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Oh, the places you’ll go: A schema theory perspective on cross-cultural experience and entrepreneurship

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ABSTRACT

Emerging evidence suggests that there is a meaningful link between overseas experience and entrepreneurial activity. However, we find very limited inquiry at the individual-level into why cross-cultural exposure seems to enhance proclivities to engage in entrepreneurship. Drawing from Schema Theory, we argue that breadth of cross-cultural experience cultivates entrepreneurial intentions through the role of alertness—a set of schematic aptitudes for spotting commercial potential. Using a sample of lay individuals from the U.S. (N = 581) with diverse entrepreneurial and overseas experience, we find support for our model. Our findings help explain why cross-cultural experiences can be so impactful for nascent venturing. The greater the diversity of foreign cultural exposure one attains, the greater it expands scanning and search, association and connection, and evaluation and judgment schemata salient to the pursuit of new venture opportunities.

1. Introduction

Increasing attention is being given to the links between international backgrounds and engagement in entrepreneurship (Morgan et al., 2018; Vahidnia et al., 2019). International backgrounds can range from emigrating or temporarily living in a foreign country to amassing exposure over time through personal or business trips abroad (Maddux et al., 2020). Studies consistently report disproportionately high rates of new venture launches among those who have migrated than among the native population (Dheer, 2018). Economic theories such as selection and discrimination effects may partially explain types of entrepreneurial activity such as high-tech startups or entry into self-employment (Chiswick, 1999). But recent studies suggest that the experience of engaging with different cultures, in-and-of-itself, maybe a valuable stimulant for entrepreneurial mindsets more broadly (Pidduck, 2020). For instance, the more multicultural one’s social and family background, the more likely they are to develop entrepreneurial intentions (Dheer and Lenartowicz, 2018). Moreover, even short stints abroad, such as foreign educational exchanges, have been shown to impact one’s ability to recognize profitable business opportunities (Vandor and Franke, 2016). Exposure to different cultures, then, is likely an integral

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component driving the relationship between those who travel overseas and their heightened entrepreneurialism (Pidduck and Busenitz, 2018).

Empirical evidence abounds for the relationship between cross-cultural experiences and entrepreneurial activity in the aggregate—such as firm registrations or self-employment rates (Wadhwa et al., 2007). However, we lack an understanding of the processes that underpin exposure to different cultures and enhance propensities to engage in entrepreneurial pursuits (Dheer and Lenartowicz, 2020). We know from studies in management and cross-cultural psychology that different dimensions of experience abroad, such as breadth and depth, can develop skills like creativity and innovativeness that are beneficial for developing new ventures (e.g., Godart et al., 2015; Lu et al., 2017). While such skillsets are indeed valuable, we still do not know why cross-cultural experience is so conducive to cultivating intentions to become an entrepreneur for some, yet not others. Therefore, we ask the following question: how and when do cross-cultural experiences cultivate entrepreneurial intentions?

To answer this question, we draw from Schema Theory (Fiske and Taylor, 1991; Gagliò and Katz, 2001) to develop a model theorizing that cross-cultural experience stimulates entrepreneurial intentions. We posit that such experiences provide the unique and often unorthodox stimuli needed to expand schemata influential for initiating new venture opportunities. Schema Theory posits that our knowledge of the world is organized and categorized into sets of information, or “mental maps,” which help us to process a complex environment with cognitive simplification (Valliere, 2013). We position entrepreneurial alertness schemata (Tang et al., 2012) as a key intervening construct in transforming cross-cultural experience into intentions to pursue entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial alertness comprises three dimensions proven to be influential in recognizing or developing commercial opportunities: scanning and search, association and connection, and evaluation and judgment (Srivastava et al., 2020). Thus, we argue that breadth of cross-cultural experience—the diversity of foreign countries visited, in particular, provides individuals with the range and novelty of cognitive inputs required to enhance these entrepreneurial schemata. In turn, this is positively associated with intentions to pursue entrepreneurship. We test our model on a sample of prospective entrepreneurs (U.S. working adults).

2. A schema theory model

Schema Theory is a cognitive perspective grounded on the premise that people are consistently flooded with complex stimuli in their daily experiences (Vygotsky, 1978). A schema is a pattern of thought or behavior that organizes categories of information and the relationships among them. Individuals develop sets of schemas for all aspects of life, which help organize extant knowledge in a given domain and provide a cognitive framework for absorbing new thoughts or information that are related (Fiske and Taylor, 1991). For example, schemas can include social scripts (e.g., how to respond in a given situation), worldviews (e.g., making sense of events through religious beliefs), or archetypes (e.g., assumptions on how things “ought” to be). In sum, schemata are cognitive frameworks useful for understanding how people absorb and process new information.

The cognitive lens is particularly effective in entrepreneurship research for examining differences between entrepreneurs and why some, yet not others, can develop particular skillsets or make important decisions (e.g., Baron, 1998; Busenitz and Barney, 1997; Grégoire et al., 2011). More specifically, schema theory has been fruitful for understanding the pre-launch stage of the entrepreneurial process, which is predominantly concerned with recognizing or creating new venture opportunities (Gagliò and Katz, 2001). Baron (2006) suggests that individuals who are effective at this pre-launch stage of entrepreneurship can “connect the dots” and spot patterns overlooked or unconceived by others. Entrepreneurial alertness is a set of schemata whereby some individuals possess this entrepreneurial “antenna” that enables them to identify commercial potential (Valliere, 2013). A body of literature has emerged on entrepreneurial alertness and found that it is an influential capacity among both existing and prospective entrepreneurs for developing and taking action on new ideas (e.g., Levasseur et al., 2020; Sharma, 2019; Srivastava et al., 2020).

Tang et al. (2012) suggest that entrepreneurial alertness consists of three distinct yet mutually important schemas. First, the “scanning and search” schema allows entrepreneurs to be persistent and unconventional in their attempts to investigate new ideas (Busenitz, 1996). This dimension of alertness assists entrepreneurs in building a vast array of domain-relevant information. Second, the “association and connection” schema accounts for how information is applied or extended (Tang et al., 2012). This dimension of alertness centers on processing new information in creative ways to make extensions in logic, consideration for multiple options and possibilities, and to forge unique connections. Finally, the “evaluation and judgment” schema relates to McMullen and Shepherd’s (2006) notion of first and third-person opportunities (Tang et al., 2012). Specifically, this dimension of alertness is most directly related to whether the other two dimensions absorb new information in a way that presents an actual opportunity an individual wants to pursue themselves. Tang et al. (2012) emphasize that this schema does not entail the actual launching and capitalizing on an opportunity, only whether the opportunity is one a prospective entrepreneur considers personally viable. To date, much of the conceptual and empirical research on alertness has focused on its outcomes and largely overlooked its antecedents (Valliere, 2013). In line with Schema Theory, experiences that provide new and unorthodox stimuli are likely to enhance these entrepreneurial schemata by providing the potential for more novel combinations of ideas to emerge (Valliere, 2013).

2.1. Cross-cultural experience

Encountering another culture can oftentimes be a stimulating experience (Ward et al., 2005). Interaction between different cultural environments exposes people to a rich combination of new people, ideas, social dynamics, and customs (Pidduck, 2019). In management research, the traditional focus has been on how executives, managers, or employees, adjust and overcome the challenges or “liabilities” associated with foreignness (Clarke et al., 2013). An implicit assumption in many organizational studies is that exposure to a different culture, particularly those with a high psychic distance, can be overwhelming to process and potentially hinder a businessperson’s
organizational effectiveness (Kraimer et al., 2016). In turn, a consensus in expatriation research is that the longer one’s tenure in foreign assignments (i.e., the deeper their experience of a particular country), the stronger the adjustment in replicating their domestic effectiveness (Shaffer et al., 2012).

The entrepreneurial context, however, is distinct. In this context, the focus is less on managing established processes and more on developing new ideas, products, or processes (Harrison and Leitch, 2005). Though liabilities of foreignness may still exist at the new venture level, the turbulence of a foreign environment can be stimulating for the individual entrepreneur, in a constructive way (Lorenz et al., 2018). For example, Tadmor et al. (2012) found that living abroad enhanced integrative complexity, which in turn leads to higher creative performance and innovations at work. Similar studies support these findings suggesting that exposure to foreign cultures enables individuals to be more creative in recognizing business opportunities and initiating innovative products (Godart et al., 2015). More recently, entrepreneurship research suggests that short stints abroad can lead to enhanced abilities in recognizing profitable opportunities as unorthodox combinations of ideas can be linked in novel ways (Vandor and Franke, 2016).

2.2. Hypotheses

Experiencing a different culture can take numerous forms (Maddux et al., 2020). Terms such as international, foreign, or overseas experience, multicultural experience, inter-cultural experience, bicultural experience, and cross-cultural experience are frequently and interchangeably applied in organizational research (Inkson et al., 1997; Pidduck and Busenitz, 2018; Terjesen and Elam, 2009; Vandor and Franke, 2016). Contextual differences such as experiences involving work with international companies, personal travel and living abroad, and social or identity-based exposure through family and friends. We use the term cross-cultural experience as we propose it is exposure to the underlying cultural differences that one accumulates over time, which provides the novel stimuli required for entrepreneurial alertness schema to expand in meaningful ways. Although a prospective entrepreneur can feasibly experience other cultures indirectly via interactions with foreigners in a domestic setting, research suggests that physically going to foreign countries has the most distinct and lasting influence (Adam et al., 2018).

Research suggests that there are two core dimensions of cross-cultural experience that can influence individuals in distinct ways (Cao et al., 2014). Depth refers to the duration of time spent in foreign countries. Breadth generally refers to the frequency or diversity of countries visited (sometimes referred to as scope). Typically, these dimensions are the result of one’s accumulative cross-cultural experience to date. To illustrate, take two U.S. businesspeople: the first has spent five years in China on a work assignment; the second has been to over twenty African nations but only on short vacations or very short business trips. Both have amassed potentially impactful cross-cultural experiences. However, the first has developed a deep exposure with limited cultural variety; the second has developed a wide variety of cultural experiences but lacks deep exposure to any in particular.

Depth of cross-cultural experience provides individuals with extensive knowledge of a specific (or a few) cultural context different from their own (Godart et al., 2015). The initial contact with this (these) cultures may have provided a “shock-to-the-system” in which interactions with new customs, people, and ideas generated a temporary increase in cognitive stimulation (Ward et al., 2005). Studies suggest that this can increase creative cognitions up to a point (Godart et al., 2015). However, the longer the duration of time spent in a country, the less potential there is for flooding decision-making schemata with novel cultural concepts that can be juxtaposed with one’s own culture. This is because people become accustomed to the cultural differences to the extent that daily interactions become normalized (Ward et al., 2005). In sum, the benefits of cognitive stimulation through unorthodox cultural contact wear-off as entrepreneurs often require a variety of new stimuli to “connect the dots” and recombine ideas for promising opportunities to arise (Baron, 2006).

Breadth of cross-cultural experience provides contact with a much wider variety of cognitive inputs (Cao et al., 2014). This can enable individuals to realize multiple approaches to the same problem better or conceive of new and unique ways of overcoming barriers to initiating projects (Maddux et al., 2020). Experiencing many different cultures enables prospective entrepreneurs to observe how things are done in foreign countries as well as through receiving information from intercultural associations within professional networks across these contexts (Godart et al., 2015; Laursen et al., 2012). Moreover, the multiplicity of cross-cultural experiences also increases the diversity of information exchanged through these bridging ties in one’s social network and can help to foster original ideas (Burt, 2004). Though creativity and innovative performance are the most examined outcomes from the breadth of cross-cultural experience (Leung et al., 2008), and are indeed integral to the association and connection schema of entrepreneurial alertness, in particular, we posit that breadth is also a valuable input to the other dimensions. For example, there is evidence that breadth of experience can also increase comfort with risk-taking (Baer, 2010; Godart et al., 2015), and provide exposure to a variety of political skills and influence tactics essential for initiating new ventures (Tesluk and Jacobs, 1998). These effects are likely to enhance the scanning and search and the evaluation and judgment schemas as well, by expanding the proclivity for originating and pursuing opportunities (Levasseur et al., 2020). Consequently, we argue that accumulating a breadth of cross-cultural experience through visiting multiple countries provides potential contributions for entrepreneurial alertness schemata to expand.

While the relationships between those from international backgrounds and entrepreneurial activity have received significant attention (Morgan et al., 2018; Tadmor et al., 2012), understanding of the specific mechanisms behind this link has remained limited. Economic perspectives have been useful for explaining why rates of particular forms of entrepreneurship are common among migrants (Chiswick, 1999). For example, immigrant entrepreneurs pursuing high tech startups are likely to move to where the resources for scalable new ventures are most available (Wahiwa et al., 2007). At the other end of the entrepreneurship spectrum, immigrants may become self-employed due to discrimination or their qualifications are not recognized or transferrable (Bogan and Darity, 2008). Though these economic arguments in aggregate provide some explanations, they do not account for the much larger population of individuals who accrue cross-cultural experience yet are not immigrants (Shaffer et al., 2012). They cannot explain why some
individuals are more likely to launch new ventures or become self-employed, while others do not. Finally, though there is a small yet growing literature on “returnees” (e.g., Bai et al., 2017; Liu and Almor, 2016; Wang, 2020), extant research in this domain typically focuses on entrepreneurial activity in a domestic context by those from a foreign context (Liu et al., 2010). We still lack understanding of how the exposure to foreign countries in-itself fosters entrepreneurial mindsets, regardless of where businesses eventually take root.

Drawing on Schema Theory, our model proposes that entrepreneurial alertness plays a key mediating role in connecting cross-cultural experiences with intentions to pursue entrepreneurship. Together, the alertness schemas hold valuable explanatory power for understanding why some individuals seem to leverage their cultural experiences to entrepreneurial ends, whereas others with similar experiences do not. Namely, a diversity of cross-cultural experiences cultivates a proclivity for becoming an entrepreneur through enhancing alertness to opportunities. In sum, stated formally:

**Hypothesis 1.** Breadth of cross-cultural experience is positively associated with entrepreneurial alertness schemata.

**Hypothesis 2.** Entrepreneurial alertness schemata mediate the relationships between breadth of cross-cultural experience and entrepreneurial intentions.

### 3. Methods

#### 3.1. Sample and procedure

As the purpose of this study is to examine the underlying processes that explain why people with cross-cultural backgrounds want to pursue entrepreneurial activity, our population of interest is lay individuals. Our dependent variable, therefore, is intentions to pursue entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial intentions have received critique in some entrepreneurship studies due to the temporal ambiguity between developing an intention and actually launching a firm (Bird, 2015; Rideout and Gray, 2013). However, our goal is to establish an explanatory mechanism for how and why entrepreneurial pursuits emerge, making the time-lag between intentions and action both outside the scope and purpose of this study. More importantly, sampling purely active entrepreneurs would be unsuitable as sampling on the dependent variable would confound our model (Grégoire et al., 2019). Moreover, hindsight bias, or “rationalization after the fact,” is a common problem when accurately assessing the intentions of established entrepreneurs (Davidsson and Honig, 2003). To test our model, we used a sample indicative of the intended population—lay individuals from the U.S. We collected data from the U.S. working population using Amazon’s Mechanical Turk. We followed the latest best-practice procedures (e.g., Chmielewski and Kucker, 2020; Hunt and Scheetz, 2019; Kennedy et al., 2018) for recruitment and design using online-sourced survey platforms, such as (a) requesting only those from the United States, (b) those with HIT (Human Intelligence Task) ratings > 95%, (c) paying respondents $2.00, and (d) including three attention check questions. After requesting 1000 initial HITs, and only including those passing all three attention checks, our final sample size was 581. Among them, 60% were women and the average age was 34 years old; 71% of them had a bachelor’s degree or above; 33% of them had taken at least one entrepreneurship course.

#### 3.2. Measures

**Breadth of Cross-Cultural Experience.** Drawing on extant studies, we evaluated cross-cultural experience through the breadth dimension of overseas exposure (e.g., Godart et al., 2015). This involved asking respondents to complete a matrix table listing the countries they had been to, how many times they had been to each, and the longest duration of time spent in each country in a single visit. Specifically, we operationalized breadth of cross-cultural experience by using the natural log (to correct skew) of the combined scores for the number of different countries visited and the frequency of trips to each country. Further, as robustness check to our theorizing and in keeping with the wider literature on multicultural experiences more broadly we also assessed the depth dimension (e.g., Maddux et al., 2020). We operationalized depth of cross-cultural experience by using the natural log of the score for the longest duration of time a respondent spent in each country.

**Entrepreneurial Alertness Schemata.** We measured entrepreneurial alertness schemata using Tang et al. (2012) 13-item scale. This was specifically comprised of three dimensions. A sample item for the Scanning and Search Schema includes “I have frequent interactions with others to acquire new information.” A sample item for the association and connection schema includes “I see links between seemingly unrelated pieces of information.” A sample item from the evaluation and judgment schema includes “I have a gut feeling for potential opportunities.” The Cronbach’s alpha was .91.

**Entrepreneurial Intentions.** We measured entrepreneurial intentions using Lián and Chen’s (2009) 6-item scale. This scale is the most widely used in entrepreneurship research to assess an individual’s explicit intention to engage in entrepreneurship directly (e.g., Bae et al., 2014; Fitzsimmons and Douglas, 2011; Schlaegel and Koenig, 2014; Shimmar et al., 2012). Sample items include “I am ready to do anything to be an entrepreneur,” “My professional goal is to become an entrepreneur,” and “I will make every effort to start and run my own firm.” The Cronbach’s alpha was .96.

**Controls.** Entrepreneurship research has consistently found that age, gender, and educational attainment, in particular, are strong predictors of engagement in entrepreneurial activities (Bates, 1995; Delmar and Davidsson, 2000; Nikolaev et al., 2019). Thus, we control for the effects of age, gender (1 = Male, 2 = Female), and educational attainment (1 = High school, 2 = Some College, 3 = Bachelors, 4 = Masters/Professional, 5 = Doctoral).
4. Results

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and correlations of all variables in the model. Cronbach alphas are on the diagonal in parentheses.

We conducted a structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis to assess all of the hypothesized theoretical relationships in our model (Muthén and Muthén, 2012). As breadth and depth of cross-cultural experience are formative indicators, we included these as observed variables in the model. Entrepreneurial alertness schemata consist of three theoretically distinct dimensions. Therefore, we created three parcels for this reflective construct and modeled this as a latent variable. Finally, as entrepreneurial intentions is a unidimensional reflective construct and our estimated ratio of sample size to parameters is well above Bentler and Chou’s (1987) value of 5, we included each item to model this as a latent variable.

In Hypothesis 1, we proposed that there is a positive relationship between the breadth of cross-cultural experience and entrepreneurial alertness schemata. As a robustness test, we also included the depth dimension path to test our theorizing further that it is specifically breadth of cross-cultural experience that is influential. To test this hypothesis, we tested a direct effect model in which both breadth and depth of cross-cultural experience were linked to entrepreneurial alertness schemata. The results showed that breadth of cross-cultural experience was positively related to entrepreneurial alertness schemata ($B = .07, p < .05$). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is supported. For the robustness test, the depth of cross-cultural experience was not significantly related to entrepreneurial alertness schemata ($B = .03, n.s.$).

Hypothesis 2 predicted that entrepreneurial alertness schemata mediate the relationship between the breadth of cross-cultural experience and entrepreneurial intentions. The results are shown in Fig. 1 and Table 2. This model had a good fit to the data: $\chi^2(61) = 125.95, \text{CFI} = .98, \text{TLI} = .98, \text{SRMR} = .03$ and RMSEA = .05. The indirect effect of breadth of cross-cultural experience on entrepreneurial intentions via entrepreneurial alertness schemata was significant ($B = .06, p < .05, 95\% \text{CI} = [.003, .11]$). However, the robustness test involving depth was not significant ($B = .02, n.s., 95\% \text{CI} = [-.03, .07]$). Hypothesis 2 is supported.

Robustness Check. We performed several post-hoc analyses to establish the robustness of our results. First, we examined a model in which entrepreneurial alertness schemata mediate the relationships between entrepreneurial intentions and breadth and depth of cross-cultural experience. The path estimates are shown in Figure A1 in Appendix A. This alternative model had a significantly worse fit than our theoretical model: $\Delta \chi^2(\Delta df = 3) = 28.314, p < .01$. In addition, as shown in Figure A1 in Appendix A, the paths from alertness schemata to breadth and depth of cross-cultural experience were both non-significant. Thus, we conclude that the indirect effects of entrepreneurial intentions on both breadth and depth were non-significant. These results support the robustness of our findings and suggest that the directions of the relationships among our variables are consistent with our theoretical arguments. Second, we followed Anderson et al. (2019) to obtain the confidence intervals for the indirect effects we estimated (see Table 2). Third, we tested our model without control variables, and the significance of the path coefficients and the conclusion of the findings did not change. Fourth, we conducted linear regressions to investigate the link between the dimensions of entrepreneurial alertness schemata and entrepreneurial intentions. These results are shown in Table B1 in Appendix B. Our data indicate that scanning and search ($B = .40, p < .01$) and evaluation and judgment ($B = .46, p < .01$) are both positively related to entrepreneurial intentions while association and connection ($B = .40, n.s.$) is not related to entrepreneurial intentions. Finally, we tested our model after including another control variable: entrepreneurship course taken. This variable was measured by asking the participants, “have you taken (or are currently taking) any entrepreneurship educational courses?” The results indicated that the significance of the paths and the conclusion of the findings did not change. These results supported the robustness of our findings.

5. Discussion

5.1. Overview

There is an increasing focus, in scholarship, public policy, and popular press, on the constructive link between those with cross-cultural backgrounds and the ostensibly stimulating effect it has on forms of entrepreneurial activity (Clark et al., 2018; Morgan et al., 2018). Though some recent studies in entrepreneurship have started to examine this at the individual-level (e.g., Dheer and Lenarwitz, 2018; Vandor and Franke, 2016), our knowledge of the explanatory processes underpinning this has remained limited. We
want to advance this conversation by taking a cognitive, schema-based lens and providing a supplementary angle to prevailing economic-based explanations. The results from our mediation model shed some initial light on how and why the exposure people accumulate through interactions with foreign cultures cultivates entrepreneurial proclivities. Specifically, we highlight that breadth of cross-cultural experience is more influential to entrepreneurial intentions than depth as it provides the diverse sets of novel stimuli from which to “connect the dots” for alertness schemata to develop (Baron, 2006).

5.2. Theoretical implications

We advance theory on the role of cross-cultural experiences and intercultural dynamics at the individual-level in entrepreneurship research (e.g., Bolzani and Foo, 2017; Clark et al., 2018; Jones and Casulli, 2014; Morgan et al., 2018; Williams and Gregoire, 2015). We specifically shed light on the influential role of cross-cultural experience in itself and the formation of intentions to engage in entrepreneurship. A cognitive lens enables us to delineate why some individuals tend to leverage their overseas experiences to entrepreneurial ends, yet others with similar overseas experiences do not. Our results suggest that it is the expansion of entrepreneurial alertness schemata that is influential for utilizing the stimulating and novel exposure to other cultures in ways that structure knowledge to recognize opportunities that one deems worthy of pursuing. While we find significant paths for only the scanning and search and evaluation and judgment dimensions, we are confident that entrepreneurial alertness is meaningfully influential in connecting novel experiences with proclivities to engage in entrepreneurship. Indeed, recent studies have drawn on this same conceptualization to develop alternate linguistic-based measures of alertness dimensions and found evidence for its link to related outcomes (Srivastava et al., 2020). Further, as alertness is cognitive construct grounded in processing unique combinations of stimuli for novel entrepreneurial ideation, we provide a foundation for research exploring the mediating role of conceptually similar constructs such as paradoxical mindset (Liu et al., 2019; Prashantham et al., 2018; Waldman et al., 2019) and Janusian thinking (Ko and Butler, 2006).

We also contribute to the growing literature on multicultural experience in broader management (e.g., Maddux et al., 2020; Shaffer et al., 2012) by advancing the understanding of the mechanisms driving explicitly entrepreneurial outcomes. While studies have probed connected variables such as creativity and professional innovativeness (Maddux et al., 2010; Tadmor et al., 2012), we find evidence for the antecedents to entrepreneurial intention and extend this literature by answering why cultural exposure can stimulate specifically
entrepreneurial pursuits. Moreover, while depth and breadth are the two most widely employed dimensions for assessing international experiences (Maddux et al., 2020), there is growing research examining less-direct forms of multicultural exposure such as through socializing with culturally distinct groups within one’s home country and through virtual teams (Erez et al., 2013). With recent travel restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the rise of “born office-less” ventures initiating entirely virtual global teams (Economist, 2020), future research can unpack whether non-direct forms of cross-cultural exposure are as influential in entrepreneurship contexts, as are direct forms such as living, working, or traveling abroad.

5.3. Constraints on generalizability

We acknowledge some constraints to generalizability (Simons et al., 2017). First, we assess the role of cross-cultural experiences on lay individuals from the U.S. While the tenets of schema theory and the development of entrepreneurial alertness schemata are generally applicable cognitive dynamics (Fiske and Taylor, 1991) it is plausible that culture-specific home-contexts may strengthen or weaken paths in our model. For example, the U.S. is a culturally loose nation (Gelfand et al., 2011), which may provide a low threshold for those traveling overseas to absorb new inputs into entrepreneurial alertness schemas from foreign interactions. Culturally tight nations socialize and inculcate people into stricter norms and discourage deviation from them (Gelfand et al., 2011). Thus, replicating our model on samples in culturally tight nations (such as Pakistan or Singapore) may require deeper, rather than broad/diverse cross-cultural experiences in order to absorb the contextual richness needed to meaningfully integrate new cultural ideas into alertness schemas (Liu and Almor, 2016). Finally, despite following best practices for alleviating endogeneity concerns in cross-sectional samples (e.g., Anderson et al., 2019), our model alone cannot establish causation. Future research can conduct longitudinal studies and examine the distal outcomes of entrepreneurial intention, such as new venture launches or subsequent venture performance.

Appendix A

[Diagram of theoretical model]

Fig. A1. Robustness check of theoretical model. Note. Unstandardized path coefficients are reported. Solid lines indicate significant paths, and dashed lines indicate non-significant paths. For the ease of readability, we omitted the path estimates from control variables in the model. Standard errors are presented in parentheses. * p < .05, ** p < .01.

Appendix B

| Variables                  | Entrepreneurial intentions |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
|                            | Model 1   | Model 2   | Model 3   |
|                            | B (SE)    | B (SE)    | B (SE)    |
| Intercept                  | 4.60**(.39)| 4.34**(.40)| .37(.53)  |
| Controls                  |            |            |            |
| Age                       | .01(.01)   | .01(.01)   | .01(.01)   |

(continued on next page)
Table B1 (continued)

| Variables                        | Model 1          | Model 2          | Model 3          |
|----------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
|                                  | B (SE)           | B (SE)           | B (SE)           |
| Gender                           | -.27(.16)        | -.24(.16)        | -.14(.14)        |
| Educational attainment           | .01(.07)         | -.03(.07)        | -.02(.06)        |
| Independent variables            |                  |                  |                  |
| Breadth of cross-cultural experience | .18**(.06)       | .13*(.06)        |                  |
| Depth of cross-cultural experience | -.02(.06)        | -.03(.05)        |                  |
| Mediators                        |                  |                  |                  |
| Alertness 1: Scanning and search |                  |                  |                  |
| Alertness 2: Association and connection |                  |                  |                  |
| Alertness 3: Evaluation and judgment |                  |                  |                  |
| $R^2$                            | .01              | .03              | .23              |
| $\Delta R^2$                     | .01              | .02*             | .20**            |

Note. SE = standardized errors. *p < .05, **p < .01.

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