Introduction

According to practice theory, our actions produce and maintain social reality (Schatzki 1996). Through practice we are trained as researchers, teachers and debaters. Within practices in the education system, students are trained by us and by our practices. Because of this we are accountable for how the concepts we teach maintain social differences. Every time we use the concept of intercultural communication in its classic definition, as communication between people with different cultural backgrounds, we perpetuate the notion that national differences influence communication more than other differences. These could be social categories such as gender, class, age, or e.g. differences in relations between a teacher and her student. When cultural and national differences are granted status as the most important differences – ethnic minorities in multicultural societies are silently/verbally excluded from national communities.

In a Nordic context (e.g. Iceland, Norway and Denmark) persons with origins in other national groups than the majority will most often be named and categorized for example as Turks or Iranians. The majority argues for the pragmatism of this labeling, and denies any relation to discrimination.

The aim of this article is to develop a theoretical position, which is able to conceptualize intercultural communication in complex multicultural societies and function as a frame for empirical analysis.

I put forth the term postcultural position, which aims to destabilize the notion that national differences are always given privilege in intercultural communication, which is a dominant statement in functionalistic approach. It also aims to destabilize the notion, that culture is a coherent system of meaning as stated in the social constructivist approach.

The postcultural position is within theoretical prism, composed of practice theory, intersectionality and positioning theory. The overall purpose with a prism is to shed light on the silenced voices in multicultural Scandinavian societies, which are excluded through a gentle but consistent construction of taking cultures importance for granted and perceive culture as coherent entity.

In order to avoid misunderstandings; I do not claim that culture/ethnicity is never the main reason for misunderstandings in politics, love or inefficient communication, but I do argue that 1) culture/ethnicity is to be seen as interwoven with other social categories, 2) culture/ethnicity is to be seen in relation to a specific context, and 3) which differences are the most important in a communication process remain an open empirical question.

The article is divided into four parts. The first is an introduction to the field of intercultural communication research. The second part is an introduction to practice theory and intersectionality and theory of positioning, which in sum produces the postcultural position. The third is a discussion on how culture and intercultural communication can be understood from a postcultural position. The fourth and last part of the article is a postcultural analysis of a job interview in a Danish company with a well-qualified applicant from New Delhi.

I: Intercultural communication

The aim of the following mapping of the field of intercultural research is to introduce two dominant positions. The field remains divided in a dominantly functionalistic approach and a less established constructivist approach. As the functionalistic approach in many ways shares common understandings with practice theory, the aim of the mapping is also to qualify the discussion on practice theory in relation to intercultural communication.

How is the term intercultural communication used and defined?

The term intercultural communication is, in its most simple form, defined as communication between people from different cultures. The term intercultural communication is used whenever interaction between people occurs, while the term cross-cultural communication is used in comparative studies e.g. in studies of media reception of the same product in different ethnic groups.

Obviously the term is defined in many different ways. Edward Hall, who is often referred to as

the founding father of the intercultural research field, defines culture as the hidden dimension in life (Hall 1966). Culture is what shapes or forms all human activities. Culture shapes the way we walk, talk, eat, how we build our houses and social systems. According to Hall most anthropologists agree on the following: 1) We are not born with a culture – culture is learned behavior. 2) Culture is a coherent system – if something in a culture changes the whole system of culture will change. 3) Culture is shared in a group and defines the boundaries between groups (Hall 1966).

These statements are interesting partly because they dovetail with practice theory, which I will present in a forthcoming section. Although Edward Hall, as a trained anthropologist, had a nuanced, complex understanding of the many ways culture was forming the actions of people, his work turned into an essentialist tradition, which stresses the sameness within national groups and the differences of other cultures. One of Halls most well-known concepts is the concept of high- and low -context societies. A high-context society is. e.g. the Japanese society where an important part of the information is to be found in the context, and a low-context society could be the American, where most meaning is expressed in verbal or written conversation (Hall 1966, 1976). As Ruyling Chang rightly comments, the concept mirrors a Western and white perspective as the norm – or as the normal reference point for all cultures (Halualani et al. 2009).

Functionalist tradition in the field

Within the field of intercultural communication research, the functionalist approach saw *culture* as coherent entities which were relatively static, and which were inherited from one generation to the next nearly unchanged (Moon 1996). The concept of *communication* was understood to be one-directional from sender to receiver. Due to these understandings of the concepts of culture and communication, culture was seen as a barrier to a message is received correctly. The question for research was therefore to predict how to reduce the barrier of culture in order to produce effective communication from sender to receiver, where the message was understood as intended by the sender (Jensen 2003). The research interest among the researchers in this tradition was therefore linked to developing taxonomies (sets of rules) about common features and core values in national group in order to produce a

communication strategy for the chosen target group (Larry Samovar and Richard Porter, L.E. Sarbaugh, Roichi Okabe, William B. Gudykunst).

The fairy tale of Geert Hofstede

Part of functionalist history goes back the 1980'ties, where one of the most influential researchers did his first survey for IBM. His name is Geert Hofstede, and his fairy tale was based on 41 national offices in IBM. From these data he developed four cultural dimensions, and a mapping of the 41 nationalities. The four magic cultural dimensions were 1) Power distance; which relation does the employees have to power? 2) Uncertainty avoidance; to which extent does the employee feels threatened by the unknown? 3) Individualism/collectivism; to which extent does the employee feel responsible for own or extended family? 4) masculine/feminine dominance; to which extent are values based on materialism or nurturing? (Hofstede1980). , Hofstede later added two more cultural dimensions; an East-West dimension and a dimension related to short or longtime decisions. These cultural dimensions are shown on cultural maps, which provide an overview of where national groups, according to Hofstede, differ from each other. The rationale behind Hofstede's survey was that since everybody was working for IBM, the differences among the participants could only be explained by cultural differences. His results were based on statistics and were received as answers and solutions to the wish to be able to predict what cultural differences would mean in all situations. Today Geert Hofstede runs a global business together with his son Gert Hofstede.

Despite heavy criticism (McSweeney 2002) of the assumptions underlying Hofstedes survey – that IBM employers hereby represent a whole nation – his study is one of the most used in universities, business schools and in management education.

The constructivist approach in late nineties

The intercultural research field was entirely dominated by this essentialist approach until the

late 1990's. However, in the late 90'ties a minor group of American researcher's (Dolores Tanno, James Applegate & Howard Sypher, Mary Jane Collier & Milt Thomas, John Gumpertz, Dreama Moon) and a group of Scandinavian researchers approach the field from a social constuctivist approach (Peter Nynäs, Marita Svane, Øyvind Dahl, Iben Jensen). Culture, for these researchers was seen as meaning constructed in relations between people. Culture was seen as always changing and diverse. Culture could therefore not be reduced to homogeneous national cultures. Many of the researchers draw on the definition of culture given by the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz, who defines culture as "nets of meaning people spin around themselves" (Geertz 1973:5). Some of the researchers worked hermeneutically, others took a more semiotic perspective of culture as systems of meaning or interpretation repertoires (Hall 1997). This theoretical perspective of culture as diverse was highly inspired by the work of Fredrik Barth, who argued that culture is distributed, which means that all members of a culture share some practices, values and experiences with members of a culture, but not everyone shares everything with all (Barth 1994).

It is characteristic for this approach that culture is seen as an open empirical category. It is possible to explore the effects of culture, but is per definition not possible to *predict* the outcome of how actors from a certain culture will act. Neither is it considered a possibility to use taxonomies, as they are seen to reduce the complexity which characterizes multicultural societies. *Communication,* in this approach, is defined from a receiver oriented perspective. This means that the receiver is seen as an actor, who is able to interpret the message in relation to his/her former experiences and knowledge of discourses related to the topic or context of the communication process (Jensen 1998).

Critical American intercultural communication

Critical intercultural communication appeared as a new American approach in the start of the new century. With the reader, Critical Intercultural Communication, Thomas Nakayama and Rona Halualani have consolidated this new approach in the American research field. One example from the reader is the postmodern reading of the existing literature on intercultural and cross-cultural communication offered by Rueyling Chuang (2003). Aiming to destabilize central concepts in the field of intercultural communication, Chuang is critical of the positivist

tradition and argues that e.g. the studies of Hall and Hofstede, which have produced patterns such as high/low context societies and individualism/collectivism, reproduces a Western and white perspective as the norm – or as the normal reference point for all cultures. This, she posits, "creates a crisis of representation that suffocates and silences cultural groups" (Halualani et al., 2009: 29).

The theoretical prism I am going to present has its roots in Scandinavian social constructivism and is aligned with the critical American approach.

II: A postcultural position

Practice theory

During the last 10 years practice theory has developed from being an outline of a theory (Reckwitch 2002) guided by the American philosopher Theodore Schatzkis reading of Wittgenstein supplemented with a particular *reading* of certain scholars, Bourdieu, Foucault, Giddens, Butler, Garfinkel who had aligned (not similar) perspectives on practice and a series of shared (not similar) assumptions on body, performance and social action – to an open but well-established theory. Current practice theory is still deeply influenced by Schatzki, but there is now a second generation of scholars of practice theory. Davide Nicolini (2013), Stephen Kemmis (2012), Silvia Gherardi (2012), Elisabeth Shove, Mika Pantzar and Matt Watson (2012) are among the most internationally influential researchers in the field.

Basic assumptions

Practice theory is based upon the assumption that social action, practice is a precondition of

all existence. It is actions, not the subject, which are the starting point. This means that it is practice which in one and the same movement constitutes both the subject and the object. Or, in other terms, both subject and object are constituted by the practices they are part of. This is what distinguishes practice theory and social constructivism from each other. In social constructivism (e.g. presented from the tradition of Berger and Luckmann as often is used as a reference), reality is constructed by the subject. Subject and object are not in the same realm, as is the case in practice theory. This position also influences the way materiality is seen in practice theory. Practices train subjects to develop certain ways to handle objects (materiality) as well as the materiality (things) also form the subject (Schatzki 1996, Reckwitch 2002, Kemmis 2012). Regarding intercultural communication for example IT-programs are the materiality, which has increasingly influence on how subjects are doing communication.

What is a practice?

A practice is defined as interconnected rays of activities (or arrangements), which most often are routinized. What all practices have in common is, according to Theodore Schatzki, that practice is our doings and sayings, tied together by understandings, formal and informal rules, a teleoaffective structure, (aiming towards a goal) and general understandings (Schatzki 2001:53).

A practice is to drive a car, take the bus, make supper, participate in an assembly or play tennis. If we take tennis as an example of a practice, the concepts would be as follows: In order to play tennis, an *understanding* of what is meant is necessary. Tennis is a racket sport, played on a court, surrounded with a fence etc. In order to play the game appropriately regarding local norms, knowledge of the *formal rules*, e.g systems of points, the ball touching the net in serve etc. and *informal rules* like whether it is ok to give a bagel (6-0) to a friend. The *teleoaffective* structure is related to which emotions the player finds it appropriate to invest or show in a match. Lastly, tennis draws on ‘general understandings’ about sport as meaningful. Most scholars are inspired by Schatzki and share this basic understanding of a practice (Reckwitz 2002).

This above description of practice is also useful as a framework for the analysis of practice. In intercultural communication the question addressed will often be related to whether the participants have the same norms for appropriate behavior, especially regarding informal rules and teleoaffective structures.

Main contribution from practice theory to the prism?

The major contribution from practice theory is that culture can be seen as rays of interconnected practices, without being fixed coherent systems. It also provides an opportunity to focus upon practices which are shared across ethnic groups, gender, class and age. This brings forth a possibility to redefine social groups on the basic of their doings.

Regarding intercultural communication, practice theory contributes first and foremost by using the concept of 'culture as practices' and secondly by seeing intercultural communication as a practice like any other, which can be analyzed by the terms presented above. Analyzing intercultural communication as a practice focusses awareness on body/mind, formal and informal rules related to the communication, and teleoaffective structures.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a research approach which takes its departure in feminist studies and is widely used in critical race theory. It is argued that "Rather than examining gender, race, class, and nations as distinctive social hierarchies, intersectionality examines how they mutually construct one another" (Collins 1998: 62). However, the ways categories are interwoven has consequences for the opportunities a person has in society (Collins 1998; Razack 2005, Christiansen et al., 2006).

Social categories are, from the position of intersectionality, seen as 'doings', which refers to the idea that aligns with practice theory, that the subject has learned to behave and act

appropriately in relation to gender, age, color of skin/ethnicity. A last important feature of intersectionality is that every social interaction is seen as intersected by axes of power. Intercultural communication is in this perspective not to be seen as neutral, but has to be analyzed according to power structures as e.g. gender, class or position in the field (Brah & Phoenix 2004).

Research in intersectionality research stresses that axes of power do not act like a logarithm. Women with an Arabic background will not automatically have a lower position in the Danish society, than men with an Arabic background. In a Danish context, women with an Arabic background (who master the language at the same level) will often have a better position, in e.g. a job interview or in communication between parents and school due to a negative discourse about dominant Arabic men who suppress their wives. According to the same discourse, an Arabic man could easily be read as too masculine or dominant (Jensen 2011a).

Contribution to the prism by intersectionality

The major contribution to the prism is that intersectionality convincingly argues that social categories will always be interwoven. If that premise is accepted, it follows that national culture ,like other categories, must be seen as interwoven with social categories like gender, ethnicity, age or local categories such as teachers, learners etc. From the position of intersectionality, it can be argued that it is impossible for an agent to be only part of one single category as e.g. nationality. An agent will always be part of social categories such as gender, age or social/ethnic group.

Positioning theory

While practice theory points out the existence and scope of practices and how they are to be analyzed, positioning theory points out the micro-processes involving verbal and body expressions which are part of the negotiation of whether a behavior is appropriate or not. According to Davis Harré and Luk Langenhove positioning theory is: “The study of local moral

orders as ever-shifting patterns of mutual and contestable rights and obligations of speaking and acting has come to be called 'positioning theory" (Harré and Langenhove 1999: 1). Positioning theory is developed in social constructivist psychology and takes its departure in the concept of subject positions developed by Michel Foucault. Harré and Langenhove distinguish between position and subject position in this way:

"*… a position is a complex cluster of generic personal attributes, structured in various ways, which impinges on the possibilities of interpersonal, intergroup and even intrapersonal action through some assignments of such rights, duties and obligations to an individual as are sustained by the cluster. … Generally speaking positions are relational, in that for one to be positioned as powerful other must be positioned as powerless*" (Harré and Langenhove 1999: 1-2).

As an analytical tool, position theory will be used as an indicator for power relations in communication, dividing into three modes: superior positioning (giving the right to decide for others), equal positioning (same rights to discuss and decide) and subordinate position (inviting others to make decisions for you) (Jensen 2013). It will also be part of the analysis to focus on bodily acted positioning. Lastly, focus will be on how categorical positioning is done as e.g. ethnic or gender positioning.

Contribution to the prism by positioning theory

The major contribution to the prism from positioning theory is the awareness of how all activities are part of performative practice. Everyday practices are also doings, which must be seen as performances. Positioning theory points to negotiations in micro processes and how actions across social groups can be read far from what the subject or social groups intended.

A postcultural prism

In the following section I will discuss which insights on culture and intercultural communication the constructed postcultural prism gave.

Culture seen from a postcultural position

The most radical contribution from practice theory is the notion of the social as constructed by practice. The social is not in our mind, in the grammar, in signs or systems or in 'a hidden dimension'. In this sense practice theory is, as earlier mentioned, more radical than social constructivism, as the practice forms the relation between subject and object whereas in social constructivism the subject constructs the object. When the social is constructed by practices, culture must – no matter whether it is seen as Hall's hidden dimensions, Hofstede's cultural dimension or Geertz's systems of meaning – be comprices of practices.

Culture is seen from the prism series of practices. Each practice is seen as interconnected with a ray of practice producing what Kemmis calls an ecology of practices. However, it is important to note, that the interconnectedness between the ecological systems not are linked to each other as a coherent system.

All members of a society (national culture) do not enact the same practices. Practices are, to paraphrase Barth, distributed, which means that we share some practices with one another – but we do not share the same practices with all in the society. Many practices are shared with members of other societies – a good example is .e.g. our use of IT, where an increasing number of people in the world are trained by Microsoft, Apple sharing IT-practices.

The English anthropologist Ann Swidler argues that seeing culture as practice gives an answer to one of the major challenges in sociology, which is to be able to address which activities are related to abstract concepts as values or ideas. Swidler writes: "Both discourses and practices are concretely observable in a way that meaning, idealism and values never

really were …" (Swidler 2001: 76).

From the perspective of a postcultural position, the intersectional approach is a strong critique of the notion of national cultures as coherent entities. This is first and foremost due to the premise that all social categories are interwoven. This means that no member of a culture is able to distinguish him/herself from e.g. gender.

Seeing culture from the perspective of positioning theory creates an awareness of how social micro processes, in communication and human interaction, are often a site for discrimination.

How is a postcultural position differentiated from other approaches?

Culture, from a postcultural position, is seen as series of practices. However, Zygmunt Bauman put forth seeing 'culture as praxis' (Bauman 1973) many years ago. Bauman argued that culture hold such complexity that in order to grasp it, culture should be understood from three different perspectives. Culture should be seen as 'concept', as 'structure' and as 'praxis' (Bauman 1973/1999). Bauman's work with culture as practice differs from practice theory in that he never takes the radical step of believing that the social is constructed by practice.

Interconnected practices – not coherent systems of meaning

Seen from a postcultural position the work and definitions on culture done by Edward Hall, Geert Hofstede, and Clifford Geertz share the notion of culture as coherent systems of meaning. The subject is either determined by the system e.g. in high-low context societies (Hall 1966), predictable by cultural dimensions (Hofstede: 1980) or constructing culture in a net (Geertz 1973). The benefit of seeing culture as practice is first and foremost that it creates a theoretical frame for interconnected practices rather than coherent systems of meaning. This makes it possible to point to the fact that actors in multicultural societies are not trained by diverse practices. Some practices will be enacted in hardly the same way (e.g.

playing tennis) while other practices draw on specific knowledge in a local community (preparing a local dish in a certain way). Some practices will be global, e.g. Facebook, and users of Facebook will share practices across borders and age. As all practices train practitioners to act appropriately, class distinctions are always integrated in practices.

Focus on selected practices – bringing forth similarities across cultures

Another affordance of seeing culture as practice is that it makes it possible to focus upon selected practices, which are related to the situation/problem under investigation. The task of the researcher is not to analyze a whole system of meaning, but rather to investigate a selected topic or problem focusing on understandings, informal and formal rules and teleoaffective structures. Paradoxically, although culture as practice embraces all practices, it is far more concrete than a constructivist approach, where one is supposed to analyze how topics are seen as part of the coherent system of meaning.

A postcultural position on intercultural communication

In relation to intercultural communication, two aspects of a postcultural position are of particular relevance. Firstly, body/mind has a unique position. Body/mind is trained by the practice in order to enact the practice in an appropriate manner (Reckwitz 2002). A major part of functionalist intercultural research focused upon the body in intercultural communication. Body language was seen as one of the most important skills to master in order to gain intercultural competence (Prosser 1979). In the hermeneutic or critical tradition body has more or less been invisible. A practice theoretical approach offers a way of including body/mind in the communication process. The perspectives of intersectionality reminds us about the importance of also reading the body as part of the social and positioning theory reminds us that bodily expressions are also positions.

Secondly, individuals are seen as agents who are formed by practices and thereby influenced by structures. A postcultural position approach offers a way of seeing actors as both

individuals and social products (Kemmis 2012). The actor has the choice of changing practices, but is heavily trained by the existing practices. Intersectionality informs us, that all subjects are doing more than one social category at a time and the theory of positioning makes it clear that an actor will both be positioned and positions oneself and others.

III: Empirical analysis

Data and method

The empirical example is from a study I did from 2002 – 2007. Observing more than 100 job interviews in Denmark, New Zealand, Vietnam and England in order to examine how gender and ethnicity were negotiated in job interviews. The job interviews in Denmark and England were part of a larger EU project on cultural diversity at workplace. The candidates were applying for jobs in three different categories; no demand for education, demand for further and higher education demand for a master (Jensen 2011a). The theoretical perspective was informed by a practice theoretical approach. I was doing the observations while sitting at another table, taking notes on contact, dress, energy, atmosphere, and silence and flow in the communication (Spradley 1980). The interviews were recorded. Some of the findings of the project were (aligned with other studies for example Campbell and Roberts 2007) that although the practice of job interview is extremely routinized regarding the formal activities, questions, the informal rules and the way the questions are posed give the hiring committee an overwhelming influence, which they are not aware of (Jensen 2011a). This finding supports the argument that to divide into high- and low-context societies does not make sense in everyday situations.

Mohinder, an energetic competent candidate

The following observations are from a job interview in a large company, where a cultural diversity program had been implemented. Regarding recruitment this means that the HR team has selected the most qualified candidates with "another ethnic background than Danish". The candidate we follow is about 25 years old, his name is Mohinder, he is newly educated, from India and has a relevant IT education. We follow the candidate at his second interview in the company. The job interview is done by the leader of the department, a man who is about 55 years old and an HR employee, a woman who is approximately 30 years old. The interview is in English, which seems to make the local leader less talkative compared to the interviews I observed that were in Danish.

Mohinder, steps into the room with an energetic attitude. He greets the two members of the hiring committee enthusiastically and takes a seat in the chair he is offered. After a short chat about the weather Henrik gives a long informative, story about the company. The speech contains large amounts of information Mohinder was also introduced to at the first job interview. Mohinder listens, nods and gives feedback. He indicates several times that he is eager to be part of the communication. Henrik rejects his attempts and finish his 7 minutes long speech. When Mohinder at last get an opportunity to participate in the interview he answers very eagerly and gives relatively long answers. He is quite detailed in his answers, and it seems like his strategy is to give a rich picture of his qualifications. The more eager Mohinder becomes the more reserved Henrik becomes. After a while Henrik asks Mohinder about his last examination project at the university. Mohinder dives into his bag and take up his diploma for his exams and some drawings from his former exam project. This act was apparently the last straw for Henrik, who sharply (in a patronizing voice) adds, that they have neither time to go into details in former project, nor is there any reason for showing exam papers. The job interview is ended shortly after this episode. Henrik is extremely critical about Mohinders attitude in the interview. Henrik mumbles that he did not like his attitude; he was too pushy. He found it especially odd that he tried to show old projects and even diplomas. Linda, the HR consultant kept arguing for the advantages of Mohinder, pointing out his professional competences and relevant contacts in India and England, where his brother also works in IT-Business.

Analysis from a postcultural position

In the next section I will offer an analysis of this job interview based upon a postcultural position beginning with a focus on body/mind, agency and materiality and appropriate performance which will be followed by a section on understandings, rules and teleoaffective structures. In the concluding discussion the analysis will be used as argument for the crucial need for rethinking intercultural communication in such a way that an intercultural communication like this is only analyzed focusing on the difference between Indians and Danes.

Body/mind, materiality, agency and appropriate performance

Mohinder walks confidently into the room. He is tall, handsome and young. His eyes are brown, his hair is black, pearly-white teeth, a friendly smile and he is wearing a light shirt, which emphasizes his dark skin. He is, in short, good looking (masculine beauty ideal) and his body posture radiates self-confidence. The two persons he is interacting with are Linda, a young, tall, good looking woman (feminine beauty ideal). She is wearing a black blouse which emphasizes her light hair. Henrik is physically shorter than both of them. He is wearing a shirt and pullover in grey/brown colours. His hair is grey/brown. Materiality is in this example primarily related to the clothes the participants wear. Both Henrik and Mohinder shows 'agency'. Mohinder, when he indicates his dissatisfaction with the 7 minutes long speech of Henrik, when he actively takes a strategy of self-promotion, and when he dives into his bag in order to show his work. Henrik shows agency, when he insists on informing Mohinder about the company despite the fact that he has been presented with the information already. Regarding 'appropriate performance,' Henrik is quite clear in his assessment of Mohinder. He describes his actions as inappropriate, obtrusive and too self-confident. According to Henrik, Mohinder was not 'doing good candidate' in this interview. Worth noting is, that Mohinder is 'doing candidate' in a way, which would have given a Danish candidate a positive response.

Understandings, rules, teleoaffective structure

The analysis will in this section look upon the concrete activities in the job interview practice.

Henrik and Mohinder share the same *understanding* of the practice job interview, but they follow different formal and informal rules. Henrik chooses to present information about the company and Mohinder chooses to show his exam papers. Both of their choices are well known activities in job interview practice. It is a common feature (informal rule) in the company observed to spend the first 5 minutes introducing the company. In handbooks of job interviews such an introduction is described positively as "a window into the organization"– and this is actually what Henrik is doing. Likewise, it is a procedure in many Asian countries, that you bring official documents like exam papers. (Similar to how architects or artists in Denmark will bring their portfolio).

Thus, Mohinder and Henrik both act conventionally. However, when they are not familiar with the practices of the other, both of them assess 'the other' as acting *inappropriately.* Henrik comments on Mohinders performance as too pushy or obtrusive, comments which relate to the *teleoaffective structure.* Mohinder does not seem to master the kind of teleoaffective structure, which Henrik finds appropriate for a job interview with an ethnic minority candidate in Denmark.

Positioning and performance

I observed five job interviews led by Henrik. What is interesting is that, compared to the other job interviews, the interaction in this interview is very different. Apart from his long speech in the opening of the interview, Henrik is very reserved in this interview, while Mohinder positions himself as self-confident in a way similar to what Henrik did in the other interviews. It seems like this job interview develops into a battle about controlling the job interview. From Henrik's position Mohinder is to blame as he is not backing off, and hereby he does not take the subject position he is offered. In terms of positioning theory Henrik takes a superior position and expects Mohinder to take a lower position, which all Henrik's other candidates with ethnic minority background took. According to Henrik, Mohinder's performance is problematic due to the position he is offered as an ethnic minority. This position is characterized by listening, expectant, emotionally controlled but most importantly grateful

for being invited to a job interview in the company. It is presumably a part of being trained in everyday practices in Denmark.

The HR employee won and Mohinder was hired. However, during the first half year he was deeply frustrated. He felt that he was continuously offered the same subject position where he had to express gratefulness and humility because he had gotten the position. Like in the job interview he refused to accept the subject position he was offered and worked hard on creating another narrative about his brother in England, who with the same education had a much better position.

The analysis has shown how an intercultural communication process can be analyzed from a postcultural position. Firstly it pointed out how body, agency and appropriate performance shape the job interview seen as a practice. In next section it illustrated how the job interview can be analyzed through the concepts of understanding, rules and teleoaffective structures.

IV: Concluding discussions

The article took its point of departure in a critique of both functionalist and constructivist approaches to intercultural communication. It has been put forth that it is possible to break with powerful stereotypes (about ethnic homogeneous groups) by developing new perspectives on intercultural communication through a prism of practice theory, intersectionality and positing theory. Using the job interview as an example, I will in conclusion discuss affordances of a postcultural position.

Functionalist approach to the job interview

This analysis shows some of the shortcomings of functionalist theories; If the job interview had been prepared with Geert Hofstedes two cultural dimensions *power distance* (which relation does the employee has to power?) and *uncertainty avoidance* (To which extent does the employee feels threatened by the unknown) the expectation would have been different. Hofstede's index of India is high on both power distance and uncertainty avoidance, while the index of Denmark has a low score on both cultural dimensions. However, according to the

analysis above, Mohinder from India does certainly not respect the power position he is offered, and he does not show any kind of angst toward going into areas he is not familiar with. Contrary Henrik (who represents the country with a low power distance), places himself in a superior position during the whole interview, taking the right to dominate the relation. Henrik (who represents the country with low uncertainty avoidance) seeks to avoid uncertainty related to speaking a foreign language he does not master as well as the two other in the interview.

The analysis shows a similar shortcoming of the functionalist approach if we apply Hall's well known pair of high- and -low context societies. The analysis shows how the practice of job interview – like all other practices – have formal as well as informal rules, which have to be followed by the candidate, if he wants to 'do good candidate'. India is a so-called high context society, while Denmark is a low context society. The analysis shows that both partners have knowledge about formal as well as informal rules about job interview practice. Consequently informal rules are to be found in contexts in both societies. Hereby the analysis shows some of the limitations of developing taxonomies for everyday life.

Constructivist approach to the job interview

If the job interview were analyzed from a constructivist approach it would probably have many similar findings. However, a major difference between social constructivism and practice theory is, that constructivism works with the notion of culture as systems of meaning. An analysis of the job interview would probably have included a mapping on the most dominant discourses in India and Denmark regarding job interview, cultural identity, class or religion. Contrarily, this analysis from a postcultural position is not after a coherent system of meaning for the entire culture, but aims at the specific practice, the ecology of the practices and the microprocesses related to the practice (Kemmis 2014). From a postcultural approach the task is primarily linked to the practice under investigation. The focus is the norms of the practice and the interconnectedness with the ecology of related practices (Kemmis 2014). The importance of this distinction is that Mohinder is trained by a practice regarding job interviews, which is slightly different from his former experiences, but the reason that these minor differences are important is only to be seen if we integrate the

perspective of power and/or majority/minority, western/Eastern, and intersectionality; the differences in body performance young tall /older short. These differences would easily disappear if the focus of the analysis were the whole system of meaning.

In this way, a postcultural position offers a new way of thinking intercultural communication not only as communication between ethnic or social categories, but also as communication across many differences in a given context.

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