borders. Following the imperialist blueprint, this view of culture reproduces the relations of power that prevailed during the colonial era, the continuity sustained by the postcolonial ideological complex. Now the colonizer is the AmericanUS Corporation, with the expatriate manager (or local administrator of neocolonial interests) managing the ‘Other’ as in the postcolonial dichotomy. Those ‘managed’ are all assumed to behave as in the stereotype, which not only simplifies national cultures but also regional cultural ‘clusters’, Latin America among them. Hofstede offers a solution to the complexity of international business operating in multiple countries. His model simplifies cultural complexity, an easy tool to use for understanding the problematic differences found in workplaces when doing business in other countries. Although his study explicitly notes the diversity inside each culture, his management of the data through sophisticated statistical tools simplifies the complexity, creating cultural representations that are often close to stereotypes:

Many of Hofstede’s findings are consistent with standard Western stereotypes about cultural differences. For example ‘many people believe Americans are more individualistic and egalitarian (they have a lower power distance) than the Japanese, who in turn are more individualistic and egalitarian than the Mexicans. Similarly, many might agree that Latin American countries such as Mexico place a higher emphasis on masculine value – they are machismo cultures—than the Nordic countries of Denmark and Sweden. (Hill 2004:120)

The similarity of the scientific results to common stereotypes seems here interpreted as reinforcing their accuracy but in my view it raises some concerns about how those cultural perceptions might have been inadvertently introduced into the design of the research, especially considering that the research comes from a perspective that might be influenced by the ‘truth’ of ‘standard Western stereotypes’.

As a discursive strategy, scientific stereotypes are legitimised by the scientific model as a discursive regime of truth (in Foucault terms, 1972), and by virtue of that authority they carry weight when introduced into the textbook, seeming unquestionable facts. The model, with its ideological perspective attached, conveys a narrative of AmericanUS managerial hegemony. In that way a classificatory scheme of values found in different cultures is transformed into a device to apply positive or negative judgements from an AmericanUS perspective. The culture of the contemporary ‘global/colonial power’, Anglo culture, is implicitly translated into good business practice, i.e. good for
success in the global capitalist ‘jungle’, where AmericanUS Corporations are the fittest. Their concern is to avoid behaviours that might damage negotiations with potential business partners, or affect the performance of business partners, in this case Latin Americans.

Even though these textbooks have readers from other nationalities, the intended audience seems to be mainly AmericanUS or those who want to be like them. The fact that in my case the audience is Australian does not seem problematic. Based on the same homogenising strategy Australians are not distinguished from AmericanUS. They become undifferentiated Anglos, in the same way as Mexicans, Brazilians or Argentineans become Latin Americans in ‘regional clusters’, erasing in both cases any difference between them.

The texts explicitly teach readers how to behave with political correctness, which is in fact common in the ideological complex of postcolonialism. The dominant paradoxically expresses superiority by denying it exists. In managerial discourse this appears especially when illustrating the problems ‘we’ business people will find when doing business in those countries. For example, after inviting readers to consider positive changes in LA as an opportunity, Hill changes to a warning: ‘At the same time, given the long history of economic mismanagement in Latin America, there is no warranty that those favourable trends will continue’ (Hill 2004:26).

This simultaneity of opposite views constructs ambivalence about LA cultures through different discursive strategies at different levels of textuality, more or less explicitly marking contrasts with Anglos. Anglos are generally characterised by timeless values such as honesty, while texts point out that corruption is common in ‘host countries’, never mentioning the role of multinationals in these systems. The use of the term ‘host’ to refer to the countries businesses enter is useful to construct asymmetrical relations that seem reciprocal and involve friendship. This is another way to disguise a position of dominance in a situation not represented as colonial. How could a ‘guest’ do wrong if behaving like the host? Apparently it is possible to judge the behaviour of the host, but not while being a guest:

These are business payments that rise significant questions of appropriate moral behaviour either in the host nation or in other nations... They are called different names in different countries: tokens of appreciation, la mordida (the bite, in Mexico), bastarella (“little envelope” in Italy), pot-de-vin (jug of wine in France). For the sake of simplicity, we will categorize all these types of questionable payments as some form of bribery. In Mexico, for example, companies make monthly payments to the mail carriers, or their mail gets “lost” (Deresky 2004:48).

It is important to point out in this quote the discursive strategy that gives authority to the speaker, a ‘we’ who has the capacity and right to judge all cultures (host or other). ‘We’ are more reliable and ‘our’ way of doing business is beyond question. ‘We’ have the moral authority to judge these others. ‘We’ give ourselves these characteristics: trustable, lucid, time efficient and individualistic. These contrast with characteristics of other cultures, the Latin American ‘primitives’ who cause problems for good business people. The
implicit contrast between ‘reliable’ AmericanUS and ‘unreliable’ Latin Americans can be seen in the next quotation:

“In Latin America, for example, a common attitude toward time is manana [sic], a word that literally means “tomorrow”. A Latin American person using this word, however, usually means an indefinite time in the near future” (101)

From the quotation it is evident that civilised people do not say something that means something different, and they are definite and clear about their commitments. Using a common strategy of orientalism, over-generalisations to homogenise the other, it seems that a hundred million people do not know when tomorrow is.

Other instances explain how problematic are the cultures of others for AmericanUS. For example Deresky (2002:103) laments how Mexican culture ‘affects Business Organizations’: they are ‘rigid’, ‘don’t transfer loyalty’, prioritize leisure, are imprecise, ‘rely on intuition and emotion’, their ‘discipline routine [is] unnatural’ and they are morally confused by a ‘mixture of good and evil’. Since Mexicans do not follow the default way of doing business, as in the Protestant work ethic, their practices are seen as obstacles to success.

Other Latin American countries and other ‘primitives’ share an inherently and corrupt authoritarian culture, and this unfocused attitude to work:

> Italians, Mexicans and Chinese, for example, would openly express emotions even in a business situation, whereas the British and Japanese would consider such display unprofessional” (Ibid:98)

> … family oriented and Polychronic. “Polychronic people –Latin Americans…and those from other collectivist cultures- may focus on several things at once, be highly distractible and change plans often” (Ibid:136)

These cultural characteristics are represented as inconvenient, ignoring their possible value as alternative ways of behaving. Instead of seeing potential benefits, for example, in the ability to express emotions, or the advantage of a multiple focus, the text qualifies them negatively as ‘unprofessional’, ‘distractible’, and unstable. Also relevant in the quotation is the inclusion of the word ‘even’. Its role is to magnify the effect, transforming the neutral value in question, ‘to express emotions’, into a negative one. The word ‘even’ creates the implication that it is bad enough to possess that quality outside the business environment; inside it is scandalous.

Not all these cultural judgements are referenced, but it is possible many have been informed by research that followed the line of authors like Hofstede (1991) and Trompenaars (1993), who applied a simplistic logic in which responses to a survey about attitudes to workplace dynamics become true representations of what is and will be the culture of the other. Since cultural difference is considered problematic the best way to manage intercultural relationship is after all by teaching ‘best’ practices and attitudes from the best culture. But these management students (and business people) have to be trained how to deal with those problems face to face with the ‘primitives’. For this task they are given another discursive strategy, the discourse of tolerance.
The discourse of tolerance

The need to deal with ‘primitive’ business people demands an attitude which is characteristic of colonial exchanges: the paternalistic ‘civilised’ show their superiority by positioning themselves as ones who can understand the ‘inferiority’ of the other, and make an effort to behave accordingly. This discursive strategy employs ways of acting with tolerance, a tolerance that works unidirectionally, with the superior interlocutor as the one who tolerates and the inferior subaltern as the one to be tolerated. Being tolerant, superiors reinforce their superiority by showing generosity and understanding, while simultaneously signalling the inadequacy of the other’s behaviour. If it were adequate, tolerance would not be necessary.

The tolerance strategy appears when advising how corporations entering into ‘host’ countries should behave, being careful not to offend, explicitly recommended to exercise patience and tolerance to deal successfully with their inconvenient but indispensable partners or employees:

‘Americans need to approach negotiations with Mexicans with patience and tolerance’ (Deresky 2002:17).

In Mexico, a visiting international executive or salesperson is advised to take time out, before negotiating business, to show appreciation for the surrounding architecture, which is prized by Mexicans” (Ibid:135)

In many countries such as Mexico and China, personal commitments to individuals, rather than legal systems, form the basis for the enforcement of contracts. Effective negotiators allow plenty of time in their schedule for such relationship building with bargaining partners. This process usually takes the form of social events, tours, and ceremonies, along with much light conversation, or non task sounding, while both sides get to know one another. In such cultures, one patiently waits for the other party to start actual business negotiations, aware that relationship building is, in fact, the first place of negotiations. (Ibid:162)

The uses of some key words (marked in bold) emphasize difference by contrasting with the expected ‘good behaviour’. They also indicate some level of irritation at the ways of others that must be hidden, instead showing ‘respect’, ‘appreciation’, ‘patience’ and ‘tolerance’. What is recommended is not to be but to ‘show’. There is no need for real positivity towards the other; showing it is enough. To ‘endure ’ visits to Mexican architecture is clearly patronising, and in this case may not even reflect responses by the AmericanUS audience, who often find a personalized tour very rewarding (with costs covered by the Mexican potential partner), enjoying tourist attractions not only prized by Mexicans but recognised world wide.

Case studies carrying the Ideological complexes

As part of the strategy to homogenise and over-generalise cultural behaviours, management textbooks use case studies as illustrations. Even though many such cases come from research, they are adapted or
fictionalised to fit the models being presented. The case studies use situations that represent ‘reality’ in a vivid way, but this didactic tool is also coloured with ideology. The sense of reality is actually achieved through fictions, or reliable inventions. This kind of practice to bridge theory with practice has been called Applied Science Fiction (ASF) (Nicolai 2004). I select one case to analyse in more detail, which Deresky (2002:416) reprinted from TIME (Cathy Booth Thomas, June 11, 2001), entitled ‘The rise of the NAFTA Manager’

This case shows the triumphant interrelation of the two ideological complexes of globalisation and postcolonialism: how ‘a postcolonial manager’ should behave. ‘NAFTA Man’ is able to manage the contradictions of the ideological complex, dealing efficiently with the paradoxes of power and solidarity. He can behave simultaneously as civilised and primitive to deal with the emergent border region. Borders and trade agreements create new situations of interculturality, and this case suggests a ‘solution’ to the long difficult relationship that has existed between Mexicans and AmericanUS. The NAFTA trade agreement has opened a space where interactions historically defined by domination of USA over subaltern Mexico become apparently equal, allowing the relationship to be managed in politically correct terms, showing patience and tolerance, keeping power and control while behaving with solidarity, as if the relationship were reciprocal.

The Rise of the NAFTA Manager

The border economy has bred a dynamic new strain of bicultural bosses.

... The reason that Laredo and nearby McAllen, Texas, are two of the top 10 fastest-growing metro areas in the US is mainly owing to NAFTA and its progeny: NAFTA Man.

NAFTA man is not only bilingual, he’s also bicultural. He speaks Spanish on the factory floor in Mexico but yells in English at his kid’s T-ball games. He knows when to offer a bribe in Mexico (to a traffic cop) and when not (during an environmental inspection). He prefers chile rellenos to pot roast, gets his allergy medicine in Mexico but his MRI in the U.S. He has a two-sided wallet for pesos and dollars and would practically kill for a cell phone that works in both countries. “We don’t know who we are” laugh Jon Castany, president of the Reynosa Maquiladora Association, which has 110 mostly gringo members. “We are schizo. Border culture is just, well different”.

These NAFTA Men - and a few women - are genetically engineered by the border economy. Managers are taught to take a different route to work every day to fail potential kidnappers. They grow accustomed to training – and losing - an entire factory floor of workers every year. And they have discovered that “casual Friday” in McAllen is often a dress-up workday on the other side. Around here, the most valuable asset is their flexibility. “You have to switch gears in Mexico – and not just languages. You have a behaviour shift too” says Charles Taliaferro 49, who runs maquila operations for AmMex Products, which makes everything from Siemens electric motors to Smead file folders. Workers
cause less trouble, but their bosses have to be more considerate. ‘In Mexico you are more polite, more formal’, he says.

According to this case study the solution is the ‘bicultural boss’. Castany is AmericanUS, and he has learned well, taking over the Mexican Reynosa Maquiladora Association to control the maquiladoras\(^2\). According to this bicultural boss, border culture is ‘just, well… different’, but in fact it is more than different; it is inferior but indispensable for AmericanUS businesses to thrive. The ideologies behind the difference can be detected in a series of oppositions, contrasting reality on the two sides of the border in a way that seems a neutral representation. In fact it creates a dichotomy between values as positive or negative. This binary representation has been used also in political texts by AmericanUS to orientalise the ‘Other’, and divide the world between developed and developing countries (see Said, discussing Kissinger 1978:46-47).

The next table shows the discursive strategy, the explicit and implicit contrasts that differentiate the two groups.

| Table 1: Binary representations of Mexican and AmericanUS cultures |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| **Contrast** | In Mexico/Mexicans | In US/AmericanUS |
| **Skills** | Monolingual Low skills workers ‘the factory floor’ | ‘He speaks Spanish on the factory floor in Mexico but yells in English at his kid’s T-ball games’ Manager - High skills - Bilingual |
| **Honesty** | ‘He knows when to offer a bribe in Mexico (to a traffic cop)…’ | … and when not (during an environmental inspection’ - which has bilateral control) |
| **Smartness** | ‘gets his allergy medicine in Mexico’ Same product, cheaper | ‘but his MRI in the U.S’ supported by health system |
| **Criminality** | ‘Managers are taught to take a different route to work every day to foil potential kidnappers’ | (by whom? receptive to solve the risks |
| **Reliability** | ‘– and losing - an entire factory floor of workers every year’ | ‘They grow accustomed to training’ –…’ (acceptance) |
| **Formality** | ‘they have discovered that… is often a dress-up workday on the other side’ | “casual Friday” in McAllen |
| **Flexibility** | Not flexible; the ones who | ‘the most valuable asset is their |

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\(^2\) ‘Sweatshops’ under a different name.
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<th>Conflicts</th>
<th>Workers cause less trouble, but their bosses have to be more considerate.</th>
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<td></td>
<td>‘Bosses are more considerate …In Mexico you are more polite, more formal, he says’ (416)</td>
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<td>Exercise of power through solidarity</td>
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The opposites created by the case study imply different levels of efficiency through contrasts in skills, honesty, smartness, criminality, reliability, formality, flexibility and conflict. They contrast the realities of the two countries and their cultures, with AmericanUS superior to Mexicans. The contrast works to aggregate the positive values around the AmericansUS, who are able to learn, accustomed to deal with problems arising from the need or opportunity to do business with difficult partners, who although ‘primitives’ can produce ‘everything’ for the benefit of AmericanUS business, under the efficient management of the NAFTA Man.

The mix of fiction with real data serves well to subtly introject the ideological complex, so that students hardly pay attention to the difference between fiction and truth. The authority of the written word and the legitimacy of the speaker, with a little help from the ideological complexes, together create a hegemonic managerial discursive regime.

**Conclusion**

Globalisation and postcolonialism, the two *schemas* of the ideological complex, interact to represent the world and its various sectors in linear, evolutionist terms. The discursive regime is legitimised by the power of the business community, reproducing the dichotomy of domination-subordination while simultaneously establishing the relationship between ‘democratic’ partners in politically correct terms, as ‘partnerships’, ‘alliances among equals’, ‘free’ agreements. Expressing this logic the textbooks represent Latin American cultures as not fit enough to survive in the free market without the help of the fittest, mostly AmericanUS business corporations. To manage the problematic relationship with these inadequate but indispensable partners, multinationals are recommended to manage by understanding and tolerating the ‘inherent’ inefficiencies produced by cultures ‘essentially’ ill adapted to success. This representation legitimises the business practices of global capitalism, making AmericanUS Corporations the voice of the managerial discursive regime, transmitting the “truth” to future generations of managers.

The managerial discourse of textbooks reproduces the role of the Anglo West as the heir of colonial power and culture, continuing the colonial relationship with the less developed or developing countries as the ‘Other’, ‘primitives’ who need to be ruled. Building business relationships in these terms becomes a useful tool with countries that are potential ‘partners’ to advance the
competitive advantage of global corporations, who need to manage the relationship in a judicious balance of power and solidarity.

The outcome of this process is to graduate postcolonial managers as expatriates with a colonial attitude, or local business elites with a colonised mind. Both local and global postcolonial managers are allies in their commitment to fulfil the interests of powerful global corporations, ignoring the impacts on the local countries, people and cultures.
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