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Yin Yang: A New Perspective on Culture

Tony Fang
Stockholm University, Sweden

ABSTRACT In this article I propose a Yin Yang perspective to understand culture. Based on the indigenous Chinese philosophy of Yin Yang, I conceptualize culture as possessing inherently paradoxical value orientations, thereby enabling it to embrace opposite traits of any given cultural dimension. I posit that potential paradoxical values coexist in any culture; they give rise to, exist within, reinforce, and complement each other to shape the holistic, dynamic, and dialectical nature of culture. Seen from the Yin Yang perspective, all cultures share the same potential in value orientations, but at the same time they are also different from each other because each culture is a unique dynamic portfolio of self-selected globally available value orientations as a consequence of that culture's all-dimensional learning over time.

KEYWORDS cross-cultural management, dialectical thinking, globalization, paradox, time, Yin Yang

INTRODUCTION

Culture has been extensively studied in management literature during the past three decades in which Hofstede's (1980, 1991, 2001) dimensional theory of culture has been a dominant paradigm (Kirkman, Lowe, & Gibson, 2006). Hofstede's work has emphasized cultural differences across national borders and stimulated managers to show respect for different cultures, values, and management styles. Some later studies may be more scientifically designed (Schwartz, 1992), practically oriented (Trompenaars, 1994), and may have investigated more societies (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004) than Hofstede's research, but their overall impact does not surpass Hofstede's. Although using different cultural dimensions, these later studies have essentially followed in Hofstede's philosophical tone. 'Hofstede's masterful capacity to elaborate the complex phenomenon of culture in simple and measurable terms explains his enormous popularity' (Fang, 2010: 156).

Nevertheless, Hofstede's cultural paradigm has received important critiques from methodological (McSweeney, 2002), management (Holden, 2002), and

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philosophical (Fang, 2003, 2005–2006, 2010) perspectives. The downside of Hofstede's bipolarized and static vision of culture is increasingly recognized in the age of globalization and the Internet when cultural learning takes place not just longitudinally from one's own ancestors within one's own cultural group but all-dimensionally from different nations, cultures, and peoples in an increasingly borderless and wireless workplace, marketplace, and cyberspace.

The purpose of this article is to propose a Yin Yang perspective, as an alternative to the Hofstede paradigm, to understand culture. Yin Yang is an ancient Chinese philosophy and a holistic, dynamic, and dialectical world view (Li, 2008). Yin Yang involves 'three tenets' of *duality*:

> The tenet of 'holistic duality' posits that a phenomenon or entity cannot be complete unless it has two opposite elements. . . . The tenet of 'dynamic duality' posits that opposite elements will mutually transform into each other in a process of balancing under various conditions. . . . The tenet of 'dialectical duality' posits that the holistic and dynamic tenets can stand because two contrary (relatively contradictory) yet interdependent (relatively compatible) elements exist as opposites in unity to mutually affirm (for consistency and equilibrium) and mutually negate (for completeness and punctuated shift). . . . The dialectical tenet is the most salient as the anchor for the other two tenets of duality. (Li, 2008: 416)

Yin Yang is a unique Chinese duality thinking bearing some resemblance to the dialectical thinking in the West. 'Dialectical thinking is considered to consist of sophisticated approaches toward seeming contradictions and inconsistencies' (Peng & Nisbett, 1999: 742). The Chinese have a long-standing reputation for being 'dialectical thinkers' (Peng & Nisbett, 1999: 743) whose reasoning differs from the formal logic dominating the Western philosophical tradition (e.g., Graham, 1986; Needham, 1956). Yin Yang captures the Chinese view of paradox as interdependent opposites compared with the Western view of paradox as exclusive opposites (Chen, 2002). Based on the indigenous Chinese philosophy of Yin Yang, I conceptualize culture as possessing inherently paradoxical value orientations, thereby enabling it to embrace opposite traits of any given cultural dimension. I posit that potential paradoxical values coexist in any culture and they give rise to, exist within, reinforce, and complement each other to shape the holistic, dynamic, and dialectical nature of culture.

This research has been pursued in the belief that Asian management research needs to participate in 'global scholarly discourse' and 'make major contributions . . . by drawing on traditional Asian thought in developing new theories' (Meyer, 2006: 119) and that the Chinese management research community 'may contribute to global management knowledge' (Tsui, 2009: 1). Dialectical reasoning is not unknown to Western literature. For example, in the history of Western

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philosophy dialectical thinking with paradox and change as its central concepts permeated the writings of a number of thinkers such as Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Karl Marx. Unfortunately, this dialectical movement in the West was later overshadowed somehow by logical positivism in the name of modern science (Popper, 2002). The recent advance in psychology on dialectical thinking in Chinese culture (Peng, 1997; Peng & Nisbett, 1999) and on dialectical thinking in ancient Greece (Lee, 2000) implies the potential of incorporating dialectical thinking in cross-cultural research. In this article, I acknowledge the Western contribution to dialectical thinking; however, I distinguish between Yin Yang (Chinese duality thinking) and Western dialectical thinking so as to emphasize the need to adopt the former as the philosophical foundation for this study of a new conceptualization of culture that is more embracive and holistic in nature than the current cultural models. In this article, culture is theorized in generic terms but interpreted mostly in the context of national culture because cultural dynamics at the national level have been extremely under-researched (Leung, Bhagat, Buchan, Erez, & Gibson, 2005).

Below, I first provide a literature review and then discuss the indigenous Chinese philosophy of Yin Yang and its relevance for cross-cultural theory building. Finally, I make a number of propositions based on the Yin Yang perspective and discuss their implications for culture theory and practice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature in the field of international cross-cultural management can be categorized into two broad paradigms, the static and the dynamic, with the former dominating the field to date. These two paradigms are discussed in this section, respectively.

The Static Paradigm

Hofstede is the chief representative of the static paradigm of culture which uses bipolar cultural dimensions to describe national cultures (e.g., Hofstede, 1980, 1991, 2001; House et al., 2004; Trompenaars, 1994).[1] At least six assumptions underpin the paradigm. First, the complex phenomenon of culture is captured through simplification. Second, nationality or nation state is adopted as the basic unit of analysis. Third, cultural difference is the focus. Culture and management skills are viewed as country-specific phenomena. In the words of Hofstede (2007):

> The nature of management skills is such that they are culturally specific: a management technique or philosophy that is appropriate in one national culture is not necessarily appropriate in another (413). . . . Different societies in the world have different histories and they maintain different values: there is no one universal human values system (415).

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Moreover, cultural differences, cultural clashes, and cultural collisions are seen essentially as a problem. This problematic view about cultural differences has given rise to many other concepts and texts, both in academia such as 'cultural distance' (Kogut & Singh, 1988) and in practice such as 'when cultures collide' (Lewis, R. D., 2000). The fourth assumption is that cultures can be analysed in bipolar cultural dimensions along which each national culture is given a fixed indexing. Hofstede (1991: 50; original italics) uses bipolarized terminology to categorize culture and society, for example:

> The vast majority of people in our world live in societies in which the interest of the group prevails over the interest of the individual. I will call these societies *collectivist*. . . . A minority of people in our world live in societies in which the interests of the individual prevail over the interests of the group, societies which I will call *individualist*.

According to Hofstede (2007: 417) 'Asian countries all scored . . . collectivist'. As such, in the Hofstede paradigm, culture is conceptualized, in effect, as an 'either-or' phenomenon. Fifth, Hofstede emphasizes that value is the most crucial component of culture; value forms the core of the 'onion' of culture and determines and prevails over behaviour. Last but not least, culture is conceptualized as stable over time because values are viewed as difficult to change. In the words of Hofstede:

> We assume that each person carries a certain amount of mental programming which is stable over time and leads to the same person showing more or less the same behavior in similar situations (Hofstede, 1980: 14). Cultural values differ among societies, but within a society they are remarkably stable over time (Hofstede, 2007: 413). . . . Cultures, especially national cultures, are extremely stable over time. . . . Differences between national cultures at the end of the last century were already recognizable in the years 1900, 1800, and 1700, if not earlier. There is no reason they should not remain recognizable until at least 2100. (Hofstede, 2001: 34, 36)

Since the publication of his book *Culture's Consequences* in 1980, Hofstede (see 1991, 2001; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005) has continuously added new countries (e.g., China) to his old country dimension index table for cross-national comparison despite the fact that his original IBM (International Business Machines Corporation) research data were collected a long time ago, 'around 1968 and around 1972' (Hofstede, 1980: 11).

Despite its obvious merits in enabling us to make 'the first best guess' (Osland & Bird, 2000: 67) about cultures with its myriad of implications, the static paradigm is incapable of capturing cultural dynamics in a globalizing society (Fang, 2003, 2005–2006; Hermans & Kempen, 1998; McSweeney, 2009). The paradigm

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ignores within-culture diversity as well as cultural change over time (McSweeney, 2009; Tung, 2008; Tung & Verbeke, 2010). The paradigm is essentially a pre-globalization and pre-Internet phenomenon. If we accept that '[c]ulture is learnt, not inherited. It derives from one's social environment, not from one's genes' (Hofstede, 1991: 5), we need to be humble to accept that there is reason to revisit the concept of culture because we are living in a new social environment of globalization with 'borderless and wireless cultural learning, knowledge transfer, and synchronized information sharing', an environment 'unknown to the Hofstede generation' (Fang, 2010: 166–167).

In particular, the static paradigm has completely missed a duality perspective that culture has the capacity to reconcile the opposite poles of any cultural dimensions and can thus be both 'feminine' and 'masculine', both 'individualist' and 'collectivist', and so forth, in a dynamic process of change and transformation (Fang, 2005–2006). With its unique insight into paradox and change, the Chinese indigenous Yin Yang thinking offers important inspiration for overcoming the weaknesses of the static paradigm to achieve a fuller understanding of culture and cross-cultural management.

The Dynamic Paradigm

There is a growing awareness that studying cultural dynamics, particularly at the national level, is imperative (Leung et al., 2005). A dynamic paradigm is emerging with various perspectives being put forward, such as 'negotiated culture' (Brannen & Salk, 2000), 'knowledge management' (Holden, 2002), 'multiple cultural identity' (Sackmann & Phillips, 2004), and 'paradox' (Fang, 2005–2006). The dynamic paradigm can be further categorized into two broad perspectives: the intercultural interaction (e.g., Brannen, 2004; Brannen & Salk, 2000; Shenkar, Luo, & Yeheskel, 2008) and the multiple cultures' perspectives (e.g., Arnett, 2002; Bird & Stevens, 2003; Holden, 2002; Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martinez, 2000; Leung et al., 2005; Sackmann & Phillips, 2004; Shapiro, Von Glinow, & Xiao, 2007; Soderberg & Holden, 2002). The former examines the process of new culture creation that emerges from interactions between organizational members of different national cultural backgrounds, while the latter goes beyond citizenship-based national identity to unravel multilayer cultures and multiple cultural identities in heterogeneous and pluralistic organizations (see also Boyacigiller, Kleinnberg, Phillips, & Sackmann, 2003).

In the dynamic paradigm, culture is 'seen as being made up of relations rather than as a stable system of form and substance' (Soderberg & Holden, 2002: 112). Thus, instead of measuring the cultural distance (see Kogut & Singh, 1988) between two countries, some proponents of this approach advocate studying 'cultural friction' that arises from the actual encounter between cultural systems (Shenkar et al., 2008). Cultural differences are seen essentially not as a problem but

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as an opportunity for inter-organizational and intra-organizational learning and knowledge transfer (Holden, 2002). Brannen and Salk (2000) hypothesized that as people of different cultures work together in an organizational context a new 'negotiated culture' emerges.

These studies of cultural dynamics offer fresh insights as they probe intercultural encounters in action, i.e., as cultures are negotiated, compromised, embraced, and transferred, thus paving the way for the study of cultural change at the national level, an area of research that 'has rarely been addressed' (Leung et al., 2005: 362). Osland and Bird (2000: 65) emphasized the need to 'index' context to enable 'cultural sense-making' and they introduced the notion of 'value trumping' to reflect the reality that '[i]n a specific context, certain cultural values take precedence over others'.

Hong et al. (2000: 709) have shown that 'biculturals' (see also Mok & Morris, 2010) engage in cultural frame shifting in 'response to culturally laden symbols'. Hong and Chiu (2001: 181) elaborated on this further by asserting that through a dynamic constructivist perspective, cultures should be viewed as 'dynamic open systems that spread across geographical boundaries and evolve over time'.

Leung et al. (2005) presented a model of culture that views cultural dynamics as a multilevel and multilayer process. Culture is conceptualized as comprising of five distinct but integrated layers: individual behaviour values and assumptions, group culture, organizational culture, national culture, and global culture that results from global networks and global institutions that transcend national and cultural borders.

Fang (2005–2006) crafted an 'ocean' metaphor, in contrast to the 'onion' analogy proposed by Hofstede (1991: 9; 2001: 11), to understand culture. At any given point in time, some cultural values may become more salient, i.e., rise to the surface, while other cultural values may be temporarily suppressed or lie dormant to be awakened by conditioning factors at some future time. Today, in most societies, globalization and the Internet have rekindled, activated, empowered, and legitimized an array of 'hibernating values' to rise to the surface of the 'ocean', thereby bringing about profound cultural changes in these societies.

The current research in cultural dynamics can be further broadened and deepened. Most cutting edge research on cultural dynamics in international cross-cultural management literature has been conducted at the organizational level. They have focused on 'cultural negotiation' in complex cultural organizations (Brannen & Salk, 2000: 451); the 'multiplicity of cultural groups . . . within organizational settings' (Sackmann & Phillips, 2004: 378); and 'knowledge transfer' in cross-cultural management (Holden, 2002). While generating powerful insights, these studies can be viewed as an extension of earlier research on organizational cultural dynamics (e.g., Hatch, 1993). This is why Leung et al. (2005), in their extensive review of culture research in international business, asserted that cultural change at the national level has rarely been touched.

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The differences between the static paradigm and the dynamic paradigm can be understood in terms of two different world views, i.e., mechanic science and organic science, respectively (Needham, 1956). To move the cross-cultural literature forward, I borrow insight from Chinese philosophy which has been ignored by the mainstream cross-cultural research community. Hofstede (e.g., 1991, 2001; Hofstede & Bond, 1988; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005) discussed the possible Western bias in cross-cultural research and attempted to counterbalance the bias by identifying a fifth cultural dimension. Building on my earlier critiques of Hofstede's work (Fang, 2003, 2005–2006, 2010), I would like to point out that counterbalancing the Western bias in cross-cultural research calls for knowledge of the duality thinking embedded in the Chinese philosophy of Yin Yang.

The lack of focus on duality thinking in cross-cultural management is largely due to the prevailing cognitive system of 'either/or' formal logic in the West. The duality (dialectical) thinking in the ancient Chinese philosophy of Yin Yang that every universal phenomenon is a dynamic unity consisting of paradoxes is useful for cross-cultural theory rebuilding. In organization research, general dialectical thinking and paradox are also found to be a useful perspective in theory building (Cameron & Quinn, 1999; Eisenhardt, 2000; Lewis, M. W., 2000; Li, 1998; Poole & Van de Ven, 1989).

THE YIN YANG PERSPECTIVE

Against the aforementioned backdrop, a duality (dialectical) thinking embedded in the indigenous Chinese philosophy of Yin Yang is explained to understand culture. Figure 1 illustrates the positioning of this study, using the Yin Yang symbol, in relation to the existing research along the 'cultural statics–cultural dynamics' and 'national culture–organizational culture' axes.

Yin Yang

The Chinese world view is holistic, dynamic, and dialectical (Chen, 2002; Li, 1998, 2008; Peng & Nisbett, 1999). This world view is best embodied by Yin Yang, an ancient Chinese philosophical principle, and arguably the best-known symbol in East Asia (Cooper, 1990). The Yin Yang symbol (see also Fig. 1) is denoted by a circle divided into two equal halves by a curvy line, one side of which is black (Yin) and the other white (Yang). According to the Yin Yang philosophy, all universal phenomena are shaped by the integration of two opposite cosmic energies, namely Yin and Yang. Yin represents the 'female' energy, such as the moon, night, weakness, darkness, softness, and femininity; while Yang stands for 'male' energy, such as the sun, day, strength, brightness, hardness, and masculinity. The white dot in the black area and the black dot in the white area connote coexistence and unity of the opposites to form the whole. The curvy line in the symbol signifies that there

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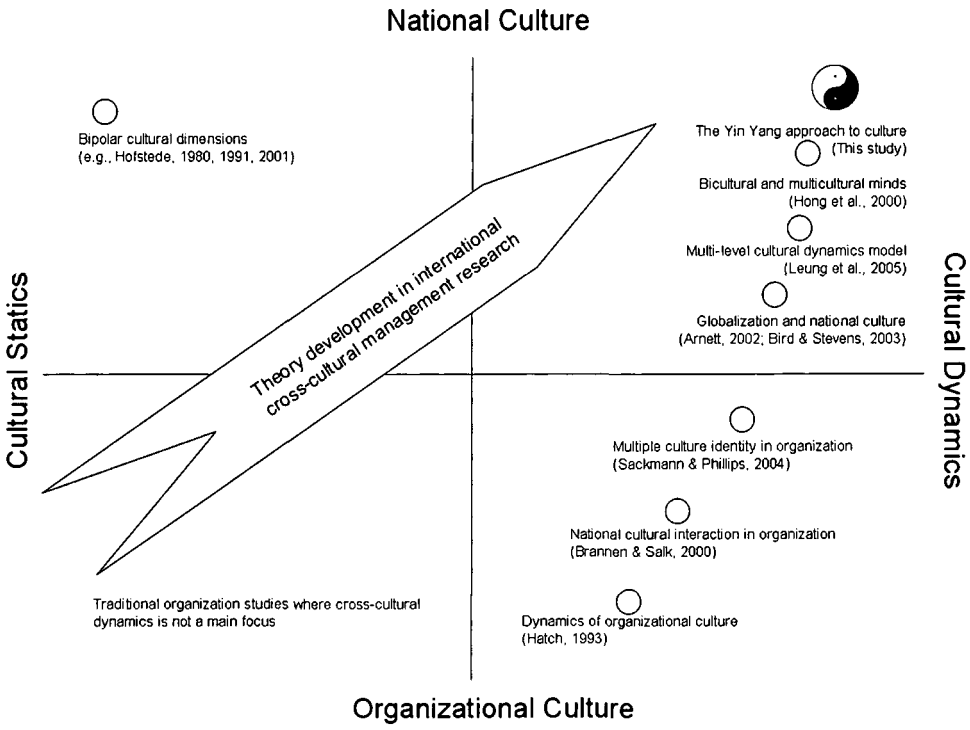
Figure 1. Mapping the terrain of cultural research



are no absolute separations between opposites. The Yin Yang principle thus embodies duality, paradox, unity in diversity, change, and harmony, offering a holistic approach to problem-solving (Chen, 2002).

There are different views on the origin of the Yin Yang philosophy. G.-M. Chen (2008) elaborated the historical and philosophical characteristics of Yin Yang in his analysis of the Chinese concept of *bian* (change) in the well-known Chinese classic *I Ching* (also known as the *Book of Changes*), whose history can be traced back over 3,000 years ago (Lee, 2000). For centuries the minds of Chinese elites have been fascinated by the question 'What is the fundamental principle of the universe'? Chen (2008: 7–9; original italics) explained that the answer lies in the discourse on the concept of *bian* (change) which relies on the dialectical interaction of Yin and Yang:

> In Chinese intellectual pursuit, the concept of change was mainly stipulated in the ancient Chinese writing, *I Ching*, or the *Book of Changes*. The concept of change not only gives *I Ching* its name but also formulates its system of thought. . . . *I* is comprised of *sun* and *moon*. The sun represents the nature of *yang*, and the moon the nature of *yin*. Together, the interaction of sun and moon comes to the emphasis of *yin* and *yang* in *I Ching*. . . . Change as a fundamental principle

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> of the universe forms ontological assumptions of the Chinese philosophy and was further developed into a set of guidelines for Chinese beliefs and behaviors. *Change discourse* naturally became the central focus in early Chinese discursive practices. . . . According to *I Ching*, the formation of change relies on the dialectical interaction of *yin* and *yang*, the two opposite but complementary forces of the universe, with *yin* representing the attributes of yieldingness and submissiveness and *yang* representing unyieldingness and dominance. . . . This discourse of endless, cyclic, and transforming movement of change continues to influence the philosophical discourse and its assumptions never cease to affect Chinese behaviors in the contemporary Chinese world.

The Yin Yang thinking 'is so powerful and pervasive that it has influenced Chinese philosophies, martial arts, medicine, science, literature, politics, daily behaviour, beliefs, thinking, and other arenas for thousands of years' and 'greatly influenced almost all ancient Chinese scholars, like Lao Tsu (571–447 B.C.), Sun Tsu (c. 550 B.C.), Confucius (557–479 B.C.), Hsun Tsu (298–238 B.C.), Hanfei Tsu (c. 285–233 B.C.), Gongsun Long (284–259 B.C.), and Mo Tsu (327–238 B.C.)' (Lee, 2000: 1066). According to Lao Zi (Lao Tsu), the founder of Daoism (Taoism) (in Lee, Han, Byron, & Fan, 2008: 88):

> The Dao produced the One.
> The One produced the Two.
> The Two produced the Three.
> The Three produced All Things.
> All Things carry Yin and hold to Yang.
> Their blended influence brings Harmony.

Here, in Chinese philosophical parlance, 'Dao' (or Tao) means the natural course; 'One' the entire universe; 'Two' the Yin and Yang; and 'Three' heaven, earth, and humans, which have produced all things (Lee et al., 2008: 88).

Recent research in cultural anthropology and archaeology reveals that Yin Yang's historical and philosophical origin may go well beyond Taoism and *I Ching* and is closely related to the ancient totemic beliefs and shamanism widely shared among various cultural groups along the Pacific Rim such as ancient Chinese, native Americans, or native Mexicans (Lee & Wang, 2003; Wang & Song, 2007). These ancient totemic beliefs illustrated by way of an octagon 'might have much to do with sun, stars and astronomy' representing 'the most powerful way to understand, interpret and predict the complicated universe (e.g., sun, moons and stars) in order to make sense of the world' (Lee & Wang, 2003: 75). As such, the sequential order of ancient Chinese Yin Yang thinking could be understood as follows: shamanic belief or totemic belief, the older version of *I Ching* with the Yin Yang idea (i.e., pre-King Wen) which could have been brought to America approximately 5,000–6,000 years ago (Wang & Song, 2007) and still kept by Native

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Mexicans (or Mayans) but not kept by modern Chinese for various reasons. Today, the Chinese only have the new version of *I Ching* which was said to be authored by King Wen approximately 3,500–4,000 years ago based on what King Wen knew at that time. The new (or post-King Wen) version of *I Ching* which also includes the Yin Yang idea is the version we read or refer to. This new version influences almost all aspects of Chinese life – philosophy, religion, medicine, arts, military theory, etc. Taoism and Confucianism, the two indigenous Chinese philosophical teachings, were developed from ancient shamanism (Lee et al., 2008). Taoism, in particular, was influenced by the new version of *I Ching* with the Yin Yang idea (Lee et al., 2008).

Ji, Nisbett, and Su (2001: 450) characterized the codependency between Yin and Yang, the two cosmic energies, as follows: 'When yin reaches its extreme, it becomes yang; when yang reaches its extreme, it becomes yin. The pure yin is hidden in yang, and the pure yang is hidden in yin'. A similar expression was given by famous Chinese philosopher Yu-Lan Fung (1948/1966: 19) more than 60 years ago: 'When the cold goes, the warmth comes, and when the warmth comes, the cold goes. . . . When the sun has reached its meridian, it declines, and when the moon has become full, it wanes'.

In short, the Yin Yang principle suggests the following philosophical underpinnings:

1. Yin and Yang coexist in everything, and everything embraces Yin and Yang.
2. Yin and Yang give rise to, complement, and reinforce each other.
3. Yin and Yang exist within each other and interplay with each other to form a dynamic and paradoxical unity.

The Yin Yang suggests that 'human beings, organizations, and cultures, like all other universal phenomena, intrinsically crave variation and harmony for their sheer existence and healthy development. We are "both/and"[3] instead of "either/or". We are both Yin and Yang, feminine and masculine, long-term and short-term, individualistic and collectivistic, . . . depending on situations, context and time' (Fang, 2003: 363). The crux of this Yin Yang duality, the unity of paradoxes may account, at least in part, for why some organizations are successful vis-à-vis those that are less effective when they reached a fine balance of differentiation and integration (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). Similarly, glocalization (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1989) and coopetition (Luo, 2005), strategies that call for the simultaneous deployment of apparently diametrically opposed principles, have been proven effective in the international management literature. Virtually all the ongoing debates, including the one over whether culture will converge or diverge and even the concept of 'cross-vergence' (Ralston, Gustafson, Cheung, & Terpstra, 1993), can be cast within the broad perspective of Yin Yang balance.

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Paradox

Paradox is defined as the existence of 'contradictory yet interrelated elements – elements that seem logical in isolation but absurd and irrational when appearing simultaneously' (Lewis, M. W., 2000: 760). Given the penchant for linear logic in the Western world, paradoxes typically carry some negative connotations in the Western mind. However, Maslow's (1954: 233; his original italics) research showed that 'polarities . . . [existed] *only in unhealthy people.* In healthy people, these dichotomies were resolved'. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, research in developmental psychology also showed that adult thought, particularly creative scientific activities, 'are dominated by playful manipulations of contradictions and by conceiving issues integratively which have been torn apart by formal operational thinking' (Riegel, 1973: 363). 'Middle-aged and older people are more likely to accept contradiction in reality and to synthesize contradiction in their thinking than are young people' (Peng & Nisbett, 1999: 742). As such, paradoxical thinking and the ability to embrace paradoxes seem to be developed with the depth of experience and wisdom.

Poole and Van de Ven (1989: 563) distinguished between two generic approaches to theory building. One is to develop internally consistent theories. The other, which has often been neglected but needs to be encouraged, is to '[l]ook for tensions or oppositions and use them to stimulate the development of more encompassing theories'. In other words, they posited that in order to make significant advances in management theory, it is necessary to stretch the imagination by embracing paradoxical thinking. This is in line with the special issue hosted by the *Academy of Management Review* in 2000 on the theme 'paradox, spirals and ambivalence' which exhorted the potential merits associated with a 'both/and' perspective over the favoured 'either/or' approach. The view of theory building by embracing tensions is also in line with the General System Theory which asserts that life is not maintenance or restoration of equilibrium but is essentially maintenance of disequilibria and that psychologically, behaviour not only tends to release tensions but also builds up tensions (von Bertalanffy, 1968).

With a few exceptions (e.g., Fang, 2003, 2005–2006, 2010; Faure & Fang, 2008), Yin Yang as a fundamental philosophical principle to understand the dynamics of culture through embracing paradoxes has rarely been examined in the cross-cultural management literature. Culture in action is full of paradoxes, diversity and change. Opposite values and behaviours can coexist within any culture and a culture's greater tendency toward one end of a bipolar dimension does not preclude the espousal or exhibition of characteristics at the opposite end (Fang, 2005–2006). Depending on the circumstances and time period under consideration, some characteristics may rise to the surface while other attributes are temporarily suppressed and/or lie dormant until they are 'primed' (Hong et al., 2000). Culture is therefore not a situation-free, context-free, or time-free construct, but rather is embedded in situation, context, and time.

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In the history of Western philosophy, dialectical thinking with paradox and change as its central concepts permeated the writings of a number of thinkers such as Heraclitus (c. 535–475 BC), Kant (1724–1804), Hegel (1770–1831), Marx (1818–1883), Engels (1820–1895), Nietzsche (1844–1900), Simmel (1858–1918), and so on. Dialectical thinking is also evident in ancient Indian thinking. 'In ancient Indian philosophy, Brahmanic thinking was concerned with the unity or harmony based on two opposites. . . . Opposition is a category of the human mind, not in itself an element of reality' (Lee, 2000: 1066). However, there is a need to distinguish between Chinese duality (dialectical) thinking and Western dialectical thinking. According to Peng and Nisbett (2000: 1067):

> Chinese dialectical thought denies the reality of true contradiction, accepts the unity of opposites, and regards the coexistence of opposites as permanent. Belief in genuine contradiction is regarded as a kind of error. The Western Marxist dialectic treats contradiction as real but defines it differently from the Western Aristotelian tradition, in terms not of the laws of formal logic but rather by the three laws of dialectical logic.

According to Li (2008: 416), 'the Western dialectical logic fails to truly transcend the "either/or" thinking because it still regards paradox as a problem to be solved'. The Yin Yang perspective, a unique frame of cognition, embraces contradiction or paradoxes as necessary and desirable in terms of the permanent interdependence, interaction, and interpenetration between Yin and Yang (Li, 1998, 2008). From the Yin Yang point of view, contradictions or paradoxes are not viewed as problems but as a world view, a methodology, and a natural way of life (Chen, 2002; Chen, M.-J., 2008; Fang, 2003; Fletcher & Fang, 2006; Li, 1998, 2008, 2011a,b). Now, I turn to Yin Yang to develop a dynamic view of culture and offer some propositions to guide future research.

A YIN YANG APPROACH TO CULTURE AND PROPOSITIONS

The Yin Yang principle adopts a different perspective about intracultural differences. Instead of viewing differences within a national culture as sheer manifestations of deviation of minority groups' value and behaviour from the mainstream's, the Yin Yang perspective of culture emphasizes the need to understand the intrinsic paradoxical nature of culture. If we use '+Vi' [i = 1, 2, 3, . . . n] and '−Vi' [i = 1, 2, 3, . . . n] to symbolize various paradoxical value orientations, the Yin Yang philosophy suggests the following:

> *Proposition 1: If there exist {'+V_1', '+V_2', '+V_3', . . . '+Vn'} in a culture, {'−V_1', '−V_2', '−V_3', . . . '−Vn'} can coexist in the same culture depending on the situation, context, and time.*

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Hofstede (2001: 9; 2) defines culture as 'the collective programming of the mind' that 'is physically determined by states of our brain cells'. The human brain is 'the most complex entity in the known universe' (Brown, 1991: 148) and the human mind is capable of encompassing contradictory cognitive properties, both physically and bio-psychologically. The human mind embraces both divergent thinking and convergent thinking, both openness and closure, both rationality and intuition, both ego-strength and anxiety. In the words of Hampden-Turner (1981: 112): 'Order and disorder, doubt and certainty can surely be entertained simultaneously in one mind'.

Many of these contradictions may be observed in metaphors and popular sayings in a given society. Metaphors, proverbs, social axioms (Leung & Bond, 2004), and popular sayings reflect how our value system works. As we live in a world full of paradoxical metaphors, proverbs, social axioms, and popular sayings, the reality is that we are guided, at least potentially, by paradoxical values.

The dual notions of Swedish '*stugor*' ('summer homes' to connote privacy and individualism) and '*folkhemmet*' ('the home of the people' to symbolize egalitarianism and collectivism) is one example showing the paradox of Swedish culture (Fang, 2005–2006). Similar paradoxical sayings that pertain to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, such as power distance, can also be found in many other societies. In France, there are two apparently contradictory sayings, 'A master can sleep where he decides' (*Celui qui est maître, se couche où il veut*), implying high power distance vis-à-vis the other popular French refrain, 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity' (*Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*) that suggests otherwise. Likewise, in Spain, the adage 'What the boss says goes' (*Donde hay patron, no manda marinero*) coexists with 'We are all equal in the eyes of the Lord' (*El sol brilla para todos*); in Sweden, the proverb 'All that glitters is not gold' (*Allt är inte guld som glimmar*) exists alongside the social axiom 'The clothes make the man' (*Kläderna gör mannen*).

From the Yin Yang point of view, the coexistence of paradoxical sayings, values, and behaviours in a culture reflects the paradoxical nature of that culture. This Yin Yang perspective of culture allows us to see that all cultures, no matter how different they may appear to be, share essentially the same *potentials* in value orientations ranging from {'+V1', '+V2', '+V3', . . . '+Vn'} to {'–V1', '–V2', '–V3', . . . '–Vn'}. Viewed in this way, national culture is not just shaped by a few values and cultural dimensions; rather, people in a given culture are mentally surrounded by many potentially competing value orientations from which they choose the ones that are most relevant to the situation at hand, i.e., primed (Hong et al., 2000; Mok & Morris, 2010). Depending on the situation, context, and time, one value eventually 'trump(s)', to borrow Osland and Bird's (2000: 70) terminology, over others to guide action in that particular context at that particular time. From the Yin Yang point of view, the focus on situationality leads to the second proposition:

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Proposition 2: To guide action in a given context at a given time, human beings choose the most relevant value(s) from the full spectrum of potential value orientations ranging from {'+V_1', '+V_2', '+V_3', . . . '+Vn'} to {'–V_1', '–V_2', '–V_3', . . . '–Vn'}.

Under Hofstede's static paradigm, culture is captured as a situation-free, context-free, and time-free phenomenon. This is consistent with the belief in and pursuit of absolute truths popular in the classical Western logical positivism. In contrast, from the Yin Yang perspective, there exists no absolute truth; truth is embedded in and associated with situation, context, and time.

Using Hofstede's (1980) masculinity–femininity dimension, Sweden ranks as the world's most feminine culture. This may be true in some contexts (e.g., a highly developed social welfare system in Sweden and the Swedish attitude toward the environment and cooperation, in general). But in the context of global competition, as gauged by the speed, scale, and spirit of Swedish multinationals, Sweden may be categorized as 'masculine'. In fact, the Swedes and their compatriots in other Scandinavian countries like to be referred to as 'Vikings', the ferocious sailor-warriors who dominated the high seas in their fabled tales of conquest of foreign lands. These expeditions could not have succeeded in the absence of elevated levels of competitiveness and aggression.

Likewise, the Finns are often described as serious-looking, reserved, and quiet in formal work settings, most probably a result of the Finnish value of *sisu* (perseverance and down to earth). But Finns are often not so in the Finnish sauna. From the Yin Yang perspective, the two Finnish values – sauna and *sisu* – need, reinforce, and complete each other. If Finland's (a nation of 5.4 million people) two million saunas were to be closed down, the Finnish venue for transforming its people from one of quietude to unreservedness and expressiveness may disappear, and with that perhaps the entire Finnish capability to remain in the forefront of technological innovation may wither. Thus, if we use '–Vi' to symbolize the feminine qualities in the Swedish culture or the quietude in the Finnish culture, the Yin Yang principle enables us to predict that '+Vi' (masculinity and unreservedness) also exists in the same Swedish and Finnish cultures, respectively.

In China, Japan, and Korea, similarly, a stark contrast exists between the formal office work environment and the informal milieu (e.g., restaurants, pubs, and karaoke bars) frequented by business executives and their subordinates after office hours. These informal settings are extremely important for developing relationships that are essential to the successful conduct of business in these cultures. In this relaxed atmosphere, rigid hierarchies dissipate as individuals sing, drink, and become less reserved in their provision of critical feedback to their superiors under the guise of drunkenness, with no resultant loss of face to their leaders. It is not uncommon to see that in such informal settings the leaders often behave in 'non-leaders' ways, allowing themselves to be the target of critiques and fun-loving activities.

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Seen from the perspective of Yin Yang, culture can be conceived as having a life of its own. Like the ebb and flow of tides and waves in the 'ocean' metaphor of culture, at any given time, some values can be promoted, while other values can be suppressed (Fang, 2005–2006). Even though the 'suppressed' value orientations may not be readily observable, nevertheless, it does not mean that they are absent or non-existent. Hong et al. (2000: 709; 716) posited that individuals can possess 'contradictory or conflicting construct . . . [although] they . . . cannot simultaneously guide cognition. . . . Specific constructs . . . only come to the fore in an individual's mind' when primed, thus giving rise to the notion of 'construct accessibility'. That is, a particular set of conditions and contexts (primes) can facilitate access to certain cultural value orientations, whereas in the absence of such primes, these same value orientations can be suppressed. This notion of construct accessibility is consistent with the Yin Yang perspective and gives rise to the third proposition:

Proposition 3: In a culture in a particular context at a particular time some values {'+V1', '+V2', '+V3', . . . '+Vn'} can be promoted, while other values {'−V1', '−V2', '−V3', . . . '−Vn'} can be suppressed, thus resulting in a unique value configuration.

Parallel to China's transformation from being one of the world's poorest economies to its fastest growing and most dynamic economy is the process of cultural change in terms of the changing Chinese value system (Faure & Fang, 2008). During Mao's Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), Mao, Maoist thinking, and the Communist rhetoric were China's only value, only idol, only symbol, only hero, and only ritual visible on the surface of Chinese culture. Concepts, values, and lifestyles such as capital, capitalists, market, private ownership, individualism, fashion, branding, knowledge, professionalism, Confucian tradition, quality college education, academic degrees, and even piano and almost anything Western were all labelled as evils (Fang, 2010). These concepts, values, and lifestyles were ' "suppressed," "beaten," and "jailed" by the then prevailing political ideology and they were not able to show their faces legitimately on the surface of the ocean of culture but had to be hibernating on the bottom of the ocean during that period' (Fang, 2010: 164). Nevertheless, after Deng Xiaoping came to power with his 'open-door' policy being implemented in Chinese politics since December 1978, these concepts, values, and lifestyles were no longer taboos; they were gradually activated, empowered, and legitimized to come up to the surface to be part of the visible concepts, values, and lifestyles driving today's Chinese society.

China's economic development influences the movement of Chinese values. In today's China, it is not uncommon that the son or daughter earns a salary 10 or even 20 times higher than what the family father gets. It is often not the family father but rather a junior member of the family who pays the bill when the family goes out wining and dining. This new economic situation tests the traditional

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Chinese value of hierarchy and the family father's authority, legitimizing the value of simplicity, creativity, and competence (Faure & Fang, 2008; Phan, Zhou, & Abrahamson, 2010).

Face is another example. Chinese people are traditionally described as face-conscious, reserved, and indirect in communication (Gao, Ting-Toomey, & Gudykunst, 1996) and assertive behaviour is frowned upon as indicated in an old Chinese saying: 'It is the bird ahead of the flight that gets shot the first'. Today, while face is still an important Chinese value, Chinese professionals have learned to stand out. Facing competition in the marketplace, one must look confident and assertive when necessary. A highly publicized advertising campaign from China Mobile showed the big image of a confident Chinese manager speaking to his mobile phone in front of the entire world with the two big Chinese characters displaying 'I can!' (*Wo neng*!) (Faure & Fang, 2008). Similarly, the 'Super Girls' (the Chinese version of 'American Idol') contest in China in 2005, which drew the largest audiences in the history of Chinese television, reveals the face of individualization of today's Chinese culture. The theme song of the contest is called *Xiang Chang Jiu Chang* (Want [to] Sing, Just Sing). Li Yuchun, a 21-year-old music student from Sichuan province, usurped the crown of the 'Super Girl 2005' by putting Chinese traditional values to test, for example, through her boyish appearance, unconventional clothing, and assertive and straightforward communication style.

The change of Chinese society's attitude toward sex also signals a value change. The word 'sexy' was completely banned in Mao's China. A 'sexy' attitude was a synonym of 'faceless' behaviour and talking about sex in public was out of the question. But today, the Chinese media and public attitude allow open discussions about sex, sexuality, and even homosexuality (Huang & Zhang, 2010). The term 'sexy' is received increasingly in a neutral and even positive light, at least in large cities (Faure & Fang, 2008). Moreover, using the term 'comrade' (*tongzhi*) to address each other was part of everyday ritual featuring Mao's China. Today, however, except for some clearly defined often politically laden contexts in which the word 'comrade' still refers to 'revolutionary comrade', the term 'comrade' means 'homosexuals' (*tongxinglian*) in Chinese Internet slang and social conversations in China.

China's phenomenal economic growth does not come without cost though – corruption, environmental pollution, income inequality, and disparities between the regions. China's President Hu Jintao has emphasized building a harmonious society as China's number one priority. A 'harmonious society is one that will put people first and make all social activities beneficial to people's subsistence, enjoyment and development' ('Harmonious society', 2007). China's new vision for building a 'harmonious society' has legitimized sustainability, environmental concern, innovation, and social justice, among other things to become relevant values in defining China's future development.

China's development supports Inglehart and Welzel's (2005) finding that cultural change comes hand in hand with economic progress (see also Leung, 2008).

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The more developed the economy, the more vigorously the value of self-expression blossoms. China's experience also lends support to Rokeach's (1973) finding that no values are time-free. In short, culture cannot be understood without the ups and downs of cultural values being captured in broader political, institutional, economic, and social contexts over time.

Thus far, the suggested propositions have focused on the dynamics of national cultures from within themselves and see them in isolation of each other at a given time. In the age of globalization and the Internet, nations and peoples of different cultures are increasingly brought together. The Yin Yang philosophy that embraces paradox and harmony offers useful insights to understanding the interactions of different cultures when they meet each other in the global arena, thus generating the following proposition:

Proposition 4: Each culture is a unique dynamic portfolio of self-selected globally available value orientations ranging from {'+V1', '+V2', '+V3', . . . '+Vi'} to {'−V1', '−V2', '−V3', . . . '−Vi'} as a consequence of the culture's all-dimensional learning over time.

How to understand the nature of culture in the age of globalization and the Internet is probably the single most important challenge to cross-cultural thinkers. It is important to point out that globalization has not removed nation-states and national cultures (Chevrier, 2009; Van de Vliert, Einarsen, Euwema, & Janssen, 2009). Globalization gives rise to a paradoxical movement of cultures through two broad constructs which interact with each other (Bird & Fang, 2009): (i) *cultural ecology* with uniquely embedded local political institutions, climate, language, traditions, and customs; and (ii) *cultural learning* of values and practices as a consequence of 'cultural clashes' and 'cultural collisions'. In general, the former contributes to containing and stabilizing cultures, making them a special, idiosyncratic, and unique identity, whereas the latter contributes to opening up cultures, making them a common, non-idiosyncratic, and globally interwoven identity. In a broad sense, the Hofstede paradigm looks at the former but overlooks the latter. According to Hofstede (2007: 415), cultural differences exist because 'different societies . . . have different histories and they maintain different values'.

In today's borderless and wireless world few societies are immune to foreign concepts, values, and lifestyles. Today, cultural learning takes place not just longitudinally from one's own ancestors within one's own cultural group but all-dimensionally from all possible potential cultural orientations, i.e., from different nations, different regions, different cultures, and different peoples in an increasingly borderless and wireless workplace, marketplace, and cyberspace. As a result, each culture has the opportunity to acquire its own unique cultural profile over time by balancing between cultural ecology and cultural learning through selecting values from among globally available value orientations. In the age of globalization, cultural differences will not disappear not because of the reasoning advocated

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by the Hofstede paradigm but because of each culture's self-selection, deliberately and/or unconsciously, of its value portfolio as a consequence of the culture's all-dimensional learning over time.

National cultural learning through interactions between cultures has never been discussed in the Hofstede paradigm, which views cultural differences, cultural clashes, cultural collisions, and cultural shocks essentially as a problem. The disastrous consequences of cultural collisions are routinely warned and strategy which 'mitigates cultural clashes' (Hofstede, 2007: 419) is called for. 'Culture shocks . . . may be so severe that assignments have to be terminated prematurely. . . . There have been cases of expatriate employees' suicides' (Hofstede, 1980: 210; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005: 325). Hofstede is also quoted as saying: 'Culture is more often a source of conflict than of synergy. Cultural differences are a nuisance at best and often a disaster' (ITIM, 2009). However, culture's rich life during and after cultural clashes and collisions has rarely been examined in Hofstede's work. Given his static vision of culture, Hofstede's (2007: 413) assertion that 'a management technique or philosophy that is appropriate in one national culture is not necessarily appropriate in another' seems to suggest that management techniques or philosophies basically cannot be transferred from one cultural environment to another. But cases from real-life management processes show that management techniques or philosophies can be learned and transferred often through cultural clashes, collisions, and negotiations (Brannen & Salk, 2000; Holden, 2002). When different cultures (like Yin and Yang) 'collide' with each other, the very collision itself, however painful it may be at the 'colliding moment', would help inspire and ignite an invaluable cultural learning process taking place on both sides (Fang, 2005–2006, 2010), most probably leading to the integration of both cultures into a new hybrid 'negotiated culture' (Brannen & Salk, 2000). When different cultures meet, the potential exists for different cultural values to penetrate into each other and coexist within each other, physically and cognitively.

DISCUSSION

Chinese culture has been changing dramatically as a result of the accelerated intercultural interactions between China and the rest of the world since the 'open-door' policy was self-initiated by China in 1978 (Tung, Worm, & Fang, 2008). The value changes in China are not created out of nothing but come as a consequence of China's *proactively invited collisions* with foreign systems, foreign values, and foreign lifestyles. Today, China is one of the world's largest recipients of foreign direct investment and nearly 600,000 foreign-invested companies, including more than 400 of Fortune 500 multinational corporations, operate on Chinese soil (Fang, Zhao, & Worm, 2008). The post-1978 cultural collisions between China and the rest of the world may, at least in part, account for China's progress and growing prosperity. Without collisions between Western culture and management philoso-

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phy on the one hand, and traditional Chinese culture and management philosophy on the other hand, modern management concepts such as marketing, branding, franchising, innovation, and professional management would still have been unknown to Chinese managers. For example, the introduction of the IKEA/ Swedish culture may have contributed to the emergence of values such as simplicity (*jianyue*) and DIY (do it yourself) in today's Chinese society.

IKEA in China

IKEA's success in China illustrates how the Yin Yang approach to understanding culture can be applied in the globalized business world.[2] In many ways, the IKEA culture and the IKEA style of furniture are contradictory to Chinese culture and traditional Chinese furniture industry practice. For centuries, Chinese households have preferred dark-coloured bulky furniture. This is very different from IKEA's lightweight light-colour furniture. In terms of sales technique, IKEA's practice of no 'advice unless actively sought' and no sales pressure, stands in stark contrast to the traditional Chinese approach of having salespeople follow the customer in the showroom to provide one-on-one service. Before IKEA opened its first store in Shanghai in 1998, the DIY concept was largely unknown, and hence foreign, to most Chinese consumers. Shortly after opening, many customers complained about having to pick up flat-packed furniture on their own and the need to assemble the pieces by themselves at home. In China, given the very low cost of assembly, the standard practice is to have others do it for you, i.e., DIO (do it by others). However, IKEA holds firm to its DIY practice. Now, 10 years after IKEA's first entry in China, Chinese consumers have learned to adapt to the IKEA way and the DIY concept has been accepted by Chinese people. Interestingly enough, DIY has become a symbol of quality of life, self-expression, and self-actualization, values that are increasingly legitimized and practiced in today's China. IKEA has also learned to make changes to accommodate the Chinese way, including the offering of an assembly service at home for a nominal fee upon request, longer store hours, the availability of bicycle parking stalls, widening the aisles to allow for the heavier flow of customers inside the store, the provision of on-site arrangements with trucking companies to provide transportation to customers who want to take home flat-packed furniture but who do not have access to autos, selling both Chinese and Swedish food in the store restaurants, offering more theme-based catalogues (e.g., the Karaoke theme) in addition to its annual standardized catalogue on the global market, and the incorporation of Chinese cultural symbols (such as animals in the Chinese zodiac system) into the design of IKEA products. As Ian Duffy, President and CEO of IKEA China remarked, 'Differences between people in any situation can create tension. This is natural and cannot be avoided. My wish is to create an environment where this tension is seen and handled in a constructive way where both parties have the opportunity to learn and to grow from the interaction'.

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Here, I am using the IKEA China anecdotes to suggest that any culture (Chinese culture, IKEA/Swedish culture, etc.) inherently embraces both Yin and Yang. Put in other words, any culture has the potential to incorporate its opposite culture through cultural interactions and cultural learning over time. When the Chinese and Swedish cultures/practices are meeting with each other, both sides are acquiring more or less a new identity by embracing the seeds of the other side. The concept of cultural distance (Kogut & Singh, 1988) that has been used extensively to characterize the fundamental divide between different cultures may be rendered inconsequential because such conceptualizations fail to capture the paradoxes, changes, and more importantly, the mutual learning that may occur within both cultures as a result of the interactions/collisions between them over time. Practically, the Yin Yang perspective of culture suggests that managers need to understand cultural differences but, at the same time, must not be shattered by cultural differences. More importantly, the beauty of cultural differences, cultural clashes, cultural collisions, and even cultural shocks need to be applauded because they can stimulate cultural learning and cultural change in a constructive and creative manner on the part of all involved parties.

Future Research

First of all, there is a need to redefine culture in globalization by integrating various 'cultural schools'. So far, most cultural studies view national culture and global culture as two separate and mutually exclusive concepts (see Arnett, 2002; Bird & Stevens, 2003; Featherstone, 1990; Held & McGrew, 2003; Leung et al., 2005 for a comprehensive review), whereas some advocate in terms of glocalization (Robertson, 1995) or 'cross-vergence' (Ralston et al., 1993). The Yin Yang perspective of culture may inspire us to come up with some new definitions of culture by integrating the strengths of the various schools of thought.

Second, the proposed Yin Yang perspective of culture can be related to the emerging research on bicultural identity (Benet-Martínez, Leu, Lee, & Morris, 2002; Brannen & Thomas, 2010; Hong et al., 2000, 2007; Mok, Cheng, & Morris, 2010; Mok & Morris, 2010). Given contextual cues, some biculturals (defined as those individuals who have 'either been ascribed by birth or who have acquired more than one cultural schema', see Brannen & Thomas, 2010: 14) shift their frame of reference from one culture to another. In-depth investigations are needed to uncover the nature and nuances of the harmonious coexistence of paradoxical values and paradoxical cultural identities within the same societies, organizations, and individuals.

Third, it would be interesting to link the Yin Yang perspective of culture with creativity research (Chiu & Kwan, 2010; Leung, Maddux, Galinsky, & Chiu, 2008; Phan et al., 2010). There seems to exist positive correlations between duality thinking and creative performance because 'creative scientific activities . . . are

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dominated by playful manipulations of contradictions and by conceiving issues integratively which have been torn apart by formal operational thinking' (Riegel, 1973: 363 in Peng & Nisbett, 1999: 742). The ability to hold paradox is crucial for creative theory building (Poole & Van de Ven, 1989).

Finally, future research may use Yin Yang to better understand China's re-rising in world politics, economy and management. Many (e.g., Naisbitt & Naisbitt, 2010) have attempted to decipher China's development. Yet, few have touched upon Yin Yang, the philosophical base of the Chinese model. The Yin Yang principle explains many Chinese concepts and practices that look weird to westerners but do not seem to disturb the Chinese mind as far as internal consistency and coherence are concerned. Such concepts and practices include *yi guo liang zhi* ('one country; two systems'), *shehuizhuyi shichang jingji* ('socialist market economy'), *wending fazhan* ('stabilizing development'), *weiji* (crisis – also translates literally as 'danger and opportunity'), and so on. The Chinese capacity to generate development, coherence and consistency out of stability, chaos and contradiction is probably the single most important cultural explanation for China's re-rising.

CONCLUSION

This article contributes to the cross-cultural theory building by proposing a Yin Yang perspective to understand cultural dynamics. Yin Yang, an indigenous Chinese philosophical principle, serves as the philosophical foundation for the theoretical propositions offered in the article. Seen from a Yin Yang perspective, culture possesses inherently paradoxical value orientations and culture changes over time. The Yin Yang perspective allows us to perceive that all cultures, no matter how different they may appear to be, share essentially the same *potentials* in value orientations comprising opposing, paradoxical, and potentially incompatible cultural values. The notion of culture which is conceptualized as a passport-based and nationality-embedded phenomenon by the Hofstede paradigm has acquired a dynamic meaning in the Yin Yang model which posits that each culture is a unique dynamic portfolio of self-selected globally available potentials in value orientations as a consequence of the culture's all-dimensional learning over time. The Yin Yang perspective of culture lends support to the concept of cultural frame shifting (Hong et al., 2000) and its central idea that 'all individuals are capable of representing multiple cultures in their minds and switching between representations of cultures' (Hong et al., 2007: 340), as well as insightful ideas discussed by, e.g., Brannen and Salk (2000), Brannen and Thomas (2010), Holden (2002), Leung et al. (2005), and Sackmann and Phillips (2004) who have studied cultural dynamics by adopting different approaches.

Chinese management research has attracted enormous interest in the past few years as evidenced in the emergence of *MOR* (*Management and Organization Review*) as a highly respected management journal since its start in 2005. Yet, most writings

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on Chinese management topics published in *MOR* and other top management and business journals have had the propensity to unquestioningly adopt 'established' Western approaches without penetrating beneath their underlying assumptions. Many still use China merely as a venue for collecting empirical data to blindly please 'established' Western models without seeing China as an important source of inspiration for theory building and theory rebuilding. That the 2011 Academy of Management Annual Meeting has chosen 'West Meets East' as its central theme marks a new milestone in knowledge creation in management research. China is home to one of the world's earliest civilizations. The Chinese management research community should indeed not only learn from the world but also inspire and enrich the world with indigenous Chinese knowledge (Meyer, 2006; Tsui, 2009). It is a historical mission for researchers interested in China to conduct indigenous research to make theoretical contributions of global relevance. I hope the dialectical perspective of culture based on the Chinese Yin Yang philosophy makes a modest contribution to this nascent field.

NOTES

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[1] In this article the terms the 'Hofstede paradigm' and the 'static paradigm' are used interchangeably. The critique given to Hofstede's (1980, 1991, 2001) theory applies equally to the closely related research streams in the bipolar or dimensional tradition of studying culture (e.g., House et al., 2004; Trompenaars, 1994).

[2] This mini IKEA case is based on the author's personal interviews with Ian Duffy, President & CEO of IKEA China and Linda Xu, PR and Communication Manager, Beijing, August 13, 2008.

[3] In this article, 'both/and' is used not to reject 'either/or' but to embrace it by recognizing both conflict and complement inherent in the duality of Yin and Yang.

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Tony Fang (tf@fek.su.se), Ph.D., is Professor of Business Administration at Stockholm University School of Business, Sweden. He received his Ph.D. in Industrial Marketing from Linköping Institute of Technology at Linköping University, Sweden, and his M.Sc in Naval Architecture and Ocean Engineering from Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China. His research and teaching interests include culture in globalization, emerging markets, global leadership, intercultural negotiation and communication, Chinese business culture and negotiating style, internationalization of Chinese firms, global sourcing, etc.

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