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FROM HOMOGENIZATION TO PLURALISM: INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT RESEARCH IN THE ACADEMY AND BEYOND

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Evidence abounds that globalization has been one of the most significant and rapid changes in recent decades. A crude measure of economic globalization is that aggregate world exports as a percentage of world gross domestic product (GDP) increased from 11.6 percent in 1970 to 30.7 percent in 2006 (United Nations, 2007). Given the continuing growth of many emerging economies, along with increases in both their inflow and outflow of foreign direct investments, it is unlikely that there will be a slowdown or reversal of this globalization trend in the near future. A direct implication of globalization is that international management research is not only desirable but also critical to generate knowledge on the management of firms operating in global or novel national contexts. This is a critical charge for members of the management academy at large in future decades.

Corresponding to economic globalization is a dramatic increase in international membership in the Academy of Management (AOM). International membership grew from 13 percent in 1990 to 38 percent in 2006.[1] Thus, Academy members can and should play a significant role in creating the much-needed global management knowledge.[2] Has the management field in general and the Academy of Management in particular lived up to this expectation? My reading of the international management literature and observation of international research activities both within and beyond the AOM unfortunately yields the answer "no" or "not yet." In fact, there is a worrisome "homogenizing tendency" (March, 2005) in which management research has converged on the North American research paradigm. This paradigm undoubtedly has been the major contributor to the body of management knowledge to date. However, by itself, it may be insufficient to provide understanding of novel contexts. I invite, and indeed urge, both experienced mainstream scholars and new international researchers to collaborate in the pursuit of this vital research agenda through serious engagement in deep contextualization, novel questioning, and innovative theorizing. To fill the critical gap in global management knowledge, we must avert the homogenizing tendency and foster the development of pluralistic intellectual perspectives or "pluralistic scholarship" by members of the global management research community.

THE HOMOGENIZING TENDENCY

Following Ricks (1985), Werner (2002) described three types of international management research. The first comprises studies of management in a multinational context that examine phenomena such as entry mode, internationalization processes, subsidiary relationships, knowledge transfer, and expatriate management. This line of study can be viewed as "pure international management" research and labeled "type 1." The second consists of studies that compare employee behavior or management practices across cultures or nations ("type 2"). The third comprises studies that focus on management in a nation outside North America ("type 3"). Using the United States as his reference point, Werner referred to these as "foreign domestic studies." I have used the term "context-specific" (Tsui, 2004) to describe studies conducted within a single national context, with or without a comparative intention. This suggests that any single-country study that either incorporates aspects of the national context in the theory and methods or that takes the national context for granted (as most U.S. studies did or do), is context-specific research.

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[1] Academy of Management membership information separating domestic (U.S.) from international (members declaring a non-U.S. country of residence) is available from 1990 on.

[2] I define global management knowledge as knowledge about multinational firms operating in the global context but also about local management models in different national contexts.

The launch of the *Journal of International Business Studies* (*JIBS*) in 1970 signaled the formal birth of this field. Almost four decades later, many journals sponsored by management associations around the world have emerged,[3] and in recent years several mainstream journals have printed comprehensive reviews of international management studies.[4] For example, Werner (2002) focused exclusively on the first type of international management research and reviewed its development from 1996 to 2000 in 20 top management journals. Schaffer and Riordan (2003) focused on type 2 studies and evaluated the methodologies of cross-cultural research in 9 journals over 1995 to 2001. Earley and Gibson (1998) reviewed a decade's work on individualism and collectivism, a major cultural value that has dominated cross-cultural research. Kirkman, Lowe, and Gibson (2006) reviewed 25 years of empirical studies on Hofstede's cultural values framework. Also focusing on type 2, Gelfand, Erez, and Aycan (2007) offered an update of cross-cultural organizational behavior research including both multiple- and single-country studies, and my coauthors and I focused on cross-national organizational behavior research from 1996 to 2005 in 16 leading management journals (Tsui, Nifadkar, & Ou, 2007). White (2002) reviewed all three types of studies in Asia; Li and Tsui (2002) focused on studies published from1984 to 1999 concerning China only. In an editorial essay, Kirkman and Law (2005) took stock of the status of international research in *AMJ* from 1970 to 2004.[5]

The aforementioned reviews, while conveying an exciting coming of age in international management research, also reveal that knowledge about management in the comparative arena or outside North America is still lacking in both quantity and quality. Werner (2002) found only 5.5 percent of the articles published in his five-year study period (1996–2000) in the 20 management journals to be purely international (type 1) research. Redding (1997) observed much fragmentation in comparative management research (type 2), and others (Gelfand et al., 2007; Meyer, 2006; Tsui, 2004) have noted a paucity of high-quality context-specific, or indigenous, research (type 3 in Werner's categorization).

It seems that both experienced mainstream scholars and new researchers hesitate to venture into international studies. Deterred by a normal inertial tendency, the former may not have discovered the potential excitement in pushing the frontier of knowledge through international studies. The latter lack not only the confidence but also the experience to pursue studies in this new domain. Indeed, most new international scholars seem to have preferred to follow the well-trodden path of mainstream research. Leung (2007) observed that Asian social psychologists tend to publish on research topics that are well-known in the West. Meyer (2006) observed a lack of innovativeness in Asian management research and attributed this situation to the choice of Western topics and application of Western (aka North American) research methods. In a review of 26 years of Chinese management studies (Li & Tsui, 2002), a similar pattern of applying well-known theories on topics well-studied by Western scholars was observed.

Analyzing the recent issues of four leading North American and four leading European journals, March (2005) reported an average of 11.5 percent non–North American authors, reviewers, and references in the four North American journals, but an average of 37.4 percent North American authors, reviewers, and references in the four European journals. This suggests a greater dominance of the North American research paradigm in Europe than the reverse.

These observations from the extant literature, taken together, affirm the tendency of management research toward homogeneous use of a North American model, whereby researchers inadvertently depress the development of novel ideas and theories that may prove to be useful in advancing knowledge in different national and emerging-economy contexts. Serious pursuit of type 3 studies (indigenous, or context-specific) is necessary for a fair debate on the value of universal versus local theories to explain management phenomena around the world. The Academy of Management, with its increasingly global membership, has both the rich intellectual resources and, I would argue, an obligation, to engage in this work.

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[3] Examples are *Management Research*, by the Ibero-American Academy of Management; the *European Management Review*, by the European Academy of Management; the *British Journal of Management*, by the British Academy of Management; the *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, by the Asia Academy of Management; the *Journal of Management and Organization*, by the Australia-New Zealand Academy of Management; and *Management and Organization Review*, by the International Association for Chinese Management Research.

[4] Journals that have published these reviews are the *Journal of Management*, the *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Organizational Research Methods*, the *Annual Review of Psychology*, and the *Asia Pacific Journal of Management.*

[5] Harry Barkema (2001), an associate editor of *AMJ*, wrote the first editorial on internationalization of *AMJ.*

POSSIBILITIES FOR PLURALISTIC SCHOLARSHIP WITHIN THE ACADEMY

Globalization in the Academy of Management Membership: Rich Intellectual Resources

The total Academy membership grew from 5,244 in 1981 to 16,345 at the end of 2006, an increase of 218 percent since 1981.[6] This is an average increase of 8 percent per annum. In 1981, the International Management (IM) Division had 499 members (9.5 percent of the total) and, in 2006, it had 2,764 (17 percent of the total), showing an average increase of 17 percent per year.[7] However, most of the growth was in the earlier years of the cited range. Since 1990, annual growth in IM Division membership has been about 6 percent, a rate that keeps pace with the increase in total membership (also 6 percent). This growth rate contrasts sharply to the rate of growth in international membership (i.e., membership of non-U.S. individuals) during the same period, which grew from 1,075 in 1990 (13 percent of the total) to 6,169 in 2006 (38 percent of the total), a total increase of 474 percent, or 28 percent per year. During the same 17-year period, the annual growth in domestic (U.S.) membership was 3 percent.

Among the 2,764 members of the IM Division in 2006, 43 percent were from countries other than the United States. The participation of U.S. members academy-wide in the IM Division was 15 percent and among international members, it was about 20 percent. Thus, it seems that a majority of the international members have not chosen to affiliate with the IM Division. On the one hand, this may not be surprising, as scholars outside the United States may not consider their research as international, even though it could match type 3 in Werner's classification scheme. On the other hand, by not treating their work as international, these authors might have missed the opportunity to develop true understanding and valid knowledge of management in their locations.[8]

Between 2004 and 2006, 32 (out of a total of 105) countries experienced at least a 10 percent increase in membership in the Academy. The Asian countries had the largest increase, followed by countries in Europe, suggesting that the Academy of Management has become an important, if not the major, professional home for management scholars worldwide. This enthusiastic participation in the Academy's scholarly activities signals rising attention to serious scholarship around the world but also implies both active acceptance of, and passive subjection to, the influence of the American research tradition, style, and paradigm by the international members.

At the dawn of the 21st century, many management associations arose around the world and entered an associate arrangement with the Academy of Management (e.g., the British Academy of Management, the Brazilian Academy of Management, the Australian/New Zealand Academy of Management, and the International Association for Chinese Management Research). The AOM also established two international affiliates (the Ibero-American AOM and the Asia AOM). These activities coincide with the great momentum within business schools around the world that desire their faculties to publish in international journals (Meyer, 2006; Tung, 2006). Leung referred to this movement as "a stampede for top tier publications" (2007: 510). These business schools look to the Academy as the model for research and to publications in the Academy journals as a sign of research success and legitimacy.[9] Unfortunately, these movements contribute to homogenizing global management research activities into a North American model.

International Publications in *AMJ*: Growing, but Many More Are Needed

Kirkman and Law (2005) performed a comprehensive analysis of international publications in *AMJ* from 1970 to 2004. Extending their data back to the first volume of *AMJ* in 1958 and updating to 2006, I found that the number of international authors relative to the total number of authors grew from 0 percent in 1958 to 23 percent in 2006. The number of articles involving a non-U.S. sample grew from 0 percent in 1958 to 17 percent in 2006. For both indexes, the largest growth has occurred since 1995; in the past 12 years, every year has seen double-digit growth. Similar growth occurred in editorial board membership, as the proportion of non-U.S. reviewers increased from 4 percent in 1970 (0 percent before that year) to 20 percent in

[6] Detailed data on AOM membership and AMJ's international publications reported in this paper are available from the author upon request.

[7] In 2006 the IM Division was the fifth-largest division in the Academy, following OB, BP&S, OMT, and HR.

[8] I will address this issue in further detail later in the subsection below with "deep contextualization" in its title.

[9] Many universities in Asia offer handsome monetary rewards for publishing in top journals such as *AMJ.*

2006, with the largest increase occurring in 1997 (17.6%).[10]

Using a liberal definition of international research,[11] Kirkman and Law (2005) reported that 14 percent of the articles in *AMJ* in the years 1970 to 2004 were international. Focusing on research within Werner's (2002) type 2, my colleagues and I (Tsui et al., 2007) found only 9 articles in *AMJ* over a ten-year period (1996–2005) involving cross-national samples. This is less than 3 percent of the total 339 publications in the ten volumes. Our review excludes articles that reported single-country cross-cultural studies (e.g., Erez & Somech, 1996) or context-specific studies involving international issues (e.g., Yan & Gray, 1994). Thus, the true amount of international management research in *AMJ* is probably somewhere between 3 percent, based on my strict definition (Tsui et al., 2007), and 14 percent, based on the more liberal definition of Kirkman and Law (2005).[12]

Kirkman and Law concluded that the first five years of this century (2000–04) "can be regarded as a sort of golden age of international management in *AMJ*" (2005: 379) and implied a "real internationalization of *AMJ*" (2005: 380). In contrast, my own view is less optimistic. Even though the proportional amount of international research (as indexed by international authorship, international samples, or international review board members) shows a clear upward trend consistent with globalization of the Academy membership and the world economy, these studies do not necessarily offer theoretical and empirical insight into the nature of management in novel or emerging-economy contexts. In other words, quantity alone is not a sufficient gauge of progress in producing global management knowledge. As the recent reviews cited above (e.g., Gelfand et al., 2007; Schaffer & Riordan, 2003; Tsui et al., 2007; Werner, 2002; White, 2002) concluded, despite much progress, many gaps remain in both theory and methods. Werner (2002) identified many substantive areas that deserve more concentrated research attention, including international microlevel research (studies on such topics as leadership, motivation, communication, and conflict resolution in multinational corporations); research on social factors and MNCs (such as studies of their ethics, stakeholder relationships, and political actions); and research on MNC strategies. Gelfand et al. proposed that future cross-cultural research move beyond culture to unpack cross-cultural differences, model multilevel contexts, understand cross-cultural interfaces, and take indigenous research seriously to understand "recessive characteristics" (2007: 498). Tsui et al. (2007) offered seven recommendations to advance future cross-national research, ranging from clarifying the concept of culture to engaging configurational models and polycontextual research methods.

The phenomenal growth in the number of international AOM members and in their aspirations to publish in Academy-type journals, along with a strong interest among U.S. scholars (who comprise 52 percent of the IM Division membership), suggests that the Academy has rich intellectual resources for potential contribution to global management knowledge. Hence, international research activities in the Academy are keeping pace by trending upward, but clearly much more is needed to fill the gap in global management knowledge and to mine the opportunities for new insights on unique phenomena in novel contexts.

BUILDING PLURALISTIC SCHOLARHSHIP IN INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT: TREATING THE CONTEXT IN EARNEST

Following the dominant North American research paradigm is essentially an exploitation approach (March, 1991) entailing application of well-accepted constructs, theories, and methods and further analysis of well-analyzed research issues. The popularity of this approach among newcomers is understandable. After all, imitation, or modeling, is a well-proven learning method (Bandura, 1977), and new authors may see it as a low-risk approach to research success. However, the rush into mainstream research by new international scholars has pitfalls. They are essentially competing in a highly mature market, where the competition is intense and most of the big ideas may have already been developed.[13] At worst, important questions in novel contexts and across contexts are being ig-

[10] Following March (2005), I treat editorial board members from non-U.S. locations as one indication of internationalization or the possibility for cross-context integration of organizational studies.

[11] Kirkman and Law (2006) defined international publications as studies that investigate international issues but also as studies that involve non-U.S. authors or non-U.S. samples, regardless of the topic of the studies.

[12] An analysis of the representation of non-U.S. authors in the *Academy of Management Review* shows that it is similar to that in *AMJ*, growing from 10 percent in 1976 (volume 1) to 30 percent in 2006 (volume 31). The proportion of non-U.S. reviewers grew from 3 to 26 percent.

[13] This point will be elaborated further in the "novel questions" subsection below.

nored, and development of much-needed global management knowledge is being delayed, if not halted.

Meyer (2006) encouraged Asian management researchers to be more confident about studying indigenous issues and developing innovative theories meaningful to the Asian context. Scholars like Gelfand et al. (2007), Kirkman et al. (2006), Schaffer and Riordan (2003), and others have also identified many opportunities for progress. Three areas in particular have great potential for unique discoveries that may advance management theories in general: (1) pursuing deep contextualization, and (through such contextualization) (2) developing innovative theories, and (3) formulating novel questions. The work involved in these endeavors may be intense and difficult, but the opportunities to find novel treasures will be many, and the rewards will be immense.

Seek Valid Understanding through Deep Contextualization

For a long time, scholars have written about the importance of context in organizational studies (e.g., Blair & Hunt, 1986; Cappelli & Sherer, 1991; Johns, 2006; Mowday & Sutton, 1993; Rousseau & Fried, 2001). The *Journal of Organizational Behavior* devoted an entire issue to "contextualization" in organizational research (2001, issue 1). Attention to context was also a major theme of the first Emerging Research Frontiers Conference sponsored by *JIBS* in March 2003. Child (2000) contrasted high- and low-context approaches to theorizing about organizations cross-nationally. Building on the work of Whitley (1992), Redding (2005) proposed a highly contextualized theory of business systems in which (national) cultures underlie institutions and institutions underlie business systems. In the views of Whitley and Redding, the economic behavior of firms and the management of those firms are deeply embedded in their socio-political-economic-historic contexts.

Yet management scholars, including those who study international issues, have not yet taken the context seriously (Johns, 2006). To the extent that countries differ in their political, economic, social, and cultural institutions from those typical in the context in which most current management models and theories were developed, replication or application of these theories may lead to biased or inaccurate conclusions. If newly developed economies (e.g., in Asia, South America, and Eastern Europe) are novel contexts that differ from the regions in which the bulk of management theories originated, research in these contexts *must* involve some contextualization if the limits of existing theories are to be discovered or if new theories to explain local phenomena are to be developed. For example, the idea of "servant leadership" has deep roots in Christian values (Graham, 1991; Greenleaf, 1977), and thus one should not assume its applicability to a context with deep Confucian values or a "high-power-distance" culture. Such contexts value obedience to authority, status, and the practice of "paternalistic leadership" (Farh & Cheng, 2000). Deep contextualization is necessary for both theory development and for the meaningful application of existing theory to novel contexts. In a citation analysis of organization and management studies in the Chinese context (Li & Tsui, 2002), my colleague and I found a high level of contextualization characterizing the most cited publications (e.g., Boisot & Child, 1996; Nee, 1992).

Smith and Hitt (2006), by studying the theory development process of 32 of the most influential management scholars, converged on a similar idea. High-quality, high-impact research is the result of scholars' deep knowledge about the phenomena they study and the contexts in which they study them. This is true of international research as well. One does not develop deep local knowledge through CNN, *Newsweek,* or even the *Economist,* but by total immersion in a local context. Collaboration with native or local scholars should facilitate deep contextualization (Peterson, 2001). For example, international collaboration has resulted in many informative and insightful China-specific studies (e.g., Farh, Zhong, & Organ, 2004; Meyer & Lu, 2005), as well as in comparative studies of the United States and China (Liu, Friedman, & Chi, 2005), the United States and Japan (Adair, Okumura, & Brett, 2001), and Canada and China (Johns & Xie, 1998). Many international dissertations have been published in the *Academy of Management Journal* (e.g., Chen, 1995; Yan & Gray, 1994) or in *Administrative Science Quarterly* (e.g., Xiao & Tsui, 2007) because they reflect deep contextualization of the phenomena analyzed and because their results defy common knowledge. Through his understanding of the economic reform in China and its meaning for workers in Chinese firms, Chen (1995) offered hypotheses that are contrary to common assumptions about Chinese values (i.e., a preference for the equality rule). He hypothesized and found support for the idea that Chinese workers value an equity rule for reward allocation more than do American employees. Xiao (Xiao & Tsui, 2007), drawing on his deep understanding of the collectivistic in-group-oriented Chinese culture, theorized that structural holes in Chinese employees' career networks would have a negative rather than a positive effect on career outcomes, contrary to the findings in American studies (e.g., Burt, 1992). In essence, taking the context seriously, either within a single nation or across multiple nations, is simply practicing good science. Such work would be appreciated and published by any top-tier journal.

Develop Theoretical Innovations through Contextualized Theory Building

The desire to publish in esteemed journals such as *AMJ* has inevitably led to an overabundance of exploitation research (i.e., application or extension of existing ideas) and the underdevelopment of exploration research (i.e., creation of new theories or innovation in methods). To illustrate, Tsui, Schoonhoven, Meyer, Lau, and Milkovich (2004) identified only 2 studies of Chinese management, out of 104 published from 2000 to 2003, that reported a new theory. Schlevogt (2001) proposed a geoeconomic theory to explain how geographic differences influence economic development and management. Shenkar and Yan (2002) produced an integrative political theory to explain how escalation of political behavior by joint venture partners leads to joint venture failures. It is possible that innovative theories are being published in China's native language journals, but unfortunately, these studies are not accessible to the global scholarly community.

Whetten (2008) advocates a theory development process he refers to as "systematic borrowing," wherein a theory developed in one context is applied in a different context and the theoretical application takes into account theoretically relevant contextual differences. He urges borrowers to "return something better to the literature" by informing theoretical perspectives through novel application. This approach has the advantage of using a before-after comparison as the basis for judging the extent of new theoretical contribution. Given that the color of the borrowed lens may influence a borrower's vision, starting with an existing theory may reduce the possibility of seeing a phenomenon in its true form. This difficulty suggests the value of developing context-specific indigenous theories in parallel with systematic borrowing. Currently, there is neither enough systematic borrowing of existing theories nor enough creating of new theories in international management research. Whetten (2008) provides detailed guidance on constructing both "contextualized theory" (developing theories *in* context, or contextualizing extant theories) and "context-effects theory" (developing theories *of* context, or using context to formulate new theories). Other researchers have also offered suggestions on how to develop indigenous theories (e.g., Meyer, 2006; Whetten, 2002; White, 2002; Tsui, 2004, 2006).

Context-sensitive indigenous theorizing should clarify and isolate the influence of multiple and qualitatively different contexts embedded in each other within a nation. Shapiro, Von Glinow, and Xiao (2007) used the term "polycontextuality" to refer to the multiplicity of national contexts, which can include verbal, cognitive, emotional, and even spiritual ones. Although cultural frameworks (e.g., Hofstede, 1980; Schwartz, 1994; Singelis, 1994; Triandis, 1995; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998) have played a major role in advancing international studies, future theorization should capture the influences of contexts beyond culture on the behavior of firms and within firms. Along this line, building on a coevolution perspective and using a multilevel approach, Lewin and Kim (2004) advocated the use of nation-state institutional configurations[14] to study comparative management practices and organizational adaptation, innovation, and change.

Cross-cultural theories of the behavior of firms or of behavior within firms as influenced by national cultures or other national contexts are by definition cross-level, yet a majority of scholars conducting cross-national studies have tested their hypotheses at a single level.[15] Given the different roles of culture and other national contexts, there are both opportunities and need to develop theories on cross-level direct effects and cross-level moderating effects, as well as cross-level "frog-pond effects" (Klein & Kozlowski, 2000). Contextualization is essentially adding one more level to theorization by accounting for the effect of contextual characteristics on the behavior of and within organizations. The development of highly contextualized multilevel or multilayered theories would not only yield innovative theories about novel contexts but would also inform and improve management theories in general. Through "reverse exporting" (White,

[14] This nation-state institutional configuration idea is similar to the polycontextual approach described in Shapiro et al. (2006) and in Tsui et al. (2007). The polycontextual approach focuses on both structural conditions and ways of knowing or meaning interpretations. Configurations, according to Lewin and Kim, reflect the founding conditions of a nation and the nature of its government, legal and education systems, capital market, and culture.

[15] Tsui et al. (2007) reported that 96 percent of the 93 cross-national cross-cultural OB studies had single-level designs.

2002), these innovative theories could be used to examine or re-examine management in the North American context.

For example, although their study was not a test of a novel theory, Liu et al. (2005) compared the role of culturally sensitive individual difference factors in two different cultures. They found that U.S. negotiators who scored high in extraversion or agreeableness (Western personality traits) achieved lower economic gains because these negotiators were more willing to engage socially with the other parties, release more information, and open with less aggressive offers. These personality attributes, however, did not affect the Chinese negotiators. The latter in their turn achieved lower economic gains if they scored higher on harmony, face, or *ren qing* (three individualized Chinese cultural norms) because they were concerned about preservation of inner peace, interpersonal concord, reciprocity, or enhancement of their public images. The U.S. negotiators were not sensitive to these attributes. The reverse exporting of constructs is a good first step toward the reverse exporting of theories.

Through the process of deep contextualization—identifying how context enhances or modifies understanding of a common phenomenon across contexts—the possibility emerges of discovering context-free regularities. In other words, separating out the contextual explanations (those that might generalize) from the idiosyncratic explanations (those that are truly local or indigenous) may be the starting point of new universal theories. By treating context as endogenous to theory, scholars may discover general theories to explain and through which to understand individual and firm behavior in any context.

Borrowing an idea from human resource management (Becker & Gerhart, 1996), it is possible to conceive of a theory (or a system architecture) with system-level characteristics (or guiding principles) such as cultural values, leadership styles, or governance modes that might affect firm outcomes or employee behavior in multiple contexts. Although the meaning of these system-level characteristics may be the same across cultures, their implementation or manifestation may vary in different contexts. For example, leadership styles in one context may be manifested in transformational and transactional behavior (Bass, 1985), while in another context they may be manifested in paternalistic (Farh & Cheng, 2000) or authoritative behavior (Tsui, Wang, Xin, Zhang, & Fu, 2004). Explanation of social phenomena cannot be void of contextual assumptions and often may involve context-specific meanings. The system-level characteristics are essentially etic, or culture-general, and the manifestations of them (i.e., their indicators or operationalizations) may be emic, or culture-specific.

Tsui et al. (2007) described a similar idea at the construct level. That is, a construct with similar meaning across contexts could involve both similar (etic) and different (emic) indicators in different contexts. Thus, the endogeneity is in the local manifestation of these higher-level universal characteristics. However, I caution against a rush toward a search for universal general theories because such a quest is likely to invite premature closure on the search for contextual constraints.[16] Universal or context-free theories may best be the result or byproducts of the accumulation of context-sensitive theorizing and studies.

Regenerate Intellectual Excitement through Novel Questions in New Contexts

After 30 years of publication, the *Journal of International Business Studies* commissioned a number of papers to take stock of the international business field. In one of these articles, Buckley attributed the success of international business studies in the early years to a focus on "a number of big questions which arise from empirical developments in the world economy" (2002: 370). However, he went on to note, "The agenda is stalled because no such big question has currently been identified" (Buckley, 2002: 370). Hunt (1999) made a similar observation in a historical analysis of leadership research. He described the leadership field as "rigorous, boring, static, but most of all examining more and more inconsequential questions and providing little value added given the plethora of published studies (upwards of 8,000 by the late 1980's)" (Hunt, 1999: 130). In examining the status of organizational theory research, Pfeffer echoed the sentiment of Hinings and Greenwood, who bemoaned the fact that "organizational scholars have stopped asking big, important questions and instead have devoted an increased focus on technical precision and manageable research projects" (Pfeffer, 2005: 99). This stagnant state of affairs in mainstream (i.e., North American) management research is not all that surprising, because the opportunity to frame big questions greatly diminishes in a mature field.[17]

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[16] I wish to thank David Whetten for his insight on this point.

[17] The publication and tenure process, as well as the pitfalls involved in the review and editing process, may also contribute to the lack of big question studies, a topic discussed in Pfeffer's (2007) essay.

Over 15 years ago, Bettis observed that much of the extant strategy management research was "irrelevant to what is going on" (1991: 315) and that the greater part of such research was "ethnocentric." He encouraged strategy scholars to do more comparative studies (type 2 research, in Werner's [2002] scheme) and to study firms outside North America (type 3 research). There has been clear progress in the years since, but much more is needed. International management offers opportunities for novel (big and different) questions to revitalize the intellectual stagnation. Here are a few illustrative questions:

- What are the implications of continuing globalization for firms, work, management, and employees at home and abroad?
- What role does management play, relative to industrial policy, in the economic growth and development of industries and firms in different geopolitical entities?
- What accounts for convergence or divergence in management practices across nations, and what are the implications of convergence or divergence for the management of local firms and multinational corporations?
- Why are some emerging economies (e.g., China and India) able to demonstrate exceptional economic growth relative to other emerging economies (e.g., Russia)?
- What is the role of cultural values, education, leadership, and social networks for knowledge creation and transfer within and between firms?

These questions may seem formidable to new researchers, but seasoned scholars might welcome the challenge of tackling some novel puzzles. The emerging economies are ideal contexts for raising novel questions. For example, Nee (1989, 1991, 1992, 1996) and Boisot and Child (1988, 1996) studied how China's transition from a centrally planned redistribution system to a decentralized market economy has created different organizational forms or governance systems, changed property rights, and increased social inequality. The international management field is ripe with many interesting and important questions and phenomena to be explored.

The above three areas are clearly related, with contextualization being at the core of identifying novel questions and developing interesting theories. I hope the vastness of these suggestions will not deter or stall the pursuit of this critical scholarly agenda. A practical approach is to begin with contextualized questioning and thick descriptions of novel phenomena and to proceed to building theory to explain the interesting patterns. I echo Hambrick, who urged, "Leading journals in management should broaden their scope to include papers that do not directly contribute to theory but that are nonetheless of great potential consequence. These might be papers that identify compelling empirical patterns that cry out for future research and theorizing. They might be rich qualitative descriptions of important but unexplored phenomena that, once described, could stimulate the development of theory and other insights" (2007: 1350). This approach is ideal for stimulating the much-needed international management research agenda.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Charting new territory involves risks. Engaging in the kind of research that I describe above is difficult. Reviewers may not appreciate the insight from a study when it is beyond their comfort zone, or they may not recognize a gem beneath a rough surface because it does not fit existing specifications of quality. However, this situation is not unique to international studies. Reflecting on the development of social cognitive theory, Bandura said, "It is not uncommon for authors of scientific classics to experience repeated initial rejection of their work" (Bandura, 2005: 30). Referring to what John White (1982) recorded in his book *Rejection*, Bandura continued to remind us that successful people in any pursuit have "an unshakable sense of efficacy and a firm belief in the worth of what they are doing" from the very beginning of their careers. It is not a coincidence that most of the scholars who produced the influential work described in the book *Great Minds in Management* (Smith & Hitt, 2005) had their ideas when they were in graduate school.

Similarly, many significant works in international management have been written by young scholars (e.g., Earley, 1993; Gelfand & Realo, 1999; Guthrie, 1997; Kogut & Singh, 1988; Morris & Peng, 1994) and by seasoned senior scholars working in partnership with international novices (e.g., Brett & Okumura, 1998; Xin & Pearce, 1996; Yan & Gray, 1994). These doctoral students and junior faculty members value the opportunity to work directly or indirectly under experienced mentors. Such intercultural and intergenerational collaboration may be a pragmatic approach to realizing their joint aspiration of making a difference through significant scholarship.

Though progress has been slower than desired, opportunities on the horizon for exciting new work are abundant. I hope this essay will stimulate discussions of how to develop the international management field and to avert, in time, the tendency toward homogeneity that characterizes current research. Although fragmentation may limit the integration of knowledge across contexts, homogenization involves an even greater risk of depressing the rise of pluralistic intellectual perspectives and the generation of global management knowledge.

Fortunately, all journals are eager to publish studies that address big and novel questions, offer innovative theories, employ contextually meaningful methods, and provide deep insight into management in any context (Palmer, 2006; Rynes, 2005). Given the diverse and rich intellectual resources within the Academy and beyond, I am hopeful that 20 years from now, organization and management studies will be truly a "multidisciplinary, multinational and multilingual association of scholars with all the paraphernalia of international exchange" (March, 2005: 5). This image of a future when pluralistic scholarship flourishes around the globe is eminently possible if we wish it to occur, and I believe that we all do. As scholars, we share a mission to identify, to understand, and to explain novel phenomena in our management world, and most of the important new puzzles are in the international arena. Engagement in and contribution to this research agenda offers opportunities to make a difference not only to scholarship, but also, importantly, to practice (Bartunek, 2007) through filling the gargantuan gap in global management knowledge.

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