

## **A critical perspective on Gender and Paternalistic leadership in China**

Dr Martin Sposato

Middlesex University,

Dubai Knowledge Village,

Block 17, Dubai, UAE

Email: A.Sposato@mdx.ac.ae

Biographical notes: Martin Sposato is a Senior Lecturer in Human Resources Management at the Middlesex University, Dubai campus. He holds a PhD in Leadership, and his research interests include: leadership, post-colonialism as a theoretical lens, indigenous (Chinese) theories and conceptualisations of HRM, gender in organisations, and reflexivity in the research process. He is also a CIPD academic member.

## Abstract

Women have made significant social advancements in recent times in China, but as in most of the world they still face barriers to leadership positions. This is even (re)presented in the most popular indigenous Chinese theory of leadership: Paternalistic Leadership (PL). As a theory, PL overlooks the potential of women leaders. Acknowledging what may be understood as epistemological sexism, this article critically analyses PL as the dominant theoretical framework for the study of leadership in China. Gender bias inherent within the theory, and even its name. This is identified as a key weakness for its application. The use of a Postcolonial feminist lens to address this gender bias is introduced, applying concepts like Othering, Norm, and essentialism. This article highlights the utility of postcolonial feminism to PL studies by introducing a conceptual toolkit for future researchers.

Key words: paternalistic leadership; Post-colonial feminism; gender

## **Introduction**

This article critically analyses the Chinese version of paternalistic leadership from a gender perspective. Based on the gendered assumptions of the conceptualisation it is suggested that a Postcolonial feminist approach can complement paternalistic theory and help gain better understandings of the behaviour of female managers in a Chinese cultural context. A postcolonial feminist lens is applied to this paternalistic leadership to show how postcolonial feminism aids in the critical evaluation of leadership. This lead to new insights into leadership that also take into account overlooked issues. The article starts by presenting the study of leadership in a Chinese cultural context, before introducing paternalistic leadership as the most widely applied indigenous conceptualisation of leadership in Chinese cultural setting, (Farh and Cheng, 2000; Farh et al., 2006; Farh et al., 2008). Later, a postcolonial feminism is introduced as a framework that could improve the understanding of female leadership behaviour in a Chinese context and help to advance knowledge in the field, moving to examples and illustrations of how postcolonial feminist theory complements paternalistic leadership.

Postcolonial feminist can help to create a non-gender bias understanding of leadership in a Chinese cultural context, (and in many others) which also takes into account the implications of gender in organisational studies. This article identifies several research trajectories, where this theoretical approach could be implemented. Research should focus on gaining a better understanding of how women actually lead from their own perspective not from a male perspective, as more women reach managerial position, research could address the current influence and relevance of the Chinese cultural context and especially the traditional gender roles in female leadership, research should also focus on the strategies that female managers in a cultural Chinese context have developed to fulfil the two roles, the professional, where women compete in the job market with men who's social/ cultural expectations are gender

differentiated, and the social/cultural, where several roles and expectations as mothers/daughters/sisters/wives are to be achieved. All of this within a dynamic social context, where the traditional role and expectations of women in society are changing and patriarchal structures are evolving.

### **Paternalistic leadership and its limitations**

The new role that Chinese cultural societies play in the international division and movement of labour and the effect of these movements on the global economy and labour market (Cheung and Chan, 2008), suggest that understanding Chinese leadership remains salient to doing business. Long ago Chinese companies have started a process of venturing out of China and started invest; Example of this are Lenovo taking over the computer division of IBM, or the relented expansion of companies like Huawei, soon to become the largest mobile phone manufacturer. As a result, many westerners are now, and many more will be short, working for Chinese organizations. The term Chinese cultural societies do not only englobe only the people's republic of China but also other culturally Chinese socialites like Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore (Fan, 2000). The current process of globalisation has allowed new enterprises from Chinese societies to expand and enter new countries and territories (Child and Marinova, 2014) As Kamoche and Siebers, (2015) exemplify in their study of Chinese organisation in Kenya.

Within the leadership literature in China, Paternalistic leadership is the most systematically researched and widely applied indigenous Chinese leadership theory apply in Chinese cultural settings (Farh and Cheng, 2000; Farh et al., 2006; Farh et al., 2008). Unfortunately, paternalistic leadership does not recognise the role of women as leaders or potential leaders (Sposato and Rumens, 2018).It assumes that leaders are male and in certain

conceptualisations, the first born male (Westwood, 1992, 1997). Yet, contemporary society has seen women promoted to managerial roles and gain positions of power. Chinese societies have undergone remarkable changes in social structures and currently face groups of well-educated women moving into managerial positions, positions where leadership is required and where gendered power relations and politics also play a role (Blessie and Supriya, 2018). In their new found roles, women quite often lead male subordinates, which presents a clear contradiction to their traditional social role. However, how these traditional views on leadership and the traditional female role of women in society affect women who are entering managerial positions in Chinese cultural contexts still lacks clarity. Paternalistic leadership is in this context out-dated as it does not incorporate or consider female leaders.

Therefore research is needed to address the concerns raised by Peus et al.,( 2015: 58) when stating that; "the question to what extent paternalistic leadership generalises to female leaders is yet to be answered". This article highlights the insufficiencies of paternalistic leadership concerning its omission of female leadership, and a postcolonial feminist lens is suggested as a potential research tool to be applied to research in organisational studies. However, paternalistic leadership can still be a valuable point of departure, but should not be implemented alone. Paternalistic leadership can be complemented with a postcolonial feminist lens to present a more accurate picture of female leadership in a Chinese cultural context.

The popularity of paternalistic leadership as a leadership theory able to explain leadership in a Chinese cultural context is perhaps founded on its ability to establish a direct link between this style of leadership, Confucian philosophy and values, and Chinese cultural customs and values (Sposato, 2015). In the theory of paternalistic leadership, all of these elements are interrelated, exposing cultural customs as the link between human relationships and expected behaviour (Pellegini and Scaundra, 2008). Paternalistic leadership considers that the

willingness among subordinates to follow reciprocates the care and protection of their leaders, who portray themselves as a paternal authority by displaying loyalty and conformity, in an interdependent relationship (Pellegrini and Scandura, 2008). Within this style of leadership, the emphasis of the working relationship is based on the father-like attitudes display by the leader. In this case, the leader's role is to create a family atmosphere in the workplace, to establish close and individualised relationships with some of the subordinates, to be involved in the non-work domain, to demand loyalty and to maintain authority and status. In contrast, as a way to reciprocate the behaviours of the leaders, subordinates are expected to exhibit certain behaviours such as the acceptance of authority, involvement in non-work domains, loyalty and consideration of the workplace as a family (Aycan, 2006).

However, a family-like environment in the workplace may be placing women at a disadvantage, as women are constructed as 'inferior' to men in traditional roles in Chinese society, and in family hierarchies (Xian and Woodhams, 2008). As its name signifies, the theory focuses heavily on male leaders and is therefore strongly male biased, which demands an investigation of its relevance to the study of female managers and modern society in general. Every year an increasing number of Chinese women join the workforce and many attain managerial positions. Contemporary China is undergoing large social changes in many areas, yet these social changes do not affect both sexes equally. Yukongdi, and Benson (2005) highlight the limited transferral of female gains concerning education and legislation to career development. The authors offer gender roles, attitudes towards women and general factors, primarily organisational, as potential reasons for this lack of advancement.

Furthermore, Tang et al. (2010) discuss the existence of a 'glass ceiling', which limits female professional development in Chinese societies. This glass ceiling reinforces the traditional Chinese female role. A better understanding of female leadership in a Chinese context could help for a better integration of women in the workforce, addressing the issue of the existence

of a 'glass ceiling'. In addition to helping organisations to make the most of the entire pool of talent of society, by not relegating talented women to secondary roles and helping them achieve their full potential as leaders.

### **Post-colonial feminism, a lens to advance research**

Postcolonial feminism is a theoretical lens that can help understand the role that women play in modern organisations. The idea that people of different cultures can all fit into a model of expected behaviour is an oversimplification of a complex social phenomenon. This oversimplification summarises entire cultures into conceptualisations and models, essentialises diverse social characteristics and oversimplifies social complexity (Westwood, 2004, 2007), presenting as an end product, binary categories of behaviours into which people do/do not fit. This approach limits in-depth understandings of the societies under study (Prasad, 2003; Bjerregaard et al., 2009 and has been heavily criticised by scholars who adhere to postcolonial views, who understand human behaviour as fluid, not limited by behaviours prescribed in standard conceptualisations. For example, Child (2009) has argued that China has undertaken a process of contextual evolution leading to changes in legislation, technology and management, changes that undoubtedly affect gender roles in society and organisational behaviours, these changes have certainly had an impact on Chinese culture and its organisations. Child, (2009) urges researchers not to base the discussion of management in China on static terms, advocating the acknowledgement of the dynamism of societies and cultures, moving away from binary roles. As enlisted in many models, including paternalistic leadership

The three principal strands of feminist theory in the west have been liberal feminism, radical feminism, and Marxist and socialist feminism (Hines, 2008). These feminist theories can be

critiqued for the western bias in conceptualisations of the roles and expected roles of women in societies (Mohanty, 2003). For instance Mohanty (1984), criticises western feminism in its understanding of non-western women as a monolithic category. In addition Monahaty, (1984) also argues that western bias of feminist issues views first world women as subject of their studies but third world women as an object. In contrast, postcolonial feminism has been identified as an approach that critiques western feminist movements for the generalisation and transferral of western feminist issues to non-western cultural settings (Reed, 2008).

This bias is not only limited to feminist, gender-specific studies, but there are also many examples on the organisation or cross-cultural management literature where researchers apply western conceptualisations and theoretical models to non-western participants. Therefore overlooking their cultural and social singularities and presenting as findings matches or mismatches to the original western models or conceptualisations but which are far from the actual reality experienced by the participants (Jackson, 2016). Postcolonial feminism originates from conceptualisations that emerged out of postcolonial theory, which attempts to expose and remove the hegemonic position of western knowledge structures, often imposed on non-western cultural settings (Park and Sunder-Rajan, 2000). The theoretical principles used for achieving this are based on stressing the deficiencies of western perspectives when addressing non-western cultures and as one of many theoretical perspectives (Westwood and Jack, 2007). It must be noted that whilst the prefix of 'post' could insinuate a time or space after colonialism, postcolonial studies do not assume these power relationships have ended. Even though formal colonial domination has drawn to a close, the power relationships formed still play an influential role in former colonies (Westwood and Jack, 2007). The current postcolonial movement does not limit itself only to formally recognised ex-colonies. The contemporary globalisation process and the imposition of ideals that it brings, also plays a

role in the understanding of what is “normal” and therefore the dominant conceptualisation (Kamoche and Siebers 2015).

Arguably, postcolonial theory started with the work of Said (1978) who introduced the concept of orientalism, the idea that the western self is constructed and defined as opposite to the oriental Other. In Said’s case, this was how people living in colonies were created as other to their colonial masters and vice versa, as colonised people also created their identity in contraposition to their colonisers. This concept was previously presented in a feminist but not a postcolonial context by Simone De Beauvoir (1949) who introduced the notion that female identity is defined as the opposite to male identity. The idea that the female identity is constructed as an Other can be applied to organisational studies. Women in organisations may construct in their managerial self as Other to non-managerial women, but also women are Other to men in managerial positions, quite often as those who are not men, which in most cases are the “norm”. Quite often reducing women within research to a simple statistical variable. Postcolonial feminist lens, can explore this process of othering women, and give them a voice.

However, even if postcolonial feminism draws on concepts from postcolonial theory, postcolonial feminism cannot be understood as a subset of postcolonial theory in general, or as simply another feminist perspective. As stated by Park and Sunder-Rajan, “postcolonial feminism is an exploration of and at the intersections of colonialism and neo-colonialism with gender, nation, class, race, and sexualities in the different contexts of women's lives, their subjectivities, work, sexuality, and rights” (2000: 53). These intersections are fluid, mutually influencing each other and consequently influencing the data collection and creation of knowledge. Postcolonial feminism has been critical of western academia, and their attempts to speak for women in developing countries, from a position of power and privilege.

Furthermore, postcolonial feminist studies have addressed problems of fluid positionality and its implication by engaging in a reflexive process (Özkazanc-Pan, 2012).

An integral part of the postcolonial feminist approach is the practice of reflexivity.

Reflexivity is based on questioning the relationships between ourselves, the audience, and the research participants and their multiple positionalities (Haynes, 2012). In essence, reflexivity is concerned with how knowledge is constructed (Cunliffe, 2011). The practice of reflexivity within research aims at exposing hidden alternatives, acknowledging epistemological limitations and empowering voices that struggle to be heard, providing a self-critical view of the research that has been conducted (Lynch, 2000). Reflexivity should not only question the truth of the claims made by the participants but also question the claims of the researcher and the construction of meaning, creating a more critical account of reality (Cunliffe, 2003).

Reflexing has been addressed by many disciplines from different angles such as philosophy, linguistics and anthropology, among others. However, defining reflexivity remains a difficult endeavour and with this in mind, within this article reflexivity is understood as a way to question the ability of the research to capture the complex, interactional and emergent nature of the phenomenon in question (Cunliffe, 2003).

Postcolonial feminism is far from unified, but theorist centre on critique towards the essentialising tendencies of mainstream feminist theory towards third world women and their focus on issues that affect middle-class white women in the English speaking world.

Additionally, postcolonial feminism is critical of the omission of gender issues within postcolonial theory per se (Mills, 1998). Postcolonial studies are concerned with hegemonic ideologies; ideologies which construct the idea of “normal” and “acceptable”, and also create the idea of what entire societies should aspire to (Özkazanç-Pan, 2008). Currently, the hegemonic conceptualisation regarding indigenous theories of leadership in Chinese cultural settings is based on the most popular and researched theory, paternalistic leadership, as it sets

the standards of what is "normal" and "acceptable" for cultural Chinese leaders and what they should aspire to become. However, in the current context, the traditional role of women in Chinese society can also be viewed as another dominant conceptualisation. This conceptualisation focuses on what is socially expected of women in society.

Additionally, a postcolonial feminist approach not only focuses on specific social factors to understand a phenomenon, but also aims to conduct a holistic analysis of how inequalities have been presented from a historical, political, social, cultural, and economic perspective (Racine, 2011). Furthermore, postcolonial feminism views western scholarship as highly biased in their representation of the realities of Third world women and advocates for the use of indigenous theories as well as giving those researched a voice (Ashcroft et al., 2006; Reed, 2008). This bias within representations is a central concern of postcolonial feminism, which is highly critical of how westerners have represented third world women, and raises concerns over the agency and ability of these women to speak for themselves. From this concern for the ability of certain people in society to speak for themselves, Spivak (1998) coined the term "subaltern", based on a previous conceptualisation of Gramsci, the subaltern references to those people in society who do not have a voice.

The concerns of Spivak, (1988) move away from the basic analysis of the ability of women to have agency in a binary model and attempts to address agency within their cultural context. Spivak has been critical of the notion of essentialism, which assumes that women have an essence that goes beyond cultural and ethnic circumstance, but has advocated for the idea of "strategic essentialism". This concept refers to the idea that in some circumstances it is possible for women to strategically essentialise themselves in order to fight for a common cause and achieve a common goal.

Postcolonial feminist academics like Mohanty (1984), also take issue with gender representation, criticising the way western scholars represent third world women, in an essentialistic way, without agency and silent. Othering them from western society and quite often making them the objects of their studies, yet, not giving them a voice or presenting their realities from their perspectives. Consequently, it is imperative to conduct critical research, as advocated by postcolonial feminism, to create a new understanding of representation and knowledge, which taken into account other voices (Özkazanc-Pan, 2012). Failing to do this only created a representation that does not take into account the realities of the non-western actors. And also fails to acknowledge the intersectionalities of the researchers and the participants and their influence in the research process

Explorations of the construction of Chinese female leadership must consider what is expected of a leader in a Chinese cultural context, in addition to the influence of the traditional role of women in Chinese societies where women's expected social behaviour is defined and female leadership is not supported. This exploration will also include institutional and organisational representations of these women. The negotiation of how other and self-are constructed and co-constructed could potentially lead to what Bhabha (1994) has conceptualised as a "hybrid identity" and in the case of organisations, a cultural "third space", the unique space where the organisational dynamics occurred. In this hybridity, the consequence of identities emerges from relational processes of two opposites (Özkazanc-Pan, 2012). As there are people in modern society and organisations who do not have a voice, who are limited in the agency to "tell their story" it is imperative from an academic perspective to consider how we conduct research that incorporates the voices of these "subalterns". Producing research that allows "subalterns" to have a voice, instead of research that reproduces positions of power and that leaves subalterns voiceless.

Chinese female managers must negotiate the expectation of how women should behave in their traditional social roles and also as leader within the constraints of the model of paternalistic leadership. As part of the negotiated behaviour a postcolonial feminist lens offers the concept of mimicry Bhabha (1994), the act of imitating the behaviours prescribed by a dominant conceptualisation as a way to establish discipline and compliance, consequently unifying behaviours towards what is expected, but also overlooking the realities of the people on whom this mimicry is imposed (Frenkel, 2008). Postcolonial feminist theory has been established as a lens to analyse reality in its own right. Applying the concepts presented in this section among others moves away from a mere critique of mainstream feminism or the postcolonial theory that it emerged from (Mills, 1998). Currently, postcolonial feminism is home to a theoretical set of tools that can be applied to gender issues in society in general and more specifically in organisations. For instance, Wing-ye Lee (1996) published an edited book, where among many other topics, the challenges of a patriarchal society, the female identity and postcolonialism in Hong Kong are explicitly discussed. This book aims at understanding how the aforementioned factors (among others) have been both obstacles and opportunities for women's liberation. Equally interesting is the contribution made from Lim (2015), who studies feminism and the feminist movement in postcolonial Hong Kong, demonstrating the relevance of the postcolonial legacy of feminism in Hong Kong. Yue and Leung (2015) in an attempt to avoid the North American and European paradigms and debates, combine a postcolonial feminist lens and queer studies to their case studies in Singapore and Hong Kong to understand rise of the queer Asian city. Demonstrating the versatility and adaptability of the framework, to non-western environments.

## **A Postcolonial feminisms contribution to the advancement of Paternalistic leadership theory**

Authors like Racine, 2011; Reed, 2008 among others; stress that postcolonial feminism aims at addressing the issue of power imbalances and patriarchal hegemony. This aim highlights the potential ability of a postcolonial feminist lens in a broad range of societies and within organisation studies. For example, as a critique of what is understood to be the “norm” in leadership studies in Chinese cultural context; paternalistic leadership. This “norm” is a distinctively male-biased theory that does not account for the role, experience and implication of women in leadership position. This bias is a reflection of the development of the paternalistic leadership within a strong patriarchal cultural setting (Westwood 1992, 1997). Yet, the bias has not been addressed or challenged and it is inherently incorporated in the conceptualisation. Consequently, more and more academic studies are still published utilising this bias framework, which omits the experiences of considerable parts of society, without questioning or addressing its limitations.

The issue of gendered power and its relationship to patriarchal societies is directly linked to the expected role of women in Chinese societies, traditionally used as an instrument for control and domination (Lee, 2005). But unless researchers depart from it and take a critical stand on paternalistic leadership, its limitations will never be acknowledged. It is argued that liberation is not a concern among these women, mainly Chinese women have indicated that they are satisfied with their professional career and family life, showing an acceptance of their role in society (Lo et al., 2003). Chinese women, as members of the Chinese cultural community, strive for harmony, social acceptance, and conflict avoidance (Cheung et al., 2010). Chinese culture demands a harmonious environment and the avoidance of confrontation. This demand, in the context of a patriarchal society where the female role involves emotional caregiving and chores, might shape an environment where women lack

the opportunity to challenge their social role. Furthermore, women accept and fulfil multiple roles, especially those who aspire to a professional career.

Within this context, by questioning power imbalances and patriarchal hegemony, a postcolonial feminist lens could aid research and better understand the sources of power imbalance and patriarchy, and comprehend if women are not able to challenge the current idea or what is "normal" for women or if they simply feel that they cannot do it. This "normalisation" of conflict avoidance, harmony and acceptance of the status quo may impact personal life and professional performance. Hence, a clear limitation of paternalistic leadership is that does not account for these impacts as it unquestionably assumes they are part of social arrangements. Postcolonial feminism advocates for a non-essentialist understanding of human behaviour (Spivak, 1988). This stance not only includes women but also every member of society, who may or may not fit into rigid categories and expectations. A postcolonial feminist lens, can also account for the experiences of other members of society, for instance, the LGBT community, who do not fit into traditional arrangements of patriarchal society. In addition to immigrant or ethnic minorities groups, whose voices are not always heard or included.

Hegemonic ideologies; ideologies which construct this idea of "normal" and "acceptable", can be questioned utilising a postcolonial feminist lens. In this case, the ideas and assumptions that underpin the conceptualisations of paternalistic leadership in a Chinese cultural context, and therefore opens the door to the advancement of knowledge by questioning basic assumptions. Assumptions that are based on social constructions, but assumptions that can and should be challenged and that inevitably change as societies evolve. For instance, the traditional role of women in Chinese society is "traditional" not contemporary, and the relevance of this role to women in positions of power remains unsubstantiated, so too does its effect on leadership behaviours and colleague/subordinate

actions and reactions. New social arrangements have emerged in modern Cultural Chinese societies like Hong Kong, Taiwan or Singapore, where some women rely on foreign domestic helpers, to be able to have a professional career (Lo et al., 2003; Cheung and Lui, 2015). This addition to the family inexorability alters the traditional family dynamics and brings new issues to the role and expectations of women, but also to men, families and organisations.

As previously stated, postcolonial feminism aims at addressing the issue of power imbalance and patriarchal hegemony their relevance to women within organisational studies postcolonial feminism is concentrated with how these affect women in the workforce in general and in leadership positions specifically. Within organisational studies, the issue of patriarchy and patriarchal structures cannot be omitted, as more women in societies join the labour force and move to leadership positions. These social changes challenge norms, expectation and outdated hierarchies. The concept of “hybridity” may be key to further analysis of leadership in general but also of female leadership behaviours. As a “hybrid identity” is formed when members of societies aim to combine their gender and professional identities, in addition to social expectations. This new understanding of leadership should take into account the multiple voices and singular experiences that each leader brings to the organisations. Voices that should not be lost in an essentialist generic description of leadership. As exemplified earlier, the traditional view of leadership in Chinese cultural context is male biased, this approach consequently excludes significant gender issues. A better understanding of “hybrid identities” would shed light and insights in organisational studies. All of this creating a new "third space", which reconciles both social and professional roles of all members of societies, but also including personal, singular experiences of individuals. Ultimately, providing a better understanding of organisational phenomena.

## **Future research trajectories**

Aided by the postcolonial feminist lens, further research on Chinese leadership must focus departing from a male-centred view on leadership and address the phenomena of leadership from a non-gender bias position. Recognising that gender issues are present in organisations in Chinese cultural context, as they are in every aspect of society, and therefore must be incorporated the analysis. This should lead to a better understanding of how women actually lead from their own perspective, not from a male perspective, and also enrich the overall understanding of organisational studies. Researchers could also address the prominence and influence of traditional social gender roles and expectations in modern organisations, putting special emphasis on how these have changed and adapted to the current times. Ultimately, helping to clarify their modern influence in organisations. Traditional gender roles have changed; due to social factors like economic development and migration but also one child policy and low fertility rates and a large number of women in higher education who consequently postpone maternity. What remains to be understood is how these changes have influenced leadership on an individual basis but also their overall social and organisational impact.

Further research is necessary on the strategies that female managers in a cultural Chinese context have developed to fulfil the two roles, the professional, where women compete in the job market with men who's social/ cultural expectations are gender differentiated, and the social/cultural, where several roles and expectations as mothers/daughters/sisters/wives are also to be achieved. For this special emphasis could be placed on the role of other social actors, e.g.; domestic helpers, quite prominent in Hong Kong and other cultural Chinese societies, as a central part of the work- life dynamics of these leaders. Or alternative strategies like the delay of maternity and even the choice of not becoming a mother.

Finally, from a different angle, research could explore how women in a leadership position are perceived by their co-workers, superiors and subordinates and to enquire if male colleagues perceive them as women and leaders in a rather holistic way or if male colleagues are gender blind to the realities of being a women in a women in a Chinese cultural context. And therefore are not able to perceive the singularities of being women in a Chinese cultural context and also a leader. This understanding could also help to better understand the realities of leadership and single out gender bias attitudes.

## **Conclusion**

This article has presented a new, critical perspective on dominant theoretical “norms” within organisational studies. Within this article paternalistic leadership in a Chinese cultural context is introduced as a dominant but also bias conceptualisations for the study of leadership in a Chinese cultural context. Based on this problem, postcolonial feminist is introduced as a lens to address the limitations of dominant conceptualisations and also to better understand phenomena in organisational studies. Some of the main concepts of Postcolonial feminism, like Othering, norm and essentialising, among others are introduced and explain, in order to display some of the tools that the conceptualisation has to offer. Later, these concepts are applied as to Paternalism leadership as a way to highlight its limitation and demonstrate how a postcolonial lens can enrich organisational research Finally, several research trajectories for further research are presented here postcolonial feminism could aid the research process and help to advance knowledge.

## References

- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G. & Tiffin, H. 2006, *The post-colonial studies reader*, Taylor & Francis.
- Aycan, Z. 2006, "Paternalism" in *Indigenous and cultural psychology* Springer, , pp. 445-466.
- Beauvoir, S.d. 1949, *The Second Sex*, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier, New York: Alfred A",
- Bhabha, H.K. 1994, *The location of culture*, Psychology Press.
- Bjerregaard, T., Luring, J. & Klitmøller, A. 2009, "A critical analysis of intercultural communication research in cross-cultural management: Introducing newer developments in anthropology", *critical perspectives on international business*, vol. 5, no. 3, pp. 207-228.
- Blessie, P.R. and Supriya, M.V., 2018. Masculine and feminine traits and career satisfaction: moderation effect of glass ceiling belief. *International Journal of Business Innovation and Research*, 16(2), pp.155-167.
- Chao, A. & Kao, H. 2005, "Paternalistic leadership and subordinate stress in Taiwanese enterprises", *Research in Applied Psychology*, vol. 27, pp. 111-131.
- Chen, C. & Farh, J. 2010, "Developments in understanding Chinese leadership: Paternalism and its elaborations, moderations, and alternatives", *The Oxford handbook of Chinese psychology*, , pp. 599-622.
- Chen, C. & Huang, C. 2004, "A multiple criteria evaluation of high-tech industries for the science-based industrial park in Taiwan", *Information & Management*, vol. 41, no. 7, pp. 839-851.

Chen, X., Eberly, M.B., Chiang, T., Farh, J. & Cheng, B. 2014, "Affective Trust in Chinese Leaders Linking Paternalistic Leadership to Employee Performance", *Journal of Management*, vol. 40, no. 3, pp. 796-819.

Cheng, B. 1995b, "Hierarchical structure and Chinese organizational behavior", *Indigenous Psychological Research in Chinese Societies*, vol. 3, pp. 142-219.

Cheng, B. 1995a, "Paternalistic authority and leadership: A case study of a Taiwanese CEO", *Bulletin of the Institute of Ethnology Academic Sinica*, vol. 79, pp. 119-173.

Cheng, B., Chou, L., Wu, T., Huang, M. & Farh, J. 2004, "Paternalistic leadership and subordinate responses: Establishing a leadership model in Chinese organizations", *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 89-117.

Cheng, B. 1995c, "Authoritarian values and executive leadership: the case of Taiwanese family enterprises", Report prepared for Taiwan's National Science Council. Taiwan: National Taiwan University (in Chinese), .

Cheung, A.K.L. and Lui, L., 2015. Hiring Domestic Help in Hong Kong The Role of Gender Attitude and Wives' Income. *Journal of Family Issues*, p.0192513X14565700.

Cheung, C. & Chan, A.C. 2008, "Benefits of Hong Kong Chinese CEOs' Confucian and Daoist leadership styles", *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, vol. 29, no. 6, pp. 474-503.

Child, J. and Marinova, S., 2014. The Role of Contextual Combinations in the Globalization of Chinese Firms. 情境性组合在中国企业全球化中的作用. *Management and Organization Review*, 10(3), pp.347-371.

Child, J. (2009) "Context, comparison and methodology in Chinese management research", *Management and Organization Review*, Vol. 5, No. 1, pp.57–73.

Cunliffe, A. 2011, "Why complicate a done deal? Bringing reflexivity into management research", *C.Cassell and B.Lee Challenges and controversies in management research*, Oxford: Routledge, , pp. 404-418.

Cunliffe, A.L. 2003, "Reflexive inquiry in organizational research: questions and possibilities", *Human Relations*, vol. 56, no. 8, pp. 983-1003.

Farh, J. & Cheng, B. 2000, "A cultural analysis of paternalistic leadership in Chinese organizations", *Management and organizations in the Chinese context*, , pp. 84-127.

Farh, J., Cheng, B., Chou, L. & Chu, X. 2006, "Authority and benevolence: Employees' responses to paternalistic leadership in China", *China's domestic private firms: Multidisciplinary perspectives on management and performance*, , pp. 230-260.

Farh, J., Liang, J., Chou, L. & Cheng, B. 2008, "Paternalistic leadership in Chinese organizations: Research progress and future research directions", .

Faure, G.O. & Fang, T. 2008, "Changing Chinese values: Keeping up with paradoxes", *International business review*, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 194-207.

Frenkel, M. 2008, "The multinational corporation as a third space: Rethinking international management discourse on knowledge transfer through Homi Bhabha", *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 33, no. 4, pp. 924-942.

Fan, Y. 2000, "A classification of Chinese culture", *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 3-10.

- Fong, V.L., 2002. China's one-child policy and the empowerment of urban daughters. *American Anthropologist*, pp.1098-1109.
- Haynes, K. 2012, "Reflexivity in qualitative research", *Qualitative organizational research: Core methods and current challenges*, , pp. 72-89.
- Hines, S. 2008, "Feminist theories" in *Introducing Gender and Women's Studies*, eds. D. Richardson & V. Robinson, Palgrave Macmillan, , pp. 3-19.
- Huang, C translation, Confucius, By 1997, *The Analects of Confucius*, Oxford University Press.
- Jackson, T., 2016. Paternalistic leadership The missing link in cross-cultural leadership studies?. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*, 16(1), pp.3-7.
- Kamoche, K. and Siebers, L.Q., 2015. Chinese management practices in Kenya: toward a post-colonial critique. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 26(21), pp.2718-2743.
- Lee, E.W. 2005, "The renegotiation of the social pact in Hong Kong: Economic globalisation, socio-economic change, and local politics", *Journal of social policy*, vol. 34, no. 2, pp. 293-310.
- Leung, A.S. 2003, "Feminism in transition: Chinese culture, ideology and the development of the women's movement in China", *Asia Pacific journal of management*, vol. 20, no. 3, pp. 359-374.
- Leung, K. 2009, "Never the twain shall meet? Integrating Chinese and Western management research", *Management and Organization Review*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 121-129.

Lim, A., 2015. Transnational feminism and women's movements in post-1997 Hong Kong: Solidarity beyond the state. Hong Kong University Press.

Lin, L. & Ho, Y. 2009, "Confucian dynamism, culture and ethical changes in Chinese societies—a comparative study of China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong", *The international journal of human resource management*, vol. 20, no. 11, pp. 2402-2417.

Liu, J., Li, M. & Yue, X. 2010, "Chinese social identity and inter-group relations: the influence of benevolent authority " in *The Oxford handbook of Chinese psychology*, ed. M.H. Bond, Oxford University Press., , pp. 579-597.

Liu, H. & Li, K. 2002, "Strategic Implications of Emerging Chinese Multinationals:: The Haier Case Study", *European Management Journal*, vol. 20, no. 6, pp. 699-706.

Lo, S., Stone, R. & Ng, C.W. 2003, "Work-family conflict and coping strategies adopted by female married professionals in Hong Kong", *Women in Management Review*, vol. 18, no. 4, pp. 182-190.

Lynch, M. 2000, "Against reflexivity as an academic virtue and source of privileged knowledge", *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 17, no. 3, pp. 26-54.

Mills, S. 1998, "Post-Colonial Feminist theory" in *Contemporary feminist theories*, eds. S. Jackson & J. Jones, Oxford University Press, .

Mohanty, C. T. (1984). *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses* in Mohanty,

Chandra Talpade; Russo. Ann and Torres Lourdes (Eds.) *Third World Women and the Politics of*

Feminism. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press,

Mohanty, C.T. 2003, *Feminism without borders: Decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity*, Zubaan.

Özkazanç-Pan, B. 2008, "International management research meets "The rest of the world"", *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 33, no. 4, pp. 964-974.

Ozkazanc-Pan, B., 2012. Postcolonial feminist research: challenges and complexities. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, 31(5/6), pp.573-591.

Park, Y. & Sunder-Rajan, R. 2000, "Postcolonial Feminism/Postcolonialism and Feminism" in *A companion to postcolonial studies*, eds. H. Schwarz & S. Ray, Oxford: Blackwell, , pp. 87-112.

Pellegrini, E.K. & Scandura, T.A. 2008, "Paternalistic leadership: A review and agenda for future research", *Journal of Management*, vol. 34, no. 3, pp. 566-593

Peus, C., Braun, S. & Knipfer, K. 2015, "On becoming a leader in Asia and America: Empirical evidence from women managers", *The Leadership Quarterly*, vol. 26, no. 1, pp. 55-67.

Prasad, A. 2003, *Postcolonial theory and organizational analysis: A critical engagement*, Palgrave Macmillan.

Racine, L. 2011, "The Impact of Race, Gender, and Class in Postcolonial Feminist Fieldwork: A Retrospective Critique of Methodological Dilemmas.", *Aporia*, vol. 3, no. 1.

Redding, S.G. 1993, *The spirit of Chinese capitalism*, Walter de Gruyter.

Reed, K. 2008, "Racing the feminist agenda " in *Introducing Gender and Women's Studies*, eds. R. Diane & V. Robinson, Palgrave Macmillan, .

Said, E. 1978, *Orientalism: Western concepts of the Orient*, Penguin.

Schnurr, S. & Mak, B. 2011, "Leadership in Hong Kong: is gender really not an issue?", *Gender and Language*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 337-364.

Silin, R.H. 1976, *Leadership and values: The organization of large-scale Taiwanese enterprises*, Harvard Univ Asia Center.

Spivak, G. C. (1988). Can the subaltern speak? In C. Nelson, & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *University of Illinois Press Urbana*. pp. 271-313.

Sposato, M., (2015). Methodological approaches to research in China. *International Journal of Chinese Culture and Management*, 3(4), pp.403-412.

Sposato, M & Rumens, N (2018) Advancing international human resource management scholarship on paternalistic leadership and gender: the role of postcolonial feminism. *International Journal of Human Resource Management* . ISSN 0958-5192 (Accepted/In press)

Tacconelli, W. & Wrigley, N. 2009, "Organizational Challenges and Strategic Responses of Retail TNCs in Post-WTO-Entry China", *Economic Geography*, vol. 85, no. 1, pp. 49-73.

Tang, C., Chua, Z. & O, J. 2010, "Gender perspective of Chinese social relationship and behavior" in *The Oxford handbook of Chinese psychology*, ed. M.H. Bond, Oxford University Press, .

Warner, M. 2010, "In search of Confucian HRM: theory and practice in Greater China and beyond", *The international journal of human resource management*, vol. 21, no. 12, pp. 2053-2078.

Westwood, R. 1997, "Harmony and patriarchy: The cultural basis for 'paternalistic headship' among the overseas Chinese", *Organization Studies*, vol. 18, no. 3, pp. 445-480.

Westwood, R.I. 1992, "Headship and Leadership" in *Organisational behaviour : Southeast Asian perspectives*, ed. R.I. Westwood, Longman, Hong Kong, .

Westwood, R.I. & Jack, G. 2007, "Manifesto for a post-colonial international business and management studies: A provocation", *critical perspectives on international business*, vol. 3, no. 3, pp. 246-265.

Westwood, R., Chan, A. & Linstead, S. 2004, "Theorizing Chinese employment relations comparatively: Exchange, reciprocity and the moral economy", *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, vol. 21, no. 3, pp. 365-389.

Wing-yee Lee, E. 1996, "Anti-Discrimination Legislation and Gender Equality in Hong Kong: A Philosophical and Jurisprudential Discussion", *Asian Journal of Public Administration*, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 22-44.

Wu, M. & Xu, e., 2012, "Paternalistic Leadership: From Here to Where?" in "Handbook of Chinese organizational behaviour", ed. M.H. Bond, Edward Elgar Publishing, .

Xian, H. & Woodhams, C. 2008, "Managing careers: Experiences of successful women in the Chinese IT industry", *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, vol. 23, no. 6, pp. 409-425.

Yue, A. and Leung, H.H.S., 2015. Notes towards the queer Asian city: Singapore and Hong Kong. *Urban Studies*, p.0042098015602996.

Yukongdi, V. & Benson, J. 2005, "Women in Asian management: cracking the glass ceiling?", *Asia Pacific Business Review*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 139-148.

Zhou, H. 2011, "Confucianism and the Legalism: A model of the national strategy of governance in ancient China", *Frontiers of Economics in China*, vol. 6, no. 4, pp. 616-637.