Introduction to the Special Issue on Indigenous Research on Management in China

Indigenous Research on Management: *What, Why, and How*

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Abstract

We attempt to provide a definition of indigenous research on management, identify its major objectives, and outline the general methodological approaches for this type of research. We also present an integrative summary of the four articles included in this special issues and show how they illustrate our definition of indigenous research on management and the various methodological approaches we advocate. Further, we introduce the commentary on the four articles from the perspective of engaged scholarship, and also the two additional articles included in this issue. Finally, we conclude with our suggestions for future indigenous research on management.

My Responses to the Reviews

1. I am not sure how to cut out the part in PP. 4-20 except for my comments on the frame of Yin-Yang Balancing (PP. 17-20) as well as Table 1 and Figure 1. I do not agree that we should replace that with a new literature review.
2. I agree that self-reference is a problem. I have cut down my self-reference.
3. I do not totally agree with the suggestion to tone down our argument. I have tried a little.
4. As for the structure suggested by Anne, I do not see the need for a new section on literature review, and I do not see the need for a new section on suggestions for future research (we have done that on PP. 10-11 (the subsection on "sources of indigenous constructs and theories").

5. I disagree that the key concepts of indigenous research are well-established (Reviewer 1: "<u>new and not terribly resonant labels for concepts that are well established"</u>). If that is the case, we do not need the part of definition in this Introduction.
6. I do not know if we should and how we can engage in the broader intellectual tradition (Reviewer 1). I do not think there is a need for that.
7. I disagree with Reviewer 1' comment on Table 1. Type 3 is indeed advanced simply because it cannot be a recorded folk theory. The term "advanced" does not refer the level of scientific sophistication but the depth of indigenousness. I would ignore this comment.
8. I am not sure if our argument is inconsistent with some "contradictory claims" (Reviewer 1). I do not see the problem, but I may be biased. Please double check.

9. I disagree with the first point of Reviewer 2. It is our intended goal to provide some guidelines. Nothing wrong about that! We never say that this is the only definition: it is only a working definition, so I even added the term "tentative". I do not know how to tone down further from that.
10. I have cut out Figure 1 (Reviewer 2 Point 2).

11. We can tone down the demand for the ideal form of indigenous research (Reviewer 2 Point 3). However, we should insist that more effort should be devoted to Type 3 and Type 4 research.
12. I take issue with Reviewer 2's Point 4. If the local phenomenon is unique, it demands a unique indigenous theory. If not unique, no need for any indigenous effort. I have added this idea in the paper.
13. For Reviewer 2 Point 5, I am not sure if we can scale down or up regarding our comments on guanxi research. In fact, it is my intention to imply that the West can definitely learn from the Chinese research, which is the true ideal and ultimate goal of indigenous research.
14. To respond to Reviewer 2 Point 6, I have largely cut out the portion in PP. 17-20.
15. I have added a summary before the introduction of the articles (Reviewer 2 Point 7).

Introduction to the Special Issue on Indigenous Research on Management in China

Indigenous Research on Management: *What, Why, and How*

Many authors argue that indigenous research is essential for an adequate understanding of local phenomena (e.g., Kim & Berry, 1993; Tsui, 2004; Yang, 1993, 2000). Given the fact that almost all the extant theories of management and organization are built upon the indigenous philosophies and values of the West that are drastically different from those of non-Western cultures (Boyacigiller & Adler, 1991; Tsui, 2007), the indigenous research from non-Western cultures has the great potential to contribute to geocentric theories by revising or modifying, supplementing or enriching, and even in some cases superseding Western management concepts or theories (Lin, 2002; March, 2005; Morris, Leung, Ames & Lickel, 1999; Yang. 2000). Because of the long history of China and its rich culture, the Chinese context offers many unique management phenomena and ideas for an indigenous analysis. A complete and thorough understanding of these phenomena and ideas require an insiders', or indigenous, perspective (Hwang, 2006; Fang, 2010; Meyer, 2006; Tsui, 2004, 2006; White, 2002; Yang, 1993, 2000). The special issue on indigenous research on management in China calls attention to the indigenous perspective and includes four studies that showcase the importance and utility of the indigenous approach to Chinese management research.

Indigenous research in the management discipline is a nascent endeavor, and two major challenges need to be overcome. First and foremost, there is no widely accepted definition of indigenous research on management. Some authors argue that a study will automatically qualify as indigenous if it covers an indigenous phenomenon or topic, even if Western theories or concepts are adopted (e.g., Whetten, 2009); others maintain that indigenous research requires location-specific, indigenous contextual factors, but the theoretical framework adopted can be borrowed from the West (e.g., Tsui, 2004); still others argue that only when an indigenous theoretical perspective is adopted can a study be qualified as indigenous (e.g., Yang, 1993). A related issue is that the objectives of indigenous research are also controversial. Is the main purpose of indigenous research simply to verify

Western theories? Or is it primarily for modifying Western theories? A more radical objective is to stay away from Western theories and develop new theories to explain uniquely local phenomena (Yang, 1993). The second challenge is concerned with the conceptual approaches that are optimal for conducting indigenous research. One proposal is to include contextual variables into a research design (Tsui, 2004, 2007). Other methodological issues are concerned with the logical sequence in developing a program of indigenous research and the research methods that are appropriate for different stages of indigenous research. Whether there is the need to develop special research methods for indigenous research is another issue that needs to be resolved.

In this introduction to the special issue, we attempt to provide a tentative definition of indigenous research on management, identify its essential objectives, and outline the general methodological approaches for this type of research. We also present an integrative summary of the four articles included in this special issues and show how they illustrate our definition of indigenous research on management and the various methodological approaches we advocate.

Definition and Typology of Indigenous Research on Management

Li (in press) proposes a working definition of indigenous research on management, namely, any study on a unique local phenomenon or a unique element of any local phenomenon from a local (native as emic) perspective to explore its local implications, and, if possible, its global implications as well. To be indigenous, a study must contain at least one concept or variable unique to a local phenomenon. From this perspective, indigenous research has two basic features: the examination of a unique local phenomenon and the adoption of a unique local perspective. In other words, when a local phenomenon is so unique that the extant Western theories or constructs cannot apply effectively, indigenous research is called for to explore the unique local phenomenon with a unique local theory or construct. Following this definition, a study that examines a local phenomenon by applying the extant Western theories or constructs cannot qualify as indigenous due to the lack of a local perspective. On the other hand, if a study examines a local phenomenon with a modified or expanded Western theory informed by a local

perspective, it may quality as indigenous because the research contributes to theory development by the adoption of a local perspective. Hence, the quality of indigenous research can be assessed by the explicit criterion if the unique concept or variable makes a novel contribution to building a new theory or revising an extant one. It is noteworthy that this working definition is more open-ended than the typical definition of indigenous research in psychology, which mandates a purely local perspective (Kim & Berry, 1993; Yang, 1993). An equally critical point is that we make an explicit distinction between contextualization and indigenous research, because contextualization may not involve any local perspective for the research on a local phenomenon (cf. Tsui, 2004; Whetten, 2009). As Jia and colleagues (Jia, You & Du, this issue) lamented in their review of Chinese-context-centered studies, "Chinese context has failed to contribute new theoretical logics to existing management knowledge, except for Confucianism and related concepts such as guanxi, face, wulun, renqing, li, pao, and traditionality" (page number xxx).

As suggested by the above tentative definition, indigenous research is imperative because some local phenomena are truly unique due to the historical and cultural reasons that require uniquely local theories and constructs. [*Please add one or two paragraphs here to explain why we should engage in indigenous research*].

We recognize that there can be different forms of indigenous research according to the level of indigenousness as well as the type of approach. Built on the emic (culture-specific) and etic (culture-general) approaches concerning the assumed level of indigenousness, Li (in press) has provided a tentative typology of indigenous research on management, The basic, perhaps most common, stream or approach involves the uncritical application of extant theories from the West in a local context (Type 1: the emic-as-etic or imposed etic approach with a mostly Western content). This type of research is not indigenous in nature, but it can bear some indigenous implications because it may inform subsequent indigenous research by drawing attention to local uniqueness or perspectives. A more sophisticated stream or approach involves a comparative perspective with the potential to discover one or more novel

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constructs unique to a locality, and this type of research targets to modify and revise the extant theories from the West (Type 2: the etic-to-emic approach with a blended Western-Eastern content). An even more sophisticated stream or approach involves the development of a novel local theory to explain a unique local phenomenon, which can complement or supersede relevant theories from the West (Type 3: the emic-as-emic approach with a mostly Eastern content). Finally, the most sophisticated stream or approach involves a holistic, dynamic and duality integration of the above three streams or approaches toward a *geocentric* (the West-East integration as a duality of opposites-in-unity) framework, with an integrative Western-Eastern content (Type 4: emic-and-etic integration).

To illustrate this typology, we compare the construct of social tie with that of *guanxi*, a Chinese construct (cf. Chen, Chen & Huang, 2011; Li, 2006; Luo, 2011; Luo, Huang & Wang, this issue). First, guanxi regards the substantive attributes of personal tie as the essence of social interaction (King, 1991; Yang, 1999), while the Western notion of social tie tends to focus on the structural attributes of social network such as centrality, density, and homophile (Burt, 1992; Coleman, 1992). From the perspective of guanxi, the quality of personal tie is of paramount importance not only in interpersonal exchange but also in inter-firm exchange (Luo et al., this issue). However, the dyad-specific attributes of personal tie tends to receive limited attention in the Western research (Moran, 2005; Nahapiet & Ghosal, 1998). Second, the pre-existing ties for guanxi (Jacobs, 1982; Tsui & Farh, 1997) are salient determinants of social interaction and new guanxi development in China, while impersonal social identities, such as race, gender, and age, are salient social categories that affect social networking in the West (e.g., Ibarra, 1992, 1997). Third, guanxi, either at the dyadic or network level, tends to be more hierarchical based on position and age than the Western social tie (Chua, Morris & Ingram, 2009). Fourth, guanxi users emphasize the utility of strong and close guanxi to gain influence and cooperation, while in Western theorizing, networkers often leverage weak and distant social ties to gain access to diverse information and other benefits (Bian, 1997; Xiao & Tsui, 2007).

In addition to the above four distinctions between guanxi and the Western notion of social tie, there are two more critical distinctions. In terms of quality substance, guanxi is more holistic with all parties caring about the psychological, social, and economic welfare of each other by engaging in all types of resource sharing across formal and informal ties (e.g., Chen et al., 2009; Luo, 2011), while the Western parties tend to compartmentalize their social ties by separating work from family, profession from friendship, and instrumental exchange from sentimental exchange (Morris, Podolny & Sullivan, 2008). In other words, while the relational dimension in the West is a continuum with most social ties falling toward the two ends, denoted as weak and strong (with tie strength related to tie nature, i.e., instrumental and sentimental) (Granovetter, 1973; Marsden & Campbell, 1984), guanxi focuses on the third stance along the weak-strong continuum with a mix of both instrumental and sentimental elements (Hwang, 1987; Li, 2006; Luo, 2005; Yang, 1993). Specifically, in building and utilizing guanxi, the Chinese tend to extend the model of familial ties to non-family ties so as to turn them into family-like ties with a mix of instrumental and sentimental elements, while Westerners adopt either a model of organizational and professional ties or a model of private friendship (Chua et al., 2009; Hwang, 1987; Li, 2006; Morris et al., 2008;). It is the mixed features that delineate guanxi as uniquely indigenous to the Chinese, which also reflects the Chinese *cognitive frame of Yin-Yang Balancing* by integrating the opposite forces into a unified system as the duality of opposites-in-unity (e.g., guanxi as a balanced mix of weak and strong elements as well as instrumental and sentimental elements), thus making guanxi holistic, dynamic and duality in its substance, structure, antecedent, and outcome (Li, 1998, 2006; Luo, 2011).

Finally, in terms of quantitative structure, guanxi has a unique mode of differential associations, which consists of multiple layers or rings of guanxi around a focal person (Fei, 1992). Different moral standards and exchange rules apply for various layers, which have different psychological distances to the focal person (Hwang, 1987; Yang, 1993). Each layer symbolizes a specific mix of instrumental and sentimental elements, including the three categories of layers along the weak-strong continuum: family,

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familiar and stranger ties (Yang, 1993; also see Hwang, 1987). Consistent with the Chinese frame of Yin-Yang Balancing (Li, 1998, 2008, in press), the category of familiar ties is the core of guanxi in China. Guanxi structure of this sort is an ego-centered network without clear boundaries, thus flexible for specific actions via the balancing mechanism of flexibly coupling and decoupling various ties within and across various layers of differentiated associations. In contrast, the Western network structure of a small group often consists of people with equal status as stable association members but with specified boundaries between different associations. The Chinese often call such an ego-centered network *insider circle* (Luo and Yeh, forthcoming). Because insider circles are simulated families via paternalistic leadership, the Chinese way of organizing small groups is "clan" as the Chinese form of association, in contrast to that of "club" as the Western form of association (Hsu, 1963).

If we apply the concept of social ties to guanxi research, it becomes etic-as-emic research (Type 1 as non-indigenous). For example, the concepts of strong-weak ties (Bian, 1997) and structural holes (Xiao and Tsui, 2007) have been used in guanxi studies. If we classify social ties and guanxi as two distinctive concepts, we view tie strength (Granovetter, 1973; Marsden and Campbell, 1984) and guanxi quality (Chen and Chen, 2004) as two different measurements, it is etic-to-emic research (Type 2 as weak-indigenous). If we adopt the concept of guanxi as a unique form of social ties in China, it is a type of emic-as-emic research (Type 3 as strong-indigenous). For instance, a series of studies has investigated the special features of guanxi, such as differential modes of association (Fei, 1992), mixture of various motivations (Hwang, 1987; Yang, 1993) and family-ethics base (Liang, 1983; Hwang, 2006). If we integrate social ties with guanxi, the research is now emic-and-etic (Type 4 as geocentric). The current problem is that Type 1 is not only dominant in the research on guanxi, but also in other areas of management research, which is the main reason why there is little contribution to the literature from such (non-indigenous) research on Chinese management (see Jia, You & Du for a review, this issue).

In fact, most research concerning China is Type 1, with little original theoretical contribution. Some Chinese management research falls into Type 2, which is rooted in the comparative perspective

with a focus on the use of Western theories to understand unique local phenomena. This approach is consistent with Whetten's notion of *context-sensitive* research (2009), which calls for the application of Western theories that take into account local contextual factors. Research that falls into Type 3 has greater potential to make original theoretical contributions because it focuses on the development of locally-derived theories. This approach is consistent with Tsui's notion of *context-specific* research (2004), which calls for the inclusion of locally meaningful contextual factors in theorizing. Type 4 research attempts to develop geocentric theories, and is consistent with the notions of the dynamic synergy of emic and etic perspectives (Morris et al., 1999), leveraging the cross-cultural perspective (Chen, Leung & Chen, 2009), the balanced global view (Yang, 2000), and the geocentric mosaic (Li, 2008, in press).

How to Conduct Indigenous Research on Management in China

With the growing acceptance, if not embrace, of Chinese indigenous research in the global academic community of management, the central question has been shifting from why to how to conduct Chinese indigenous research. We organize our thoughts and recommendations on this issue in two broad categories: 1) sources of indigenous constructs and theories and 2) methods of conducting indigenous research.

Sources of indigenous constructs and theories

To develop indigenous constructs and theories, management scholars can turn to two important sources. The first is the philosophically and ideologically diverse literatures, including the rich ancient Chinese philosophies and wisdoms, such as Confucianism, Taoism, Legalism, the Arts of War, as well as the modern political ideologies of Maoism and Deng Xiaoping Thoughts (Chen & Lee, 2009; Pan, Rowney & Peterson, this issue). From this source many indigenous constructs and theories for Chinese management can be derived. For example, the theories and applications of the cognitive frame of Yin-Yang Balancing (e.g., Li, 1998, 2008, in press; also see Chen, 2002, 2008; Fang, this issue; Wu et al., this issue); the link between Yin-Yang Balancing, as the epistemology for the Chinese philosophy, and

"wu" (intuitive imagination or 悟), as the methodology for Chinese philosophy, to meet the challenges of complexity and ambiguity (e.g., Li, 2012); "*zhong yong*" (the *Golden Rule of Balanced Harmony* or 中庸, e.g., Chen & Miller, 2011; Li, in press); "*wu wei*" (active non-action or 无为, e.g., Lee, Han, Byron & Fan, 2008; Tsui et al., 2004); the strategic leadership in the *Arts of War* (e.g., Pan et al., this issue; Sun, Chen & Zhang, 2009); the interpersonal theory of harmony (e.g., Leung & Brew, 2009; Leung, Brew, Zhang & Zhang, 2011); the cultivation of moral character (修养, e.g., Yang et al., 2008); the circle and network of guanxi (e.g., Chen & Chen, 2004; Li, 1998, 2006; Luo, 2011; Ma, this issue); paternalistic leadership (e.g., Farh & Cheng, 2000; Wu, Huang, Li & Liu, this issue), among others. Except for the last example of paternalistic leadership, other concepts and theories are all relatively uncharted areas wide open for both theoretical and empirical studies. Many more new theories and constructs of management and organization are yet to be identified from the rich literatures about the traditional and modern Chinese perspectives (Jia et al., this issue; Li, in press). This is where the indigenous research on management seems to have the potential to make its most unique contributions.

The second source of Chinese management constructs and theories lie in the legacies of Chinese management practices: the successes and setbacks as well as opportunities and pitfalls of Chinese firms, and the aspirations and frustrations of CEOs and ordinary rank and file employees. Examples include the economic and enterprise reform in the special context of China (e.g., Chen, 2007; Li, 2005); the internationalization pattern of Chinese multinational firms (e.g., Child & Rodrigues, 2005); the so-called Chinese "Shanzhai" phenomenon as imitative innovation (e.g., Luo, Sun & Lu, 2011), as well as many other little studied phenomena such as the migrant labor force, the new generation of single child born in the 80s and 90s, and the gaping inequality and differentiation since the start of China's reform. All of these are practical phenomena in an urgent need for scholarly attention. It is up to management scholars to apply their intellectual curiosity, knowledge, and wisdom to make connections between the

concepts and theories on one hand and the practical phenomena on the other. Also, this is where the indigenous research on management can have the great opportunity to be both rigorous and relevant.

Methods of conducting indigenous research on management

We propose three methodological recommendations for advancing Chinese indigenous research on management. First, we urge Chinese management scholars to develop and practice qualitative research methods (Berg, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Indigenous research on management, which is typically rooted in the cultural and historical contexts of a locality, cannot and should not imitate the so-called "scientific" methods commonly adopted in social sciences (see Bandura, 1999; Kim & Park, 2005 for reviews). What is needed is an integration of positivism and constructivism because social research must involve both subjectivity and inter-subjectivity (Bandura, 1999; Kim & Park, 2005). Qualitative methods are particularly suitable for studying the content and process of inter-subjective social phenomena, and especially for theory-building purposes in the exploratory stage of a research program.

To the extent that the most urgent task of advancing indigenous Chinese management lies in the development of indigenous perspectives, theories, and constructs, we call on scholars to engage in qualitative research methods, such as ethnography and participant observation (Adler & Adler, 1994; Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994); action research (Argyris, Putnam & Smith, 1985; Lewin, 1946); engaged scholarship (Van de Ven, 2007); case study (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2009); focus group and interview (Adler & Adler, 1994); grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), and content analyses (Chi, 1997). In particular, the newly proposed *Yin-Yang Method of Case Study* (Li, in press) is helpful for young scholars to effectively integrate the extant controversial theories or views into new balanced theories or frameworks. We are aware that this call is at odds with the dominant paradigm of positivism that puts emphasis on experiments and surveys as well as with many Chinese scholars' individual and collective self-efficacy of statistical modeling. However, we are convinced of the unique advantages of qualitative methods in construct and theory development and the necessity of engaged scholarship (Van

de Ven & Jing, this issue). We also believe that investment in developing and practicing qualitative research competences is critical for continuous advancement of Chinese management research. Chinese management scholars should take reference of the exemplary ethnographic work of arguably the most influential sociologist and anthropologist in China, Xiaotong Fei (1939). His works serve as a source of inspiration and an illustration of high-quality and relevant qualitative research methods for indigenous research.

Our second recommendation focuses on scale development. Once an indigenous construct has been conceptualized, whether derived from the extant literature or abstracted from practical concerns, quantitative measures have to be developed and validated for empirical research to proceed. Space does not allow us to elaborate on the steps and procedures of scale development and validation, and we point to Farh, Cannella and Lee (2006) for details about how to develop measurements that are sensitive and relevant in the Chinese context. Readers are encouraged to take note of the painstaking processes required in developing indigenous scales, and of the adoption of etic and emic perspectives and the utilization of various qualitative methods in their otherwise quantitative endeavors. This brings us to our third and most important recommendation, namely, the use of multi-perspective, multi-level, and multi-method approach to the study of Chinese indigenous phenomena. This approach requires the deep appreciation of engaged scholarship to truly balance research rigor with research relevance (Li, 2011; Van de Ven & Jing, this issue).

By multi-perspective, we have not only multiple disciplines in mind, but also etic and emic perspectives. In this special issue, we deliberately emphasize the importance of the Chinese origin and source for indigenous Chinese management theory and research, but that does not mean the Chinese theories developed out of such an indigenizing process are limited to the Chinese context in terms of applicability and generalizability. For example, the Chinese indigenous frame of Yin-Yang Balancing takes all entities at all levels as holistic and dynamic systems in which the opposite forces balance each other because they are partially conflicting but partially complementary as opposites-in-unity (Li, 1998,

2008). As one of the cardinal principles of Confucianism rooted in the frame of Yin-Yang Balancing, the *Golden Rule of Balanced Harmony* (中庸) covers how to holistically and dynamically balance the opposite elements so as to maintain both stability and change in a complex adaptive system (Stacey, et. al., 2000; Chen & Miller, 2011; Li, in press). This frame is parallel to the emerging approach to complex network. For instance, Granovetter (1995; 2002) takes "balancing coupling and decoupling" in a complex network as the core function of an entrepreneur. Coupling and decoupling act as two opposite forces in the entrepreneur's ego-centered network where he or she needs to balance such forces. Some features of the frame of Yin-Yang Balancing can be also found in the research stream on the robustness of complex network (e.g., Barabasi, 2006; Ferrary & Granovetter, 2009). Hence, we argue that there is a common ground for the Western and the Eastern perspectives to meet and also move toward a geocentric balance between the Western and the Eastern views. A good example is the story of Steve Jobs, the former CEO of Apple. He illustrates the best possible balances between the West and the East as well as between science and art, given his life-long appreciation of intuition or "wu" (悟) as the core of Zen Buddhism in contrast to the Western rational logic (Isaacson, 2011). Another example is that Niels Bohr applied the Chinese frame of Yin-Yang Balancing to his famous *Principle of Complementarity*, which explains the wave-particular duality in particular and the quantum physics in general; see the explanation of his Yin-Yang symbol at the center of the cover image of this special issue on Page xxx).

The geocentric balance between the West and the East will not "naturally" or "automatically" happen if scholars do not, at one point or another, adopt an etic, or multi-emic perspective. That is, scholars have to take into account non-Chinese perspectives, be these perspectives from other parts of Asia, West, or Africa. This approach requires an appreciation of the duality of diversity-in-unity. Most specifically, Li (in press) has proposed an approach that integrates indigenous research across multiple countries, based on an integration of the models of Morris and colleagues (1999), Enriquez (1990), and

Yang (2000). His geocentric approach is multi-perspective in nature, and is not a form of homogenous universalism, but an emic-etic integration in terms of a mosaic-like diversity-in-unity toward an overall theoretical framework. Indigenous or emic research is by no means confined to the goal of explaining unique phenomena at the local level, as it often bears some global implications. Emic constructs and theories as diverse perspectives from different cultures can be integrated to develop a more complete, mosaic-style framework with an overlapped core and diverse unique details. This is what we refer to as the ultimate goal of indigenous research (Type 4 as geocentric research).

By multi-level, we refer to individual, group, organizational, and society levels. For example, the guanxi phenomenon in China has been conceptualized and examined at the individual, dyadic, organizational, and societal levels although the group level is conspicuously understudied (Chen & Chen, 2004; Li, 2006; Luo, 2011). By multi-method, we advocate the synergistic combination of qualitative and quantitative methods (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Aside from its use in scale development as in our second recommendation, it can be used throughout the process of theory development and testing. It is typical to initiate the process of theory-building via the qualitative methods such as the theory-building case study (Eisenhardt, 1989). After the initial development of a new theory or construct, one can use the quantitative methods to test the newly developed theory or construct (Popper, 1959). Another approach is to start from the Yin-Yang Method of Case Study by integrating the extant controversial theories or constructs (Li, in press) and then to follow up with the large-sample statistical tests.

As an illustration of the importance of the multi-perspective, multi-level, and multi-method approach, we discuss a potential research project on harmony. First, consider the multi-perspective approach. Harmony is a salient concept in both the traditional Chinese philosophies and the current Chinese society. What do the traditional and contemporary thoughts share and differ with regard to the meanings of harmony? How is harmony related to the Golden Rule of Balanced Harmony as one of the core principles of Confucianism? How is harmony related to the frame of Yin-Yang Balancing? While

harmony may not be as salient a concept in the West, similar concepts like cohesion, solidarity, and unity are salient there. To what extent do these concepts in the West differ from the Chinese construct of harmony? Are the concepts of diversity, tension, and conflict intrinsic to the meanings of harmony as opposed to cohesion? How is harmony related to the constructs of complexity and ambiguity? Can we integrate the Eastern notion of harmony with the Western notion of cohesion into a geocentric duality of diversity-in-unity? The above questions require a multi-perspective approach.

With regard to the multi-level approach, concerns of harmony by the Chinese government and the general public seem to be on one hand at the societal level (e.g., the growing disparity between the rich and the poor between people and regions) and on the other hand at the individual or interpersonal level (e.g., psychological harmony and harmony motives, Leung et al., 2011). However, a multilevel approach would raise questions of harmony for managers and employees at the organizational and work group level, especially the cross-level interaction of variables at different levels. Further, a multi-level approach would also lead to theorizing about different antecedents and outcomes of harmony depending on the level at which harmony is conceptualized and examined, as well as the cross-level interactions involved.

Finally, a multi-method approach to harmony would generate more insights in construct and theory development and hypotheses testing. The critical review of ancient Chinese philosophies, and focus groups and interviews involving Chinese academics and practitioners can be combined to initially define the content domain of harmony. These initial definitions can be compared with extant Western concepts such cohesion and solidarity to examine potential overlap and distinctiveness. Such similarities and distinctions will be taken into account to refine the concept and to develop its measures. Scale validation would include both Chinese harmony measures and similar measures in the West to establish the convergent and discriminant validities. Testing the theoretical models of antecedents and consequences of harmony can be conducted through multiple methods, including case studies, content analyses of classic and contemporary literatures, field or lab experiments, and surveys.

The illustration of harmony suggests that indigenous research is imperative given the unique historical and cultural traditions in a local context in need for unique local perspectives. The issue of harmony also illustrates that geocentric knowledge is the ultimate goal of indigenous research, and it can be achieved by integrating the indigenous research in the West with that in the East. This example even implies that the indigenous research in the East could have the potential to take the lead in some research streams, especially those rooted in the Chinese traditions, such as the cognitive frame of Yin-Yang Balancing and its applications to complex issues (Chen & Miller, 2011; Fang, this issue; Wu et al., this issue); the inherent links between complexity, ambiguity and metaphor to addressed by the Chinese methodology of "wu" (Li, 2012); the healthy tension for balanced harmony (Leung et al., 2011); paternalistic leadership (Farh & Cheng, 2000; Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008; Wu et al., this issue), and finally the duality roles of guanxi as a mixed tie with both instrumental and sentimental elements, including the positive role of horizontal guanxi among professional peers for teamwork and alliance in contrast to the negative role of vertical guanxi (Li, 2006; Luo, 2011).

SUMMARIES OF THE ARTICLES IN THE SPECIAL ISSUE

This special issue contains four articles. These four articles cover a wide range of diverse issues from multiple perspectives from a theoretical reframing of cultural value system from the perspective of the Chinese Yin-Yang frame to an empirical scale to measure the rich Chinese cultural traditions; from an empirical study on the role of guanxi in vertical relationships from the institutional perspective to an empirical study on three key influencing processes that underlie paternalistic leadership from the perspective of Chinese culture. These articles share the common feature required for being qualified as indigenous research, i.e., focusing on one or more indigenous constructs or measures (e.g., Yin-Yang frame, Taoism, guanxi, and paternalistic leadership). Together, the above four articles provide a set of exemplary indigenous research on management in the Chinese context.

More specifically, we summarize the four articles as follows. In the article of "*Yin Yang: From Chinese dialectical thinking to a new perspective on culture,*" Fang applies the Chinese frame of Yin-

Yang Balancing to a new conceptualization of culture. He reframes culture as possessing inherently paradoxical value orientations, thereby enabling it to embrace opposite traits of any given cultural dimension. He posits that potential paradoxical values and behaviors coexist in any national 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 and dynamic portfolio of self-selected globally available value orientations as a consequence of that culture's learning over time.

In the article of "*The structure of Chinese cultural traditions: An empirical study of business employees in China,*" Pan, Rowney and Peterson develop a scale to measure the five key schools of Chinese cultural traditions that implicitly influence current management thought in China. The authors propose a four-factor Structure of Chinese Cultural Traditions (SCCT) model. A sample of 2658 people in businesses in Beijing was used to develop the dimensions that were then cross validated in a nation-wide sample of 718 business employees. The four dimensions show plausible patterns of convergent and discriminant validity with generic domains of values represented by the Schwartz Value Survey. The authors suggest that the Structure of Chinese Cultural Traditions provides a unique model of Chinese culture that complements other generic measures, thereby allowing a deep understanding of Chinese culture.

In the article of "*A Relational view of organizational restructuring in transitional China*," Ma addresses three related questions concerning authority relations (personal relations with superiors) in transitional China. First, could superiors retain an organizational unit in order to save a protégé's job? Second, has instrumental usage of particularistic relations, or *guanxi*, lost its importance? Third, has "principled particularism", an integration of political loyalty and authority relations, continued to impact careers? Based on first-hand survey data, this study found that state-owned enterprises whose managers had closer authority relations were less likely to be sold or discontinued, and close authority

relations also reduced the likelihood of career blockage (demotion/layoff). The significant interactive effect of party membership and authority relations revealed the rather sticky continuation of "principled particularism". Taken together, this study underlines institutional continuity during rapid social change, renders insights into the processes of organizational restructuring, and depicts the relational base of formal organizations.

In the article of "*Perceived interactional justice and trust-in-supervisor as mediators for paternalistic leadership,*" Wu, Huang, Li and Liu identify several key culture-specific influencing processes that underlie the effects of the three paternalistic leadership dimensions on subordinates' work performance/ organizational citizenship behaviors. The results, based on the data collected from private firms in China, showed that perceived interactional justice mediated the effects of moral leadership and benevolent leadership on trust-in-supervisor. However, perceived interactional justice did not mediate the relationship between authoritarian leadership and trust-in-supervisor. In addition, trust-in-supervisor was found to be positively associated with work performance and organizational citizenship behaviors. It is worth noting that the article highlights the unique value of Yin-Yang frame for better understanding the seemingly paradoxical dimensions of paternalistic leadership.

In sum, the above four articles in the special issue share the central theme that the phenomena and issues concerning Chinese management are often unique in certain aspects as compared to the phenomena and issues in the West, thus in need for indigenous research. They also share the core feature of indigenous research by containing at least one concept or variable unique to the local phenomenon, which calls for the adoption of local perspectives. In this sense, these articles embrace the multiple-perspective approach. In addition, the research methods range from quantitative (e.g., multivariate analysis and structural equation modeling) to qualitative (e.g., grounded theory building and case illustration). Hence, these articles adopt the multi-method approach. Finally, even though not specifically shown in any single article, these article as a group demonstrate the value of multi-level approach (e.g., from the macro-cultural level to the micro-personal level). It is interesting to note that

two of the four articles effectively apply the frame of Yin-Yang Balancing (i.e., Fang on culture; Wu et al. on paternalistic leadership), and that two articles highlight the imperative of harmony for Chinese management (Fang on culture; Pan et al. on culture).

To put the indigenous research on Chinese management into the perspective of the overall research on management, we have invited a commentary regarding the indigenous research on management in general and the four articles in the special issue in particular. In the commentary entitled "*Indigenous research on management in China from an engaged scholarship perspective***,"** Van de Ven and Jing comment on the four papers in this special MOR issue. The commentary begins by emphasizing the importance of indigenous research not only for understanding the specific deep knowledge of local phenomena, but also for advancing general theoretical knowledge across cultural boundaries. Further, they propose a method of engaged scholarship for conducting indigenous research. Finally, the commentary recognizes that the four papers in this special issue provide good examples of applying the principles of engaged scholarship in their indigenous research.

In addition to the four articles and one commentary, this issue contains two more articles related to the theme of indigenous research on Chinese management. The first article is a meta-analysis of the literature on guanxi. Entitled *"Guanxi and organizational performance: A meta-analysis,"* Luo, Huang and Wang provide a meta-analysis of the extant literature linking guanxi utilization with organizational performance. It is worth noting that business ties have a bigger impact on operational performance, while government ties exert larger effects on economic performance. In contrast to the finding in this meta-analysis that the importance of government ties is time-variant and has been declining with the development of the institutional environment in China, Ma's article in our special issue provides the different evidence for the continuation of "principled particularism" in terms of guanxi utilization. We believe that future research can shed more light on this mixed evidence, and new research can reframe guanxi from the mainstream loose definition as any type of social tie toward a particularistic tie with both instrumental and sentimental elements as well as reframe it from the mainstream focus on its

vertical or hierarchical type (which often involves corruption) toward its horizontal or peer type (which seldom involves corruption such as the cases of teamwork and workplace friendship).

The second article is a review of the literature about the contextualized research on Chinese management. Entitled "*Chinese context and theoretical contributions to management and organization research: A three-decade review*," Jia, You and Du develop and apply a context-emic model to management and organization articles published in six leading journals between 1981 and 2010 and articles from *Management and Organization Review* (*MOR*) since its launch in 2005 through 2010. In particular, they find that those studies based on Chinese contexts introduce only three new concepts (market transition, network capitalism, and *guanxi*), and that Chinese-context research contributes only Confucianism and its related concepts. This review shows that Chinese management research continues to use Western models, but those empirical articles using more Chinese contextualization garner more citations. We agree with the overall conclusion of this review, but we want to emphasize the distinction between contextualized research and indigenous research as we argued explicitly earlier. It is worth repeating that indigenous research has the hope to make the high-impact contributions to the literature by developing novel indigenous constructs and theories beyond contextualization.

CONCLUSION

With a growing recognition that research in a single cultural context is indigenous in nature, including Western research, we highlight the unique and novel value of indigenous research with the ultimate vision of emic-etic integration for the development of geocentric theories. We also showcase the value of multi-perspective, multi-level and multi-method approaches. We believe that indigenous research is central to academic associations concerned with non-Western cultural contexts, such as *International Association of Chinese Management Research*. It is hoped that this special issue on the Chinese indigenous research on management will attract attention to indigenous research, especially geocentric theories as the ultimate goal of indigenous research with Type 2 and Type 3 of indigenous research as the necessary steps toward geocentric research. We also hope that the growing interest and

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attention concerning indigenous research will demonstrate its potency in the near future by taking the lead in some emerging research streams across the world.

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