

Quiet Ego and Health: A Growth and Balance Perspective

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Abstract

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Full Text

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Abstract: The quiet ego represents an identity that neither excessively focuses on the self nor on others—an integration with others without losing one's own identity. Developing a quiet ego benefits individuals' physical and mental health, particularly by enhancing subjective well-being, improving self-rated health, and reducing materialistic tendencies. The quiet ego can be promoted through mindfulness and meditation. By summarizing research on the concept of quiet ego, growth and balance perspectives, measurement methods, the impact of quiet ego on mental health, and approaches to its promotion, this paper argues that the quiet ego is essentially the balance and integration of the self

across spatial and temporal dimensions. While considerable research on the quiet ego already exists, future investigations should explore its localization, systematization, development, and promotion as a relatively new field of study.

Keywords: quiet ego; health; balance; growth; promotion

Since psychologist William James initiated the study of the self, this construct has become a central theme in psychological research. The first challenge lies in defining the self. James (1891) pioneered the philosophical distinction between the “I” (subject) and “Me” (object). Subsequent researchers proposed various frameworks, such as actual self versus ideal self (Rogers, 1961), past self, present self, and future self (Parfit, 1971), and individual self, relational self, and collective self (Sedikides & Brewer, 2002). More recently, researchers have introduced a new perspective: the noisy ego versus the quiet ego (Bauer & Wayment, 2008).

Since the mid-to-late twentieth century, rapid economic development and rising material living standards have gradually revealed and intensified selfish, stubborn, and indifferent personality traits. Global political scandals, racial discrimination, trade conflicts—these events at both individual and national levels carry strong self-centered overtones, signaling a shift from historically valued “altruism” to contemporary “egoism.” In other words, self-centered values have become the mainstream ideology in modern society. Against this backdrop, Wayment and Bauer first coined the term “quiet ego” at a conference in 2005, and further elaborated on the concepts of “quiet ego” and “noisy ego,” their impacts, and the development of quiet ego in their 2008 book *Transcending Self-Interest*. Research on the quiet ego has gradually gained attention in psychology over the past decade. This article reviews recent advances in three areas: the concept and measurement of quiet ego, its effects on health, and approaches to its cultivation, while proposing directions for future research.

2.1 Definition of Quiet Ego

Modern society is characterized by self-centeredness and egoism, with individuals aggressively pursuing “first place,” “uniqueness,” and “excellence.” These represent the loud screams of the inner self, ultimately aimed at gaining others’ attention and recognition, surpassing others, and defeating them. This is the “noisy ego.” In contrast, the quiet ego is an identity that neither excessively focuses on the self nor on others, integrating with others without losing one’s own identity (Bauer & Wayment, 2008). Unlike the noisy ego’s extreme self-centeredness and inflation, the quiet ego exhibits less defensiveness toward both self and others, tending toward a balance between self and other considerations and between positive and negative evaluations (Cambell & Buffardi, 2008; Jack, 1991; Lutz-Zois et al., 2013; Wayment, Bauer, et al., 2015). Some researchers have proposed the metaphor of the “wild ego,” suggesting that the quiet ego tames the wild ego into humility and tranquility (Exline, 2008). The wild ego has three characteristics: first, it is undisciplined and unrestricted, lack-

ing boundaries; second, it lacks constancy, being changeable, fluctuating, and ambiguous; and third, it is unconstrained by external factors, disconnected from others, and unconventional. While the wild ego typically motivates people to pursue goals with positive self-related emotions, its excessive pursuit of power and status, filled with desires to dominate others, often leads to interpersonal conflicts.

The quiet ego is both an ideal state of self-development and a process of seeking self-tranquility. No one is born with a quiet ego. The self begins as “noisy,” self-centered, and constantly clamoring for selfish needs. Only with age and continuous growth does the ego gradually mature and quiet down, becoming capable of connecting present actions with future outcomes, transcending self-interest, thinking from others’ perspectives, and identifying with and integrating others and the external world in increasingly broad and profound ways (Bauer, 2008). Emotion researcher Thayer (1996) proposed that calm energy represents the most optimal arousal state, which is closest to the positive psychological quality of vitality (Nix et al., 1999). Many topics in positive psychology—such as forgiveness, gratitude, compassionate love, courage, responsibility, altruism, and tolerance—aim to quiet the ego’s noise and achieve the ideal state of a quiet ego. When this quiet ego state appears stably and persistently across different situations, it becomes an important personality trait.

2.2 Growth and Balance Perspectives on Quiet Ego

The quiet ego understands self and others through two major perspectives: balance and growth. The balance perspective refers to considering and balancing the needs, desires, and viewpoints of both self and others. This perspective reflects the interaction between individual and society. Human nature is the sum total of social relations. Each person is both an independent individual and a member of society, possessing dual attributes of individuality and sociality. We develop our individual attributes by balancing self-identity, and we develop our social attributes by balancing interactions with others to integrate into groups. Although the quiet ego turns down the volume of the self, it is not a silent ego, a suppressed ego, or a “squashed ego.” It does not lose self-identity but appropriately balances attention to self and others, enabling individuals to listen to both internal and external needs, thereby approaching life with a more humane and compassionate attitude (Wayment, Bauer, et al., 2015). Additionally, the balance perspective refers to balancing positive and negative evaluations of self and others. Compared to the quiet ego, the noisy ego excessively seeks positive self-evaluation (Cambell & Buffardi, 2008), while the squashed ego excessively 倾向于 negative self-evaluation (Jack, 1991; Lutz-Zois et al., 2013). The quiet ego helps individuals escape from self-interest-related negative self-worth by promoting self-compassion and cultivating a compassionate self-identity (Wayment et al., 2018). Therefore, the quiet ego also means comprehensive recognition of one’s strengths and weaknesses, accepting and identifying with the authentic self.

The growth perspective refers to individuals' consideration of self and others over time (Wayment, Collier, et al., 2015), reflecting the dynamic development of the self. During development, the noisy ego interferes with the quiet ego in three ways. First, the noisy ego constantly focuses on immediate needs while ignoring or even sacrificing long-term interests. Second, it primarily focuses on the outcomes of current behaviors, especially those related to self-image or social status, rather than the behaviors themselves. Finally, when the noisy ego does attend to long-term goals, it often focuses on increasing personal material wealth or social status rather than intrinsic spiritual growth and progress. The transition from noisy ego to quiet ego is essentially the process of psychosocial maturation. Bauer (2008) suggests that Loevinger's stages of ego development precisely reflect this journey from noisy to quiet ego. These eight stages begin with infants lacking ego, followed by the Impulsive stage of negative dependence, the Self-Protective stage of opportunistic gambling, the Conformist stage of rule-following, the Self-Aware stage of fair rule consideration, the Conscientious stage of following self-evaluation standards, the Individualistic stage of respecting others' standards, the Autonomous stage of understanding interdependence, and the Integrated stage of coordinating broader conflicts (Bauer et al., 2005). Across these stages, ego complexity and psychological maturity continuously increase, enabling the self to focus on others and balance conflicts between self and others, becoming increasingly quiet. At this point, the individual's frame of reference for viewing the self widens in psychosocial space, so self-perspective is not squeezed but becomes increasingly whole. A growing self often implies a vast self-space: cognitively, the self becomes increasingly self-aware; emotionally, the self is firm and confident without excessive worry and defensiveness; and in interactions with others, it becomes increasingly interdependent and capable of empathy.

2.3 Measurement of Quiet Ego

Initially, the quiet ego was considered to have four characteristics: detached awareness, interdependence, compassion, and growth (Bauer & Wayment, 2008). Here, interdependence refers to mutual relationships with others, with understanding others at its core; compassion involves emotions toward self and others, including acceptance, empathy, and the desire to enhance personal or group well-being. Later, they replaced compassion and interdependence with more understandable and measurable perspective-taking and inclusive identity (Wayment, Bauer, et al., 2015). Among the four characteristics, inclusive identity and perspective-taking focus on the ability to connect with and deeply understand others. Inclusive identity is the degree to which one sees oneself as the same as others, shares personal qualities with others, or otherwise incorporates others into one's psychosocial identity. This ability increases the likelihood of cooperation and reduces the likelihood of adopting self-protective stances toward others, though it does not yet include the ability to understand others' viewpoints. Perspective-taking further deepens this capacity, representing the ability to consider issues from others' standpoints and forming the basis of em-

pathy and compassion (Batson et al., 1997; Davis, 1994). Inclusive identity and perspective-taking reflect integrated and differentiated recognition of others, respectively.

Detached awareness and growth present another balance, both emphasizing process over outcome. Detached awareness shares the same connotation as mindfulness (Brown & Ryan, 2003), referring to a participatory, non-defensive attentional tendency toward present circumstances. Individuals focus on the present moment, accepting positive or negative interpretations without considering egoistic judgments about what one should do or what the moment should become. This creates psychological space for the quiet ego without energy-consuming defenses and cognitive control, free of any evaluation. Growth refers to subjective attention to personal development, which directs focus from the present toward long-term, humane development, emphasizing process over outcome and focusing on future growth. Detached awareness attends to the present moment without considering the future, while growth attends to long-term goals in the present, with countless present moments forming a river of growth.

Given the abstract nature of the quiet ego concept, current research primarily assesses quiet ego by evaluating its characteristics. Wayment and colleagues integrated these four characteristics of quiet ego with existing scale items and established the QES five-point scale (Quiet Ego Scale) through factor analysis, involving assessment of 14 related items (Wayment, Bauer, et al., 2015). Research with college student samples indicates that the QES scale significantly correlates with four of the Big Five personality traits (extraversion, openness, conscientiousness, and agreeableness) as well as humility, and also correlates with numerous positive psychological qualities including self-compassion, ability to savor daily experiences, life satisfaction, subjective well-being, psychological resilience, autonomy needs, self-transcendence, self-esteem, and meaning. This provides support for the quiet ego construct, demonstrating the questionnaire's good structural validity and application value. Additionally, Chinese scholars have explored the applicability of the QES scale in Chinese cultural contexts (刘国华, 2018; 张舒, 2017). Zhang's (2017) research found that the inclusive identity dimension had poor reliability and validity, thus replacing it with forgiveness, which showed good reliability and validity in college student populations. Liu's (2018) research indicated that the quiet ego questionnaire has good reliability and validity in China and is suitable for Chinese cultural contexts.

3 Quiet Ego and Health

Current research demonstrates that quiet ego is closely related to individuals' physical and mental health, benefiting various aspects of development. For example, individuals with quiet ego exhibit higher subjective well-being, lower death anxiety, and greater post-traumatic growth; they report better subjective physical health and show lower materialistic tendencies.

3.1 Enhancing Subjective Well-Being

Research indicates that quiet ego helps enhance subjective well-being, alleviate stress, and reduce anxiety. When Wayment, Bauer, and colleagues (2015) revised the Quiet Ego Scale, they found that quiet ego positively correlated with subjective well-being. Collier and Wayment (2018) conducted an online survey of 465 college students examining relationships among participation in maker activities, quiet ego, and subjective well-being. These maker activities ranged from home arts and crafts to various DIY projects. The researchers investigated time spent on these activities, reasons for participation, and short-term and long-term benefits. Results showed that college students' primary motivations for participating in maker activities were emotional restoration, socializing with friends, and enhancing "present-moment focus." Most importantly, quiet ego positively correlated with subjective well-being, and indirectly promoted subjective well-being by increasing arousal levels during maker activities. Collier and Wayment (2019) also conducted an intervention study demonstrating that quiet ego cognitive intervention and drawing creation intervention helped restore negative emotions. The experiment first asked participants to write about a strongly angry or disturbing experience for 10 minutes. Participants were then randomly assigned to four groups based on whether they received quiet ego intervention and whether they engaged in growth-oriented drawing creation, and created artwork for 15 minutes. Results showed that participants receiving both quiet ego contemplation and growth-oriented drawing intervention reported the highest positive emotions, with quiet ego intervention and drawing creation influencing positive emotions by promoting emotional flow and increasing arousal levels.

Research has also revealed mechanisms underlying quiet ego's impact on well-being. One study (Wayment et al., 2016) examined relationships among quiet ego, self-control, self-compassion, perceived stress, and life satisfaction in first-year college students. Results showed that quiet ego indirectly influenced perceived stress through direct effects on self-control and self-compassion, which in turn affected life satisfaction. This suggests that first-year students with quiet ego characteristics tend toward self-compassion in interpersonal interactions, exhibit stronger self-control, experience lower stress levels, and have higher life satisfaction. These results were confirmed across two samples of first-year students. Another study (Wayment & Bauer, 2017) examined relationships among quiet ego, balance and growth values, and well-being in 1,117 college students. Balance values were defined as the ratio of compassionate goals to self-image goals, while growth values included experiential and reflective growth values. Results showed that quiet ego was closely related to compassionate and growth goals, and indirectly influenced well-being through balance and growth values.

Research has also explored quiet ego's role in alleviating death anxiety. Humility's core features include accurate assessment of self-characteristics, ability to acknowledge limitations, and self-forgetfulness (Tangney, 2002). These features align completely with quiet ego's emphasis on reducing self-centeredness and bal-

ancing positive and negative self-evaluations. Therefore, humility is a personality trait highly related to quiet ego (Kesebir, 2014). Kesebir (2014) conducted a series of studies demonstrating humility's buffering effect on death anxiety. The research primed death anxiety by asking participants to select three online images related to death. Results showed that individuals with lower self-reported humility were more likely to use moral disengagement to buffer death anxiety when facing mortality reminders, whereas those with higher humility responded differently—death reminders made them want to adhere to universal values and act according to moral norms. Additionally, after death anxiety priming, control group participants who did not write about humble experiences showed impaired self-control and were more susceptible to external temptations compared to experimental group participants who wrote about humble experiences. These results indicate that humility, as a low-self state, plays a protective role in mortality salience contexts. Therefore, a quiet, humble ego can buffer death anxiety, with quiet ego's accompanying self-transcendence providing stronger and healthier anxiety buffering than traditional self-enhancement.

Furthermore, research has found that quiet ego can promote post-traumatic growth. Wayment, Al-Kire, and colleagues (2019) investigated factors influencing post-traumatic growth in mothers of children with autism spectrum disorder under stressful life circumstances. Results showed that quiet ego effectively enhanced individuals' post-traumatic growth levels, helping them derive growth and meaning from adversity.

3.2 Improving Self-Rated Health

Individuals' subjective assessment of their own health is an important indicator of overall health status, proven to be related to mortality and morbidity rates and considered a reliable reflection of physical health (Barger, 2016). Research on specific populations indicates that quiet ego significantly correlates with self-rated health. For example, Wayment and colleagues (2011) explored relationships among mindfulness, quiet ego, and self-rated health. They conducted a six-month web-based follow-up survey of 117 Buddhist practitioners in the United States with an average of 11 years of practice. Quiet ego included six aspects: altruism, wisdom, sense of interdependence, anger and verbal aggression, negative affect, and need for structure. Results showed that practitioners who spent more time per week and had longer overall practice years exhibited more mindfulness traits, with high-level mindfulness being an important predictor of quiet ego, which in turn indirectly influenced self-rated health.

Research has also examined quiet ego's positive effects on healthcare workers' health. Wayment, Huffman, and colleagues (2019) investigated quiet ego's impact on compassion fatigue, self-rated health, and perceived stress among medical staff. The study was conducted in hospital-based workshops, where employees were introduced to the quiet ego concept and how to promote ego quieting in work and non-work environments through four seminars. Participants' quiet ego, compassion fatigue, self-rated health, and perceived stress

were measured at the beginning and end of the workshops. Results showed that over eight weeks, medical staff's quiet ego increased while compassion fatigue and perceived stress significantly decreased; quiet ego significantly positively correlated with self-rated health, which improved over time.

Research has also found quiet ego positively correlates with self-rated health among unemployed populations. Wayment, Huffinan, and Irving (2018) recruited 173 unemployed individuals from employment centers during the peak of the 2010 economic recession, measuring their quiet ego characteristics, self-compassion, post-traumatic growth, and self-rated health on-site. Results showed that quiet ego was associated with post-traumatic growth, self-compassion, and better self-rated health, with quiet ego indirectly influencing health through self-compassion. This study also found positive effects of quiet ego on self-rated health in a sample of 60 employed individuals.

3.3 Reducing Materialistic Tendencies

In modern urban society's ubiquitous consumer culture, the acquisition of material goods is closely tied to social status, personal development, and economic achievement, leading more people to believe that money and material possessions are the primary paths to fame and happiness. Materialists are individuals preoccupied with, desiring, and emphasizing material goods and money while neglecting other matters (Garoarsdittor et al., 2008). Extensive research shows that materialists experience lower well-being (Burroughs & Rindfleisch, 2002). Not only those with materialistic personality traits, but ordinary people can be triggered by situational cues—such as viewing desirable consumer products or being reminded that a computer task involves consumption—to adopt materialistic mindsets (Bauer et al., 2012).

Recent research has found quiet ego relates to lower materialism. Watson (2018) surveyed 423 college students and found that quiet ego significantly negatively correlated with materialism, with materialism indirectly influencing well-being through quiet ego. The study found that materialists fear compassion for others and compassion from others, with materialism also indirectly affecting well-being through self-compassion. Therefore, the author proposed that promoting quiet ego is an effective way to reduce individuals' materialistic tendencies.

Karanika and Hogg (2016) interviewed 35 Greek participants experiencing lower consumption levels due to financial difficulties. Results showed that compared to most consumers' self-improvement pursuits, this group pursued self-compassion more, using it to prevent upward social comparison and derive positive emotional experiences while reducing stress. Therefore, self-compassion within quiet ego helps reduce individuals' materialistic tendencies. The self-perspective in materialism research is receiving increasing attention (周静 & 谢天, 2019). For example, materialism's self-escape theory suggests that materialism originates from failing to achieve desired wealth, power, and prestige, leading to lower self-evaluation and poor self-feelings. To escape these negative cognitions and feelings, indi-

viduals engage in various irrational behaviors (Donnelly et al., 2016). These manifestations are precisely characteristics of the noisy ego: equating the self with external material possessions and using them to evaluate the self. The instability and comparability of external material possessions prevent the self from becoming stable and quiet. The development and promotion of quiet ego help individuals escape negative effects associated with excessive self-interest (Wayment, Huffman, & Irving, 2018), thereby reducing materialistic, competitive, and self-centered tendencies while enabling positive emotional experiences.

4 Promotion of Quiet Ego

Quiet ego contributes to individuals' physical and mental health. However, as previously noted, no one is born with a quiet ego; it is a continuous developmental process that can be enhanced and promoted through various methods. Previous research has primarily explored the positive roles of mindfulness and meditation in promoting ego quieting.

4.1 Cognitive Intervention for Quiet Ego

Quiet ego is both a measurable psychological state and a manipulable variable in empirical research. Wayment, Collier, and colleagues (2015) designed a brief cognitive intervention based on quiet ego's 内涵: Quiet Ego Contemplation. The intervention material was a 15-minute audio describing quiet ego's four core characteristics—detached awareness, interdependence, compassion, and growth—and guiding participants to reflect on what these characteristics meant to them. The researchers randomly assigned 32 college students to three experimental groups: quiet ego contemplation, quiet ego contemplation with virtual reality scene experience, and control group. The quiet ego contemplation with scene group experienced natural park scenes through virtual reality devices, while the control group read *National Geographic* magazine. Results showed that after quiet ego contemplation intervention, participants' self-reported quiet ego characteristics increased, oxidative stress levels decreased, and focus improved, while the other two groups showed no significant improvements. The virtual reality condition even produced opposite results, possibly because visual stimuli in the VR scene distracted participants, rendering the quiet ego contemplation ineffective.

Quiet ego contemplation has been applied in subsequent research (Collier et al., 2016; Collier & Wayment, 2019), typically adapted to specific application contexts. For example, Wayment, Huffman, and colleagues (2019) guided health-care workers in quiet ego-related thinking and discussion through workshop formats, teaching them how to implement and apply quiet ego in actual work and life situations. Results showed that participants' self-reported health levels improved after intervention.

Beyond workshop formats, quiet ego cognitive intervention can be applied in groups. Researchers used qualitative methods to explore characteristics and trig-

gers of quiet ego group activities in Romanian and Japanese cultural contexts (Gherghel et al., 2018). After reading a passage describing “self-transcendence,” participants recalled their experiences of quiet ego in group activities and completed questionnaires about cognitive, emotional, and behavioral characteristics during these activities and potential triggers. Results showed that while participants’ experiences had some unique cultural features, their descriptions reflected quiet ego characteristics across both cultures. Group activities that induced quiet ego shared similarities in four aspects: high individual acceptance, consistent team atmosphere, attractive activity themes, and relaxed, pleasant external environments. Participants all experienced increased intimacy, relaxation, and self-development. This demonstrates the positive significance of group activities in reducing self-focus and promoting connections with others, offering important insights for future community governance applications.

4.2 Mindfulness and Meditation

Mindfulness is similar to the detached awareness component of quiet ego and can therefore promote quiet ego development. While few studies have simultaneously intervened on all four aspects of quiet ego, relevant empirical research shows that mindfulness and meditation training can enhance compassion, one of quiet ego’s four characteristics.

Mindfulness training can reduce defensiveness, increase compassion and understanding for others, and thereby promote quiet ego. Similar to Buddhist meditation, mindfulness focuses attention in a present-centered, non-judgmental way (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). When individuals view someone as “other” or different from themselves, their defensiveness often increases and aggressive behavior becomes more likely (Hanlon, 2006). Extensive research confirms that mindfulness, as an intervention, can effectively reduce individuals’ aggression and violence (Gillions et al., 2019). As a state that can be cultivated and strengthened, quiet ego can be further enhanced through mindfulness training (Bauer & Wayment, 2008). In a study on mindfulness and aggression in law enforcement officers (Ribeiro et al., 2019), researchers randomly assigned participants to mindfulness training or no-intervention control groups. Twenty-four officers in the mindfulness group underwent eight weeks of mindfulness-based psychological resilience training, including lectures and practical exercises. Practical components included body scans to enhance bodily awareness, sitting and walking meditation, gentle yoga mindful movements, and group discussions. Researchers tracked participants’ practice data using devices and self-reports, categorizing practice levels as low, medium, or high, and measured aggression before and after training. Results showed that both the frequency and duration of mindfulness practice significantly correlated with reduced aggression among these officers.

Another study on meditation and compassion (Condon et al., 2013) randomly assigned 39 participants to meditation or control groups, with the meditation group undergoing eight weeks of meditation training. Those in the meditation group were further randomly assigned to mindfulness meditation or compassion

meditation subgroups. Both interventions taught focus and calming techniques, while the compassion meditation condition added discussions about compassion for others' suffering. After training, researchers arranged for participants to enter the laboratory sequentially and observed whether they would offer their seat to an experimenter posing as a "sufferer" to alleviate their distress. Results showed that both meditation groups were more likely to offer their seat compared to the control group, indicating that meditation increases individuals' sense of connection and empathy with others. During meditation, individuals typically accept internal and external events with an open, receptive mind, making them less susceptible to self-centered biases and enabling more objective responses. This reduces defensiveness toward self and external world, minimizing various forms of noise.

Mindfulness also enables individuals to become aware of their own suffering and generate more self-compassion. Birnie and colleagues' (2010) research supports this: when consciousness is firmly rooted in mindful attention—or what is happening in the present moment—individuals suffering distress will more strongly anticipate care and comfort, thereby initiating self-compassion. Short-term meditation practice based on mindfulness has also been shown to effectively increase self-compassion levels among caregivers (Hevezi, 2016). In summary, mindfulness and meditation are important pathways to promoting quiet ego. While a defensive mindset provides highly adaptive value for protecting the organism in hostile and dangerous situations, mindfulness can prompt individuals to more flexibly and constructively choose values, goals, and activities from an open perspective with more possibilities (Hayes, 2002).

5 Summary and Outlook

By summarizing research on the concept of quiet ego, growth and balance perspectives, measurement methods, quiet ego's impact on mental health, and approaches to its promotion, we propose that quiet ego is essentially the balance and integration of self across spatial and temporal dimensions. First, the temporal dimension is an important perspective in self research. For example, the self can be divided into past self, present self, and future self (Parfit, 1971; Welch-Ross, 2001). The degree to which individuals perceive their past, present, and future selves as an integrated whole across time is called self-continuity (Chandler et al., 2003). Past experiences and future imagination both influence individuals' current psychology and behavior, becoming part of self-identity (刘云芝 et al., 2018). Quiet ego's growth perspective emphasizes acceptance and identification of the present self while directing attention toward future development and growth. Whether past, present, or future, quiet ego's non-defensive identification of self reflects self-continuity across the temporal dimension. Second, the balance between self and others in quiet ego reflects the balance between self and external world in the spatial dimension—neither excessively focusing on self nor others, which resonates with China's "Doctrine of the Mean." Quiet ego embodies the 中庸思维 principle of "holding both ends and balancing them,"

appropriately balancing the inner self-world and external world. The spatial dimension is also an important perspective in self research. For example, research distinguishes between independent self and interdependent self, with interdependent self further divided into relational self and collective self (Sedikides & Brewer, 2001). Similar to interdependent self, quiet ego emphasizes individuals' interdependence with others, emphasizing that individuals can both identify with self and understand others from their perspectives, constructing a balance between personal and collective rationality. In summary, while considerable research on quiet ego already exists, as a relatively new field, future investigations should explore its localization, systematization, and development and promotion.

5.1 Quiet Ego Concept Needs Localization

The quiet ego concept was proposed by Wayment and Bauer based on American individualistic culture. American society emphasizes personal competitiveness and status, highlighting distinction and independence from others, reflecting an individualistic cultural orientation (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). This culture values individualism, focusing on and indulging in “self-centeredness,” “narcissism,” and “unrestrained egoism,” which damages physical and mental health, lowers self-esteem, creates interpersonal distrust, and causes social disharmony. Therefore, there is an urgent need to quell the flourishing “egoism” trend, lower the volume of self, and enable integration of others into one's self-world (Bauer & Wayment, 2008). Consequently, in quiet ego measurement, the two dimensions of detached awareness and growth focus on present-centered and future-oriented attention, while inclusive identity and perspective-taking focus on recognizing sameness with others and willingness to consider issues from others' perspectives. All four dimensions emphasize how to detach from self-centeredness and transcend the self. However, in Eastern collectivist cultures like China, the self typically includes others and is interdependent. The distinction between self and others is less clear, people prioritize collective goals over personal goals, and well-adjusted, mature individuals are typically skilled at maintaining harmonious social relationships and willingly fulfilling social roles and obligations. Therefore, the self is relatively quiet and restrained (Wirtz & Chiu, 2008). As mentioned earlier, when revising the Chinese version of the quiet ego questionnaire, research found that the inclusive identity dimension had poor reliability and validity (张舒, 2017). Questionnaire items such as “I feel a connection with strangers” and “I feel a connection with all living things” received negative responses from most Chinese college students, showing a positively skewed distribution. Such expressions may be unsuitable for Chinese culture. Therefore, how to conceptualize quiet ego in collectivist cultural contexts is a future research direction.

One possible direction is to consider three self-states: noisy ego, silent ego, and quiet ego. Noisy ego is excessively self-centered, lost in self-desires; silent ego is excessively suppressed, lost in external expectations and demands. Both

are unbalanced selves. Quiet ego is the ideal, balanced self. For people in individualistic cultures, the primary challenge to self-health is reducing noisy ego to achieve quiet ego. For people in collectivist cultures, the challenge may be excessive influence from external others, collectives, or society, causing the inner self to become “squeezed,” “stuffed,” or “lost” among various external noises, becoming overly quiet or silent. Therefore, healthy self-development primarily involves breaking through silent ego to achieve quiet ego. Of course, both cultural contexts include individuals with prominent noisy or silent egos, and from an individual differences perspective, similar approaches apply. With modernization and globalization trends, self-centered values and individualism are also showing intergenerational strengthening in China (苏红 & 任孝鹏, 2014). Therefore, Chinese cultural contexts also include individuals with prominent noisy egos whose healthy self-development primarily requires reducing noisy ego.

5.2 Quiet Ego Concept Needs More Systematization

Among quiet ego’s four characteristics, only growth significantly positively correlates with the other three; inclusive identity only positively correlates with perspective-taking, while the correlation between detached awareness and inclusive identity is unstable. This indicates unclear relationships between growth and balance dimensions, somewhat weakening the scale’s reliability and validity—a limitation requiring improvement (Wayment, Bauer, et al., 2015). Future research should continue exploring quiet ego’s structure to make it more reasonable and complete. We propose an exploratory spatiotemporal model of quiet ego for consideration, shown in Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper].

The self’s structure includes spatial self and temporal self. The spatial self’s core is the subject self, surrounded by different self-aspects involving others, collectives, nature, and object self. The temporal self includes past self, present self, and future self. Both spatial and temporal selves in quiet ego have two major characteristics: stability and flexibility. Spatial self’s stability manifests as stable, secure, solid self-esteem rather than fluctuating, fragile, hollow self-esteem. It does not fluctuate greatly with external changes and feedback, does not become silent under external pressure, and does not attempt to loudly scream to control the external world. Such self-esteem naturally emerges from satisfying basic psychological needs rather than depending on situational outcomes like achieving specific results, meeting expectations, or matching standards. It requires no continuous validation, and implicit, unconscious self-esteem is consistent and matched with explicit, conscious self-esteem. Typically, when individuals act according to their core, most authentic self, their self-esteem is secure and stable (Kernis, 2005). Therefore, the self-space in Figure 1 has boundaries, but like a cell membrane, these boundaries are permeable, interactive, and mutually nourishing with the external world—this reflects spatial self’s flexibility. Spatial self’s flexibility involves maintaining attention to external voices while staying true to the authentic self, flexibly facing and handling problems in different

situations, and achieving harmony with the external world. This can manifest as flexibility in cognition, emotion, and behavior. Notably, flexibility typically emerges on the basis of stability and is an expression of stability. Without stability, external voices can easily squeeze inner self-space, turning the self into a “squashed ego.” Temporal self’s stability is essentially self-continuity over time, manifested as accepting past and present selves and being willing to continue such selves into the future. Temporal self’s flexibility reflects the self’s agency—individuals maintain openness to present and future, knowing and willing to experience and practice multiple possibilities. Possessing both stability and flexibility is the concentrated expression of quiet ego, like a tumbler that can both stand stably and swing flexibly. Sometimes a very quiet self is beneficial, while sometimes a loud self is beneficial (Kosloff et al., 2008). Such flexibility enables fuller realization of our developmental potential. Based on this 设想, future quiet ego structure will be able to integrate growth and balance dimensions within the same framework through stability and flexibility. However, this model awaits future empirical testing.

5.3 Multi-Perspective Development and Promotion of Quiet Ego

Quiet ego was proposed in contrast to noisy ego, yet how to develop from noisy ego to quiet ego requires multi-perspective research. As mentioned earlier, studies have shown that quiet ego cognitive intervention, mindfulness, and artistic creation help promote quiet ego. However, these methods’ effectiveness awaits further verification. For example, controversy remains regarding whether mindfulness enhances or quiets the self. Gebauer and colleagues (2018) conducted two longitudinal studies finding that mindfulness did not quiet the ego but instead promoted self-centeredness. Participants were 93 yoga students and 162 meditation students tracked for 15 weeks and 4 weeks, respectively, who self-assessed their self-centeredness and self-enhancement tendencies. Results showed that self-enhancement tendencies increased in both cases, with these effects mediated by greater self-centeredness, which enhanced the well-being benefits of mind-body practices. Such results, as mentioned earlier, relate to quiet ego’s 内涵, and also indicate that mechanisms and boundary conditions of mindfulness promoting quiet ego require future in-depth exploration. Additionally, other possible methods for promoting quiet ego need exploration. For example, the relationship between awe and quiet ego deserves future attention. Awe’s small self hypothesis (Piff et al., 2015) suggests that awe reduces self-directed attention, shifting focus to larger stimuli and thereby promoting prosocial behavior. Perlin and Li (2020) propose that awe enhances individuals’ perception of interdependence with the external world, promoting balance between internal and external focus, thus facilitating quiet ego. Research has found that awe-induced participants more balancedly displayed their strengths and weaknesses to others and were more willing to acknowledge external forces’ contributions to their personal achievements (Stellar et al., 2018). This suggests that enhancing awe may be a pathway to promoting quiet ego, though this awaits future verification.

Additionally, whether manual arts and maker activities can promote quiet ego requires investigation. Collier and colleagues (2014) randomly assigned 47 experienced textile crafters to textile art making, quiet ego contemplation, or writing about disturbing emotional memories. Results showed that textile art making promoted the strongest positive emotions, highest arousal and engagement, and lowest rumination and negative emotions. Collier and von-Károlyi's (2014) research classified participants as art creators or non-creators based on self-reported peak experiences in art activities. Results showed that compared to non-creators, 70% of female art creators reported rejuvenation and self-actualization experiences. These studies emphasize the positive effects of high arousal, high involvement, or high immersion in artistic creation, consistent with positive psychologist Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) concept of flow. When tasks involve extremely concentrated attention, irrelevant and negative thoughts and concerns decrease or have no space to enter awareness, people often forget themselves and even time, thus promoting quiet ego. Therefore, artistic creation may be a pathway to promoting quiet ego, awaiting future empirical testing.

Finally, quiet ego's promotion and development require research from diverse populations. Constrained by objective conditions, most of Wayment and colleagues' research has been based on female participants, including during questionnaire revision and development. Future research should test the validity of quiet ego constructs and promotion methods more extensively in male populations. It is also worth noting that quiet ego research is particularly valuable in special populations such as disadvantaged groups, patient populations, and marginalized communities. Unlike the background against which quiet ego was proposed, these special populations face more complex internal and external noise due to their differences from most others. Both moving from silent ego to quiet ego and from noisy ego to quiet ego pose challenges. Previous research has examined quiet ego in unemployed populations (Wayment, Huffman, & Irving, 2018), parents of children with autism (Wayment, Al-Kire, et al., 2019), nurses (Wayment, Huffman, & Eiler, 2018), and lesbians (Aubin & Skerven, 2008). Future research should examine quiet ego characteristics across broader special populations, exploring similarities and differences among different groups to enable more targeted quiet ego promotion and enhancement.

In conclusion, as a new research perspective in the self domain, quiet ego is receiving increasing attention. The self is a core topic across multiple disciplines including social psychology, health and clinical psychology, personality psychology, and developmental psychology. In-depth exploration of quiet ego's concept, measurement, development, and promotion will provide theoretical guidance for healthy development and enhancement of individual psychology and behavior, holding important practical significance and value.

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