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IM. STANISŁAWA STASZICA W KRAKOWIE

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Kraków, 8 May 2026

Review of the doctoral dissertation by Xiaochen Bu

entitled “*Building positive relationships at Sino-Polish workplace in Poland*”, written in 2026 at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń under the supervision of Prof. Aldona Glińska-Noweś and Prof. Pauliina Ulkuniemi.

Formal Basis

The basis for preparing this review is the letter dated 18 March 2026 from Prof. Agata Sudolska, informing me of my appointment by the Council of the Discipline of Management and Quality Sciences as a reviewer of the doctoral dissertation by Xiaochen Bu.

The substantive assessment has been prepared in accordance with the requirements specified in Article 187 of the Act of 20 July 2018 – Law on Higher Education and Science, as amended.

The subject of the evaluation is a doctoral dissertation prepared in English, consisting of 226 pages, including the bibliography and appendices. The dissertation contains all formal elements required for doctoral dissertations and has been presented in a form enabling its substantive evaluation.

The review is structured around six main areas: the assessment of the choice of topic and research objectives, the evaluation of the applied research methods, the formal assessment of the dissertation, the substantive evaluation of the work, the final conclusions, and the justification for awarding distinction to the dissertation.

1. Assessment of the choice of topic and research objectives

The doctoral dissertation submitted for review addresses a research problem of high topicality, scientific relevance, and practical significance. The study focuses on the process of



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developing positive interpersonal relationships in an intercultural workplace environment, with particular emphasis on relationships between Chinese employees working in Poland (*self-initiated expatriates*) and Polish employees. Already at the stage of topic conceptualisation, it should be stated that the Author selected a research problem that fits within some of the most dynamic and rapidly developing areas of contemporary management and quality sciences.

The importance of the undertaken topic results from several key premises. First, progressing globalization and the intensification of migration flows mean that organizations increasingly operate in conditions of high cultural diversity. Second, the development of the Belt and Road Initiative and the growing presence of Chinese investors and employees in Central and Eastern Europe, including Poland, have created new organizational configurations that require deeper scientific reflection. Third, contemporary organizations increasingly recognize the importance of interpersonal relationship quality as a factor influencing team effectiveness, employee satisfaction, and organizational learning capacity.

Against this background, particular emphasis should be placed on the accurate identification of the research gap. The Author demonstrates that previous studies on expatriation and intercultural teams have focused primarily on Western Europe and North America, while the Central and Eastern European context has remained relatively underexplored. Moreover, the existing literature is dominated by analyses focused on individual adaptation, whereas the relational dimension of workplace functioning, especially within Sino-Polish configurations, remains insufficiently recognised. In this respect, the dissertation responds to a genuine and clearly defined research gap.

The research objectives have been formulated in a multidimensional and ambitious manner. The Author does not limit herself to describing the phenomenon, but attempts to explain the mechanisms underlying the development of high-quality interpersonal relationships. In particular, the study examines the influence of such constructs as belonging, workplace attachment, differentiated embedding, and the concept of *Guanxi* on the quality of relationships between employees.

Particular recognition should be given to the high level of conceptualisation of the research problem. The Author demonstrates the ability to synthetically combine different theoretical perspectives and creatively adapt them to the analysed context. The research questions are formulated precisely, remain logically connected with the objectives of the dissertation, and enable empirical verification. Importantly, consistency is maintained

between the research problem, research objectives, research questions, and the overall structure of the dissertation.

The major strengths of this part of the dissertation include:

- clear positioning of the topic within current research trends,
- accurate identification of the research gap,
- a high level of theoretical integration,
- consistency in the formulation of research objectives and questions,
- the ability to operationalise complex theoretical constructs.

Any critical remarks are of secondary importance and concern mainly the broad scope of the study, which at times may appear highly ambitious for a doctoral dissertation. However, this does not affect the overall very positive assessment of the dissertation.

2. Assessment of the applied research methods

The applied research methodology constitutes one of the strongest aspects of the dissertation. The Author adopted a mixed-methods approach integrating quantitative and qualitative analysis within a convergent design. This choice should be regarded as fully justified both in relation to the nature of the investigated phenomenon and the research objectives of the dissertation.

The quantitative part of the study was based on a survey conducted among 122 Chinese employees working in Poland. The Author applied advanced statistical techniques, including reliability analysis, exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, correlation analysis, and regression models. Particular appreciation should be given to the careful validation of the research instruments and the transparent presentation of the results.

It is worth emphasizing that the use of both EFA and CFA demonstrates a high level of methodological competence and an awareness of the need to confirm the structure of the analysed constructs. The interpretation of the findings was conducted correctly and in accordance with the principles of statistical analysis.

The qualitative part was based on semi-structured interviews conducted with both Chinese expatriates and Polish employees. This approach made it possible to capture the bidirectional nature of interpersonal relationships, which constitutes an important added value of the dissertation. The thematic analysis was conducted systematically, and the proposed analytical categories remain consistent with the theoretical framework of the study.

Particular recognition should also be given to the properly designed and consistently implemented mixed-methods strategy based on the integration of quantitative and qualitative data. The doctoral candidate did not limit herself to the parallel use of two research methods,

but attempted their actual interpretative integration. In this context, the use of so-called *joint displays* should be considered methodologically valuable. This solution enabled the comparison of statistical findings with respondents' narratives, allowing for the mutual complementing, explaining, and deepening of the interpretation of the obtained results. The application of joint displays demonstrates good familiarity with contemporary mixed-methods standards and a high level of methodological awareness on the part of the doctoral candidate.

Another interesting and methodologically valuable element of the research design is the incorporation of elements of a dyadic perspective in the qualitative part of the study. The doctoral candidate conducted interviews with respondent pairs consisting of Chinese self-initiated expatriates and Polish co-workers functioning within the same organizational environment. This solution made it possible to capture the relational and co-constructed character of intercultural experiences, as well as to analyse mutual interpretations, expectations, and relationship-building mechanisms within the Sino-Polish workplace environment. The use of this perspective should be assessed positively, as it allows the study to move beyond the one-sided research perspective typical of many studies on expatriation and intercultural relations. At the same time, it should be noted that the dyadic approach was applied mainly as a strategy for deepening the qualitative analysis of interpersonal relationships rather than as a full statistical model of interdependence between relationship partners. Nevertheless, this solution clearly increases the cognitive value of the research and strengthens its interpretative and relational methodological dimension.

The major strengths of the methodology include:

- an appropriate selection of the research approach,
- a high level of sophistication of statistical analyses,
- proper validation of research instruments,
- the ability to conduct qualitative research,
- effective triangulation of data.

The methodological limitations concern mainly the sample size and its representativeness. However, it should be emphasized that the Author demonstrates awareness of these limitations and undertakes compensatory measures, such as methodological triangulation.

3. Formal Assessment

The dissertation has a clear and logical structure consistent with the standards expected of doctoral theses. It includes an introduction, a theoretical part, a methodological part, an empirical section, a discussion of findings, final conclusions, a bibliography, and appendices. The structure of the dissertation is coherent, and the narrative guides the reader

from the justification of the research problem, through the reconstruction of the theoretical foundations, to the presentation and interpretation of the author's own research findings.

The structure of the dissertation supports the process of scientific argumentation. The individual chapters are logically interconnected, and their sequence corresponds to the adopted research logic.

The bibliography is extensive, up to date, and carefully selected. It includes both classical and recent publications related to expatriation, intercultural management, acculturation, interpersonal relationships in organizations, and the concept of *Guanxi*. The range and quality of the cited literature demonstrate the Author's very good familiarity with the international body of scientific research.

The language of the dissertation is correct, communicative, and consistent with academic standards. Overall, the dissertation meets the formal requirements expected of doctoral theses.

4. Substantive evaluation

The substantive evaluation of the submitted doctoral dissertation is unequivocally very high. The dissertation constitutes a mature and multidimensional scholarly work that makes a significant contribution to the development of management and quality sciences, particularly in the fields of intercultural management and research on interpersonal relationships within organizations. The Author addresses a complex, multidimensional, and interdisciplinary research problem, the examination of which required both a solid theoretical foundation and advanced methodological competencies.

Particular recognition should be given to the high level of theoretical integration achieved in the dissertation. The Author does not limit herself to presenting a literature review, but rather develops a creative synthesis of various research streams, including acculturation theory, social exchange theory, the concept of high-quality connections, the differentiated embedding framework, and the culturally specific Chinese concept of *Guanxi*. Such a broad theoretical spectrum could potentially lead to analytical fragmentation; however, in this dissertation it has been successfully organized and incorporated into a coherent conceptual model. The Author demonstrates the ability not only to select relevant theories, but also to adapt and reinterpret them within the context of the studied phenomenon.

A particularly valuable achievement of the dissertation is the development and application of the concept of differentiated embedding in the context of intercultural workplaces. The Author convincingly demonstrates that the adaptation process of employees is neither homogeneous nor linear, but rather dynamic, multidimensional, and strongly

dependent on social relationships. In this respect, the proposed approach significantly extends previous studies on expatriate adaptation by shifting the analytical focus from the individual level toward relational and processual dimensions.

Another important theoretical contribution lies in the analysis of the role of Guanxi within the Sino-Polish workplace environment. The Author undertakes the challenging task of transferring this analytical category from the traditional Chinese cultural context into an intercultural organizational setting. This constitutes an innovative approach requiring considerable cultural sensitivity. The findings indicate that Guanxi not only retains its significance in relationships among Chinese employees, but may also play an important role in shaping relations with local employees, although its functioning undergoes certain modifications. These conclusions offer valuable insights for future research on the transfer of cultural patterns within international work environments.

At the empirical level, the dissertation provides new and valuable data concerning the functioning of Chinese employees in Poland, which in itself represents an important contribution to the existing body of literature. Previous studies in this area have been relatively limited, whereas the findings presented in the dissertation allow for a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of adaptation and interpersonal relationship building within the Sino-Polish context. Particularly important is the inclusion of both perspectives involved in the relationship process, namely those of Chinese and Polish employees, which enables a more balanced and comprehensive analysis.

Attention should also be paid to the high quality of data analysis and interpretation. The Author does not restrict herself to presenting statistical relationships or qualitative descriptions, but undertakes an in-depth interpretation of the findings within the adopted theoretical framework. The interpretations are coherent, logically developed, and convincingly justified, while the conclusions are formulated in a consistent and methodologically rigorous manner. Especially valuable is the integration of quantitative and qualitative findings, which enables a more comprehensive understanding of the studied phenomenon.

An additional strength of the dissertation is its practical applicability. The conclusions derived from the study may prove highly useful for management practice, particularly in organizations operating in international environments. The Author highlights the importance of such factors as trust, intercultural communication, understanding of cultural differences, and the development of a sense of belonging for effective cooperation. These

recommendations are practical in nature and may provide a useful basis for designing human resource management practices.

Another important advantage of the dissertation is its internal coherence. The individual parts of the dissertation, beginning with the literature review, through the conceptualization of the research model, and ending with the analysis of findings, form a logically structured whole. The Author consistently pursues the adopted research objectives, while the structure of the dissertation effectively supports the process of scientific argumentation.

This does not mean, however, that the dissertation is entirely free from limitations. Certain weaknesses include the limited possibility of generalizing the findings, resulting from the nature of the research sample and the concentration on one national group. Furthermore, a broader comparative reference to other cultural contexts could have enriched the analysis even further. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that these limitations are largely inherent in exploratory research and do not undermine the overall scholarly value of the dissertation.

In conclusion, the dissertation stands out due to the originality of its research perspective, the high level of theoretical integration, the rigor of the empirical research, and the depth of interpretation of the findings. It constitutes a significant contribution to the development of research on intercultural management and interpersonal relationships within organizations, while also demonstrating a clear practical and applicative potential.

Final Conclusions

The doctoral dissertation by Ms. Xiaochen Bu is an original and valuable work in theoretical, empirical, and practical terms. The author addressed a highly topical and significant research problem, relevant to the development of management and quality sciences. The dissertation contributes new insights to the study of cross-cultural management, expatriate adjustment, workplace relationships, and Sino-Polish organisational environments, and its research concept was realised consistently and coherently.

Particular merits of the dissertation include:

- accurate choice of topic and its clear placement within current research trends,
- precise formulation of the main objective and detailed research questions,
- a high level of theoretical integration grounded in extensive and carefully selected international literature,
- an advanced methodological approach based on a convergent mixed-methods design,

- rigorous quantitative and qualitative analyses, including the use of EFA, CFA, regression analysis, and thematic analysis,
- effective integration of empirical findings through joint displays,
- comprehensive interpretation of results capturing both relational mechanisms and cultural specificity within Sino-Polish workplaces,
- formulation of conclusions with both cognitive and practical value for management practice in multicultural organisations.

The dissertation meets the requirements set for doctoral theses, as defined in Article 187 of the Act of 20 July 2018 – Law on Higher Education and Science, as amended, according to which a doctoral dissertation should constitute an original solution to a scientific problem and demonstrate the candidate's general theoretical knowledge in a given discipline, as well as the ability to conduct independent scientific research.

On the basis of the above considerations, I recommend that the doctoral dissertation by Ms. Xiaochen Bu be admitted to public defence.

Wnioski końcowe

Rozprawa doktorska mgr Xiaochen Bu stanowi oryginalne i wartościowe opracowanie zarówno pod względem teoretycznym, empirycznym, jak i praktycznym. Autorka podjęła aktualny i istotny problem badawczy, ważny z perspektywy rozwoju nauk o zarządzaniu i jakości. Dysertacja wnosi nowe ustalenia do badań nad zarządzaniem międzykulturowym, adaptacją expatriantów, relacjami w miejscu pracy oraz funkcjonowaniem środowisk organizacyjnych chińsko-polskich, a przyjęta koncepcja badawcza została zrealizowana w sposób konsekwentny i spójny.

Do szczególnych walorów rozprawy należy zaliczyć:

- trafny wybór tematu oraz jego wyraźne osadzenie w aktualnych trendach badawczych,
- precyzyjne sformułowanie celu głównego oraz szczegółowych pytań badawczych,
- wysoki poziom integracji teoretycznej oparty na szerokiej i starannie dobranej literaturze międzynarodowej,
- zaawansowane podejście metodologiczne wykorzystujące konwergencyjny model badań mieszanych,
- rzetelnie przeprowadzone analizy ilościowe i jakościowe, w tym zastosowanie EFA, CFA, analizy regresji oraz analizy tematycznej,
- skuteczną integrację wyników empirycznych z wykorzystaniem *joint displays*,

- pogłębioną interpretację wyników uwzględniającą zarówno mechanizmy relacyjne, jak i specyfikę kulturową środowisk pracy chińsko-polskich,
- sformułowanie wniosków posiadających zarówno wartość poznawczą, jak i praktyczną dla zarządzania organizacjami wielokulturowymi.

Rozprawa spełnia wymagania stawiane rozprawom doktorskim określone w art. 187 ustawy z dnia 20 lipca 2018 r. – Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym i nauce, z późniejszymi zmianami, zgodnie z którym rozprawa doktorska powinna stanowić oryginalne rozwiązanie problemu naukowego oraz wykazywać ogólną wiedzę teoretyczną kandydata w danej dyscyplinie, a także umiejętność samodzielnego prowadzenia pracy naukowej.

Na podstawie powyższych rozważań wnioskuję o dopuszczenie rozprawy doktorskiej mgr Xiaochen Bu do publicznej obrony.

6. Justification for Distinction of the Doctoral Dissertation

The doctoral dissertation by Ms. Xiaochen Bu stands out for its very high substantive quality, methodological maturity, and originality of the research problem undertaken. In my opinion, this dissertation clearly exceeds the standard expectations for doctoral theses and therefore deserves distinction.

Particular recognition should be given to the relevant and innovative choice of topic. The author addresses the issue of interpersonal relationships in the Sino-Polish workplace environment, which, despite its growing practical importance, remains insufficiently explored in the existing literature. At the same time, she proposes an interesting relational perspective, showing that functioning in an organisation is not merely an individual adaptation process, but a process co-constructed by the participants of workplace relationships.

The dissertation is also distinguished by a high level of theoretical integration. The author successfully combines different concepts and research traditions into a coherent analytical framework. Especially valuable is the application of the concepts of *Guanxi* and *differentiated embedding* to the analysis of an intercultural organisational environment.

Another important strength of the dissertation is its advanced methodological approach. The author applied a mature mixed-methods design, effectively combining quantitative and qualitative research. Particular appreciation should be given to the correctness of the statistical analyses, the depth of interpretation, and the integration of findings through the use of joint displays.

The dissertation also demonstrates clear practical relevance. The findings may be useful for organisations operating in international environments, particularly in the areas of intercultural team management and expatriate adaptation processes.

Taking into account the originality of the dissertation, its high scientific quality, methodological maturity, and significant contribution to the development of management and quality sciences, I believe that the dissertation by Ms. Xiaochen Bu fully deserves distinction.


Therefore, I formally recommend that the doctoral dissertation by Ms. Xiaochen Bu be awarded distinction.

Rozprawa doktorska mgr Xiaochen Bu wyróżnia się bardzo wysokim poziomem merytorycznym, dojrzałością metodologiczną oraz oryginalnością podjętego problemu badawczego. W mojej ocenie rozprawa wyraźnie przekracza standardowe oczekiwania stawiane pracom doktorskim i dlatego zasługuje na wyróżnienie. Na szczególne uznanie zasługuje trafny i nowatorski wybór tematu badawczego. Autorka podejmuje problematykę relacji interpersonalnych w środowisku pracy sinopolskiego, która mimo rosnącego znaczenia praktycznego pozostaje nadal niewystarczająco rozpoznana w literaturze przedmiotu. Jednocześnie proponuje interesującą perspektywę relacyjną, ukazującą funkcjonowanie w organizacji nie jako wyłącznie indywidualny proces adaptacji, lecz jako proces współkonstruowany przez uczestników relacji organizacyjnych.

Rozprawa wyróżnia się również wysokim poziomem integracji teoretycznej. Autorka z powodzeniem łączy różne koncepcje i nurty badawcze w spójne ramy analityczne. Szczególnie wartościowe jest zastosowanie koncepcji Guanxi oraz koncepcji zróżnicowanego zakorzenienia do analizy międzykulturowego środowiska organizacyjnego.

Kolejną istotną zaletą rozprawy jest zaawansowane podejście metodologiczne. Autorka zastosowała dojrzały projekt badań mieszanych skutecznie integrując badania ilościowe i jakościowe. Na szczególne uznanie zasługuje poprawność przeprowadzonych analiz statystycznych, głębokość interpretacji wyników oraz integracja rezultatów.

Rozprawa wykazuje także wyraźny potencjał aplikacyjny. Uzyskane wyniki mogą znaleźć zastosowanie w organizacjach funkcjonujących w środowisku międzynarodowym, szczególnie w obszarze zarządzania zespołami międzykulturowymi oraz procesami adaptacji expatriantów. Biorąc pod uwagę oryginalność rozprawy, jej wysoką jakość naukową, dojrzałość metodologiczną oraz istotny wkład w rozwój nauk o zarządzaniu i jakości, uważam, że rozprawa mgr Xiaochen Bu w pełni zasługuje na wyróżnienie. W związku z powyższym formalnie wnoszę o wyróżnienie rozprawy doktorskiej mgr Xiaochen Bu.

Kierownik Katedry
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