

# Chinese cultural contribution to personality traits and personality disorders

## evidence from fiction and contemporary society

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### 1. INTRODUCTION - Core Components of Chinese Culture Reflected in *A Dream of Red Mansions*

The core components of Chinese culture (Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism) trigger individuals' psychological processes to meet their hierarchical needs; once the needs are met, they remain well-being; otherwise, they develop psychological disorders. A novel of 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> AD, *A Dream of Red Mansions*, and contemporary world might offer some evidence.

**Confucianism:** With particular emphasis on the importance of the family and social harmony, rather than on another worldly source of spiritual values; its core is humanistic (Juergensmeyer, 2005).

**Daoism:** "The Dao produced the One. The One produced the Two. The Two produced the Three, and the Three produced the ten thousand things"; its core is harmony (see below; Laozi, n.d.).

**Buddhism:** Death and after-life are important issues in human's life, therefore, ordinary people naturally wish to know what happens after death; it emphasizes that all one's deeds in life, whether good or evil, and there will be retribution (Guang 2013).

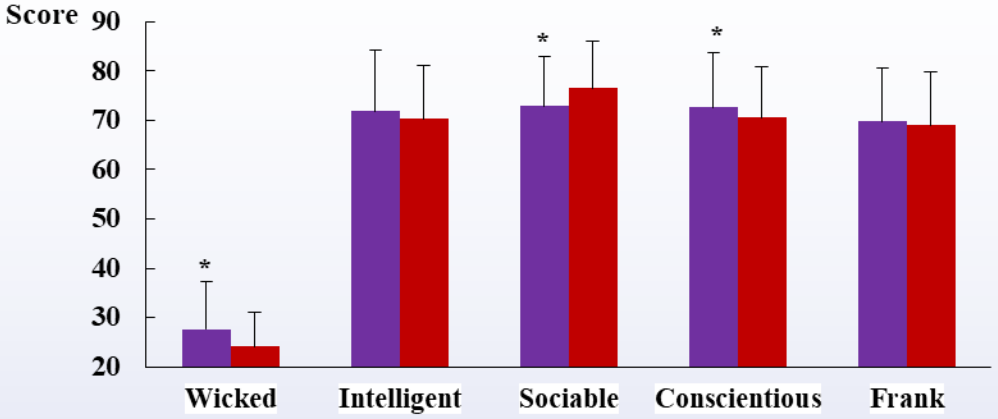
### 2. BASES - Harmony in Chinese Culture and Health

A philosophy which includes Confucianism, Moism and Daoism

**Biological Harmony and Health** (balance between individual and nature): It is reflected in the traditional Chinese medicine, which is founded upon Yin-Yang equilibrium philosophy, as well as the Five Elements Theory which results in Theory of viscera, namely the liver, heart, spleen, lung and kidney correspond to wood, fire, earth, metal and water, respectively. The five viscera generate five basic emotions which are joy, anger, sad, worry, and fear.

**Social Harmony and Health** (balance between individuals): It particularly emphasizes the individual relationships or social relationships so that pursuit of harmony is able to promote equilibrium and the maintenance of hierarchical relationship in the context of collectivistic and hierarchical circumstance in Chinese culture (Chen 2000). The harmony defined in Chinese culture respects the emotional suppression which is thought as self-discipline (Bond 1993), rather than the "emotional harmony".

### 3. RESULTS - Late Imperial China, in a Novel

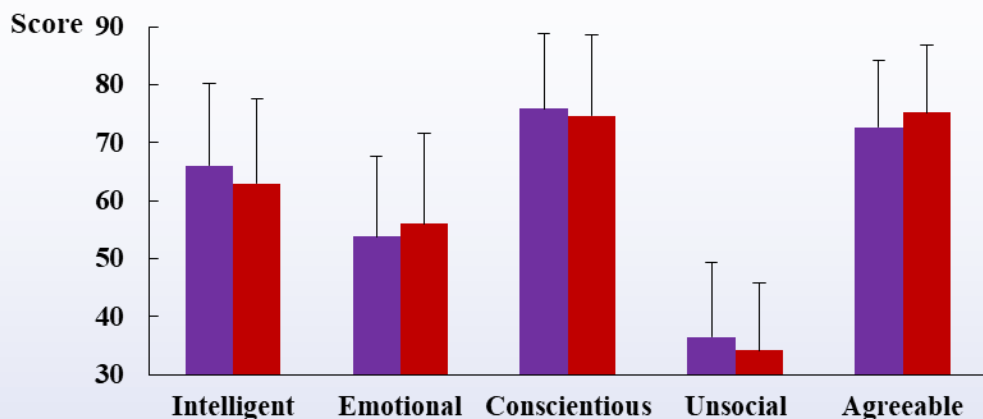


**Figure 1.** Using adjectives in *A Dream of Red Mansions*, which were related to the daily cultural cores, we have found five personality domains fitting into the contemporary 5-factor model, and they did contribute to the personality disorder descriptions in the same Novel (see Table 1 below). The scores on these domains in men (violet bars,  $n = 258$ ) and women (red bars,  $n = 474$ ). \*  $p < .05$  vs. women.

**Table 1.** Possible impairments in personality functioning, pathological personality traits, personality disorder or trait specified in some characters who practiced the cultural cores daily in *A Dream of Red Mansions*. These PDs might be diagnosed according to the contemporary DSM-5 criteria. Below are examples of plot characters in the Novel.

Character Name	Impairments in personality functioning	Pathological personality traits	Personality disorder	Trait-specified
Concubine Zhao (赵姨娘)	Self-direction; Empathy; Intimacy	<i>Antagonism</i> (manipulativeness, callousness, deceitfulness, hostility); <i>Disinhibition</i> (risk taking, impulsivity)	Antisocial	
Jia Baoyu (贾宝玉)	Identity; Self-direction; Intimacy	<i>Psychoticism</i> (cognitive and perceptual dysregulation, unusual beliefs and experiences, eccentricity); <i>Detachment</i> (withdrawal)	Schizotypal	Distractibility
	Identity; Intimacy	<i>Negative affectivity</i> (emotional lability, separation insecurity, depressivity); <i>Disinhibition</i> (impulsivity)	Borderline	
Jia Huan (贾环)	Self-direction; Empathy; Intimacy	<i>Antagonism</i> (deceitfulness, hostility); <i>Disinhibition</i> (irresponsibility)	(Probable) Antisocial	
Jia Jing (贾敬)	Identity; Self-direction	<i>Psychoticism</i> (unusual beliefs and experiences, eccentricity); <i>Detachment</i> (restricted affectivity, withdrawal).	Schizotypal	
Jia Rui (贾瑞)	Self-direction; Intimacy	<i>Antagonism</i> (manipulativeness, callousness, deceitfulness, hostility); <i>Disinhibition</i> (risk taking, impulsivity)	Antisocial	
Jia Xichun (贾惜春)	Self-direction; Intimacy			Callousness
Jia Yucun (贾雨村)	Identity; Self-indirection; Intimacy	<i>Antagonism</i> (manipulativeness, callousness, deceitfulness, hostility); <i>Disinhibition</i> (risk taking, irresponsibility)	Antisocial	
Lin Daiyu (林黛玉)	Identity; Empathy;	<i>Negative Affectivity</i> (emotional lability,	Borderline	Grandiosity Suspicious

### 3. RESULTS - Contemporary world, through labs

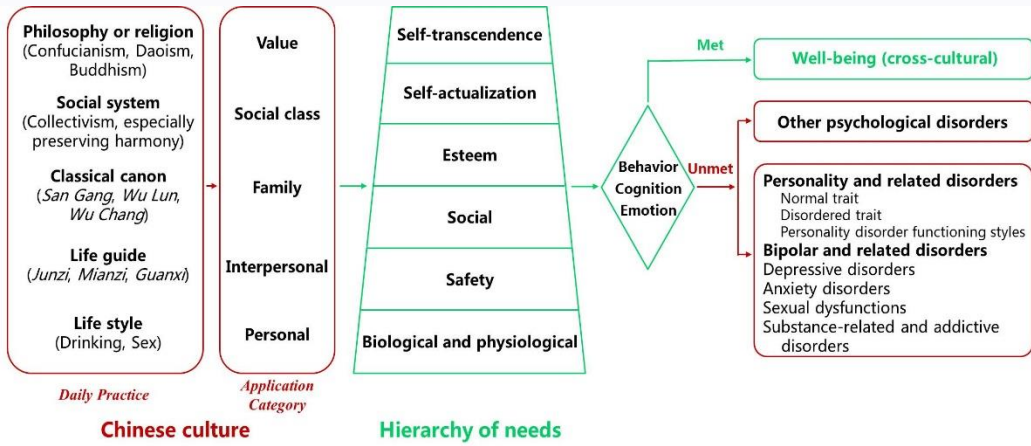


**Figure 2.** Using contemporary Chinese adjectives, we have found five personality traits which are again fitting into the 5-factor model; and they again contribute to the prediction of personality disorders (see Table 2 below). Scale scores on these five traits in men (violet bars, n = 255) and women (red bars, n = 465).

**Table 2.** Stepwise multiple regressions predicting the Parker Personality Measure styles with the Chinese Adjective Descriptors of Personality traits in the healthy controls and the personality disorders. Note: \* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01;  $\beta$ s valued larger than .30 were bolded for clarity; B and standardized error (SE) were unstandardized coefficients.

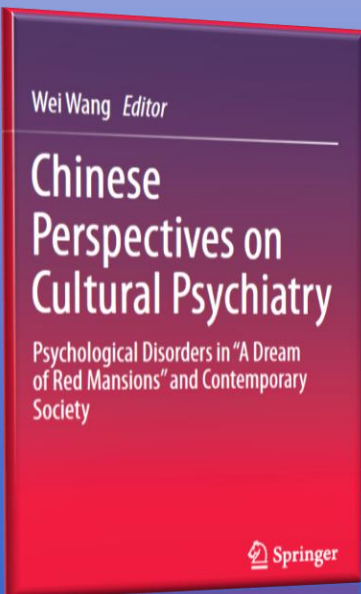
	Healthy controls (n=110)		Personality disorders (n=55)	
	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	$\beta$ (B, SE), predictors	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	$\beta$ (B, SE), predictors
Paranoid	0.18	<b>0.43 (0.31, 0.06) Unsocial**</b>	0.39	<b>0.63 (0.32, 0.05) Emotional**</b>
Schizoid	0.06	0.26 (0.20, 0.07) Unsocial**	-	-
Schizotypal	0.17	<b>0.43 (0.27, 0.05) Unsocial**</b>	0.09	<b>0.32 (0.26, 0.10) Unsocial*</b>
Antisocial	0.4	<b>0.51 (0.30, 0.05) Unsocial**</b>	0.44	<b>0.51 (0.28, 0.07) Unsocial**</b>
		-0.27 (-0.14, 0.05) Agreeable**		-0.22 (-0.16, 0.09) Agreeable
		<b>0.39 (0.16, 0.04) Intelligent**</b>		<b>0.48 (0.22, 0.06) Intelligent**</b>
		-0.21 (-0.10, 0.05) Conscientious*		<b>-0.35 (-0.19, 0.07) Conscientious**</b>
Borderline	0.3	0.29 (0.19, 0.06) Unsocial**	0.29	<b>0.55 (0.29, 0.06) Emotional**</b>
		0.30 (0.14, 0.04) Emotional**		
		-0.22 (-0.10, 0.04) Intelligent*		
Histrionic	0.17	<b>0.42 (0.33, 0.07) Unsocial**</b>	0.25	<b>0.52 (0.27, 0.06) Emotional**</b>
Narcissistic	0.3	<b>0.50 (0.34, 0.06) Unsocial**</b>	0.16	<b>0.43 (0.18, 0.06) Intelligent**</b>
		<b>0.35 (0.16, 0.04) Intelligent**</b>		<b>0.34 (0.17, 0.07) Unsocial*</b>
		-0.26 (-0.15, 0.05) Agreeable**		
Avoidant	0.12	<b>0.36 (0.28, 0.07) Unsocial**</b>	0.15	<b>0.41 (0.25, 0.08) Unsocial**</b>
Dependent	0.21	<b>0.47 (0.31, 0.06) Unsocial**</b>	0.12	<b>0.37 (0.20, 0.07) Emotional**</b>
Obsessive-Compulsive	0.15	<b>0.39 (0.30, 0.07) Unsocial**</b>	0.14	<b>0.39 (0.22, 0.07) Conscientious**</b>
		0.26 (0.15, 0.05) Conscientious**		
Passive-Aggressive	0.28	<b>0.53 (0.37, 0.06) Unsocial**</b>	0.31	<b>0.43 (0.33, 0.09) Unsocial**</b>
				<b>0.67 (0.40, 0.09) Intelligent**</b>
				<b>-0.42 (-0.32, 0.10) Conscientious**</b>

# 4. A theoretical frame: culture to psychiatry



**Figure 3.** The relationships between Chinese culture, individual's hierarchical needs, and psychological disorders. The daily practice of life style, guide, classical canon, social system, and philosophy or religion, are stratified into the personal, interpersonal, family, social class and value categories, which affect individuals' psychological processes (behavior, cognition and emotion) through their hierarchical needs. Most people have their needs satisfied and thus remain well-being, other people have their needs unmet and thus develop sorts of psychological disorders.

**5. GENERAL CONCLUSION:** Some links between Chinese culture and normal/disordered personalities were found, which might offer hints to the understanding, preventing and treating personality disorders in a Confucian or Collectivistic context.



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