

YING-YI HONG**Professor, Nanyang Business School, Nanyang Technological University**

Ying-Yi Hong is currently a Professor at the Nanyang Business School of Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore. As a Hong Kong native, she grew up in a humble Chinese family while being exposed to western cultures in public schools during the British colonial time. After receiving undergraduate education at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, she studied overseas, and subsequently received a Ph.D. degree from Columbia University, specializing in Personality and Social Psychology. She has taught at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) before moving to NTU. Her main research interests include culture and cognition, self, identity, and intergroup relations. She has published over 100 journal articles and book chapters mainly on culture and cognition, multiculturalism and identity. Her published work has been cited widely in the fields of psychology, business, and education (H-index=39). Dr. Hong is the recipient of the Otto Klineberg Intercultural and International Relations Award in 2001, International Society for Self and Identity Outstanding Early Career Award in 2004, and was elected Fellow of the Association for Psychological Science, and Associate of the Center for Advanced Study, UIUC. She is also a co-director of the Culture Science Institute, a research body housed at Nanyang Business School that aims to conduct cutting edge, interdisciplinary research on culture.

A Dynamic Constructivist Approach to Culture

Human civilization is marked by the proliferation of cultures, which include not only artifacts and institutions, but also networks of meaning systems (e.g., lay beliefs and theories) that groups of individuals shared and transmitted from generations to generations (Bruner, 1990; D'Andrade, 1984; Shore, 1996; Strauss, 1992). These shared meaning systems are crucial for individuals to simplify the vast amount of information characterizing our complex world, to communicate and coordinate with others in the group, and to define who we are. However, the sharing of a meaning system is not homogeneous within a group, and an individual can acquire multiple cultural meaning systems. Moreover, globalization has resulted in frequent juxtapositioning of cultures. All these have challenged the traditional static views of cultures; a new approach is needed. To meet this, the dynamic constructivist approach was proposed by Hong and colleagues (Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martinez, 2000) to model switching of cultural frames within multicultural individuals' mind, and to understand the dynamic nature of cultures. In this talk, I will discuss how the dynamic constructivist approach can address cultural dynamics employing

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diverse concepts such as brain plasticity, niche construction, and co-evolution of genes and culture. Taken as a whole, the new approach can shed light on responses across a wide scale, from neural responses to reactions to real life incidents, such as empathy toward the 2011 Japanese earthquake and tsunami. The goal is to deepen our understanding of cultures as complex systems that are dynamic, adaptable, emergent, self-organized and non-linear.