

In Search of a Western Counterpart of *Ch'i*: Eastern and Western Cognitive Frames in Interpreting Relevant *Ch'i* Terms

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Abstract: This study uses multidimensional scaling (MDS) to explore how Chinese and North American respondents differ in their perception of leadership spirit, or *Ch'i*, a concept that refers to energy flow, vital force, spirit, or dignity. Results show that three dimensions (*Amenable Charisma*, *Magnetic Self-Assuredness*, and *Engaged Obstinacy*) underlie perceptions of leadership *ch'i* by the Chinese subjects, as contrasted with those underlying North American subjects (*Respectful Amiability*, *Zealous Inflexibility*, and *Tentative Charisma*). The differences in the dimensions reveal the diverse cognitive frames of Chinese and North Americans as they try to understand leadership spirit. Cross-cultural understanding between Eastern and Western thinking patterns, particularly as they relate to leadership qualities, is also discussed. [China Media Research. 2010; 6(1):20-36]

Keywords: *Ch'i*, *shih*, leadership *ch'i*, multi-dimensional scaling (MDS), leadership, charisma.

Introduction

During the 2006 World Cup Final, French soccer star Zinedine Zidane, provoked by insults from an Italian opponent, head-butted him. As a result, Zidane was ejected from the match and the French team lost the championship. The following day, while soccer fans around the world were still in a mix of surprise and perplexity, the *Wall Street Journal* published a translated article, titled "Zidane," by a French author. Its first paragraph reads:

Here is one of the greatest players of all time, a legend, a myth for the entire planet, and universally acclaimed. Here is a champion who, in front of two billion people, was putting the final touches on one of the most extraordinary sagas in soccer's history. (Lévy, 2006)

The article goes on to call Zidane "a man of providence, a savior," "the planetary icon" and "a man more admired than the Pope, the Dalai Lama and Nelson Mandela put together, a demigod, a chosen one" (p. A12). The article also calls Zidane's legend "a mix of secret king, a Dostoyevskian sweet man, the ideal Beur son-in-law, future mayor of Marseilles and the charismatic captain leading his troops to consecration." These expressions seem to be uplifting enough to move, at least, Zidane fans. To those familiar to the concept of "sublimity," the hyperbolic expressions appear to have the potential of exhibiting what Dionysius Cassius Longinus and Immanuel Kant call "sublimity," the expression of a great spirit, the power to provoke ecstasy, and the ability to move others (Roberts, 1899). Zidane, the dignified paladin described in the article, apparently also has the character of sublimity. Zidane, as described in the article, apparently also possesses what Max Weber

terms "charisma," or the gifted power of being able to influence a large number of people.

East Asians, however, most likely would respond to the article by referring to the word "*ch'i*." They would consider both the article and Zidane himself as full of *ch'i*. In fact, sublimity is considered an approximate Western counterpart of the *ch'i* concept (Chang, 1994). But what is *ch'i*? This is a question frequently asked by those who are not members of cultures embracing the idea of *ch'i*.

Ch'i, a concept that refers sometimes to maneuverable energy flow, vital force, spirit, or dignity, has been a ubiquitous idea dominating Eastern Asian people's thinking about communication and other fields for more than two thousand years. Not only can numerous *ch'i*-related words in many Eastern Asian languages be identified, the concept of *ch'i* has also guided specific activities, such as personal conduct, acupuncture, *t'ai chi* (shadow boxing), *feng shui* (Chen, 2007), swordsmanship, calligraphy, architecture, and painting, constituting an important part of these cultures.

One important area of exploration of the notion of *ch'i* lies in leadership quality. Particularly when talking about a leader, Chinese are likely to evaluate his or her performance in terms of the type or amount of *ch'i* he/she possesses, since *ch'i* encompasses qualities such as breadth, spirit, character, bearing, and manner (Liang, 1988, p. 281). Common phrases such as *ch'i p'ai* (impressive manner or air), *ch'i p'uo* (breadth of mind or moral strength), or *ch'i kai* (pronounced "*ki gai*" in Japanese, high-spirited or grand), are aspects of this ubiquitous concept. While the concept of *ch'i* may seem elusive and abstract, for many Chinese and other Easterners, it is nevertheless perceivable and observable, and may work as an important criterion in judging leadership qualities.

As the Chinese culture is gaining more attention, businesses and organizational contacts are becoming increasingly common, and *ch'i* related applications are making inroads into other cultures, it should be enlightening to compare and contrast perceptions of leadership *ch'i* by Chinese and others. What do Chinese believe to be a leader with *ch'i*? How is *ch'i* expressed in various ways and influence interpersonal interactions? On the other hand, although *ch'i* is an East-Asian-culture-specific concept, *ch'i* does not exist uniquely in East Asia or is possessed merely by East-Asians. As Lao Tzu said definitively, all things have *yin* and *yang*, interplaying to generate *ch'i*.

Then, how do North Americans perceive leadership *ch'i* and how do their perceptions differ from those of Chinese? Given its rich cultural implications expressed through its diverse linguistic terms, it is difficult to interpret this concept in terms of Western perspectives. *Ch'i* is most commonly translated into English as energy flow, vital force, "passion nature," breath, power, "ether force," and "the great breath of the universe" (Siu, 1974); however, none of these translations fully captures the richness of *ch'i*. The cross-cultural challenge concerning the concept of *ch'i* becomes evident. To shed some light on the questions, we use multidimensional scaling (MDS) to compare how Chinese and North American natives perceive the concept of leadership spirit by analyzing their respective cognitive configurations of various linguistic terms closely related to *ch'i* and charisma.

Before we address the methods in depth, in the following we present a review of the concept of *ch'i* and its application in Chinese culture, compare the concept with other similar concepts in the West, and then discuss how the concept may be used to study leadership quality.

***Ch'i* in All Things, in the West, and in Leadership**

Ch'i: Its Origin and Characteristics

The concept of *ch'i* is omnipresent in the East Asian cultures of China, Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Vietnam. Among all fields of *ch'i* studies, *ch'i* in philosophy (e.g., Liu, 2007, 2008) is the most relevant to the implication of or application to communication. In China, an etymological investigation traces the word *ch'i* back to as early as China's *Shang* dynasty (ca. 1766-1223 B.C.), as found in oracle bone inscriptions. Since the ancient days, *ch'i* has been studied in Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Legalism, and other philosophical or religious disciplines. For example, Liu (2008) identifies three schools of thought in the Confucian tradition. It also has been studied, applied, and developed in literary criticism, art, medicine, *ch'i kung*, martial arts, *feng shui*, and other

fields. The contemporary notion of *ch'i* took shape in the *Ch'in* dynasty (221-206 B.C.).

Ch'i is considered the most fundamental component of the universe, permeating all existence (Wang, 1989). It exists in the natural environment (such as mountains and water); flows in the human body; as well as emanates from artifacts such as common buildings, architecture, paintings, calligraphy, and other art works. Thus, all human beings and their artifacts, social organizations, and materials have their own individual *ch'i*. According to Yao (2008), *ch'i* can refer to the original life force of all existence, the intrinsic nature of any real object, the appearance or condition external to an object, as well as a person's state of mind.

The word *ch'i* as a prefix or a suffix makes possible numerous *ch'i*-related words and phrases such as air, weather, breath, energy, anger, climate, etc. Even in human relationships, there are abundant *ch'i* terms in personal, interpersonal, group, organizational, and public contexts. These include depression, upbeat attitude, stinginess, generosity, encouragement, discouragement, aggressiveness, harmony, atmosphere, morale, and so on. There are also phrases, though not including the character *ch'i*, that express *ch'i* as a mental and spiritual state (Liu, 2008). Such words are ubiquitous and frequently used in the Eastern Asian, especially Chinese, languages, reflecting the importance of *ch'i* in these cultures.

Chung and Busby (2002) propose that *ch'i* has the following properties. First, *ch'i* is ubiquitous, though invisible, because it is the most fundamental element of the universe. Second, *ch'i* is mortal. It may die out (disperse) eventually and need to be regenerated or condensed. After *ch'i* wanes or dies, a new *ch'i* needs to be regenerated to act or communicate effectively. Third, *ch'i* is circular. Without intervention (such as regenerating), the *yin* element of *ch'i* may wane and the *yang* element may rise, and vice versa, forming a cycle. Fourth, *ch'i* is dialectical. The *yin* and *yang* elements balance each other to maintain equilibrium for a certain period before they switch places. Fifth, *ch'i* is fluctuational. It ebbs and flows, affected by an individual's mental state, the environment, or other factors. Sixth, *ch'i* is perceivable. When person *A* comments that person *B* has a certain kind of *ch'i*, the *ch'i* is perceived by this commentator, although another observer may not necessarily perceive any kind of *ch'i* in person *A*. Seventh, *ch'i* is maneuverable. This is what is valuable about learning *ch'i*, because by changing *ch'i*, we can act and communicate more effectively. Eighth, *ch'i* is developable. With cultivation, *ch'i* can grow or take shape.

Because various schools of *ch'i* thoughts emphasized various nuances, *ch'i* has taken on different connotations in different fields of studies and

applications. As it evolved during the past two millennia, this concept has taken on many additional dimensions of meaning. In the field of communication, a new theory of *ch'i* is taking place at the onset of the 21st century, as studies have been conducted of *ch'i*'s application to written, interpersonal, organizational, political, and societal communication, (Chung, 2004; Chung, Hara, Yang, & Ryu, 2003; Isaacson & Chung, 2003; Ito, 2002; Chung & Busby, 2002). In light of its growing importance, *China Media Research* devoted a special forum to address *ch'i*'s philosophical and conceptual foundation and applications in communication studies (see Chung, 2008a).

Thoughts about *Ch'i* and leadership

Starosta (2008) notes that "*ch'i* could be dealt with on a continuum that stretched from the way things were imputed to be, toward an accounting of the way in which persons should deal with other persons" (p. 108). That *ch'i* is a vital force that is also generated through the interplay of *yin* and *yang* provides a useful vantage point to explore aspects of leadership.

Ancient Chinese philosophers theorized that the universe was first formed by *ch'i*, or primordial *ch'i*. *Ch'i*, like all things in the universe, consists of two aspects, *yin* and *yang*, which interact with each other to produce *ch'i* (Wang, 1989). This mutuality allows *ch'i* to manifest itself (Starosta, 2008) and is the common principle through usage of *ch'i*-related words (Chung, 2008b). Chang Tsai (1020-1077), a prominent *ch'i* scholar, explicated that *ch'i* is a vital force in a perpetual process of change following a definitive pattern of activity according to the *yin* and *yang* (interplay) principles (Huang, 1988). *Yin* represents the dormant, relatively weak, soft, or passive element, and *yang* stands for *ch'i* in action, the comparatively strong, tough, or active component. It would be easier to understand the *yin-yang* interplay by observing the cyclic movement of the Mother Nature. The cold winter, for example, evolves into the warmer spring and eventually the hot summer. The summer then turns back into winter in the same pattern. Winter (*yin*) and summer (*yang*) form a rotational symmetry making a continuous cyclic movement. The cyclic interchange creates an energy flow (in physical sense) called *ch'i*. The *ch'i* governs the birth, growth, and decay of all things, including various phenomena in nature.

Human behaviors, including leadership, being part of all things in the universe, also has the *yin* and *yang* aspects, being able to interplay, or even to generate *ch'i*. For example, the interactions between leaders (the socially more powerful, thus *yang*) and the follower (the weaker, thus *yin*) can interplay to generate *ch'i*, an atmosphere in this context (Chung, 2008b). Questions might naturally emerge: how to interplay and what kind

of *ch'i* is generated by different interplays? If the power differential (*yin* vs. *yang*) is gained, strategically achieved, played, or acted to appear large or wide, then there is a dynamic *ch'i*, which has the potential to do works. If the differential appears small or narrow, the *ch'i* is amiable. A tyrant and his subjects would naturally mold a *ch'i* in the former category, while a friendly first level supervisor and his "buddy" subordinate workers would shape the latter.

Mencius, the first prominent Confucian scholar to propose the concept of *ch'i* directly relevant to leadership studies (Zu, 1991), claimed that he was skilled in nurturing a *hao jan* (grand) *ch'i*. His concept of nurturing *ch'i* contained two levels: first is to "reduce desires" to achieve an unshakable mind (*pu tung hsin*) in daily life. Then, at the higher level, he suggested using *ch'i* nurturing to recall the distracted mind (Chiang, 1982).

Mencius' remarks shaped the concept of *ch'i* in Confucianism in the following ways. First, the *hao jan* (grand) *ch'i* is "great and unbending." When nurtured with righteousness without being damaged (by selfishness), the *hao jan ch'i* can fill (one's) world. Second, *ch'i* is under the command of will (*chih*). When one's goal is set, *chih* comes, and *ch'i* follows. But Mencius emphasized that one needs to use *chih* to hold on to one's will and should not allow *ch'i* to run amok. He said that focusing on the will can move one's *ch'i*, but if one allows the *ch'i* to go in full swing, the *ch'i* may move the will. Finally, *ch'i* needs to be complemented by two basic elements: *i* (righteousness) and *tao* (the law of nature).

How *ch'i* influences Chinese understanding of leadership quality and how such perceptions contrast with those of North Americans is a question for serious consideration. Before we explore this question, however, we first turn to Western conceptions that resemble *ch'i*, especially with respect to leadership qualities.

Western Concepts Close to *Ch'i*

Although the word "*ch'i*" is ubiquitous in East-Asian languages and the concept of *ch'i* is important in East-Asian cultures, it is difficult to find a counterpart in Western languages or concepts. A close example may be "gusto" that the 19th century British literary critic, William Hazlitt, uses to refer to power emanating from artistic works (Hazlitt, 1930, cited in Chung & Busby, 2002). Other words that carry close connotations, but are different from the meaning of *ch'i*, include: "atom," as used by Epicurus in 400 B.C.; "arer" (air); "pneuma" (breath or spirit); and "psyche" (spirit or soul), as used by Diogenes of Apollonia, a Greek philosopher of 500 B.C.; and the "nous" (spirit or soul) by Archelaus, also of 500 B.C. The concept of *ch'i* is often compared with the concept of ether, a hypothetical medium formerly

postulated to fill the atmosphere and outer space and supposed to account for the propagation of electromagnetic radiation through space (Soukhanov, 1999). *Ch'i* differs from ether in that *ch'i* is full of life and is maneuverable, while ether is considered lifeless and un-maneuverable.

Another very close Western comparison to *ch'i* is "sublime" as proposed by Dionysius Cassius Longinus, a Greek rhetorician living in Rome approximately during the third century. Longinus listed essential elements that can "transport" readers: expression must instinctively uplift the soul to be sublime; the soul must take "proud flight" "filled with joy and vaunting, as though it had itself produced what it has heard." Sublimity means excellence of expression, the expression of a great spirit, the power to provoke ecstasy, and the ability to move others (see Roberts, 1899, p. 55, as cited in Chung & Busby, 2002). Kant further differentiates "mathematically sublime" from "dynamically sublime" (Chang, 1994, p. 40). In addition to Kant's two sublimities at the conceptual level, Nicholson proposes that which is "rhetorical sublime" at the technical level (Nicholson, 1965, p. 29). Rhetorical strategies such as asyndeton, balance, and antithesis fall into this category. As Chung and Busby (2002) point out, these concepts of sublimity are rich resources for building *ch'i* theories and for constructing *ch'i*-related strategies.

Aside from the definitions of the concept itself, approaches to acquiring *ch'i* in the East are also different from approaches to developing leadership qualities in the West: the Easterners emphasize relatively longer term to develop *ch'i*, while the Westerners tend to stress fast learning of rhetorical or delivery techniques and knowledge (Chung & Busby, 2002). Traditionally, Chinese develop *ch'i* by cultivating internal character, such as visiting knowledgeable people (for intellectual development), touring magnificent mountains and rivers (for cultivating an open mind and vision), and keeping physically robust (for strong stamina), etc. (Chang, 1994). Westerners, on the other hand, emphasize the external act of leadership (Cashman, 1998). The Western leadership development books place greater emphasis on techniques and skills than on character building.

The Chinese or Eastern concepts of *ch'i* themselves include both rational and emotional aspects. Powerful reasoning or emotion can motivate stake-holders (followers) and elevate their *ch'i*. It is relatively difficult to differentiate the cognitive and emotive aspects. In the Western studies of leadership, however, leadership qualities tend to be broken into the categories of functional (communication) skills and emotional (communication) competencies (Hackman & Johnson, 2004). Goleman and his colleagues, for example, argue

for fostering a positive emotional climate by introducing the concept of "primal leadership." He maintains that to "prime" good feelings in followers would bring out the best in leaders and followers alike, and he terms this effect "resonance" (Coleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002). This concept is close to the Chinese leadership concept of "*kan ying*" (feeling and responding), but is distant from the *ch'i* concept.

Leadership *Ch'i* and Charisma

Ch'i, as energy flow, vital force, or spirit that exists in all human beings, is particularly useful in helping us analyze leadership. Although what makes a leader depends upon his or her behavioral performances and the effects such behaviors may generate, there is nevertheless some kind of quality that is perceived by his or her followers to mark the leader as different, unique, and being able to lead. Such quality, or air, is well captured by the notion of *ch'i* and can also be elaborated through the Western concept of charisma.

Weber borrowed the word "charisma" from theology to define gifted leadership. He referred to those charismatic leaders as those who attracted devoted followers through their extraordinary powers. Weber (1947) stated:

... he (sic) is set apart from ordinary men (sic) and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These [powers] are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader. (pp. 358-359)

He viewed charismatic leaders as gifted, or even supernatural, for they possess extraordinary power not available to others. It is also this personality quality which is perceived by, and thereby attracts, followers. Since then issues concerning charisma have been studied by scholars taking sociological, psychoanalytical, political, behavioral, attributional, and communicative approaches (Hackman & Johnson, 2004). No longer simply focusing on charisma as a given personality quality, these scholars try to delineate factors that make a charismatic leader (personality traits, behavioral performance, situational exigencies, or others) and leader-follower interaction (process, emotional attachment, and so on).

Charisma and *ch'i* are apparently two different concepts, each embracing its own unique cultural assumptions; however, they do share the same focus on leadership spirit. In order to compare how Chinese and American subjects differ in their perception of leadership spirit, it was thought useful to use both concepts as initial stimuli to generate associated concepts, upon which MDS will be performed.

Methods

This study uses weighted multidimensional scaling (WMDS) to examine differences in perceptions of leadership *ch'i* by Chinese and American subjects. The multidimensional scaling technique has been used in a variety of social science studies (Cooper, 1983; Davison, 1983; Schiffman, Reynolds, & Young, 1981), including studies of communication and social relationship (Wang & Chang, 1999; Wish, 1975; Wish, Deutsch, & Kaplan, 1976). More recently, Holt expands this method and utilizes MDS to establish dimensions underlying perceptions and to provide depth interpretation as a means of elaborating cultural knowledge in thesis research projects he has directed (Chin, 1999; Parker, 2006; Song, 1996; Velez, 2000). Wang and Chang (1999) follow Holt's lead in using MDS to explore different perceptions of Chinese professionals about working in Chinese, versus in American, organizations.

Davison (1983) notes that MDS is used "for estimating the parameters in and assessing the fit of various spatial distance models for proximity data" (p. 2). Specifically, MDS allows the researcher to discover salient underlying features through interpreting stimulus coordinates recovered in the scaling (Davison, 1983). By applying "direct" measures of proximity in communication research, a "finer grained inspection of individual and group perceptions" may be achieved (Cooper, 1983, p. 445). Another utility of MDS is that, unlike most research in which researchers often impose a prescribed list of attributes on which the perceptions are rated, here the respondent is able to bring a personal frame of reference to the judgment task and thus avoid unexpected experimenter contamination (Cooper, 1983; Schiffman et al., 1981; Wang & Chang, 1999).

The purpose of this type of multidimensional

scaling is to construct a multiple dimensional map of the locations of stimulus terms relative to each other, from data that specify how different the terms are. Specifically, we used the "scaling replicated conditional rank-order data" (SRCRD) approach, in which subjects are asked to rank stimulus pairs in terms of similarity. Each of the twelve stimuli serves in turn as the standard stimulus, and the other nine stimuli are then ranked from the most similar, to the least similar, with respect to each standard stimulus. By observing the spatial distance among these stimulus terms, WMDS allows us to identify the dimensions underlying perceptions of leadership *ch'i* between Chinese and Americans.

Selection of Stimulus Terms

In this study *ch'i* is defined as a vital force possessed by individuals or social systems in the communication processes. The first step in this study was to identify key stimulus terms relevant to leadership *ch'i*. To achieve this goal, several pilot tests and literature reviews were conducted in the United States and in Hong Kong.

In the United States, a total of fifty-two American college students were asked to (1) write down the terms that come to mind when they hear the word, charisma, and (2) write down what they think are the traits of a charismatic leader and/or what such a leader is like. Although charisma is in no way identical to the Chinese concept of *ch'i*, it does nevertheless capture the feeling of "energy flow" or "spirit" about a leader. These pilot tests generated more than 100 terms associated with charisma; combined with results from the literature review on leadership qualities and after we classified terms based upon similar concepts, twelve key terms emerged (see Table I, below):

TABLE I
CONCEPTS ASSOCIATED WITH CHARISMA AND CH'I
BY AMERICAN AND CHINESE SUBJECTS

Concepts Associated with Charisma by American Respondents	Times	Concepts Associated with <i>ch'i</i> by Chinese Respondents	Times	Terms Selected for MDS Test
<i>Energetic*</i>	19	<i>open-minded</i>	13	charming
<i>Charming</i>	16	<i>charming</i>	11	persuasive
<i>Confident</i>	13	<i>persuasive</i>	10	powerful
<i>Powerful</i>	8	wise	9	energetic
<i>Positive</i>	7	<i>far-sighted</i>	7	positive
<i>Likeable</i>	7	<i>decisive</i>	7	open-minded
Spiritual	7	<i>persistent</i>	7	enthusiastic
Personable	6	broad-minded	6	confident
<i>Enthusiastic</i>	6	good at employing people	5	far-sighted
Interesting	6	perceptive	5	likable
<i>Persuasive</i>	4	calm	5	decisive
Exciting	4	<i>courage to plunge ahead</i>	5	persistent

*Italicized terms are those selected for MDS test.

Similar procedures were performed with Chinese subjects. In Hong Kong, a total of forty students were asked to identify the terms they thought of when they heard the term *ch'i*. In addition, they were asked to describe the traits of a leader who is full of *ch'i* and/or what such a leader is like. A smaller number of Chinese Americans in America, mostly middle-aged immigrants, also completed the questionnaire. It should be noted that Chinese subjects responded to this questionnaire in Chinese. Again, after classifying terms based upon similar concepts, we derived twelve key terms (see above, Table I).

Since it is necessary for the two groups to rank order spatial similarities of the same set of stimulus terms, special efforts to identify stimulus terms appropriate for both groups were made to ensure that linguistic barriers did not unduly influence the results of the study. As can be observed from the table, both "charming" and "persuasive" appeared in both groups. The concept "powerful" bears some degree of resemblance to the Chinese notion of *puoli*, the courage to plunge ahead. The remaining key concepts ranked as the top six for each group were then selected. These include "energetic," "confident," "positive," and "likeable" from American respondents; "open-minded," "far-sighted," and "decisive" from Chinese respondents. The concept of "wise," though ranked fourth by the Chinese respondents, was thought to be more unique to Chinese cultural values and likely to be less applicable to American subjects, and hence it was not selected. Instead, the concept "persistent" was used. This procedure generated a total of twelve terms (see Table I) applicable to both Chinese and American subjects. All these terms were considered appropriate as attributes to ideas and activities related to *ch'i*.

Subjects

A total of thirty-four subjects participated in this study; nineteen are undergraduate students in the United States and the other fifteen are Chinese part-time MA students in Hong Kong. Since MDS explores the spatial structures of subjects with regard to a specific set of objects or terms through analysis of similarity data, it yields stable spaces even with only a few subjects (Schiffman et al., 1981, p. 4; Wang & Chang, 1999). According to Davison's (1983, p. 41) formula the minimum number of judging, M averaged for each pair is $M = 40K^*/(I-1)$, where K is the anticipated number of dimensions (for the present study, $K= 3$) and I represents the number of stimuli (for the present study, $I = 12$). Thus eleven subjects should be sufficient. The fifteen subjects for one group and nineteen for another thus is an appropriate size sample.

Procedure

Two stages of stimuli were involved. In the first stage, subjects were prompted through a short description to hold in mind their overall opinion of leadership *ch'i*. Specifically, the researcher stated the following:

I want you to think about a leader who is full of spirit or energy. Based upon this image, I will ask you to perform a ranking task.

In the second stage, subjects completed the SRCRD ranking procedure on the twelve stimulus terms. All twelve stimulus terms were in English, and were written on twelve separate cards. Each subject was presented with one randomly selected term from the set of twelve stimulus terms as the standard, and then was asked to rank order spatial distance among the remaining terms. Once the procedure was done, the term selected as the standard was put back, and another term was selected as the standard against which the other eleven terms' spatial distances were judged. The process continued until all twelve terms served as the standard. In other words, the researcher helped each subject fill a 12X12 grid which records their ranking order of these twelve terms.

The "weighted MDS" procedure (Davison, 1983; Schiffman et al., 1981) was used to analyze the data and generate a three-dimensional graphic model for each group. These models represent aggregate perceptual spaces of subjects, with respect to the perception of leadership *ch'i*. From these data, it is possible to interpret the clustering of perceptions and compare the cognitive configurations of American and Chinese subjects toward *ch'i*.

Interpretation of Data

To understand the coordinates of the twelve stimulus terms, three dimensions were generated for each primary stimulus for each of the two groups. Although the loading score and rank order for each of the twelve stimulus terms could be meaningful for interpreting dimensions, only the three highest positive and the three highest negative loadings were considered in deriving the label for each dimension. While it is practically impossible to combine meanings of more than three concepts into a single dimension label, the conjoining of the three most positive loadings with reverse confirmation from the three most negative loadings, makes it feasible for the researcher to capture the essence of each dimension (Wang & Chang, 1999).

Chinese Perceptions of Leadership *Ch'i*

Chinese subjects were asked to think about a leader who is full of spirit or energy, generating data that resulted in a three dimensional map (Figure 1). The three dimensions for the Chinese subjects' perception about leadership *ch'i* are "Amenable Charisma," "Magnetic Self-Assuredness," and "Engaged Obstinance" (see below, Table II).

Figure 1
Stimulus Configuration Space, Perceptions of Leadership *Ch'i* by Chinese Subjects

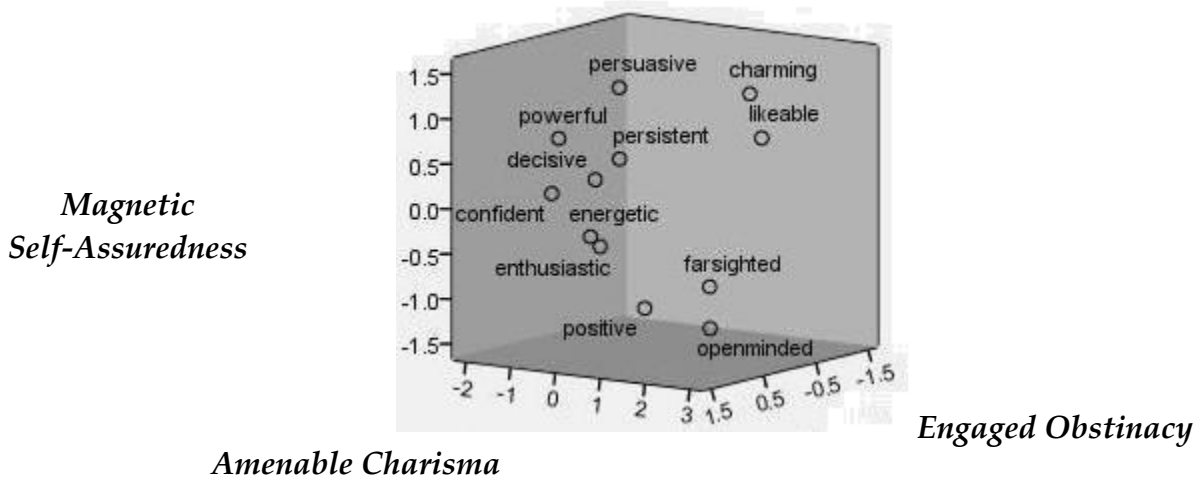


Table II
Stimulus Term Loadings for Chinese Subjects

Stimulus Term	Dimension 1 <i>Amenable Charisma</i>	Dimension 2 <i>Magnetic Self-Assuredness</i>	Dimension 3 <i>Engaged Obstacity</i>
Charming	1.9491†	1.1469†	-.5798††
Persuasive	-.7806	1.0698†	-.6286††
Powerful	-1.5421††	.8474†	-.1221
Energetic	.4491	.0568	1.2866†
Positive	.7160	-.9665††	.8244†
Open-minded	.8392†	-1.5899††	-.3342
Enthusiastic	.4997	-.0533	1.1875†
Confident	-1.4102††	.3102	.6366
Far-sighted	-.1795	-1.4099††	-1.0969††
Likeable	2.3376†	.6794	-.4363
Decisive	-1.5757††	-.1216	-.3655
Persistent	-1.3025	.0308	-.3717

† most positively loaded terms
 †† most negatively loaded terms

Dimension 1: Amenable Charisma. The three stimuli loading most positively on this first dimension are “likeable” (+2.3376), “charming” (+1.9491), and “open-minded” (+.8392). The three most negatively loaded terms are “decisive” (-1.5757), “powerful” (-1.5421), and “persistent” (-1.4102). *Amenable Charisma* captures the impression of a pleasant, charming, and inviting leader who, instead of being rigid and set at the path to tread, is willing to listen to others and follow the flow of events without exerting unnecessary control.

This dimension loaded most heavily on “likeable,” followed by “charming” and “open-minded,” suggesting

a leader who exudes pleasant, inviting feelings toward those who he or she leads. “Likeable” suggests attractive characteristics that are appealing to people, who naturally align with the leader to follow his or her lead. The second most positively loaded term, “charming,” further supports the attraction people have toward their leader. It may not be that what the leader does is in line with what is right or supposed to be, but that the leader is likeable and charming enough that people find him or her easy to get along with. Adding “open-minded,” the third most positively loaded term, we can clearly envision the broad-minded leader as someone who can appreciate alternative perspectives,

primarily because s/he is open to (amenable to) what is opening up and evolving, naturally generating positive feelings and drawing people closer.

This ideal of the pleasant leader is also more socio-emotional than task-oriented, as can be judged from the three most negatively loaded terms, "decisive," "powerful," and "confident." Particularly interesting is the observation that the leader's open-mindedness, while it may enable him or her to become better informed and make a more thorough decision, the leader is neither firm nor adamant about forcing his or her positions on people, but instead may be hesitant in making up his or her mind. This person's open-mindedness may thus be more of a means to reach out to people than to contemplate important issues; since the leader is not quite sure about him- or herself, he or she might even be likely to vacillate among different positions. Without holding onto firm positions but responding to the needs of people and circumstances, this unsure leader is in fact quite malleable without taking charge of situations and persistent in insisting on his or her own way (the fourth most negatively loaded term, "persistent," has almost the same value as "confident.")

Unlike the stereotype of the Western ideal leader as someone who possesses significant power to carry things out, in *Amenable Charisma* we find the leader's *ch'i* more supple and accommodating. *Amenable Charisma* incorporates the Chinese cultural ideal of a follow-the-situation leader who is very attractive--a charming *t'ai chi* or Taoist master, if you will. The movement of *t'ai chi* boxing is soft and flexible, following the movement of the natural environment; and yet, it is within these seemingly supple, powerless movements that strength is sustained and achieved. *Amenable Charisma* well reflects the idea that the *ch'i* of a charismatic, likeable leader does not exert force but expresses an accommodating, flexible energy with a personal touch that requires no willful actions.

Dimension 2: Magnetic Self-assuredness. The three stimuli loading most positively on this dimension are "charming" (+1.1469), "persuasive" (+1.0698), and "powerful" (+.8474). The three most negatively loaded terms are "open-minded" (-1.5899), "far-sighted" (-1.4099), and "positive" (-.9665). *Magnetic Self-Assuredness* describes a charming and even compelling leader who naturally wins people's hearts and moves their actions. Full of charm and having no shortage of followers, the leader does not entertain alternative viewpoints or encourage people, only focusing on the here-and-now.

The most positively loaded term, "charming," suggests the leader is quite magnetic--he or she possesses the kind of spirit that naturally puts people at ease in following his or her lead. Even exerting only

very little reasoning power to articulate matters, the leader is still perceived by people as convincing and they are willing to submit themselves to the charismatic leader's calls for action. The second positively loaded term, "persuasive," clearly shows how the leader is able to affect people with this magnetic personality, much like an influential spiritual leader whose power seems to reside in the leader's personal force.

Perhaps because of having such influential power to sway people, as suggested by the third positively loaded term "powerful," this sort of leader can also be quite self-assured. "Open-minded," the term loading most negatively on *Magnetic Self-Assuredness*, suggests a leader who may be more likely to be top-down, rather than a bottom-up "people person." Such leaders can come to their own judgments and not need to have them verified by others therefore see little need to go beyond their own outlook to explore broader possibilities. Simply put, this type of leader may be quite sure of his or her knowledge and experience and see little need to exert effort to supplement any deficiencies. The second most negatively loaded term, "far-sighted," further supports this possibility of the leader being self-assured. In addition to not being interested in other's ideas, negative association with far-sightedness might also suggest that the leader also finds little value in going beyond the here-and-now, the future perhaps being deemed irrelevant to the present. Not surprisingly, the leader is neither constructive nor helpful, as suggested by the third negatively loaded term, "positive." The concern for only the immediate, tangible elements seems to portray this leader as someone less intellectually sophisticated and with no vision for the future.

Magnetic Self-Assuredness suggests a very charismatic leader who draws followers close simply by being appealing and magnetic. The leader's charming *ch'i* not only is alluring to people, but also perhaps to him- or herself. Possibly the leader's self-assuredness not only does not provoke followers' blame but is actually encouraged by them.

Dimension 3: Engaged Obstinacy. The three stimuli loading most positively on dimension three are "energetic" (+1.2866), "enthusiastic" (+1.1875), and "positive" (+.8244). The three most negatively loaded stimuli are "far-sighted" (-1.0969), "persuasive" (-.6286), and "charming" (-.5798). This dimension depicts an exciting and dynamic leader full of energy to stir things up. However, while making no attempt to exert power to change others, the leader's positively-oriented energy is narrowly focused only on present matters with little concern for the future, a posture that people likely perceive as unappealing.

The most positively loaded term, "energetic," portrays a vigorous leader full of spirit. She or he could

be quite active through involvement in a variety of activities and therefore likely to stir up dormant energy in followers. The second most positively loaded term, "enthusiastic," further adds the feeling of active engagement by the leader, who takes charge of matters while his or her vigor inspires people. Eager and passionate, the leader's *ch'i* appears constructive and optimistic, a perception likely reinforced by the third most positively loaded term, "positive."

This expansive positive energy may not be effective in rendering people irresistibly compliant, however. The most negatively loaded term, "far-sighted," may indicate that the leader's enthusiastic energy is curtailed by a narrow, here-and-now focus (much as it was for the previous dimension). The leader's *ch'i* might be seen to apply only to current problems, but not for future planning. Another of *Engaged Obstinacy's* most highly negatively loaded terms, "persuasive," points to the possibility that this positive enthusiasm might not be perceived as being used in an attempt to change people, who may be allowed to proceed in the absence of persuasion, or in other words, to decide on their own. Having spent so much energy to resolve current matters, the leader may be viewed as uninterested in going beyond the observable present and would rather leave the matter for followers to make judgments for themselves. With a focus only on immediate, tangible situations with little regard for the future, the leader's active enthusiasm appears constrained.

Moreover, if this leader seems to exercise little persuasive power, the possible task-oriented narrow foci may put people off a bit, supported by the third most negatively loaded term, "charming." The more energy exhibited by a leader with such *ch'i*, the more it may seem as if the leader only holds to his or her

position inflexibly and may be seen as eager to resolve tangible matters at the expense of getting people involved. Simply put, such a leader may not be viewed as being involved with people but concrete, tangible matters. Such a leader's *ch'i* is less likely to generate positive feelings of liking; instead, such leaders may be seen as so uncharismatic that people find it difficult to be attracted to them. This kind of *ch'i* can actually alienate followers and accentuate interpersonal distance.

Engaged Obstinacy accentuates the notion that *ch'i* may be narrowly held by the leader without exerting much impact on others, given his or her persistent, task-oriented focus on the here-and-now. It also captures the conventional Chinese distinction between "matters" and "human affairs," domains that do not always coincide. Although the leader is engaged rather than detached, given his or her possibly unappealing narrow-mindedness, the *ch'i* is only obstinately claimed by the leader him- or herself. Followers may comply due to principles of matters, but not because it is pleasant in terms of principles of human affairs. The *ch'i* expresses itself in the leader's strong enthusiasm to resolve current matters but not in human skills that allow the leader and those led to be tightly bound to one another. The leader's *ch'i* could thus be viewed of limited relevance to others and may actually repel them.

American Perceptions of Leadership Ch'i

American subjects in this group were asked to hold in mind their perception of a leader infused with energy or *ch'i*. Data analysis resulted in a three-dimensional chart (see Figure 2, below). The three dimensions for the American subjects are labeled as "Respectful Amiability," "Zealous Inflexibility," and "Tentative Charisma" (Table III).

Figure 2
Stimulus configuration space, perceptions of leadership *ch'i* by American subjects

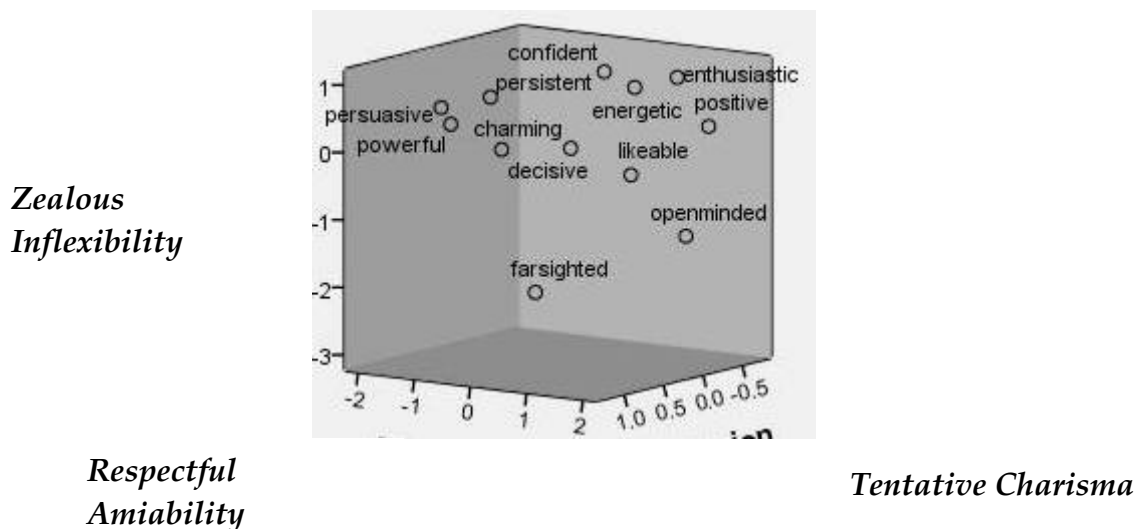


Table III
Stimulus Term Loadings for American Subjects

Stimulus Term	Dimension 1 <i>Respectful Amiability</i>	Dimension 2 <i>Zealous Inflexibility</i>	Dimension 3 <i>Tentative Charisma</i>
Charming	1.3298	.3276	1.0375†
Persuasive	-1.3800	.5731	.7480†
Powerful	-1.4545††	.2693	.5754
Energetic	.5320	.7505†	-.3454
Positive	1.4897†	.1948	-.6006††
Open-minded	1.4440†	-1.3624††	-.3436
Enthusiastic	.7809	.8189†	-.7083††
Confident	-.3928	.8101†	-.6194††
Farsighted	-.7511	-2.3184††	.0002
Likeable	1.9407†	-.1005	.7100†
Decisive	-1.9253††	-.4382	-.4099
Persistent	-1.6134††	.4752	-.0441

† most positively loaded terms

†† most negatively loaded terms

Dimension 1: Respectful Amiability. The three stimuli loading most positively on the first dimension are “likeable” (+1.9407), “positive” (+1.4897), and “open-minded” (+1.4440); the three most negatively loaded are “decisive” (-1.9253), “persistent” (-1.6134), and “powerful” (-1.4440). This dimension suggests a pleasant, constructive, broad-minded leader people find comfortable to approach. This amiable leader’s *ch'i* flows naturally, subtly exerting its influence by being hesitant, yielding, and seemingly feeble, similar to the style of an understated *t'ai chi* master.

Respectful Amiability is most positively loaded on the stimulus term, “likeable,” highlighting the positive affect that naturally links the leader with followers. This kind of feeling also often carries with it elements of positive regard, such as care and concern, form the basis upon which a more human-oriented leadership can be established. The second positively loaded term, “positive,” further emphasizes the leader’s affirmative and optimistic spirit that makes it easy for others to identify themselves with the leader. This positive feeling and orientation of the leader’s *ch'i* would appear to be not simply a matter of feelings and emotions, but is accompanied by the leader’s intellectual sophistication--such as willingness to take different perspectives into account--as shown by the third most positively loaded term, “open-minded.” Such leaders’ appealing characteristics seem to invite followers to remain under their influence; they are not the sole thinkers of thoughts but are perceived to be part of an unfolding understanding on principles of matters.

Such an approachable, likeable, and accepting leader seems a good role model followers could look to for guidance and direction. Nevertheless, this kind of

leader could also be someone who could vacillate among different positions, since she or he could also be soft and feeble, rather than harsh or forceful. This appears to be indicated by the three most negatively loaded terms--“decisive,” “persistent,” and “powerful.” Such a leader’s *ch'i* is unlikely to manifest as certainty, confrontation, or display of force. Quite to the contrary, leaders like this seem hesitant in making decisions and do not insist on followers taking specific courses of action, but rather allow events and people to flexibly attune to the demands of the situation.

The second most negatively loaded term, “persistent,” further indicates that the leader may be thought to be not particularly resolute in specific courses of action, but rather likely to display seeming weakness by changing positions according to different circumstances. Rather than persisting their own ideas and beliefs, such leaders seem to simply follow the flow of the development of circumstances, since they do not persist in pushing others in the direction they have chosen or try to exert their power. This suppleness may also be conceived as taking a respectful posture toward others.

Coupled with the three most positively loaded terms, the leader’s affirmative attitude and open-mindedness may simply be a process of contemplating important issues; he or she explores all possibilities but yet remains rather uncertain and hence may not be seen as taking charge in making final decisions. In *Respectful Amiability*, we see the image of a well-liked but malleable leader who exhibits positive regard to draw others closer, and yet does not exercise external power to force their compliance. This *ch'i*, as in the case of earlier dimensions, may suggest the posture of a master

in the less aggressive martial arts, such as *t'ai chi* or *aikido*.

Dimension 2: Zealous Inflexibility. The three stimuli loading most positively on this second dimension are “enthusiastic” (+.8189), “confident” (+.8101), and “energetic” (+.7505). The two most negatively loaded terms are “far-sighted” (-2.3184) and “open-minded” (-1.3624). The dimension *Zealous Inflexibility* portrays the image of a powerful, self-assured leader who single-mindedly focuses on the present and who trusts his or her own ability so much that he or she may perceive no need to entertain alternative perspectives and opinions.

These most highly positively loaded stimuli point to this type of leader’s spirited, upbeat demeanor. The first term, “enthusiastic,” suggests that such a leader pursues matters close at hand vigorously and with certainty, confirmed by the high positive loading of the second term, “confident.” Such leaders put forth their best effort in full force, with high spirits actualized through powerful actions. The third positively loaded stimulus term, “energetic,” may suggest that such leaders’ *ch'i* is perceived as a kind of higher-level vibration with the ability to stimulate followers. Taken together, all these stimuli suggest enthusiastic, confident, and energetic *ch'i* that allows a zealous leader to get others to commit themselves the same as the leader does; such leaders guide with a strong, fully-fledged, indomitable power grounded in self-assurance.

As has been the case for other dimensions, however, here we find the stimulus term “far-sighted” highly negatively loaded, pointing to an image of a leader focused on the present, with little attention to the future. The various stages of development, together with the trajectories they might follow, that may transpire in the future are seen to matter far less in *ch'i* of this type of motivating leader. This seemingly pragmatic focus on a quality that appears immediate and tangible in the here-and-now depicts a leader who embraces *ch'i* that resolves matters but does not necessarily inspire dreams. The second most negatively loaded stimulus term, “open-minded,” contributes to a perception of the leader as closed-minded, perhaps believing his or her way is the best choice and seeing no need to enlarge his or her repertoire by considering alternative positions.

Zealous Inflexibility suggests a powerful style in which leaders devote their best energies and forceful zeal and are in this way able to stir up elements among people leading to successful motivation. At the same time, convictions about their own ability to understand matters also may curtail any possibility to learn from others and go beyond the circumstances of the immediate present. Simply put, the high-powered, motivating leader is simultaneously restricted in what she or he can do. Alternatively, perhaps it is precisely

because this kind of *ch'i* is so energetic and powerful that there is no perceived need to do more than solve problems at hand. The restrictiveness of this kind of *ch'i* lies in not going beyond further consideration of the complexity of situations and circumstances, but does not appear to be seen as a limitation in commitment and energy spent in the process of leading.

Dimension 3: Tentative Charisma. The three stimulus terms loading most positively on *Tentative Charisma* are “charming” (+1.0375), “persuasive” (+.7480), and “likeable” (+.7100). The three most negatively loaded terms are “enthusiastic” (-1.7066), “confident” (-.6194), and “positive” (-.6006). *Tentative Charisma* captures the image of a charming, agreeable, and influential leader who, in the place of being entirely committed, not only remains uncertain about him- and herself but somewhat gloomy about paths that must be followed.

Tentative Charisma loaded most heavily on the stimulus term “charming,” followed by “persuasive” and “likeable,” depicting a leader who may exude pleasant, positive feelings toward followers. “Charming” suggests attractive characteristics appealing to people who then naturally align with the leader to follow his or her lead. The second most positively loaded term, “persuasive,” further supports the image of the leader who exerts influence in the direction of followers. It may not be that what the leader does is in line with what is right or supposed to be, but that the leader is charming and likeable enough that people find him or her difficult to resist. Adding the stimulus term “likeable” to the array of most positively loaded terms, we can clearly envision a leader infused with *ch'i* as someone who is attractive, well-liked and who naturally embraces and draws people closer.

One of the most negatively loaded terms, “enthusiastic,” provides further insight into this dimension and the qualities just alluded to. Although appealing and able to move people, these leaders nonetheless may show little passion, being short of energy to inspire and excite others--lacking the ability to cause them, in other words, to exhibit enthusiasm. The second most negatively loaded term, “confident,” portrays the leader as someone unsure about him- or herself which may provide a good reason why the leader would be hesitant in causing followers to rise to their full capabilities. The third most negatively loaded term, “positive,” shows that this leader’s *ch'i* perhaps does not embrace a spirit of optimism but instead conveys a less optimistic, maybe even gloomy, outlook. Taking a more pessimistic position, the charming leader seems resistant in exerting much energy or enthusiasm in pursuing his or her goals.

Taken together, *Tentative Charisma* depicts *ch'i* as charismatic energy combined with a sense of

tentativeness and uncertainty and a less positive outlook on circumstances that may, to a greater or lesser extent, hold up development. This leader's *ch'i* can stimulate and make people change position, but that may be more due to a charming personality rather than to her or his personal enthusiasm. Though people are naturally drawn to such a leader, the leader may nevertheless be viewed as less than sure about his or her ability and hence seen as likely to avoid full commitment.

Comparison of Chinese and American Perceptions of Leadership Ch'i

Chinese and American subjects' underlying perceptions about leadership *ch'i* can be observed from the spatial proximity of twelve chosen stimulus terms. Each group's unique configuration provides a useful way to compare cultural differences in leadership *ch'i*.

Summaries of Chinese Perceptions. Specifically, three dimensions are generated through coordinates of the stimulus terms for Chinese groups: *Amenable Charisma*, *Magnetic Self-Assuredness*, and *Engaged Obstinacy*. *Amenable Charisma* captures the impression of a pleasant, charismatic leader who appreciates alternative positions and hence is also more cognitively sophisticated, while at the same time seen as having no central focus and perhaps vacillating among different positions without taking active control or forcing people toward a determined path. *Magnetic Self-Assuredness* depicts an appealing leader whose magnetic personality naturally attracts people, who is nevertheless self-assured and narrowly focused only on present matters without any interest in taking advice from others. *Engaged Obstinacy* shows a fully committed, passionate, constructive leader whose concentrating on tackling current situations without trying to change others' minds makes people find him or her a bit dull and less than exciting.

Simply put, the *ch'i* expressed in *Amenable Charisma* points to the leader's ability to generate attractiveness and incorporate various perspectives even though the leader may be somewhat directionless; in *Magnetic Self-Assuredness* the *ch'i* lies in the leader's overwhelmingly swaying power which does not expand beyond the leader him- or herself or the immediate situation; and in *Engaged Obstinacy* the *ch'i* flows in the leader's vigorous, unwavering energy and single-minded efforts on resolving problems at hand which somewhat compel followers to distance themselves from the leader.

Summaries of American Perceptions. There are three dimensions underlying American subjects' perception of leadership *ch'i*: *Respectful Amiability*, *Zealous Inflexibility*, and *Tentative Charisma*. *Respectful Amiability* suggests a well-liked, pleasant leader who tries to go beyond his or her own

understanding perhaps to such an extent that he or she is irresolute and taking no firm positions. *Zealous Inflexibility* realizes the image of a vigorous, confident, and committed leader who boldly moves matters forward without looking beyond the present and his or her own conviction. *Tentative Charisma* captures leadership *ch'i* as a charismatic force that naturally convert people even while the leader's lackluster effort is operated with uncertainty and overshadowed by a pessimistic outlook.

Simply put, in *Respectful Amiability* the *ch'i* can be found in the leader's approachability and the respect shown to people's viewpoints with feeble attitude; in *Zealous Inflexibility* the *ch'i* lies in the leader's passionate dedication accompanied by a narrow-minded, restricted, present focus; and in *Tentative Charisma*, the *ch'i* is powerful and charming, even as the leader takes a laid-back, hesitant, and pessimistic attitude.

Commonalities between Chinese and American Perceptions. The three dimensions underlying Chinese subjects and those underlying American subjects, although diverging in several directions, share discernable commonalities that point to some fundamental qualities of leadership *ch'i*. For both groups, *ch'i* seems to tap on three meta-dimensions: what we might call a *likeable, pleasant aspect*; an *appealing, charismatic aspect*; and an *active flow of energy aspect*.

Both *Amiable Charisma* for Chinese subjects and *Respectful Amiability* for American subjects address *ch'i* as generated through a leader's pleasant, broad-minded demeanor. The two dimensions share very similar spirit: both have "likeable" and "open-minded" as two of the most positively loaded terms and exactly the same three most negatively loaded terms (though differing in order between the second and third terms). While Chinese respondents viewed such *ch'i* as leaning more toward a charming quality, as compared to Americans respondents' focus on positive orientation, such a pleasant and more cognitively sophisticated *ch'i* seems more difficult, not to say impossible, to control as it flows in all different directions. In this conception being resolute stands at odds with the nature of *ch'i*. If leadership *ch'i* should be allowed to follow its own contour, then being ardently sure of the path to be followed is likely to be misguided and unnatural: it is not an active force following the flow of events but an inactive, unenthusiastic posture arising from having prematurely determined the path without attending to situational dynamism. Contrary to some commonsense perceptions, being indecisive or allowing matters to take their own course and follow the situation can be considered an active, rather than passive, expression of *ch'i*.

This yielding and supple *ch'i* arises not from a merely pleasant feeling but is enabled through the

leader's cognitive sophistication that makes people feel respected and valued. It is also under such guiding emotions that future direction may be engaged in by all involved rather than dictated by the leader him- or herself. For both Americans and Chinese, such *ch'i* is a progressive force that, while soft, is nevertheless evolving and improving, as it is always possible to see room for growth. Reminiscent of an understated *t'ai chi* master, power lies precisely in not being expressed outwardly or as powerful. As Taoists advise, water assumes no shape and is soft hence has the power to wear away even the hardest, most resistant stone. *Ch'i* as spirit can be flexibly attuned to different circumstances, and this strategy of accommodation is far more powerful than naked power artificially exerted by the leader him- or herself.

Second, both *Magnetic Self-Assuredness* for Chinese subjects and *Tentative Charisma* for American subjects touch on a leader's *ch'i* as inspiring through personal appeal and ability to sway followers. These two dimensions share the same two most positively loaded terms, "charming" and "persuasive." For both groups, this variety of *ch'i* is an overwhelmingly influential force that naturally changes people's perspectives and induces actions. However, it either does not extend beyond the leader him- or herself or the immediate situation, or else it works through the leader's lackluster effort and uncertainty (that this idea manifests differently in the two groups is suggested by the two sets of the negatively loaded terms). This more forceful element in *ch'i* is actually more confined to the leader and circumstances without taking into account the perspectives of others or the need to get others involved. The charismatic force does not bring with it an expansion of the leader's mental perspective or energy.

Third, both *Engaged Obstinacy* for Chinese subjects and *Zealous Inflexibility* for American subjects bring into view elements relating to the vigor of *ch'i* as apparently arising from strong energy and firm commitment. *Engaged Obstinacy* shares with *Zealous Inflexibility* two of the three most highly positively loaded stimulus terms, "enthusiastic" and "energetic." Both of these dimensions tap into the idea of leaders' willingness to engage and get the commitment of others through energetic measures. This does not appear to entail degrees of liking people have toward leaders who consider all aspects of affairs (as in the first dimension), nor any strong appeal leaders demonstrate (as in the second dimension). Such action-filled, vigorous *ch'i* is simultaneously constrained, however, as it narrowly focuses only on tackling current situations, confirmed by having "far-sighted" as the most negatively loaded term for both dimensions. The leader's fully committed energy, which concentrates on tackling current situations without trying to change others' minds, quite

possibly can be seen as rendering the leader as close-minded, even to the extent that people may perceive the leader as less exciting.

To summarize, commonalities between Chinese and American subjects point to one key conception of leadership *ch'i* as a likeable and embracing force that is at the same time supple and yielding. Such *ch'i*, however, is unlike the more positive, appealing *ch'i*, an alternative breed of *ch'i* that seems disproportionately encompassed by the leader him- or herself. Third, there is the action-filled energetic *ch'i* accompanied by an immediate, restricted focus on the present. Aside from the similarities of the three types of *ch'i*, the positioning of several key terms--"open-minded," "far-sighted," and "charming"--also point to some similar perceptions of *ch'i* shared by both groups.

For Chinese respondents, "open-minded" is loaded positively on *Amenable Charisma* but negatively on *Magnetic Self-Assuredness*. For American respondents, "open-minded" is loaded positively on *Respectful Amiability* but negatively on *Zealous Inflexibility*. As mentioned previously, both *Amenable Charisma* and *Respectful Amiability* capture a likeable, respectful spirit that can be seen as subtly moving people. An important aspect of such *ch'i* is the leader's readiness to open his or her horizon by adopting alternative perspectives. This willingness to open up, however, is accompanied by a sense of apprehensiveness with no specified direction for leadership, which was indicated by the fact that "decisive" loaded most negatively on these two dimensions.

On the other hand, while being open to other viewpoints may be what sustains leaders' *ch'i*, those leaders who are overly consumed with themselves are closed to the possibility of entertaining alternative perspectives. For Chinese, the charming inspiration expressed by *Magnetic Self-Assuredness* is coupled with an identified refusal to go beyond one's own horizon and embrace a broader vision, while for Americans, the enthusiastic spirit shown by *Zealous Inflexibility* is characterized by a reluctance to look beyond the situation at hand and the leader him- or herself. Taken together, when such *ch'i* becomes associated with a leader's power to sway or to arouse strong commitment in followers, being open-minded becomes impossible--perhaps closing up the leader's own focus is what allows liberating *ch'i* to unleash its positive force. For both groups, being open-minded, on the one hand, helps fortify *ch'i*, while on the other hand, being closed-minded is what allows *ch'i* to coalesce.

A second term showing commonality is "far-sighted," which loads negatively on *Magnetic Self-Assuredness* and *Engaged Obstinacy* for Chinese respondents and as well on *Zealous Inflexibility* for American respondents. Recall that *Magnetic Self-*

Assuredness captures the leader's ability to captivate followers, while *Engaged Obstinacy* and *Zealous Inflexibility* point to energetic, fully committed *ch'i*. Moreover, other dimensions, although not showing "far-sighted" as loaded negatively, also do not have this term loaded positively, indicating its relative unimportance as a defining feature. Taken together, these seem to suggest that for both Americans and Chinese, leadership *ch'i* requires little vision of the future on the part of the leader. To the contrary, the present, here-and-now focus may be what is seen by respondents as an element permitting *ch'i* to expand. This possible indicator is somewhat at odds with the conventional view that a great leader must have vision and the ability to visualize outcomes that extend beyond current circumstances.

A final keyword serving attention in terms of commonality is the term "charming." This term loads positively on three different dimensions: *Amenable Charisma* and *Magnetic Self-Assuredness* for Chinese respondents and *Tentative Charisma* for American respondents (it is also the third most negatively loaded stimulus term loading on *Engaged Obstinacy*). Whether pointing to a more alluring appeal that has the ability to sway followers (as in *Magnetic Self-Assuredness* and *Tentative Charisma*) or a gentler, more accommodating spirit (as in *Amenable Charisma*), exuding some type of mesmeric personal quality seems to be an important element shared by a number of dimensions describing leadership *ch'i*.

In particular, for both *Magnetic Self-Assuredness* and *Tentative Charisma*, next in line behind "charming" is the second most positively loaded term, "persuasive." This shows that in many situations, the power of leadership *ch'i* seems to be perceived as intimately connected to the leader's character, rather than an indication of specific sets of attitudes or behavioral patterns adopted by leaders. This observation seems to stand in line with the common perception that effective leaders may be merely so charming and attractive that there are few or no perspectives to explain their popularity.

Divergence of Chinese and American Perceptions.

While sharing commonalities, American and Chinese subjects, on a number of elements, also diverge in their views about leadership *ch'i*. As we compare dimensions, it is clear that the three dimensions for each group tap similar qualities of *ch'i* but with subtle differences on both ends.

First, there appears to be a more personal focus expressed by Chinese, as compared to American respondents. As mentioned earlier, in both *Amenable Charisma* and *Respectful Amiability*, the amicable leader's *ch'i* is ready to flow at any direction circumstances may dictate. Leaders showing this quality may actualize a soft and timid position since exerting

power or insisting on specific directions is likely to be seen as artificial and self-assured (both have the same three most highly negatively loaded terms, though ranked in a slightly different order). Nevertheless, Chinese subjects view such *ch'i* as more leaning toward the leader's charismatic character ("charming" is the second most positively loaded term on *Amenable Charisma*), whereas American subjects focus on the leader's more affirmative orientation ("positive" is the second most positively loaded term on *Respectful Amiability*). In other words, Chinese view such pleasant *ch'i* more as a reflection of leader personality, i.e., something intrinsic to the leader, while Americans treat it as an aspect of the leader's attitude, i.e., a respectful perspective that can be adopted by the leader.

Taken in combination, these terms suggest that Chinese respondents may find the leader charismatic yet indecisive--in other words, an appealing leader who sways according to people's likes and dislikes and changes according to circumstances. On the other hand, American subjects choose to see a very likeable, affirmative leader who has no preset ideas about specific paths for people to follow or having the need to use power to compel followers' compliance. While Chinese view such *ch'i* as a leader's charming and appealing character, the respectfulness shown by the American conception of *ch'i* outlines boundaries between people--a distinction that parallels depictions in the current literature of Chinese as more concerned with human connectedness, with Americans more individualistic, observing and attending to mutual respect between people.

Second, Chinese may see a charismatic leader as small-minded and restricted to his or her vision in the here-and-now, as compared to the Americans view that such charismatic leaders may lack passion in expanding their swaying power, given their comparatively lesser level of involvement and degree of uncertainty. Both "charming" and "persuasive" load positively on *Magnetic Self-Assuredness* for Chinese and *Tentative Charisma* for Americans. As for the negatively loaded terms, we find "open-minded" and "far-sighted" loading highly negatively on *Magnetic Self-Assuredness* and "enthusiastic," "confident," and "positive" in *Tentative Charisma*. While Chinese view a charismatic leader as possessing *ch'i* focused on him- or herself as an indicator of self-assuredness, Americans view such *ch'i* as uninvolved due to the perception that the charming leader is merely treading on tentative ground, because he or she is not confident and does not have an optimistic view of the situation. Comparison of *Magnetic Self-Assuredness* and *Tentative Charisma* demonstrates that while the Chinese view of charisma may involve too much self-absorption, American charisma may suffer from timidity.

Such differences are also reflected in the dimensions *Zealous Inflexibility* for American subjects and *Magnetic Self-Assuredness* for Chinese subjects, which share the two most highly negatively loaded terms ("far-sighted" and "open-minded," although in reverse order). In other words, a closed-minded focus on the here-and-now is for Chinese respondents a reflection of a magnetic, overly self-absorbed leader, but for the American respondents such close-mindedness is a reflection of a committed, engaging leader. Chinese view leadership *ch'i* as capable of becoming limited if the leader sees him- or herself as the center of attention, whereas Americans treat leadership *ch'i* as a quality that may close up only when the leader is passionate and vigorously pursues specific goals. For Chinese, the charming inspiration expressed by *Magnetic Self-Assuredness* is coupled with the leader's refusal to go beyond his or her own horizon, while for Americans, the enthusiastic spirit shown by *Zealous Inflexibility* is characterized by reluctance to look far beyond the situation at hand and the leader him- or herself.

Finally, with regard to the energetic leader's *ch'i*, both Chinese and Americans view this as an expression of near-sighted preoccupation with power expressed as action, as in *Engaged Obstinacy* for Chinese subjects and *Zealous Inflexibility* for American subjects. The two dimensions involving, at least in part, this high level of enthusiasm share "energetic" and "enthusiastic" as two of the three most positively loaded terms. However, Chinese have "positive" as the third most positively loaded term in *Engaged Obstinacy*, whereas Americans picked "confident" as the second most positively loaded term in *Zealous Inflexibility*. In other words, for Chinese, energetic *ch'i* is partially derived from the leader's affirmative attitude, whereas for Americans, such *ch'i* comes from the leader's self-assured trust. This difference seems to be in line with Chinese cultural tendency to cultivate one's mind toward the world, while American cultural individualism values the important of self-confidence and -assurance.

The two dimensions also share the most negatively loaded term, "far-sighted," but they differ on the other two most negatively loaded terms: "persuasive" and "charming" for *Engaged Obstinacy* and "open-minded" for *Zealous Inflexibility*. While the energetic *ch'i* seems to be accompanied by a perception of near-sighted focus on immediate matters, Chinese subjects find such a leader neither influential nor appealing, whereas American subjects find such a leader unwilling to take advice from others. In other words, Chinese find such committed yet near-sighted energy unappealing and unlikely to draw people in, while Americans find it a reflection of the leader's narrow-mindedness in refusing

to entertain alternative ideas. Chinese situated such *ch'i* more as in between people, whereas Americans tend to treat it as the leader's personal problem.

Conclusion

Results reveal dimensions underlying perceptions of *ch'i* in the two cultures. Both the Chinese and American subjects converge in conceiving leadership *ch'i* as a pleasant and embracing force that can be inviting to people only if it is supple and yielding with no assertion of power or attempt to persuade a perspective, quite contrary to the common wisdom that leaders ought to be decisive and assertive. Moreover, an alternative breed of *ch'i* incorporates stronger--yet constrained--charismatic flavor that while charming and attractive, may at the same time be seen as unlikely to go beyond the leader's own understanding, or having timid hesitancy in inspiring actions. Such *ch'i* may more reflect a leader's personal character than the idea of a motivating force for followers. Finally, whether for Chinese or Americans, a fully committed, engaging *ch'i* is often reserved only for the present, not the future. This also stands contrary to the common belief that leaders ought to be visionary in planning not only the present but the future.

On the other hand, first, compared to Americans, Chinese are more likely to view the likeable and open-minded *ch'i* as a reflection of the leader's personality whereas Americans tend to see it in light of the mutual respectfulness. Moreover, Chinese find a charismatic and influential leader likely to be overly self-absorbed and restricted to his or her vision in the here-and-now, while Americans find such leaders somewhat withdrawn and timid in expanding their swaying power; neither shows a leader able to go beyond self and become involved with people. As for the energetic leader's *ch'i*, for Chinese, it is partially derived from the leader's affirmative attitude, whereas for Americans, it comes from the leader's self-assured trust. This committed yet limited energy, however, in the Chinese eyes reflects an unappealing *ch'i* unlikely to reach out to people, while Americans see such energy as a reflection of the leader's narrow-mindedness in refusing to entertain alternative ideas beyond the situation at hand and the leader him- or herself.

The difference in interpreting these terms under the concept of *ch'i* facilitates cross-cultural understanding of elements of interpersonal communication between the East and the West. Moreover, the differences in interpreting these terms under the concept of *ch'i* inform us about how culture shapes and defines the more spiritual aspects of communication, which in turn guides our everyday interactional activities.

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