Daoist/Taoist Altruism and Wateristic Personality: East and West[1]

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Based on the Daoist/Taoist model of water-like (or wateristic) personality features (Lee, 2003, 2004), four hypotheses were derived with a focus on altruism and modesty. A total of 122 Chinese college students and 106 American college students participated in this cross-cultural study. It was found (1) that American college students were more altruistic than Chinese counterparts; (2) that levels of modesty were more trait-specific than culture-specific; and (3) that Chinese participants were more altruistic and receptive toward outgroup members or outsiders (e.g., aliens) than American counterparts in uncertain situations. Theoretical implications are also discussed.

1. Introduction: Rationale for Studying Daoist/Taoist Altruism Cross-Culturally

In this introduction we will address three major issues. First, how do western and Eastern scholars see altruistic behavior and human nature? What do we mean by altruism? How is altruism related to love? Next we will discuss the connections between altruism and Daoism (Taoism) as well as a Daoist/Taoist model of water-like (or wateristic) personality features, which involve altruism. Finally, we shall review cross-cultural evidence with regard to self-sacrificing altruism, modesty, and religion and also present our major research questions based on the Daoist/Taoist model.

Are human beings altruistic? What do we mean by altruism?

In the eyes of certain people, human beings are basically kind and altruistic by nature. However, others believe that humans are selfish by nature. There is a debate among Westerners (see Post 2003:59-61). Ever since Plato, who emphasized the primacy of reason in moral motivation, ethics and morality, including altruism, have received much controversial attention. Altruism or human nature is just like a lightening rod. Though

scholars such as Thomas Hobbes, Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, Edwin O. Wilson, and Richard Dawkins saw human beings as selfish, others (e.g., Adam Smith, David Hume) tended to believe that altruistic motives do exist within the repertoire of human nature. Unlike all those above, Immanuel Kant offered a neutral perspective on altruism (see Nagel 1970). Kant believed that certain altruistic helping inclinations exist but they are not trusted because they are unstable and unreliable. To Kant, altruistic behavior is possible but must be grounded in a categorical rational imperative (Nagel 1970).

Similarly, there is a debate on altruism and human nature among scholars in Eastern societies such as ancient China. For Mencius (371-289 BC), human beings are basically good and altruistic. Everyone should unconditionally do what he or she ought to do, and he or she should "extend himself or herself so as to include others" (Fung 1948:69). Basically people have a mind which cannot bear to see the suffering of others. For example, if they see a child about to fall into a well, they will without exception experience a feeling of alarm and distress. Trying to rescue the child is an example of altruistic behavior or human goodness.

On the other hand, Xunzi, who lived in the same time of Mencius, held that the nature of man is evil and selfish. People are born with inherent desire for profit and sensual pleasure (Fung 1948:145). However, in Kaozi's view, human beings are either selfish or unselfish. It depends. In other words, Kaozi's argument was somewhat similar to Kant's perspective.

In brief, it is controversial to both Westerners and Easterners when altruism and human nature are discussed. Though we cannot focus too much on human nature, altruism is worth further investigation. What is altruism? How do social scientists define it?

First, Howard and Piliavin (2000) defined altruism as helping others in the absence of psychological rewards which are conceived as benefits to the agents. In psychology, it is also held that altruistic behavior should exclude any material motive (Post 2003:59). Second, as a Harvard sociologist, Sorokin (2002/1954) defined altruism as the five-dimensional universe of psychosocial love (i.e., intensity, extensity, duration, purity, and adequacy). For example, the intensity of love (or altruistic behavior) tends to decrease with an increase of duration. Intensity, purity, and adequacy of love are somewhat more frequently associated positively than negatively or not at all. Adequate love is likely to last longer than inadequate love (also see Post 2003).

Further, within social psychology, Fathali Moghaddam defined altruism as a "behavior intended to help another, without regard for benefit to oneself" (1998:297). C. Daniel Batson (1991) defined altruism as a motivational state with the ultimate goal of increasing another's welfare. Batson also pointed out that altruism does not necessarily involve self-sacrifice, although it is inherently self-sacrificial. Thus we argue that altruism is more effective if it involves self-sacrifice, which is consistent with Chinese Daoism/Taoism. This brings us to the relationship between altruism and Daoism/Taoism.

Connections between Taoism/Daoism and Altruism

We may see connections between Taoism and altruism when we examine Laozi' Dao and De (Sima 1994). *Dao* can mean a road, a path, the way it is, the way of nature, the way of ultimate reality, the rules/laws of nature. According to R. B. Blakney (1955), in the eyes of Chinese, *Dao* does not only refer to the way the whole world of nature operates but also signifies the original undifferentiated Reality from which the universe is evolved. *De* means humanistic behavior/virtues, character, influence, or moral force. The character *De* consists of three parts, (1) an ideographic meaning "to go"; (2) another, meaning "straight"; and (3) a picturograph meaning "the heart". Put together, these imply motivation by inward rectitude (Blakney 1955:38).

In another translation (see Addiss and Lombardo 1993), *Dao* means a "way" in both literal ("road") and metaphysical ("spiritual path"). It can also, more rarely, mean "to say," "to express" or "to tell". According to Burton Watson (see Addiss and Lombardo 1993:xiii), *Dao* literally is a "way" or "path" and is used by other schools of Chinese philosophies to refer to a particular calling or mode of conduct. However, in Daoistic writing, it has a far more comprehensive meaning, referring rather to a metaphysical first principle that embraces and underlies all beings, a vast Oneness that precedes and in some mysterious manner generates the endlessly diverse forms of the world. Thus *Dao* lies beyond the power of language to describe. Burton Watson (see Addiss and Lombardo 1993:xiii) defined *De* as the moral virtue or power that one acquires through being in accord with the *Dao*, what one gets from *Dao*.

Further, we propose a metaphor that links Daoism with altruism (i.e., water-like or wateristic personality features). Laozi advocated a "wateristic or water-like personality" partly because he observed that human conflict (e.g., fighting, killing, wars) was most likely to occur if everyone wanted to compete and to go after his or her interest (e.g., moving or fighting for more material, or more fame or higher rank). Thus, we human beings should learn from water because water always remains in the lowest position and never competes with other things. Instead, water is very helpful and beneficial to all things. According to Laozi (also see Wing 1986):

> The highest value (or goodness) 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*. (Chapter 8)

Though soft and yielding, water is very strong 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. (Chapter 78)

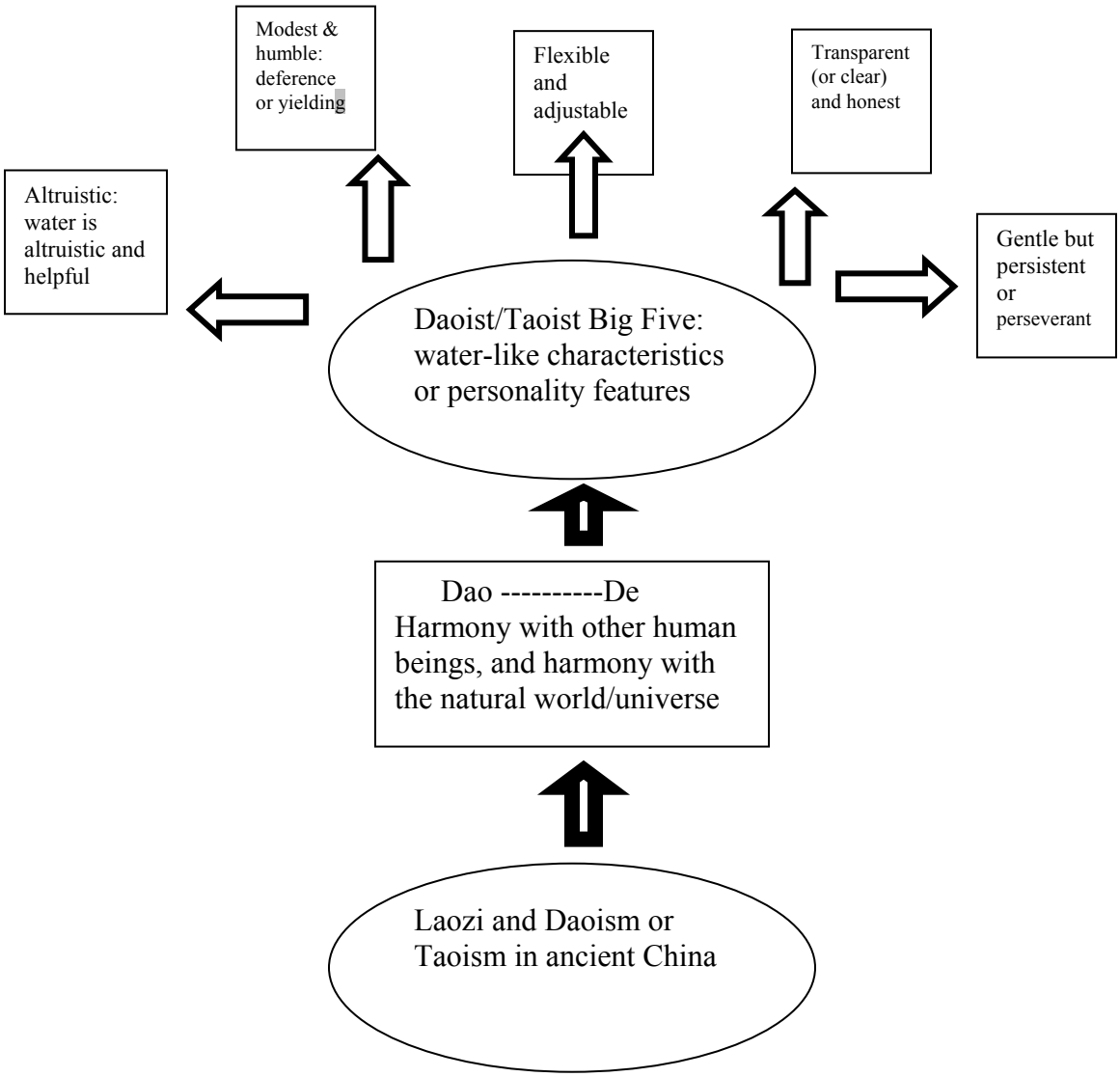
While Westerners historically and currently value and enjoy assertiveness, aggressiveness and competitiveness, Laozi encouraged us to have a water-like personality, which is to maintain a low profile and to be humble and modest but very helpful and/or beneficial to others. To Laozi, modesty or humility (or humbleness), willingness to help and benefit others and 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. (Chapter 66)

In Laozi's eyes, those who are humble and modest not only exist in good harmony with others, but are effective leaders, just like the rivers and seas. In short, it may be that interpersonal and intergroup harmony and peace are more likely if people learn from water (i.e., adopting a wateristic personality) than if they are too competitive, controlling and aggressive.

In sum, water has five features. First, water is very altruistic and always serves all things in its quality. What does water get from us? It gets almost nothing. Can we survive without water? Obviously we cannot. Perhaps we should learn from water to be helpful and altruistic. Second, water is modest and stays in the lower place. Naturally water always goes to the lowest position. Water yields. We should learn from water to be humble and modest. Third, water is so adaptable and flexible that it can stay in a container of any shape. We can learn to be flexible and adaptable to different people in different situations. Fourth, water is very transparent and clear. As human beings we should learn from water in being honest and transparent. Finally, water is very soft yet persistent. It is good to be soft, gentle and friendly with others but also persistent with them. Perhaps water is our best teacher. Thus the best is like water. This is what we call the Daoist/Taoist model of "wateristic" personality (Lee 2003, 2004; Watts 1975) which includes five essential components: 1) altruism, 2) modesty/humility (or humbleness), 3) flexibility, 4) transparency and honesty, and 5) gentleness with perseverance. This model is summarized in Figure 1 (next page). In this paper, we will only focus on the first two (i.e., altruism and modesty) due to the complexity of this model as well as the limited space of the paper.

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



Culture and Self-Sacrificing Altruism

Lee (2003) noted that Laozi, who has been recognized as the founder of Taoism, contended that the best qualities or personalities are like water because all species and organisms depend on water. These "wateristic" personality attributes, Lee (2003) argues, affect Chinese notions of altruism. In traditional Chinese beliefs, people with a good Taoist personality should be as altruistic as water. Philosophically, water is modest and humble. It always goes to the lowest place. Since it always remains in the lowest position and does not compete, it is not only helpful and beneficial to all things but also implies self-sacrifice, which is experienced as psychologically very satisfying to any Taoist.

Being humble and modest is necessary for us to appreciate and understand the Tao of things, Lee argues, and to always be ready to learn and guard against being overconfident. While many Westerners often value and enjoy a sense of authority, assertiveness, aggressiveness, and competitiveness (Lee, McCauley, and Draguns 1999; Lee 2000; Lee et al. 2004), 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 Tao or nature, and to be very helpful and beneficial to others. Modesty or humility (or humbleness), willingness to help and benefit others, and the ability to maintain a low profile (just like water) are qualities essential to an individual who wants to influence others.

There is a difference between Easterners and Westerners with regard to generosity and unselfishness, which is implicitly related to altruism (Lee and Seligman 1997; Tang, Furnham, and Davis 2002; Yik and Bond 1993; Zhang et al. 1999). For example, in developmental psychology, Ma and her colleagues (Ma 1992, 2003; H. Ma and M. Leung 1991), employing the Child Altruism Inventory they developed, found that Hong Kong Chinese child's altruistic behavior was directly related to a positive family environment and positive peer influence.

Ma (1992) found that those with high moral judgment were more willing to sacrifice their lives for any recipient and to rescue a stranger than those with low moral judgment. Further, by interviewing 37 Chinese in Hong Kong who had donated bone marrow to an unrelated recipient, Holroyd and Molassioitis (2000) found that this type of Chinese altruism or donation was more of a self-fulfilling act (i.e., yielding self-satisfaction or self-growth) than a social act with very little familial or social recognition being accorded in the public world, which is totally different from Western culture.

Religiosity, Modern Individualism, and Altruism, and Cross-Cultural Differences

Triandis and his colleagues (Triandis 2001, Triandis and Gelfand, 1998) tend to classify North America and Europe as more individualistic cultures and East Asian countries (e.g., China, Japan or Korea) as less individualistic ones (i.e., more collectivistic). Though traditional Chinese culture is collectivistic, today one can argue that most mainland Chinese,

especially the younger generations, have shifted their social orientation more towards individualism for three reasons. First, mainland Chinese young people tended to dissociate themselves more from traditional Chinese cultural beliefs and values and are less knowledgeable about, or influenced by, those traditional beliefs and values (Lee, McCauley, and Draguns 1999). Modernization and economic reforms could make them more materialistic, more individualistic, and/or less altruistic. For example, in a recent large-scale and refined cross-cultural study on individualism and collectivism, Schwartz (1994) provided evidence suggesting that Chinese are more individualistic in certain important aspects than other East Asian countries (Japan and Korea).[2]

Second, ecologically, China is the most populated country in the world, and Chinese government and its people have to implement one-child policy. Chinese young generations (e.g., today's college students) who are from families with only one child are usually more spoiled, self-centered, and individualistic in their attitudes. Moreover, evidence suggests that younger generation Chinese are less likely to share with others and to be more selfish than previous generations (e.g., Gu 1997; Gu, Hu, and Ma 2000; Li 1999).

Third, much research has revealed that religious beliefs are positively associated with altruistic behavior and negatively associated with depression and suicide (Bernt 1989; Lee, Ottati, and Guo 2002; Nelson and Dynes 1976). European Americans are more religious than mainland Chinese (Lee et al 2002). For example, in the recent years, the rate of Chinese divorce and suicide increased significantly due to a lack in spiritual or religious beliefs (see Lee et al 2002). Nelson and Dynes found that devotion, church attendance and level of religious commitment were positively correlated with levels of helping behavior, both in routine and emergency situations. College students who were more devoted to a religion were found to put more hours in voluntary work. Examining the data from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) for 72 midsize cities, Jan Shipps found that religion and philanthropic giving are closely linked (see Post 2003).

Though Americans tend to help those victims whom they may know and trust (e.g., making a significant amount of financial donation to the Tsunami tragedy in 2005, or helping in those Vietnamese refugees in the 1980s and 1990s), research revealed that they not only distrusted those outgroup members in uncertain situations but also tended to exaggerate their threat from outgroup members and consequently acted aggressively such as in the Iraqi case (e.g., Todd 2003). This has been especially true since the 9-11 incident and terrorism (Lee et al. 2004). If Americans encounter aliens (i.e., hypothetical outgroup members), for example, chances are they might be more suspicious and more xenophobic than Chinese who have never experienced the 9-11 terrorism.

Overview of our Study and Summary of Hypotheses

We focus primarily on the measurement of altruism and modesty as two important components of the Daoist/Taoist model of wateristic personality. We have developed and administered to student participants in China and the USA a variety of scenarios involving sacrifice, donation, giving, serving, and yielding at the cost of one's interest and time. We

also used self-enhancement to measure modesty. The more self-enhancing a person is, the less modest he or she is. We hypothesize that

1. American college students would be more altruistic than mainland Chinese counterparts due to religious and ecological influence.
2. Levels of modesty are more trait-specific than culture-specific. Modesty is probably general across all cultures but depends on certain traits.
3. Altruistic attitudes are positively related to modesty.
4. In uncertain situations American college students may be more suspicious and less helpful toward outsiders (e.g., aliens) whom they do not know than their Chinese counterparts.

2. Method

Participants

A total of 228 college students participated in this study. There were 122 Chinese college students from a university in North China and 106 students from a university in the Midwestern area. One hundred and forty-one students were female while the rest were male. Their mean age was 20.39.

Cross-Cultural Measures of Self-Sacrificial Altruism

To measure altruism, we create various scenarios (helping a person with a chronic disease, or HIV/AIDS, a war victim, and a victim of catastrophe) as follows:

Scenario 1: Suppose one day you see a person who cannot move and is lying on the ground. You are informed that the person has a chronic disease (e.g., Hepatitis, or Tuberculosis) which is probably contagious. The person pleas [sic] for help.

Scenario 2: Suppose one day you see a person who has collapsed and is lying on the ground. You are informed that the person has HIV/AIDS which is probably contagious. The person pleas [sic] for help.

Scenario 3: Human beings sometimes cannot avoid conflict or violence. War is part of human conflict or violence. Suppose one day you are in a situation where you see a group of people fighting or killing another group. Though you do not know which group is the aggressor or which one is the victim, you notice many people injured or killed. If you plan to rescue or help one of the victims, you may bring danger to yourself (injury or death). One person pleas [sic] for help.

Scenario 4: Human beings are sometimes so vulnerable and weak that they cannot control natural disasters or catastrophes (earthquake, flood, or fire). Suppose one day you encounter victims of such disasters and one of the victims pleas [sic] for help.

All participants were informed that the purpose of this study was to investigate "how individuals make personal decisions when facing various challenging situations" and were asked to answer each question based on the Likert scale from 1 (least likely) to 7 (most likely) with regard to the five issues as our dependent measures (helping at the cost of one's health, helping at the cost of one's life, blood donation, time donation, and money donation):

> How likely are you to rescue/help the person directly if it were to put your health at risk?
> How likely are you to rescue/help the person directly if it were to put your life at risk?
> How likely are you to donate your blood to that person if it is called for?
> How likely are you to donate your time (two weeks) to the person if it is called for?
> How likely are you to donate your money (about $500) to that person if it is called for?[3]

Additionally, we also used a scenario involving encountering aliens. "Suppose one day you encounter a group of aliens. You do not understand what they are talking about and they do not understand what you are trying to say. From your intuitive judgment, one of them seems to plea [sic] for help." On the scale from 1 (least likely) to 7 (most likely), participants were asked about the following questions:

> How likely are you to help that alien?
> How likely are you to feel frightened of the aliens?
> How likely are you to escape from the situation?
> How likely are you just to observe and not take any action?
> How likely are you to blow those aliens away if you have a power weapon?

Cross-Cultural Measures of Modesty (or Lack of Self-Enhancement)

It is necessary to clarify why modesty is measured based on lack of or lower self-enhancement. Self-enhancement is defined as "the tendency to describe oneself more positively than a normative criterion would predict" (Krueger 1998; Colvin, Block, and Funder 1995). Whereas, according to the American Heritage Dictionary (2005), "modest" is defined as "having or showing a moderate estimation of one's own talents, abilities, and value." Thus, by definition, self-enhancement and modesty are inversely related. Consequently, lower levels of self-enhancement should indicate greater modesty.

We must distinguish two meanings of modesty. First, is what is called "true modesty," when people have modest thoughts and tend to truly recognize their weaknesses. People who are truly modest tend to be genuinely self-examining and self-critical (Kitayamaet al. 1997). The second is "false modesty," in which people have immodest thoughts, but present themselves publicly as modest. In the current investigation, we are concerned with true modesty. There is much evidence to suggest that self-report measures of self-enhancement correspond inversely with true modesty and genuine self-criticism (see Heineet al. 1999 for a review). This is so because studies employing self-enhancement measures are generally conducted under anonymous conditions where participants have no reason to be concerned about self-presentational gains (Kitayama et al. 1997). Moreover, self-reports of self-enhancement also

reliably corresponded with unobtrusive measures of self-enhancement (Heine, Takata, and Lehman 2000).

To measure self-enhancement (or lack of modesty), participants were asked to estimate the percentage of the population of the same age and sex as them that was better than them with respect to each of the traits (i.e., intelligent, hardworking, likeable, dependable, confident, cooperative, interesting/lively, loyal, independent, and considerate). They were told, "Circle the appropriate percentage. Please keep in mind that the better you are with respect to any trait, the smaller the percentage of people who are better than you." For example:

Intelligent
percentage of the population of the same age and sex as you that is better than you with respect to this trait

95% or more better than me	90%	80%	70%	60%	50%	40%	30%	20%	10%	5% or less better than me

In our data analysis, we convert those boxes above into 0 to 10 scale such as 95% or more =10, 90%=9, 80%=8, 70%=7, 60%=6, 50%=5, 40%=4, 30%=3, 20%=2, 10%=1, and 5% or less =0. The higher a score, the more modest (or less self-enhancing) the respondent.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Mixed results on Modesty

The reliability for the self-enhancement measure showed great internal consistency (alpha = 0.86). As can be seen in Table 1 (next page), overall Chinese (M = 2.97) appear to be less modest (or more self-enhancing) than their American counterparts (M = 3.05), but there was no significant difference between American and Chinese participants ($t = -0.45$, $p = 0.66$) in modesty. However, with regard to intelligence and dependability, Americans seemed to be more modest (or less self-enhancing). Chinese seemed to be more modest (or less self-enhancing) with regard to hard work, likeability, and cooperation. Other variables did not show any significant difference. Therefore it is hard to state that one culture was more modest than another. The findings were consistent with our hypothesis 2—i.e., modesty is more trait specific than culture-specific.

Americans were more altruistic than Chinese

With respect to altruism or self-sacrificial altruism, the reliability scores for dependent measures in Scenario 1 through 4 ranged from alpha = 0.76 to alpha =0.82. Americans were found to be more altruistic than Chinese across all the four situations, such as helping patients with chronic diseases, with HIV/AIDS, war victims and catastrophe victims (see Table 2). With regard to overall helping involving health risk, life risk, blood and time donation, Americans were found to be more altruistic than Chinese with one exception of money donation (which was not significantly different, see Table 3). This is also true with

the situation involving helping victims of natural disasters or catastrophe (see Table 4), which may help us to understand the Tsunami tragedy in South Asia.

Consistently, our regression analysis revealed that culture played an important role in altruistic behavior (Beta = 0.40, t = 6.46, p <0.001). In other words, overall Americans were more altruistic than Chinese.

Table 1. Mean (SD) Modesty (contrary to self enhancement) as a function of cultures

Trait	China (N = 122)	USA (N = 106)	t-value, p value
Intelligent	2.54 (2.23)	3.41 (1.78)	-3.21; p = 0.01
Hardworking	3.67 (2.31)	3.21 (1.73)	1□□; p=0.09
Likeability	3.55 (2.14)	2.75 (1.81)	3.01; p=0.003
Dependable	2.06 (1.75)	2.72 (1.76)	-2.82; p=0.005
Confident	3.24 (2.27)	3.72 (2.35	-1.57; p=0.12
Cooperative	3.31 (1.74)	2.90 (1.56)	1.87; p=0.06
Interesting and Lively	3.45 (2.03)	3.43 (1.94)	0.10; p=0.92
Loyalty	2.03 (1.80)	2.27 (1.64)	-1.09; p=0.28
Independent	2.91 (2.07)	3.34 (1.96)	-1.63; p=0.104
Considerate	3.12 (2.09)	2.69 (1.77	1.27; p=0.20
Total	2.97 (1.38)	3.05 (1.24)	-0.45; p=0.66

Greater mean numbers indicate less self-enhancement (or more modesty): 0=5%, 1=10%, 2=20%, 3=30%, 4=40%, 5=50%, 6=60%, 7=70%, 8=80%, 9= 90%, 10= 95% of my peer group members are better than me with regard to each of the above dimensions. All tests have df = 226 and p values for a two tailed test.

Table 2. Mean (SD) Altruism toward various types of "victims" as a function of cultures

Trait	China (N = 122)	USA (N = 106)	F-value (df)
Patients with Chronic Diseases	4.69 (1.24)	3.70 (1.21)	36.67 (1,226)***
HIV and AIDS Patients	4.61 (1.35)	3.52(1.56)	31.13 (1,226)***
War Victims	4.44 (1.40)	3.44(1.41)	31.22 (1,226)***
Catastrophe Victims	5.28 (1.28)	4.37 (1.23)	29.58 (1,226)***

Higher values indicate more altruism. ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table 3. Mean (SD) Altruism toward alleged victims across all situations as a function of cultures

Trait	China (N = 122)	USA (N = 106)	F-value (df)
Help with health risk	4.74 (1.43)	3.68 (1.61)	26.91 (1,226)***
Help with life risk	4.12 (1.58)	2.71(1.48)	48.16 (1,226)***
Donating blood	5.99 (1.33)	4.91(1.73)	27.54 (1,226)***
Donating time	4.94 (1.46)	3.84 (1.55)	29.74 (1,226)***
Donating money	3.75 (1.77)	3.41 (1.84)	1.91 (1,226) ns

Higher values indicate more altruism. ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table 4. Mean (SD) Altruism toward an assumed victim in a hypothetical natural disaster as a function of cultures

Trait	China (N = 122)	USA (N = 106)	F-value (df)
Help with health risk	5.50 (1.51)	4.31 (1.78)	29.08(1,226)***
Help with life risk	5.02 (1.80)	3.42(1.90)	42.24(1,226)***
Donating blood	6.19 (1.37)	5.41(1.70)	14.20 (1,226)***
Donating time	5.39 (1.76)	4.65 (1.81)	10.41 (1,226)**
Donating money	4.28 (2.05)	4.07 (2.10)	0.58 (1,226) ns
Total	5.28 (1.28)	4.37 (1.23)	29.58 (1,226)***

Higher values indicate more altruism. ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table 5. Mean (SD) Attitudes toward aliens in various situations as a function of cultures

Trait	China (N = 122)	USA (N = 106)	F-value (df)
Help the alien	4.25 (2.06)	5.16 (1.74)	13.03 (1,226)***
Feel frightened	5.00 (2.01)	4.06 (1.72)	14.59 (1,226)***
Escape	4.14 (1.85)	3.17 (1.59)	18.08 (1,226)***
Non Action	3.71 (1.93)	3.53 (1.68)	0.54 (1,226) ns
Blow them away	2.80 (2.10)	1.76 (1.12)	22.60 (1,226)***

Higher values indicate greater likelihood of behavior. ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Chinese seemed to be more sympathetic toward aliens than Americans

It is also of interest to see cross-cultural differences with regard to reaction to encountering aliens, as this item taps into willingness to be altruistic towards outgroup members whose intentions are uncertain. Consistent with our fourth hypothesis, as can be seen in Table 5, Chinese participants (M= 5.16) tended to be more willing to help aliens than their American counterparts (M= 4.25), F(1,226) = 13.03. No significant differences were obtained regarding observation of aliens and taking no action. However, Chinese reported feeling less frightened and were less likely to blow the aliens away than their American participants. In other words, in comparison with Chinese, American tended to act more aggressively toward outgroup members whom they do not know in uncertain situations.

Correlations between altruism and modesty

We found a negative correlation between altruism and modesty, $r(226) = -0.12$, $p < .05$. That is, the more modest or humble a person was, the less altruistic (e.g., less willing to help patients or victims) he or she was. This correlation was primarily due to Chinese responses, as indicated by $r(121) = -0.17$, $p < .05$. For American participants, however, there was no relationship between altruism and humility.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Consistent with hypothesis 1 and 2, our results revealed that overall, Americans were more altruistic than Chinese (which is consistent with hypothesis 1) but that there was no cultural

effect on modesty (no difference in self-enhancement; hypothesis 2). As predicted, modesty levels varied more by trait than by culture.

An alternative explanation, the "kernel of truth" hypothesis and perception accuracy (Lee 1995; Lee and Ottati 1993, Lee, Jussim and McCauley 1995) may also account for our results. That is, independent of levels of modesty, American college students might objectively think that they were less intelligent or more independent than their peers, which is factually true and accurate. Similarly, Chinese college students might think that they were less hardworking, less likeable and more competitive. More research will be needed in this regard.

Inconsistent with our third hypothesis, there was no significant correlation between altruism and modesty in the American data. Instead, there was even a negative correlation between altruism and modesty in Chinese data. This may show that our measure of modesty (or lack of self-enhancement) was Western-oriented. That is, despite the theoretical rationale for associating self-enhancement levels with modesty levels that we provided, the two concepts may not be perfectly related. Probably the concept of modesty may be more robust than self-enhancement, especially since previous cross-cultural evidence suggests that the psychological salience of self-enhancement may be culture-specific to North America, and to some extent in Western European cultures (Heine et al. 1999) with the exception of Scandinavian countries (Fiske 2002). In future studies, we should perhaps start by deriving modesty items by asking participants in each culture to come up with their own examples or situations of modesty humility (or humbleness).

Overall Chinese had a more positive attitude toward aliens than Americans. In light of a post-9/11 environment in the United States, it was found that Americans are less willing to trust outgroup members whose intentions are uncertain and therefore will be less willing to help them (Todd 2003). In some cases, Americans even showed their narcissistic and xenophobic attitudes toward outsiders in their uncertain situations. As Todd stated:

> After having been the guarantor of political freedom and economic order for half a century, the United States appears more and more to be contributing to international disorder by maintaining where it can uncertainty and conflict. It demands that the rest of the planet recognize that certain states of secondary importance constitute an "axis of evil" that must be combated and destroyed (2003:1).

In the eyes of Americans, Iraq, Iran, and North Korea, who may have nuclear weapons, are not trustworthy and perceived as sources of threat to the USA. Therefore the "axis of evil" should be destroyed.[4]

However an alternative explanation would be that the Chinese who might have watched fewer violent films or videos about alleged aliens would be more curious and tolerant of them. On the other hand, Americans are brained washed by negative images of aliens' attack and terrorism (Feshbach 1989, 1992; Lee et al, 2004; Moghaddam, 1998). Whether this is the case or not awaits more research.

We conclude by noting that Taoism/Daoism and Laozi's philosophy focus on harmony stresses two points (see Lee 2003): a) being humanistic and harmonious with other humans; and, b) being harmonious with Mother Nature (or the universe). A Taoist (or Daoist) model of wateristic personality involving altruism, modesty, flexibility, transparency/honesty, and perseverance, provides us with a new approach to understanding human behavior (see Figure 1).

The wateristic personality, including altruistic tendencies, may lead to more peace and harmony. Our research could throw some light onto solutions to major world problems (Lee 2003). Natural resources cannot continue to be over-exploited because oil, for instance, will be gone. Ethnocentric and narcissistic military strategies may work temporarily, but they only work, at best, to delay problems for a while. Though it is easy to wipe out Native Americans and to defeat and occupy small countries like Afghanistan, Iraq or Iran today, tomorrow, a bigger conflict between more powerful nations fighting for the rights to the scarce resources available in small, helpless countries may escalate into another world war. If human groups kill each other (by nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction) and continue damaging the environment, and thus continue over-using or over-consuming resources provided by the earth, can we human beings survive as a species? While showing strength and defending ourselves against enemies are probably necessary measures for our security, perhaps there is a place for being altruistic and modest (yielding or not competing), as these features may also be necessary means for addressing world problems today. Certainly, if a much more powerful alien force were to make contact with us, we would hope that they were altruistic and yielding to our ways, while being persistent about working with us towards a greater harmony.

Consistent with our wateristic personality model, other research suggests that leaders who displayed self-sacrificial altruistic behavior lead their followers more effectively than those without self-sacrificial altruism (Choi and Mai-Dalton 1998, 1999; van Knippenberg and van Knippenberg 2005). If self-sacrificial altruism is powerful in the field of management and leadership, it can surely play a beneficial role in other domains, such as in unlimited love for human beings (Post 2003) and child altruistic behavior in Hong Kong (see Ma 2003: Ma and Leung 1991).

More research will be needed to test various aspects of the Taoist model of wateristic personality (e.g., altruism, modesty, flexibility, honesty, and perseverance). Though this research is far from perfect, "a journey of thousand miles begins with a single step" as is stated in Laozi's Tao De Jing (Chapter 64).

5. NOTES

1. This paper was presented at the 34th annual conference of Cross-Cultural Research in Santa Fe, New Mexico on February 23-27, 2005. The authors would like to thank Harry Triandis and Juris Draguns for their insightful comments on previous versions and Jennifer Kirkland for helping us in American data collection and input. Part of this research was funded by the National Institute of Mental Health, National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, and Fogarty International Center (Grant No. AA014842-01) and also by the Minnesota State University Research Grant (Grant No. 211555) given to the first author.

2. A more recent meta-analysis on individualism-collectivism, however, suggests that westernization has shifted the social orientation of Japan and Korea towards individualism even more so than in China (Oyserman et al. 2002) and the United States in the case of Japan (Matsumoto 1999). However, most cross-cultural studies on individualism-collectivism rely on measures of attitudes. Attitudes associated with individualism-collectivism, however, are probably more subject to influences of recent cultural trends and therefore can vary more by individual than by culture (Matsumoto 1999). Cultural psychologists who rely more on experimental procedures than on attitudinal measures, however, suggest that attitudinal measures do not correspond well with automatic on-line responses and implicit attitudes, both of which are more stable and consistent with traditional cultural values (Kitayama 2002).

3. Instead of $500, Chinese participants were asked to donate an amount of 2000 Renminbi (or 2000 Yuan) which is not economically but psychologically and culturally equivalent to the USA amount.

4. We use "outgroup" loosely, which may have different meanings. For example, the meaning of the axis of evil (e.g., Iran, Iraq, North Korea) as outgroup members is not the same as that of the aliens as outgroup members. However, we use the concept to illustrate the point that American participants were less like to include others.

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