

# Constructing a Theoretical Framework for the Ontogenetic Development of the Chinese Bicultural Self: A Preliminary Statement

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Cultural ecological research has demonstrated that different ecological environments tend to create different forms of subsistence economy, which in turn make various types of society and culture possible. Thus, agrarian economy facilitates the formation of agricultural society and collectivistic-oriented culture, whereas industrial economy eases the development of industrialized society and individualistic-oriented culture. In order to help the members in these two contrasting types of society and culture to acquire the motives, thoughts, aptitudes, values, temperaments, and behaviors necessary for effectively functioning in their respective subsistence economies, distinctive patterns of socialization practices have to be designed and promoted. The causal sequence as postulated in the above is as follows: Ecological environments → subsistence economies → societies and cultures → socialization practices → psychological and behavioral characteristics.

During the long process of societal modernization in Chinese societies (especially Taiwan and Hong Kong) in the last hundred years or so, both traditional agrarian and modern industrial economies have been coexisting for so long a time that a bicultural society has been gradually formed in each of them. In such a society, the collectivistic-oriented and individualistic-oriented cultural elements or aspects are mixed, or even integrated, in daily activities and practices. The traditional-modern bicultural society tends to actualize a bicultural kind of socialization practice, which in turn leads to a bicultural pattern of psychological and behavioral characteristics.

In a bicultural society like Taiwan or Hong Kong, people need a bicultural self to integrate their bicultural psychological and behavioral characteristics. Yang (2004) and Lu and Yang (2006) called such a kind of self the traditional-modern bicultural self. Yang proposed that the Chinese bicultural self consists of both the traditional, social-oriented self and the modern, individual-oriented one in accordance with his four-part theory of the Chinese self. The former is further divided into three subselves, respectively labeled as the relationship-, the familistic (group)-, and the other-oriented self.

In this paper, a Y-shaped model of the developmental stages for the Chinese bicultural self is proposed. First of all, we slightly modify Jane Loevinger's (1976, 1983) six-stage model of ego development to form a five-stage one for the ontogenetic development of the individual-oriented self: (1) *Preconformity Stage*, (2) *Conformity Stage*, (3) *Individualistically Conscientious Stage*, (4) *Autonomous Stage*, and (5) *Individualistically Integrated Stage*. In contrast to this model, a five-stage one for the development of the social-oriented self is constructed to include the following corresponding stages: (1) *Preconformity Stage*, (2) *Conformity Stage*, (3) *Collectivistically Conscientious Stage*, (4) *Homonomous Stage*, and (5) *Collectivistically Integrated Stage*. The earliest two stages are identical in the two five-stage models, whereas the later three in one model are diametrically different, in one way or another, from the corresponding ones in the other. It is thus possible to place the early two stages on the stem of the Y-form layout. Beyond the intersection point, the later three successive stages for the social-oriented self are placed on the left arm, and the corresponding three for the individual-oriented self on the right one. A Y-shaped developmental model for the Chinese bicultural self is thus conceptually proposed. The defining psychological (cognitive, motivational, affectional, and intentional) and behavioral

characteristics of such a self are described for each stage on the stem and the two arms, so that the empirical test of this Y-form developmental model of the Chinese self could be made feasible.

Finally, some preliminary recommendations for empirically testing the Y-model of bicultural-self development are made. It is suggested that the whole age range for the participants to be used should be from 3 to 70 years old, and this range may be divided into three age groups: (1) kindergarten children and 1-4 grade pupils, (2) 5-6 grade pupils and junior and senior high school students, and (3) college students and ordinary adults. The validity of the Y-model will be tested by using participants from the three age groups in three consecutive years in Taiwan and Mainland China.

**Keywords:** *four-part theory of Chinese self, individual-oriented self development, social-oriented self development, traditional-modern bicultural self, Y-model of bicultural-self development*