CALL FOR PAPERS: Special issue of Journal of International Business Studies

WIDENING THE LENS: RETHINKING DISTANCE, DIVERSITY, AND FOREIGNNESS IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS RESEARCH THROUGH POSITIVE ORGANIZATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP

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Introduction

Essentially, international management is management of distance. Zaheer, Schomaker and Nachum (2012: 19)

The notion that difference and distance are liabilities, whether they are national, cultural, geographic, or semantic, is pervasive in international business (IB) research and practice. Constructs such as “cultural distance” (Kogut & Singh, 1988; Shenkar, 2001), "psychic distance" (Johnson & Vahlne, 1977, 2009), "institutional distance" (Kostova 1996; Kostova, 1999), and "liability of foreignness" (Zaheer, 1995; Miller & Parkhe, 2002) have guided much of the IB literature. Barriers, difficulties, costs, and risks associated with working and doing business across national borders are emphasized, resulting in a "problem-focused view" of diversity in IB research (Stevens, Plaut & Sanchez-Burks, 2008). Many issues arising in IB contexts have been explained in terms of “foreignness,” “unfamiliarity costs,” “organizational misfit,” “culture novelty,” “institutional gaps,” and related concepts, and IB research commonly focuses on discordance, incompatibility, friction, and conflict, and the negative impact of distance, diversity, and difference on various outcomes. In short, current theory and research in IB may have overly emphasized a negative view on distance and diversity of all kinds (national, cultural, organizational, and institutional) with an emphasis on liabilities and adverse outcomes associated with such differences. While existing research is certainly valuable, focusing on mostly negative processes and outcomes has hindered our understanding of the processes and conditions that leverage the benefits of diversity in a wide range of contexts, such as development of strategic capabilities, foreign direct investment decisions, synergy creation in cross-border mergers and acquisitions, cross-border knowledge-sharing and learning, and unleashing the creative potential of diverse teams (Brannen, 2004; Shenkar, 2001; Stahl et al., 2010; Tung & Verbeke, 2010; Zaheer et al., 2012).

The goal of this special issue of JIBS is to encourage research that is in line with a Positive Organizational Scholarship perspective (POS). POS aims "to develop rigorous, systematic, and
theory-based foundations for positive phenomena. [It] draws from the full spectrum of organizational theories to understand, explain, and predict the occurrence, causes, and consequences of positivity” (Cameron et al., 2003: 5-6). POS does not represent a single theory, but rather offers a fresh lens and encourages scholars to look at commonly considered phenomena in new ways, as well as to explicitly consider new phenomena. For example, recent calls to pay greater attention to the potentially positive outcomes of IB activity and to enhance the benefits of IB studies for real-world stakeholders (Jonsen, et al. 2010), including viewing “foreignness as an asset” (Brannen, 2004: 596), exploring the “upside of cultural distance” (Stahl & Tung, 2013), and “consider(ing) it as an opportunity for arbitrage, complementarity or creative diversity” (Zaheer et al., 2012: 26) are examples of looking at phenomena in new ways. Explicitly considering positive concepts like thriving, resilience, compassion, and virtue in IB research on differences illustrates consideration of distinctly different phenomena. Examining the positive side of differences is not only intellectually beneficial in terms of filling the gap in the IB literature, but is also crucial for IB practice in light of the increasing globalization of the world economy as well as growing intra-national heterogeneity in many countries.

Topics

We invite theoretical and empirical papers using quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods approaches. As aspects of distance, diversity, and foreignness occur at multiple levels, submissions investigating micro, meso, macro, or cross-level phenomena are welcome. Research submitted to the special issue does not need to explicitly apply POS, but can use the POS perspective as a generative lens to theorize about positive outcomes. Other existing theoretical perspectives in IB could be linked to theorize why distance, diversity, and foreignness matter; under what circumstances they are likely to be beneficial rather than challenging or harmful; how their effects play out and what motivational and enabling mechanisms are or could be at work in the process. As such, it is also not necessary for research submitted to consider only positive outcomes.

Papers could address a wide range of issues, including but not limited to topics that

- Infuse the IB literature with new constructs generated in POS research such as resilience, meaningfulness, positive emotion, altruism, relationship transformation, and high-quality connections, and study how these constructs enable individuals, groups, and organizations to gain the benefits of diversity, distance, and difference.
- Consider positive outcomes investigated in POS like thriving, virtue, and abundance. These could support investigation of questions like: What does organizational thriving mean in diverse institutional contexts?
- Consider traditional organizational outcomes in IB and examine the contexts and conditions under which foreignness enhance a corporation’s legitimacy, reputation, attractiveness, or brand value.
- Integrate theories that traditionally haven’t been simultaneously considered to reconcile challenges and benefits, such as research on the multinational advantage versus liability of foreignness. Integrating such perspectives could illuminate the conditions generating value from difference, diversity, and distance.
- Unpack mixed results and curvilinear findings to develop theory about enabling processes that "bend the curve" from negative to positive, or delay inflection points to extend positive benefits of diversity. This could support investigations of the relationship between differences and innovation, for example, which show an inverted-U-shaped relationship. What could support benefits of diversity to innovation at very high levels of diversity?
- Investigate further how research on diversity in organizations has shown that individuals vary in how much they value diversity. Can concepts like happiness, joy, fulfillment, self-esteem, or other positive states alter the extent to which individuals value diversity rather than feel threatened by difference?
- Apply different research methodologies and designs than traditionally used in IB research to study topics like cross-border alliances, mergers, and acquisitions. Process research or qualitative research may reveal important insights into how firms develop valuable capabilities and reap synergistic benefits from these activities and uncover new understanding of
difference, diversity, and distance by examining positive processes that create beneficial outcomes/patterns.

- Consider positive individual traits and behaviors like character, talent and responsible behavior and investigate their role in leader effectiveness in diverse contexts.
- Investigate what is positive global leadership, developing a framework that goes beyond cultural similarities and differences and identifies common ground for leveraging diversity, both locally and globally.
- Explore how the experience of being foreign and/or marginal, typically considered negative, could lead to enhanced creativity and help individuals develop a global mindset.
- Refine theories of adaptation to consider how concepts like replenishment and resilience can support phenomena like emerging market multinationals learning from their foreign operations, particularly their activities in developed markets.
- Examine the idea of abundance gaps created by distance, diversity, or difference in research on international entrepreneurship and "born global" organizations.
- Differentiate between when difference and distance have a positive effect on MNEs and when they don't. For example, are there some instances when an outsider perspective (such as the use of global teams from subsidiaries) is valuable in regards to sustainable corporate renewal or growth and when having a more culturally integrated team would be more effective?

The main contributions sought with the special issue include: analyzing the reasons for possible overemphasis on the negative in current research on foreignness, diversity, and distance, and identifying ways to overcome this imbalance; motivating the development of new theoretical perspectives or the application of theoretical perspectives seldom used in the international business literature to refine the distance and diversity constructs and shedding new light on the positive outcomes of differences in the context of IB; exploring situational contingencies (moderators), intervening mechanisms and processes (mediators), and non-linear relationships between foreignness, diversity and distance and outcome variables - possibly drawing on POS research to introduce new constructs to IB; reassessing whether "foreignness," "diversity," and "distance" are appropriate metaphors with which to describe, analyze, and assess the impact of difference variables in international business.

Submission Process

All manuscripts will be reviewed as a cohort for this special issue. Manuscripts must be submitted in the window between December 18, 2014, and January 1, 2015, at http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/jibs. All submissions will go through the JIBS regular double-blind review process and follow the standard norms and processes.

For more information about this call for papers, please contact the Special Issue Editors or the JIBS Managing Editor (managing-editor@jibs.net).

References


Special Issue Editors

Günter K. Stahl is Professor of International Management at Vienna University of Economics and Business (WU Vienna). Prior to joining WU Vienna, he served for eight years as a full-time faculty member at INSEAD, and was a visiting professor at Duke University, the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, Northeastern University, and Hitotsubashi University. His research interests include the sociocultural processes in teams, alliances, mergers and acquisitions, and how to manage people and culture effectively in those contexts. He has served on the editorial boards of several academic journals and recently was a co-guest editor for special issues of Academy of Management Learning & Education on “Cross-Cultural Management Education: Exploring Multiple
Aims, Approaches, and Impacts," of Academy of Management Perspectives on "Responsible Leadership," and of the European Journal of International Management on "Global Leadership."

Rosalie L. Tung is the Ming & Stella Wong Professor of International Business, Simon Fraser University. In 2003-2004, she served as President of the Academy of Management. She was formerly a Wisconsin Distinguished Professor, University of Wisconsin System. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, the Academy of Management, the Academy of International Business, and the British Academy of Management. She has published many books and articles on international human resource management, international business negotiations and comparative management. She serves on the editorial board of many academic journals.

Tatiana Kostova is the Buck Mickel Chair and Professor of International Business at the University of South Carolina’s Darla Moore School of Business. Her research is in the areas of international management, macro-organizational behavior, and organization theory. In particular, she studies cross-border transfer and adoption of organizational practices, MNC legitimacy, headquarters-subsidiary relationships in MNCs from an agency and social capital perspective, multiculturalism, psychological ownership, dual identification, and others. She is also interested in conceptualizing and measuring contextual embeddedness of MNCs with an emphasis on the institutional environment, its multiplicity and complexity. Dr. Kostova has served as Vice President of AIB, Chair of the International Management Division of the Academy of Management, as well as on the editorial boards of many international business and management journals. She is AIB Fellow.

Mary Zellmer-Bruhn is Associate Professor of Organizational Behavior at the University of Minnesota's Carlson School of Management. Her research focuses on knowledge and learning, and composition and diversity in teamwork and workplace collaboration, with particular interest in cognitive and cultural diversity. Her recent work emphasizes the role of context in team learning and knowledge management, and language and cultural diversity social cognition. She has particular interest in multi-level and longitudinal research. Zellmer-Bruhn is Area Editor for the Journal of International Business Studies. She has served on the editorial boards of several leading journals, including currently Organization Science and Management International Review. She currently Chairs the Executive Committee of the College of Organization Science (INFORMS), and was a past board member of INGROUP.