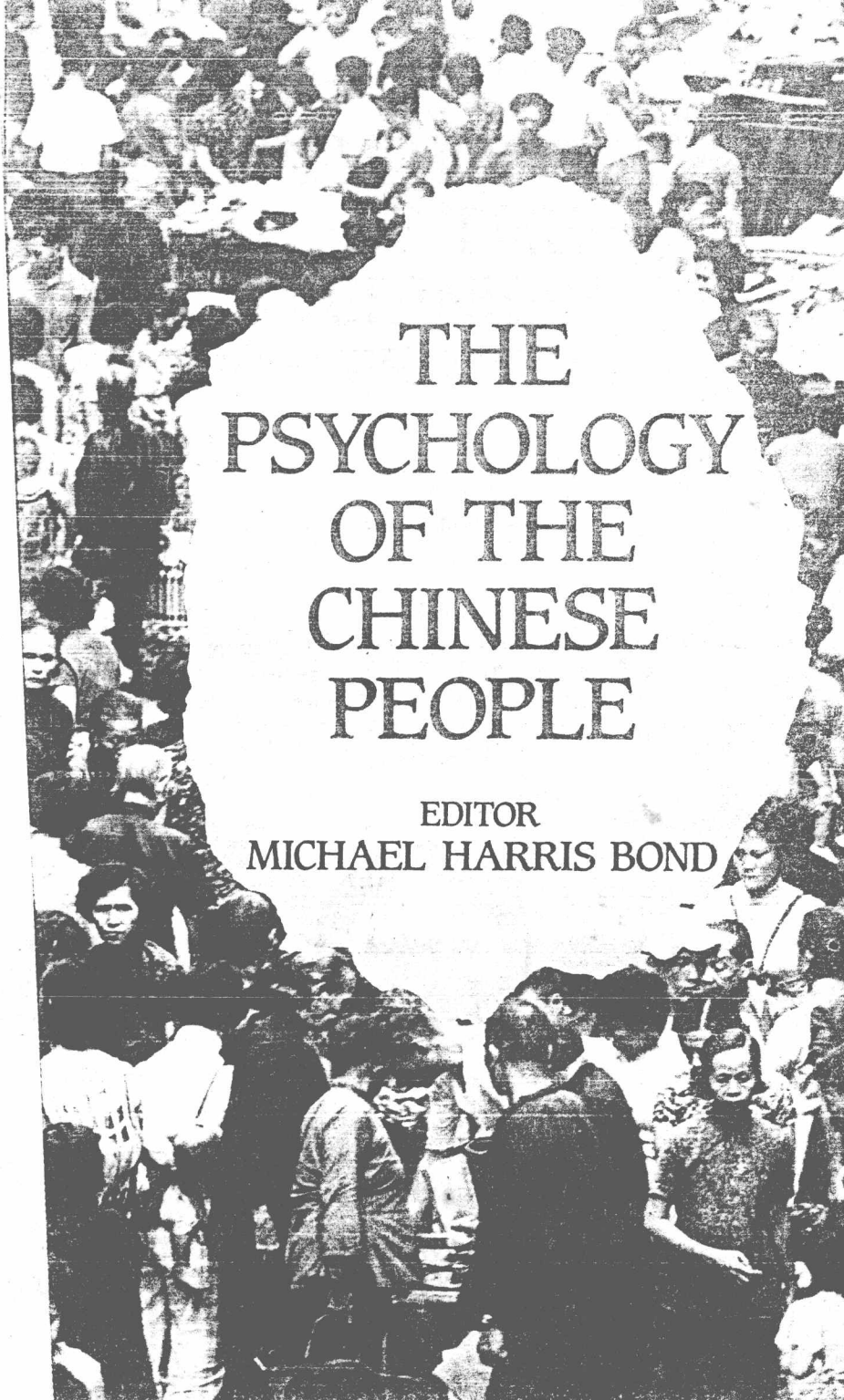

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE CHINESE PEOPLE

EDITOR
MICHAEL HARRIS BOND

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The East hath ever been
the dawning-place of
the Sun of Truth

(Abdu'l-Baha, 1911)

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Editor's Preface

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

(Traditional Chinese proverb.)

This collection attempts to fill a vacuum. At present, there is no book available that summarizes and integrates the empirical data on the psychological functioning of Chinese people. This is a lamentable state of affairs, given that Chinese people constitute more than one-quarter of the world's population.

There is a wealth, or perhaps one should say an excess, of speculation about what Chinese people are like. Although often perceptive, these speculations are bounded by the experiences and attitudes of their authors. Data collected under the constraints of scientific methodology are freed from many of these limitations, and may provide an antidote to the effusion, ethnocentrism, and axe-grinding which characterize much of the speculation.

In sharp contrast to the vast numbers of Chinese people is the malnourished base of empirical data about their behaviour. The science of psychology is a recent immigrant to Chinese intellectual communities. Furthermore, it has occasionally suffered from association with its origins in the West. Only recently has it emerged as an acceptable academic discipline in the People's Republic of China following the Cultural Revolution. This edited volume is offered in the hope of stimulating the accumulation of empirical data and directing future psychological research into productive channels.

In choosing the authors for each chapter, I was first concerned with selecting those who were actively creating scientific knowledge about Chinese psychology in those areas to be covered. An additional consideration was to ensure that a Chinese-reading author was associated with each chapter, so that no published research would be overlooked. Beyond these basic criteria, I naturally wanted the most competent scholars in their chosen fields to participate in the project. It seemed a harbinger of success that my first choices all agreed to contribute.

The authors were given the task of summarizing and integrating the major strands of research in their designated areas. They were also asked to build a comparative perspective into their treatment

of the data, so that the Chinese could be located as a group with respect to other cultural groups. And, finally, all were requested to specify topics where future research seemed to be required.

My job as editor was made easier by the good cheer of the chapter authors in responding to my prodding about deadlines and by their gracious professionalism in thoughtfully considering my various suggestions about content, organization, and style. Our happy association reminds me of the Chinese proverb, 'When a family is united, everything succeeds'. I believe that we have, together, taken a successful first step towards understanding the Chinese psychologically; I hope that you, the reader, will agree.

MICHAEL HARRIS BOND
Hong Kong

The Chinese people constitute more than a quarter of the world's population, yet until now there has been no single volume that summarizes and integrates the wealth of data available, in English and Chinese, on the psychological functioning of Chinese people. *The Psychology of the Chinese People* (中國人的心理) fulfils this role, emphasizing the prime areas of research, both past and present, the theoretical models used to integrate these findings, and areas for future research. The book also provides a cross-cultural comparative perspective on the data.

The authors are all scholars who are major contributors to the theoretical and factual basis of their disciplines. The topics covered include socialization, perception, cognition, personality, psychopathology, social behaviour, and organization.

The editor, Michael Harris Bond (彭邁克), is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Psychology at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Cover illustration: Photograph courtesy of the Hong Kong government.

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1 Chinese Patterns of Socialization: a Critical Review

David Y.F. Ho

INTRODUCTION

The literature on Chinese socialization processes derives from very diverse sources, with great variations in theoretical perspective and methodological approach, as well as in the scope, depth, and quality of analysis. Furthermore, it is scattered in books and journals addressed to different groups of readers. A major aim of the present review is to bring together these diverse sources of material published in both English and Chinese, in order to assess the current state of knowledge in the field, note the conceptual and methodological issues involved, reveal serious gaps in knowledge, integrate and distil the findings and insights of previous investigators, and point out areas where further research is needed. The emphasis is on reviewing empirical investigations, an emphasis urgently needed at the present state of our knowledge (in a previous article, Ho, 1981a, the emphasis was put on traditional patterns). It is hoped that this review will encourage and enable greater co-ordination of efforts among different investigators in the field, so that a body of scientific knowledge built upon hierarchically ordered investigations will be more readily realized in the future.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE LITERATURE

Authors who have contributed to the literature on Chinese patterns of socialization appear to fall primarily into four groups, each identifiable by the intellectual discipline with which they are associated and consequently by the perspectives, approaches, and focus of interests germane to that discipline. The first of these is comprised of cultural anthropologists and, to a lesser extent, sociologists who rely on informants, biographical and autobiographical materials (notable examples of which are Chiang, 1940; Pruitt, 1945; J.S. Wong, 1950), content analysis of cultural productions, observations,

and field studies of specific subcultural groups in various localities. Such sources have given detailed accounts of child-rearing practices; typically, however, the data obtained do not lend themselves easily to quantified presentation or analysis. The work of the Chinese group under the direction of Ruth Bunzel in the Columbia University Research in Contemporary Cultures project marked a milestone in anthropological investigations, and represented an early effort through which information on Chinese child-rearing practices was systematically gathered. The project yielded a large number of documents, most of which are unpublished. It may be noted that, judging from publications by authors who were participants in the project (such as Heyer, 1953; Muensterberger, 1951; Weakland, 1956; and Wolfenstein, 1955) psychoanalytic theory exerted a strong influence in guiding the work of the Chinese group. Despite the contributions of psychoanalytic theory, the information on Chinese socialization was limited in that it was derived from informants (see Bunzel, 1950), content analysis of children's stories (see Hu, 1950; Mead and Wolfenstein, 1955, the chapter on 'Monkey') and other cultural productions (for example, literary and artistic materials, films, games, and slang). The Columbia project was, indeed, 'The Study of Culture at a Distance' (Mead and Metraux, 1953). Other investigations (Hsu, 1967; Li, 1970; Osgood, 1975; Ward, 1970; Wolf, 1964; Wolf, 1970; Wu, 1966; and Yang, 1945) were, however, based on direct observations in specific Chinese communities.

The second group is represented by political scientists who have attempted to apply the political-culture approach to the study of China. A central thesis underlying this approach is that political processes and institutions characteristic of a nation over a period of time are under the pervasive influence of certain deeply rooted and enduring predispositions of the culture in which members of that nation are immersed. In particular, a focus on childhood political socialization promises to relate adult political behaviour to its antecedent conditions, that is, childhood experiences in authority relationships, styles of leadership, peer-group pressures towards conformity, and the like. The assumption is that a child, accustomed to these experiences, will be predisposed to feel and act in predictable ways in his political behaviour during adulthood. It is beyond the scope of this review to examine the validity of this assumption, or of the wider issues entailed in the notion of political culture. Nevertheless, the writings of political scientists who have used this approach add a new dimension to the understanding of childhood socializa-

tion in Chinese society. Notable among these are Solomon (1969; 1971) and Wilson (1970; 1974; 1977; 1981).

The third group is represented by Chinese psychologists or foreign psychologists with cross-cultural interests. Their entrance into the field is later than that of anthropologists or sociologists, with most of their studies reported only within the last two decades. A large proportion of these studies has been done in the United States, using samples of Chinese students (Scofield and Sun, 1960), immigrants, or Chinese Americans (Kriger and Kroes, 1972; Kurokawa, 1969 — including both Chinese and Japanese Americans; Niem and Collard, 1972; Sollenberger, 1968). Investigations in Taiwan are also becoming more frequent. Typically, the psychologists have used techniques of measurement capable of yielding data for quantitative analysis and presentation.

Finally, the fourth group is comprised of psychiatrists and other professional workers who have come into contact with Chinese individuals or families in psychological distress, where a sound knowledge of childhood experiences, parent-child relationships, and family dynamics in the Chinese cultural context would be indispensable to a fuller assessment and effective therapeutic intervention. Insight into and knowledge about subtleties in complex socialization processes, which are missing from quantitative approaches in the study of groups, may be gained through clinical work. Examples of contributions to the literature with a clinical flavour are Ho (1979d; 1981b), Hsu (1972), Hsu and Tseng (1974), W.S. Tseng (1972), Tseng and Hsu (1969–70; 1972).

Most studies reported in the literature relate to one of two major themes, namely, impulse control and achievement. These are also, as we shall see, two areas of primary concern to Chinese parents. Accordingly, they provide a convenient framework for the organization of this literature review.

IMPULSE CONTROL

Leniency versus Harshness

One important assertion regarding Chinese socialization is that the pattern changes as a function of the child's age (Lazure, 1962, p. 181; Li, 1970; Muensterberger, 1951, pp. 42–50; Tseng and Hsu, 1969–70, p. 8; Wolf, 1970, pp. 40–6; Wu, 1966, pp. 5–6). Parents

tend to be highly lenient, perhaps even indulgent, towards the infant and young child (below approximately 6 years of age), in marked contrast to the strict, perhaps even harsh, discipline they impose upon the older child. Furthermore, these disciplinary demands are introduced rather abruptly and are not marked by any ceremony, other than that of beginning primary school, to signify that the child is passing into a new period of life. The result is that the child may find the sudden change in parental attitudes quite drastic and bewildering (Wolf, 1970).

The reason for leniency toward the younger child is that he or she is considered to be not yet capable of 'understanding things', and therefore should not be held responsible for his or her wrongdoings or failures to meet expectations (Bunzel, 1950; Li, 1970; Wolf, 1970). It is thought that training cannot be expected to accomplish much for infants or young children; they are viewed as passive dependent creatures who are to be cared for, and whose needs are to be met with little delay or interference. The mother seems to assume almost total responsibility for their physical well-being, making sure that they are well fed, fully clothed, and protected from hazards. And if a mother is temporarily absent, there are other women available to take care of young children. Thus children receive multiple mothering from a very young age (see, for example, Parish and Whyte, 1978; Sidel, 1972, p. 99). Weaning and toilet training are mild; strict bedtimes are rarely enforced (see, for example, Bunzel, 1950; Hsu, 1967; Muensterberger, 1951; Sollenberger, 1968; Wolfenstein, 1955; Wu, 1966). Infants or young children are not put on a rigid schedule in regard to any biological function; they eat and sleep according to their needs and not according to the clock (Bunzel, 1950). Little or no emphasis is put on training for independence. On the whole, the period of infancy and early childhood can be said to be one of great leniency and indulgence. The only study which contradicts this conclusion is that by Scofield and Sun (1960), who reported that Chinese child-rearing practices from infancy, with the exception of toilet training, were more severe than American practices. It should be noted that this study was based on retrospective reports by Chinese students attending American universities, and this raises questions concerning both the representativeness and the validity of their reports.

It should be added that active or exploratory demands tend to be thwarted even during the period of infancy and early childhood, although passive oral needs are typically met without hesitation