

## THE INDIVIDUAL- AND SOCIAL-ORIENTED CHINESE BICULTURAL SELF: A SUBCULTURAL ANALYSIS CONTRASTING MAINLAND CHINESE AND TAIWANESE

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LUO LU

*National Taiwan University, Taiwan, ROC*

SHU-FANG KAO

*Hsuan Chuang University, Taiwan, ROC*

TING-TING CHANG

*Lunghwa University of Science and Technology, Taiwan, ROC*

HSIN-PEI WU

*National Central University, Taiwan, ROC*

ZHANG JIN

*Tsinghua University, PRC*

The previously proposed and tested bicultural self theory (Lu, 2007a; Lu & Yang, 2006) was further extended to mainland Chinese in the People's Republic of China, and potential

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Luo Lu, PhD, Professor, Department of Business Administration, National Taiwan University, Taipei, Taiwan, ROC; Shu-Fang Kao, Department of Applied Psychology, Hsuan Chuang University, Taiwan, ROC; Ting-Ting Chang, Department of Industrial Management, Lunghwa University of Science and Technology, Taiwan, ROC; Hsin-Pei Wu, Institute of Human Resource Management, National Central University, Taiwan, ROC; Zhang Jin, Department of Human Resources and Organizational Behavior, Tsinghua University, PRC.

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Please address correspondence and reprint requests to: Professor Luo Lu, Department of Business Administration, National Taiwan University, No.1, Sec. 4, Roosevelt Road, Taipei 106, Taiwan, ROC. Phone: +886 2 33669657; Fax: +886 2 23625379; Email: [luolu@ntu.edu.tw](mailto:luolu@ntu.edu.tw) or [luolu@management.ntu.edu.tw](mailto:luolu@management.ntu.edu.tw)

subcultural differences across the Chinese strait were explored. Results indicated that mainland Chinese generally endorsed various aspects of the individual-oriented self more strongly, but the two groups across the strait were not different in their overall endorsement of the social-oriented self. As social orientation is rooted in traditional Chinese conceptualization of the self and the individual orientation is brought in with modern Western influences, this pattern of differentiation was understood in the context of both common heritage and differing phases of societal modernization in mainland China and Taiwan. In addition, a brief version (24 items) of the “Individual- and Social-oriented Self” scale (ISS; Lu, 2007a, 2007b) was successfully constructed, and its reliability and validity mirrored its original full version of 40 items.

*Keywords:* Chinese bicultural self, individual orientation, social orientation, PRC, Taiwan.

Against the greater socioeconomic background of globalization, Lu and Yang (2006) have recently proposed a model of “Chinese bicultural self”. Specifically, they observed that (1) the traditional (*social-oriented*) Chinese self differs from the modern (*individual-oriented*) Chinese self, and (2) as a result of modernization, the modern Chinese self becomes more widely distributed in contemporary Chinese societies, and both traditional and modern self are now available to most Chinese. Lu (2007a) later systematically and comprehensively delineated the main contents of the individual-oriented and social-oriented self, and developed and conducted initial validation of the “Individual- and Social-oriented Self” (ISS) scale. Lu (in press) further designed a series of studies to relate the bicultural self model to some of the important issues in the field of self. In that research, the ISS was found to have convergent and divergent validity across cultural individualism/collectivism and independent/interdependent self. The bicultural self model was also found to impact upon basic psychological processes such as motivation, cognition, emotion, and well-being. Thus far, the basic tenets of the bicultural self theory have been proposed, its primary elements can be reliably and validly measured using the ISS, and its value for studying contemporary issues in the field of social and personality psychology has been established. For details of the theory, development of the ISS, its items, reliability, construct and incremental validity, please refer to published literature (Lu, 2007a, b, in press).

The bicultural self model was initially formulated against the greater social context of ongoing modernization in the non-West world, specifically, drawing upon the common cultural heritage of the Chinese tradition and its inevitable encounter with the expanding Western culture. As such, the theory and ISS should be relevant to all cultural Chinese living in major Chinese societies. However, so far work done on the bicultural self model has been restricted to one Chinese group: the Taiwanese. It is imperative to extend the research effort to include the largest population of Chinese on earth: the mainland Chinese in

the People's Republic of China (PRC). Such an effort will be advantageous in firmly establishing the utility of the bicultural self model to the entire Chinese population. Furthermore, contrasting mainland Chinese against Taiwanese will amount to a finer grained subcultural analysis, as these two regions possess different political, economic, social, and historical institutions.

As defined by Lu (2007a, in press), *social-oriented self* involves the conception of oneself as a connected, fluid, flexible, committed being who is bound to others. In addition, morality and self-cultivation are also central to the traditional Chinese self. In sharp contrast to this self view, *individual-oriented self* involves the conception of the person as a bounded, coherent, stable, autonomous, independent and free entity. This self view derives from a belief in the wholeness and separateness of each individual's configuration of internal attributes, which locates crucial self-representations within the individual. The essence of this Western self is the independent and individual way of being. As argued by Lu and Yang (2006), both self systems should be included in the representation of the modern day Chinese self, as there is increasing evidence that social orientation coexists with individual orientation among Chinese living through the profound process of societal modernization (Lu, 2003; Yang, 1996).

It is a daunting practical and intellectual challenge to represent mainland China (PRC) and Taiwan in their full flavor, especially because both have undergone dramatic changes during the 20th century and new events constantly impact on Greater China nowadays. However, Lu, Cooper, Kao, and Zhou (2003) did attempt a systematic comparative analysis of the two major Chinese societies along historical, political, social, and economic dimensions, and concluded that the PRC is a socialist society undergoing transition towards a market economy, while Taiwan is a new democracy continuing its rapid industrialization. Consequently, despite their share of common cultural heritage, we still expect both similarities and dissimilarities between people in the PRC and Taiwan in mentality and basic psychological processes. In the present study we contrasted subcultures of the PRC and Taiwan in views of the self.

Empirical comparisons of the PRC and Taiwan are rare in psychological research, with the exception of managerial studies (Lu et al., 2003). However, researchers noted that underlying psychological structures are usually very similar for mainland Chinese and Taiwanese, while differences exist mainly in levels of endorsement of these focal constructs, reflecting subculturally sanctioned meanings and preferences (Yang & Lu, 2005). We therefore did not expect variations in the basic structure of the bicultural self model; nonetheless, different levels of endorsement on various aspects of the self were expected across the strait.

A secondary purpose of this study was to develop a brief, yet reliable, version of the ISS scale to facilitate future use.

## METHOD

### DATA AND PARTICIPANTS

Data from four independent samples of Chinese across the strait were included in analysis here. Details follow: (1) mainland students (CS,  $N = 364$ ) were recruited from several large universities in Beijing, Shanghai, and Shandong provinces. There were 45.9% males, with a mean age of 20.72 ( $SD = 4.39$ ). (2) Mainland adults (CA,  $N = 178$ ) were recruited from various organizations and further education classes based in several large universities. Fifty percent were males, with a mean age of 32.62 ( $SD = 13.34$ ). (3) Taiwanese students (TS,  $N = 884$ ) were recruited from several large universities; 37.2% were males, with a mean age of 23.29 ( $SD = 1.92$ ). (4) Taiwanese adults (TA,  $N = 374$ ) were recruited from various organizations and further education classes based in several large universities; 52.9% were males, with a mean age of 31.82 ( $SD = 11.89$ ).

### MEASURES

The 40-item ISS was self-administered (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 6 = *Strongly agree*). The ISS-I and ISS-S (hereafter referring to the scale measuring individual/social-oriented self) each has four subscales: independence (ISS-I1), self-determination (ISS-I2), competition (ISS-I3), and consistency (ISS-I4); contextual self (ISS-S1), interpersonal relatedness (ISS-S2), self-cultivation (ISS-S3), and social sensitivity (ISS-S4). Cronbach's  $\alpha$ s for the ISS-I/S were .79/.83, .76/.79, .79/.84, and .83/.85 in CS, CA, TS, and TA samples respectively. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for the eight subscales ranged from .67- .79, .65-.72, .64-.79, and .63-.78 in the above four samples.

At the end of the questionnaire, demographic data – age, gender, and marital status – were recorded.

## RESULTS

### TESTING FOR MAINLAND-TAIWAN DIFFERENCES

As previous studies (Lu, 2007a, in press) indicated some gender and age (adults vs. students) differences existed for the two self aspects, as well as other self-related constructs (Lu & Gilmour, 2006; Yang & Lu, 2005), we explored regional differences along with gender and age differences. A full model of 2 (age: adults vs. students)  $\times$  2 (gender: male vs. female)  $\times$  2 (region: mainland vs. Taiwan) ANOVA was conducted. Results are shown in the upper portion of Table 1.

None of the age  $\times$  gender (2-way) or region  $\times$  age  $\times$  gender (3-way) interactions were significant. For ISS-I, there were significant main effects of region, gender, and age, as well as significant interactions of region  $\times$  gender and region  $\times$  age. This pattern for the total I scale generally held across all four subscales. Overall,

TABLE 1  
FULL MODEL ANOVA ON ISS AND ISSb: CONTRASTING REGION, AGE, AND GENDER

ISS version	ISS scales	Region		Gender		Age		Main effect-Region		Main effect-Gender		Main effect-Age		Region × Gender		Region × Age		Age × Gender		Region × Gender		df
		TW	CN	F	M	Adults	Students	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F		
ISS (40-item)	ISS-1	79.97	82.58	79.80	81.95	84.00	79.40	26.37***	3.18**	65.81**	5.14*	15.22***	.39	.75	(1,1690)							
	ISS-11	24.52	24.81	24.69	24.50	25.05	24.41	3.23	7.78*	14.73***	21.97***	5.03*	2.60	4.14	(1,1757)							
	ISS-12	18.90	19.99	18.64	19.98	20.10	18.85	18.11***	12.83***	22.11***	6.48*	2.22	.16	.01	(1,1754)							
	ISS-13	18.29	18.32	17.94	18.76	18.60	18.18	1.22	12.01***	6.39*	.17	10.76***	.40	.02	(1,1759)							
	ISS-14	18.26	19.50	18.62	18.64	20.23	17.94	33.17***	1.55	101.99***	.04	7.43*	.27	.16	(1,1760)							
	ISS-S	89.55	89.16	89.15	89.82	92.10	88.34	.24	1.80	37.47***	26.66***	3.01	1.25	2.83	(1,1701)							
	ISS-S1	24.33	23.58	24.42	23.70	24.02	24.14	20.44	25.66	.68	17.95	.85	.66	3.23	(1,1753)							
	ISS-S2	21.69	23.08	21.73	22.58	23.27	21.60	40.08***	1.01	57.43***	29.52***	5.45*	1.36	.40	(1,1761)							
	ISS-S3	22.74	23.31	22.91	22.92	24.11	22.39	7.85*	4.48*	75.76***	15.11***	2.89	2.63	2.75	(1,1765)							
	ISS-S4	20.82	19.36	20.17	20.66	20.72	20.23	44.33***	3.23	9.29*	2.35	5.73*	.03	2.89	(1,1757)							
ISSb (24-item)	ISSb-1	37.16	39.46	37.20	38.65	40.31	36.80	34.50***	2.76	74.16***	2.35	6.51*	.09	.00	(1,1733)							
	ISSb-S	64.99	65.08	65.00	65.05	67.00	64.18	.01	4.38*	38.90***	25.69***	1.82	3.10	4.01*	(1,1724)							

Notes: (1) \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

(2) ISS-11 = independence, ISS-12 = self-determination, ISS-13 = competition, ISS-14 = consistency, ISS-S1 = contextual self, ISS-S2 = interpersonal relatedness, ISS-S3 = self-cultivation, ISS-S4 = social sensitivity

mainland Chinese – males and adults – scored higher on ISS-I and its subscales. For ISS-S, there was a significant main effect of age and a significant interaction of region  $\times$  gender. This pattern for the total S scale generally held across three out of four subscales; ISS-S1 (contextual self) was the exception. Overall, adults scored higher on ISS-S and its three subscales.

We used scores on the ISS-I and ISS-S to illustrate the nature of significant interactions. While there was no gender difference in the mainland, Taiwanese males scored significantly higher than did females on ISS-I (region  $\times$  gender). Conversely, while there was no age difference in Taiwan, mainland adults scored significantly higher than did their student counterparts on ISS-I (region  $\times$  age). As for ISS-S, the pattern of gender difference was a cross-over in mainland and Taiwan: Taiwanese males scored higher on social-oriented self, whereas in mainland China females scored higher (region  $\times$  gender).

As our focal interest was mainland-Taiwan differences, a series of independent sample *t* tests was conducted comparing means of pooled mainland Chinese (CN = CS + CA,  $N = 542$ ) with those of pooled Taiwanese (TW = TS + TA,  $N = 1258$ ). Please refer to Table 1 for group means on ISS scales. Significant results were: (1) mainland Chinese scored higher than did Taiwanese on ISS-I ( $t(848) = 4.13, p < .001$ ), ISS-I2 ( $t(921) = 4.54, p < .001$ ), and ISS-I4 ( $t(964) = 5.13, p < .001$ ); (2) mainland Chinese scored higher than did Taiwanese on ISS-S2 ( $t(1773) = 6.54, p < .001$ ), and ISS-S3 ( $t(896) = 2.72, p < .05$ ); (3) Taiwanese scored higher than did mainland Chinese on ISS-S1 ( $t(757) = 3.57, p < .01$ ), and ISS-S4 ( $t(872) = 7.16, p < .001$ ). It is interesting to note that there was no overall difference on ISS-S between the two regions.

### CONSTRUCTING A BRIEF ISS

Exploratory factor analysis was conducted separately for Taiwanese adults (who were not tested separately before, TA:  $N = 374$ ) and pooled mainland Chinese (CN:  $N = 542$ ). As we intended to form a brief scale including the most important – but not necessarily all – of the aspects of the self constructs, a two-factor structure (individual vs. social orientation) was extracted in each sample, composed by exactly the same 24 high-loading items. Ten items measuring the individual-oriented self were retained (drawn from ISS-I2 and ISS-I4) and 14 items measuring the social-oriented self (drawn from all four ISS-S subscales). Because of the fewer items, it is advisable to use only total scores of individual and social orientation on the brief ISS version (hereafter ISSb-I and ISSb-S). These final items can be obtained from the authors on request. Similarly to what was found with the 40-item version (Lu, 2007a, in press), ISSb-I and ISSb-S were weakly correlated (CN:  $r = .28, p < .001$ ; TA:  $r = .36, p < .001$ ), indicating that the two self-aspects are discernable constructs. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for the ISSb-I was .81/.79 (TA/CN) and .83/.81 (TA/CN) for the ISSb-S.

Confirmatory factor analysis was then conducted separately for TA and CN samples. With 24 items as observed variables, a one-factor model was compared with the hypothesized two-factor (bicultural) model, using AMOS 5.0. For the mainland Chinese, results showed that all 24 items had highly significant factor loadings to their designated latent variables (I or S factor), and the overall fit of the two-factor model was marginally satisfactory ( $\chi^2 = 965.09$ ,  $df = 251$ ,  $p < .001$ , GFI = .86, RMR = .13). Nonetheless, this model was significantly superior to the one-factor model ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 654.43$ ,  $\Delta df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Results were very similar for Taiwanese adults.

We also re-ran the  $2 \times 2 \times 2$  ANOVA using ISSb scales, and results are incorporated in the lower portion of Table 1. As can be seen, findings generally mirrored those of the 40-item version.

Taken together, the reliability of ISSb scales was acceptable, and the underlying bicultural model was replicated in CFA. They also produced similar patterns of differences across gender, age, and region. Thus, validity of the brief ISS (24-item version) was supported.

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was two-fold. First, we intended to extend the bicultural self model to mainland Chinese, and further explore possible differences in self views between PRC and Taiwan. Second, we attempted to construct a brief ISS version for the convenience of future use.

On the first front, with our large mainland Chinese samples involving both university students and community adults, a degree of support was gained for the bicultural self model and the ISS scale that measures its main components. The two-factor structure of the bicultural self model was reproduced. Scale reliability was established for the ISS and ISSb. Additional evidence of construct validity was obtained when similar patterns of relations between scores of ISS, a social judgment task and work behaviors (Lu, 2007b) were found in PRC and Taiwan. We thus suggest that independence, self-determination, competition, and consistency are “essential” elements of the individual-oriented self, and contextual self, interpersonal relatedness, self-cultivation, and social sensitivity are “essential” elements of the social-oriented self, and are equally applicable to mainland Chinese as well as Taiwanese.

This is what we expected: the underlying psychological structures of self views should hold for both mainland Chinese and Taiwanese, resulting from their shared cultural tradition, corroborating previous findings (Yang & Lu, 2005). Furthermore, the two groups were not different in overall endorsement on social-oriented self. Nonetheless, we did find some quantitative differences between the two regions: mainland Chinese endorsed more strongly on the

individual-oriented self than did Taiwanese. There is a growing body of literature suggesting that mainland Chinese are the most “modern” of the Chinese groups, and Taiwanese Chinese perhaps the least (Leung & Bond, 2004; Lu & Gilmour, 2004). Our findings add to the observation that mainland Chinese are catching up quickly with their newly encountered Western influence. This psychological modernizing trend has a rather positive connotation in the rapidly modernizing PRC. It was further found that “being a modernist” was more advantageous for subjective well-being for mainland Chinese than Taiwanese (Lu, 2006). Such regional differences need to be understood in the larger cultural milieus of each subculture in Greater China.

On the second front, we successfully shortened the 40-item ISS to 24 items. This brief version still retained good reliability, validity, and reproduced relevant results as did its forerunner. As a single instrument capturing all the important self-aspects, ISS and ISSb can not only serve to unify all related concepts and research, it also has the convenience and economy necessary for self-related research.

To conclude, we now have sufficient support to claim that contemporary Chinese people may indeed use two separate ways of construing the self, individual-oriented and social-oriented, thus possessing a bicultural self. Both versions of ISS have realized their potential to be conglomerations of the individual-oriented versus social-oriented self dichotomy, and warrant use in future studies.

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