



The Upside of Cultural Differences: Towards a More Balanced Treatment of Culture in Cross-Cultural Management Research

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3 Introduction to Special Issue of *Cross Cultural & Strategic Management*
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7 **The Upside of Cultural Differences: Towards a More Balanced Treatment of**
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9 **Culture in Cross-Cultural Management Research**
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12 Abstract
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15 **Purpose** –This introductory paper to the Special Issue encourages scholars to look at commonly
16 considered phenomena in international business and cross-cultural research in new ways and to
17 theorize and explore how cultural diversity, distance, and foreignness create value for global
18 organizations. These considerations should result in a more balanced treatment of culture in
19 cross-cultural management research.
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26 **Design/methodology/approach** – The idea that there are negative consequences associated with
27 cultural differences is pervasive in hypotheses formulation and empirical testing in international
28 business and cross-cultural management literature, as reflected in widely used constructs such as
29 “cultural distance”, “cultural misfit”, “foreignness”, and related concepts. Consistent with a
30 Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS) perspective on culture and cultural differences, the
31 authors emphasize the positive role of distance and diversity across national, cultural,
32 institutional, and organizational dimensions. In addition, they provide an overview of the
33 contributions to the Special Issue.
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41 **Findings** – Examining the positive side of culture is not only beneficial theoretically in terms of
42 filling the existing gaps in the literature, but is also crucial for the practice of international and
43 global business. Accordingly, the contributions to the Special Issue highlight how explicitly
44 considering positive phenomena can help better understand when and how cultural diversity,
45 distance, and foreignness can enhance organizational effectiveness and performance at multiple
46 levels. They include five research papers, a Distinguished Scholar Essay by Kim Cameron, the
47 founder of the POS movement, and an interview piece with Richard Nisbett, a pioneer researcher
48 in culture and cognition.
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3 **Originality/value** – The overemphasis on adverse outcomes associated with cultural differences
4 in existing research has hindered our understanding of the processes and conditions that help
5 organizations leverage the benefits of cultural differences in a wide range of contexts. This
6 introductory paper together with the contributions included in the Special Issue showcases the
7 positive dynamics and outcomes associated with cultural differences, distance, and diversity in a
8 wide range of international business contexts.
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16 **Keywords** Cross-Cultural Management, Cultural Diversity, Positive Organizational Scholarship,
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21 **Paper type** Research paper
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The Upside of Cultural Differences: Towards a More Balanced Treatment of Culture in Cross-Cultural Management Research

Culture is more often a source of conflict than of synergy.

Cultural differences are a nuisance at best and often a disaster.

– Geert Hofstede (www.geert-hofstede.com)

*Cultural differences can be viewed as either a handicap
or a powerful seed for something new.*

– Carlos Ghosn, President and CEO of Renault and Nissan (cited in Emerson, 2001: 6).

Cultural differences are widely viewed as a source of problems, misunderstandings, and conflict in cross-cultural encounters – succinctly captured by the above quote by Geert Hofstede. The idea that there are negative consequences associated with cultural differences is core to the “cultural distance” construct (Kogut & Singh, 1988; Shenkar, 2001) and its underlying assumption that cultural differences are a source of difficulties, costs, and risks. Accordingly, in the past few decades, theory and research have reflected this theme through constructs such as “cultural distance” (Kogut & Singh, 1988; Shenkar, 2001), “psychic distance” (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977, 2009), “institutional distance” (Kostova 1996; Kostova, 1999), and “liability of foreignness” (Zaheer, 1995; Miller & Parkhe, 2002), and this is a pervasive focus in hypotheses formulation and empirical testing in international business and cross-cultural management literature. Most notably is the overarching idea known as the “cultural distance” hypothesis that argues barriers, and hence difficulties related to working and doing business across national borders, will increase with greater distances between/among the individuals, groups, and organizations involved (Shenkar, 2001; Ward, 2003).

In line with this “problem-focused view” of differences and diversity (Stevens, Plaut & Sanchez-Burks, 2008) and the underlying assumption of “discordance” (Shenkar, 200: 524), many issues that arise in international and global business contexts have been explained in terms such as “foreignness”, “unfamiliarity costs”, “institutional gaps”, “organizational misfit”, among many. Differences, distances, and diversity have been viewed as causing incompatibility, friction, and conflict. These concepts have been proposed – and often found – to have a negative impact on

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3 choice of foreign entry mode and perceived ability to manage foreign operations (e.g., Tihanyi,
4 Griffith & Russell, 2005), post-acquisition integration outcomes (e.g., Björkman et al., 2007), and
5 longevity of global strategic alliances (e.g., Parkhe, 1991). Inside and outside the organization,
6 issues such as cross-border transfer of organizational practices (e.g., Kostova, 1999), legitimacy
7 of MNCs and their subunits (e.g., Kostova & Zaheer, 1999), organizational learning across
8 national borders (e.g., Barkema, Bell, & Pennings, 1996), dynamics and performance of diverse
9 teams (Stahl, Maznevski, Voigt & Jonsen, 2010), adjustment of international assignees (e.g.,
10 Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer & Luk, 2005) have been analyzed primarily through a
11 perspective of disparities and discrepancies. Reflecting on this past trend, Cameron (this issue)
12 asserts that “The bias toward emphasizing negative phenomena in research, of course, is not
13 limited to international and cross-cultural studies. It permeates organizational science and
14 management research as well.”
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26 There is ample evidence to show that the international business and cross-cultural management
27 literature has over-emphasized the difficulties, obstacles and conflicts caused by cultural
28 differences rather than the positive dynamics and outcomes that stem from such differences. For
29 example, researchers have expended less effort on developing new theoretical perspectives
30 highlighting the positive characteristics of multicultural teams than explaining the liabilities
31 associated with team diversity. In their review of the team diversity literature, Stahl, Mäkelä,
32 Zander and Maznevski (2010) uncovered that all but one of the dominant theoretical perspectives
33 on cultural diversity in teams are consistent with the problem-focused view of diversity,
34 emphasizing the adverse dynamics of cultural diversity in teams. The “pessimistic” perspective
35 categorizes diversity as a liability. Research from this ontological perspective focuses on issues
36 such as the process losses resulting from reduced perceptions of similarity-attraction among team
37 members, as well as negative biases and attributions associated with social categorization
38 processes. Further, research on diversity as a liability finds that feelings of mistrust, dislike and
39 resentment stem from variance across values and that communication barriers result from
40 divergences in language and communication. On the other hand, the “optimistic” perspective
41 categorizes diversity as an asset. Research from this perspective focuses on issues such as the
42 information processing advantages resulting from team members’ different perspectives, know-
43 ledge bases, and decision-making styles. These, if properly harnessed, can enhance creativity and
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3 lead to superior decision-making quality. With the exception of this latter theory, the dominant
4 theoretical perspectives and explanatory frameworks in diversity research all focus on the
5 negative dynamics and consequences of diversity, rather than capturing its upside.
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10 Although the problem-focused approach contributes to our understanding of the role of cultural
11 differences in cross-cultural management, it is our view that this emphasis gives little attention to
12 the positive effects and outcomes associated with cultural differences. In a recent content analysis
13 of articles on culture in international business, Stahl and Tung (2015), compared research
14 published over a 24-year time period (1989-2012) in the *Journal of International Business*
15 *Studies (JIBS)*, and published over a 19-year period (1994-2012) in *Cross Cultural & Strategic*
16 *Management (CCSM)* (formerly *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal*). The
17 results were compelling. It revealed a substantial 17:1 imbalance of negative over positive
18 theoretical assumptions when exploring the role of culture in international business published in
19 *JIBS*. Thus, there is a tendency among these scholars to focus their theory building on the adverse
20 dynamics associated with cultural differences, while scholars of empirical studies examining the
21 impact of cultural differences displayed more complex and mixed picture findings.
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31 Comparatively, among the articles published in *CCSM* it was revealed that a large proportion of
32 the studies, both theoretical and empirical, had mixed assumptions and findings regarding culture
33 and the effects of cultural differences. Together these findings suggest that cultural differences
34 appear to be a mixed blessing in cross-cultural management – they can be both an asset and a
35 liability, contingent on contextual influences and management-related factors, such as
36 interventions to manage cultural distance and diversity. Further, some practitioners, more so than
37 academics, are acutely aware of the double-edged sword nature of culture and keenly realize that
38 under some circumstances cultural differences can be a source of synergy, innovation and
39 learning. As Carlos Ghosn, the CEO and President of both Renault and Nissan, repeatedly
40 stressed: “Cultural differences can be viewed as either a handicap or a powerful seed for
41 something new” (Emerson, 2001:6).
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52 **Towards a More Nuanced Understanding of Culture in Cross-Cultural Management**

53 **Research**

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3 Recent research has drawn attention to the potentially positive role of distance and diversity
4 across national, cultural, institutional and organizational dimensions. Advocating the study of
5 how diversity, foreignness and distance creates value for global organizations is gaining recent
6 appreciation (e.g., Brannen, 2004; Edman, 2009; Mezias, 2002; Stahl, Tung, Kostova & Zellmer-
7 Bruhn, 2016; Tung & Verbeke, 2010; Zaheer, Schomaker, & Nachum, 2012). These scholars
8 argue that the overemphasis on adverse outcomes associated with cultural differences in existing
9 international business research hinders our understanding of the processes and conditions that
10 help organizations leverage the benefits of diversity in a wide range of contexts. These benefits
11 may be exhibited through the development of strategic capabilities, decisions on foreign direct
12 investment, synergy creation in cross-border mergers and acquisitions, learning through cross-
13 border knowledge-sharing, unleashing of creative potential in diverse teams, and designing and
14 implementing corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives that meet the needs and demands
15 of a diverse set of stakeholders spread across the globe.
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28 Although there is little doubt that distance and foreignness can be disadvantageous, both
29 anecdotal and research evidence suggest that this is only one part of the story. As Edman (2009)
30 noted, being a stranger in a distant land may result in uncertainty and bewilderment, yet locals are
31 not blind to foreignness. Indeed, they incorporate it into their assumptions and attitudes, often
32 adjusting their behavior and reactions, then formulating different expectations of foreigners than
33 of their domestic counterparts. While this may at times have negative consequences, e.g., in the
34 form of chauvinism and xenophobia, it can also result in greater tolerance of otherness and
35 freedom of action, more development of opportunities and exploration of ideas, and expanded
36 perceptions of attractiveness, sympathy and trustworthiness of others.
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46 Consistent with these observations, enlightened MNEs have found that accentuating rather than
47 deemphasizing their “otherness” can give them a viable edge over local competitors in the
48 countries where they operate (see Brannen’s 2004 study of Tokyo Disneyland that asserts that
49 foreignness can be an asset). For example, since Chinese high-potentials often prefer to work for
50 Western companies in their own country, as opposed to domestic Chinese firms, many developed
51 market MNEs operating in China have made deliberate attempts to integrate their foreign identity
52 into their employer brand strategy. Highlighting the value of the “American style”, merit-driven
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3 systems that open up the doors to promotion and career advancement, these MNE's can position
4 themselves as an employer of choice in the Chinese market (Stahl et al., 2012). At the same time,
5 MNEs operating in an emerging-market context have found that when host-country institutions
6 are deficient or weak, adapting to local standards and imitating the practices of their emerging
7 market competitors may not be advisable to gain legitimacy and stakeholder trust (Doh, Littell &
8 Quigley, 2015). By focusing on issues such as higher safety standards, more stringent
9 environmental protection, more focused human rights dialogue, and more authentic engagement
10 in CSR activities and sustainable practices, relevant MNEs may emphasize their foreignness.
11 This signals to investors, customers, and other stakeholders that the MNEs are trustworthy
12 partners, which is especially important in the absence of strong governmental controls.
13 Furthermore, in addition to operating in an unstable political context, being foreign can provide a
14 source of competitive advantage for MNE subsidiaries vis-a-vis local firms (Reade & Lee, 2012).
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26 These examples illustrate that both greater distances and diversity – be they geographic,
27 institutional, cultural, linguistic or psychic – can actually help individuals and organizations
28 become better prepared for the challenges involved in international and global business.
29 Conversely, perceived similarity between psychically or culturally close countries may hide
30 unexpected and unforeseen barriers – a phenomenon known as “psychic distance paradox”
31 (O'Grady & Lane, 1996). Consistent with this line of reasoning, studies suggest that cultural
32 differences, which tend to be more salient in business transactions across greater distances, may
33 lead the individuals, groups and organizations involved in these transactions to pay greater
34 attention to cultural sensitivities and be better prepared to navigate the cultural challenges of
35 working internationally. For example, in the context of cross-border mergers and acquisitions
36 (Björkman et al., 2007; Reus & Lamont, 2009; Stahl & Voigt, 2008), it has been observed that
37 the presence of more obvious national cultural differences may increase the awareness of the
38 significance of such cultural factors in the integration process. In turn, this may lead the managers
39 involved in these transactions to pay greater attention to the softer, less tangible, but more critical
40 human resource aspects that are often overlooked in mergers involving companies from the same
41 country (Pucik and Evans, 2004). Also, acquiring companies that have previous international
42 M&A experience learn from their mistakes and implement processes that enable them to execute
43 cross-border deals more effectively. Consistent with these observations, Larsson and Risberg
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3 (1998) found higher degrees of acculturation (defined as the development of jointly shared
4 meanings that foster cooperation between the merging firms) lowers levels of employee
5 resistance and increases synergy realisation in cross-border acquisitions compared to domestic
6 acquisitions. They conclude that “cross-border M&A may not only be ‘cursed’ with additional
7 culture clashes but also be ‘blessed’ with a higher propensity for culturally aware selection and
8 integration management” (1998: 40).
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16 There is also a growing body of evidence that differences and distance can help firms engaged in
17 cross-border business to overcome rigidities and inertia, develop unique and potentially valuable
18 capabilities, and foster learning and innovation (e.g., Morosini, Shane & Singh, 1998; Vermeulen
19 & Barkema, 2001). In one such study of cross-border acquisitions, Morosini et al. (1998) found
20 that national cultural distance enhanced post-acquisition performance by providing access to the
21 target’s and/or the acquirer’s diverse set of routines and repertoires embedded in national culture.
22 This is very much in line with extant research on cultural diversity in teams and organizations. At
23 the core of the “value-in-diversity” hypothesis is the idea that diversity brings net-added value to
24 organizational processes (Cox & Blake, 1991: 46); indeed, diversity scholars have highlighted a
25 number of potentially beneficial outcomes of diversity, such as heightened levels of creativity,
26 greater adaptability, higher quality of problem-solving, and better learning outcomes at the
27 individual, group and organizational levels (e.g., Adler, 2003; DiStefano & Maznevski, 2000; Ng
28 & Tung, 1998).
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41 The examples provided above illustrate that research in international business and cross-cultural
42 management can benefit from adopting a more “positive approach” by highlighting the
43 circumstances and mechanisms whereby the positive aspects of cultural diversity, foreignness
44 and distance can outweigh the costs associated with them. Nevertheless, we are not suggesting
45 that the traditional, problem-focused perspective on cultural differences, distance and diversity
46 does not have merits; nor are we claiming that the idea that diversity creates opportunities rather
47 than problems is a new one. Positive aspects of foreignness, diversity and distance have been
48 studied for decades, with international business and cross-cultural management scholars having
49 highlighted a number of potentially beneficial outcomes of these differences, be they psychic-,
50 cultural-, institutional- or otherwise. This is illustrated through research within the resource-based
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3 view of the firm (e.g., Barney, 1991; Fiol, 1991) and organizational learning theories (e.g.,
4 Levinthal & March, 1993), both of which propose that differences in knowledge structures can be
5 a source of synergistic benefits for global organizations. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest
6 that diversity, while often hindering exploitation - defined by activities such as refinement,
7 efficiency, selection, and implementation - may be beneficial for exploration - defined by
8 activities such as search, variation, experimentation, and discovery (e.g., Cantwell & Mudambi,
9 2005; Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004; Stahl & Tung, 2015).

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18 Examining the positive side of differences is not only beneficial theoretically in terms of filling
19 this gap in the literature, but is also crucial for the practice of international and global business. In
20 light of the increased international business activities and transactions across nations, the growing
21 mobility of the workforce across national boundaries, the dramatic rise in immigration over the
22 past decade, and growing intra-national heterogeneity in many countries, the time is ripe to study
23 more systematically the positive aspects associated with cross-cultural contact and the factors that
24 could enhance the likelihood of their occurrence. Accordingly, the goal of this special issue of
25 *CCSM* is to showcase research that sheds light on the positive dynamics and outcomes associated
26 with cultural differences, distance and diversity in a wide range of international business
27 contexts. This is in line with a Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS) perspective, which
28 seeks “to develop rigorous, systematic, and theory-based foundations for positive phenomena...,
29 [drawing] from the full spectrum of organizational theories to understand, explain, and predict the
30 occurrence, causes, and consequences of positivity” (Cameron et al., 2003: 5-6).

41 42 **Overview of the Special Issue**

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46 Our call for papers generated 35 submissions representing authors from 15 countries– an
47 indication that our invitation to explore “The Upside of Cultural Differences: Towards a More
48 Balanced Treatment of Culture in Cross-Cultural Management Research” struck a chord with
49 international business and cross-cultural management scholars. Out of this set of submissions, we
50 accepted five for publication in this Special Issue. These five papers address a wide range of
51 issues, ranging from the exceptionally micro to the exceedingly macro, as well as cross-level
52 phenomena, and they include both theoretical and empirical papers employing quantitative,
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3 qualitative, and mixed-methods approaches. In addition to the five papers we include a
4 Distinguished Scholar Essay by Kim Cameron, the founder of the POS movement. Also included
5 is an Interview Piece with Richard Nisbett, a pioneer researcher in culture and cognition. In total,
6 seven papers comprise in this Special Issue.
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12 In the first article, Cameron introspectively applies the POS perspective to cross-cultural
13 research. The author proposes that inherent inclinations of human systems toward the negative
14 undoubtedly exists, but at the same time inherent tendencies toward the positive, paradoxically,
15 also exist. These arguments provide an optimistic stance that the bias toward the negative is not
16 necessarily a destiny. Demonstrating that an emphasis on positive can produce extraordinarily
17 beneficial outcomes for individuals and organizations, Cameron argues that often the positive is
18 ignored as an important source of flourishing in cross-cultural contexts. To illustrate this point, he
19 highlights that "virtuousness", a particular example of a positive concept that produces
20 universally-valued outcomes such as cultural congruence and synergy, deserves more attention in
21 cross-cultural research.
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32 Pesch and Bouncken's paper (this issue), entitled "The Double-Edged Sword of Cultural Distance
33 in International Alliances—How Perceived Cultural Distance Influences Trust and Task
34 Discourse to Drive New Product Development Performance" presents a clear example of how
35 international business and cross-cultural management research can benefit from changing the lens
36 – from focusing primarily on problems and difficulties associated with cultural distance to
37 examining positive outcomes of cross-border interactions. Their paper makes several important
38 contributions to the topic of the Special Issue and the literature on international alliances. The
39 authors propose that perceived cultural distance can be a double-edged sword in cross-border
40 alliances – it may have positive effects on some outcomes and adverse effects on others. Their
41 confirmed findings suggest that although perceived distance seems to make trust building more
42 challenging, the beneficial effects of cultural differences on task discourse and knowledge
43 combination seem to outweigh the negative ones on trust. In turn, this leads to overall positive
44 effects on joint product development and innovation in cross-border alliances. The authors,
45 however, caution that the overall positive effect on alliance performance is likely to emerge only
46 if the interdependencies between partners are relatively low and the collaborating firms' degree
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3 of autonomy remains high, as is the case in non-equity alliances. They argue that the potential for
4 cross-cultural conflict may be significantly higher in collaborative ventures characterized by
5 higher levels of operational integration and more intensive face-to-face interaction, such as joint
6 ventures or M&As, due to social categorization processes and communication problems. By
7 directing attention to the role of context in research on cross-border alliances, Pesch and
8 Bouncken's paper makes a strong case for the need to consider moderators, including process-
9 oriented and management-related variables, in research on the role of culture in international
10 business.
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19 In their paper entitled "Creating the Asset of Foreignness: Schrödinger's Cat and Lessons from
20 the Nissan Revival", the authors Ikegami, Maznevski and Ota (this issue) challenge the
21 assumption in cross-cultural research of Liability of Foreignness (LOF). Arguing that LOF
22 comes from pressures for isomorphism, the authors contend that Asset of Foreignness (AOF)
23 derives from the active process of taking up permission to break norms, which can enhance
24 productivity and efficiency. The field study explores how leaders can initiate and sustain AOF.
25 The paper analyzes the Nissan Revival led by Carlos Ghosn and is based on published interviews
26 and assessments, as well as the authors' interviews and discussions with Ghosn and his senior
27 leaders at Nissan and Renault. In their analysis, the authors confirmed the potential for AOF by
28 resisting pressure for normative isomorphism and creating opportunities for normative
29 isomorphism. They uncovered four patterns of behavior that created AOF virtuous cycles among
30 Nissan leaders: initiating trust; shaping identity; anchoring and transcending common language;
31 and acting positively on ignorance. These virtuous cycles were sustainable and transformed into
32 new global strategic perspectives. From their interviews, the authors tried to identify specific
33 variations that were important in the context of being foreign and which created virtuous cycles.
34 For example, shaping collective identity that values component identities and transcending
35 common language are specific to cross-cultural contexts. Additionally, the interviews suggest
36 among other things that initiating trust and acting on ignorance were even more important in a
37 foreign context than they would be in domestic one. The authors cleverly conclude that
38 foreignness can be represented as Schrödinger's cat of quantum physics: in a dual state of both
39 asset and liability, until leaders and top management teams act to drive it into a cycle towards net
40 liability or asset.
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Bresciani and Comi (this issue) in their article “Facilitating Culturally Diverse Groups with Visual Templates in Collaborative Systems: Increasing Structuration to Improve Precision” present an experimental study based on 229 managers from 49 countries and in 56 groups. The authors investigate how structuration through visual templates – graphic structures and illustrations that help map knowledge in the form of text and images – can improve groups’ task precision. The experimental task simulates a group meeting between strategic-alliance partners and requires them to identify opportunities for collaborative innovation. Within this context, the authors propose that higher structuration imposed by visual templates improves groups’ task precision. The findings confirm that facilitating group interactions with visual support embedded in computer-supported collaborative systems significantly increases task precision. Drawing on POS literature, Bresciani and Comi additionally hypothesize and find support for a moderating effect of group cultural diversity on the effect of structuration on task precision. Their study integrates approaches from information-systems research and structuration theory with cross-cultural management and with regard to sustaining the effectiveness of culturally diverse groups. The study thus shows how cultural diversity can be managed, as well as how it can be leveraged to help organizations benefit from the potential of culturally diverse groups.

In the next article, Hyun-Jung Lee interviewed Richard Nisbett, a renowned cognitive social psychologist and the author of the widely influential book "The Geography of Thought" about his perspective on cross-cultural differences in thinking style. Nisbett contrasts two dominant ways in thinking style across cultures - the analytical and holistic thinking, and highlights the advantages and disadvantages of each. He cautions that the analytic thinking, while tremendously advantageous in giving rise to science, has a tendency towards 'hyper'-logicizing, and this may result in disconnection from the phenomenon itself, particularly in social science including psychology and economics. The holistic way of thinking, on the other hand, has the advantage to enable people to notice much more about the physical world and context, and to help accept contradictions, but it is vulnerable to possible abuse due to a lack of universalistic rules. He indicates that the best way probably lies somewhere in-between, rather than an ‘either-or’ resolution. He convincingly demonstrates how the efforts to understand different cognitive and intellectual styles can help reduce limitations of one’s own way of reasoning.

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5 Matthiesen and Salzmann (this issue) in their article entitled, “Corporate Social Responsibility
6 and Firms’ Cost of Equity: Does Culture Matter?”, examine the relation between CSR and cost
7 of equity – the required return a firm must offer its shareholders to compensate them for owning
8 its stock and bearing the risk involved – based on a sample of 3,439 firms in 42 countries. First,
9 the authors substantiate previous research and show that CSR is significantly negatively related to
10 cost of equity. Thus, the more companies engage in CSR activities, the lower the cost of equity
11 will be. Second, adopting a POS lens, Matthiesen and Salzmann identify three GLOBE culture
12 dimensions that moderate this relationship in such a way that they decrease cost of equity further.
13 Thus, they find that countries characterized by lower levels of assertiveness as well as higher
14 levels of humane orientation and institutional collectivism provide more favorable environments
15 for companies to engage in CSR. The study links CSR-related and finance-oriented research with
16 cross-cultural studies and advances our understanding of how national culture can be regarded in
17 a more positive way in promoting socially and environmentally responsible behavior
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30 In the final article entitled, “Cross-cultural Management Education Reboot: Creating Positive
31 Value Through Scientific Mindfulness”, the talented team of scholars Fitzsimmons, Dietz,
32 Francesco, Aycan, Boyacigiller, Jonsen, Lee, Sackmann, & Osland, argue that cross-cultural
33 management education has traditionally directed its attention to topics such as cross-cultural
34 communication, values, and conflicts. Further, they posit that this curriculum has been useful in
35 educating students on cultural differences by offering key knowledge aimed at handling global
36 issues; however tackling these global matters through solely a CCM perspective is insufficient.
37 The authors suggest that the demands of today’s complex global issues are multifaceted and
38 complex, requiring an enhanced and expanded version of cross-cultural management (CCM)
39 education, to include a larger range of perspectives (i.e. micro and macro level) and a more
40 mindful appreciation of the positive value created across stakeholders interactions. It is through
41 the use of CCM scientific mindfulness action principles that are designed for and taught in a new
42 type of CCM course that the authors believe our discipline will move beyond focusing on cultural
43 differences and their pejorative associations. In the article, the authors systematically outline the
44 construction of this new type of CCM course and its requirements, which include the careful
45 design and implementation of program content, program materials, the learning assessment, and
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3 instructional methods. Further, the authors paint a compelling portrait of the practice of
4 mindfulness and scientific thinking, which they argue is comprised of perspective taking (applied
5 through stakeholder involvement, holism, contextualization, and cross-or multi-disciplinarity)
6 and reflexivity. Through the accompanying use of actual case studies for developing mindfulness
7 and scientific thinking, the authors advocate the adoption of the action principles explained in this
8 paper. With the purpose of creating positive value, scientific mindfulness lets students to see both
9 the positive and negative sides of cross-cultural differences, offering suggested principles for
10 settling cross-cultural dilemmas.
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19 CONCLUSION

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21 With the advent of culture clashes and the focus on the downside of culture in international
22 business, often the positive aspects related to cross-cultural management are neglected. This
23 Special Issue seeks to highlight the emergent topic of the upside of culture research and its
24 application in business and education. Based on our review of 35 submitted and five accepted
25 papers, we were able to draw some compelling conclusions. The breadth and depth of the papers
26 received were affirming that a broad interest on the topic of the upside of culture is emerging
27 across many fields and disciplines. The boundaries of a Special Issue dictate that the main ideas
28 need to focus on the intended topic and that the papers must be developed within the timeframe
29 for publication. As such, some papers were found to be outside of the perimeters of the Special
30 Issue and other papers simply needed more time to develop than our Special Issue allowed. The
31 remaining group of papers were high in quality and wide-ranging in scope. This signaled to the
32 editorial team that investigating the upside of cross-cultural management was both warranted and
33 well-timed. Working with expert reviewers is an important element of any successful manuscript
34 review process and we found this to be exceptionally true for this Special Issue. We would like to
35 thank all our manuscript reviewers, as their feedback and expediency were crucial for the authors.
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50 The five papers that made it through the rigorous review process demonstrate the types of
51 theory and application that will move this line of positive-focused research forward. From the
52 four patterns of behavior that created AOF (Asset of Foreignness) virtuous cycles among Nissan
53 leaders presented in the article by Ikegami et al, to the double-edged sword effect of cultural
54 distance in cross-border alliances highlighted in Pesch and Bouncken's paper, to Bresciani and
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3 Comi's ideas about how cultural diversity can be leveraged through visual templates, to the
4 evidence provided in Matthiesen and Salzmann's paper on how national cultural orientations may
5 facilitate or hinder the implementation of CSR strategies and the adoption of socially and
6 environmentally responsible practices in MNCs, to the scientific mindfulness model of teaching
7 cross-cultural management proposed through the article by Fitzsimmons and her colleagues, this
8 Special Issue emphasizes the notion of the positive results and consequences of cross-border
9 business interaction. The two additional articles – one from the seminal scholar on POS and the
10 other an interview from a premier thought leader on cross-cultural cognitive psychology – add a
11 richness and depth to the discussion in this Special Issue. The insights gleaned from the original
12 POS idea through the Cameron article, coupled with the diverse 'thinking' perspective presented
13 in the Nisbett interview, challenges the reader to develop deeper theoretical explanations of
14 existing theories. Together, these seven Special Issue papers seek to generate the growth of new
15 ideas in the arena of the upside of cross-cultural management.
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28 By advancing the framing of the upside of cultural differences to achieve a more balanced
29 treatment of culture in cross-cultural management research, we are heeding the recent call by
30 Stahl and colleagues (2016: 628) who hoped to "encourage IB scholars to explore and take on
31 some of these concepts to further develop positive aspects of IB". We view this volume as a
32 prime opportunity to feature the positive interactions and possible outcomes resulting from cross-
33 cultural business exchanges, and explicating these through management frameworks that feature
34 the uniqueness of the international setting. It is our expectation that this Special Issue will be seen
35 as a move toward encouraging scholars and practitioners alike to further explore these relevant
36 topics.
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REVIEWERS FOR THIS SPECIAL ISSUE

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