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Advancing Otherness and Othering of the Cultural Other during 'Intercultural Encounters' in Cross-Cultural Management Research

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Abstract: This article argues that theorising Otherness and Othering of the cultural Other is integral to identity construction during intercultural encounters, but has largely been neglected in Cross-Cultural Management (CCM) research. *Intercultural encounters* entail the exchange of cultural identities and ideas when individuals from different cultures interact with each other or multicultural organisations. *Otherness* signals the ascribed qualities attributed to the Other and is expressed through conceptual boundary markers regarding what constitutes Us and Them. *Othering*, however, reflects the above boundary-production as an underlying cultural process which maintains (and reproduces) such boundaries. Consequently, the CCM research agenda has overly focused on 'cultural differences', values and broad-stroke dimensions of fixed 'national cultures' at the expense of identity constructions that transpire when individuals from different cultures are interacting. This article builds theory through advancing the Otherness and Othering concepts, which are key missing interrelationships to Self in CCM research. This is achieved by coupling CCM theory with intellectual developments in Social Anthropology and Sociology.

Keywords: Cross-Cultural Management research; identity construction; Otherness; Othering; cultural Other; intercultural encounter; Social Anthropology; Sociology; theory-development.

INTRODUCTION

This article advances theory and expands the role of identity construction in the Cross-Cultural Management (CCM) research field through illustrating the integral concepts of Otherness and Othering of the cultural Other (hereafter, 'the Other') as a means to obtain richer, deeper and more contextualised understanding of intercultural interaction and challenges. According to Chapman (1992), the dynamic processes of constructing the aforesaid identities take place through culture-meetings of experiences and socially constructed realities of encountered Others, which is conceptualised here as 'intercultural encounters'. The article employs a transdisciplinary interrogation into CCM by incorporating intellectual advancements in Social Anthropology and Sociology as way of decreasing the epistemological and ontological constraints stemming from methodological individualism in mainstream CCM research.

With high levels of international migration and global trading, it is important for managers and practitioners during any aspects of cross-border operations to manage and handle intercultural challenges to perform successfully within increasingly competitive and multiculturally diverse environments (Primecz, Romani, and Sackmann 2011). Cultural misunderstandings, lack of trust and in the worst-case scenario– loss of business contracts, profit and future opportunities– are likely to occur in the case of limited intercultural understanding (Johnson Lenartowicz, and Apud 2006). Examining identity construction at the individual level has the potential to explain why people fail to engage fruitfully with the Other in particular contexts and to better understand their own biases and assumptions that might hamper productive intercultural interaction (Guttormsen 2015). The abilities of practitioners to strategise and to tackle intercultural challenges in Multinational Enterprises (MNEs) and other multicultural work organisations as well as broader society is arguably improved when the problem-solving focus is not limited to merely identifying 'differences' and drawing

conclusions based on cultural dimensions: investigating why and how people draw the conceptual boundaries the ways they do as part of constructing identities, i.e. Othering (Chapman, Clegg, and Gajewska-De Mattos 2004; Chapman et al. 2008; Caprar 2011), can be argued to enhance the aforesaid abilities to effectively manage and interact within multicultural environments.

This article argues that the CCM research agenda still suffers from several limitations in terms of the importance of identity construction when it comes to researching and understanding intercultural challenges (Chapman et al. 2008; Moore 2012a). First, the overt focus on the Self reflects an unfortunate predominance of methodological individualism (inherited from Social Psychology) which underlies the hegemonic positivistic, behaviourist, hypothetico-deductive and functionalist Hofstedeian research traditions within CCM. Hegemony relates to the above-mentioned characteristics exercising predominance within the discipline in terms of having the power to dictate what type of research matters more than other approaches. Methodological individualism relates to explaining social phenomena by assigning an ideologically biased primacy to the individual and its agency (Udehn 2002). Ontologically, the predominance of the individual where Otherness is only treated as reflecting your own Self is indeed silencing the dynamicity of Otherness and Othering (of the Other). Arguably, this tradition eclipses theory-development regarding intercultural encounters in CCM research as a plausible result of neglecting fully to integrate the significant explanatory concepts of Otherness and Othering.

CCM research has also largely been limited merely to acknowledging the existence of the Other. This limitation is plausibly linked to the major focus on measuring and establishing 'cultural differences' at the expense of a more comprehensive inquiry into the various identity

construction processes that play out when individuals are actually interacting at the individual level (Romani 2008; Moore 2012b).

Third, in CCM research, the Other has traditionally surfaced for the most part as a non-contested fixed entity for denoting 'somebody from another culture' (other than Self). Prasad (2015, 199) states that 'Hofstede's framework is grounded in the simultaneous devaluation of the Other and the overvaluation of the West'. Other etic cultural models, such as Schwartz, Trompenaars and the GLOBE study, have also been generated within the same paradigm as Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Hence, the above models do not offer greater insights with regard to identity construction beyond an over-emphasised Self and a fixed Other. Thus, the *dynamic* Other should be explored in much greater depth in CCM contemplating on that Taylor (2011, 24) promulgates that comprehending the Other is the 'great challenge of this century both for politics and social science'. A handful of studies, however, have commendably illuminated such dynamics in relation to identity making (Brannen and Salk 2000; Lauring 2008), and in regard to interfacing CCM with anthropology and sociology (Chapman et al. 2004; 2008; Bjerregaard, Lauring, and Klitmøller 2009; Jonasson and Lauring 2012).

It is within the above enigmatic intellectual space where this article proposes theory building. Not only in terms of 'unsilencing' the neglected concepts of Otherness and Othering in CCM research (Fitzsimmons 2014), but also to advance the empirical focus in the field through adopting the dynamics of Otherness and Othering, in more depth. These concepts reflect a significant missing interrelationship to the Self in cross-cultural analysis when it comes to better comprehend intercultural encounters. Such an effort requires moving the investigations outside the current hegemonic and philosophical paradigm (Davis 1986; Whetten 1989; Corley and Gioia 2011).

Key Concepts

'Intercultural encounters' involve interaction between individuals with different cultures across country borders or within a country (Frenkel, Lyan, and Drori 2015). These encounters can also transpire between individuals and socio-historically embedded organisations and institutions both abroad and within domestic multicultural organisations (Holmes 2015). During such encounters, the exchange of cultural identities, as well as the mobility of individuals and ideas take place (Özkazanc-Pan 2015). Furthermore, the term 'intercultural' signals a shift in the ontological focus on 'national culture' in CCM research. This shift reflects recognising the need for scrutinising actual interaction at other levels– including between individuals, groups of individuals, and individuals and organisations– as opposed to limiting inquiries to mere applications of Hofstede's broad-stroke cultural dimensions (Chapman 1997; McSweeney 2009).

Identity construction is at the core of intercultural encounters whereby individuals are constructing their Self (Tajfel 1981), belongingness to an in-group through social categorisation (Eriksen 1993; Hogg and Terry 2000), and differentiating themselves (Us) from Them (aka Other) (Barth 1971; Jenkins 1997; Brubaker 2002). *Otherness* signals the ascribed qualities attributed to the Other. It is argued to be expressed through conceptual markers of the boundaries of what constitutes Us– as opposed to– Them (Lamont and Molnar 2002). *Othering*, however, reflects the above boundary production as an underlying cultural process which maintains (and reproduces) such boundaries (Barth 1971). This article will highlight how Social Anthropology and Sociology can offer additional perspectives on identity construction than Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Self-Categorisation Theory (SCT) from Social Psychology (Hornsey 2008).

The article is structured into four main sections. First, Otherness and Othering are positioned in the CCM literature. Second, the transdisciplinary theoretical perspective comprised of both classical and contemporary theories and concepts from Social Anthropology and Sociology will be outlined. Third, the article demonstrates the importance of Otherness and Othering as key explanatory sources concerning intercultural encounters. This is achieved by discussing three areas of theory development with associated illustrative examples. These examples are drawn from both within and outside organisations as a means to reflect that intercultural encounters transpire across people's organisational and social lives. Finally, theoretical contributions, implications for practitioners and CCM researchers as well as suggested avenues for future research will be highlighted.

POSITIONING OTHERNESS AND OTHERING OF THE OTHER IN CCM RESEARCH

Methodological individualism, which is explaining social phenomena predominantly based on only the individual (Udehn 2002), has undoubtedly led to playing down alternative components to the Self in CCM research. Traditionally, the CCM literature has effectively treated the Other as a fixed entity as 'somebody else from another culture' in relation to intercultural encounters. This also reflects a lack of interest in the dynamicity of that Other, let alone theorising on how that Other is constructed (Otherness), as well as addressing the underlying cultural processes involved with the latter (Othering). Romani (2008) commendably deploys a social theoretical lens regarding the Other but limits the focus to the interplay between paradigms and not on the Other per se. This trend is plausibly related to overly focusing on identifying culture (Sackmann and Philipps 2004) and less so on its performativity. The same shortcoming relates to the underlying assumption regarding cultural differences. Bourdieu promulgated that limiting

cross-cultural analysis to merely identify what is different is "stopping where the real fun begins". He argued such limitation to result in research only exploring the 'cultural stuff' *in between cultures* but neither demonstrates how such boundaries function as elements of social reality nor why people construct these boundaries (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2009, 17). Rather, differences become mere static signs for observable and measurable behaviour– a resemblance of Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions and the 'cultural distance' construct (Kogut and Singh 1984). Measuring cultural distance is logical in quantitative research as statistical analysis needs to be based on the averages of comparable samples (McSweeney 2002). However, people are not interacting with each other's average of their single fixed culture.

In CCM research, Otherness is often, misleadingly, used interchangeably with the Other, taken merely as 'something different' (Gibbs and Ilkan 2008, 88). This has become an 'end point' in CCM research and signals the limiting frontier of the epistemological and ontological boundary for investigating intercultural interactions at the individual level (Fitzsimmons 2014). Methodological individualism is identified as a major obstacle in this regard, due to the CCM research agenda having largely neglected venturing much beyond the Individual/Self as the explanatory source in cross-cultural analysis. Effectively, examining intercultural encounters remains constrained to an ontology where one individual's perceptions are created in isolation, but at the same time somehow escapes the influence of impinging contextual structures which are structuring, and structured by, agency and individuals' perceptions.

The limited engagement with the dynamics of Otherness and Othering in relation to researching intercultural encounters can be argued to be a result of disciplinary heritage from Social Psychology and Behaviourism (Chapman 1997; Patel 2007; Caprar et al. 2015): traditionally, a monopolising positivistic, functionalist essentialist and non-meaning-based

research paradigm in CCM evolved. Consequently, the dominating role of the 'national-level' (e.g., Hofstede 1980) become prevalent on the CCM research agenda. Furthermore, the 'firm' level developed a strong foothold as far as research analysis is concerned, following suit the International Business research field (Buckley 2002). Culture and identity have been treated, conventionally, as static entities in accordance with the boundaries of the two aforesaid levels (Holmes 2015). An ontological consequence relates to that observable differences *between* assumable fixed cultures were given primacy (Lowe 2002). Collectively, the epistemological and ontological constraints impinged by aforesaid research praxises placed Otherness and Othering in a marginalised position, although not necessarily actively silenced in CCM research.

Thus, integral to interpretivist cultural frameworks, which takes into account multiple and constructed realities based on meanings and subjectivity (Peterson 2007; Chapman et al. 2008), intercultural encounters remain an antithesis to the dominating Hofstedeian-inspired paradigmatic practices in CCM research. This CCM trend has transpired during the past three decades or so, although the facets of Otherness and Othering have been central to intellectual development and theorising in the wider social sciences as well as the humanities for more than eight decades, ranging from Mead (1934) in Social Anthropology to more recent work in International Relations (Hansen 2006; Croft 2012).

The frontier of CCM research depicted above also reflects the problematic relationship between CCM and the broader social sciences. For example, Chapman (1997) points out that Hofstede's work was indeed published *after* the epoch where classical social sciences had already adopted major intellectual advancements: the epistemological focus had shifted from positivism (function) to interpretivism (meaning) already in the 1960s. Furthermore, this

development was also evident in Social Anthropology which as a discipline had largely already abandoned the enterprise of quantifying cultural research the 1960s and 1970s.

Focus on actual *interaction* across cultures enjoys a somewhat longer attention in CCM (e.g., Chapman et al. 2004; Moore 2006, 2012a, 2012b; Lauring and Selmer 2009; Caprar 2011; Klitmøller and Lauring 2016). For example, Westwood (2004) includes dynamic representations of the Other from a post-colonial perspective– as negative forms of the Other in relation to a positive Self. However, only a few studies explicitly address and theorise beyond a *dynamic* Other such as Otherness and Othering when it comes to intercultural encounters. In addition, Ybema and Nyiri (2015) and Guttormsen (2015) relate the cultural Other to the issue of identity construction. Khestri and Alcantara (2015) move beyond cross-cultural dimensions when explaining cultural influence on cybercrimes regarding what context a crime is accepted or prosecuted. Stayaert and Janssens (2015) highlight the meaning construction to an enemy Other, which is signified as 'otherization' (Holmes 2015, 238).

When CCM research ventures into the broader social theoretical domain beyond the etic cultural frameworks, efforts are constrained to engage with the highly criticised orientalist work of Edward Said. Said operates with a fixed Other/Otherness in the form of an 'oriental' (Lewis 1993). Furthermore, the CCM research agenda lacks an *operationalised* framework, i.e. Otherness and Othering. Only recently has an operationalised framework been introduced to CCM research through the application of sociological conceptual boundary markers (Guttormsen 2015), which is integral to identity construction (Molnar and Lamont 2002).

THEORETICAL VEHICLE: COUPLING CCM RESEARCH WITH SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY

This section delimits the theoretical perspective of this article regarding advancing the role of identity construction in CCM research in terms of intercultural encounters. This theory building is achieved by theorising the concepts of Otherness and Othering through a transdisciplinary inquiry which draws upon both classical and contemporary intellectual developments. These developments encompass, from Sociology, the conceptual boundary marker approach as operationalisation of Otherness (Lamont and Molnar 2002). In addition, developments from Social Anthropology serve as a means to demonstrate the layers and hierarchies of boundary markers and designating Otherness. This materialises through the Barthian (1971) 'school' of Otherness, as well as Chapman's (1993, 22, 35) biosocial/ethno-biology and Ardener's (1989) classification approaches.

Although sharing common aspects with SIT and SCT from Social Psychology (see Hornsey 2008), drawing upon the work in Social Anthropology and Sociology enables theoretical development in CCM to move the inquiry a step further. First, the actual qualitative characteristics (i.e., conceptual boundary markers (Lamont and Molnar 2002)) being used to label Them from Us are included, as opposed to merely resting on the statement that accentuating processes occur. Second, categorisation is based on individuals' own context-specific social construction (how social reality is constructed by individuals and groups through shared meanings (Berger and Luckmann 1966)) of belonging to a group, as opposed to arbitrary criteria (see Tajfel and Billig 1974; Ardener 1989). Third, group memberships and world-views are based on meaning-construction through actual interaction and learning (see Hornsey 2008). Fourth, the paradigmatic orientations of SIT and SCT (cognition and behaviourism), have resulted in an approach to studying identity which is heavily based on norms, and an epistemological and methodological inconsistency in jumping between individual and group level as far as where 'identity is located'. Finally, there is a stronger focus on social and cultural

processes in the meaning-constructing of world-views. Such a stance moves beyond giving mere attention to accentuated belongingness processes to a social group and granting primacy to cognitive processes as the explanatory source, which occurs through depersonalisation as a way of fitting it to the group prototype. Nevertheless, where the Barthian School on the one hand and SIT and SCT converge again relate to the point of individuals' motivation to uphold a positive self-concept (Tajfel and Turner 1979) and to reduce subjective uncertainties (Hogg and Terry 2000).

EXPLORING THREE NEGLECTED ASPECTS OF THEORISING AND OPERATIONALISING OTHERNESS AND OTHERING

Mainstream CCM research has largely neglected the operationalisation of Otherness and Othering during intercultural encounters, which suggests an important missing interrelationship with the Self in CCM research (Corley and Gioia 2011). This article provides a wide range of examples from both the corporate and social realms, to highlight the fruitfulness of expanding the CCM research agenda into Otherness and Othering.

Neglected Aspect 1: Advancing the Operationalisation of Otherness by Deploying Conceptual Boundary Markers from Sociology

This section advances CCM research by adopting conceptual boundary markers as a way of operationalising Otherness, through directing focus towards why and how Them and Us are constructed. In CCM research, the concept of Otherness has not yet been clearly operationalised. Without such conceptual apparatus, it becomes too easy to omit asking questions about the phenomenon (reflecting most paradigmatic boundaries). "Unpacking" Otherness can provide an important path into querying about peoples' personal biases during intercultural encounters beyond merely stating that such viewpoints may relate to categorising

ourselves into a particular group (the latter reflects the limit of what SIT and SCT can inform us about)– particularly relevant in circumstances of sensitivity or latent negative/hostile sentiments. For example, the Israeli author Grossmann (2015) makes a notice of how the demonising Othering of Syrians, due to political hostility between the two countries, becomes more difficult to uphold when Israelis witness on the television screens an increasing number of Syrian refugees with faces filled with horror and who 'look like themselves' on the news.

Lessons on operationalising Otherness can be taken from Guttormsen's (2015) research on Scandinavian expatriates in Hong Kong and South-Korea, which demonstrates how conceptual boundary markers from Sociology can be used as the identifiers for Otherness. These markers (aka Otherness collectively) form the boundary of the Other where Otherness may constitute any numbers of boundary markers. Hence, this article realigns beyond the ontological focus of 'differences' and endogenous cultural traits of Us and Them as objectified categories that groups ascribe to. Furthermore, by drawing upon the Barthian (1971) school of otherness, the CCM research agenda is encouraged to incorporate the focus on why (Othering) people construct the boundaries the way they do, and how such boundaries function as elements of their constructed social reality during intercultural encounters (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2009). It follows that this sociological approach provides actual ascribed qualitative markers beyond merely acknowledging group-belongingness from SIT and SCT (see Hogg and Terry 2000).

The above outlook on intercultural encounters also facilitates a framework that acknowledges shared-ness and similarities between cultures. The construction of different Otherness*es*, for example, often entails ascribing qualities of multiple cultural Others by sharing some of the same boundary markers. This allows for comparing different Others

beyond sole intergroup social comparisons in STA and SCT (Tajfel 1975). The realisation that boundary markers can be shared between different Others also serves as an additional path of criticism: the claim that it is possible to measure a *distance* between cultures ('cultural distance' construct)– which in fact are not completely detached (Shenkar et al. 2001). Appreciating all the similarities, which are often forgotten about during challenging intercultural encounters, could decrease an already high stress level between expatriates and local staff members, which might prevent fruitful interaction and adjustment to multicultural environments (Rosenbusch et al. 2015). Appreciating similarities could also serve as an important reminder of the, often, simplified idea underlying Them against Us discourses. For example, the attitude regarding radical Islamic terrorists (Them) killing Us (non-Muslims)– part of a wider and more biased 'Muslims against the West' narrative– would rightly be contested if juxtapositioned with the notion of shared similarities: after all, according to United Nations and U.S. Department of State reports, the majority of killed terrorist victims are, indeed, other Muslims.

As opposed to wide-sweeping cultural dimensions (fixated to the singular boundary of an entire nation), operationalising Otherness also needs to be constructed across multiple internal layers that might co-exist within one country, such as intra-country variance. In international business, when strategising how to negotiate with a Malaysian counter-part in the most effective manner, sense making of the dynamic Other and Otherness would be highly dependent on the Malaysian national being of Malay, Indian or Chinese ethnic heritage– or perhaps a combination (Meyer 2007).

However, perceived positive shared-ness can also lead to dismissing, often unconsciously, existing Otherness which left unattended can lead to significant failure in MNEs and damaging business co-operation between countries. For example, when the

telecommunication state-owned MNEs, Telia (Swedish) and Telenor (Norway) were to merge, it was assumed to run smoothly contemplating the high cultural proximity (in addition to strong organisational and resource fit). However, the failure to merge became evident in the lack of cohesiveness between the Swedish and Norwegian governments when it came to strategic priorities regarding the merger as a result of differences in national governance structures (Meyer and Altenborg 2008).

Importantly, operationalisation of Otherness through boundary markers is, thus, not only a way to identify the social construction of the Other, but also to describe its Otherness(es). The latter point is an important addition to existing approaches as far as identity construction is concerned within CCM, which predominantly limits the exploration to broad typologies of a single identity (e.g., Mao and Shen 2015).

Neglected Aspect 2: Advancing Hierarchies of Boundary Markers as Otherness

In this section, CCM theory is advanced by introducing the concept of boundary markers being placed in a hierarchy in addition to the aforesaid hierarchy taking four different forms and having different conceptual distance between different hierarchical levels. Furthermore, Otherness is operationalised as ways of differentiating between various types and levels of the boundary markers in play during intercultural encounters. Hierarchies matter because the degree of impact from a particular marker (or layer of markers) does not always matter all the time. Thus, the above approach aids in deciphering how social reality and perceptions concerning the Other are constructed, as well as identifying personal biases and misperceptions when facing intercultural challenges, which are subsequently easier to manage. Depicting boundary markers as a hierarchical architecture builds on sociologists Molnar and Lamont's

(2002) conceptual boundary markers, in addition to Leander's (2009) work on 'hierarchy of fields' from a Bourdieusian perspective. However, these scholars proposed the markers as non-hierarchical, and merely as markers for the singular boundary differentiating our construction of Us and Them. Furthermore, the acknowledgement that there are levels of such markers (with varying 'conceptual distance' between them) is yet to be explored in CCM as well as in the social sciences and humanities more widely.

Hypothetically, a host-country national working in an international joint venture located in Shenzhen with a Japanese manager might attribute a break-down in business negotiations to a lack of shared professional trust and miscommunication. However, in some cases, the unwillingness to collaborate could be a deep-rooted dislike for Japanese people emerging from the sensitive history between the two countries (Japanese invasion and war in 1937 (until 1945) and the Nanjing massacre in 1938, where allegedly 100,000-300,000 Chinese were tortured and tens of thousands of women raped by the Japanese Imperial Army). Perhaps the said person found it difficult to take orders from a Japanese superior as it might resemble the feelings of inferiority. If only looking at more superficial boundary markers such as 'high' versus 'low' context communication styles (see Hall 1966) as opposed to other sub-layers, which bring in history and geopolitics, the assessment would fall considerably short of adequately explaining the core issue.

It becomes crucial that any attempts by management to solve intercultural conflicts should be based on the deeper, and more credible, sources of the arisen issue, which often might not be immediately evident without a deeper analysis of which hierarchies of boundary markers might be in play. Subsequently, cross-cultural training delivered by the human resources office would inevitably become more effective and less costly if avoiding working

on the wrong type of issues. Similarly, the Brazilian mining giant Vale experienced problems with their Canadian joint-venture collaborator due to expectations relating to the nature of interpersonal interaction being turned on its head when the 'developing country' (Brazil) took the lead over a company from an industrialised country.

As discussed above, current approaches in sociological and anthropological theory to boundary markers assume they are all equal and at one level. Thus, this point also extends theoretical advancement beyond CCM and into other disciplines. However, this article further proposes that the hierarchy of boundary markers take four different forms. The first form concerns the hierarchical order of the different levels of markers corresponding to 'importance'. 'Importance' tends to vary more between different cultures. For example, the case of classificatory disturbance from Social Anthropology (Ardener 1989; Chapman 1992, 157-159) becomes illuminating here as a means to illustrate how different weights of importance are levied onto different types of classificatory schemes: a formal business dinner might end up in mistrust due to perceived lack of respect towards the Other's cultural customs if, for example, the Chinese dinner-host serves meat from an animal which the Danish guests classify as 'pets' but are classified as 'edible food' in the minds of the Chinese. The Danes might well get a feeling of disgust, disbelief and disrespect.

Similar sensitive debates have transpired in relation to Western prison systems where Muslim inmates have expressed to only consume Halal meat– an essential custom among those subscribing to the religion of Islam. Some politicians, in Norway for example, have voiced arguments that such accommodation should not be offered, and compared it with the scenarios where prisons would not have the capacity, nor should be required to, accommodate those who do not like vegetables. However, the manner in which 'vegetables' and 'Halal' are used as

comparable phenomena (equal importance of boundary markers) by allocating the same markers across two different religions/societies that evolved within different contexts, is highly problematic: the consumption of vegetables is a case of tastes and preferences or a choice based on a particular diet and nutrition, whereas Halal is a religious requirement. Thus, there is no equivalent in the Norwegian society to the role that Halal plays in Muslim communities. The rationale is arguably flawed (and subsequently the notion of 'equivalence' in etic cultural models) – which should entice further interrogation into why particular intercultural stances have developed. It might be unconscious negative sentiments towards a religion, or perhaps just different personal values overall regarding inmates' rights.

The above types of issues intensify cross-culturally when different cultures are embedded with very different classificatory systems (Ardener 1989). Human beings look for equivalent characteristics in the Other culture to which their own culture can be compared, and understood in relation to their own. However, because the role (aka importance) of boundary markers, and their meaning, differ in different cultures it becomes empirically and analytically impossible to identify 'the middle' of a culture. For example, if working in Nigeria as a Western expatriate who comes from a society where tribes do not exist and not being aware of their prominent position in Nigerian society, the explanation for collaboration mishaps in a multicultural team might be attributed to varied English language skills among host-country nationals. However, the reason could perhaps be linked to the boundary marker 'power-status', contemplating on Nigerians categorising other Nigerians' social status based on the local language/dialect spoken, which is aligned with a particular tribe and thus birthplace. The danger is always that if an important boundary marker does not exist in our own culture, it is very easy to forget to assess its impact during intercultural encounters.

The second form of hierarchy categorises boundary markers as material (for example, physical objects and artefacts such as attire and religious artifices); and non-material cultural aspects (such as religious values, attitudes, norms) (Geertz 1973). The former markers are readily detectable to their surroundings, and thus are often what surface in racist attitudes. The non-material ones are less visible– and often invisible. In cross-cultural analysis, it can become easy to over-focus or attribute explanations to factors that are material/visible. Cross-cultural trainers might, unconsciously and sometimes unhelpfully, place more trust on the visible factors due to the Law of Proximity from Gestalt psychology (Sternberg 2006). For example, when immigrants change their name to sound more local to enhance chances to secure job interviews, they ought to be sure if the sound of the name is the actual issue– or perhaps if an association from that name which spills into another realm (e.g., the reputation of the person's nationality) is the problem in the minds of the recruitment panel.

A third form relates to the different levels of boundary markers: for example, local, provincial, regional, national – and even supra-national levels. Levels can also be divided into realms, such as the political, cultural, social, professional and legal spheres. The various levels of Otherness are also relational and contextual. Being aware of what level Otherness (and that there can be multiple Otherness*es*) is assigned to assist in scrutinising if we are analysing intercultural encounters and challenges attributed to the appropriate level/realm or if being conflated with another level/realm. When the luxury hotel chain, Four Seasons, established the chain in Paris, intercultural encounters between the North American corporate culture on the one hand– and individuals and institutional practices culturally embedded in French employment law and labour relations on the other– created conflicts between individuals, management and the organisations as a whole regarding service expectations as well as HRM policies, regulations and training (Hallowell, Bowen, and Knoop 2002). Thus, if management had decided to look for explanatory factors pertinent to solving the intercultural challenges

solely at the organisational level, the assessment would very likely have been severely hampered, and the analysis rendered less credible and relevant, as multiple Selves and Others were in play across individual, firm/organisational and national spheres.

The fourth form, in particular, advances operationalisation of Otherness beyond extant social theory as far as boundary markers are concerned. By applying Chapman's social anthropological notion of 'biosocial/ethno-biology' (1993, 22, 35), as an extension of the earlier mentioned 'importance-level', opens up the interplay between social and biological hierarchies of Otherness. 'Biosocial' entered social theory via Biological Anthropology and relates to recognising cultural influence in what might be considered a culture-free description (Chapman 1993, 22). Classification of Otherness is to be made on the cultural meaning that transpires during intercultural encounters, and not necessarily based on a biological trait such as skin-colour. The above creates further awareness regarding where boundary markers might be placed, and thus the opportunity to interrogate the often-unconscious motivations for the decisions made where to analyse that Otherness. Otherness is used to also de-humanise the Other to create distance, which links to Chapman's (1993) 'biosocial/ethno-biology'. For example, to motivate English soldiers to kill their enemy (Germans) during WWII who biologically looked just like themselves, demonising became essential.

To some extent, the aspect of de-humanising resembles the notion of depersonalisation in SIT and SCT. However, where aforesaid social psychological literature claims the motivation stems from seeking a positive self-concept by fitting with the group prototype (Tajfel and Turner 1979), Barth's (1971) Otherness from Social Anthropology provides additional perspectives, linked to the theoretical contribution of the present article: motivation to create distance over belongingness to a self-subscribed social group.

Chapman's distinctive contribution also reflects the importance of ideas, which seldom is scrutinised in CCM research. Ideas can be manifested in physicality, and physicality can be embodied as ideas in a diffusing and undistinguishable symbiosis. This demonstrates the importance of grasping that Otherness is a constructed hybrid. Biological traits (and differences) exist but not separate from the realm of ideas. Differences exist as materiality/physicality, but the perceptions of them are socially constructed. For example, your life-prospect would be decided by Nazi-Germany depending on your blood-line, herein your degree of 'Jewish-ness' (Forsythe 1989). Furthermore, Tutsi and Hutu peoples in Rwanda were constructed as separate ethnic categories believing their human value were also different because of small dissimilarities in physical features– based on what might be argued to reflect differences in physical characteristics. Such use of hostile markers of a 'radical Other' (Croft 2012)– constructed in our minds– caused misery, and eventually lead to 800,000 Rwandans being killed in a 100-day slaughter in the 1994 genocide.

These social constructions also tend to reflect how individuals place themselves at the top of a given hierarchy with an assumed 'purity' or 'neutrality' regarding their own positions in relation to all the Others (see Hunt 1987). In utterances when Caucasians refer to 'coloured people' (Otherness), the author of this article feels the urge to state that 'white' is also a 'colour'! The symbiosis between materiality and ideas signals that the 'distance' between hierarchical levels of boundary markers can only be conceptual and not empirical.

On a similar note, there is not a physical 'distance' between Otherness and your own Self during intercultural encounters– which reflects yet another important divergence from SIT and SCT: in the latter realms, Self and the Other(ness) are treated as typologies, whereas social

anthropological and sociological theory recognise that Self is mutually constituted through an Other through an Othering process (Barth 1971). The dynamicity of identity construction is reiterated, such as Otherness of Self. For example, after the terror bombing in Oslo in 2012, it became difficult to uphold an enemy-Other when the boundary markers of the known terrorist actually equated to your own identity markers, i.e. those of Norwegian ethnic origin. Through Othering processes, the temporality of Othering (Hansen 2006)– i.e. 'Muslim' and 'Norwegian' as conceptually different– was renegotiated as many Norwegians expressed in the media that they for the first time had felt togetherness with Muslim immigrants due to noticing the latter also wept tears for the same people and thus being an attack against *'our'* country.

This example indicates the powerful anchoring of Othering as cultural processes as only a violent rupture of self-conception could lead to a change in the deep-rooted ideology of Otherness. This recognition also reflects a limiting assumption with contemporary SCT: the above example demonstrates the importance of cultural and historic factors in identity construction which may have an impact on the dynamics of intercultural encounters, whereas SCT has almost dismissed those factors at the expense of SCT's fluid and contextual approach to identity development (see Haslam, Oakes, and Reynolds 1999; Huddy 2002).

Neglected Aspect 3: Advancing Salience and Meaning-Attribution of Boundary Markers and Otherness during Othering

A third aspect of advancing CCM theory concerning the operationalisation of Otherness relates to how individuals attribute meanings to assigned boundary markers as well as the salience of markers. When constructing the Other through boundary markers, some of the markers might be latent and possess less definitional strengths in specific contexts, depending on the nature and dynamics of the intercultural encounter (see Barth 1971). Appreciating the above assists in exploring arising conflicts and tensions that may hamper harmonious intercultural

interaction: people sometimes make assumptions and judgements regarding the Other– often unjustified and biased– due to over-relying on a particular and a more salient, marker. For example, Guttormsen (2015) identified that the boundary marker 'egalitarianism' (a prevalent characteristic of Norwegian expatriates' identity construction in Hong Kong and South-Korea) will be less salient when Norwegian expatriates interact with neighbouring Danes (due to very similar cultures) as opposed to South Koreans who subscribe to a much more rigid and authoritarian-based hierarchy (Rowley and Warner 2015). Thus, what constitutes 'Norwegian-ness' becomes easier to identify when interrogating the Self through a very different cultural Other.

The above realisation expands on existing theorisation in Social Psychology: identity-salience relates to how a particular identity is activated, and identity distinctiveness is associated with how groups perceive differences with them (Haslam, Oakes, and Reynolds 1999). However, this article advances the operationalisation of Otherness with conceptual boundary markers for identifying *why* the boundary has been drawn by ascribing specific qualitative signifiers, as opposed to only establishing a single, typology of identity, which this article identifies as a limitation in contemporary expatriate research (e.g., Mao and Shen 2015). Furthermore, the cultural process of Othering becomes a more revealing approach for cross-cultural analysis than SIT and SCT, as the latter limits the inquiry to illuminate which social group individuals categorise themselves into (see Huddy 1999).

Meaning-attribution relates to how individuals sometimes assign a fixed (but unhelpful and empirically flawed) identity by inferring from a single, and often biased, boundary marker during intercultural encounters. This realisation, thus, focuses on the importance of the construction of meaning beyond SIT's mere recognition that such processes exist, and can subsequently aid with identifying the underlying bias when making assumptions regarding

Others. During his pursuit to win the Republication Party's nomination for running for the US Presidency, Donald Trump seemed to infer from the salient boundary marker 'religion', 'terrorism' as a connoted meaning into another salient marker of Muslims. His reasoning was the justification for him to propose that all Muslims should be denied access to US soil to prevent terrorist attacks.

The salience of a marker also provides an explanatory lens of what might be deemed as racism. For example, Swiss football commentator Stefano Eranio was fired due to making allegedly racist remarks, indicating that black players were blessed with physical strength but not an ability to concentrate thus making errors in defence. It might not be outrageously questionable to say that players coming from the same training regime or institution might share characteristics in styles of playing football (for example, Iceland successfully reaching the Quarter Final stage in Euro 2016 attributed to having professional coaches even for 5-year olds on the tiny Nordic island). However, Eranio's statement was about assigning a negative connotation to a physical trait (race/skin colour), blissful of the fact that 'black players' might come from a vast range of institutional and cultural backgrounds traditions and indeed geographical areas (e.g., African-Americans, Afro-Caribbeans, black Africans, black British, Afro-Brazilians– and the list goes on).

The danger is when the above biased, and often ideologised, meaning-attribution transplants itself into behaviour. This acknowledgement moves beyond SIT's preface of intergroup social comparisons irrespective of meaning-construction (see Tajfel 1975). This also highlights the short-coming of SIT and SCT which focuses on cognitive processes (see Hornsey 2008) and almost ignores learning through interaction (which is a cornerstone of social anthropological theory). In the above cases, we see how meaning-attribution performs in

tandem with hierarchy and different types and levels of boundary markers. Reducing a whole person into one marker is extreme.

CONCLUSION: CONTRIBUTIONS, PRACTITIONER IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This article advances theory in CCM by demonstrating the relevance and explanatory-power of Otherness and Othering integral to identity construction during intercultural encounters in cross-cultural analysis. The theoretical contribution also extends beyond the realm of the CCM research field. How social anthropological and sociological culture theories can provide additional avenues of intellectual inquiry and perspectives into intercultural encounters, have also been offered to SIT and SCT. The two latter theories are currently being upheld as CCM's mainstream approaches to study identity. More specifically, the article advances CCM theory through adopting conceptual boundary markers from Sociology as a way of operationalising Otherness. Furthermore, aforesaid boundary markers are demonstrated to perform in hierarchies (and with different conceptual distance between the hierarchical levels), in accordance with degree of importance; if taking the form of material or non-material cultural aspects; on which level the marker is detectable; and that Otherness is a constructed hybrid based on a diffusing and undistinguishable symbiosis between ideas about physicality and how the latter can be embodied as ideas. Additionally, the article advances the role of salience and meaning-attribution in terms of the interplay between boundary markers.

The article also advances CCM theory vis-à-vis SIT and SCT through the application of theoretical developments in Social Anthropology and Sociology: the conceptual boundary markers labels Us from Them beyond relying on accentuating processes; primacy is granted to

individuals' context-specific categorisation and not arbitrary criteria; meanings construction and the individual level are at the core of investigating identity without overt focus on norms; and that accentuated belongingness processes are expanded through paying more attention to social and cultural processes in the meaning-construction of world-views.

The above links to the practitioner implications. Expatriate managers working abroad, often express that they find limited use of received cross-cultural training (CCT) which predominantly seem to revolve around Hofstede's cultural dimensions and ideas derived from social psychological research as far as actual international business dealings on the ground are concerned (Guttormsen 2015, 2016). Thus, CCT programmes are often designed with an overt focus on 'cultural differences' leading to increased dangers of national stereotyping (Frenkel, Lyan, and Drori 2015). The number of CCT programmes is rapidly increasing but the cultural orientations are known to be notoriously very superficial (Berber, Rofcanin, and Fried 2014). This article has demonstrated how identity construction during intercultural encounters (including Otherness, Othering and a dynamic Other) can lead to cultural misunderstandings and conflicts, which often cannot be understood and solved simply by training participants in the 'dos and don'ts' of the new culture. The current article suggests that the following interventions can contribute towards decreasing the depth of the above short-comings in CCT.

CCT should be continuous and not only take place pre-departure, but also *during* the international assignment and when repatriated. This allows for reflections and training in a natural setting and when the individual has actually experienced the Other culture through interaction with locals. It is recommended that CCT challenges participants to analyse their own cultures through a boundary marking exercise. Moreover, they should keep diaries with their own reflections regarding how attendants from other cultures perceived their own culture.

This should lead to additional CCT exercises where cultural similarities are to be identified (as well as differences). The diaries should here be used to reflect upon the negotiation within them and with others in terms of any change of opinions regarding their own or other people's culture. Other exercises should include discussing assumptions underlying stereotypes through unpacking reflections of own biases (e.g., use of layers and hierarchies of boundary markers would come in handy, so would discussion activities surrounding what meaning people infer and attribute to markers, stereotypes and opinions) (see Zhang and Guttormsen 2016). CCT participants should be introduced to the above concepts as managerial 'thinking-tools' for cross-cultural analysis of international work-life. This article also recommends reflexive thinking as mere reasoning has been deemed insufficient in dealing with intercultural conflicts and developing intercultural competences (Rosenblatt, Worthley, and MacNab 2013): participants should interrogate their own thinking, by considering the possible impact of their social, professional and intellectual backgrounds as far as producing their opinions surrounding intercultural encounters is concerned.

In terms of future CCM research, studies of cross-cultural phenomena should increasingly establish research questions and explore research designs that either complement or innovatively expands the current paradigmatic hegemony, with perspectives and theoretical development in Social Anthropology and Sociology, and beyond. Specifically, studies providing the perspectives of stakeholders other than the self-referential individual would be particularly welcome, so would studies that examine Otherness(es) and Othering processes during conflicts and managerial problem-solving in international business management. Future research endeavours should also consider other 'sub-units' of inquiry between the individual and the national: for example, groups, communities, organisations– between themselves but also with the individual. Such inquiry could also lead to the further intellectual development of

SIT and SCT in terms of what those theories mean by 'social groups'. Further development of the CCM research agenda is not only a question about investigating missing interrelationships with the Self (empirically: those experiencing intercultural encounters; conceptually: connecting with concepts not privy by the monopolistic cognitive and behaviourism research paradigm in CCM), but also exploring CCM's disciplinary identity and relationships with other disciplines (Whetten 1989; see Corley and Gioia 2011).

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