

Book review

International Journal of
Cross Cultural Management
11(2) 269–272
© The Author(s) 2011
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav
ccm.sagepub.com



Michael Harris Bond (ed.)

Oxford Handbook of Chinese Psychology. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

ISBN: £65/\$125 HB, ISBN 978 0 19 9541850.

Reviewed by: Yih-teen Lee, *IESE Business School, Barcelona*

DOI: 10.1177/1470595811399199

People's attention has been increasingly attracted by the Chinese world as it has constantly gained political and economic weight in recent decades, starting from the miracles of the four dragons (Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and South Korea) and continuing with the amazing rise of China. As a result, a clear need emerges for cross-cultural management scholars to understand better Chinese people so as to facilitate possible collaborations with them in various business and managerial settings. Bond's handbook provides a timely response to such need.

Having lived and worked in Hong Kong for more than 35 years, Michael H. Bond has become one of the key contributors to the development of the field of Chinese psychology. It is thus natural and legitimate for him to edit this handbook on Chinese psychology at the summit of his career. The *Oxford Handbook of Chinese Psychology* is comprised of 41 chapters (plus a chapter of introduction by Bond), covering a wide range of topics including the socialization of children, mathematics achievement, emotion, bilingualism, Chinese styles of thinking, Chinese identity, personal relationships, leadership processes, and psychopathology, written by leading scholars and experts of the fields. Specifically, the book includes chapters such as 'the continuing prospects for Chinese psychology' (Blowers), 'what is Chinese about Chinese psychology and who are the Chinese in Chinese psychology?' (Hong, Yang, and Chiu), 'the cultured brain: Interplay of genes, brain, and culture' (Ali and Penney), 'social and emotional development in Chinese children' (Chen), 'parenting and child socialization in contemporary China' (Wang and Chang), 'language and the brain: computational and neuroanatomical perspectives from Chinese' (Li and Shu), 'language and literacy development in Chinese children' (McBride-Chang, Lin, Fong, and Shu), 'understanding reading disabilities in Chinese: from basic research to intervention' (Ho), 'Chinese bilingualism' (Cheung, Yap, and Yip), 'Chinese children learning mathematics: from home to school' (Ni, Chiu, and Cheng), 'the thinking styles of Chinese people' (Ji, Lee, and Guo), 'approaches to learning and teaching by the Chinese' (Kember and Watkins), 'Chinese students' motivation and achievement' (Hau and Ho), 'How unique is Chinese emotion' (Yik), 'beliefs in Chinese societies' (Leung), 'the multiple frames of "Chinese" values: from tradition to modernity and beyond' (Kulich and Zhang), 'what do we know about the Chinese self? Illustrations with self-esteem, self-efficacy, and self-enhancement' (Kwan and McGee), 'from indigenous to cross-cultural personality: the case of the Chinese Personality Assessment Inventory' (Cheung, Cheung, and Zhang), 'psychology and aging in the Land of the Panda' (Fung and Cheng), 'Chinese well-being' (Lu), 'the spirituality of the Chinese people' (Shek), 'psychiatric disorders in the Chinese'

(Stewart, Lee, and Tao), 'clinical neuropsychology in China' (Chan, Leung, and Cheung), 'the tao (way) of Chinese coping' (Cheng, Lo, and Chio), 'illness behaviors among the Chinese' (Mak and Chen), 'community psychology in Chinese societies' (Chan), 'psychotherapy with the Chinese' (Liu and Leung), 'face and morality in Confucian society' (Hwang and Han), 'Chinese cooperation and competition' (Leung and Au), 'interpersonal relationships in rapidly changing Chinese societies' (Chan, Ng, and Hui), 'a gender perspective on Chinese social relationships and behavior' (Tang, Chua, and O), 'Chinese cultural psychology and contemporary communication' (Shi and Feng), 'Chinese political psychology' (Ng), 'Chinese intergroup relations and social identity' (Liu, Li, and Yue), 'developments in Chinese leadership' (Chen and Farh), 'Chinese consumer behavior' (by Wyer, Jr. and Hong), 'Chinese sports psychology' (Si, Lee, and Lonsdale), 'Chinese acculturation and adaptation' (Ward and Lin), 'Inter-cultural interactions' (Thomas and Liao), and 'on the distinctiveness of Chinese psychology: Or, are we all Chinese?' (Smith).

Each chapter offers a thorough review of the topics and offers insightful reflections and suggestions for the field to move forward. Without section separation, the chapters generally move from basic psychological mechanisms (e.g. neuro-linguistic development) to more applied aspects of psychology (e.g. leadership, consumer behavior, and intercultural interaction). Its level of comprehensiveness and sophistication places it as one of the key references in the years to come for people to understand the Chinese.

Those who are familiar with the works of Bond or the field of Chinese psychology may easily associate this new handbook with the *Handbook of Chinese Psychology* which Bond edited in 1996 for the same publisher. Some may even think of the current handbook as the second edition of the 1996 one, adding minor updates and modifications. However, a careful examination of the two books shows that this is not the case. Whereas the same key topics are present in both books (e.g. socialization, children development, emotion, decision-making, adaptation, leadership), most of chapters in the current edition are written by different authors. In fact, less than one-third of the authors contributed to both handbooks, indicating a significant rejuvenation of the group of contributors. Moreover, by increasing the total number of chapters from 32 to 41, Bond was able not only to include more topics of Chinese psychology, but also to address more general reflections of the uniqueness of Chinese people (e.g. see the chapters by Hong, Yang, and Chiu, and by Smith).

Being psychological in nature, the handbook offers useful knowledge for managerial scholars and practitioners alike to enter into various facets of the Chinese world. For example, Hong, Yang, and Chiu reflect on the meaning of being 'Chinese' and the identity politics in multicultural Chinese communities (chapter 2). It sheds light on the heterogeneity of 'Chineseness', and illustrates how Chinese people may react to foreign cultures in a world of globalization. As emotions receive increasing attention in the management literature, the chapter by Yik (chapter 14) tries to answer the question 'how unique is Chinese emotion' by reviewing the structure of emotion and its relevant research with the Chinese subjects. Kwan, Hui, and McGee offer insights on the concept of self, focusing on self-esteem, self-efficacy, and self-enhancement of Chinese people (chapter 17). These self concepts are proven to have significant implications in human decision-making and performance, so they are highly relevant to management scholars. In chapter 24, Cheng, Lo, and Chio discuss the *Tao* of Chinese coping, illustrating how the Chinese deal with stressors in ways different from their western counterparts. Hwang and Han present theories of face and morality in the Confucian society (chapter 28). Key concepts in the Chinese culture such as face, guanxi, modesty, and honor are addressed in depth, offering one of the rare indigenous theoretical frameworks to understand the Chinese.

The chapter of Chen and Farh (chapter 35) on Chinese leadership is probably the most relevant for readers of our journal. The authors first introduce the paternalistic leadership model, a well developed and indigenous Chinese leadership theory. According to the model, three dimensions characterize the essence of paternalistic leadership: moral leadership, authoritarian leadership, and benevolent leadership. Such a model explains the importance for leaders to demonstrate moral character, strong authority and control, and individualized concern for subordinates in the Chinese context. Subordinates are expected to respond with respect and identification, dependence and compliance, and indebtedness and obligation to repay to the three facets of paternalistic leadership. The authors then tried to connect western leadership theories such as leader-member exchange (LMX) and transformational leadership with the paternalistic leadership model. Such effort is valuable because it leads readers to focus not only on differences but also on similarities of social phenomena across societies.

Thomas and Liao identified a general model of cultural influence in inter-cultural interactions (chapter 39), with special considerations of Chinese cultural factors that may affect such process (e.g. salience of situational cues, out-group identification, etc.). Before the concluding chapter by Bond, Smith's chapter (chapter 40) offers provocative yet interesting questioning on the distinctiveness of Chinese psychology – are we all Chinese? It pushes scholars to reflect deeper on the differences as well as similarities across cultures.

Some special merits of the handbook are worth mentioning. First, it is probably the most comprehensive collection of review articles on Chinese psychology to date. The 41 chapters cover most of the critical fields in psychology for readers to learn about the Chinese in a profound way. Also, the number and quality of contributors that Bond has gathered for this purpose is impressive. Readers can find expert assistance in learning about the Chinese mind in this essential sourcebook. Second, most of the chapters offer excellent reviews of the field. They report empirical findings of the Chinese population accumulated in the past decades. I find them particularly up to date and comprehensive. Readers can easily equip themselves with the state-of-the-art of the literature. Hence, management scholars and students can gain useful insights in terms of what is currently known about the Chinese, and what to study in the future. Third, the handbook offers more than a simple review of literature, replicating western models in the Chinese setting. It invites readers to look for deeper and more indigenous understanding of Chinese people. The development and validation of measurement instruments for the Chinese are commonly mentioned in different chapters. The philosophical roots such as Confucianism and Taoism and their implications in Chinese psychology are often raised and discussed in a deep way. Such effort is, in my opinion, indispensable to reach a good understanding of the Chinese mind.

On the other hand, I was somewhat puzzled and bothered by the fact that the book does not have a clear structure (except for the implicit flow from basic psychological studies to the applied ones as mentioned earlier). It is thus difficult for readers to learn quickly about what is included in the book and to identify the chapter on a specific topic unless they go through the whole table of contents carefully. However, on more thought, I did wonder whether Bond has done it purposefully, following the example of Chinese classics such the *Analects of Confucius* in which readers need to figure out the implicit organic structure through cautious reading?

Also, careful readers may notice that there is a general lack of theory in the whole handbook. Generally speaking, the topic-oriented chapters have done a great job in reviewing and reporting extensively empirical findings in the field regarding the Chinese people. However, very few chapters offer indigenous theories of Chinese psychology (e.g. the chapter of Hwang and Han). Most of them stay at the level of confirming/disconfirming western findings, referring to well-known

cultural dimensions such as collectivism, power distance to explain the variation found, despite the openly stated effort to push for indigenous research. Moreover, most of the studies cited in the book simply dichotomized their findings as Chinese vs western, failing to capture the much more refined complexity of the world. To be fair, this is not a criticism of Bond's work per se. Indeed, it reflects a common challenge that all non-western scholars are facing today – how to go beyond the dominant western scientific paradigms to establish a more relevant and valid body of knowledge in explaining/interpreting phenomena in their own society. The handbook demonstrates the will of many scholars to move in such a direction, although it may take some more years and efforts to make it a reality.

In sum, as the Chinese world is becoming more and more important, it becomes increasingly critical for management scholars to understand Chinese psychology in order to deal with CCM issues involving Chinese people. This comprehensive handbook offers insights not only into psychological mechanisms of the Chinese, but also into their social and philosophical underpinnings. This handbook will be highly valuable for cross-cultural management scholars who wish to dig deeper into the mysterious Chinese world.