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Daoist Leadership in Psychology: From Theory to Practice

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Abstract

This article includes three parts. First, we will address basic information about Laozi and major principles of Daoist leadership, including *wei wu wei* and water-like leadership styles (i.e., Daoist Big Five as altruism, modesty, flexibility, honesty, and gentleness and perseverance) based on various research (Lee 2003, 2004; Lee, Han, Byron & Fan, 2008; Lee, Yang & Wang, 2009; also see Hackman & Wageman, 2007; Watts, 1975). Second, we will report a preliminary quantitative study (N=261) to measure water-like leadership and personality as Daoist Big Five. We found that Daoist Big-Five (i.e., five Water-like leadership dimensions or styles) are highly correlated, and stable between male and female students and between White and nonwhite students though there were some gender and ethnic variations. Finally, we will discuss how Daoist leadership and Daoist principles, and preliminary findings of Daoist Big Five are related to psychology (e.g., social and cultural psychology, counseling and clinical psychology, and other areas of psychology), concluding with research implications for Asian American leaders and others.

Daoist Leadership in Psychology: From Theory to Practice

“Leadership is a totem in society and a taboo in science” (Moscovici, 1986, p. 249)

Leadership is honored as a totem in mainstream society (Moscovici 1986), but little attention has been paid to research on Eastern or Asian perspectives of leadership in scientific psychology. Specifically, little is known about Chinese Daoism and its implications for leadership in the scientific community as it is considered a taboo or, at the very least, foreign to Western thinking. Though numerous publications have been produced on leadership in the field of psychology and business management (e.g., Bass, 1990; Fiske, Gilbert, & Lindzey, 2010; Hackman & Katz, 2010; Hogg, 2010; Messick, & Kramer, 2005; Pittinsky, 2009; Sherif, 1962; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003), they are characteristic of the concepts and findings involving Western leadership styles and values (e.g., assertiveness, aggressiveness, charisma, independence, control, strong personality, standing out, or masculinity).

In recent years, more research has been conducted on the diversity and dynamism of leadership that challenges our “typical” notions of leadership (e.g., Chen & Lee, 2008; Chin, 2010; Eagly & Chin, 2010). Leadership, including Daoist leadership, is “an object of analysis for the social sciences,” (Moscovici, 1986, p. 242). The aim of this article is to focus on Daoism and Daoist leadership which differ from the Western mainstream perspective both in terms of its theory, application and practice (see Lee, Han, Bryon & Fan, 2008). Daoism is one of the major influential ideological and philosophical beliefs

in China, which, to a large extent, affects not only the behavior, life styles, and leadership styles of Asians and/or Asian Americans but also many other peoples around the world.

First, we will address basic information about Laozi and major principles of Daoist leadership, including *wei wu wei* and water-like leadership styles, based on various research (Lee 2003, 2004; Lee, Han, Byron & Fan, 2008; also see Hackman & Wageman, 2007; Watts, 1975). Second, we will report a preliminary study of the quantitative measurement of Daoist water-like leadership and personality. Third, we will discuss how Daoist leadership and Daoist principles can be incorporated into our understanding of psychology (i.e., social, cultural, counseling, clinical, etc.). Finally, we will conclude with implications for research on Daoist leadership.

Laozi's Daoism and Daoist Leadership Theory

Laozi's given name was Li Er. He was born in 640 BCE near the Yangtze River in central China during the time of the Zhou dynasty where he served as an official historian (Lee, 2003; Lee, Han et al, 2008). The first reliable reference to Laozi is located in the *Shiji*, translated *Records of the Grand Historian*, in 100 BCE by the Chinese historian Sima Qian (Sima, 1994). According to the *Shiji*, Laozi left his job as Keeper of the Royal Archives and journeyed west to the state of Qin. Reaching the pass of Han Gu Guan, Laozi encountered Yin Xi, the pass guard, who pleaded with Laozi to record his teachings. His writings resulted in the production of the *Dao de jing*, translated as *Book of the Way* (Roberts, 2004). The *Dao de jing*, as it was originally intended by Laozi, expounds a philosophy of human existence in relation to the surrounding universe (Lee,

2004). With the exception of the Bible, the *Dao De Jing* is the most widely read and translated book in circulation (Lee, Han, Bryron & Fan, 2008).

Key Concepts: Dao and De

Daoism can be broken into two basic components, *Dao* and *De*, from which all other ideas are derived. *Dao* can be understood as a road, a path, the way it is, the way of nature, the way of ultimate reality, and the law of nature (Lee, 2003, 2004; also see Addiss & Lombardo, 1993, p. xiii). It refers to not only the way in which the universe functions, but also the fundamental undifferentiated (homogenous) reality from which the universe first evolved. It also implies that humans are confined or obedient to the natural law. *Dao* is used by some other schools of Chinese philosophy to signify a specific mission or code of conduct. Meaning to the Daoist, however, is increasingly comprehensive. It invokes a metaphysical principle which initiates and maintains the totality of existence giving way to endless diversity. In brief *Dao* is naturalistic or the way it is.

Following *Dao* (i.e., naturalistic), *De* is understood as virtue, character, influence, moral force, or more generally humanitarianism. That is, people should adhere to human laws and act in a compassionate and humane manner. The Chinese character *De* is constructed of three elements: an ideograph signifying “to go,” a symbol meaning “straight” and a pictograph signifying “the heart” (Blakney, 1955, p. 38). The combination of these elements in the creation of the character *De* suggests motivation by a sort of internal goodness or integrity (Lee, 2003, 2004). Simply put, *De* is humanistic or humanitarian.

Both *Dao* and *De* are complimentary in essence. The former means that humans are in harmony with nature, and the latter that humans are in harmony with one another. *Dao* is the process of reality itself, the way things combine while continuously transforming. It reflects the Chinese belief that change is the fundamental character of reality, just like *yin* and *yang* specified in the *Yi jing* (also known as *I-Ching*), translated *Classic of Change (or the Book of Change)*. *Dao* results from the harmony produced through the balancing of *yin* and *yang* in the world. As described in Chapter 25 of *Dao De Jing*, first we human beings should follow or be consistent with the way Earth works (*ren fa di*). Second, the way Earth works follows or is consistent with the way Heaven works (*di fa tian*). Third, the way Heaven works follows or is consistent with the way *Dao* works (*tian fa dao*). Finally, the way *Dao* works follows or is consistent with the way Nature or Universe works (*dao fa zi ran*)- (also see Lee 2003 and Lee, Han et al. 2008). *Dao* produces all things in the world and all things carry *yin* and *yang* as follows (see Lee, 2003; Lao Tzu, 1993; *Laozi's Dao De Jing*; 1961):

The Dao produced the One.

The One produced the Two.

The Two produced the Three.

The Three produced All Things.

All Things carry Yin and hold to Yang.

Their blended influence brings Harmony (Laozi: Chapter 42).

What did Laozi mean by *One, Two, and Three*? *One* which is produced by *Dao* (or the natural course) means the entire universe. *Two* means the *Yin-Yang*, and *Three* means heaven, earth and human which produce all things (Fei, 1984). For example, farmers

(part of human beings) who grow agricultural products—e.g., wheat, rice, fruit, corns or beans usually cannot grow them without any farmland (i.e., earth-related); crops cannot be harvested without water or rain, sun, suitable weather and temperature (i.e., heaven-related in the ancient time). Almost everything consists of *yin* and *yang*; life and death, growth and declining, hot and cold, wet and dry, male and female, assertiveness and gentleness, and leadership and followership. Everything or every phenomenon appears and disappears naturally in the universe which follows *Dao*.

Psychology of Daoism and Daoist Leadership

How is the Daoist philosophy offered by Laozi understood in the context of leadership? Based on prior research (Lee, 2003; Lee, Yang & Wang, 2009; Lee, Han et al, 2008), two major principles are in order here. One is *Wei-Wu Wei* Leadership. The other is water-like leadership as Daoist Big Five.

Wei wu wei Leadership. *Wei wu-wei* means “going with the grain, rolling with the punch, swimming with the current, trimming the sails to the wind, taking the tide at its flood, and stooping to conquer” (Watts 1975, 75). It is the way it goes or flows. It is the flow or well-being that allows one to be in harmony with all things or people (Lee 2003).

Literally, “*Wei* [follow or do] *Wu-Wei* [without doing or without action; *wu* not]” implies “noninterference” or “non-action” and allows things to be or to act within the true nature of things:

The Dao never acts,

And yet is never inactive. (Laozi: Chapter 37)

To pursue artificial discovering (to learn), add to it daily,

To pursue the Dao, subtract (interfere less) from it daily

Subtract and subtract again,

To arrive at non-action.

Through non-action nothing is left undone. (Laozi: Chapter 48)

Act without action; work without effort.

Taste without savoring.

Magnify the small; increase the few.

Repay ill-will with kindness.

Plan the difficult when it is easy;

Handle the big where it is small.

The world's hardest work begins when it is easy;

The world's largest effort begins where it is small.

Evolved/Wise Individuals (or Sages/Saints), finally take no great action,

And in that way the great is achieved. (Laozi: Chapter 63)

As can be seen above, *wei wu-wei* does not mean inertia, laziness, laissez-faire, or mere passivity. Rather, it suggests that excessive care or concern for others or the natural world results in unwarranted intervention or control. With regard to leadership, the more leaders attempt to control, the less they can truly control. Micromanagement and dictatorship which focus on too much control tend to produce negative outcomes or least satisfaction from their followers (e.g., Lewin & Lippitt, 1938).

Those who would take hold of the world and act on it,

Never, I notice, succeed.

The world is a mysterious instrument,

Not made to be controlled (or handled)

Those who act on it spoil it,

Those who seize it lose it. (Laozi: Chapter 29)

Excessive action or intervention of others or the external world (or things) may produce unintended negative outcomes (e.g., backfire). It is the idea discussed above that man should follow Earth which follows Heaven; Heaven follows Dao which follows Nature or the Universe. Accordingly *wei wu wei* demands that humans be natural, and not intervene too much with the natural course of things (Lee 2003). As Laozi stated in Chapter 32, “Heaven and Earth would unite to generate timely rain or dew, and people would naturally cooperate without commands.” Heaven and Earth are *yin* and *yang* (i.e., Two) in harmony with each other and follows Dao (i.e., One). Ordinarily and naturally, people need to work together to survive and thrive.

In brief, *wei wu wei* is a naturalistic leadership, which is very implicit and indirect in Daoist philosophy. However, water-like leadership as follows is more explicit and direct. We discuss it because it directly helps us to better understand and appreciate Daoist leadership.

Daoist Big-Five: Water-like Leadership Style. The other important component of Daoist leadership can be summarized as “the best is like water” (i.e., “*Shang Shan Ruo Shui*” in Chinese) by Laozi. In other words, a great leader must act like water in the following five ways. Based on the narrative and exploratory discussion by Lee and

colleagues (see Lee, Han et al, 2008; Lee, Yang, & Wang, 2009), Daoist Big Five or Water-like leadership personality is summarized as follows more specifically.

First, water is altruistic. All species and organisms depend on water. Without water, none of them can survive. What does water get from us? It gets almost nothing. Accordingly Daoist leaders should be as altruistic as water. Water is very helpful and beneficial to all things.

The highest value (or the best) is like water,
 The value in water benefits All Things
 And yet it does not contend,
 It stays in places that others despise,
 And therefore is close to *Dao* (*Laozi*: Chapter 8).

Daoism recognizes that the ultimate goal of leaders is to serve their people without the desire to gain for personal benefit or gratitude. Laozi stated in his book that “The best are like water, good at benefiting all things without competing for gaining” (*Laozi*: Chapter 8). This entails selflessness as an essential attribute of a leader, which is realized in accepting people’s aspirations as one’s own. “The sage does not have aspirations but adopts those of the people as his own” (*Laozi*: Chapter 49). Only when a leader does not have his own ambitions can he truly serve his people instead of competing with them.

Second, water is very modest and humble. Do we not always see water go to the lowest place? As we can see from the above quotation (i.e., *Laozi*, Chapter 8), although water benefits all things, it does not contend and always stays in the lowest places that others despise. While many Westerners often value and enjoy a sense of authority,

assertiveness, aggressiveness and competitiveness, Laozi encouraged people to have a water-like characteristic—that is, to maintain a low profile and to be humble and modest, especially in the face of the Dao or nature, and to be very helpful and/or beneficial to others.

To Laozi, modesty or humbleness, willingness to help and benefit others and the ability to maintain a low profile (just like water) are qualities essential to a leader who wants to influence others:

The rivers and seas lead the hundred streams

Because they are skillful at staying low.

Thus they are able to lead the hundred streams (*Laozi*: Chapter 66).

In Laozi's opinion, those who are humble and modest not only exist in good harmony with others, but they are effective leaders, just like the rivers and seas.

The sea, for instance, can govern a hundred rivers because it has mastered being lower. Being humble is important for leaders because it enables them to accept people's goals as their own and to attract and unite people around themselves. Laozi said "He/She who knows how to motivate people acts humble. This is the virtue of no rival and uses the strength of others" (*Laozi*: Chapter 68).

Third, water is very adaptable and flexible. It can stay in a container of any shape. This flexibility and fluidity lends a great deal of wisdom to leadership. Good leaders can adjust themselves to any environment and situation just as water does in a container. Maintaining flexibility and adapting to the dynamics of change, like water following its path, are probably the best options for leader.

Fourth, water is transparent and clear. An effective leader should be honest and transparent to their followers. The most honorable individuals (not only leaders) are usually honest and transparent like water. Though Western Machiavellianism or other deceptive approaches might work temporarily, being honest and transparent is one of the big ethical concerns in modern management. Water itself is very clear and transparent if you do not make it muddy. In Chapter 15, Laozi stated, “Who can (make) the muddy water clear? Let it be still, and it will gradually become clear.” Metaphorically, human beings by nature are naïve and honest. Components of the social environment such as competition (like muddiness) make them unclear. Water’s clarity, transparency, and honesty are most appreciated by Laozi.

Finally, water is very soft and gentle, but also very persistent and powerful. If drops of water keep pounding at a rock for years, even the hardest rock will yield to water. Over time, water can cut through the hardest rock, forming valleys and canyons. The style of leaders should be similarly gentle and soft, but perseverant and powerful. Here is an example of what we could learn from water:

Nothing in the world
 Is as yielding and receptive as water;
 Yet in attacking the firm and inflexible,
 Nothing triumphs so well (*Laozi*: Chapter 78).

There is nothing softer than water, yet nothing better for attacking stubborn obstacles. Thus, there is no substitute for it. Its softness enables it to tolerate all kinds of environments, gathering strength without wearing it off at an earlier stage. And the resolute and perseverance of water help it to cut its path through hard rocks and wear

away mountains. It is very important for a leader to know the dialectical relationship as such and to acquire the resolute and persevering characteristics of water.

In sum, water has five features which are essential to all individuals including leaders. This is what we call the Daoist/Taoist model of “wateristic” personality (Lee, 2003, 2004; Lee, Norasakkunkit, Liu, Zhang, & Zhou, 2008; Watts, 1961, 1975) which includes five essential components: (1) altruism, (2) modesty/humility (or humbleness), (3) flexibility, (4) transparency and honesty, and (5) gentleness with perseverance (Lee, 2003, 2004; Lee, Norasakkunkit et al, 2008). This model is summarized in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 here

Quantitative Study of Daoist Big Five

Why do we present this quantitative study? What can we accomplish via this study? The theoretical perspective of Daoist leadership has already been well-addressed (Lee, Han, Bryron & Fan, 2008; Lee, Yang & Wang, 2009); however, prior research has involved primarily cases studies with the exception of one quantitative study by Lee, Norasakkunkit, Li, Zhang, & Zhou (2008). Our rationale, therefore, was to offer empirical and quantitative data to expand the theoretical foundations of Daoist leadership. Second, we wanted to demonstrate and confirm findings of prior research (Lee, 2003; Lee, Han et al, 2008) that Daoist leadership, while originating from East Asia, has implications for leadership globally beyond China or Asia.

Thus, our data are from non-Asian American students who live within mainstream American culture. We examine the gender and ethnic variation of leadership behavior on the Daoist Big Five dimensions described in Figure 1. We have two objectives in this study. First, we examine the extent to which the Daoist Big Five Dimensions of water-like leadership are interrelated. Second, we investigate the degree of gender and ethnic similarity and variation in responses to each of the five dimensions of water-like leadership.

Method

Participants

A total of 261 students from a Midwestern research university participated in this study via Psychdata, an online data collection platform. We had 96 males and 165 females with a mean age of 20.01 ($SD=3.61$). A majority of the participants were from Christian-Catholic backgrounds ($N=211$). With regard to ethnicity, 195 were white European American students; the rest were nonwhite students (i.e., 35 African American students, 10 Latino students and 17 other American students). There were only four Asian American students who were not included in the analysis as this number is too small to result in a meaningful comparison.

Measures and Procedures

Questions to measure Daoist Big Five Water-like Leadership style were based primarily on the on the HEXACO measure developed by K. Lee and his colleagues (Ashton & K. Lee, 2008; K. Lee & Ashton, 2004; K. Lee, Ashton, Morrison, Cordery & Dunlup, 2008; K. Lee, Ashton, Pozzebon, Visser, Bourdage, & Ogunfowora, 2009) specifically with regard to the dimensions of altruism, modesty, flexibility, honesty, and

gentleness. . Because the HEXACO scale did not have a direct measure of perseverance or persistence, we added the GRIT scale (see Duckworth, Peterson, Mathews, & Kelly, 2009) to our measure (see Appendix 1). All the questions extracted from HEXACO and GRIT scales were measured on a five point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). These measures were reported to reveal very high reliability and validity scores in prior research. We also report our own internal consistency scores in the results section. Additionally, two measures were employed in order to check the validity or effectiveness of our Daoist Big Five Measurement. One was the Machiavellian measure (Christie & Geis, 1970; Robinson, Shaver, & Wrightsman, 1991, pp. 378-380) which should be negatively correlated with Daoist Big Five; the other was Human Nature Scale (Wrightsman, 1964, 1974; Robinson, Shaver, & Wrightsman, 1991, pp. 392-393) which is consistent with and should therefore be positively correlated with our Daoist Big Five. These two measures have been previously validated.

With regard to the procedure, participants were told that the study was about the measurement of personality and individual differences. After they signed the informed consent form, they completed the HEXACO and GRIT measures, Machiavellian scale, Human Nature Scale, and demographic information, all online via Psychdata. Upon completion, they were thanked and given a half credit electronically for their participation.

Preliminary Results

Reliability and Validity

As can be seen in Table 1, almost all the measures demonstrated a reasonable internal consistency. Except Honesty ($\alpha = .49$) which is below .50, the rest of the α scores

were between .50 and .80. As can be seen in Table 2, the effectiveness or validity scores between the Daoist Big Five and Machiavelli Scale were negatively correlated and statistically significant whereas the scores of the Daoist Big Five were positively related to Human Nature Scale. All of the correlations were statistically significant, which demonstrated a reasonable amount of relevance and effectiveness in our measure.

Insert Tables 1 & 2 about here

Findings

With regard to our first objective, we found that there were correlations between the Daoist Big Five dimensions. With the exception of flexibility, Table 3 reveals a general internal relationship among the five Daoist leadership dimensions. Most Notable is that altruism was related to each dimension except for honesty.

Insert Table 3 about here

With respect to our second objective to examine the degree of similarity and variation between male and female students on the five dimensions (see Table 4), we found that female respondents ($M=3.65$) tended to be more modest than male students ($M=3.45$), $t(259) = -2.33$, $p = .02$, two-tailed. We also found that female respondents ($M=3.80$) tended to be more altruistic than male students ($M=3.54$), $t(259) = -2.33$,

$p=.004$, two-tailed. The remaining dimensions did not display any statistically significant differences in gender.

Insert Table 4 about here

Examination of Table 5 shows a slight ethnic variation with regard to modesty, altruism, and gentleness and perseverance while we found no statistical difference in regard to the dimensions of honesty and flexibility. White students generally scored higher on the dimensions of altruism, modesty and gentleness and perseverance than non-white minority students (i.e., Black, Latino or other students), which showed more interethnic variation than similarity on the five dimensions.

Insert Table 5 about here

Discussion and Implications

Daoism and Daoist Leadership in the Context of Psychological Research

What can we learn from the above findings? How are they related to leadership research? First, dimensions of Daoist leadership is related to research on Western democratic leadership. Over seventy years ago, Lewin and his colleagues did a series of leadership experiments (see Lewin & Lippitt, 1938; Lewin, Lippitt & White, 1939; White & Lippitt, 1960) in which they manipulated three leadership situations, democratic, autocratic, and laissez-faire. Results showed that participants in the democratic leadership

situation produced higher ratings in terms of satisfaction though they were slightly less productive as compared to participants in both the dictatorial and laissez-faire conditions. While those in the autocratic situation were found to be most productive, they were also least satisfied.

While it can be argued that Daoist leadership is more like the democratic leadership style than either of the other two styles, the concept of Daoist leadership is more comprehensive than democratic leadership in the following ways. Democracy is a political term originally coined in the West with a focus on human rights and equality although sometimes deceptive (see Triandis, 2009), while Daoism or Daoist leadership, part of Eastern philosophy, is *both naturalistic and humanistic* (i.e., how to get along with mother nature and how to get along with other humans). Though both democratic leadership and Daoist leadership may reflect a two-way street involving interaction and mutual influence between leader and follower, Daoist leadership focuses philosophically on the *Yin-Yang* relationship (e.g., no leadership without followership) while democracy focuses politically on basic human rights and dignity. The Daoist *Yin-Yang* perspective is much broader and embracing than democracy. To a certain degree, a leader (i.e., yin) is a follower (i.e., yang), and a follower is a leader; both are independent of and also dependent on each other, reminiscent of the Daoist concept of *Yin-Yang* (see Lee Han et al, 2008; Hogg, 2010; Triandis, 2009).

Second, Daoism is perhaps most intricately linked to psychology through the theory and philosophy of Abraham Maslow (Lee, 2003; Maslow, 1998). Maslow was not only a great humanistic psychologist but also a great Daoist clinician. In his books *Motivation and Personality* (Maslow, 1970) and *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*

(Maslow, 1971), Maslow cited the concept Taoism/Taoistic (or Daoism/Daoistic) numerous times. A couple of examples from his *Motivation and Personality* (Maslow, 1970), suggest that he was very interested in and influenced by Laozi's Daoism:

The concept of motivated, purposeful spontaneity, of **Taoistic** [boldface and italics not in original] yielding and letting go... (p. 133)

and

an education in spontaneity and eager abandon, in being natural, non-voluntary, noncritical and passive in the **Taoist** style, trying not to try. One must 'learn' for such purposes to be able to drop inhibitions, self-consciousness, will, control, acculturation, and dignity. 'When once you are free from all seeming, from all craving and lusting, then will you move of your own impulse, without so much as knowing that you move'—LaoTse.

(Maslow, 1970, p. 134)

Similarly, research by E. Fromm, G. Jung, and C. Rogers explicitly or implicitly relate to Laozi's Daoism (see Lee, 2003). For example, Fromm (1956) cited Tao (or Dao) in the section of *Love of God* in his book *The Art of Loving* and compared it with God (pp 74-75). He was fascinated with Laozi's paradoxical wisdom: "Gravity is the root of lightness; stillness the ruler of movement;" "The Tao in its regular course does nothing and so there is nothing which he does not do" (Fromm, 1956, pp. 74-75). But God is a religious term to deal with human relations. Daoism is much broader to account for both human relations and the relation with the natural world.

Finally, we found gender and ethnic or cultural differences on the Daoist five dimensions. White participants scored higher than Black and Latino students with regard to modesty, altruism, and gentleness and perseverance. More research will be needed to explain this cultural variation. In this quantitative study (see Table 4 above), female participants tended to be more modest and altruistic than male counterparts. These findings are consistent with other empirical research on perception accuracy (see Lee, 2011; Lee, Bumgarner, Widner, & Luo, 2007; Lee & Jussim, 2010; Lee, Jussim & McCauley, 1995) in cross-cultural and social and personality psychology. Ordinarily, males are stereotyped as more aggressive than females both in social and personality psychology across cultures. Although we need to be careful in interpreting this data, our results here provide further support on stereotype accuracy.

Implications and Challenges

What are the implications of the Daoist Big-Five (i.e., water-like personality or leadership style) to inform our understanding of leadership including that of Asian American leaders? First, our research on the Daoist leadership perspective challenges Western leadership research to focus on aggression and assertiveness as it interacts with Machiavellianism; this shed light on a different (and arguably more effective) understanding of leadership. Daoist leadership principles illuminate and value dimensions that are less central in Western leadership models (e.g. altruism, modesty and flexibility, honesty and transparency, and gentleness and persistence). Our study which incorporates Eastern philosophy and principles may help leaders (including Asian American leaders) to lead more effectively by complementing what is missing in Western models, thus

increasing both leader and follower satisfaction (also cf. parables of leadership by Kim & Mauborgne, 1992).

Second, re-discovering the meaning of classical *Dao* and *De* is useful to modern psychology, management and leadership studies (Lee, 2003; Lee, Han et al, 2008). Times may change, but human nature remains largely unchanged. While Maslow (1971) alluded to Daoist leadership, mainstream psychologists and/or management scientists pay little attention to this concept in Maslow's work (see Drucker, 2001, p. 77). The introduction of Laozi and the Daoist Big Five principles to psychologists and leadership scholars will enable our theories of leadership to be more inclusive in incorporating perspectives more than the typical white Anglo perspectives (Lee, 2003; Lee, Han et al, 2008).

Third, the use of Daoism leadership theoretically and empirically has global implications. Daoism and its leadership philosophy may be applied to help us to reduce ecological problems and human conflict; its concepts of following *Dao and De* may urge us to be peaceful and in harmony with Mother Nature and other human beings. In this day and age, the world is like a small village; interpersonal and intergroup/cultural relationships, ethnic conflict or ethnic cleansing, hate crimes, discrimination against females or minorities, violence against women, and ecological/issues of our environment are major concerns for all global citizens, and are at odds with principles of Daoism and Daoist leadership.

Fourth, Daoist leadership has special implications for Asian American leaders. Those who were born and raised in the West have been greatly influenced by Western culture. To get to know Daoism and apply Daoist leadership principles can help to re-affirm their cultural identity and enhance group pride, and leadership efficiency and

confidence. Balancing Western and Daoist leadership styles can be transforming and relevant to today's leadership amidst a diverse society. For example, the first and perhaps most important factor of Daoist leadership urges altruism and helpful service. Leaders, therefore, must recognize community and public service as a necessity. Our research suggests that leaders who display self-sacrificial, altruistic behavior lead their followers more effectively than those who do not (Choi & Mai-Dalton, 1998; Choi & Mai-Dalton, 1999; Greenleaf, 1996; van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005); this suggests that Asian American leaders can be encouraged to provide more community service and display more altruistic behavior (Greenleaf, 1996) consistent with Daoist principles of water-like leadership. This may also help to reduce stereotypes of Asian Americans as "good or competent scholars, academicians or polite coworkers (e.g., technology slaves)" but not "sociable" (see Lee, Ottati, Chan & Lin, 2012; Lin, Kwan, Cheung & Fiske, 2005) when compared with white European Americans.

Finally, limitations of this study are that these are preliminary results on Daoist Big Five principles. More research, especially cross-cultural research is needed on Daoist Big Five leadership style and will be challenging as it may require people to "think outside the box" But at least we can try. As Laozi stated in Chapter 64, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with every single step."

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Figure 1: The Daoist/Taoist Model of Wateristic Personality (Taoist Big-Five)

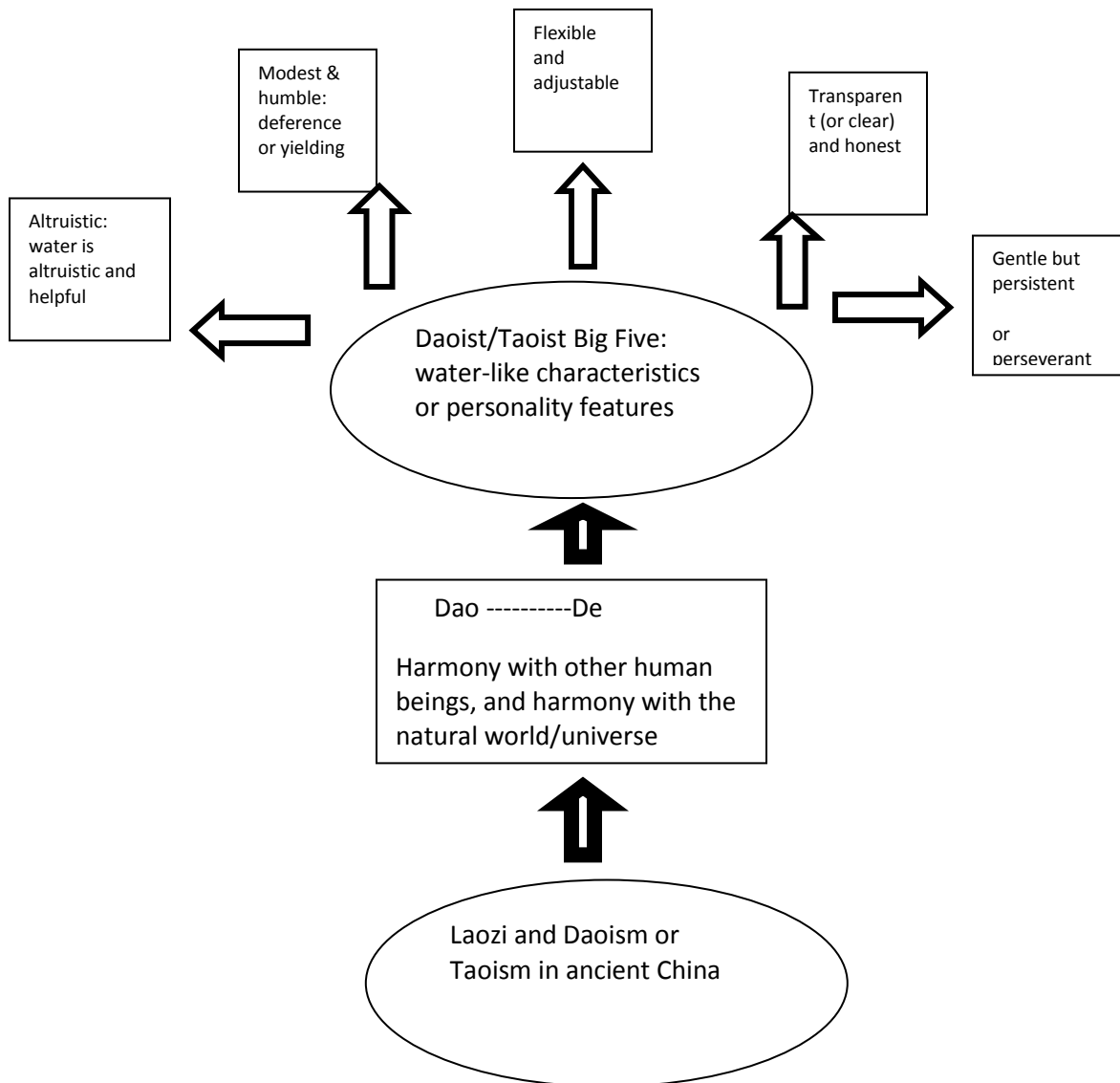


Table 1. Reliability Scores

	Cronbach's Alpha	Items
Altruism	.62	4
Modesty	.59	4
Flexibility	.55	4
Honesty	.49	4
Gentleness & Perseverance	.69	10
Machiavellian Scale	.62	20
Human Nature Scale	.79	10

Table 2. Validity index: Correlations between Daoist Big Five (i.e., Water-Liker Leadership Dimensions) and Other Relevant Scales.

	Machiavellian Scale	Human Nature Scale
Daoist Big Five		
Altruism	-.429**	.400**
Modesty	-.351**	.349**
Flexibility	-.179**	.187**
Honesty	-.195**	.238**
Gentleness & Perseverance	-.442**	.307**

**significant at alpha = .01 *alpha = .05

Table 3: Correlations between Daoist Big Five: Water-like Leadership Styles

Daoist Big Five	1	2	3	4	5
1. Altruism	—				
2. Modesty	.40**	—			
3. Flexibility	.12	.11	—		
4. Honesty	.09	.24**	.07	—	
5. Gentleness & Perseverance	.46**	.26**	.25**	.08	—

** p < .01 * p < .05

Table 4: Mean Response of Daoist Big Five: Water-Like Leadership between Male and Female Students

Daoist Big Five	Male (N=96) Mean (SD)	Female (N=165) Mean (SD)	T-Value (df=259)	p-value
1. Altruism	3.54 (.67)	3.80(.67)	-2.93	.004
2. Modesty	3.45 (.65)	3.65 (.66)	-2.33	.02
3. Flexibility	2.90 (.68)	2.90 (.72)	.94	ns
4. Honesty	3.22 (.64)	3.25 (.71)	-.42	ns
5. Gentleness & Perseverance	3.50 (.54)	3.50 (.47)	-.11	ns

Table 5: Mean Response of Daoist Big Five: Water-Like Leadership between White and Nonwhite Students

Daoist Big Five	White (N=195) Mean (SD)	NonWhite (N=62) Mean (SD)	T-Value (df=255)	p-value
1. Altruism	3.76 (.67)	3.54 (.71)	2.29	.02
2. Modesty	3.65 (.67)	3.38 (.62)	2.81	.005
3. Flexibility	2.93 (.70)	2.96 (.72)	-.26	ns
4. Honesty	3.20 (.66)	3.35 (.78)	-1.42	ns
5. Gentleness & Perseverance	3.53 (.48)	3.40 (.54)	2.12	.04

Appendix 1:

Questions to measure Water-like Leadership (and/or Personality) as Daoist Big Five (extracted from HEXACO by K. Lee & Ashton, 2004; Ashton & Lee, 2008; and GRIT scale by Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2009). Those items marked with * were reversed in scoring. **Honesty was measured based on K. Lee's sincerity scale.

Altruism

I have sympathy for people who are less fortunate than I am.

I try to give generously to those in need.

It wouldn't bother me to harm someone I didn't like.*

People see me as a hard-hearted person.*

Modesty

I am an ordinary person who is no better than others.

I wouldn't want people to treat me as though I were superior to them.

I think that I am entitled to more respect than the average person is.*

I want people to know that I am an important person of high status.*

Flexibility

People sometimes tell me that I'm too stubborn.*

I am usually quite flexible in my opinions when people disagree with me.

When people tell me that I'm wrong, my first reaction is to argue with them.*

I find it hard to compromise with people when I really think I'm right.*

Honesty**

If I want something from a person I dislike, I will act very nicely toward that person in order to get it.*

I wouldn't use flattery to get a raise or promotion at work, even if I thought it would succeed.

If I want something from someone, I will laugh at that person's worst jokes.*

I wouldn't pretend to like someone just to get that person to do favors for me.

Gentleness

People sometimes tell me I am too critical of others.*

I generally accept people's faults without complaining about them.

I tend to be lenient in judging other people.

Even when people make a lot of mistakes, I rarely say anything negative.

Perseverance

I have achieved a goal that took years of work.

I have overcome setbacks to conquer an important challenge.

I finish whatever I begin.

Setbacks don't discourage me.

I am a hard worker.

I am diligent.