

Being inside without being unaccountable: a measurement roadmap for Oriental psychology using Cronbach's Alpha, AI dialogue, and wearable sensing

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Abstract: Psychological science often secures public accountability by observing persons from an external, third-person position. This enables comparison, but it can lose the phenomenon when the object of inquiry is lived experience itself. Oriental Psychology begins from being inside: bodily change, attention, meaning, relationship, and choice as they arise in the present situation. This article proposes a disciplined route from first-person experience to shareable evidence. Practice-derived concepts are translated into item families, ecological momentary prompts, behavioral indicators, and wearable signals. Cronbach's alpha is positioned as an early reliability checkpoint for whether items intended to represent one process covary; it is not proof of truth, unidimensionality, validity, or efficacy. AI dialogue can elicit time-near descriptions and preserve process sequences, while wearables add physiological and behavioral context. The proposed architecture evaluates coherence within scales, within persons over time, and across first-person, behavioral, relational, and physiological sources. It allows Oriental Psychology to retain its civilizational commitment to lived interiority while accepting public scrutiny, revision, and falsification. The aim is to turn long-standing practice into professionally recognizable knowledge without reducing experience to numbers alone.

Keywords: Oriental Psychology; first-person evidence; Cronbach's alpha; ecological momentary assessment; AI dialogue; wearable sensing; embodied knowing

1 Introduction: What is lost when science steps outside?

Experimental psychology has gained authority by stepping outside the event: standardizing observation, comparing people against common reference points, and asking whether another researcher can reproduce the result. This third-person discipline protects inquiry from private certainty and is indispensable.

Difficulty appears when the phenomenon is a lived event. Fear is not exhausted by heart rate; kindness is not exhausted by the speaker's intention. The receiver knows something from within that an observer may not see, yet first-person certainty can be mistaken or retrospectively reconstructed. The question is how an experience known from within can become accountable beyond the person who lived it.

This question is central to Oriental Psychology. By "Oriental", we mean a living civilizational tradition rooted in China—an integrated way of understanding mind, body, relationships, nature, and life. The term is used deliberately, not as an exotic label imposed from outside, but as the name of a civilization being understood, renewed, and shared. Oriental Psychology does not enter international scholarship as local material waiting to be translated entirely into pre-existing Western categories. It enters as a theory-bearing partner whose claims must nevertheless be defined, tested, criticized, and revised.

The position is simple: being inside is necessary for fidelity to lived experience, but it does not remove the obligation to produce public evidence. AI dialogue, ecological momentary assessment (EMA), and wearable sensing can preserve experience near its occurrence and relate it to time, action, physiology, and outcome. Cronbach's alpha can support one early step, provided its limits are respected.

2 Oriental Psychology as disciplined interiority

Oriental Psychology begins with the person as an embodied and relational life in the present moment. In Chan-influenced practice, the present is not a thin instant between past and future. It is where sensation, attention, memory, interpretation, and response become the world that is presently available for action. The traditional proposition that mind participates in the formation of the experienced world is not presented here as an empirically established cosmological claim. It is operationalized more narrowly: attention, bodily state, prior meaning, and relationship co-constitute what a person can perceive and do now.

Western philosophy and cognitive science are not uniformly externalist. Phenomenology and Varela's neurophenomenology explicitly argued that first-person experience is an irreducible field and proposed reciprocal constraints between disciplined experiential reports and cognitive science [1]. First-person methods likewise distinguish careful experiential inquiry from casual introspection [2]. Oriental Psychology joins this methodological opening while contributing a different civilizational center of gravity: knowing is not complete until it is lived, embodied, and capable of reorganizing conduct.

This starting point requires discipline. Bodily contraction after criticism is evidence that the interaction was received as constricting at that moment. It does not prove harmful intention, universal interpretation, or identical effects on others. "The body knows first" should therefore be represented as a process sequence:

event → bodily registration → awareness → interpretation → reception choice → action → consequence.

Each link can be time-stamped, compared, and challenged. Work on interoceptive awareness shows that complex body-related experience can become differentiated constructs through mixed methods, cognitive testing, factor analysis, and iterative refinement [3]. Oriental Psychology should adopt comparable rigor while preserving its own questions.

3 Three forms of coherence

For an internal experience to become shareable evidence, at least three forms of coherence should be examined.

Within-scale coherence asks whether items proposed to represent one process move together. If "reception gating" is the target, candidate items might assess whether a person can notice being affected, distinguish the incoming message from the whole self, choose how much to receive now, return attention after activation, and resume necessary action. These items should be tested as one item family rather than mixed indiscriminately with bodily vitality, self-acceptance, or social contribution.

Within-person temporal coherence asks whether an experiential pattern recurs in the same person across comparable situations and whether change in one part of the sequence predicts change in another. EMA reduces dependence on global retrospective reports by repeatedly sampling experience and behavior in everyday contexts [4]. Oriental Psychology needs

both between-person questions—who tends to show greater reception-gating capacity—and within-person questions—when does this person regain choice more readily than usual?

Cross-source coherence asks whether first-person reports align, diverge, or interact with behavior, relationship, and physiology. A report of "I became more settled" may be examined alongside response delay, task resumption, conversational tone, sleep, movement, heart rate, or other context-appropriate indicators. Convergence increases confidence, but divergence is also informative. A calm self-report combined with persistent avoidance may indicate numbing; high physiological arousal combined with value-consistent action may indicate that distress remains while agency has returned.

These forms do not create an all-seeing judge. They create a public structure in which the person's account remains primary evidence of lived reception while no source becomes unquestionable.

4 Cronbach's Alpha: a bridge, not a verdict

For a scale with k items, Cronbach's alpha is commonly expressed as:

$$\alpha = k/(k - 1) \times [1 - (\sum \sigma_i^2/\sigma^2)]$$

where σ_i^2 represents each item's variance and σ^2 represents the variance of the summed score. Cronbach originally described alpha in relation to the average of possible split-half coefficients and the relationship among sampled items [5]. In practical terms, alpha can help ask whether a proposed item family behaves coherently enough to justify further investigation.

This is useful because Oriental Psychology observations often appear as rich language: "my chest tightened," "I was pulled into the other person's judgment," or "my attention came back and I could choose." Item development can test whether differently worded observations participate in a common pattern.

However, alpha must not be asked to do more than it can. A high value does not prove that a construct is true, that items are unidimensional, that the score is stable across time, that the instrument predicts life outcomes, or that an intervention works. Alpha can rise merely because a scale contains many similar or redundant items. Methodologists have therefore warned against treating it as a universal certificate of reliability or validity [6]. Omega and factor-based approaches may estimate score reliability more appropriately under less restrictive conditions [7].

Accordingly, a proposed Oriental Psychology measurement program should derive item pools from interviews, practice records, and cognitive interviews; calculate alpha separately for conceptually distinct subscales, with confidence intervals, item-total patterns, and item-deletion diagnostics; examine factor structure rather than use alpha to assume unidimensionality; report omega where models permit; distinguish between-person from within-person reliability; and test convergent, discriminant, predictive, and incremental validity.

An alpha calculated once across people cannot establish that a scale reliably captures fluctuations within a person. Multilevel methods are needed because score meaning and reliability may differ between occasions and persons [8]. The desired product is not one impressive coefficient but a reliability profile across refinement rounds, populations, settings, languages, and levels of analysis.

5 A technology-enabled evidence architecture

The evidence pathway proposed for Oriental Psychology has five linked layers.

Layer 1: time-near first-person description. A brief AI dialogue asks what happened, what changed first in the body, what meaning appeared, what the person wanted to do, and what they actually did. Unlike a fixed questionnaire, dialogue can request specificity when a response is abstract. Unlike an unstructured conversation, a versioned protocol can preserve comparable fields.

Layer 2: standardized momentary items. After the narrative, several brief items sample one process at a time: bodily registration, reception gating, recovered choice, embodied capacity, or value-consistent action. Free text preserves the phenomenon; standardized items create comparability.

Layer 3: behavioral consequence. Follow-up prompts record whether attention returned, a task began, a boundary was expressed, help was sought, or the interaction changed. Oriental Psychology is concerned not only with speaking more deeply, but with living more capably.

Layer 4: wearable and device context. With explicit consent, sleep, activity, heart rate, or other suitable signals can provide temporal context. EMA has already been combined with ambulatory physiological and behavioral measures, demonstrating the feasibility of linking lived reports with objective streams [9]. Digital phenotyping similarly enables temporally dense observation in natural settings [10]. These signals are correlates, not translations of meaning: a heart-rate increase cannot decide whether a person felt fear, excitement, effort, or love.

Layer 5: human and statistical review. Researchers audit prompt versions, missingness, response burden, risk events, alternative explanations, and subgroup performance. AI may organize and prompt data collection, but it must not silently assign diagnosis, infer hidden truth from language, or become the sole judge of a participant's inner state.



Figure 1. A proposed evidence pathway for Oriental Psychology: lived episode → AI-assisted description → process-specific items → reliability and factor testing → behavioral and wearable triangulation → revisable construct

6 A practice-derived design example

Consider an anonymized composite pattern drawn from short educational practice programs. A participant receives advice framed as "for your own good". She initially reports no disagreement with the adviser's intention, yet describes an immediate tightening in the stomach and throat, a wish to withdraw, and loss of speech. In a later comparable interaction, she notices the bodily change, delays replying, separates the adviser's concern from her own decision, and then expresses a boundary. The discomfort does not disappear, but action becomes more agentic.

An external coding system might record advice, silence, and later response. An internal account adds the missing transition: the body registered constriction before the participant could explain it. A structured evidence design would not ask outsiders to accept her interpretation on authority. It would sample several reception-gating items across episodes, test whether the item family is coherent, compare rested and depleted states, record response timing and boundary expression, and examine whether greater gating predicts task or relationship outcomes. The person's interiority defines the phenomenon; repeated structure and external consequences make the claim publicly examinable.

This example also shows why the Oriental Psychology six-stage spiral—Halt, Disentangle, Embrace, Build Capacity, Take Root, and Flourish—should not be scored as one undifferentiated ladder. Each stage proposes a distinct process. Build Capacity, for example, includes both mission-guided capability development and embodied carrying capacity.

Combining every stage into a single alpha would erase the theory's structure rather than validate it.

7 Testable propositions and research sequence

Four propositions can guide initial studies.

Proposition 1. Momentary bodily registration will explain perceived constriction or nourishment beyond the communicator's rated benevolent intention, while not fully determining judgments of objective harm.

Proposition 2. Reception-gating capacity will mediate the relationship between activation and recovered agency, expressed through attentional return, response flexibility, boundary expression, and task resumption.

Proposition 3. Embodied capacity will moderate the transition from awareness to action: noticing may occur under both rested and depleted conditions, but enactment will be less likely when sleep, vitality, or physical comfort is reduced.

Proposition 4. Multimodal profiles combining first-person, behavioral, relational, and physiological information will predict real-world functioning more accurately than either retrospective self-report or wearable data alone.

Research should proceed in stages: qualitative construct clarification; cognitive interviews; item-pool development; small prospective feasibility studies; exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis; alpha and omega estimation; multilevel reliability analysis; convergent and discriminant validity; predictive testing; and measurement invariance across age, gender, language, and setting. No instrument should be called an Oriental Psychology scale before this sequence has produced adequate evidence. Long-standing usefulness in practice motivates the research, yet practical utility cannot replace empirical investigation.

8 Discussion: civilizational confidence and scientific accountability

The encounter between Oriental and Western psychology should not be staged as a contest in which one civilization possesses objectivity and the other possesses experience. Nor should Oriental Psychology seek legitimacy by deleting its own premises. The more productive contest concerns explanatory and practical fruitfulness: which concepts help people perceive more accurately, recover authorship, build capacity, relate with clearer boundaries, and contribute more fully to life?

Scientific authority has historically travelled with institutional and material power, causing some traditions to appear universal and others local. Oriental Psychology rejects the conclusion that civilizational vocabulary must be abandoned to enter science. Oriental names the cultural source of its questions. Evidence names its willingness to make answers public, revisable, and vulnerable to disconfirmation. Neither requires surrender of the other.

Its public ethic, "Let Kindness Flow Freely", illustrates this stance. Kindness is not defined solely by intention or moral command. It is investigated through what an interaction does to bodily openness, relational safety, choice, responsibility, and later action. The receiver's experience cannot be replaced by an external verdict; neither can the receiver's first report close inquiry. A disciplined science of interiority keeps both truths in view.

9 Conclusion

Oriental Psychology is inside the phenomenon because lived life cannot be known completely from outside. It also accepts accountability because private experience alone cannot establish a public discipline. Cronbach's alpha offers one modest but useful bridge: it helps examine whether carefully derived items cohere. AI dialogue preserves time-near experiential detail; EMA creates repeated comparison; wearable and behavioral data provide additional reference points; multilevel analysis separates change within persons from differences between persons.

The result is not the numerical conquest of inner life. It is a way for lived experience to retain its depth while acquiring a form that others can inspect, test, and improve. Oriental Psychology can therefore speak in its own civilizational voice and still participate fully in shared psychological science.

Author contributions

Qiuyan Huang contributed the frontline practice perspective, methodological framing, and manuscript drafting. Joey Mengyu Wu developed the Oriental Psychology framework, provided theoretical supervision, and revised the manuscript.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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