THE 2020 JIBS DECADE AWARD

The Selection Committee for the JIBS Decade Award is pleased to announce that the 2010 JIBS article “Unraveling the effects of cultural diversity in teams: A meta-analysis of research on multicultural groups” by Günter Stahl, Martha Maznevski, Andreas Voigt and Karsten Jonsen has been selected as the winner of the 2020 JIBS Decade Award.

The award, sponsored by Palgrave Macmillan, is designed to recognize the most influential paper published in the Journal of International Business Studies ten years prior and is presented at the annual AIB conference. In order to be considered for the JIBS Decade Award, an article must be one of the five most cited articles published in JIBS for the year being considered. This year’s Selection Committee members were JIBS Reviewing Editor Sjoerd Beugelsdijk (Chair, University of Groningen, Netherlands), the current AIB Program Chair Rebecca Piekkari (Aalto University, Finland), and immediate past AIB Program Chair Maria Tereza Fleury (Fundação Getulio Vargas, Brazil). JIBS Editor-in-Chief Alain Verbeke was an ex officio, non-voting committee member.

In recommending the award-winning article, the committee noted that, “In their article, Stahl, Maznevski, Voigt and Jonsen explore the relationship between cultural diversity and team outcomes. In a well-written and clearly articulated analysis, the winners of the Award summarize the rich literature on team diversity and highlight theoretical inconsistencies and empirical lacuna in this literature. They develop a theory on cultural diversity and its relationship with team outcomes. The article is rooted in the OB literature on team diversity and the critical role of fault-lines when it comes to understanding the dynamics in diverse teams. Building on the well-known similarity-attraction paradigm and the related social identity and social categorization theories, the authors conceptualize the various intermediate mechanisms linking cultural diversity with team performance. The keywords to describe these mechanisms are cohesion, creativity, groupthink and conflict. For each of these mechanisms they develop specific hypotheses and specify a set of contingency effects. The related moderating variables relate to the size of the team, the complexity of the task, the geographic location of the team members, and team tenure. With respect to cultural diversity, they introduce an important novelty: the distinction between surface level and deep level nature of cultural diversity. Surface level diversity refers to differences among team members in overt demographic characteristics such as nationality. Deep level cultural diversity in turn refers to differences rooted in values and attitudes.

“The resulting hypotheses are tested in a meta-analysis of the team diversity literature, encompassing 108 primary studies in the area. Taken together, these studies cover a sample of 10,532 teams. The analysis shows that diverse teams gain from increased diversity in terms of greater creativity, but these teams also suffer from process loss due to increased conflict. The authors found – quite unexpectedly – that culturally diverse teams did not suffer from less effective communication. Interestingly, they found opposite results for surface level cultural diversity and deep level cultural diversity. Finally, their analysis shows that there is a difference in results between experimental studies relying on student samples and field studies that use non-student samples. They conclude their article with a series of follow up questions.

“This article is not only one of the most cited articles published in JIBS in 2010, but also stands out for a number of other reasons.
“First, the committee appreciates the theoretical novelty of the article. The distinction between the two types of cultural diversity - surface level and deep level – is an important insight compared to the dominant approach to interpret cultural differences based on values (as in Hofstede’s tradition). Furthermore, the carefully crafted conceptualization, whereby the pros and cons of cultural diversity and possible moderating effects are described, is powerful, because it emerges from a single, credible theoretical framework (social identity theory). The authors also use the above insights to theorize on the distinction between intra-national and inter-national differences. This distinction is critical to isolate and highlight the international dimension of diverse teams.

“Second, the hypotheses are tested using a meta-analytical method. The meta-analytical approach has become increasingly popular since 2010, but at that point in time few articles in JIBS (and in other business journals) had used meta-analysis to test hypotheses. Many meta-analyses are written to take stock of the prior literature, and to describe key findings without always having clear theory-based ideas about what the authors expect to find. In this case, however, the authors develop hypotheses and do make such predictions. The article is not just a descriptive account of empirical regularities (which might be of some interest), but goes much deeper. The article was one of the first to use meta-analysis, not only to summarize what others had found before, but also to test theory.

“Third, some of the results deviate from what was hypothesized. The authors elaborate on possible reasons as to why hypothesized relationships were not supported, thereby demonstrating the importance they attach to academic rigor and to an ethical approach to research. The authors show that they are part of a scholarly community in which progress is made only when members of this community are willing to share results that were unexpected or ambiguous. The authors’ willingness to transform their questions into actionable suggestions for future research, further demonstrates their interest in genuine scholarly debate.

“To conclude, the article is rigorous, relevant, and well written. It has clear takeaways that provide the reader with insight for subsequent, in-depth reflection. Ultimately, this is what academic research should be all about: it should inspire follow-up research by corroborating what we think we know, refuting what seems to be generally accepted, and pushing the scholarly community to think harder about observed empirical regularities.

For all the above reasons, the selection committee unanimously recommends to grant the JIBS Decade Award to Günter Stahl, Martha Maznevski, Andreas Voigt and Karsten Jonsen.

A session will be held at the upcoming 2020 AIB Annual Meeting in Miami, in which the authors and invited discussants will comment on the paper. A reception honoring the Decade Award winning paper and its authors will also be held as part of the closing reception at the conference. We hope that you will join us in Miami to attend these events; the date and times will be available at https://www.aib.world/events/2020-miami/ when the conference program is finalized.

A retrospective by the authors, together with discussants’ commentaries, will be published in the first issue of the 2021 volume of the Journal of International Business Studies.