

CHINA CROSSROADS

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Self-Help Psychology and the Value of Personality in China

Amir Hampel

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Boxing Cat Sinan Mansions | 519 Fuxing Zhong Lu
150rmb including drink ticket | FREE for members
RSVP to Frank Tsai at editor@shanghai-review.org



In cities around China, young people are studying how to be confident, extroverted, and interesting. They are reading books suggesting that personality is the key to success and happiness and spending their free time practicing social skills in self-help workshops. Based on ethnographic research in personal growth groups in Beijing, and an analysis of popular self-help texts, this talk will examine why Chinese young professionals view these personal traits as so valuable. Although members of self-help groups often discuss how personality leads to professional success, young people are also studying how to present themselves on marriage markets, and to align themselves with a national project to become confidently, assertively modern.

[Amir Hampel](#) is a Clinical Assistant Professor of Global China Studies at NYU Shanghai. Amir received his PhD from the Department of Comparative Human Development at the University of Chicago. He has conducted ethnographic and textual research on self-help psychology in China, focusing on social skills training programs that are popular with young urban professionals. By studying young adults who are trying to change their personalities, this research analyzes identity, social class, moral subjectivity, and mental health in contemporary China, as well as the transnational flow of psychological expertise. Amir's research has also traced how Chinese psychotherapists and cultural critics are translating 'social skills', such as empathy and assertiveness, into discourses about constructing a self-consciously modern, entrepreneurial, and confident nation.

[China Crossroads](#) hosts talks on all topics related to China, including business, foreign policy, and other areas as they relate to China, the idea being that China is both already a "crossroads" of the world and itself at a "crossroads" in terms of its future global influence. For more information, contact Frank Tsai at editor@shanghai-review.org.