The Road More Popular versus the Road Less Travelled: An ‘Insider’s’ Perspective of Advancing Chinese Management Research

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ABSTRACT To complement Barney and Zhang’s as well as Whetten’s articles in this issue of Management and Organization Review, we offer ways to develop indigenous management theory to explain unique Chinese management phenomena. We first briefly review the imbalance of developing theories of Chinese management versus developing Chinese theories of management in Chinese research societies. We then describe a five-step research process that uses an indigenous research approach to theory development: discovery of interesting phenomena, field observations, construction of the theoretical framework, empirical examination, and theory refinement. This process may be useful not only in the Chinese context, but also in any other context. We identify several challenges in both Chinese and international academic societies that must be overcome to facilitate learning across the two approaches proposed by Barney and Zhang: the need for high quality journals in the Chinese language, international journals’ efforts to ease the imbalance between the two approaches, and collaboration between Chinese and Western management schools.

KEYWORDS Chinese management research, Chinese theory of management, emic approach, indigenous research approach, paternalistic leadership, theory development

Listen not to the rain beating against the trees.
Why don’t you slowly walk and chant at ease?
Better than saddled horse I like sandals and cane.
Oh, I would fain
Spend a straw-cloaked life in mist and rain.
Drunken, I’m sobered by vernal wind shrill
And rather chill.
In front I see the slanting sun atop the hill;
Turning my head, I see the dreary beaten road.
Let me go along!
Impervious to wind, rain or shine, I’ll have my will.

Shi Su, ‘Caught in Rain’, 1082 (Xu, 2007)

INTRODUCTION

Shi Su was a great writer, poet, artist, calligrapher, and statesman of the Song Dynasty (960–1279 AD). In the poem above, a traveller was caught in the rain. Going on foot, he faced a difficult journey, and his companions grumbled about the heavy rain. While they might have chosen an easier, different way, the traveller showed no regret over their path, even delighting in the experience: ‘Oh, I would fain spend a straw-cloaked life in mist and rain’. When the rain stopped and the setting sun ahead illuminated the hard road behind them, the traveller showed no remorse about their passage, only continuing determination. By travelling ‘the dreary beaten road’, the traveller accomplished a journey that makes all the difference.

Like Su’s traveller, Chinese management scholars who focus on inductive approaches to research face difficult journeys when developing their work. Unlike scholars schooled in deductive theory development and testing with training in rigorous methods, many Chinese management scholars are unsure about which approach to apply. While Western (or the dominant) research societies particularly welcome findings regarding the contextualization of existing organizational theory, the efforts to explain unique Chinese phenomena often cannot be easily understood or accepted. Increasing institutional pressures that emphasize publication in international journals, along with the preferences of Western-educated reviewers and editors, are gradually guiding Chinese scholars’ attention to the road leading away from the development of Chinese theories.

Fortunately, a beautiful sunrise for Chinese management scholars has appeared on the horizon. As Western researchers have begun to recognize the importance of indigenous research on Chinese management and organizational behaviour (e.g., Gelfand, Erez, & Aycan, 2007; Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008), Chinese scholars have earned more room to build a Chinese theory of management. We are, thus, very happy to see Barney and Zhang’s (2009) article, which has nicely introduced two approaches to the evolution of Chinese scholarship: developing a theory of Chinese management and developing a Chinese theory of management. Also in this issue of Management and Organization Review, Whetten’s (2009) article expands recent appeals for more context-sensitive organizational research (Tsui, 2006, 2007). Following Whetten’s framework, Chinese scholars may be able to better and more clearly comprehend how to use the existing, mainstream Western theories to develop a theory of Chinese management. However, Chinese researchers may still need direction about how to develop a Chinese theory of management.

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The purpose of this commentary, therefore, is to complement these two articles by sharing our experiences of advancing Chinese management research from an ‘insider’s’ perspective. We particularly focus on how to conduct context-sensitive, indigenous studies in order to develop a Chinese theory of management that explains unique Chinese phenomena in organizational settings. That is, as Whetten provided a useful guide to the development of a theory of Chinese management, or the contextualization of existing theories, we attempt to clarify how to develop a Chinese theory of management, or the indigenous theory development that can be applied to Chinese research as well as any other context.

First, we briefly review the imbalance between contributing to contextualized organizational theory and building a Chinese theory of management in Chinese research societies by pointing out why most scholars have chosen the more popular road. Second, we propose a research sequence of five steps to show how to use an indigenous research approach in developing a Chinese theory of management. Next, we offer solutions to several of the challenges researchers face when striving to learn across Barney and Zhang’s two theoretical approaches. We conclude with optimism about the future of management research when learning across the two approaches genuinely happens and Western and Chinese management theories can converse with ease.

ANALYZING AND BRIDGING TWO DIVERGENT ROADS

The Road More Popular: Making Contributions to Contextualized Organizational Theory

As Barney and Zhang noted, ‘Currently, enormous institutional pressures are building, especially for young Asian scholars, to focus their efforts on contributing to a theory of Chinese management’ (2009: 26). Barney and Zhang’s argument is consistent with our observation. Under institutional pressures, the main road leading to academic success for Asian management scholars is to accept the ‘second mover’ role implied in the process of making cross-context theoretical contributions that Whetten describes (see Whetten, 2009, fig. 1: 35). Whetten suggests that Asian scholars should borrow a well-validated theory from the Western context (Context A) and further improve it by seeking its validity in their own cultural setting (Context B) through deep contextualization. There are many successful attempts in the literature (e.g., Chen, 1995; Farh, Earley, & Lin, 1997; Farh, Hackett, & Liang, 2007; Farh, Zhong, & Organ, 2004; Xiao & Tsui, 2007), all of which can be categorized into the second column of Whetten’s table 1 (2009: 37).

In contrast to the abovementioned splendid endeavours, the achievements in building a Chinese theory of management are still as sparse as morning stars. For example, more than 95 percent of the research on leadership discusses the North
American leadership phenomena (Yukl, 1998). Although some Western scholars have noticed that cultural differences matter, they often are unfamiliar with or even misunderstand non-Western cultural concepts. To name but a few, Bass and Stogdill (1990) mentioned, in their famous Handbook of Leadership, that one of the impacts of Confucianism on Chinese leadership is its emphasis on impartial use of reward and punishment. However, this emphasis actually originated from Legalism (Chan, 1963; Peng, Chen, & Yang, 2008) rather than Confucianism. We greatly appreciate Bass and Stogdill for their interest in Chinese leadership; however, as Barney and Zhang stated, it is difficult for Western researchers to make significant contributions to a Chinese theory of management given their unfamiliarity with Chinese history and traditional Chinese cultures.

Of course, Western researchers (Redding, 2008, may be one of the exceptions) are unlikely to ever be as familiar with Chinese culture as Chinese scholars, but Chinese researchers themselves also pay surprisingly less attention to Chinese culture’s impact on the leadership phenomena than to the validation of Western leadership theories. Leadership studies conducted by Chinese scholars in Chinese settings and published in international journals (e.g., Wang, Law, Hackett, Wang, & Chen, 2005) mainly focus on Western leadership concepts, such as transformational leadership or leader–member exchange. Huang’s (2007) review, which examined leadership studies published in widely read Chinese journals over a thirty-year period, found that almost two-thirds of these studies still investigated Western instead of Chinese leadership theories. Even more pessimistically, the majority of the remaining one-third basically came from the same research team. Hence, Chinese leadership seems like a forgotten world.

Leadership is not the only imbalanced domain between developing a theory of Chinese management and developing a Chinese theory of management (Cheng, Jiang, & Cheng, 2007). Even when writing for a Chinese and, hence, ‘insider’ audience, Chinese researchers are used to playing the ‘second mover’ role in Whetten’s framework in relation to a variety of research domains. For example, it is reasonable to expect that traditional Chinese cultural concepts, such as interpersonal harmony, play an important role in the process of Chinese intragroup conflict. However, more than 80 percent of conflict studies published in Taiwanese management journals directly applied Western conflict theories to interpret Chinese conflict phenomena without considering the impact of cultural traditions (Cheng, 2007). We believe that, in addition to institutional pressures, other reasons that lead to this imbalance may include insufficient knowledge about initiating indigenous research in a new context. Barney and Zhang pointed to the importance of such effort, but they did not explain how to do it. While Whetten elaborated on a sophisticated process of improving the veridicality of existing theories, he did not discuss the process of building a new theory. Thus, in the next section, we briefly introduce our experiences in developing a theory of paternalistic leadership in the Chinese context. We hope that our experiences can provide some
The Road Less Travelled: Building a Chinese Theory of Management

I totally changed my mind about human resources after collaborating with a Chinese company. Its human resources department is still quite primitive. However, its turnover rate is nearly zero and union issues never happen. Most surprisingly, most employees demonstrate high levels of citizenship behavior. Up to now, I still have no idea why this company operates human resources management like that.

A human resources executive, Merck, Taiwan (Yu, 2004)

The human resources executive’s above question about the company’s human resource management cannot be properly answered without considering the historical background of China. One hundred and fifty years ago, China was shocked by the formidable military forces of Western countries. Repeated defeats and humiliations heavily damaged the Chinese self-image of cultural superiority. China quickly discovered that frustration would continue if it never learned from the West. Its learning began from the direct import of Western weapons and the westernization of social and political systems to the acceptance of Western cultures and values.

Through this traumatic historical experience, contemporary Chinese society became a product of dominant external values and suppressed traditional cultures (e.g., the coexistence of the spirit of equality and the tradition of submission to authority: see Liu, 2003). Although Chinese traditional cultures lost dominance on the surface, they did not fade entirely from consciousness or practice. A possible reason for the co-existence of both Chinese traditions and Western values may be that Chinese culture values the transcendence of dualism (see Li, 2008: 415–417). The core of Chinese traditional philosophy is about trying to be moderate and ‘holding the middle’ dynamically, avoiding imbalance and extremes. Therefore, suppressed traditions are not replaced; rather, they permeate through the westernized society and mix with Western values.

In short, learning from the West in the Chinese setting is never substitutive. This learning is evolutional; the philosophy of ‘holding the middle’ melts Western values into the Chinese culture and simultaneously preserves Chinese traditions from permanent dissolution. From this perspective, it may not be so difficult to interpret the Merck human resources executive’s observation. Clearly, the Chinese company employs a Western system of human resources management but operates it in a Chinese way, which is unfamiliar to the Merck executive. Why does this integration work in Chinese settings? A (Western) theory of Chinese management,
even a contextualized one, cannot provide the best answer. The effort to contextualize a Western theory may only lead to the discovery of the theory’s limitation. A new, indigenous theory must be developed. In the following, as shown in Figure 1, we propose a sequence for developing a Chinese theory of management.

**Before step 1: profound knowledge about Chinese traditions.** It is difficult to discover Chinese characteristics of management if researchers do not have enough knowledge of Chinese traditions. Management researchers who devote themselves to developing a Chinese theory of management should, thus, be familiar with at least Chinese language, philosophy, and history. Understanding China’s social history and the history of Chinese social thought would be particularly helpful to the development of a Chinese theory of management. While readers fluent in the Chinese language can easily find useful references, non-Chinese researchers may refer to introductory books, such as Wa and Esherick (1996) or Starr (2001), to develop high levels of sensitivity to the impact of Chinese traditions on contemporary managerial thoughts and actions.

**Step 1: discovery of interesting phenomena.** With enough sensitivity to the influence of Chinese traditions on contemporary Chinese management, researchers are ready to systematically observe managerial thoughts and actions in Chinese field settings. This sensitivity may result in the discovery of interesting phenomena that less sensitive scholars would not observe and Western theories cannot explain. For example, the first author served as a consultant in a Taiwanese shoe factory 20 years ago. He observed that the factory owner asserted centralized authority, maintained social distance with subordinates, and implemented various control
tactics. Western literature concluded that these leadership strategies should lead to poor organizational performance, but they did not; rather, the factory achieved great performance. The first author’s understanding of Chinese culture suggested that, in the Chinese context, the relationship between the owner’s leadership and the factory’s performance might be reasonable rather than surprising. Moreover, according to the first author’s personal experiences, this factory was not a special case, and such phenomenon should be prevalent in Taiwan. It was his sensitivity to the influence of Chinese traditions that made the first author’s findings into the beginning of his research on Chinese paternalistic leadership. Otherwise, these findings would have been merely a special, non-intuitive case for Western leadership literature.

**Step 2: field observation.** A reasonable next step after the discovery of interesting phenomena should be investigating the prevalence of the observed phenomena. Qualitative case studies following the clinical ethnography approach are highly recommended in this stage (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Selecting several representative cases, researchers should study them, applying both qualitative and quantitative methods and acquiring data from various sources (e.g., self-reported, other-rated, researcher-observed, archival, objective, etc.), which will provide the most substantial information possible. A systematic analysis of case studies can subsequently enhance a pellucid understanding of the unknown phenomena (e.g., Cooke, 2008). Researchers should then utilize their familiarity with Chinese philosophy and history to carefully examine the role Chinese traditions plays in observed phenomena. As Cialdini (1980) as well as Cheng and Chou (2006) remind us, this examination contributes to theoretical insights and breakthroughs. For example, by conducting in-depth interviews with 42 Taiwanese CEOs, Cheng (1995a) concluded that the shoe factory owner’s leadership style generally exists in Taiwanese organizations. In a following case study, Cheng (1995b) then depicted this cultural-specific leadership in detail and named it ‘paternalistic leadership’.

**Step 3: construction of the theoretical framework via cultural analysis.** After intensive field observations, a thorough literature review to clarify the cultural roots of observed phenomena is necessary. Through this effort, culture-specific causes of the observed phenomena can be clearly theorized. Take paternalistic leadership as an example again. After Cheng’s field work (1995a, 1995b), he and his colleagues clarified the cultural roots of such leadership and proposed a three-dimensional model of paternalistic leadership, which states that the demonstration of paternalistic leadership is the effect of cultural traditions (Farh & Cheng, 2000). Fulfilling role obligations of both the leader and his or her subordinate, which is embedded in Chinese cultural traditions, brings smooth leader–subordinate interaction and elevated subordinate effectiveness (Cheng, Chou, Wu, Huang, & Farh, 2004; Farh & Cheng, 2000).
The key to the development of a meaningful indigenous theory is whether this theory effectively and accurately describes the cultural and historical elements of a society’s collective subconsciousness (Yeh, 2008). Again, sensitivity to the influence of Chinese traditions on contemporary Chinese management helps researchers construct a meaningful theory. Additionally, after a preliminary theory is developed, it is important to search the available literature and to identify the differences (and contributions) of the new theory from existing ones. This is a way to make the novel familiar (see Whetten, 2009: 47) and to ensure that the developed theory is not old wine in a new bottle.

**Step 4: empirical examination of the theory.** Theoretical propositions and testable hypotheses can be subsequently derived from the developed theory. Experimental studies can confirm the causal relationships that the theory argues, and field examinations can investigate the theory’s generalization to actual organizational settings. Additionally, the purpose of developing a Chinese theory is to answer questions that Western theories cannot resolve. It is, thus, very important to examine whether the developed Chinese theory provides a better explanation of Chinese management phenomena than Western theories. The development of the Chinese paternalistic leadership theory is currently at this stage. The main effect of each paternalistic leadership dimension, the interactive effects of these dimensions, situational moderators of paternalistic leadership, and the comparison between paternalistic and transformational leadership have all been substantially investigated (see Farh, Liang, Chou, & Cheng, 2008, for a review).

**Step 5: theory refinement.** After building an indigenous Chinese theory of management, researchers should take their new theoretical lens back into the field. Applying the theory to management practices, they can further identify critical boundary conditions and engage in additional theorization. First, the theory may be unable to explain observed phenomena under certain circumstances. The proposed causal relationships may be more complicated; motivational factors rooted in cultural traditions may interact with some individual differences or contextual factors to affect Chinese individuals’ behaviour. For instance, a potential future research direction lies in studying the moderating role of organizational climate between paternalistic leadership and subordinates’ motivational states (Farh et al., 2008). Second, the original cultural analysis may not be sophisticated enough. There may be alternative motivational factors that need to be incorporated into the developed theory to increase its validity. For example, the literature on authoritarian leadership (one of the paternalistic leadership dimensions) has defined and measured this construct unidimensionally. However, authoritarian leadership may demonstrate a much more sophisticated pattern in modern organizations (Farh et al., 2008).
A full-cycle indigenous research approach. Our proposed sequence is highly consistent with Chatman and Flynn’s (2005) full-cycle approach. It is also similar to the inductive theory building portion of the research process described by Wallace (1971). Chatman and Flynn (2005: 435) suggested that, when exploring a new phenomenon, researchers should flexibly adapt diverse methods to develop a compelling theory: ‘(a) field observation of interesting organizational phenomena; (b) theorizing about the causes of the phenomena; (c) experimental tests of the theory; and (d) further field observations that enhance understanding and inspire additional theorizing’. Building on Chatman and Flynn’s (2005) argument, we add to this research cycle the necessity of profound cultural and historical knowledge and high levels of cultural sensitivity as the basis of theorization about the causes of observed phenomena. A full-cycle approach linking together behavioural phenomena and their cultural origins can specify comprehensive theoretical models, enable consideration of boundary conditions, enhance understanding of complex phenomena, and define reciprocal influence between people and situations. By repetitively travelling through the whole cycle, researchers can develop an inspiring indigenous model. This full cycle for indigenous theory development is particularly valuable as it can be employed both within and outside the Chinese context.

When Nifadkar and Tsui (2007) reviewed the book Great Minds in Management (Smith & Hitt, 2005) on the most influential management theories, they found that theorists often developed their initial concepts according to their systematic observations and personal experiences before embarking on thorough literature review. Although deeply contextualizing a Western theory contributes to Chinese management research by enhancing the Western theory’s validity, this endeavour only encompasses some stages, rather than the full cycle, of our five-step research process. Without the effort to develop a Chinese theory of management, knowledge about Chinese management will remain limited to the confines of Western theories, and conversations between management theories with different cultural origins will be nearly impossible. We call for Chinese scholars to take the road less travelled by going through the full research cycle and building new theories with indigenous cultural origins.

Does Way Lead on to Way? Prerequisites for Learning across Roads

Barney and Zhang seemed to recommend that ‘learning across roads’ is both desirable and possible, but they did not define how to achieve such learning. That is, while ‘it is likely to be rare for a single scholar to make contributions to both the theory of Chinese management and the Chinese theory of management literatures, a variety of institutions will need to be developed to facilitate whatever learning might take place between these two types of scholarship’ (2009: 25). Here, we suggest several prerequisites that are necessary for developing Chinese theories of
management and facilitating the learning between Barney and Zhang’s two approaches. Without these prerequisites, one way may never lead to the other.

**Need for high quality journals in the Chinese language.** Scholars focusing on building Chinese theories of management need high calibre journals in the Chinese language. Although publishing in Chinese language journals is less likely to directly contribute to global knowledge exchange, it has a greater impact on improving the understanding of Chinese cultural traditions within the Chinese research community. Just as the translation of Western concepts into the Chinese language is complicated, accurately clarifying a traditional Chinese concept in a non-Chinese language (e.g., English) can be very difficult. Therefore, a thorough discussion in the Chinese language of any Chinese traditions that may impact contemporary Chinese organizations is necessary before researchers exchange management knowledge at the global level (in the English language). In short, sophisticated theorization of Chinese management phenomena relies upon the publication of Chinese theories of management in journals in the Chinese language, while publication of Chinese theories of management in international journals supplies an introduction of such sophisticated theorization to a global audience.

In addition, high quality journals in the Chinese language influence Chinese practitioners more directly than international journals do. While Chinese managers fluent in English can refer to many English journals for practical implications of management theories, others, who actually represent the majority of Chinese practitioners, have little access to such resources. Moreover, given that publications of Chinese theories in Chinese language journals and international journals have different purposes, Chinese practitioners may need high quality management journals in the Chinese language more than translations of international journals; they are an ‘insider’ audience who need to know how to interpret the familiar phenomena appropriately rather than simply to know that there are such phenomena.

Unfortunately, in contrast to many international journals that provide potential outlets for studies on theories of Chinese management, the journals that serve as publication channels for Chinese language research about Chinese theories of management usually face shortages of manuscripts. Even worse, although most Chinese journals apply the double-blind review system, both authors and reviewers can often precisely guess each other’s identity. These circumstances form a vicious circle: it seems less influential to publish works in Chinese journals, institutional pressures force scholars to choose ‘the road more popular’, and Chinese journals face shortages of manuscripts, making them seem less influential. To reverse this circle, a substantial improvement in the quality of existing Chinese language management journals is desperately needed. If publication in a certain Chinese journal is as hard, as valuable, and as available for the entire Chinese research society as it is in top-tier international journals, the story could be totally different.
We also encourage research associations that have built excellent reputations among the Chinese management community, such as the International Association for Chinese Management Research (IACMR), to take the lead in publishing a Chinese language journal for an ‘insider’ audience.

*International journals’ effort to ease the imbalance.* Although Chinese journals could be the best outlets for works on developing Chinese theories of management, Barney and Zhang (2009: 23) also encouraged ‘publication’ in top tier English journals to increase dissemination of the knowledge about unique Chinese phenomena. As noted earlier, however, reviewers and editors of these journals are mainly Western, and their preferences significantly influence editorial decisions. For example, two of us recently received a decision letter regarding a manuscript on the topic of leaders’ benevolence, an important dimension of paternalistic leadership in the Chinese context. In this letter was the following anonymous reviewer comment: ‘I am concerned about the operationalization of leader benevolence. From reading the items (with admittedly, a Western perspective), they sound to me like items on supervisor support. I do not see why they should assess issues of power – this might be a “cultural blindness” from my side’.

We appreciate this reviewer’s honesty, which reveals the value of building review teams that are free from cultural blindness. Perhaps at least one Chinese reviewer familiar with the Chinese culture and language is desirable when evaluating manuscripts about Chinese phenomena. To apply Barney and Zhang’s thoughts on those who could appreciate Chinese language articles and journals, if possible, editorial staffs should include at least one management scholar who is ‘fluent enough in Chinese and familiar enough with Chinese institutions to appreciate this work’s unique contributions’ (2009: 22). We also encourage editors to be as developmental and constructive as they can when making editorial decisions in relation to works on Chinese theories of management. After all, these works often explore intellectually unfamiliar spaces with little previous literature for guidance.

*Collaboration between Chinese and Western management schools.* Collaboration with non-Chinese colleagues on theories of Chinese management is common, but that kind of work on a Chinese theory of management is rare. Although non-Chinese colleagues may be unfamiliar with the unique history, culture, and traditions of China, they can help Chinese authors enhance their research skills and smooth the conversation process with other scholars from non-Chinese contexts. Especially when Chinese authors choose international journals as potential outlets of their work, they benefit from their non-Chinese collaborators. More importantly, as Barney and Zhang suggested, such collaborations tend to better avoid the ‘reinvention’ of theories already existing in the Western literature.

Additionally, American and European management schools provide better doctoral training than most of the local colleges of management in the greater China

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region (except perhaps Hong Kong where there are a few strong Ph.D. programs). However, only a few Chinese students have opportunities to pursue their Ph.D. degrees abroad. Moreover, receiving training abroad is a trade-off: potential scholars of a Chinese theory of management leave the Chinese context for better academic training and get socialized among scholars of a theory of Chinese management. We, thus, encourage American and European management schools to cooperate with Chinese management schools to provide high-quality training in the greater China region. Such cooperation is common for Executive Master of Business Administration programs and should spread to doctoral ones. While Western schools provide rigorous training for research methodology, Chinese schools enhance students’ sensitivity to the influence of Chinese traditions on contemporary Chinese management. More importantly, these students do not leave the Chinese context for better academic training. Intense interaction with the Chinese society should make the discovery of interesting Chinese phenomena considerably easier.

*Learning across roads: when it really happens.* Recall that, in Chinese research societies, there is an imbalance between developing theories of Chinese management and developing Chinese theories of management. Applying Western theories to understand Chinese phenomena is mainstream, and the development of indigenous Chinese theories is still uncommon. Under this condition of imbalance, the mainstream perspective also tends to dominate communication between management theories emerging from different cultural origins, making genuine, reciprocal exchanges infrequent.

The need for indigenous research implies that there is no ‘all-powerful’ management theory that is ‘right’ and ‘substantial’ in all contexts. The purpose of the communication between different theories is not about comparing those theories to identify the better one, but rather about enhancing the knowledge in each that is essential for the further development of every theory. Such learning may be particularly meaningful to Western theories, which, as the ‘first mover’ in this field, may not think that they have much to learn from the late comers or ‘second movers’.

Although we currently have no hard evidence for our argument above, the modern history of China provides some implications. China has learned from the West for more than 150 years. Such a long learning process resulted in the modernization of contemporary Chinese society. Today, modernized China has become a remarkably successful economy that greatly influences the rest of the world. A country which used to learn from others now offers something for others to learn. Similarly, when Chinese theories of management are as complete, sophisticated and contributive as Western theories of management, cross-cultural learning between both Chinese and Western theories can begin. Both theories will be better than they currently are in their separate paths.
CONCLUSION

As researchers strive to develop Chinese theories of management, we once again thank Barney and Zhang for their efforts to theorize two different approaches to the evolution of Chinese scholarship. Today, most Chinese management studies still focus on developing theories of Chinese management, some following Whetten’s suggestion for context sensitivity and obtaining wonderful results. However, the imbalance between the two approaches remains. The road less travelled seems to lead to a difficult journey on which travellers may be caught in heavy rain, but unexpected sunshine is all the more beautiful after travelling on the dreary, beaten road. When travellers choosing different roads finally accomplish their respective journeys and meet, the learning across roads will facilitate the evolution of management research.

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