On Researching Communication between Parent Companies and Subsidiaries situated in Neighboring Countries

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1. Introduction.

During my studies of International Business and German at Odense University, I was introduced to a large body of literature concerning differences in marketing practice as well as communicative, organizational, and management culture in different parts of the world. Several things struck me about the books and articles that I read about these topics:

1. Most of the works that I read compare national cultures that were, geographically speaking, "far away" from each other and "very different" from each other.
2. The majority of internationally-known research studies (e.g. Hofstede's IBM-related research) focuses on large companies or known brands of goods.
3. As for research concerning communicative, organizational, and management culture, it seems to circulate around two main schools (see e.g. Adler, 1983 or Jensen and Løngreen, 1995): the classical "cultural school of management" (e.g. Hofstede, 1980, or Hall, 1959, 1960, 1969 and 1977) which has been inspired by functional anthropology and the newer interpretist school (e.g. List and Wagner, 1990, or Wagner and Petersen, 1989) which is based upon an anthropological tradition represented by, among others, Geertz (1973).

On account of these impressions, I repeatedly reflected upon several shortcomings and dilemmas that I saw in this body of research:

1. The relative lack of works concerning interaction between firms and individuals in neighboring countries.
2. The lack of an international body of literature concerning the intercultural problems experienced by

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small and medium sized firms.

3. The gap between the positivist, objectivist position of the researchers who use the methods and methodology of the Cultural School of Management and the more hermeneutic position of intercultural management scholars who do research based on the interpretive paradigm. (I will explain this gap further in section four of this paper.)

On the basis of a short description of the above-mentioned problems, I was employed by the Department of Intercultural Communication and Management at the Copenhagen Business School for one month (October 1996) to prepare a written proposal to study these problems as a ph.d. student. **In my proposal, I focused upon communicative problems in the intercultural management of small German-owned subsidiaries in Denmark and Danish-owned subsidiaries in Germany.** Additionally, I proposed to use the reflexive sociological theory, methods, and methodology[1] of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in an attempt to bridge the gap between the objective methodology and methods of the Cultural School of Management and the hermeneutically-oriented research techniques used by interpretive intercultural management scholars.

My proposal was accepted; I have been employed as a ph.d. student by the Department of Intercultural Communication and Management since January 1997. In the rest of this introductory paper, I will therefore elaborate upon the further development of my ph.d. research project, focusing especially upon my research problem and its relevance as well as the theory, methods, and methodology that I have chosen for the project.

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[1] My colleague Ken Henriksen has written (Henriksen 1996: 25) about the advantages of using Giddens' distinction between method (the techniques and sources used to collect information) and methodology (techniques used to interpret and analyse information). In this paper, I, too, will distinguish between method and methodology in the same way as Giddens.

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2. Specific research problem.

Several researchers at the Department of International Communication and Management (Martine Cardel Gertsen, Anne-Marie Søderberg, and Jens Erik Torp) have chosen to focus upon cultural contacts in international acquisitions. My research has been inspired greatly by their work and by the papers presented at the research workshop "The Cultural Dimensions of International Mergers and Acquisitions" held at the Copenhagen Business School on August 27 – 28, 1996.

The theme of my research is an examination of *possible* influences of cultural dimensions in established relationships between parent companies and subsidiaries. By writing *possible* in italics, I seek to stress that I do not necessarily presuppose that "cultural differences" per se are responsible for any or all "difficulties" experienced in these relationships. **Instead my intention is to reconstruct parent company - subsidiary relationships in order to see which factors - cultural or not - have contributed in the past and/or contribute today to cooperation-related strengths and weaknesses in these relationships.**

By reconstructing the creation and maintenance of relations between the foreign subsidiaries and the parent companies in a series of case studies, this research will attempt to make an empirical contribution to the body of literature describing the development of relations between parent companies and their foreign subsidiaries. More specifically, I will seek to answer the following questions in my empirical studies:

- Do persons directly involved in parent company-subsidiary interactions perceive any cooperation problems that they might have or have had as being cultural problems or do they attribute other factors to these difficulties? Do they in their daily work refer to stereotypical images of their foreign colleagues?
- Which parts (if any) of the continuing interactions are perceived as difficult by these persons? How much time do they believe they spend purposefully communicating with each other?

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What do they willfully communicate about to each other and what not? How are the signals that they consciously send perceived by the opposite party?

- Which parts of the continuing interactions are perceived as being satisfactory or good by the above-mentioned actors? In the opinion of these persons, which factors contribute to their successful parent company - subsidiary interactions?

- To what extent do the persons interacting in the parent company - subsidiary relations express common company-related values? To what extent do they agree upon short and long term goals and strategies as well as operational tactics?

- Which systems of reward-and-punishment and feedback are used between persons in the mother companies and the corresponding subsidiaries? How are these systems perceived by the corresponding parties? Are they accepted? Do they cause problems for one or both parties involved?

In studying the above questions, I plan to use Bourdieu's praxelogical methodology and methods, as will be explained further in sections 4 to 6. By using Bourdieu's reflexive, praxelogical methodology, which combines an objectivist perspective similar to the viewpoint of the Cultural School of Management with the scrutiny of the research subjects' personal interpretations that hermaneutically-inspired approaches to intercultural management theory emphasize, I then may be able **to use my empirical data to comment upon both intercultural management schools** from a new perspective, thus perhaps even contributing to the development of new cultural theories, methods, and methodologies.

The next section of this paper will explain why I believe my project is of importance to Danish firms and why I have chosen to focus upon Danish-German parent company-subsidiary relations. Thereafter the concluding three sections will explain the cultural and communicative theories I intend to work with as well as my chosen methods and methodology. I will also elaborate further upon the specific questions that I have listed above in section 5.2.

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3. Internationalization and the situation of small and medium-sized Danish firms.

During the past decade, the increased internationalization of (Western) European markets has been one of the, if not <u>the</u> main topics of European international commerce discussions, especially on account of the creation of the European Single Market in 1993. However, Denmark, as a relatively small European country with a comparably small home market, has exported a relatively large number of goods and services to other countries for quite a number of years. In 1980, to take an example, the sum total of Danish firms that pay Danish value-added tax (VAT) exported 18.5% of their total turnover of goods and services (Danmarks Statistik, 1992: 59); in 1992, these same firms exported 23.1% of their total turn-over (Danmarks Statistik, 1994: 61).

Denmark's main export partners are its nearest (Western) neighbors. In 1993, 23.9% of its exports went to the Federal Republic of Germany, 9.6% to Sweden, 9.5% to the United Kingdom, and 6.6% to Norway (Danmarks Statistik, 1994: 95). From these statistics, one can see that Germany is Denmark's most important export market, which is the reason why I have chosen to examine Danish-German parent company - subsidiary relations. Denmark, on the other hand, is naturally not of comparatively great importance to its much larger southern neighbor, Germany.

Denmark has a large number of smaller manufacturing firms, as can be seen from the statistics in the table below. It can therefore be assumed that the export performance of the Danish economy is very dependent upon the export success of its small and medium-sized firms.

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Table 1. Number of manufacturing firms in Denmark in 1992 classified according to the number of full-time employees in the 4th quarter of 1992.

	Firm size by number of full-time employees			
	0-19	20-99	100 +	Other
No. of firms	11,313	2,226	642	3,491
No. of full-time empl.	61,221	93,308	193,422	60,066

Note: The category "other" includes firms that were not active during the entirety of 1992 or, with regards to the figures of full-time employees, changed categories during the year.

Sources: Danmarks Statistik: *Arbejdsmarked*. 1993/7: 7 and 1993/12: 12.

Seen with international eyes, the firms the Danes call "small and medium-sized firms" are also smaller than firms categorized the same way in other countries. The Danish National Bureau of Statistics (*Danmarks Statistik*) labels firms with fewer than 20 employees as "small" and firms with 20 - 99 employees as "medium-sized", whereas the statistical authorities of Germany and the European Union categorize manufacturing firms with fewer than 50 employees as "small" and manufacturing firms with 50 - 499 employees as "medium-sized" (Skaates, 1994: 7).

Due to a comparatively high level of export activity, the Danish debate about the Single Market has often centered upon anticipated increasing competition on the formerly national markets (Madsen et. al, 1988: 11-16). Research shows that most of the smaller and medium-sized firms that are exporting are not very internationalized, i.e. their export is rather unsystematic and of a sporadic nature (Madsen et al., 1988: 109). Additionally, many firms experience "cultural-related difficulties" when exporting to neighboring countries, perhaps because they do not anticipate difficulties and thus do not try to accomodate them (Madsen, 1989: 5-6). These factors have all contributed to my decision to do research on small and medium-sized exporting companies. Over and beyond that there is a growing body of research deal with "cultural competence" both at the level of the firm and of the individual employee (e.g. Gertsen, 1990, and Langhoff, 1994a-c, 1996). It is therefore in my opinion very necessary to research

the question of to what extent culturally-related differences and difficulties play a role in the internal affairs of companies after the establishment and initial consolidation of foreign sales subsidiaries, so that one has an idea of how important the issue of "cultural competence" actually is.

In the largest study concerning the export performance and behavior of Danish firms of the past decade, Madsen et al. (1988) used cluster analyses to specify nine distinctly different groups of exporting firms. The six variables used in the cluster analyses were (1) total export sales, (2) the ratio of export sales to total sales, (3) type of export sales categorized by the follow sales channels: Danish agents, foreign agents or direct export sales, export sales subsidiaries, foreign manufacturing subsidiaries), (4) the number of foreign customer groups sold to, (5) the Herfindal index, which determines the concentration of sales on export markets, and (6) types of decision-making concerning international marketing (i.e. whether decisions are made on the basis of home market conditions, modified for individual export markets, coordinated to serve several markets optimally, or made to serve "a global market").

In my empirical study, I will build upon Madsen et al.'s analyses by selecting Danish firms that have already achieved what Madsen et al. called "a medium degree of internationalization". These firms will be chosen so that they correspond to Madsen et al.'s groups five and six, namely "small export firms that have special-ized in serving specific groups of customers in specific countries" and "export firms that specializes in niche production" repectively. Madsen et al. define the firms in group five in the following manner:

> "They are strongly oriented towards export because their very existence is based upon a large export turnover. On the average the firms have a high R & D quota. This suggests that their competitive bases are build upon firm-specific advantages in relation to the product in question or to production. [...] This group's inter-national activities are characterized by their concen-trating their marketing efforts upon a few segments (1-2 customer groups) and a few countries (an average of 5

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export markets). (Madsen et al., 1988: 73-4, translated by the author)

Madsen et al.'s definition of group six includes the following characteristics (Ibid: 75-6):

"the niche-oriented firm tries to construct a position of strength by exploiting its advantages of specialization. [...] The firm will - either consciously or on account of a lack of alternative possibilities - attempt to orient its activities toward a relatively narrow area of business [...] Through this type of goal-oriented and need-differentiated efforts, the niche-oriented firm hopes to serve certain groups of customers better than others and perhaps at the same time receive a premium price for this. [...] The home market of the niche-oriented firm is under all circumstances too small to produce enough revenue for the firm. [...] The firm is forced to spread its sales on many export markets to achieve a potential level that cannot be reached on a single geographic market [...] However the (small) niche-oriented firm will have problems in servicing a large number of export markets because it does not have the necessary human and financial resources."

I will attempt to find corresponding German firms with Danish subsidiaries that possess a similar level of export experience as the Danish firms of groups five and six and have a substantial amount of exports to Denmark. Additionaly, it should be noted that I will select companies with sales subsidiaries only, because companies with foreign production subsidiaries have already achieved a "high degree of internationalization," according to Madsen et al.'s categorizations. I will also require that the subsidiaries have existed for at least three years, to insure that they have completed their initial consolidation phase. And last by not least, the German companies that I choose will all be *West* German companies. The reason for this last criterion is as follows: In the past eight years, the formerly socialist East German region has gone through a complicated process of adaptating to the free market system. This transformation process has most likely created unique situations for firms operating in the Eastern Federal German states. I do not want to have to explain these special situations in my research, because I suspect that they are so complicated that they merit research in their own

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right.

4. Bourdieu's reflexive sociology and cultural theory in a comparative perspective.

4.1. Bourdieu's theory in relation to my ph.d. project.

As I mentioned in section one, there are two major schools of intercultural management with conflicting views on intercultural interaction and communication. The functionalist cultural school of management is often prescriptive, i.e. it predicts the behavior of foreign business partners and aquaintances based upon comparative descriptions of national cultures. Thereafter it often offers suggestions as to how managers or employees dealing with persons from other countries should behave and react. The interpretive school, on the other hand, criticizes the cultural school of management for being stereotypically determinalistic. It places a greater emphasis upon specific contextual factors, such as individual interpretation and factors which are specific to a given communicative interaction which takes place at a specific time and place. It in turn is often criticized by the cultural school of management for being mainly descriptive and ignoring possible relations of causality.

As a part of his praxelogical method, Bourdieu combines the "objective" focus of the researcher (which is predominant in the Comparative School of Management) with the presentation of the actors' own experiences (which is the focus of the interpretist paradigm). However, Pierre Bourdieu's praxelogical sociology is at the same time critical of both functionalist and interpretist (here: especially phenomenological) theories of culture. As Bourdieu writes (Bourdieu, 1990: 27):

> "social science must not only, as objectivism would have it, break with native experience and the native representation of that experience, but also, by a second break, call into question the presuppositions inherent in the position of the 'objective' observer."

In accordance with functional scholars such as the American anthropologists Kroeber and Kluckhohn and the Dutch social psychologist Hofstede, Bourdieu believes that human cultures are based upon certain universal conditions for human existance which

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can be objectively described. Hence his defense of the objective side of his praxelogical research.

However, Bourdieu is at the same time very aware of the dangers of pure "objective" research (e.g. that fact that research results in this type of research depend upon the researcher's *selective* powers of observation which can lead to projection) and sees the need for listening to the viewpoints of the subjects studied. However, what these persons tell is not the only - nor the final - side to the story, for there are many things that they take for granted or perhaps have "forgotten" as well:

> "The mode of knowledge that can be called 'phenomenolo- gical' sets out to reflect an experience which, by definition, does not reflect itself, the primary rela- tionship of familiarity with the familiar environment, and thereby to bring to light the truth of that experi- ence which, however illusory it may appear from the 'objective' viewpoint, remains perfectly certain, *qua* experience. But it cannot go beyond a description of what specifically characterized 'lived' experience of the social world, that is, apprehension of the world as self-evident, 'taken for granted'. This is because it excludes the question of the conditions of possibility of this experience" (Bourdieu, 1990: 25-6)

Here, members of the interpretist school are likely to have the same objection as Jenkins (1992: 55): Bourdieu's criticism is only valid for the radical phenomenological members of the interpretist tradition who only accept the statements of research subjects as "truths." I believe Jenkins' remark is worth consideration, as most interpretivists tend to interpret their subjects' statements on the basis of other information as well.

Bourdieu, however, does favoritize the objective side of the subjective-objective duality in one way that the interpretivist tradition does not: As mentioned previously, Bourdieu views the actions of human subjects as being improvisation based on after-the-fact interpretations. When asked about their actions, subjects often refer to "objective truths". These "objective truths" are, however, according to Bourdieu, subjective constructions devised to solve a problem related to the *objectively describable*

universal conditions for human existence. These so-called objec-
tively describable universal conditions are not a part of the
theory of most interpretivists.

Through the use of the term "habitus", Bourdieu explains how human
subjects act. The individual - or many individuals together -
develop a cognitive perception of the world and practical strate-
gies for solving problems. These things are developed not by
consciously creating optimal solutions, but through a semi- or
subconsciously aquired ability to act in certain ways in certain
situations. (Callewaert in Andersen and Kaspersen, 1996: 347)

At the epistemological level, the actions of these individuals, or
their "practice", does not follow rules. Instead the individuals
improvise on the basis of their habituses, in a way comparable to
a jazz band's improvisation during a jam session (Callewaert in
Andersen and Kaspersen, 1996: 347). Bourdieu himself states
concerning practice:

> "Practice is the product of processes which are neither
> wholly conscious nor wholly unconscious, rooted in an
> ongoing process of learning which begins in childhood,
> and through which the actors know - without knowing -
> the right thing to do." (Bourdieu, 1994: 62-63.)

Because the logic of practice according to Bourdieu neither can be
deducted from the objectivist position of the functionalist
researcher searching for rules or from the statements of the
participants themselves, which the phenomenological researcher
would prefer to accept, the epistemology of Bourdieu's sociology
requires a "double break" from primary knowledge, i.e. that one
takes "two steps back" when one attempts to construct the habitus
which produces practices:

> "This construction presupposes a break with primary
> knowledge, whose tacitly assumed presuppositions give
> the social world its self-evident, natural character.
> [...]
> Finally, it is only by means of a second break, which is
> needed in order to grasp the limits of objectivist
> knowledge [...] that we can integrate the gains from it
> into an adequate science of practices." (Bourdieu in

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Lemert, 1981: 86-7)

According to Bourdieu, the main reason for this distancing is the fact that the research in scientific studies theoreticizes about a practice that is in itself <u>non</u>-theoretical in nature:

> " Because theory [...] only can be understood from a viewpoint away from the stage on which the action is placed, the distance lies perhaps not so much where it is usually looked for, in the gap between cultural traditions, as in the gulf between two relations to the world, one theoretical, the other practical." (Bourdieu, 1990: 14)

In my project, I view the research problem questions listed in section two as questions related to the relevant actors' habituses and practices. I therefore regard my work as the construction of habituses and practices. Additionally I believe that there are some universal conditions, i.e. the quest for the survival of the firm.

4.2. General remarks about Bourdieu's sociology.

Bourdieu's sociology is a reflexive, critical sociology, although it is critical in a different sense than the critical theory of the Frankfurter School and Jürgen Habermas. Concerning Bourdieu's reflexivity, Wacquant writes as follows (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 36-7):

> "Bourdieu's brand of reflexivity, which may be cursorily defined as the inclusing of a theory of intellectual practice as an integral component and necessary condition of a critical theory of society, differs from others in three crucial ways. First, its primary target is not the individual analyst but the social and intellectual unconscious embedded in analytic tools and operations; second, it must be a collective enterprise rather than the burden of the lone academic; and, third, it seeks not to assault but to buttress the epistemological security of sociology. Far from trying to undermine objectivity, Bourdieu's reflexivity aims at

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increasing the scope and solidity of social scientific knowledge, a goal which puts it at loggerheads with phenomenological, textual, and other 'postmodern' forms of reflexivity."

Concerning the critical side of Bourdieu's research, Fowler (1996: 1) emphasizes that it is often the academic field itself that Bourdieu critically scrutinizes and tries to enlarge:

"Bourdieu redefines the purpose of this work so that it goes beyond the presentation of empirical research, beyond, even, the authorized space for sociology. Instead he suggests that it represents an entry on to the disputed terrain of the popular, indeed that the access to popular consciousness that has been gleaned through this research is much higher than the meagre and pretentious claims to popular culture often paraded under this title in novels or drama[...]. More challenging also are the implications for action: he seeks through such social research to illuminate empirically why people act as they do and what potential space for transformation exists."

It is also important to note that Bourdieu's theory is, at most, middle range theory. Bourdieu is insistant upon rejecting grand theory or theoricizing-for-its-own-sake:

"There is no doubt a theory in my work, or, better, a set of *thinking tools* visible through the results they yield, but it is not built as such [...] It is a temporary construct which takes shape for and by empirical work." (Bourdieu in Wacquant, 1989: 50)

To give an overview of Bourdieu's research, I will conclude this section with a table that compares Bourdieu's reflexive sociology with the Cultural School of Management and hermaneutically-inspired intercultural management studies. This table can be found on the next page.

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Table 2. A comparison of views on culture used by the Cultural School of Management, hermaneutically-inspired intercultural management researchers, and Pierre Bourdieu.

	Cultural School of Management	Hermaneutically inspired tradition	Pierre Bourdieu
Definition of culture and	National entity with common values.	Locally created systems of meaning.	Systems of meaning created, interpreted, and spread by the habitus.
	Culture is an empirical category.	Culture is an analytical category.	Culture is a social construction.
Relationship between culture and behavior	Culture determines behavior.	Reciprocal determination.	Second order reciprocal determination.
Perspective on communication and	Linear communication from sender to receiver; receiver interprets.	Linguistic symbols are connected with conceptual struc- tures which create common meanings.	Everything a person does is communication is most often unconsciously interpreted as signals by the habitus.
Job of the analyst and own of then	Record and explain behavior.	Write a probable explanation.	Distance herself from her own the subject's understanding behavior and construct the habitus.
Method	Quantative (and qual.) methods.	Qualitative methods.	Pragmatic approach to method.

Source: Columns 1 and 2 concerning the cultural school of manage-

ment and the hermaneutically-inspired tradition are directly quoted and translated from Kjærbeck (1997: 14). Column 3 was concepted by the author.

5. Watzlawick et al.'s Communicative Theory.
5.1. Watzlawick et al.'s Description of Communication in Relation to Bourdieu's Theory.

In this section, I will describe a theory of communicative behavior taken from the disciplines of psychology and psychiatry, namely Watzlawick et al.'s (1967) theory. At the same time, I will subject their theory to a critical comparison with Bourdieu's cultural theory, to show to what extent the two theories are compatible.

Watzlawick et al.'s theory of communicative behavior has been previously used in management and organizational research by Kleppestø (1996). Kleppestø's study deals with cooperation in mergers and acquisitions processes; as this field is somewhat similar to parent company-subsidiary relations, I will make use of several of his management-related examples to relate Watzlawick et al.'s theory more directly to the management and organizational aspects of my project.

Concerning the experimental and interdisciplinary nature of my attempt to combine the work of Bourdieu and Watzlawick et al., I am convinced that neither would disapprove of my utilizing theories originating from different sciences. Bourdieu has always ignored the traditional boundaries of the disciplines of social science, and has even on one occassion argued for the dissolution of the boundary between linguistics and sociology:

> "the division between linguistics and sociology is unfortunate and deleterious to both disciplines [...] the analysis of communication and discourse should constitute one of the foundation stones of the socio-logical enterprise." (Bourdieu in Wacquant, 1989: 47)

Watzlawick et al. are, in turn, fairly interdisciplinary as well. Their book on communication (Watzlawick et al., 1967) is filled with examples and comparisons from very diffent fields (e.g. psychoanalysis, linguistics, mathematics, and biology).

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Watzlawick et al.'s epistemological assumptions are, however, only partially similar to Bourdieu's. In agreement with Bourdieu, these researchers are not interested in regarding communication as an isolated phenomenon; instead they place importance upon the context in which communication occurs (Watzlawick et al., 1967: 20-1). Over and beyond that they favor the positivist, objectivist position of the researcher perhaps to a greater extent than Bourdieu (see e.g. ibid: 37-8), yet they too are aware of the problems of self-validation and projection inherent to the objectivist position (Ibid: 42-3).

Watzlawick et al. regard themselves as adherents to an open systems perspective of communication which allows for feedback and multicausal explanations of occurences and sees the system as being more than the sum of its parts (Ibid: 118-25). However, in contrast to Bourdieu, Watzlawick et al. believe that there actually are "rules of communication" that are perceived as such by actors, are directly binding upon a social group, and can be depicted as e.g. mathematical functions (Ibid: 25-8, 148). This is, in my opinion, the most serious theoretical discrepency between Watzlawick et al.'s and Bourdieu's viewpoint. In my theoretical and research work, I will therefore exclude this aspect of Watzlawick et al.'s contribution, because I also subscribe to Bourdieu's belief in the "improvisation" of actors within the cognitive boundaries of the habitus. (See the reference to Callewaert on section 4, page 11 of this paper or Bourdieu, 1990: 52-65 for further information.)

Turning now to the more specific content of Watzlawick et al.'s communicative theory, their theory deals mainly with the *pragmatics* and *semantics* of communication. It contains four key points. The first of these is that all human behavior is communication and that it is just as impossible not to communicate as it is not to behave (Watzlawick et al., 1967: 22, 48-9). This is, in my opinion, not in any way contradictory to Bourdieu, who, as previously explained on page 11, believes that human practical action is the result of continuous learning processes that are

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neither entirely conscious nor entirely unconscious. These
learning processes indirectly imply constant communicative
interaction.

Watzlawick et al.'s second key point about communication (Watz-
lawick et al., 1967: 51-2) is that it contains two aspects at the
same time, *the report aspect* (which relation to the content of the
message, i.e. some specific information) and *the command aspect*
(which relates to how the content is to be taken and thus
relations to the structure of the relationship itself).

The "command" level is the *higher* level communication and thus can
be regarded as metacommunication; the ability to metacommunicate
appropriately is in turn both a necessary condition for successful
communication at both levels and directly linked with the
awareness of self and others of the communicating actors. (Ibid:
52-53)

This Watzlawickian duality of communication is also a part of
Bourdieu's logic of practice:

> "Linguistic relations are always relations of power
> (*rapports de force*) and, consequently, cannot be eluci-
> dated within the compass of linguistic analysis alone.
> Even the simplest linquistic exchange brings into play a
> complex and ramifying web of historical power relations
> between the speaker, endowed with a specific social
> authority, and an audience, which recognizes this
> authority to varying degrees, as well as between the
> groups to which they respectively belong." (Bourdieu in
> Wacquant, 1989: 46)

Kleppestø illustrates the sort of problem that the dual nature of
communications can cause in the business world through the
following example:

> "an illustration could be two companies (or groups
> within the same company) fighting over budgets, computer
> systems, the correct way of reporting sales figures,
> etc.. These issues might of course be "real" but when
> the amount of issues becomes very large and the communi-
> cative style of the two parties turns aggressive or
> confrontational, one might also assume that there might
> be more to the situation than meets the eye. At least,

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one can see how the frequent bickering can create a relationship between the groups that might interfere [with] the communication on the content level." (Kleppestø, 1996: 9)

The third point that Watzlawick et al. make about communication is that it is more continuous than it appears to the interacting persons because of their attempts to "punctuate" communicative sequences:

"To an outside observer, a series of communications can be viewed as an uninterrupted sequence of interchanges. However the participants in the interaction always introduce [...] the punctuation of the sequence of events. [...] punctuation *organizes* behavioral events and is therefore vital to ongoing interactions." (Watzlawick et al., 1967: 54, 56)

In many situations, both sides view the punctuation used in more or less the same way:

"we share many conventions of punctuation which, while no more or less accurate than other views of the same events, serve to organize common and important interactional sequences. For example, we call a person in a group behaving in one way the 'leader' and another the 'follower,' although on reflection it is difficult to say which comes first or where one would be without the other." (Ibid: 56)

However, in situations of disagreement, there will often be disagreement about the original causes of the disagreement as well as different cognitive interpretations of the punctuation:

"'Who threw the first stone' is a common question in many situations. Imagine a confrontation between the accounting department and the factory about late reports. The accounting department's new rule - that all reports must be delivered on the second workday of the month - can easily be seen, by the factory people, as a sign of power and therefore obstruct the reporting." (Kleppestø, 1996: 9)

Bourdieu does not deal specifically with Watzlawickian "problems of punctuation" in the work that I have read by him. However, I believe the above remarks are in keeping with his remarks about

the problems of unreflected primary experiences (see page 10 of this paper).

Finally, Watzlawick et al.'s fourth aspect concerns the two modes of human communication:

> "In human communication, objects - in the widest sense - can be referred to in two entirely different ways. They can be represented by a likeness, such as a drawing, or they can be referred to by a name." (Watzlawick et al., 1967: 61)

When things are represented as likenesses, one speaks of *analogic communication*; *digital communication*, on the other hand, has to do with things that are referred to by names or words. Analogical communication is the older form of communication; at the same time it is the more imprecise form, as it contains no logical syntax, i.e. no equivalents for logical operators such as "if - then" or "either - or". It also contains no expressions for "not":

> "In analogic communication [...] there is something particularly "thing-like" in what is used to express the thing [...] Analogic communication, we suggest, has its roots in far more archaic periods of evolution and is, therefore, of much more general validity than the relatively recent, and far more abstract, digital mode of verbal commuication. [...] It is virtually all nonverbal communication. [...] We hold that the term must comprise posture, gesture, facial expression, voice inflection, the sequence, rhythm and cadence of the words themselves, and any other nonverbal manifestations of which the organism is capable, as well as the communicational clues unfailingly present in any *context* in which an interaction takes place.[...] Analogic communication has no qualifiers to indicate which of two discrepant meanings is implied, nor any indicators that would permit a distinction between past, present, or future." (Ibid: 62,65)

Analogic communication, however, typically causes many problems for the relationship level of communication, as it is difficult to translate or to discuss in digital terms:

> "there exists a vast area where we rely almost exclusively on analogic comunication, often with very little change from the analogic inheritance handed down to us

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from our mammalian ancestors. This is the area of relationship. [...] if we remember that every communi- cation has a content and relationship aspect, we can expect to find that the two modes of communication not only exist side by side but complement each other in every message. We can further expect to find that the content aspect is likely to be conveyed digitally whereas the relationship aspect will be predominantly analogic in nature. [...] Not only can there be no translation from the digital into the analogic mode without great loss of information [...], but the oppo- site is also extraordinarely difficult: to *talk about* relationship require adequate translation from the analogic into the digital mode of communication." (Ibid: 63, 64, 66).

Unfortunately the difficulty of translating analogic communication can lead to very different and incompatible digital interpreta- tions. Additionally, false interpretations can have unfortunate consequences. Consider the following examples:

"What is the digital mean of growing pale, trembling, sweating, and stammering when displayed by a person under interrogation? It may be the ultimate proof of his guilt, or it may merely be the behavior of an innocent person going through the nightmarish experience of being suspected of a crime and realizing that his fear may be interpreted as guilt." (Ibid: 100)

"A [...] relevant illustration could be the CEO of an acquiring company turning up, unexpectedly, at the acquired companies [sic!] factory - claiming he was in the neighbourhood and wanted to say hello. Or the CEO that invites the top management of the acquired company for dinner in the luxeres [sic!] corporate dining room. Is this a sign of respect and a friendly gesture or a sign of power and status?" (Kleppestø, 1996:10)

In relation to Bourdieu, I see no conflict between the concepts of digital and analogic communication. On the contrary, these concepts could perhaps contribute to an explanation of why the learning processes of the habitus are neither completely conscious nor completely subconscious. However, as this topic is beyond the scope of my research, I will not explore this possibility further.

5.2. Watzlawick et. al.'s and Bourdieu's Theory in Relation to the Specific Research Questions of Section 2.

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Turning now to the list of specific research questions that I will use in reconstructing parent company-subsidiary relationships, one can see that I have constructed my questions in a way that is loosely based upon Watzlawick et al.'s and Bourdieu's theories. Through these broad questions I will be able to receive information about certain specific elements of the subjects' professional relationships (e.g. work conditions, personal and company goals, elements of status) as well as communication and metacommunication at different levels. Especially the question about reward-and-punishment systems and feedback allows me to examine the relationship (and power) aspect of communication. Yet other questions about difficult and smoothly-flowing communication allow me to receive some insight into the field of punction and the interplay between digital and analogic communication.

All of the above questions are, of course, related to the construction of the habitus. However, by examining factors such as possible "national" cultural differences and/or stereotypes and possible shared values and common firm-related goals, which are also relevant to the habitus, I will be able to gain insight into aspects more closely related to the functionalistic and interpretive concepts of culture and possibly comment upon these.

I am very aware that my questions may seem somewhat vague and imprecise to the more practiced researcher. This aspect of my Ph.D. project does seem somewhat problematic to me as well, yet at the same time I am extremely wary of narrowing my research questions to too great an extent for fear of determining the problem and the solution to be found already in the problem formulation phase. On the contrary, I want my research subjects to initially direct the construction of their habituses by allowing an openness for unexpected and truly surprising discoveries. This pragmatic and subject-related approach will be explained to a greater extent in the final section of this paper.

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6. Considerations concerning method and methodology with regards to my research.

On the basis of what I have written about culture and communication in the previous two sections, I will now briefly discuss the methodologies and methods that I plan to use in my research. As Pierre Bourdieu is my primary source of theoretical inspiration, I am of the opinion that it is wise first to examine his views about methodology and method. This, however, is no easy task as Bourdieu very seldom writes about methods and methodology in social work (Fowler, 1996: 1). Bourdieu himself explains his reticence in the follow way:

> "I am loath to engage too insistently here in reflections on theory or method adressed simply to researchers: 'We do nothing but gloss one another', as Montaigne used to say. And even if it is *only* a question of doing that, but in quite other mode, I wish to avoid scholastic disquisitions on the subject of hermeneutics or on the 'situation of ideal communication': I believe that there is no more real or more realistic way of exploring communication in its general state than to focus on the simultaneously practical and theoretical problems which emerge in the particular case of the interaction between the investigator and the person questioned.
>
> For all that, I do not believe that it is useful to turn to the unnumerable so-called 'methodological' writings on techniques of enquiry. Useful as these may be when they describe the various effects that the interviewer can produce without knowing it, they almost always miss the point, not least because they remain faithful to old methodological principles which, like the ideal of the standardization of procedures, often derived from the desire to imitate the external signs of the rigour of the best established scientific disciplines. It does not seem to me, at any rate, that they do justice to what has always been done - and known - by those researchers who are most respectful of their object and attentive to the almost infinitely subtle strategies that social agents deploy in the ordinary conduct of their existence.
>
> Many decades of empirical research in all its forms, from ethnography to sociology and from the 'closed' questionnaire to the most open interview, have convinced me that this practice finds its adequate scientific expression neither in the prescriptions of a methodology which is more often scientistic than scientific, nor in the anti-scientific caveats of the mystic advocates of emotional fusion. It is for this reason that it seems to

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me indispensable to try to make explicit the intentions and the procedural principles that we put into practice in the research project, the finding of which we present here. The reader will thus be able to reproduce in the reading of the texts the work of both construction and comprehension, of which they are the product." (Bourdieu, 1996: 17-8)

From the above quotation, it becomes obvious that Bourdieu places his trust in his pragmatic sense of "what is best" with relation to acquiring data from his subjects of research, instead of adhering to "universal" methodic principles. In the above passage, which is entitled "Understanding" in its English translation (Bourdieu, 1996), Bourdieu continues by critically scrutinizing common social science methods such as the qualitative interview and participant observation, focusing especially upon the intrusive effects that these methods have and upon the fact that answers given in all forms of interviews usually are after-the-thought rationalizations.

According to Solli (1994: 225), the Bourdieuen approach requires that the social scientist reflects upon her own relation to the subject of research and the subject herself when choosing or using a method and/or a specific methodology. Using a Spinozaen (and perhaps also Kierkegaardian) reference, Bourdieu himself compares this constant, never-ending process with an intellectural exercise of the love of God (Bourdieu, 1996: 24).

Concerning methodology alone, i.e. the interpretation and analysis of data and information, Bourdieu prescribes the two steps back with regard to interpreting data as explained in section 4; however, he is again reluctant to explain these things in specific methodological terms. Instead he uses the vague terminology of creating distance:

"Distance is not abolished by bringing the outsider fictitiously closer to an imaginary native, as is generally attempted; it is by distancing, through objectification, the native who is in every outside observer that the native is brought closer to the outsider." (Bourdieu, 1990: 20)

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In his studies, however, Bourdieu very often uses statistics to postulate the regularity of certain things that take place. He has therefore been criticized by, among others, Jenkins (1992: 59) for favoritizing figures:

> "he does privelige one kind of knowledge - the objectivity of statistics, which, as it were, represents what *really* happens - over another, the subjectivity of accounts [...] he may be overconfident that his statistics actually represent what they purport to represent. Statistics [...] are theoretically and socially constructed phenomena, and must be interpreted as such. [...] Much of the survey data which Bourdieu draws upon in his sociological studies of France are actually synoptic presentations of respondents' *accounts* of their preferences, habits, etc. His confident reliance upon them as a 'model of reality' may, therefore, be misplaced."

In my initial studies I have found it pertinent to examine the concrete methods and methodologies used in Bourdieu's sociological and ethnographic work as well as the way in which other researchers implement his theories in their studies. In Denmark, studies based upon Bourdieu's theory have included projects having to do with teaching in primary schools and the nursing profession. I have chosen to examine Tine Rask Eriksen's work concerning the creation of the professional habitus of registered nurses (Rask Eriksen, 1986, 1989, 1990, 1992, 1993a and b).[2]

In her books and articles, Rask Eriksen examines the relationship between what she calls the "feminine nurturing habitus" (*kvindelig omsorgshabitus*), which she believes women receive through their childhood contact with their mothers, and the professional nursing habitus as it is taught at Danish nursing schools. She focuses especially upon the caretaking aspect of these two habituses: To what extent do the skills and ideals of caretaking that have been learned in childhood "survive" in the world of nursing schools and hospitals?

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[2] I have chosen to concentrate upon Rask Eriksen's nursing studies because I have a great deal of experience in a related field, the Danish public home health care services. As a home health care aide, I have worked in teams with nurses full-time for four years as well as part-time during my bachelor's and master's studies.

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Rask Eriksen uses a variety of sources in her research: statistics about the backgrounds of nursing students, participant observation, and qualitative and quantitative interviews. I am of the opinion that she does not totally solve the problems of interview intrusiveness and after-the-fact rationalizations; however, her work shows just how difficult these problems are to solve. Additionally - and this seems to me to be a more central problem in her research - she also seems to have trouble stepping back and objectifying the primary experiences of her interview subjects. It is as if she neglects to sufficiently problematize the question of the universal existance of a "feminine nurturing habitus".

In the case studies of my research, I, too, plan to use both participant observation and qualitative interviews, to insure that I get the opportunity to act both as the potentially 'objectively-rationalizing' observer and as an interested interviewer who seeks the research subjects' own interpretations and viewpoints. Over and beyond that I plan to make use of secondary sources, such as statistics about the companies' own/ sector-wide sales and investments, information about the general economic situation, or specimens of written communication (e.g. reports, notices, letters, faxes, e-mail messages).

I believe that the best way for me to proceed will be develop a pragmatic, practically and subject-oriented research sense with regards to methods and methodology. This will be important for the reasons Bourdieu mentions above, but also for other reasons as well: Firms are quite often reluctant to share company data with researchers, even when it could be relevant to the project at hand. As I do not have that much personal experience with this problem, I have discussed it with my advisors, Anne-Marie Søderberg and Jette Schramm-Nielsen, and will probably have to do so again on an ongoing basis during the research process.

At the same time, however, I am of the opinion that courses in methods and methodology are not as useless as Bourdieu might seem

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to suggest, especially not to persons such as I who are just beginning their research career and thus have many fewer years of experience to draw upon than Bourdieu. I therefore plan to participate in two courses concerning qualitative research methods during my ph.d. studies. The goal of my participation is to learn about the foundations and assumptions of these practices and how to use them correctly, not to learn to deify a specific method or methodological school. I will therefore throughout my entire ph.d. studies strive to retain a critical, non-dogmatic view of method and to view my choice of method/methodology as being contingent upon my research subjects and problem, in accordance with Bourdieu's remarks.

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Fejl! Bogmærke er ikke defineret