TOWARD AN INTEGRATIVE FRAMEWORK OF INDIGENOUS RESEARCH

The Geocentric Implications of Yin-Yang Balance

Abstract

It has long been recognized that indigenous research should be helpful, if not essential, for an adequate understanding of local phenomenon. The indigenous approach is consistent with, but extends beyond, the repeated calls for contextualizing management and organization research. However, the challenges of indigenous research are enormous. The purpose of this article is to shed light on these challenges by providing an integrative framework of indigenous research, including its holistic content and dynamic process. In particular, I seek to explicate the existing conceptual confusion and flesh out the best methodological approach to the indigenous research on Chinese management. The value of Yin-Yang Balance as the unique frame of thinking is evoked to illustrate the unique and novel features of local perspective, especially its application to case study method.

Key Words:

Indigenous Research; Chinese Management; Integrative Framework; Yin-Yang Balance; Emic-Etic Integration; Yin-Yang Method.
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The Geocentric Implications of Yin-Yang Balance

It has long been recognized that indigenous research should be helpful, if not essential, for an adequate understanding of local phenomenon. The indigenous approach is consistent with the repeated calls for contextualizing management and organization research (Tsui, 2004, 2007). Paradoxically, globalization gives rise to the greater need for indigenous research so as to adequately analyze each unique local context in which multinational firms operate. In particular, given the fact that most of the extant theories of management and organization are built upon the cultural values and empirical data in the West (referring to the cultures rooted in the ancient Greek civilization), it is imperative to conduct indigenous research to likely revise or modify, potentially supplement or enrich, and even in some cases supersede or substitute the Western concepts or theories (Li, 1998, 2008; Lin, 2002; March, 2005; Morris, Leung, Ames & Lickel, 1999; Yang, 2000). Given the special context of China, with its long and distinctive history as well as its rich and influential culture, there are many phenomena potentially indigenous to China, such as the Yin-Yang thinking, guanxi, paternalistic leadership, emotional bond, informal norm, and the interplay between the state and market. Understanding these will benefit from, if not require, a unique local or home-grown perspective (Chen, 2002, 2008; Hwang, 2006; Leung, Li, Chen & Luo, 2009; Li, 1998; Meyer, 2006; Tsui, 2004, 2006; Yang, 2000).

However, the challenges of indigenous research are enormous. First, there is little consensus regarding what indigenous research is. Some argue that any research will automatically qualify as indigenous research if it covers an indigenous phenomenon or topic, even when Western theories or concepts are adopted (e.g., Whetten, 2009); others maintain that indigenous research requires location-specific contextual factors that must be indigenous, but the dominant theoretical framework can be borrowed from the West (e.g., Tsui, 2004); still others posit that only when an indigenously derived notion or theory is adopted or developed can the research be qualified as indigenous (e.g., Li, 1998). Second, the above controversies are rooted in the vision and agenda of indigenous research in China.
(the Editor’s Forum on the Future of Chinese Management Research in Management and Organization Review, 2009). Is it intended to simply verify the extant Western theories? Is it designed to primarily modify the extant Western theories? Is it sought to develop new theories to exclusively explain unique local phenomena, or broadly explore the geocentric implications of indigenous theories to supplement or even supersede the extant Western ones? Is contextualized research the same as indigenous research?

Third, the above conceptual controversies also extend to the methodological issues. What is the most logical sequence for all indigenous approaches as the overall trajectory of indigenous research? What are the methodological links between indigenous approaches at various stages? Are there any special methods proper for indigenous research? Should researchers develop some, if any, indigenous methods for indigenous research?

Building upon the ongoing stream on the indigenous research in Asia (e.g., Au, 2007; Meyer, 2006; Tsui, 2004; White, 2002), I intend to shed light on both conceptual and methodological debates over the indigenous research on Chinese management by proposing an integrative framework with the holistic content and dynamic process. In particular, I will explicate the existing conceptual confusions and flesh out the novel methodological steps for the indigenous research on Chinese management. To illustrate the framework, I apply the Yin-Yang Balance, a unique frame of thinking, to case study for a novel method of case study. The rest of the paper is structured into four sections. First, I will focus on the conceptual controversies. Second, I will focus on the methodological challenges. Third, I will focus on the Yin-Yang Balance as a concrete illustration. Finally, I conclude with a broad outline of research agenda for the future.

THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF INDIGENOUS RESEARCH

Definition and Local-Oriented Typology

I define indigenous research as any study on a unique local phenomenon or a unique element of any local phenomenon from a novel local perspective to explore its local implications, and, if possible, its global implications as well. Whether a study is indigenous can be judged by the explicit criterion if
the study contains at least one concept or variable *unique* to a local phenomenon. Further, 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 novel theory or revising an extant one. To explore the uniquely novel implications of local phenomenon, one has to embrace a uniquely novel local perspective. In this sense, indigenous research has two basic characters: to study a unique local phenomenon from a novel local perspective. In this sense, none of the studies on a local phenomenon by applying the Western theories or constructs (thus from a foreign perspective) can qualify as indigenous research, even if a location-specific context is taken into consideration. This is because such studies are neither unique (in terms of focusing on the uniqueness of local phenomena as compared to global phenomena) nor novel (in terms of contributing from a novel local perspective with novel constructs or theories). Although I consider contextualization as related to indigenous research, I distinguish the two notions because indigenous research requires not only the recognition of a location-specific context but also the recognition of a local perspective to reflect the location-specific context (cf. Tsui, 2004; Whetten, 2009). Hence, not all contextualized studies are indigenous in nature. Specifically, there can be two definitions of indigenous research. One is a looser, broader, and multi-emic definition of indigenous research, tied to but beyond context-sensitive theory-testing (often in the form of multi-cultural comparative study, Whetten, 2009). The other is a tighter, narrower, and single-emic definition, tied to but beyond context-specific theory-building (often in the form of single-culture study, Tsui, 2004). To balance the multi-cultural research with the single-culture one, we can embrace both definitions for different purposes in different studies. In sum, indigenous research must reflect the uniqueness of local characters, which, by default, requires the novelty of local perspectives in contrast to foreign or universal characters and perspectives. With a focus on the local perspective, I will develop a local-oriented typology next.

Specifically, indigenous research contains four dimensions: (1) "what" (research target), i.e., a unique local phenomenon (element) in contrast to a generic global phenomenon (element); (2) "why" (research rationale), i.e., highlighting the endogenous and divergent natures of a local phenomenon
(element) in contrast to its exogenous and convergent natures; (3) “how” (research approach), i.e., adopting a context-specific (context-sensitive to a less extent) approach to create locally-relevant constructs, methods and theories in contrast to a globally-applicable approach with context-generic components; and (4) “for whom” (research result), i.e., a contribution in terms of substituting or superseding the “imported” components as an “import-substitution” (i.e., a local perspective) and/or as an “export” toward a geocentric (culture-integrative) framework (i.e., a geocentric perspective) in contrast to a contribution based on utilizing or modifying those “imported” components for local applications or adaptations (i.e., a foreign perspective). The key lies in the adoption of local (emic) or global (etic) perspective, with the former as indigenous in contrast to the latter as non-indigenous (even including foreign-emic) (Morris et al., 1999).

If researchers adopt the above four dimensions as four criteria, any research that meets two of the criteria will be directly related to indigenous research. I regard the four basic criteria as representing four distinctive streams and approaches with different contents at different stages in an overall process of a local-oriented indigenous research (Table 1; cf. Morris et al., 1999; Yang, 2000). First, the most basic stream or approach involves the uncritical local application of extant theories from the West as a basic exploitation (the emic-as-etic or imposed etic approach with a mostly Western content at Stage 1, thus neither unique nor novel). Second, a more advanced stream or approach involves a multi-context comparative research with the potential to discover one or more novel local constructs unique to a local phenomenon so as to modify and revise the extant theories from the West as an advanced exploitation (the etic-to-emit approach with a blended Western-Eastern content at Stage 2, thus both unique and novel to a limited extent). Third, an even more advanced stream or approach involves the development of a novel local theory to explain a unique local phenomenon, which can complement or supersede the extant theory from the West as a basic exploration (the emic-as-emic approach with a mostly Eastern content at Stage 3, thus both unique and novel narrowly at the local level). Fourth, the most advanced stream or approach involves an integration of the above three streams toward a geocentric system (Li,
(2008) as an *advanced exploration* (the emic-and-etic approach with an integrative Western-Eastern content at Stage 4, thus both unique and novel broadly at the global level).

While Stage 1 is a necessary initial step, it is not indigenous even in terms of a loose and broad definition. However, Stage 1 has some indigenous implications because it may be able to inform the later stages of indigenous research by exposing the local uniqueness or novelty. In other words, while Stage 1 emphasizes the goal of finding the common and shared (etic) contents across contexts, it may unexpectedly discover some unique and novel (emic) contents in the process, thus providing the initial evidence for the later stages. Stages 2 and 3 can be argued as the dual focuses of the current indigenous research, while Stage 4 can be regarded as the most advanced form toward the ultimate ideal or goal of developing geocentric knowledge. *Geocentric* refers to a mosaic-style integration of an etic theme (the global core) with highly diverse emic versions (the unique local details) of the etic theme, thus culture-integrative (Li, 2008). Stages 1 and 2 emphasize the exploitation of extant theories or constructs, while Stages 3 and 4 seeks the exploration of new theories or constructs. Further, Stages 1 and 3 contrast each other in terms of a distinctive focus on the unilateral impact of Western or Eastern perspective on the research content, but Stages 2 and 4 resemble each other in terms of their shared focus on the bilateral impact (thus balanced and potentially integrative) of both Western and Eastern perspectives on research content. Finally, while Stage 2 focuses on the aspect of uniqueness through comparison, Stage 3 tends to emphasize the aspect of novelty in perspective (cf. Meyer, 2006; Tsui, 2004).

To illustrate the typology in Table 1, I explore the distinction and link between social capital and guanxi. While *social capital* refers to a group-based social tie, either weakly instrumental or weakly sentimental, but largely depersonalized and primarily non-kinship-based, thus the typical social tie in the West, *guanxi* is a dyadic social tie, both sentimental and instrumental, strongly personalized, both kinship- or non-kinship-based, thus the typical social tie in the East (Li, 2007). If we apply the
concept of social capital to guanxi (the Western emic as the global etic), our research is non-indigenous (Stage 1). If we compare social capital and guanxi as two distinctive concepts (the Western-Eastern emic to etic), our research is weak-indigenous (Stage 2). If we adopt the concept of guanxi as a unique Chinese social tie (the Eastern emic-as-emic), our research is strong-indigenous (Stage 3). If we finally integrate social capital with guanxi (the Eastern-Western emic-and-etic), our research is geocentric (Stage 4). In sum, when guanxi is studied as a unique local phenomenon from a novel local perspective in terms of being a concept distinctive from social capital, we can regard the research as indigenous.

Most research concerning China remains at Stage 1 with little theoretical contribution to better explain a local phenomenon or element. Unless it finds something unique and explains it with a novel construct or variable unique to a local phenomenon, this research is not relevant to indigenous research in terms of contribution. A popular research stream concerning China enters Stage 2 with potential theoretical contributions because it is more likely to find or develop some novel constructs or variables to better explain a local phenomenon or element, as compared with Stage 1. Such research is rooted in the multi-cultural comparative tradition with a renewed focus on the unique local phenomenon. This approach is consistent with Whetten’s notion of context-sensitive research (2009). Another growing research stream concerning China expands into Stage 3 with greater potential theoretical contributions because it focuses exclusively on the development of locally-derived theories due to the disillusion with the universalistic claims of Western theories. This approach is consistent with Tsui’s notion of context-specific research (2004). The final emerging research toward Stage 4 attempts to integrate the research streams at Stages 2 and 3 by building intercultural constructs and theories. The last approach is consistent with the notions of emic-etic synergy by Morris and colleagues (1999), cross-cultural leverage by Chen and colleagues (Chen, Leung & Chen, 2009); balanced global view by Yang (2000), and geocentric mosaic by Li (2008). In other words, there is a clear logical sequence among the three approaches or streams of indigenous research within the confinement of a local perspective, which goes beyond a generalized notion of contextualization.
All the research approaches at Stages 2, 3 and 4 have their own unique challenges, but all later stages must proceed effectively upon the proper progresses at the earlier stages as necessary input. For instance, the integrative approach at Stage 4 has to rely upon the key contributions of both context-sensitive and context-specific studies at Stages 2 and 3, both of which can offer distinctive constructs or theories as their unique and novel contributions for Stage 4. In other words, the cultural diversity discovered at Stages 2 and 3 can serve as the necessary input for the geocentric mosaic as the ultimate output of indigenous research.

It is worth noting that the emic-etic relationship can be conceptualized as a duality, which refers to a pair of contrary (largely conflicting to mutually negate) yet complementary (largely harmonious to mutually affirm) elements as a unity-in-opposites (Li, 2008). As a duality in contrast to a dualism, the distinction and link between the emic and etic streams can be holistically and dynamically balanced as “either/both”. The “either” side refers to the contrary or contradictory tendency for the two opposites of a pair to mutually conflict in different aspects and/or at different times, while the “both” side refers to the inseparable or complementary tendency for the opposite elements to mutually embrace in different aspects and/or at different times; both mutual conflict and mutual embracement are always relative to a certain degree, thus never absolute as two polarized extremes (Li, 2008). The notion of duality derives from the Yin-Yang Balance, which is a unique frame of thinking in East Asia originated from China but shared by many Asian countries (Chen, 2002, 2008; Li, 1998, 2008). The Yin-Yang Balance is uniquely distinctive from Aristotle’s formal logic of “either/or” as well as Hegel’s dialectical logic of “both/or” (I will elaborate such distinctions in more detail later).

Consistent with the Yin-Yang Balance, I can reasonably assume that a phenomenon, no matter how unique or generic, will always have two integral components. One is the common component shared by the similar phenomena across all or many contexts, referred to as the etic component (e.g., the core characters of interpersonal ties in social capital), but the other is the unique component specific to a particular local phenomenon, referred to as the emic component (the concrete characters of strong
bond in guanxi). In other words, any phenomenon contains both etic and emic component in a holistic and dynamic balance. In sum, the above discussion describes and explains the content and process from a local perspective rather than from an integrative perspective (see the section on methodology).

**The Major Debates Concerning the Conceptualization**

To further elucidate the conceptual confusion regarding indigenous research, I now turn to the major debates concerning the definition of indigenous research (see the Editor’s Forum on the Future of Chinese Management Research in *Management and Organization Review*, 2009, including Barney & Zhang, 2009; Whetten, 2009). These ongoing debates are largely responsible for the conceptual confusions about the definition of indigenous research in general and that on Chinese management in particular. In particular, I focus on three most controversial issues, all of which are concerned with the implications of contextualization for organization study in general and indigenous research in particular.

1. *Does contextualized research refer to the same notion as indigenous research?*

I agree that contextualization is related to indigenous research, but the two constructs are not the same. The former is much broader than the latter, especially in three major areas. First, not all contexts are necessarily location-specific with unique characters and novel implications, but indigenous context must be location-specific with a local perspective. A context can be either omnibus in terms of “who”, “where”, “when” and “why” about context, or discrete in terms of task, social and physical regarding a context (Johns, 2006). In other words, a context could be industry-specific, region-specific, institution-specific, technology-specific, and organization-specific. If we refer to context only as an explicitly location-specific context, we can regard contextualization as indigenous with the explicit implications of local perspective, especially its *cultural* perspective in terms of unique cultural assumptions as well as values distinctive from other cultures. However, most scholars do not specifically confine the notion of contextualization to the cultural dimension only. In this sense, contextualized research, even context-specific one, is not necessarily the same as indigenous research because the latter requires a unique and novel local perspective beyond the contextualization of extant views (cf. Meyer, 2006; Tsui, 2004).
Second, not all contextual elements are necessarily path-dependent with unique characters and novel implications, but indigenous contextual elements must be path-dependent with a historical perspective. A context can be either a history-dependent or emerging new context. However, the notion of indigenous implies a path-dependent context with historical imprints (e.g., cultural assumptions and values), rather than the less path-dependent technological and economic conditions. If we refer to any context as explicitly history-dependent, especially cultural context, we can regard contextualization as indigenous with the explicit implications of historical perspective. In sum, if we perceive "context" narrowly and explicitly with its local (spatial) and historical (temporal) connotations, we can regard contextualization as indigenous; if we view contextualization broadly, it is not the same as indigenous research. However, most scholars do not confine their notion of contextualization to the historical and cultural dimension. Hence, contextualized research is not necessarily the same as indigenous research.

Third, contextualization is not always required in indigenous research. For instance, at Stage 4, the geocentric approach does not require much contextualization. On the contrary, it has to lighten the role of context at the last and most advanced stage of indigenous research. In sum, contextualized and indigenous streams do have much overlap, but the two also have major distinctions. Consequently, the two are two different constructs that should be implicitly mixed up.

2. Is it necessary to substitute context-sensitive research with context-specific research?

There seem to be a consensus that contextualization contains two typical approaches: context-sensitive one for comparative research, and context-specific one for local research (e.g., Tsui, 2004; Whetten, 2009). Similar to the relationship between emic (local) and etic (global) approaches, the two approaches differ fundamentally in purpose and assumption (Morrison et al., 1999). Related to the first debate, I agree that both approaches can be indigenous research if, and only if, they adopt the local perspective. In other words, we face the question if we need to engage in the emic or context-specific research in terms of developing the Chinese theories of management or just the etic or context-sensitive research in terms of applying the theories of Chinese management (Barney & Zhang, 2009; Whetten,
I believe that the notion of emic-etic duality is equally applicable to the idea of contextualization, with both common and unique contents in a local context as compared to other contexts. Consistent with the perspective of duality, the context-sensitive and context-specific approaches can both become indigenous research because both can adopt a local perspective, and each can engage in indigenous research from a unique viewpoint, with the context-sensitive approach focusing on the etic content in contrast to the context-specific approach focusing on the emic content. Hence, it is unnecessary to substitute the formal with the latter, or vice versa. In fact, both approaches exist at two stages, with the context-sensitive approach at Stage 2 and the context-specific approach at Stage 3 (see Table 1).

However, I must point out that the above two approaches are not the only approaches available for indigenous research. The last and most advanced approach, i.e., the geocentric approach, is not part of contextualized research. Consistent with the duality nature of each phenomenon and context, there can be two basic definitions of indigenous research: one looser, broader, and multi-emic definition for the context-sensitive research, and one tighter, narrower, and single-emic definition for context-specific research (cf. Tsui, 2004; Whetten, 2009). As a duality, these two definitions mutually affirm as well as mutually negate in different aspects and/or at different times, but such affirmation and negation are always relative only to different degrees rather than being absolute (Li, 1998, 2008). This idea applies adequately to the link between the context-sensitive and context-specific approaches as interdependent, interactive, and interpenetrative elements of a duality.

3. Is context-sensitive research sufficient so as to substitute context-specific research?

I take issue with the broad claim (e.g., Whetten, 2009) that there is little need for taking local perspective as long as we are highly sensitive to the context of a local phenomenon. I understand that contextual sensitivity is critical, but we should never mix the sensitivity of an outsider with that of an insider because they are never the same. The local perspective (deep contextualization and context-specific theory-building) is definitely required to explain the truly unique and novel part of any local phenomenon. An adapted foreign perspective, no matter how sensitive it is, cannot be the same as a
local perspective. This is similar to the doomed claim of “if I were you”, which will not work simply because “you can never be me”. For instance, indigenous research often requires not only the addition of unique contextual moderators (Z), but also the redefinitions of both independent (X) and dependent variables (Y) as locally relevant, due to the local perspectives above and beyond the effect of Z. In this sense, it is the novel local perspective that defines the nature of indigenous research given the unique nature of local phenomenon. If a local phenomenon is not unique, there is no need for local perspective, thus no novel value of indigenous research above and beyond universal research. In this sense, context-sensitive research is insufficient for indigenous research, so both context-sensitive research (typically in the form of testing the extant theories from the West) and context-specific research (typically in the form of building novel theories deriving from local perspectives) are necessary as a duality.

Whetten (2009) also argued that indigenous research is useful if, and only if, the Western ideas and theories fail to explain the unique and novel local phenomenon. I strongly disagree. I argue that we can legitimately start building indigenous theories regardless if the Western theories fail to apply to the local phenomenon. My view is based on the assumption that any local phenomenon must have some unique and novel aspects by default. If not, this is not a local phenomenon but a global one. The real issue is if we want to focus on the unique and novel aspects. If we do, it is indigenous (emic); if we do not, it is universal (etic). Despite the etic (to find or explain the similarity across cultures) or emic (to find or explain the distinction across cultures) purpose and focus, similarity and distinction can be treated as a duality in any phenomenon, like the duality of local and global requirements, thus the necessary values of both etic and emic research. Further, in addition to the emic approach, the etic approach also has to be contextualized. For the etic, we must specify the boundaries of its applications in terms of aspects, time, and degree. For the emic, we have to highlight the uniqueness and novelty of its local context so as to explain the part that cannot be explained by the etic approach. In other words, the emic and etic approaches constitute a duality to mutually affirm and negate toward a geocentric framework.
I can illustrate the interactive links between the dimensions of context-sensitivity (the attitude of researchers in terms of the degree of their focus on the unique or common characters of a phenomenon) and context-specificity (the uniqueness of phenomenal characters in terms of the degree of their local distinctiveness relative to other characters). I posit that the two dimensions constitute another duality, thus related to the emic and etic approaches in different aspects and/or at different times, both to different degrees, as another 2 x 2 matrix (see Table 2 for details). This is to clarify the distinction and link between context-specificity and context-sensitivity.

As shown in Table 2, the dimension of context-sensitivity is not always important since it is not absolutely required for indigenous research. However, the dimension of context-specificity is more important because it is necessary for the more important forms of indigenous research. Specifically, geocentric research, as the ultimate ideal of indigenous research (Stage 4) is only associated with low context-sensitivity in contrast to comparative research as the weak form of indigenous research (Stage 2) with high context-sensitivity. However, neither dimension alone is sufficient, but they are by default linearly correlated. Put it differently, context-sensitive research should be required for all studies across the world, including both universal (etic/global) and indigenous (emic/local) approaches. Nobody can argue against being context-sensitive, as it has the absolute truism. However, context-sensitive research is insufficient for indigenous research due to its failure to highlight the urgently required move toward the exploration of locally derived unique and novel constructs and theories, which is highlighted by the dimension of context-specificity (Stages 3 and 4 beyond Stages 1 and 2).

Further, the narrow focus on the context-sensitive application of Western theories is based on an implicit, but questionable, assumption. This assumption implies that the Western theories, even though also indigenous from the West (Yang, 2000), tend to be superior to the potential theories built from the indigenous perspective in the East. The advocates of this view seem to assert that the Western
theories are early-movers and solidly established, so there is little need to reinvent the wheel in the East unless and until one has the sufficient evidence about the serious failures of the Western theories. They also seem to claim the unconditional validity of Western theories. If the assumption and implications of Western superiority are valid, we will have to accept the argument to call off most indigenous research. Unfortunately, the assumption and implications are ill-founded. Many Western scholars recognize that the Western theories are fragmented like a “weed-patch, rather than a well tended garden” (Pfeffer, 1993: 616). Also, many Western scholars admit that most Western theories are not contextualized (e.g., Johns, 2006; Whetten, 2009). Hence, how can the Western theories serve as the exemplary role models for the rest of the world to emulate? There are no perfect theories in the West to even explain the local phenomenon in the West per se (Meyer, 2007). Consequently, how should we be expected to borrow such theories and apply them to the phenomena in the East? Put it bluntly, should every country in the world adopt the American capitalist system as the presumed best before proven otherwise? Don’t we assume that the Japanese scholars have their rights to build their own unique theories before they have exhausted the options from the West? If they had no theories of their own, there would have been no success story of Japan. The conclusion is that there are no perfect theories to borrow. We must go back to the premise that context-sensitive theory-testing and context-specific theory-building are equally valid and should be given equal chances without presuming the superiority or priority of either. The two should be regarded as a duality for the Yin-Yang Balance.

THE METHODOLOGY FOR INDIGENOUS RESEARCH

Method and Integrative Trajectory

After the above discussion to explicate the local-oriented trajectory of indigenous research, I now turn to the methodological issues for indigenous research, including the integrative trajectory and specific methods to address the content and process of a multi-emic research agenda.

The overall trajectory of indigenous research across multiple countries is summarized by Figure 1. Figure 1 is an integration of the models of Morris and colleagues (1999) and Enriquez (1990). This
integration lies in the holistic, dynamic and duality balances between the emic and etic approaches as well as exploration and exploitation as two paired multi-cultural approaches, thus being the Yin-Yang Balances to mutually affirm and mutually negate in different aspects at different times to different degrees, in line with the Golden Rule of Balanced Harmony (Chen, 2002; Li, 2008). From the outset, I clarify that Figure 1 represents an overall trajectory of two paired approaches (integrative) in contrast to Table 1 with a typology of four separate ones (local-oriented).

The primary rationale for Figure 1 is that the geocentric approach is not a form of homogenous universalism but an emic-etic integration in terms of a mosaic-style unity-in-diversity toward an overall framework. Indigenous or emic research is not confined to the goal of explaining unique phenomena at the local level for their own sake; they often bear some global implications. For instance, *guanxi* is the Chinese version of social capital that exists everywhere in the world with a shared core of informal relationship that appears in specific forms distinctive only to different degrees in different aspects and/or at different times. Another case is *paternalistic leadership*, a phenomenon not confined to the Chinese context; even though it is perhaps more pronounced in China, it can be found everywhere in the world (Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008) as an integral part of a mosaic-style geocentric theory. Hence, emic constructs and theories as diverse perspectives from different cultures can be integrated so as to enrich all toward a more complete, mosaic-style picture with an overlapped core and diverse unique details (e.g., the key link between micro and macro, with the macro as a mosaic pattern of diverse micro components). In other words, mosaic metaphor reflects the duality of etic-emic integration as a unity-in-diversity.

We should take the concepts, methods and theories in the West as emic or indigenous research in its own special context, no more or no less imperative than the emic research in the East (Yang, 2000; cf. Morris et al., 1999). However, we have to acknowledge that the West has been the early-mover in
modern times, so the East, as the latecomer, tends to start by “importing” from the West. Nonetheless, there is no reason why the East cannot catch up innovatively via either basic or advanced exploration. Further, as the latecomer, the East may even have some latecomer advantages. Finally, if we develop geocentric constructs and theories, the cultural perspectives of both West and East will be integrated, regardless the status of early-mover or latecomer. In sum, I have outlined an integrative framework of indigenous research with both the typology of four local-oriented approaches and the trajectory of two integrative paired ones.

In particular, the East has the unique advantages of being a latecomer. It can avoid the mistakes made in the West, such as the premature dominance of a few paradigms at the expense of diverse views; the premature emphasis on quantitative methods at the expense of rich qualitative methods, and also the premature fragmentation into various narrow disciplinary domains at the expense of interdisciplinary integration. Further, the East has the advantage of its rich historical wisdoms to tap into, similar to the case of the West in rediscovering the Greek classics during the Renaissance and Enlightenment (Lloyd, 1996, 2007). For instance, the Yin-Yang Balance and the Golden Rule of Balanced Harmony, widely regarded as the dual cores of Chinese traditional wisdoms (Graham, 1986), are critical for reversing the fragmented, static and unbalanced trends driven primarily by Aristotle’s formal logic of “either/or” and secondarily by Hegel’s dialectical logic of “both/or” (Li, 1998, 2008). We should promote the holistic, dynamic and duality research from the East to remedy the prevailing problems in the Western research (Chen, 2002, 2008; Li, 1998, 2008). The unique value of Yin-Yang Balance will be discussed in more detail later.

Concerning the specific methods for indigenous research in general and those for Chinese management research in particular, we should adopt an open mind, especially toward qualitative methods. It is appropriate to adopt more inductive and synthesis-based qualitative methods for the purpose of building novel constructs and theories at the early stages of indigenous research. In this sense, such qualitative methods as grounded theory method and case study method are the most
appropriate for the indigenous research at the current stage. Only at the later stages when indigenous constructs and theories are well developed will the quantitative methods for theory-testing become necessary. Only then should we adopt more deductive and analytical quantitative methods, such as large-sample statistical analysis and structural modeling. The most urgent need at the present time is to develop more indigenous constructs and theories (unique and novel) via qualitative methods, which are the dual goals of the indigenous research at Stages 2 and 3.

It is worth noting that social research (I deliberately avoid the term “social science” due to my differentiation between social research and natural science), including indigenous research, which is rooted in the cultural and historical contexts of each locality, cannot and also should not imitate the so-called “scientific” methods commonly adopted in natural sciences (see Bandura, 1999; Kim & Park, 2005 for reviews). However, the methods prevailing in the social research in the West are those used in natural sciences. I take issue with this tendency by questioning and challenging the “naïve” positivism in the social research in the West. What is needed in social research is an integration of positivism and constructivism because social research involves inter-subjectivity when both object and subject in the research are human agents (Bandura, 1999; Kim & Park, 2005). I share the view for the inseparability of objective and subjective aspects in social research (Polanyi, 1968). Based on this view, I posit that qualitative methods (suitable for studying the content and process of inter-subjective social phenomena) are much more valuable to social research than quantitative ones (more appropriate for studying the content and process of primarily objective natural phenomena). In this sense, qualitative methods are more valuable to indigenous research (as social research by default), especially for its theory-building at the exploratory stages (Stages 2 and 3 in Tables 1 and 2).

To reflect the above-mentioned issues (i.e., the integrative trajectory and specific methods), a process model for conducting indigenous research has been proposed by Cheng and colleagues (2009). A related model for developing a measurement scale has also been suggested by Farh and colleagues (2006). Integrating my definition, local-oriented typology (Stages 2, 3 and 4) and integrative trajectory
with the above two models (Cheng et al., 2009; Farh et al., 2006), I can build an integrative framework. Applying it to the specific methodological approaches to indigenous research, I propose three major steps as three concrete approaches to indigenous research (cf. Hwang, 2006; Tsui, 2006): the micro-emic, macro-emic, and macro-geocentric steps.

First, the research at Stage 2 can gain inspirations from a comparative study of *Western and Eastern distinctions* in a similar phenomenon (e.g., guanxi vs. non-guanxi ties; paternalistic vs. non-paternalistic leadership) as well as paired cultural values (e.g., long-term vs. short-term; collectivism vs. individualism). In this regard, the focus here is to specify multi-cultural diversity so as to develop some unique and novel micro perspectives (related to unique and novel characters of a similar phenomenon across different local contexts at the individual level) as well as from the micro perspective to the meso perspectives (related to unique and novel characters at the collective level). I term this “micro-emic” step or approach.

Second, the research at Stage 3 can gain inspirations from the Chinese classical thoughts (e.g., Confucianism and Taoism) as well as the Chinese values (e.g., context and harmony). In this regard, the focus here is to develop some unique and novel macro perspectives of Chinese assumptions or beliefs that are deeply-held and taken for granted (i.e., the Yin-Yang Balance as a unique and novel frame of thinking as well as the Golden Rule of Balanced Harmony as the central application of the Yin-Yang Balance) as well as from the macro perspectives to the meso perspectives (related to the unique and novel values of Chinese culture, such as context and harmony, which are derived from the assumptions or beliefs of Confucianism and Taoism). I term this the “macro-emic” step or approach.

Third, the research at Stage 4 can integrate the above two approaches at Stages 2 and 3, ranging from the micro-level perspectives to the macro perspectives and vice versa. In practice, however, the above two approaches are often intertwined with much overlap. One particular blend is to reconstruct the extant Western theories from the macro Eastern perspectives (i.e., the assumptions of Yin-Yang Balance and Golden Rule of Balanced Harmony). For instance, the controversial debates over many
paradoxical pairs can be readily reconciled via the Yin-Yang Balance, including the unity-diversity balance for team design; the flexibility-stability balance for alliance network; the transaction value-and-cost balance for the theory of the firm; the know-how and know-who balance for knowledge typology; the control-trust balance for governance mode; the teacher-student balance for effective learning; the determinism-choice balances for strategy formulation; the agency-structure balance for institutional change and stability; the formal-informal balance for institutional context, and the global-local balance for multinational strategy). This unique and novel approach can be applied to many controversial issues of indigenous research in particular and even non-indigenous research in general (e.g., Li, 1998, 2007, 2008). Because it is geocentric in its end and macro in its means, I term this “macro-geocentric” step or approach. I will revisit this issue later in the section of Conclusion. In sum, I identify the “micro-emic”, “macro-emic”, and “macro-geocentric” approaches as three concrete steps.

The Major Debates Concerning the Methodology

To further flash out the methodological confusion regarding indigenous research, I now turn to the major debates over the approaches to indigenous research (see the Editor’s Forum on the Future of Chinese Management Research in Management and Organization Review, 2009). The ongoing debates are largely responsible for the methodological controversies regarding the overall pattern of indigenous research on Chinese management.

1. What is the ideal logical sequence of context-sensitive research and context-specific research?

It is clear from my earlier discussion about the definition of indigenous research, multi-cultural research (i.e., context-sensitive research) is an integral part of indigenous research, given the fact that leveraging multi-cultural perspectives is effective for generating unique and novel insights (Chen et al., 2009), which can be accomplished by adopting a local perspective. However, it is also clear from my earlier discussion that the context-sensitive or multi-cultural comparative research is insufficient for indigenous research. There is a debate over which of the two should start first in the overall pattern of indigenous research. Some argue for context-sensitive research to be first (e.g., Whetten, 2009), while
others recommend that context-specific research should start first (e.g., Yang, 2000). Even though I recognize that both approaches can start in practice (in practice, the context-sensitive research at Stage 2 often proceeds before the context-sensitive one at Stage 3), I tend to concur with the view that it is more reasonable to start context-specific research first because context-specific research should be the necessary input for more effective context-sensitive research at the later stage. In this sense, when we conceptualize indigenous research as an integrative trajectory (see Figure 1) rather than a local-oriented typology (see Table 1), we will have a different conclusion in terms of a logical sequence of indigenous research. In this sense, integrative and local-oriented perspectives constitute another duality.

I would argue that it is desirable to conduct context-specific local-oriented research first before multi-cultural research. In fact, the Western theories have been developed from the unique perspective of the West (Yang, 2000), so they are indigenous to the West despite their universal claims. Without local-oriented research first, an integrative research tends to be dominated by the potential biases of Western perspective to straightjacket the Eastern perspective, so the latter will have a harder time to emerge. In practice, there has been another way around. Most scholars have engaged in integrative research before context-specific research. In fact, there have been very few involved in the strong indigenous research (context-specific research), which, as I have argued earlier, is urgently needed despite the institutional barriers to its emergence (Leung, 2007; Tsui, 2007). Hence, we should particularly encourage the strong indigenous research.

As I have discussed earlier, cultural diversity is critical as input for cultural integration as the ultimate output of indigenous research. In particular, we have to understand that rich cultural diversity (in contrast to cultural similarity) is the sole source of unique and novel insights, thus necessary, input for cultural integration later. In this aspect, context-specific research is more powerful than context-sensitive research since the former is more effective in identifying the unique and novel characters of a particular local context, while the latter is often tinted by its focus on using a universal measurement to compare diverse cultures. In other words, the latter has the bigger difficulty in specifying the subtle and
unique diversity revealed more sharply from a local perspective. My argument is that novel insight can hardly be inspired by multi-cultural similarity because one is already too familiar with and blindfolded by one's own perspective, so all “other” perspectives seem almost the same as one's own (thus no clear multi-cultural diversity). To me, similarity can hardly inspire novel insight. That is exactly the reason why we need the diverse local perspectives to generate insights for novelty. Without cultural diversity, there will be hardly novel frame-breaking insight. In particular, we can connect diversity with novelty (uniqueness \(\rightarrow\) diversity \(\rightarrow\) interaction \(\rightarrow\) novelty). Cultural diversity is absolutely necessary for multi-cultural research to generate novel insights. I agree that finding cultural difference is not an end in itself, but it is the necessary first step for generating novel insights. In this sense, those organizations devoted to the research on local management can pursue two core goals: (1) to introduce the local scholars to the best research in the West (outside-in with the import of Western insights), and (2) to introduce the Western scholars to the best local research (inside-out with the export of Eastern insights). The latter is especially critical given the fact that virtually no scholars in the West engage in the strong indigenous research beyond the West, while most in the East are simply interested in extending the Western ideas and theories (White, 2002). We have to reverse such biased trends.

2. What are the links between context-sensitive, context-specific, and geocentric approaches?

As I argued earlier, all three approaches are necessary for indigenous research as three stages in a local-oriented typology (Table 1), with the first two as critical for the generation and development of unique local perspectives so as to compare with other cultural perspectives for novel insights. Together, all local perspectives identify the common elements and also specify the unique and novel elements to be integrated into geocentric constructs and theories. I have also argued that no two phenomena are 100% different or similar in all aspects and at all times due to the fact that each phenomenon must have its unique and novel elements as well as its common and shared elements, so the existing theories from the West can surely explain certain parts of Chinese phenomena, especially with required adaptation. Hence, we must not waste our time reinventing the wheel on the part that can be properly explained by
the Western theories (exploitation). Our main contributions should come from our attempts to build new constructs and theories so as to explain the part that cannot be explained by the Western theories no matter how much we try to adapt or modify such theories (exploration). The distinction between exploitation and exploration is critical in the overall trajectory of multi-cultural indigenous research in Figure 1 relative to the local-oriented typology in Table 1. In particular, exploitation is central to Stage 1 and Stage 2 (to a less extent for Stage 2), while exploration is central to Stage 3 and Stage 4 (to a less extent for Stage 4). In other words, the distinction and link between the three approaches as three stages in Table 1 and the two approaches (exploration and exploitation as a duality) across multiple stages in Figure 1 lie at the holistic, dynamic and balanced link between emic and etic perspectives.

Further, we must evoke the exploration-exploitation duality again to explain the methodological link between the local-oriented typology (Table 1) and integrative trajectory (Figure 1). With context-sensitive and context-specific approaches being complementary and reciprocal (consistent with the Yin-Yang Balance), the former is more related to the exploitation of extent foreign constructs and theories, while the latter is more related to the exploration of unique and novel local constructs and theories. In general, exploitation is related to the deduction-oriented quantitative methods for theory-testing, while exploration tends to associate with the induction-oriented qualitative methods for theory-building. What we have to stress is that there is no inherent superiority of quantitative or qualitative methods; the only issue is if they are utilized adequately for the right research purposes. Both methods can be rigorous if they are applied properly, and both can be relevant if they are properly selected. For instance, the qualitative methods, including case study and grounded theory, are more appropriate than all quantitative methods for the purpose of theory-building in indigenous research (Tsui, 2006).

3. Who are the best positioned to engage in indigenous research?

Tsui (2004) identifies two primary causes for the lack of indigenous research effort among the Chinese scholars: the lack of solid training (increasingly irrelevant given the rapidly improving training of Chinese scholars both at home and abroad), and the lack of incentive due to the fact that publishing
such papers in the Western journals is tough (still relevant given the strong bias against any indigenous research other than the West, also see Meyer, 2006). Other explanations are the lack of self-confidence (e.g., Mayer, 2006); the lack of research infrastructure (Au, 2007), and the lack of knowledge about the Chinese traditions (Cheng et al., 2009). I argue that the above reasons are necessary but insufficient. An ignored reason is what I call "insider’s blind spot". If the Chinese scholars know how to delineate the comparative boundaries of Western and Eastern contexts and phenomena, they can easily contribute to the extant literature. In this sense, they can turn their Chinese uniqueness into an asset, rather than a liability, to publish in the top English journals. Hence, the lack of training, incentive, confidence, infrastructure, and knowledge are only secondary as compared to the lack of cross-cultural sensitivity to avoid the insider’s blind spot. The best approach (the most urgent) is to sharpen such sensitivity so as to gain access to unique and novel insights.

A good approach to sharpening intercultural sensitivity is to be equally knowledgeable about the distinctive perspectives from the West and East, which is difficult to accomplish by a single scholar, but much easier by a team of scholars (Van Glinow & Teagarden, 2009). Within the intercultural team, a critical member is the one who is a bi-cultural and bi-contextual in-outsider. Such a bi-cultural and bi-contextual broker can be readily found among those Chinese who have studied and worked both inside and outside China (the very idea was suggested by Whetten in a private talk with the author at the 2009 Academy of Management conference). It is worth noting that the active scholars in indigenous research in various countries are those who were trained in the West but returned to their home countries (Kim & Park, 2005). In this sense, the overseas and returned Chinese can play a big role in the team-oriented indigenous research. However, non-Chinese scholars can also play a key role if they are knowledgeable about the Chinese culture and history (Meyer, 2007), but such scholars are rare (Cheng et al., 2006).

THE YIN-YANG BALANCE AS AN ILLUSTRATION

In this section, I illustrate my integrated framework in general and macro-geocentric approach in particular by evoking the Yin-Yang Balance as a unique and novel frame of thinking. Specifically,
the Yin-Yang Balance is a legitimate frame of thinking with scientific implications, especially potent for scientifically exploring extremely complex phenomena, as evidenced by the advances in sciences and technologies in the history of China before the late Western modernization (Needham, 1956), and it is further evidenced by the cases of the most prominent figures in the history of scientific discovery in the West (e.g., Leibniz, Jung, and Bohr). In particular, the Yin-Yang Balance is an open system (Gu, 2005) to accommodate a balance between “either/or” and “both/and”. It is distinctive from Aristotle’s formal logic, which is mechanistic and reductionist due to its absolute denial of potential contradictions with a permanent “either/or” (but never “both/and”). It is also distinctive from Hegel’s dialectical logic, which is similarly mechanistic and reductionist due to its absolute requirement for the resolution of any transitory contradiction with a temporary “both/and” but ultimate “either/or”, so I term it “both/or” (Li, 1998; Peng & Nisbett, 1999). In contrast, the Yin-Yang Balance can integrate “either/or” with “both/and” in relative terms for a permanent “either/and”. In this sense, I take the Yin-Yang Balance as a duality in contrast to Aristotle’s logic as an explicit dualism and Hegel’s logic as an implicit dualism (due to its temporary tolerance, but its ultimate denial, of contradiction with its ultimate goal to resolve all contradictions, Nisbett, 2003).

It is important to note that Hegel’s dialectical logic is apparently inconsistent with Aristotle’s formal logic, but the two are fundamentally consistent due to their shared ultimate goal of resolving contradictions as compatible (Peng & Nisbett, 1999). Hegel simply allows the temporary yet absolute contradictions as the means in the recursive process of negation for the final solution of contradictions at the higher level. In contrast, the Yin-Yang Balance never regards contradictions as problems, but as the natural and organic core of both existence (ontology) and knowledge (epistemology); it treats all contradictions as permanent yet relative (contrary yet complementary), like the two sides of the same coin at the same level, thus non-resolvable and desirable at all levels. Further, the Yin-Yang Balance is apparently consistent with Aristotle’s formal logic, but the two are fundamentally inconsistent due to the conflict of ends regarding contradictions. However, the Yin-Yang Balance can be integrated with
Aristotle’s formal logic by revising the latter to accommodate the *relatively weak* form of contradiction (thus permanent yet relative) given the ontological of mutual interdependence and interpenetration (e.g., the two sides of the same coin) in contrast to the *absolutely strong* form of contradiction for mutual negation (thus temporary yet absolute). Finally, the Yin-Yang Balance can be integrated with Hegel’s dialectical logic by revising the latter to accommodate the *relatively weak* form of contradiction given the ontological nature of mutual interdependence and interpenetration in contrast to the *absolutely strong* form of contradiction. In sum, the Yin-Yang balance can be expected to have the potential to integrate all extant logical systems into a meta-logical or meta-frame of thinking by accommodating both mutual negation and mutual affirmation between two opposites as a duality (see Table 3).

To further illustrate why and how to apply the Yin-Yang Balance, let’s refer to the debate over global-local dual requirements. There are two basic perspectives about the global-local link (Prahalad & Doz, 1987). One view asserts that the two are only contrary so that we can be either global or local in perspective and strategy, but the other view claims that the two are absolutely complementary rather than contrary. The above two views delineate the prevailing typology with four categories: global, local, neither, and both, all assumed to be the case in all aspects at all times (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1998). This approach represents the typical “either/or” logic by either denying the contrary tendencies of global and local forces (in the category of “both”) or denying their complementary tendencies (in the categories of “global”, “local” and “neither”) (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1998). In contrast, the Yin-Yang Balance can help remedy such biases by treating global and local forces as a duality so that they negate and affirm each other in different aspects (e.g., more global in basic R&D and market brand, but more local in applied R&D and market channel), at different times (e.g., initially more local but more global later), but they negate and affirm each other only to different degrees (always relatively more or less without going to the polarized extremes, see Table 4). In this sense, the Yin-Yang Balance can apply to all controversies
and debates in the domain of organization and management research (e.g., competition-cooperation duality, Chen, 2008; exploitation-exploration duality, Li, 2010, and stability-change duality, Farjoin, 2010) as well as the methods of induction and deduction into abduction (Charmaz, 2006).

However, despite the potential of Yin-Yang Balance and macro-geocentric approach, we must reconstruct the Yin-Yang Balance from an indigenous frame to a geocentric one. In this sense, the new challenge to the macro-geocentric approach is to keep an open mind for the integration of Yin-Yang Balance with the emerging logic systems (Kelso & Engstrom, 2006), including fuzzy logic (Zhang & Zhang, 2004) and paraconsistent logic (da Costa & Krause, 2006). In this sense, the macro perspectives will have to undergo their “Renaissance” and “Enlightenment” by integrating the traditional wisdoms with the modern notions, just as the West did in its historical past. Further, the integration of Yin-Yang Balance with the Western logical systems is expected to have the greatest potential to transform the prevailing frames of thinking (e.g., Aristotle’s formal logic and Hegel’s dialectical logic) beyond their limitations of de-contextualization and dualism toward a geocentric meta-frame of thinking as the most appropriate in the trans-modern era (Kelso & Engstrom, 2006; Li, 1998, 2008; Nisbett, 2003). In this sense, the Eastern frame of duality can transform the Western logic of dualism as the biggest potential contribution of indigenous research to the geocentric mosaic.

To further elaborate the above argument, I briefly introduce a new qualitative method, the Yin-Yang Method, which integrates case study method (CSM, Yin, 2009) with grounded theory method (GTM, Glasor & Strauss, 1967). This integrative method offers an alternative to the extant methods of case study (e.g., Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2009) in the sense that the Yin-Yang Method seeks to build an integrative theory upon an ongoing debate between various opposing theories, while the extant CSMs either explore a novel theory based on GTM (Eisenhardt, 1989) or exploit an established theory (Yin, 2009). This distinction can be clearly demonstrated by the following steps of Yin-Yang Method.
First, the Yin-Yang Method recommends a focus on a major issue under a long-standing debate (e.g., the debate over globalization and localization or over competition and cooperation). The reason for this selection is that Yin-Yang Method is best at reconciling and integrating the opposing views. In general, the Yin-Yang Method treats all debates or controversies as Yin-Yang dualities so as to avoid the typical one-sided biases. This has inspired me for the name of this unique and novel method.

Second, after the selection of a debated issue as the focus, the Yin-Yang Method advocates an in-depth review of the literature related to the debate. This literature review is required simply because we must fully understand the perspectives of the opposing sides so as to avoid the problem of “empty head” caused by no prior literature review as prescribed by GTM (Glasor & Strauss, 1967). However, such literature review will not lead to the problem of “closed mind” because it pays equal attention to both sides of the debate so as to keep an open mind (cf. Glasor & Strauss, 1967). This literature review for a theoretical guidance is consistent with the basic requirement of CSM (Yin, 2009), which extends beyond the recommended steps of defining research questions and a priori specification of constructs as well as that of enfolding literature (Eisenhardt, 1989). The purpose of this literature review is to learn about the nature of the debate and the complexity of the debated issue in terms of its holistic content and dynamic process (e.g., the dimensions of content and the stages of process), including the context of the debated issue (Yin, 2009). Hence, this literature review can integrate an open mind with a “full” head for the benefit of a holistic guidance from multiple theories without the cost of theoretical rigidity, thus no premature jump to conclusions (cf. Eisenhardt, 1989; Glasor & Strauss, 1967; Yin, 2009).

Third, based on the literature review, a theoretical sampling will be conducted to select cases as a pair with one best representing one side of the debate and the other best representing the other side, thus one “Yin” case and one “Yang” case. The procedure of theoretical sampling extends the procedure recommended by CSM and GTM (cf. Glasor & Strauss, 1967; Yin, 2009). This procedure is consistent with the recommended multi-case comparative design (Glasor & Strauss, 1967; Yin, 2009). The paired cases will have the best potential to highlight not only the distinctions between polarized extreme cases.
but also their interplays (Pettigrew, 1990), with their maximum forced comparisons (Eisenhardt, 1989).
In this sense, the paired “Yin” and “Yang” cases offer the best opportunity for comparative case studies beyond the typical design of replication logic because the paired cases can most “transparently” reveal the holistic, dynamic and duality features (Pettigrew, 1990; cf. Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2009).

Fourth, the data collection and data analysis in the Yin-Yang will follow the recommendations by GTM and CSM, including various dimensions or types of triangulation (Yin, 2009). However, the Yin-Yang Method is highly conducive to triangulation in both data collection and data analysis because it constantly sharpens the cross-case comparisons, as compared to the traditional cases for replication. Further, the Yin-Yang Method maximizes the overlap and integration between data collection and data analysis, especially between within-case and cross-case comparisons rather than having the two done in a sequence (cf. Eisenhardt, 1989). Hence, the Yin-Yang Method often applies to a cross-level design by selecting multiple pairs of cases at different levels (e.g., individual, team, firm, industry, and country) as different units of analysis. Finally, with the polarized cases, the Yin-Yang Method provides the best opportunity for maximum falsifications due to the nature of “Yin” and “Yang” cases as polarized ones in pairs (cf. Eisenhardt, 1989).

Finally, due to the above benefits, the Yin-Yang Method has the best potential to generate the maximum forced comparisons and falsifications regarding constructs, theories, and hypotheses, thus highly conducive to theoretical saturation with multiple pairs of “Yin” and “Yang” cases in a recursive process and abductive reasoning (cf. Eisenhardt, 1989; Glasor & Strauss, 1967). In general terms, we can regard Eisenhardt’s CSM as the best for discovering little-known issues with new theories; Yin’s CSM as the best for extending well-known topics with extant theories; Yin-Yang Method as the best for resolving debated perspectives with integrative theories. Hence, for the purpose of building theories through case studies, Eisenhardt’s CSM and Yin-Yang Method are much valuable than Yin’s CSM. In sum, the Yin-Yang Method illustrates the unique value of Yin-Yang Balance as an indigenous frame of thinking with critical implications for developing geocentric theories.
CONCLUSION

With a growing recognition that all research is indigenous in nature, I have highlighted the unique and novel value of indigenous research as emic approach toward the ultimate vision of emic-etic integration as a geocentric mosaic of knowledge. Hence, there are two equally valid and equally critical paired approaches to each phenomenon and its elements, with one focusing on the common core from the etic perspective, and the other focusing on the distinctive versions of the core from the emic perspectives. Further, the other paired approaches are exploration for theory-building as well as exploitation for theory-testing. A holistic, dynamic and duality link of any paired opposites as a duality creates the synergy toward a body of geocentric knowledge as a unity-in-diversity. In particular, the very value of Yin-Yang Balance demonstrates the benefit of indigenous research for the local-oriented typology of context-sensitive, context-specific, and geocentric approaches as well as the integrative one with exploration and exploitation as one paired duality, and emic and etic as the other paired duality. In fact, I have applied the Yin-Yang Balance to the major issues related to indigenous research, especially the macro-geocentric approach and the Yin-Yang Method.

For future indigenous research, even though all approaches do have their own distinctive values, macro-geocentric approach (e.g., the application of Yin-Yang Balance to the debates and paradoxes in the Western theories) has the most unique and novel advantages. First, it is the most efficient because we do not need to reinvent the wheel. We can apply the macro perspectives from the East to the extent theories from the West. Second, it is the most effective because we can directly reconcile and integrate the extant debates and paradoxes in the Western theories. Third, it can integrate the typology of stages (Table 1) with the trajectory of approaches (Figure 1) as the most fundamental to indigenous research. Fourth, it advocates the catch-up by the East as the latecomer, while recognizing the advantages of the West as the early-mover. Fifth, it is relatively value-free or culture-free since it is a frame of thinking with broad geocentric applications in contrast to those cultural values that are often confined to a single culture. Sixth, it is most likely to make the most novel contributions since it has the greatest potential of
facilitating the needed paradigm shift in the Western research by challenging the taken-for-granted core assumptions in the dualism in the West. Finally, it is the most fundamental approach to the geocentric theory-building because it directly integrates the extant Western theories under the novel auspices of Eastern frame of thinking of duality. For the ultimate goal of advancing the geocentric knowledge, the macro-geocentric approach is of a particular importance, and it should be pursued as the top priority within indigenous research. For instance, Chen (2002, 2008), Fang (2010) and Li (1998, 2005, 2007, 2008) are good examples of indigenous research with strong global implications. For that purpose, the Yin-Yang Method is a valuable supplement to the CSM of Eisenhardt (1989) and that of Yin (2009).

Finally, indigenous research is central to the organizations (e.g., Asia Academy of Management or AAM and International Association of Chinese Management Research or IACMR) devoted to the research on local issues. Such organizations should adopt the dual long-standing goals: (1) to bring the local scholars up to the international standards of quality research (thus an import to inform the local scholars), and (2) to turn the local uniqueness into an international advantage (thus an export to inform foreign scholars). In other words, such organizations and their journal publications are in the business of fostering a balanced trade of multi-emic knowledge as a unity-in-diversity. They also should play a central role of connecting local scholars with foreign scholars for the common purpose of developing the geocentric mosaic. The long-standing goal for such organizations is to establish some indigenous schools of management, such as the Asian and Chinese schools of management.
References


Table 1

A Typology of Indigenous Research (Home-Oriented View)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arrows for the Positive Trends</th>
<th>Exploitation [Basic] [Approach &amp; Outcome]</th>
<th>Exploration [Advanced] [Approach &amp; Outcome]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unilateral/ Separate Impact [Basic]</strong> [Target &amp; Goal]</td>
<td><strong>Western emic-as-etic:</strong> [Non-Indigenous: Stage 1] Adopt extant Western theories (naïve etic as “import”) To apply/verify/confirm Western theories</td>
<td><strong>Eastern emic-as-emic:</strong> [Strong Indigenous: Stage 3] Build novel Eastern theories (isolated emic as “no trade”) To complement/supplement or supersede/substitute Western theories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bilateral/ Joint Impact [Advanced]</strong> [Target &amp; Goal]</td>
<td><strong>Western-Eastern etic-to-emic:</strong> [Weak Indigenous: Stage 2] Find Eastern uniqueness (emic as moderate “export”) To compare/modify/revise Western theories</td>
<td><strong>Western-Eastern emic-and-etic:</strong> [Geocentric: Stage 4] Integrate Western-Eastern theories (balanced emic-emic “trade”) To transform emic theories into a mosaic-style etic core &amp; emic detail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

1. From the perspective of indigenous research in a single country, this framework integrates the duality views of inside vs. outside; endogenous vs. exogenous; divergent vs. convergent; context-specific vs. context-generic; emic vs. etic approaches as well as of export vs. import; creation vs. imitation, and exploration vs. exploitation as the targeted results.
2. *Integration* is a balance between local (emic, home-grown, unilateral, and separate) and global elements (etic, borrowed, bilateral, and joint) as well as between exploitation and exploration under the auspices of the *Yin-Yang Balance* and the *Golden Rule of Balanced Harmony*. 
Table 2
A Typology of Context-Specificity and Context-Sensitivity (Home-Oriented View)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Horizontal: Emit Attribute</th>
<th>Low Context-Specificity [Phenomenon Attribute as Highly Similar]</th>
<th>High Context-Specificity [Phenomenon Attribute as Highly Unique]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vertical: Etic Attitude</td>
<td><em>Weak Etic</em></td>
<td><em>Strong Emic</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Context-Sensitivity</td>
<td><em>Stage 1: Uncritical import</em></td>
<td><em>Stage 4: Integration</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Researcher Attitude</td>
<td>Strong Etic/Weak Emic</td>
<td>Strong Etic/Strong Emic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitive to Similar Attribute]</td>
<td><em>Strong Emic</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Context-Sensitivity</td>
<td><em>Stage 2: Comparative</em></td>
<td><em>Stage 3: Local</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Researcher Attitude</td>
<td>Weak Etic/Weak Emic</td>
<td>Weak Etic/Strong Emic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitive to Unique Attribute]</td>
<td><em>Weak Emic</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table 3
The Similarities and Distinctions between Three Basic Systems of Cognition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Three Logical Systems &amp; Rules</th>
<th>Aristotle’s Formal Logic</th>
<th>Hegel’s Dialectical Logic (Contradiction Solvable)</th>
<th>Yin-Yang Balance (Holistic-Dynamic-Duality)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Law of Identity (For Subject at the Concept Level)</td>
<td>$A = A$ (Absolutely identical)</td>
<td>$A = A'$ (Absolutely different)</td>
<td>$A \approx A$ (Relatively identical &amp; relatively different)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law of Non-Contradiction (For Subject at the Concept Level)</td>
<td>$A \neq -A$ (Absolute Dualism; Explicit Dualism; Consistent but Incomplete)</td>
<td>$A \rightarrow -A$ (Absolute Dualism; Absolute but temporary contradiction as implicit dualism; only as the means for the end or goal of non-contradiction)</td>
<td>$A \approx A + -A$ (minor) (Absolute Dualism; Absolute but temporary contradiction as implicit dualism; only as the means for the end or goal of non-contradiction)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law of the Excluded Middle (For Predicate at the Statement Level)</td>
<td>$X = A$ or $-A$ (Absolute “either/or”; Consistent but Incomplete)</td>
<td>$A + -A \rightarrow A'$ as $X$ (Absolute “both/or”; Contradiction must be resolved at the higher level as sublation or transcendence)</td>
<td>$X \approx A \leftrightarrow -A$ (Relative “either/and” Contradiction cannot be resolved and no need to be resolved as contrary and complementary at the same level)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Illustrations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illustrations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Illustration" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

1. The notions of “absolute” and “relative” refer to the degree or extent of separation or integration of two contrary elements, with full or 100% as “absolute”, and partial or less than 100% as “relative”;
2. The notion of “dualism” refers to an absolute separation of contradictory opposites, while the notion of “duality” refers to a relative separation as well as a relative integration of two contrary yet compatible elements;
3. The notion of “both/or” refers to an absolute yet temporary integration of contrary opposites so as to resolve the contradiction, while the notion of “either/and” refers to the duality of relative “either/or” and relative “both/and”.

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Table 4
The Yin-Yang Balance of Globalization and Localization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To Different Degrees Without Polarized Extremes</th>
<th>Low-Globalization</th>
<th>High-Globalization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Typical either/or dualism: High-Localization in all aspects and/or at all times</td>
<td>Difficult for either/or dualism; Difficult for both/or dualism; Easy for Yin-Yang Duality: High-Localization in some aspects and/or at some times; High-Globalization in other aspects and/or at other times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Difficult for either/or dualism; Easy for both/or dualism; Easy for Yin-Yang Duality: Low-Localization in some aspects and/or at some times; Low-Globalization in other aspects and/or at other times</td>
<td>Typical either/or dualism: High-Globalization in all aspects and/or at all times</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

4. This is a typical one-dimensional dichotomy split into two low-high sub-dimensions;
5. Cells 1 and 4 are the typical cases of either/or logic as mutually negating dualism; Cell 3 is the typical case of both/or logic as mutually affirming dualism, and Cell 2 is the typical case of Yin-Yang Balance as contradictory yet complementary duality.
Figure 1

The Emic-Etic Balance (Integrative View)

Emic Exploration
[West: Indigenous Theory-Building]

Emic Exploitation
[West: Indigenous Theory-Testing]

West-East “Trade”
West as Early-mover

Emic-Etic for Geocentric Exploration
As Balanced “Trade”
[One Common Core as Etic + Each Unique Detail as Emic Toward a Mosaic-style Geocentric Theory]

Emic Exploration
[East: Indigenous Theory-Building]

Emic Exploitation
[East: Indigenous Theory-Testing]

East-West “Trade”
East as Latecomer

Etic-Emic for Geocentric Exploitation
As Balanced “Trade”
[A Mosaic-style Etic-and-Emic Theory Tested in Diverse Indigenous Contexts]
(The Overall West-East “Trade” Pattern: Initial Imbalanced West-East “Trade” Mature Balanced West-East “Trade”)

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