



CHAPTER I

Studies of the self identity of an individual have been done in many ways; and many techniques have been used.

Trent in his study of Puerto Rican subjects in the United States found that those subjects experienced identity conflict because of the collision between two cultures. He used a descriptive check list as a tool of identity measurement.¹⁶

To assess an individual's identity, Ross used the data obtained from TAT's (Thematic Apperception Test) in his study, "Ego Identity and the Social order, a Psychological Analysis of Six Indonesians." He found that ego identity was impaired when the subject had difficulties in dealing with his social order such as the norms and values of his social group, and the subject's status in the group. The difficulties could have arisen from these factors:- The subject's alienation from his own group, and the rejection the subject experienced from his own group.¹⁷

Derbyshire and Brody used a modified Bogardus Social Distance Scale in their study of Negro College students. They found that these students perceived other ethnics as being significantly different from themselves. And the students generally appeared uncertain as to what constituted the entity "Negro".

¹⁶R.D.Trent, "Economic Development and Identity Conflict in Puerto Rican", Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1965, 65 (2), 293 - 310.

¹⁷Alan E. Ross, "Ego Identity and Social Orders: Psychological Analysis of Six Indonesians", Psychological Monographs, 1962, 76 (23).

They also suggested that a revision of the Bogardus Social Distance Scale could be used as a tool for examining the concept of identity.¹⁸

In this present study, the modified Bogardus Social Distance Scale is also employed as the instrument for studying the identity of the subjects.

The justification for the use of Social Distance Scales as the tool for assessing the individual's identity will be dealt with later on. But let us discuss the theoretical framework of the nature of identity first. The construct of "ego identity" was developed by Erickson. He proposed that ego-identity was the product of interplay between the child and his social environment.¹⁹

Once a child was born, he was ascribed a membership of one specific group which was usually one of his parents'. Through stable interaction with the members of the group the child developed a secure identity of himself (That is, he had a clear answer to the question "Who and what am I?") and at the same time acquired norms and values of his group. However, when the child grew up he might have aspired to belong to out-group norms and

¹⁸R.L. Derbyshire and E. Brody, "Social Distance and Identity Conflict in Negro College Students", Sociology and Social Research, 1964, 48 (3), 301 - 314.

¹⁹Erickson E. Erickson, Childhood and Society (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1950)

values and wanted to be accepted by the group he aspired to belong to. At this point, it would be very useful to introduce the reference group theory, because it distinguished two types of group to which the individual belongs. One is his membership group (or sometimes called an ingroup) - a group which he is alleged to belong to. The other is his reference group - the group which he aspires to belong to.

Usually, for most people, their membership group and reference group are identical.²⁰ But it is also not uncommon to find persons whose membership group and reference group are different. The question then arises, why do some individuals aspire to belong to the group of which they are not yet members?

Research on the individual's orientation to an out-group's values has rarely been done, though much has been done on the study of his conformity to his ingroup's norms.

The American Soldier,²¹ a study which Merton has discussed in his book Social Theory and Social Structure, as the most important contribution to the reference group theory, suggested that, the variables correlated with the individual's changes of his reference groups are: the rate of social mobility in the relatively open social structure of the groups which the individual aspires to belong to; and the existing status of the individual

²⁰Gordon W. Allport, The Nature of Prejudice (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1958).

²¹S.A. Stouffer et al., The American Soldier: Adjustment During the Army Life, Studies in Social Psychology in World War I (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1949).

in his ingroup.

The study in The American Soldier revealed that the soldiers who were heading for promotion were showing conformity not with the norms of his enlisted group but with the official military mores.

This type of behavior, which Merton called the "Anticipated Socialization" does in fact help those soldiers in getting promotion.

However, this "anticipated socialization" (or mobility) will be functional for the individuals only within a relatively open social structure providing for mobility. In an open social system, the individuals who aspire to belong to it and adopt its norms are more likely to be accepted, and they find it easier to adjust after being accepted by the new group.

But if the social structure of the new reference group is rigid, then the individual aspiration to belong to the group will be dysfunctional because he is not admitted to the group. Since the individual also repudiates his ingroup values and is denied the membership of the groups he aspires to, the individual becomes a marginal man, standing at the edge of two groups but belonging to neither.²²

Since not all members of the ingroup orientate themselves positively to the values and norms of the non-membership group,

²²Robert K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (United States: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963)

who are the people who are most likely to do so? It is suggested that the nominal and peripheral group members are more ready to accept the outgroup's values.²³ The nominal group member is the one who actually ceased to interact with the other members of the group but is still perceived by outsiders as a group member. The peripheral group member is the one who has very little or remote relationship with the other members in the group. Both of them rarely conform to the group's norms and their behavior is hardly controlled by the group.

The reference group theory is most significant vis a vis the phenomenon of assimilation, since assimilation is the process in which there is reference to the culture of non-membership groups, ...²⁴

But, according to Milton, assimilation is a "blanket term" covering a complex of subprocesses.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid. p. 297

Here is the summary of subprocesses suggested by Milton.²⁵

Subprocess of condition	Type or stage of assimilation	Special term
Change of cultural patterns to those of host society	Cultural or behavioral assimilation	Acculturation
Large scale entrance into cliques, clubs and institutions of host society, on primary level.	Structural assimilation.	----
Large scale intermarriage	Marital assimilation.	Amalgamation
Development of sense of peoplehood based exclusively on host society.	Indentification assimilation	----
Absence of prejudice	Attitude of receptional assimilation	----
Absence of discrimination.	Behavioral receptional assimilation.	----
Absence of value and power conflict.	Civic assimilation.	----
*		

He put forward the following theoretical proposition:-

Cultural assimilation, or acculturation, is likely to be the first of the types of assimilation to occur when a minority group arrives on the scene; and cultural assimilation, or acculturation of the

²⁵M.G. Milton, Assimilation in American Life (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964) p. 71.

* This table is reproduced from Milton's. (see footnote No.25)

minority group may take place even when none of the other types of assimilation occur simultaneously or later, and this condition of "acculturation only" may continue indefinitely.²⁶

Milton's proposition can be viewed in a reference group theory framework as follows: the immigrants aspire to belong to the majority group and adopt its values and mode of behavior. However, the complete assimilation of the immigrants depends upon the social structure of the majority society. That is, if the majority society has a rigid structure then it would not absorb the immigrants into its society. In this case the immigrants will be in a marginal position. On the contrary, if the majority society is relatively open and provides a great deal of mobility, then the immigrants are more likely to be accepted into the institutions of the host society, and complete assimilation occurs. Moreover, Milton also stated "Once structural assimilation has occurred ... all of the other types of assimilation will naturally follow".²⁷ For Milton, structural assimilation seems to be the "key stone of the arch of assimilation".

Now, let us examine the implication of the foregoing discussions on the assimilation of the Chinese minority group in Thailand.

Thailand, from a sociologist's point of view, is considered to be a "loosely structured social system".²⁸ Thailand as appeared

²⁶ Ibid.; p. 73

²⁷ Ibid.;

²⁸ Embree, "Thailand a Loosely Structured Social System", American Anthropologist, 1952, 181 - 193.

to the observer, is the society which lacks regularity, discipline and regimentation. Social mobility is great and can be achieved through wealth and education. Dr. Phillip in his book Thai Peasant Personality mentioned that the incident of a village boy becoming a navy admiral is not considered unusual or surprising at all.²⁹

And this mobility is not limited only to the Thai; the Chinese in Thailand also enjoy this freedom, under only one condition - they must behave in a Thai way. Therefore, a Chinese who adopts Thai names and speaks Thai fluently is completely accepted into Thai society, intermarriage with a Thai is not difficult. "Language and poverty seem to have been the only barriers to intermarriage with Thai women."³⁰ Chinese can overcome these barriers within a few years, and marry a Thai woman.

And the more they become Thai oriented the less they are discriminated against. The less they are discriminated against, the greater the possibility of their social mobility which in turn spurs their speed of assimilation. It seems that the only prerequisite for entry into Thai society is the acceptance of Thai ways of life and patterns of behavior. And if it is accompanied by wealth and business success, entering into Thai elite society is not difficult at all. From the discussion of the Thai

²⁹ Herbert P. Phillips, Thai Peasant Personality (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1965).

³⁰ Skinner, (1957) op cit.; p. 127.

social system above, it is not surprising why Thailand is considered to be far more successful than other Southeast Asian countries in assimilating her Chinese aliens, especially the second-generations.

Among the various groups in the Chinese community, the second-generation Chinese is the most crucial group in the study of the Chinese assimilation in Thailand. They are the people who show drastic changes from Chinese culture to Thai culture. A complete assimilation can take place only from the second-generation downwards. The first generation's enculturation in their hometown in China was still strong. So it is almost impossible for them to lose all Chinese characteristics. But the second-generation were born in Thailand and grew up under (more or less) some Thai influence. Aside from their physical distinction, they can be completely Thai, if they choose to be. But the individual's choice varies and some second-generation may choose to remain Chinese. Or they themselves may not choose, but being obliged by their parents to remain Chinese. Therefore in the second-generation Chinese one sees a great variety of degrees of assimilation; some of them may be indistinguishable from the Thai. But the great majority seems to lie somewhere between the Chinese and Thai poles.

The third and fourth generation are usually assimilated until it is almost impossible to single them out from the Thai. And usually if they do not reveal their Chinese background, nobody will notice that they are Chinese. Therefore, in the present

007035

study, the assimilation of second-generation Chinese is of greatest interest.

Furthermore, there are other reasons why the second-generation Chinese were selected as subjects in this study. First, since grand scale immigration has not been possible since 1949, the future of the Chinese community depends upon the outlook of the second-generation. Second, the second-generation Chinese, normally hold Thai citizenship and have been exposed to social intercourse with the Thai more than the first generation. Therefore, they are the group which is likely to identify themselves with Thai society. If this group is found to be unassimilated, then the first generation is not likely to be assimilated at all. Third, they are the group in the transition in which the changing process is more scrutable. And the rate of their assimilation varies from individual to individual. So, it is possible to make comparisons of many groups the second-generation according to their degree of Thainess or Chineseness.

The adolescent samples are selected out of the second-generation population. This is because, in the adolescent period changes from Chinese culture to Thai culture are taking place. In older samples, the assimilation may have been completed to the point where the present scales are not refined enough to separate the Chinese from the Thai. Besides, older subjects might be so sophisticated that they detect the purpose of the study, and under some defense operation, fake the answer.

Now, let us return to the question we previously raised. How can we know that a second-generation Chinese, who holds a Thai citizenship, adopts Thai culture and speaks Thai fluently, regards himself as a Thai or a Chinese? What will be the criteria for judging that such an individual belongs to the Thai or the Chinese society?

As we have discussed before, the criteria of active membership of a group are the individual's stable interaction with the group, acceptance of the group's norms and values, and the aspiration to belong to it.

The Chinese in Thailand, according to Coughlin,³¹ interact with the Thais, adopt the Thai ways of life, but do not aspire to belong to Thai society.

However, from a psychological point of view, it is not likely that these discrepancies between behavior patterns and self image or identity could persist for a long period of time. Usually one's behavior patterns are always congruent with one's concept about oneself. If discrepancies arise, the individual is in an unbalanced state, and is motivated to change either or both cognitions so that they are congruent again.³² The studies of the immigrants in Israel found that the individual's motive for belonging to a new reference group was correlated with the individual's adoption of the values and norms of that group.³³ With these

³¹Coughlin, op cit.

³²David Krech, Richard S. Crutchfield, and E.L. Ballachy, Individual in Society (New York: McGraw-Hill Co., 1962)

³³S.M. Eisenstadt, "Reference Group Behavior and Social Intergretation", American Sociological Review, 1954, 19, 175 - 185, as cited in R.K. Merton, op cit.; p. 305.

theoretical frameworks, together with the fact that the Thai social structure is relatively open and that many of the second-generation Chinese who adopt Thai culture are nominal or peripheral members of the Chinese society, the following hypothesis was set up:

The ethnic Chinese who adopt Thai culture will also identify themselves psychologically with Thai society.

To test this hypothesis, scales which could measure these two variables had to be developed. Therefore, a cultural scale was constructed to measure the degree of Thainess and Chineseness of each individual under the study.

The Social Distance Scale which was originally developed by Bogardus and later modified by Triandis³⁴ was used in the present study to measure the degree of one's psychological identification with a reference group.

The social distance is the distance which the individual perceives to exist between himself and the other persons. He can indicate it

by means of endorsement of certain statements. Minimal social distance would include endorsement of statement, 'I would like him as an intimate friend'. Progressively larger distances are implied by endorsement of 'I would like to go

³⁴ Harry C. Triandis, and Liegh Minturn Triandis, "Race, Social Class, Religion and Nationality as Determinants of Social Distance", Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 1960, 61 (1), 110 - 118.

dancing with him (her)', 'I would like to take a trip in the same car with him (her)', 'I would exclude him from my neighbourhood', and maximal distance by endorsement of 'I would gladly participate in his lynching'.³⁵

Looking from the interaction point of view, we will see that the least social distance implies the greatest amount of interaction or willingness to interact with that specific person. And the amount of social distance increases as the amount of the interaction decreases. Therefore, when a person is indicating his social distance towards another particular person, he is also indicating the amount of interaction he is going to have with that person. And if this be the correct assumption, the person will be expected to have the least social distance with the members of his own group. Or, in other words, the person who considers himself as one of the members of a group, identifies himself as one of the members of a group towards the members of which he indicates the least social distance.

For this reason, though the original Social Distance Scale is traditionally used as the measurement of the individuals' prejudice toward out-group members, the author think that it is also applicable to use the Scale as a measurement of one's identification with a reference group or an ingroup.

That is if an ethnic Chinese psychologically identifies himself as a Thai, he should endorse the least amount of social

³⁵ Harry C. Triandis and Leigh Minturn Triandis, "A Cross-Cultural Study of Social Distance", Psychological Monographs, 1952, 76 (21), p. 1.

distance between himself and the Thai in comparison with the amount of social distance he will endorse to the members of other groups. On the contrary, if he considers himself a Chinese he should also endorse the least social distance to the Chinese.

Combining the measurement of these two variables, the cultural behavior and the psychological identification, a working hypothesis was set up

The ethnic Chinese who score less Chineseness in the Cultural Scale will show less social distance towards the Thai than towards the Chinese.

And to make sure that these low social distances to the Thai are valid indices of the Chinese identification with the Thai society, the two control groups-Chinese and Thai were introduced.

Thus the following sub-hypothesis was made:

If the Social Distance Scale is a valid measure of one's identification with a group, then the Chinese (as defined by the Cultural Scale and ethnic origin) will show least social distance to the Chinese. And by the same principle, the Thai (also as defined by the Cultural Scale and ethnic origin) will also show least social distance to the Thai.