Bridging the Determinist-Interpretivist Divide in Intercultural Competence Research

Julie Emontspool
Department of Marketing and Management
University of Southern Denmark
Campusvej 55
5230 Odense
Denmark
Email: juli@sam.sdu.dk

Julie Emontspool is Associate Professor at the Department of Marketing and Management, University of Southern Denmark. Her research interests focus on cultural diversity, migration and globalization, approached from the perspective of marketing, entrepreneurship and consumption. Her work has among others been published the Journal of Business Research, Consumption Markets and Culture, as the European Journal of International Management, as well as in chapters published by Springer, Sage Publications and Palgrave MacMillan.

Kristian Rune Hansen
Department of Marketing and Management
University of Southern Denmark
Sdr. Stationsvej 28
4200 Slagelse
Denmark
Email: kruneh@sam.sdu.dk

Kristian Rune Hansen is an assistant professor in the Management of People research group, at the Department of Marketing and Management at the University of Southern Denmark. He completed his PhD on the individualization of work in 2015. His research interests are centered on the intersection between organizations, society and management practice.

The authors thank Erika Kuever for her valuable comments on earlier versions of this paper. We would also like to express our gratitude to the editors of this special issue as well as to the reviewers for their useful comments.
Bridging the Determinist-Interpretivist Divide in Intercultural Competence Research

Abstract

This conceptual paper identifies and addresses limitations related to the conception of culture prevalent in intercultural competence research in both the management and marketing fields. Taking advantage of insights from both fields, it suggests means of addressing these limitations as productive avenues for future investigation. Doing so requires bridging the divide between determinist and interpretivist definitions of culture, which the paper accomplishes by building on Bourdieu’s theoretical framework. This approach facilitates resolutions to three main criticisms of intercultural capital that emerge in light of the determinist-interpretivist divide: an overly static conceptualization conflating culture and nation, underexplored power relations in the definition and development of intercultural competences, as well as a dearth of socio-historic contextualization of intercultural competences. The paper contributes to existing knowledge by proposing directions for future research building on these points of criticism, thereby supporting cross-fertilization between marketing and management research.

Keywords:
Intercultural competence, cultural capital, field, power, critical studies, marketing, management, consumer
Introduction

In recent decades, the study of Intercultural Competence (ICC) has extended into multiple research fields, among others communication (Wiseman and Koester, 1993), education (Deardorff, 2006) and business studies (Griffith and Harvey, 2001; Van Bakel et al., 2014). The most common definition of ICC is that it represents “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Deardorff, 2006, p.247-248). In the broader field of business research, ICC has been particularly influential in the areas of marketing and management (e.g. Bücker and Poutsma, 2010; Demangeot et al., 2013). Perspectives on ICC in these two fields have traditionally evolved in parallel and are central to ICC research since those are the “domains most concerned with the implications of culture for business” (Nakata, 2009, p.4). Predicated on similar streams of thought, both address interpersonal relations in the business context, whether with stakeholders internal or external to the organization. But despite significant congruence among perspectives on ICC in the two fields, there are also significant differences within them regarding the foundational theories underlying ICC, such as when it comes to conceptualizations of the key concept of culture. Unexplored avenues therefore remain relative to ICC, justifying joint investigation of these two fields in business studies.

One foundational aspect that represents a central challenge for ICC insights in marketing and management is that both fields are characterized by fragmented and often conflicting perspectives on, and definitions of, culture (Richter et al., 2016; Straub et al., 2002). An inspiration from the field of anthropology is often shared, but some theoretical perspectives have their roots in older, decontextualized, and deterministic perspectives on how culture can be understood and utilized in research (e.g. Johnson et al., 2006; Lloyd and Härtel, 2010). Emergent, process- and interpretive-oriented streams of thought are at the basis of others (Bjerregaard et al., 2009; Martin and Nakayama, 2015). The aim of this paper is to address some of the limitations related to the
conception of culture prevalent in ICC research in the management and marketing fields. Taking advantage of insights from both fields, we suggest productive avenues for future investigation. To achieve this goal, the paper proposes a theoretical framework drawing on Bourdieu’s social theory to integrate deterministic and interpretive perspectives in both fields. This approach opens opportunities for further research regarding ICC and its application in business contexts through a deeper understanding of what competence in a culture represents, and how it develops. It facilitates fruitful interdisciplinary collaboration by detailing how Bourdieu’s theorization (Bourdieu, 1972, 1986, 1990) can help address gaps in ICC research relative to its conceptualization, its approach to power relations in global contexts and its socio-cultural contextualization.

In the following section, we firstly review how existing business research defines culture and hence intercultural competences. Secondly, we discuss current ICC research, highlighting its contributions but also critiques of the prevalent approaches. To do so, we adopt a perspective on ICC research that highlights the need to study the underlying power relations as well as contextual grounding of ICC (Bjerregaard et al., 2009; Halualani et al., 2009; Martin and Nakayama, 2015). We thirdly discuss how work by the sociologist Bourdieu (1986, 1990) can serve as a theoretical framework for integrating deterministic and interpretivist distinctions in managerial and marketing research. We explain how the framework allows for a deeper conceptualization of ICC that acknowledges its contextual embeddedness and its grounding in power relations both within the company and on a global cultural level. Before concluding this paper, we identify two specific directions for future research, detailing how cross-fertilization between marketing and management research can add to the conceptualization of ICC and shed light on ICC’s impact on power relations in business contexts and its socio-historic embeddedness.

The concept of culture in marketing and management research
To understand differences between existing conceptualizations of ICC, a return to two historical perspectives on culture as developed in the field of anthropology is required, summarized in table 1.

Bjerregaard et al (2009) trace ICC to anthropological definitions of culture highlighting the structuring role of language on culture (Hall, 1966). In this view, culture can be studied in a similar way to language, through an identification of the grammatical rules and structures underlying a society’s cultural organization (Levi-Strauss, 1955). Commonly qualified as structuralist or deterministic, this perspective approaches culture as relatively unchangeable, where the individual merely enacts an existing structure (Erikson and Murphy, 2016). Over time, anthropological definitions of culture and its impact on individuals and societies have however moved past the culturally deterministic view to embrace an alternative perspective with a more interpretive and symbolic focus. In this view, culture is a “historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life” (Geertz, 1973, p.89). The focus here lies on the combination of historically inherited meanings, which are appropriated by individuals. Culture is thereby continuously changing, and rather than providing an immutable structure, reflects a social process of meaning-making where individuals interpret symbols and by so doing, generate new meanings (Geertz, 1973). This process is intensified in today’s global societies, where awareness about cultures and their differences leads individuals to reflexively adapt their behaviour to either support or contest cultural stereotypes, also in organizational settings (Ailon-Souday and Kunda, 2003; Askegaard et al., 2009).

In business studies, these contrasting definitions of culture take prevalence in marketing and management research (Caprar et al., 2015), where existing research has moved between the
deterministic and interpretive views of culture. One of the forerunners in management research has been Pettigrew (1979), whose definition of organizational culture followed the second type of tradition, where “man creates culture and culture creates man” (Pettigrew, 1979, p.577). From this perspective, the organization is socially constructed, symbolism and language (among others) shaping the organization through the actions of individuals and groups engaged in meaning-making processes (Pettigrew, 1979). Along with Pettigrew, Schein (1990, 2010) is one of the foundational theorists on the concept of culture in the field of management (organizational culture specifically). Schein has played a central role in the development of an understanding about culture in the field of management. He was one of the first to suggest a specific and practically usable framework for analysing organizations cultural traits and characteristics, based on a conceptualization of culture as having a core of basic assumptions and values, supplemented with a layer of enacted/espoused values and observable artefacts (Hatch, 1993). On the marketing research side, Levy advocated from early on for the study and interpretation of symbols in marketing as well as consumer practice (Levy, 1959, 1981), opening the field to interpretive studies in later years (Bode and Østergaard, 2013). Despite the crucial contribution of these forerunners, a more deterministic conceptualization of culture gained traction in marketing and management research (for an overview and examples, please see Bjerregaard et al., 2009; Yaprak, 2008). This stream of research has extended into concepts and measurements of cultural intelligence and global mindset (Andresen and Bergdolt, 2017; Ang and Dyne, 2008a; Bücker and Poutsma, 2010; Earley and Ang, 2003).

This more deterministic view of culture has influenced marketing and management research most commonly by taking its starting point in Hofstede’s (1983) operationalization of culture as homogenous, a perspective often focused on culture as national culture only, disregarding other types of culture, for example corporate or regional ones. Hofstede’s view on culture relates to “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or society from
those of another” (Hofstede, 1984, p.82). This definition can only operate alongside a culturally deterministic view of culture, a static “programming” that guides individuals’ actions rather than an interpretive, co-constitutive, and meaning-making process. Instead of an organizational culture, such as the one at IBM, created and shaped by the individuals connected to it - as described by Pettigrew (1979), Hofstede’s work suggests the existence of fixed cultural structures shaping organizational processes (Beugelsdijk et al., 2017; Hofstede, 1984). Hofstede’s prevalence in the field is undeniable, his works still being cited more than 500 times per year (Taras and Steel, 2009). Yet recurrent criticism of his work has accompanied this progression, a plethora of references critically examining and often dismissing the assertions in his work (McSweeney, 2002, 2013; Taras and Steel, 2009). The tenor of their criticism follows the lines of the contrast evoked earlier between deterministic and interpretive definitions of culture, highlighting that deterministic definitions of culture have been dismissed in the anthropological field that first developed them, to move into the direction of interpretive, co-constitutive views on culture (Bjerregaard et al., 2009).

Such debates tend to return in marketing and management studies under different conceptual headings, for instance when the deterministic-interpretivist contrast is repeated in the distinction between etic and emic, where the former is deemed to focus on broader patterns of behaviour while the latter is centred on a person’s individual perception (Helfrich, 1999). In marketing research, Hofstede’s deterministic view of culture is similarly contested in the Consumer Culture Theory field (Arnould and Thompson, 2005), which adopts a more interpretive approach to culture (Askegaard et al., 2009; Peñaloza, 2018).

**Intercultural competence research and its critics**

Research based on a culturally deterministic perspective often aims at increasing an individual’s capability, their intercultural competence, through language learning and the development of cultural knowledge (Ang and Dyne, 2008b; Bird et al., 2010; van der Zee and van
Oudenhoven, 2000). But inspired by interpretive approaches to culture, academic debate in ICC research also acknowledges ICC as a manifestation of intercultural interactions (please see Chiu et al., 2013; Leung et al., 2014, for an overview). Such an interactive view on ICC and culture renders three interconnected points of critique salient: (1) the conceptualization of culture as something that is both singular and mainly manifests as national traits or characteristics; (2) the understudied influence of power relations on the development of intercultural competence, and (3) the field’s lack of socio-historical contextualization (Halualani et al., 2009).

One of the main critiques of ICC research is that it often conceptualizes an individual’s culture as their national origin (Richter et al., 2016; Schaffer and Riordan, 2003). Two pitfalls exist in this respect. On the one hand, recent research has increasingly pointed out that cultural differences within the national context often play a larger role than cultural differences between countries (Gerhart and Fang, 2005; van Hoorn, 2015). That is, cross-cultural management studies, often inspired by Hofstede’s work, tend to focus exclusively on national differences, while only paying limited attention to the heterogenic nature of national cultures at a societal level, as well as subgroupings at the organizational level (Gerhart and Fang, 2005; van Hoorn, 2015). On the other hand, these current conceptualizations gloss over intersectionality considerations (Browne and Misra, 2003; Gopaldas and DeRoy, 2015), often ignoring how gender, sexuality and social class interrelate with cultural identity (Block and Corona, 2014; Martin and Nakayama, 2015; Yep, 2000). Acknowledging the intersectionality of culture is however crucial as individuals’ culture may not be determined by national origin alone but may be more particular to an individual’s sexual orientation or subcultural belonging than citizenship (Nagel 2006). Such pitfalls generate essentializing perspectives on culture in business studies (Emontspool and Servais, 2017), where the dynamics of power relations as well as the contextual embeddedness of cultural relations are overlooked, as we detail next.
The influence of power relations and ideology on the development of intercultural competences is understudied in ICC research. The way in which “institutions, ideologies, and histories” (Collier, 2002, p.2) constrain ICC therefore requires attention (Halualani et al., 2009). As an example, at the same level of education, students from formerly colonized countries may be disadvantaged with respect to developing ICC in comparison to those growing up in prosperous European countries as the latter’s educational system has been globalized and imposed - often partially and inadequately - in other places (Hickling-Hudson et al., 2004). Likewise, the dominance of the English language in academic publication and exchange constitutes a disadvantage for academics from countries where English language proficiency is lower despite equivalent levels of research competence (Ferguson, Pérez-Llantada and Plo 2011). Such a disadvantage can only be understood fully by tracing the predominance of the English language to its history in Western Imperialism (Tsuda 2013).

Such socio-cultural and historical contextualization is often lacking in business studies regarding intercultural competence. A crucial part of contextualization is therefore to integrate the historical origins of ICC, given that the concept’s emergence in Western business and academic contexts shaped its current conceptualization and assessment (Martin and Nakayama, 2015). Consequently, future research is needed in order to address how cultural interactions develop in a specific socio-cultural and historic context and thereby shape cultural identity (Halualani et al., 2009; Martin and Nakayama, 2015).

An integrative framework: intercultural competences, capital and Bourdieu

One of the central problems in ICC research is thus that the different streams of research rest on often conflicting definitions of culture (Richter et al., 2016). In the following we suggest that the theoretical framework of eminent sociologist Bourdieu (1984, 1986) is well suited for overcoming these contradictions and allowing fruitful cross-pollination, which enables ICC research to bridge
the deterministic-interpretive divide. The Bourdieusian perspective has generated important insights in marketing research when investigating status and power games in consumption contexts (Arsel and Bean, 2013; Coskuner-Balli and Thompson, 2013; Holt, 1998; Üstüner and Thompson, 2012). But this theoretical framework has yet to see extensive use in the broader management literature, despite increasing interest in Bourdieu’s work among management scholars (Sieweke, 2014). Outside fragmented use of his field, capital and habitus concepts, few researchers have offered exhaustive introductions and general suggestions for the utilization of the Bourdieusian framework in management studies (Emirbayer and Johnson, 2008; Townley, 2014).

One of the central elements to the Bourdieusian perspective is that this theory should be understood as “a set of thinking tools” (Wacquant, 1989, p.50), to explore and understand given social phenomena. That is, while the main theoretical concepts - field, capital and habitus - have specific and interrelated meanings, the overall conceptualization of the work centres on building a framework which can be used for empirical investigation, specifically as tools utilized to objectify the social world and practice into meaningful analytical categories. Bourdieu’s theoretical framework is inspired by structuralist thought, and therefore on relationally defining social concepts and objects. At the same time, his work enables to some extent a transcendence of the structure-agency divide, the longstanding debate in social science regarding whether individuals act as independent agents or whether all their actions are conditioned by the social structures in which they are embedded. His work bridges this divide by (inter alia) focusing on how agency is shaped by, and simultaneously, shapes the contextually specific (by way of the concept of the field) patterns of behaviour and thought, thus explaining how behaviour is both relatively unpredictable and yet limited in diversity (Bourdieu, 1990).

Expanding on the way the Bourdieusian perspective can be integrated in the three main lines of critique of the conceptualization of ICC outlined earlier, we suggest that ICC can be framed in
terms of the concept of cultural capital and its connection to cultural competences, the power
negotiations and inequalities at the basis of cultural capital (and hence competence) development, as
well as the field-specificity of this capital and its consequent variability across contexts.

The Bourdieusian concept of cultural capital and its relation to the concept of the field can
assist in overcoming some of the issues arising from conceptualizations of ICC that are overly
deterministic, static, and primarily focused on national culture. Cultural capital was utilized and
conceptualized in different ways in Bourdieu’s work over the course of his academic career
(Bourdieu, 1984, 1986; Lamont and Lareau, 1988). It can be said to describe a person’s education
and accumulated knowledge and skills (both tacit and explicit), tastes, and mastery of cultural
codes. Cultural capital is simultaneously constituted by accumulated credentials (for example
educational credentials such as diplomas and degrees) and the preferences and behaviours of the
individual. As mentioned previously, the concept of cultural capital relates to current, practical,
perspectives on ICC, in the sense that it represents accumulated labour, something that an individual
can work to achieve. Taking the above into account when it comes to the conceptualization of ICC,
the Bourdieusian theoretical framework can assist in bridging the divide between agency and
structure, and thusly to some extent the main perspectives on ICC. Indeed, the theoretical
framework encompasses both the elements of agency and structure, as well as how the interaction
between the two can be framed analytically.

However, the Bourdieusian conceptualization also focuses on how capital is unequally
distributed, and how this unequal distribution springs not from natural affinity, but rather is the
result of a series of social processes and a complex social game, which affords only some the
opportunity, time and interest necessary to develop it (Bourdieu 1986). Thus, it is connected to the
second element of critique we discuss, the importance of relations of power when it comes to the
distribution of ICC. As discussed earlier, one of the central criticisms of ICC is that the role of
power relations when it comes to the development of intercultural competence is understudied. The concept of the field, understood as a: “network, or a configuration of objective relations between positions” (Wacquant, 1989, p.39), can assist in bringing into focus the contextual frame of ICC. As an analytical construct, the field represents an autonomous social system or microcosm, where agents are positioned based on the interaction between their capital and the structure of the field (such as rules for governing practice etc.). We believe that the Bourdieusian approach allows for emphasizing how relations between the different positions in a field set the limits of capital. They thereby bring to the forefront how the ICC framework by itself tends to ignore a central element of ICC, namely how these competencies are realized and valued (Pöllmann, 2013), as well as how they are legitimized. In the Bourdieusian framework, these central elements form internalized preferences that guide behaviour (conceptualized as habitus), which in turn relates to and affects the structure of a given field.

We thus suggest that the ICC framework, in its traditional conceptualization, suffers from a lack of attention to how competencies are embedded in, and to some extent defined by, relations of power. In a Bourdieusian framework, this problematizes the positions in the field where they are valued (as cultural capital) in a similar way to how degrees and certificates from different educational institutions can be valued differently depending on context. Cultural capital is unequally distributed not simply based on ability and knowledge, but also by how it is valued and recognized in a given context, whether organizational or societal. As such, ICC can function as a mechanism for exclusion or domination, in terms of what is considered valuable, but also which subcultural elements are perceived as the most legitimate, for example in the distinction between working class and middle-class cultural practices in a given national context – thereby cementing and reproducing social hierarchies.
In relation to the lack of socio-historical contextualization of ICC, the Bourdieusian perspective also affords an emphasis on the social and the historical context, as both are central to the genesis of field and cultural capital in this perspective. The historical development of fields and capitals is a central element of Bourdieu’s framework: “suffice it to say that the separation of sociology and history is a disastrous division, and one totally devoid of epistemological justification” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.90). What is considered valuable (capital) and how this is connected to practice and preference is tied inevitably to the differentiations and developments of the specific fields from a meta-historical perspective. As such it is impossible to understand what is valuable in a field without understanding how capital developed as struggles over what is considered valued and legitimate in a given field. The Bourdieusian framework is therefore especially suited to situating existing organizational and managerial practices in relation to ICC in a broader societal context.

As a consequence, we suggest that Bourdieu’s framework can lead to valuable empirical and theoretical insights when integrating different perspectives on culture in marketing and management research. It allows for addressing points of critique about a lack of ICC theorization regarding these competences’ historic context and embeddedness in power relations, as explained earlier. Such an integration indeed plays a central role in investigating “the social conditions under which inter- and intra-organizational power relations are produced, reproduced, and contested” (Emirbayer and Johnson, 2008, p.1). Additionally, numerous research domains utilize and accept Bourdieu’s conceptualization of cultural capital, allowing for both a focus on the individual and the interactional processes underlying ICC and its development (Deardorff, 2006). Bourdieu’s theory is especially relevant if we consider that cultural competence is the person’s “capacity to produce classifiable practices and works and the capacity to differentiate and appreciate these practices and products” (Bourdieu, 1984, p.170). Indeed, cultural competence reflects “the ability to distinguish
between legitimate stocks of cultural capital, the ability to master the social skill of using the acquired cultural capital, and also the skill to deploy these ‘abilities’ in order to advance in social situations” (Tsaousi, 2016, p.470), which sum up Bourdieu’s definition of the habitus. Finally, the Bourdieusian perspective allows for the utilization of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Central to the theory is combining factual and “objective” perspective of quantitative measurements with qualitative insights and methodologies (Townley, 2014). From a practical perspective, the Bourdieusian framework therefore lends itself well to integrating quantitative and qualitative methods and proves a fruitful venue for addressing the weaknesses of the current mainstream approaches to ICC. For example, moving beyond the overreliance on singular psychometric measures, and solely quantitative methodologies, the framework provides an opportunity to bridge the two in a single theoretical framework (Caprar et al., 2015).

**Studying multi-audience ICC beyond ethno-national cultural definitions**

Applying Bourdieu’s social theory to the study of ICC offers promising opportunities for future research in the management and marketing fields, to create a more contextually embedded, multi-actor conceptualization of ICC in business contexts. A consideration of how cultures evolve in multicultural business environments contributes to the growing stream of studies focused on “socially situated communication and cultural meanings” (Bjerregaard et al., 2009, p.211), which take inspiration from more current knowledge in anthropology.

In the following, we propose two directions for future research, each articulated in relation to conceptualization, power relations and contextualization of ICC. While we do not detail the methodological implications of the research questions below, we recommend multi-method studies that ensure a holistic study of ICC across business contexts. Specific advice and suggestions about the implementation of these studies are included in table 2.

INSERT Table 2 here
Investigating ICC in multi-audience organizational contexts

A first direction for future research lies in improving both employees’ and managers’ ICC in the marketing field. In management research, ICC studies converge on the measurement of the competence of individual managers and employees, as well as the development of those competences over time (Chiu et al., 2013; Leung et al., 2014). Less attention has been given to the interrelation between corporate actors’ ICC and their interactions with customers, public policy makers and local communities as studied in marketing research (Cross and Gilly, 2014; Demangeot et al., 2013). Such considerations are crucial since differentiations between actors in- and outside of the firm may lose relevance in today’s interconnected world. For example, inside-out/outside-in distinctions allow for the possibility of utilizing customers directly in HRM practices (Ulrich and Dulebohn, 2015). Organizations’ communication with external stakeholders impacts how employee and managers identify with their workplace (Morsing, 2006). A focus on multiple audiences and their interactions in business settings (Balmer and Gray, 1999; De Chernatony et al., 2006; Welch and Jackson, 2007) is thus needed to understand how actors in business interactions relate to each other, and what competences enable successful engagement in those interactions.

Marketing research should investigate further the conflict-potential of culturally diverse retail and service environments, where customers and employees of various origins interact daily. For instance, retail managers’ attempts to both target customers from ethnic minorities and culturally interested consumers can generate tensions in the retail environment, as customers feel stereotyped and discriminated against (Regany and Emontspool, 2015, 2017). These tensions are not limited to the retail context but expand into broader society via media and political discourses (Johnson et al., 2017), harming the company’s image. Managers and employees hence increasingly face the challenge of adequately addressing customers or diverse ethnic origins. Managerial ICC research feeds into this type of research by offering additional tools for the study of ICC in business contexts.
involving multiple audience and interactions, but actionable managerial insights to address this problem are scarce. We therefore call for increased attention to the development of ICC among managers as well as employees in retail and service environments. Such insights are crucial on the one hand to lower the risk of employees becoming involved in conflicts with customers due to inadequate marketing communication and on the other, to provide employees with the competences to respond to such situations adequately, should they arise nonetheless.

Conceptualization/assessment of ICC

The complexity of contemporary business contexts raises questions about what constitutes ICC when diverse audiences, both internal and external to the organization, come into play. Employees for example experience challenges when trying to juggle corporate policies about multicultural openness with a society’s assimilationist stance in their day-to-day interactions with customers (Regany and Emontspool, 2017). An employees’ longer-term interaction with colleagues arguably differs from the short interactions of floor-level employees in a supermarket with customers shopping for everyday groceries. Differences in length of interaction, knowledge about the interactants’ cultural backgrounds as well as the level of managerial control over the interaction imply that the ICC required for successful interaction differ. Yet research is lacking about how front-line employees develop ICC to interact with their customers. Additional research is therefore needed to establish to what extent the type of cultural capital needed for the display and development of ICC differs in relation to the addressed audience.

From a Bourdieusian approach, this involves studying how individuals mobilize cultural capital differently to address audiences in different fields. Existing sociological and marketing research has connected this consideration to the concept of cosmopolitanism, individuals’ openness to diversity and engagement with the (ethnic) Other (Hannerz, 1990). The concept resembles the motivational component of cultural intelligence put forward by some studies (Earley and Ang,
yet it also contains an element of skill absent from the motivational cultural intelligence component. Engaging with culturally different others indeed requires cultural capital relative to the different contexts as well as the ability to mobilize such capital adequately (Woodward and Emontspool, 2018). Therefore, cosmopolitanism “can be a matter of competence […] of both a generalized and a more specialized kind” (Hannerz, 1990, p.239). On a general level, such a competence involves active interaction with others, while specifically, it also includes “a build-up skill in manoeuvring more or less expertly within a particular system of meanings and meaningful forms” (Hannerz, 1990, p.239). Thereby, the concept of cosmopolitanism closely resembles current conceptualizations of ICC, where the focus lies on openness towards, and an active engagement with, other cultures (Chiu et al., 2013; Deardorff, 2006), which is why we encourage a deeper integration between the concepts.

Gaps remain in cosmopolitanism research regarding specific ways in which individuals develop the required competences – insights that management studies can provide. Current research for instance only indicates how cultural competence is developed (Maciel and Wallendorf, 2017), without specifically explaining how cosmopolitan, intercultural competence is built up. Additional managerial insights are needed, to identify how cosmopolitanism training can improve employees’ ICC when in contact with multiple audiences and stakeholders. Furthermore, managers need specific insights about the circumstances and the extent to which front-office employees require ICC training, to not only be personally equipped for business interactions across cultures, but to better evaluate when the gains from ICC training outweigh its costs.

**Power negotiations underlying ICC in the marketplace**

Especially relevant for research in ICC, embeddedness in power relations, could, as also suggested elsewhere (Emirbayer and Johnson, 2008; Townley, 2014; Vaughan, 2008) be examined by focusing on differences in the perspectives of actors, in relation to their position in a given field.
Consideration is specifically needed regarding the ways in which ICC in multi-audience contexts are embedded in power relations. Marketing research shows that cosmopolitan (consumption) behaviour has been rooted in colonial ideals of young people’s discovery of foreign contexts as formative experiences (Thompson and Tambyah, 1999). While this colonial link is not directly visible in cosmopolitanism anymore, it remains connected to privilege and power, with current research mostly relating it to global elites (Woodward and Emontspool, 2018). Given that the field of intercultural competence similarly focuses to a large extent on global elites (Leung et al., 2014), both ICC and cosmopolitanism may reflect an ideology of elitist openness, afforded to individuals who have the freedom to move across the world, whether mentally or physically. Such an ideology then builds an expectation of intercultural fluency for integration in a constantly growing and changing field of power as defined by Bourdieu (Wacquant, 1993). It precludes individuals with less social and physical mobility from participation unless they acquire the relevant competences, which their situation renders impossible.

Such (post)colonial power relations remain understudied in management research (Martin and Nakayama, 2015), a gap where cosmopolitanism research may prove useful. Future research should therefore identify how and under which circumstances the development of ICC reflects participation in a status game and shifts power relations within an organization as well as on a global level. Such insights may further illuminate how particular types or components of intercultural capital become differently valued over time, reshaping social structures of interaction on a hierarchical level (Pöllmann, 2013). Examining how cultural capital and competences are devalued and delegitimized in specific contexts, such as when migrants’ educational degrees (their institutionalized cultural capital) are not recognized in their host country (Joy et al., 2018) then allows for deeper insights into individuals’ and groups’ unequal access to power.

_Socio-historic contextualization of ICC_
The cultural situatedness of marketers’ and managers’ competences and behaviours (Cayla and Arnould, 2008) requires further research in order to uncover the challenges of interacting with a diverse global audience. Two main issues arise.

Firstly, additional research is needed regarding the socio-historical links of openness to cultural diversity with colonialism and imperialism. While the expression of openness to diversity does not necessarily involve negative intentions, its articulation in culturally diverse business contexts can remain problematic. The Western origin of global business practices is often forgotten, yet these actions and their validity may be defined and understood differently across contexts (Applbaum, 2000; Cayla and Arnould, 2008). As an example, supermarkets’ celebration of Ramadan, intended to attract cosmopolitan consumers, offended members of the Muslim minority in France, who perceived such celebrations as insulting (Regany and Emontspool, 2015). From a Bourdieusian perspective, the field in which these actions take place has changed in the last decades. The French context has a long history of colonial engagement with North African Muslim countries (Beaman, 2015). With growing numbers of Muslim French citizens, many with North African roots, the retailing field has changed, and many consumers now associate retailers’ actions with colonial domination (Regany and Emontspool, 2015). As a consequence, we encourage further attention to the socio-historic embeddedness of ICC in western hegemony and how the requirements for and components of ICC have developed from colonial to post-colonial times.

Secondly, future research should consider the role of businesses in ICC development in wider society. Most studies in ICC have focused on how ICC can benefit business contexts. Yet the opposite influence also needs consideration: how do business contexts develop ICC in broader society? Existing research has shown that retail environments play an educational role in society, familiarizing customers with foreign cultures (Creighton, 1992). Our call for further research in this respect expands on propositions formulated by Peñaloza (2018) that highlight the role of institutions
such as marketing in validating ethnic minorities and communities. Studying how organizations and in particular private businesses develop as latent drivers for ICC in society will enable corporate actors to either embrace this role more consciously or to ensure that their impact does not become harmful.

**Developing ICC beyond ethno-national cultural contexts**

A second direction for future research lies in capitalizing on research about cultural perspectives on market interactions as a means of extending managerial ICC research, on the premise that moving beyond ethno-national culture allows for deepening insights relative to how ICC are developed. Returning to an interpretive perspective on culture allows us to argue that various forms of social grouping can possess a unique culture. This includes ethnic communities within a country as well as non-ethnicity focused subcultures with unique customs, rules and beliefs, such as goth, Trekkie or biker subcultures (Goulding and Saren, 2009; Kozinets, 2001; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995), and extends to organizations and their unique cultures (Barney, 1986). Developing competences in such cultures resembles the development of competences in any type of culture, also ethno-national ones, as in both cases the focus is on the need for participants in a business interaction to develop knowledge and skills related to a culture they are initially unfamiliar with. Existing research regarding cultural intelligence takes a similar direction when suggesting that cognitive cultural intelligence possesses cultural-general and context-specific knowledge dimensions. The former refers to “declarative knowledge of the major elements that constitute the cultural environment” while the latter addresses “declarative knowledge of how cultural universals are manifested in a specific domain and procedural knowledge of how to be effective in that domain” (Van Dyne et al., 2012, p.300). Of interest for our suggestions for future research is that context-specific knowledge may include knowledge about the cultural specificities of professional or demographic groups. These insights constitute valuable support for our
recommendation of moving beyond ethno-national culture in ICC research. But while Van Dyne et al (2012) consider context-specific knowledge as one subdimension of cultural intelligence, our focus lies on the process of developing ICC rather than on dimensions of cultural intelligence or competence.

Although not relative to ethno-national cultural competences, research about competence development in marketing research can offer valuable insights for ICC research in this respect. Existing studies in marketing do not relate to competence development regarding ethno-national cultures but consumption cultures, cultures in which products and their symbolism structure social interaction and are used as means of gaining status and communicating belonging (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). While we appreciate that each type of culture may have specificities, we demonstrate in the following sections that using these studies as a basis for our reasoning allows for identifying previously unaddressed avenues for future research in managerial ICC. From this perspective, the concepts of cultural and intercultural competence co-exist yet differ. Cultural competence is the “knowledge of the traditions, social norms, markets, language, and expectations” (Cross and Gilly, 2014, p.122) of a foreign culture. Intercultural competence represents “the ability to understand, adapt to and accommodate the actors and representations of other cultures that are present in the marketplace” (Demangeot et al., 2013, p.156). Even though these definitions partially overlap, we propose that cultural competence mainly refers to becoming fluent in a particular culture foreign to the individual or organization in question. Intercultural competence refers to the development of competences that are relevant for (global) interactions among culturally diverse actors, where in addition to individual understanding of a foreign culture, intersections and common ground need to be identified.

*Conceptualization/assessment of ICC*
When it comes to conceptualizing ICC, we argue for the need to extend current conceptualizations of ICC on the managerial level to incorporate how culture is not a static concept, but continuously negotiated during cultural interactions. Building on practice theory (Warde, 2005) that takes its roots in Bourdieu’s (1972) early work, Maciel and Wallendorf (2017) studied how individuals develop competences in beer tasting. Consumers adopt a set of practices that allow them to progressively develop their taste for specialty beer. Those practices are institutional benchmarking through comparison of one’s own taste and assumptions with institutional reference material, experimentation with the acquired competences, and learning with peers of similar competence levels as well as experts (Maciel and Wallendorf, 2017). Insights from this process may serve as a basis for further study about precisely which practices allow for the development of ICC in business contexts. Specifically, they allow for establishing whether and how practices needed for acquiring cultural competences contrast with those necessary for intercultural competence development. Three elements of social practices combine in this respect: tacit understandings of how to behave, explicit rules of behaviour and teleoffective motivations that define how and why to engage in the practice (Maciel and Wallendorf, 2017; Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 1996; Warde, 2005). A focus on the three elements of practice as defined above can shed light on the underlying assumptions and motivations of ICC development, currently understudied.

Power negotiations underlying ICC

The influence of power relations on the development of intercultural competence requires further investigation in order to better understand inequalities in ICC. Marketing studies have shown that individuals may be conscious of and actively address power inequalities, for instance when consumers develop cultural capital even though they may initially be disadvantaged and lack such capital (Seregin and Schouten, 2017). Coskuner-Balli and Thompson (2013) show that stay-at-home fathers attempt to gain cultural legitimacy through their consumption practices,
highlighting the inequality between capitals, as well as how gender, race and class-related relations generate differentiations between dominant and subordinate forms of capital in a field. The question therefore arises as to whether and how ICC may be both driver and barrier to power inequalities. On a global level, this question of inequalities in ICC definitions asks how western hegemony and potential prejudice in ICC evaluation generate inequalities across contexts. Maguire and Lim (2015) highlight tensions in cultural legitimacy that Chinese consumers encounter in their display of taste in the consumption of French wine. In their study, they illustrate that Chinese customers’ competences in the evaluation and consumption of French wine are considered insufficient and at times dismissed. Studying under which circumstances ICC are not accepted by dominant groups therefore allows us to better understand the challenge for non-western individuals to develop globally recognized cultural capital and to hence be perceived as interculturally competent, as well as to develop strategies for resolving this problem.

**Socio-historic contextualization of ICC**

The socio-historic contextualization of intercultural competences requires additional research in terms of the geo-territorial or cultural limits of an ICC field. Hofstede’s prevalent but increasingly contested cultural differentiations build on a study of different organizational cultures in IBM subsidiaries across the globe (Hofstede, 1983). Whether and how such differentiations translate across organizational contexts is however disputed (Askegaard et al., 2009; McSweeney, 2002, 2013). Questions arise regarding potential differences between ICC relevant within an organizational culture, within an industry, or in global business relations. How do ICC inside the company or between businesses compare? Under which circumstances and in which contexts does a given type of ICC become ineffective? Relatedly, when is ICC relevant to a field? Certain forms of cultural capital can be conceptualized as field-transcendent, generalized forms of cultural capital, which are converted more easily between fields (Arsel and Thompson, 2011), thereby allowing
individuals to gain status in different fields (Weinberger et al., 2017). Consequently, conceptualizing ICC should involve specifying when and how possessing cultural or intercultural competences differs within and across organizational contexts. The distinction between the concepts proposed in this paper provides a first avenue in this respect but requires additional empirical study and validation.

Conclusion

This paper has identified limitations related to the conception of culture prevalent in ICC research in the management and marketing fields, and suggested ways of addressing those limitations by incorporating Bourdieu’s theoretical framework. It has articulated specific directions for future research that allow on the one hand for the incorporation of diverse audiences in the study of ICC and on the other hand for moving beyond ethno-national definitions of culture in order to better understand the competence acquisition process. While an exhaustive review of existing ICC measurement instruments is beyond the scope of this contribution, our hope is that the reflections in this paper complement existing ICC research by opening the floor for nuancing and possibly adapting the dominant concepts of measurement in future studies. We wish that these insights will provide inspiration for a critical study of ICC among managers, employees, customers and other stakeholders in the public sphere by attracting attention to currently under-conceptualized and understudied aspects of ICC that better reflect the complexity of culture and competence in today’s globalized world.

References


Table 1 – Conflicting perspectives on culture in marketing and management

(Source: Authors’ own summary, drawing from Bjerregaard et al (2009))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foundational perspective</th>
<th>Deterministic</th>
<th>Interpretivist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anthropological inspirations</td>
<td>Levi-Strauss (1955)</td>
<td>Geertz (1973)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation</td>
<td>Culture as relatively unchangeable, where the individual enacts an existing cultural structure</td>
<td>Culture as continuously changing, where individuals interpret symbols and by so doing, generate new meanings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptualization</td>
<td>Gaps in existing ICC research</td>
<td>Bourdieu’s contribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|                   | A predominance of deterministic definitions of culture as conflated with nation and directing individual behaviour, which ignores e.g. intersectionality considerations as well as in-country differences. | Bridging of the divide between deterministic and interpretivist views through the theorization of ICC considering the development and mobilization of cultural capital | **Goal**
Re-conceptualizing ICC in relation to cosmopolitanism in order to integrate and widen applicability of both concepts

**Main questions**
To what extent does the type of cultural capital needed for the display and development of ICC differ in relation to the addressed audience? How can cosmopolitanism training improve employees' ICC when in contact with multiple audiences and stakeholders?

**Suggested research methodology**
Mixed-method study and comparison of ICC components in e.g. service environments, among employees with customer- and/or media contact |

| Power relations | A lack of insights regarding the constitution of ICC | Allowing for the analysis on how ICC are defined, | **Goal**
Identifying hegemonies in the criteria for defining and |

|                   | Goal Developing ICC beyond ethno-national cultural contexts | **Goal**
Differentiating cultural and intercultural competences in order to incorporate negotiations between cultures beyond variables conflating culture and national origin in the conceptualization of ICC

**Main questions**
Which specific practices allow for the development of ICC in business contexts? How do learning practices needed for acquiring cultural competences contrast with those necessary for intercultural competence development?

**Suggested research methodology**
Comparative study of ICC development in a consumption or organizational culture in which both intra-and intercultural interactions take place |
| Contextualization | ICC through (predominantly Western) hegemonic power relations. | legimitized, developed and valued through acknowledgement of the field in which capital (and hence ICC) is mobilized in order to gain power | legitimizing globalized forms of ICC  
**Main questions**  
How and under which circumstances does the development of ICC reflect a status game and contribute to shifting power relations, within an organization as well as on a global level? How does the value of specific types or components of intercultural capital become differently valued over time?  
**Suggested research methodology**  
Postcolonial content analysis of existing academic and/or corporate definitions of ICC in light of western colonialist discourse | Identifying inequalities in the acquisition and definition of ICC across cultural contexts  
**Main questions**  
When and how does ICC become a driver and/or barrier to power inequalities? How do Western hegemony and prejudice in its evaluation generate inequalities across contexts?  
**Suggested research methodology**  
In-depth (ethnographic) study of the difficulties individual consumers or employees experience when developing ICC in non-Western consumption or organizational cultures |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Goal** | Overcoming the ahistorical and decontextualized nature of ICC, though utilization of a theoretical apparatus explicitly encouraging the identification of the field shaping the legitimation | Clarifying the socio-historical linkages between ICC, openness to cultural diversity, and imperialism, both within and outside the organization  
**Main questions**  
How have requirements and components of ICC developed from colonial to post-colonial times? What is the role of business environments in societal ICC | Identifying the geo-territorial or cultural limits of defining an ICC field beyond ethno-national cultural contexts  
**Main questions**  
Under which circumstances and in which contexts does a given type of ICC become ineffective? When and how does possessing cultural or intercultural competence differ |
| What constitutes ICC. and valorisation of ICC | Development? How do organizations and businesses develop as latent drivers for ICC in society? **Suggested research methodology** Historical (documentary) study of employee qualifications in e.g. job advertisements, with a focus on attitudes, skills and behavioural aptitudes for colonial/international assignments | Within and across organizational contexts? **Suggested research methodology** Targeted mixed-method case study of consumption or organizational contexts in which ICC acquisition failed and/or where cultural competence could not be appropriately translated onto the intercultural level. |