Combining nomothetic and idiographic approaches to understand bicultural self

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<th>Static approach</th>
<th>Dynamic constructivist approach (Hong et al., <em>American Psychologist</em>, 2000)</th>
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<td>Focuses on stable, static aspects of cultures</td>
<td>Cultures are open systems subjected to changes</td>
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<td>Comparing cultures along some universal dimensions</td>
<td>Cultural differences are mediated by some domain-specific theories</td>
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<td>Makes inferences from the score distributions of cultural samples</td>
<td>Focuses on how cultural theories mediate cognition, affect, and behavior</td>
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<td>Bicultural individuals are problematic and usually excluded from studies</td>
<td>Bicultural individuals are the targets of investigations</td>
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### Overview

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<th>Nomothetic approach:</th>
<th>Experiments that demonstrated how bicultural individuals can switch between the two cultural meaning frames.</th>
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<td>Idiographic approach:</td>
<td>Narrative studies that examined the qualities of attachment of bicultural individuals to the two cultures.</td>
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**Common thread:** Bicultural individuals can dynamically switch between cultural frame, and the individual differences in the extent of doing so are linked to the *implicit theory of race.*
Bicultural individuals
Cultural priming
Cultural priming

American
Result Summary

The Chinese (American) cultural cues heightened the accessibility of the Chinese (American) cultural theory. Subsequently, these individuals will apply the more accessible cultural theory to the task at hand.

Dependent measures:

1. Internal versus external attributions (Hong, Chiu, et al., 1997, Hong et al., 2000; Hong et al., 2003)

2. Cooperation versus competition in Prisoner’s dilemma game (Wong & Hong, 2003)

3. Egocentric versus relational emotional projection (No & Hong, 2004)
Results

Likelihood of choosing the cooperative strategy in a Prisoner’s Dilemma game

![Bar chart showing the likelihood of choosing the cooperative strategy for Chinese, Neutral, and American participants. The chart indicates higher likelihood for Chinese participants compared to Neutral and American participants.](chart.png)
How does activation of different cultural knowledge system affect emotion?

No and Hong (2004a): Korean-American college students participated in an emotional task (which is based on Cohen & Gunz’s, 2002, model of perspective taking on emotions):

When I feel depressed, people around me usually feel:  

a. concerned  
b. depressed  
c. sad  
d. sympathetic  
e. Other emotion: (Please specify)
(No & Hong, 2004a)
Do bicultural individuals differ in the extent of frame switching? YES.
Idiographic approach: Narrative studies that examined the emotional attachment of bicultural individuals to the two cultures.
Our approach:
Cultural Attachment Theory
(Hong, Roisman, Chen, 2004)

- Bicultural individuals can form independent attachment to the two cultures.
- Attachment to culture is defined by the ability to freely evaluate experiences with the culture.
Methodology
Cultural Attachment Interview

• Participants: 60 Chinese-American biculturals who were living in US;

• 19 standardized interview questions, with standardized probes (45~60 minutes);

• Main questions: Participants were asked to generate 5 words to characterize their experiences with Chinese/American cultures, and then substantiate their word choices with personal stories.
The interview protocols were adapted from Adult Attachment Interview (Main, Kaplan, Cassidy, 1985; Main & Goldwyn, 1998; Hesse, 1999)
–Overall consistency of narrative can reflect a person’s state of mind of security.

Coding of the Narratives
• Verbatim transcripts of interviews were analyzed in terms of overall coherence of communication according to Grice’s maxims of communications: Quantity, Quality, Relevance & Manner.
• Instead of focusing on the positive/negative valence of words, we focus on how individuals have come to understand their bicultural experiences.
• High inter-coder reliability: 85%+
JP: coherently describing both American and Chinese experiences

[Chinese experience: Modest]:

“For example, when I study in college, our class altogether went on a picnic. Before we went to the destination, the scenic spot, we were on the bus and some classmates ask me to sing. Honestly I like to sing, but in the group and sing in front of them is kind of scary and I don’t want to show off. So I just said ‘oh ok you can go first.’ So I will let them sing first then after that they kind of push me and I will say, ‘ok,’ I don’t want to give them a sense and idea that I want to show off.”

—{coherent}
“...from my American friends or from a stranger I met in the American society, I think they are very polite, they are very civil.

For example, for the first time I went to Chicago, I kind of got lost. So I asked a stranger, we met at a gas station,”

... “she has already done the job and she was going to leave. But when I asked her, she just kindly showed me the directions. And when I, when I was leaving she also drove, you know, led me and pointed me to the direction.”

—{coherent}
CR: incoherently describing Chinese experience, coherently describing American experience

[Chinese experience: Restricted]

"like you can’t do whatever you want. You know. The culture is very, ah, restricted. It tries to force you to go to a certain directions, it’s always shaping you. It’s like putting great pressure on you.”

…… “Yeah, for example, when I was a kid I don’t want to study, I had to be a good student because that’s what, you know, that’s what everybody else expected, that’s what the culture. I think that’s a good thing, you know. If I want to be a musician, if I want to be an artist, that’s not considered a great career path.”

.... “Nothing happened, so I, I just, so I studied hard. But I really didn’t like the things I studied. I mean, I wanted to be more free, I wanted to do whatever I want, I really don’t, I didn’t have a, a goal before, as everybody else did…”

{"incoherent}
“I was staying with a guy, the host family, and he’s like, he never really cared his parents like my parents would care for my grandparents. He said he didn’t get along with his mom or dad.”

“we just talked about random things and I don’t remember why we start talking about relationship between parents and kids. And he just said, if his parents die, he wouldn’t feel too bad about it.”

“one time, his niece had a birthday, so she invited me and him to their house.”

“‘can we get her something for her birthday?’ And he’s like, ‘don’t worry about it, we’ll write her a check for 20 dollars.’ I was shocked.”
...“Often times, with parents and grandparents, I adjust differently sometimes, like cover up more, just show less skin, coz I don’t know, it just seems inappropriate sometimes.”

.... “I mean, I try to dress more conservative around my parents and grandparents.”

....“One time when I didn’t. I had a shirt like V-neck. My grandma was like ‘what is that?’--she spoke in Chinese--but she was like ‘you should cover up!’ I am like ‘ok’.”

—{coherent}
“Yeah, it was Speech Communication class. But for me, I am not that expressive, I can like on paper, but it’s hard for me to just like come out and open. Sometimes like I think I am more shy than others.”

“Nothing like really happened, but just a lot of my classmates, they spoke more their opinions, concerning like different topics, more than like me or my, or other Chinese people in the class.”

“It was like, I felt I need to be more expressive too, because I felt kind of out of place. A lot times you wanna be a part of a bigger crowd, and I feel like I am still working on it. Like, I wanna be able to, state my opinion in class, state my opinion every where else I go.”

—incoherent
MX: incoherently describing both Chinese and American experience

[Chinese experience: **High Standard**]

...“Like sometimes, I guess the high standards, like getting good grades, like getting a job, being like really obedient, and like, very respectful, I wouldn’t say, I wouldn't say I’m not respectful. It was just like, I don’t know, I won’t be like, I won’t stay home a lot. Like I’m always out, with other people.”

... “when they told me of their high standards, I just, I don’t listen to them. It’s not the same here, it’s never gonna work. I guess I don’t believe in it. It doesn’t work for everyone. I don’t know. Maybe it works for people who were born in another country and came here but like, if you were born here, it’s very different.”

—{incoherent}
... “like a song by Britney Spears, like Toxic. When it was played on the radio for the first time, I hated the song, I hated it. And every time I listen to the song in the beginning I was like ‘oh...’ and I changed the station and stuff.”

“But then like later, it started like playing it more, and a lot of people liked it, and then like, I just started listening to it more, and I was like, ‘oh I do like it.’ Then how can you hate something, and then love it? It’s like my favorite song now, like that’s how I say it’s influential, because like you can, like, people’s attitude, like the way the environment surrounding you, you can totally change your mind like really fast.”

—{incoherent}
What does Cultural Attachment Interview categorization predict?

• Adult Self-Report scale: Psychological Adjustment
  
  *(Achenbach, 1997)*

• Subjective Well-being
  
  *(Diener, 1993)*
Adult Self Report:
Insecure with American culture but secure with Chinese culture was related to more adjustment problems on 7 out of 8 sub-scales
Anxious/Depressed subscale: $\alpha = .90$
Subjective Well-being ($\alpha = .87$):

Insecure with American culture but secure with Chinese culture reported the lowest subjective well-being.
Common Thread

Implicit Theories of Race -- a belief in race as biologically determined and fixed versus race as socially constructed and malleable.

1. A belief in fixed race (vs. malleable race) was associated with insecure attachment to American culture for immigrants ($r = .81$).

2. A belief in fixed race (vs. malleable race) was associated with less or reverse cultural frame switching in the American prime condition.
Conclusion

We have used two approaches, a nomothetic and an idiographic approach, to understand the dynamics of bicultural self and identities.

What’s next? To examine the physiological responses of Chinese-American bicultural individuals when they were describing Chinese and American cultural experiences.

Any suggestions or comments?

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Other Slides
John Berry’s Acculturation Model

Maintain native culture

Separation

Avoid
Host culture

Integration

Relate to
Host culture

Marginalization

Reject native culture

Assimilation

Relate to
Host culture

Avoid
Host culture

Maintain native culture

Reject native culture