



# De-Westernization of Intercultural Communication Theory

Intercultural Adaptation and Intercultural Competence as Examples

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# 01 Origin of Intercultural Communication

PART ONE

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## Origin of IC

### As a phenomenon

- Such intercultural exchanges as migration, travel, trade and study abroad do not only promote the cultural fusion among different groups but also highlight the cultural differences and even conflicts among them.
- Historical events in China: 张骞通西域, 郑和下西洋.
- Such European scholars as Wilhelm Von Humboldt (1767-1835) and Scheiermacher (1768-1834) argued that communication is a process in which communicators continuously negotiate meaning with each other.



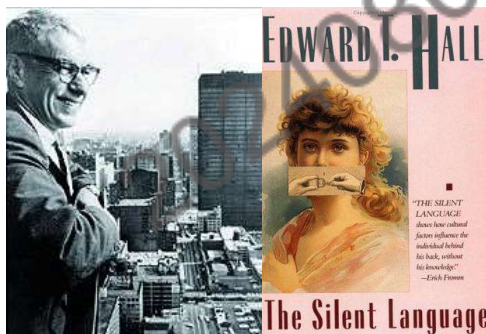
## Origin of IC

### As a discipline: in the West

- Intercultural communication was not recognized as an independent discipline until the 1950' s in the United States.

#### Started in the 1930s

- When such anthropologists as Margret Mead to join the American government;
- They tried to apply their knowledge in anthropology into International Relations.



#### Systemized in the 1950s

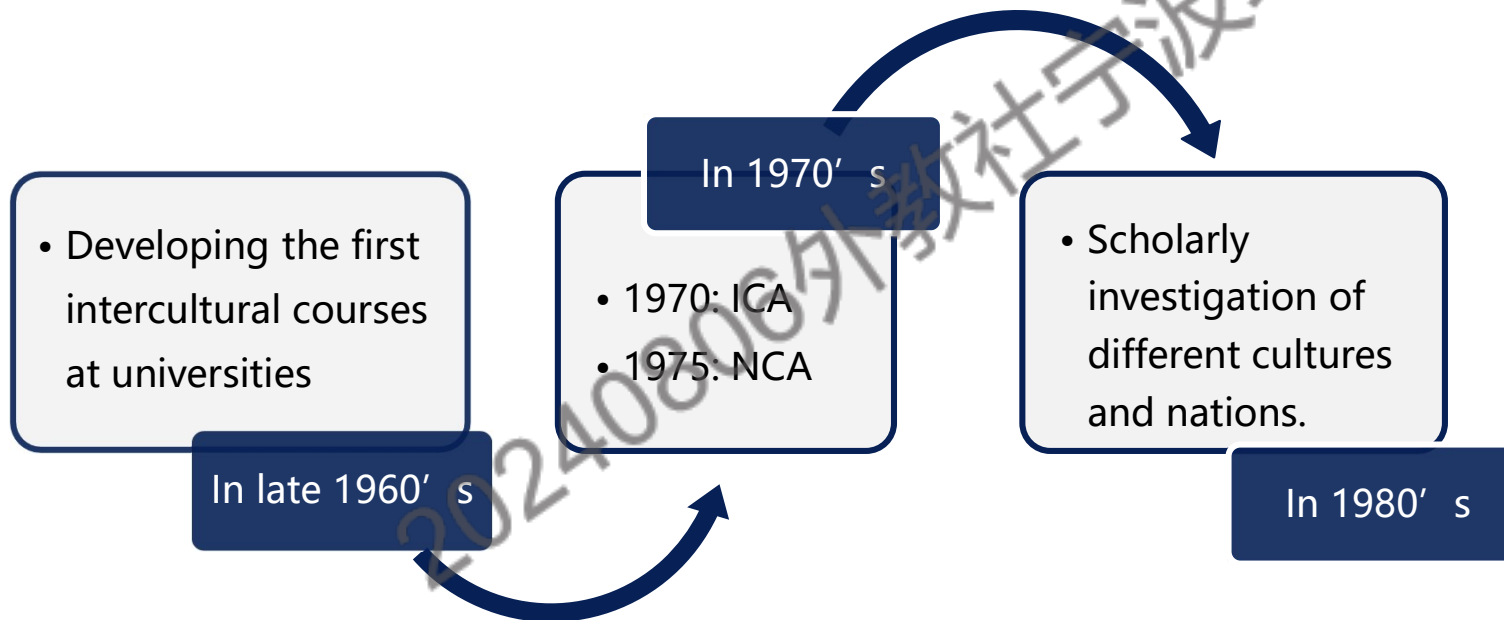
- Hall and his team were serving the Point Four Program proposed by former U.S. President Truman;
- As an independent discipline, IC was officially founded by Edward T. Hall in 1950s.

PART ONE

# Origin of IC

## As a discipline: in the West

- Then intercultural communication, as an independent discipline, found its way into Communication departments in the United States

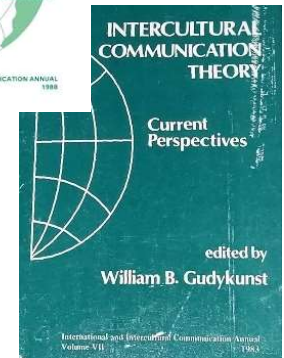


Theories in  
**INTERCULTURAL  
COMMUNICATION**

edited by

Young Yun KIM  
William B. GUDYKUNST

INTERNATIONAL AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION ANNUAL  
VOLUME XII  
1988






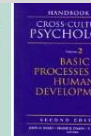














PART ONE

# Origin of IC

## As a discipline: in the West

- Representative scholars and their theories since the 1980' s in the West
- Apart from Anthropology and Communication, Psychology and Sociology also bear a great impact on the development of IC in the Western academia

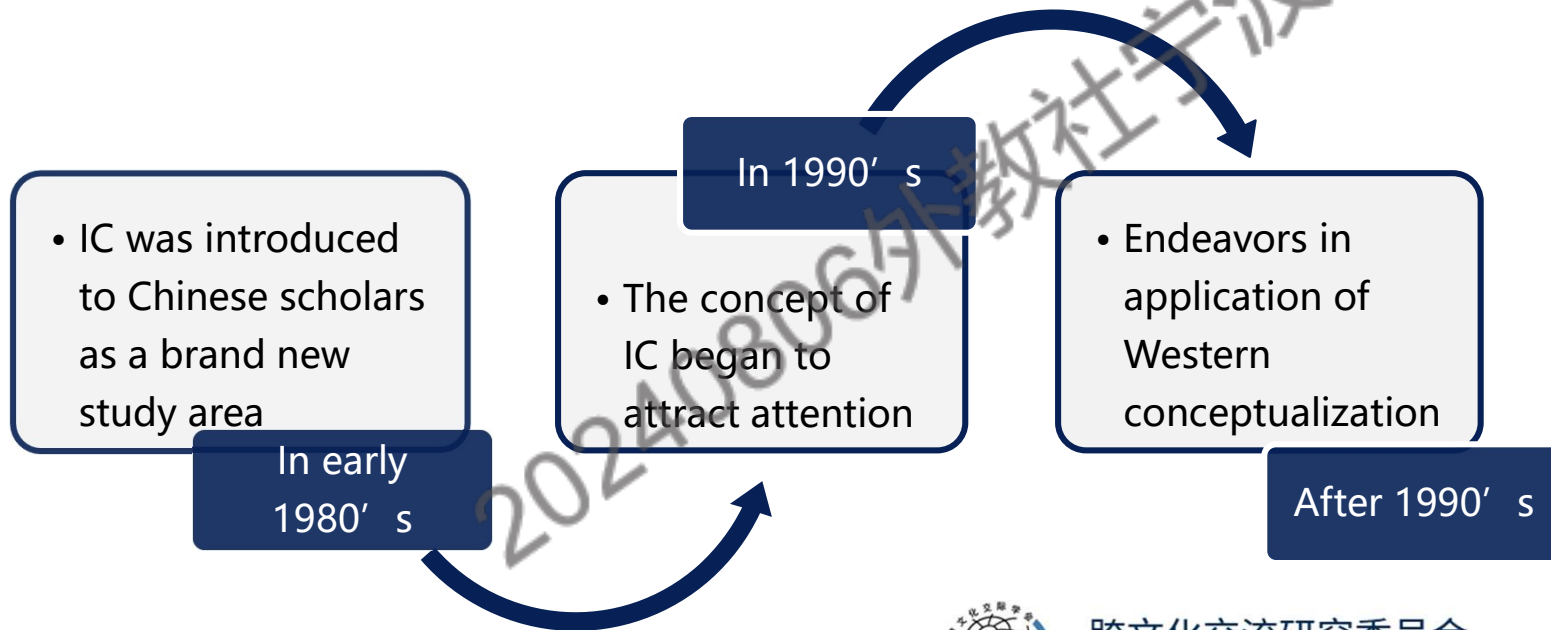
Affiliated Disciplines	Scholars	Theories	Publications
Psychology	Geert Hofstede	Cultural Dimension Theory	  
	John W. Berry	Acculturation Model	  
Sociology & Communication	William B. Gudykunst	Theory of Anxiety and Uncertainty Management	  
Sociology, Philosophy & Communication	Eric Kramer	Cultural Fusion Theory	  
Communication	Young Yun Kim	Cross-cultural Adaptation Theory	  
	Stella Ting-Toomey	Face Negotiation Theory	  

PART ONE

# Origin of IC

## As a discipline: in China

- IC was introduced to China in the early 1980s as a new research area.
- Initially, it made its way to English departments



### Intercultural Communication Study in China

LING CHEN  
Hong Kong Baptist University, China

The People's Republic of China (PRC) has arisen in around 30 years to be an important country in many ways, while opportunities and occasions have increased tremendously for anyone from another culture to encounter and interact with Chinese individuals inside or outside of China, which contrasts starkly with what the rest of the world knows about this country. This entry provides an overview of the state of the art of intercultural communication (IC) studies in China. IC here refers to communication between cultures, implying involvement of individuals as active parties in the communication process where culture matters and assuming as necessary comparison of cultural elements that influence communication practices across cultures.

#### The beginning

As a subject of academic study, IC was introduced in the early 1980s to Chinese scholars in the PRC. A first essay introducing IC as a brand new study area was published in 1983 in the college journal of Sichuan Foreign Language Institute. This was preceded by an essay in the college journal of Guangdong Foreign Language Institute written by Guozhang Xu (1980), noting the English language as a carrier of culture and implications for English teaching. The thesis resonated with many language teachers and influenced thinking in foreign language teaching as a whole. All this happened shortly after college admission through national examination was reinstated in 1977, a system that had been abolished during the 10-year Cultural Revolution, and before the economic reform and open-door policy was initiated in 1979. Pedagogical exploration of verbal communication as a tool for language teaching in the few years leading up to that point naturally sparked scholarly discussion of culture-related aspects of foreign languages among educators and scholars and the ways it might influence language learning. However, it was not until the 1990s that the concept began attracting attention among the masses of college English and other foreign language teachers. Momentum has been building continually since.

Around that time, a few communication scholars also showed interest in IC in relation to media and journalism studies. By then the study of media and journalism had become firmly established as a key field of academic study and was undergoing rapid development along with media industries. For language teachers and scholars, the main issues of IC were associated with language learning for social interaction with

The International Encyclopedia of Intercultural Communication.  
Young Yun Kim (General Editor), Kelly L. McKay-Semmler (Associate Editor).  
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DOI: 10.1002/9781118783665.seic0080

Chen, L. (2017). Intercultural communication study in China. In Y. Y. Kim (Ed.), *The International Encyclopedia of Intercultural Communication* (pp. 1-10). John Wiley & Sons.



跨文化交流研究委员会

China Association for Intercultural Communication



# Origin of IC

## As a discipline: in China



### Comparative Studies

- For example: cross-cultural communication (like conflict management and misunderstanding)



### Conceptualization

- Distinguish basic concepts by taking Chinese terms into account;
- Interdisciplinary



### Traits

- More theoretical reflections than empirical studies



### Future

- More IC training
- Strengthen methodology
- De-Westernization or de-Eurocentralization



## 02 Dualistic and Post-Positivist Theorization

PART TWO

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## Dualistic and Post-Positivistic Theorization

### Adaptation in the West

- Intercultural adaptation refers to the long-term process of adjusting to and finally feeling comfortable in a new cultural environment (Y. Y. Kim, 2001, 2005).

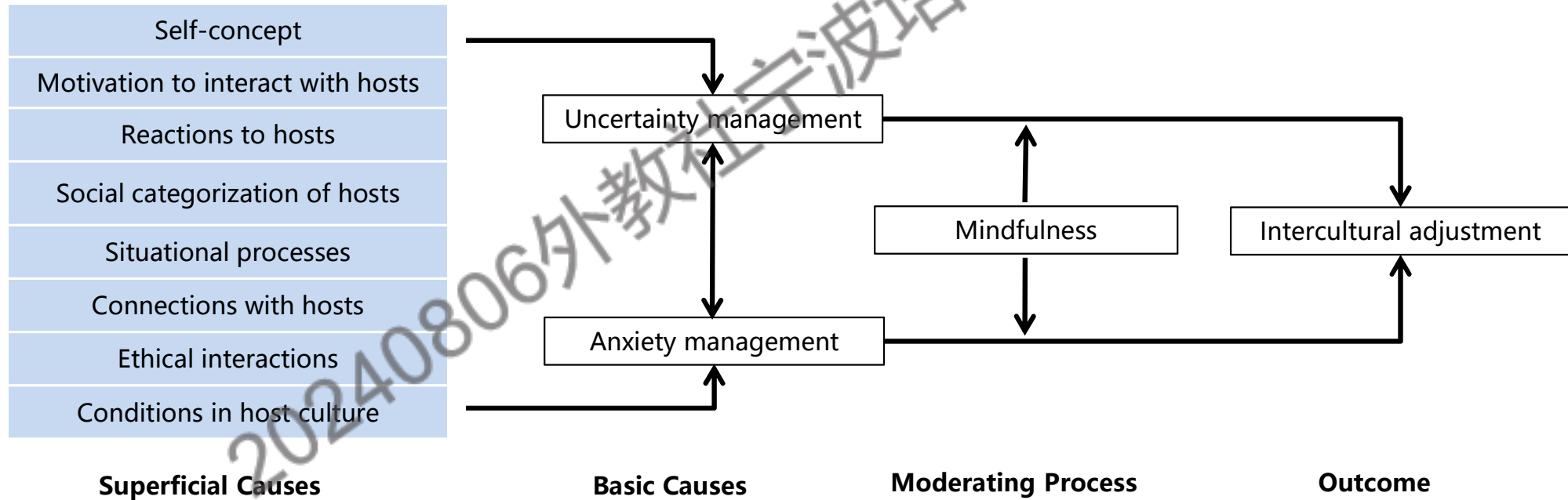
Contribution of Post-Positivism to Intercultural Adaptation	
Traits	Representative theories
Focusing on: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) the individual in the adaptation process,</li> <li>2) individual characteristics and background of the migrant, and</li> <li>3) the individual outcomes of adaptation</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The anxiety and uncertainty management (AUM) model by William B. Gudykunst</li> <li>• The cross-cultural adaptation (CCA) theory by Young Yun Kim</li> <li>• The acculturation model by John W. Berry</li> </ul>

Martin, J. N., & Nakayama, T. K. (2010). *Intercultural communication in contexts* (5th ed.). McGraw-Hill. .

# Dualistic and Post-Positivistic Theorization

## Adaptation in the West

- A glimpse of the relevant theories: AUM

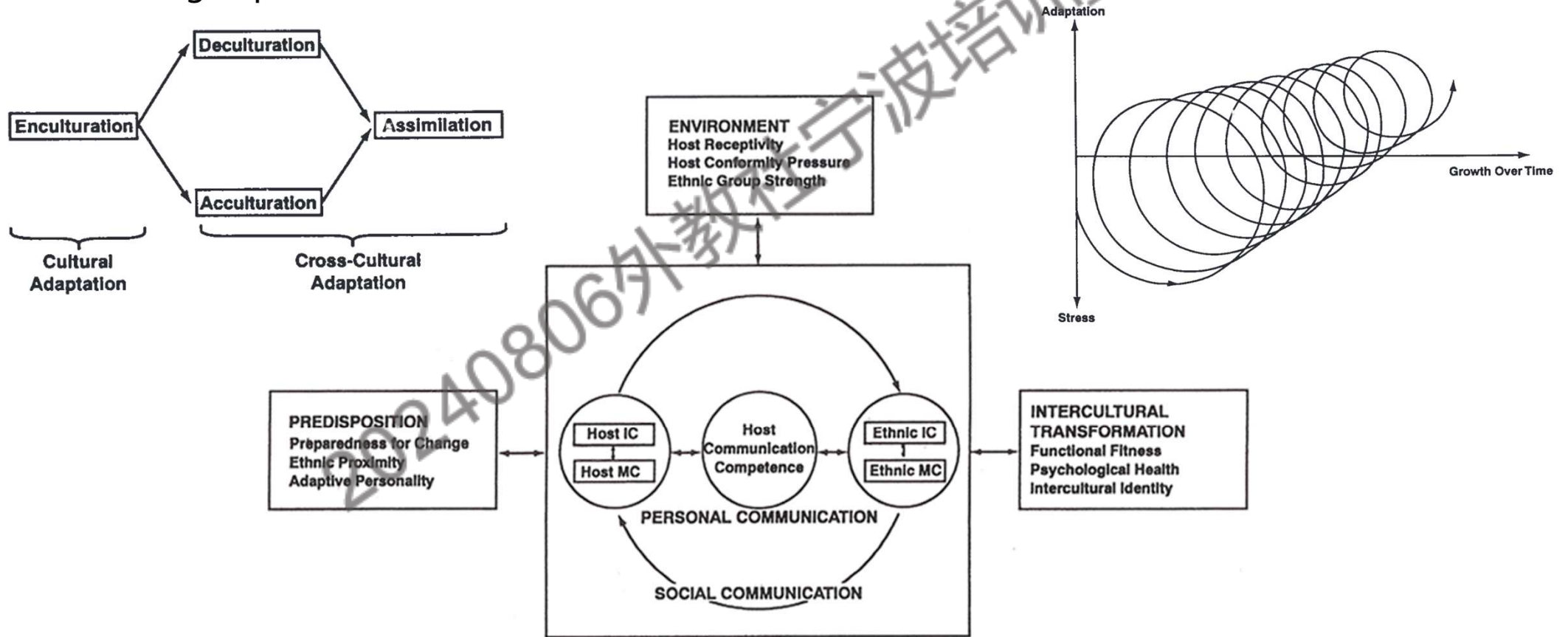


PART TWO

# Dualistic and Post-Positivistic Theorization

## Adaptation in the West

- A glimpse of the relevant theories: CCA



# Dualistic and Post-Positivistic Theorization

## Adaptation in the West

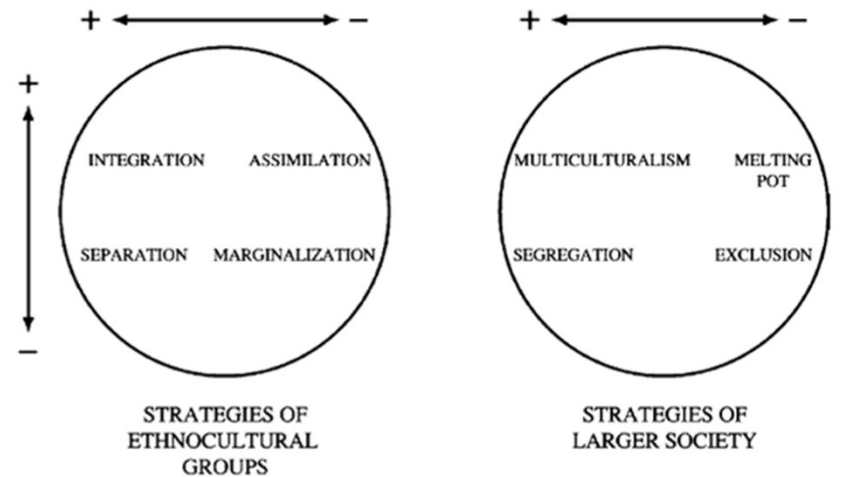
- A glimpse of the relevant theories: Four-fold acculturation model

Cultural Adaptation (relationship sought among groups)

		Low	High
		High	Separation
Maintenance of heritage culture	Low	Marginalization	Assimilation

ISSUE 1:  
MAINTENANCE OF HERITAGE CULTURE AND IDENTITY

ISSUE 2:  
RELATIONSHIPS SOUGHT AMONG GROUPS



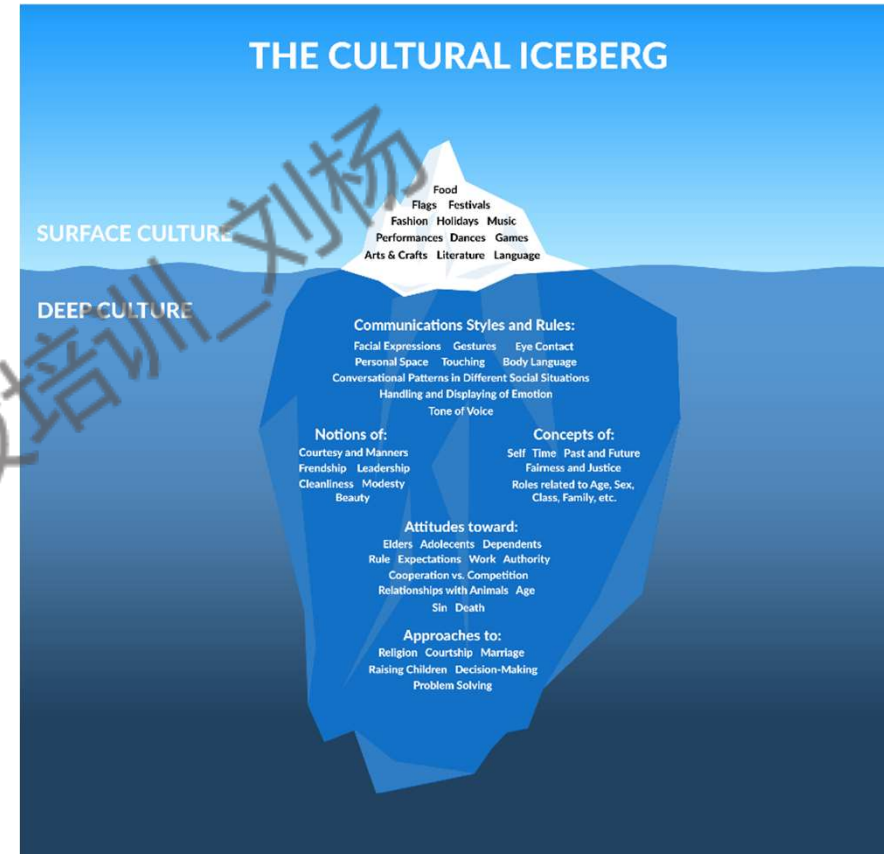
PART TWO

# Dualistic and Post-Positivistic Theorization

## Adaptation in the West

- (Post-)positivism is intertwined with dualism to shape researchers' perception and exploration of culture in the Western academia.

Positivism/Post-positivism	
Assumption of reality	External and describable
Assumptions of human behavior	Predictable
Research goal	Describe and predict behavior
Relationship of culture and communication	Communication influenced by culture

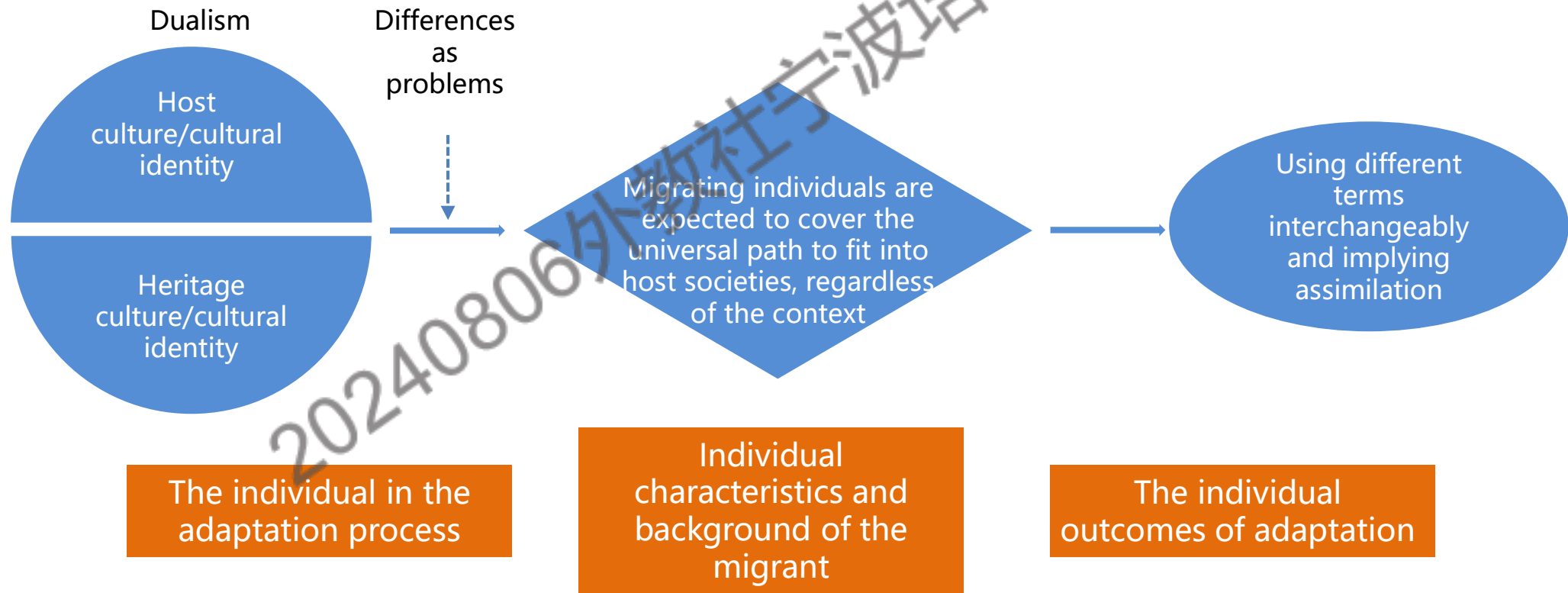


Source from:  
 Hall, E. T. (1976). *Beyond culture*. Anchor Books.  
 Weaver, Gary R. (1986). Understanding and coping with cross-cultural adjustment Stress. In R.M. Paige (Ed). *Cross-cultural orientation. New conceptualizations and applications*. Lanham MD: University Press of America.  
 Weaver, G. . (1988). Facing the Cultural Crisis in Child Care. *Journal of Child and Youth Care Work*, 4, 5–28. <https://doi.org/10.5195/jcycw.1988.129>  
 Picture from: [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-Culture-Iceberg-Metaphor-The-external-or-conscious-part-of-culture-is-what-we-can\\_fig1\\_359258763](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-Culture-Iceberg-Metaphor-The-external-or-conscious-part-of-culture-is-what-we-can_fig1_359258763)

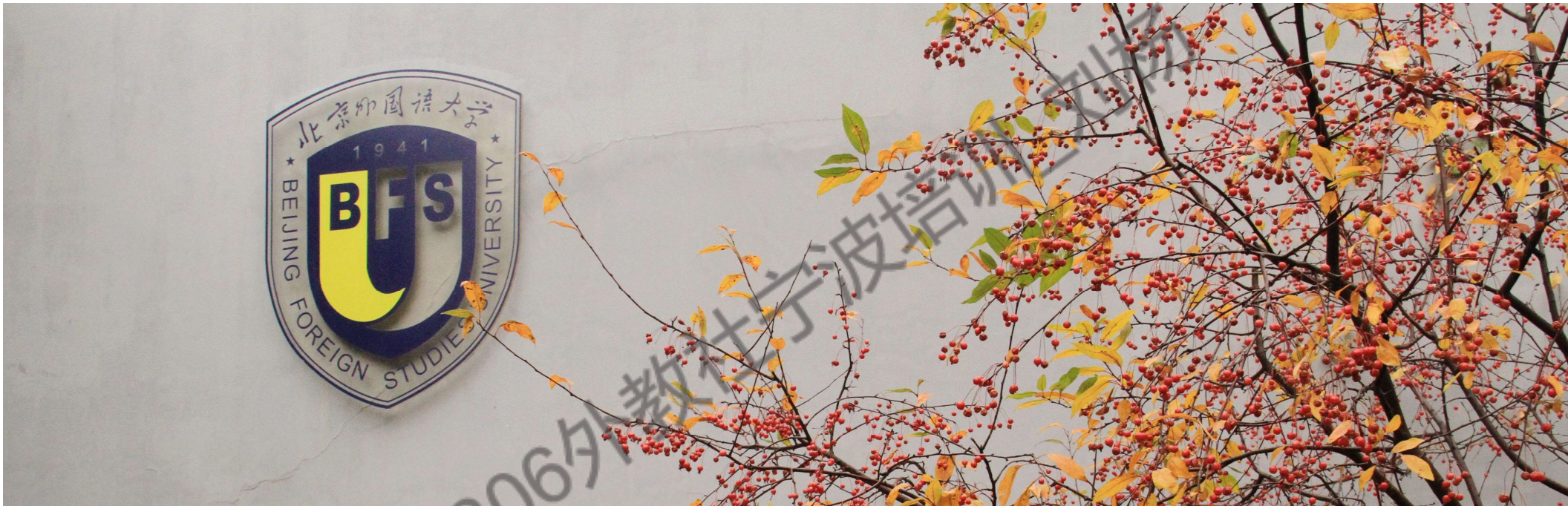
## Dualistic and Post-Positivistic Theorization

### Adaptation in the West

- Dualism-underpinned theorization







# 03 De-Westernization of IC Theories

PART THREE

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## De-Westernization of Adaptation

### Contribution of hermeneutics

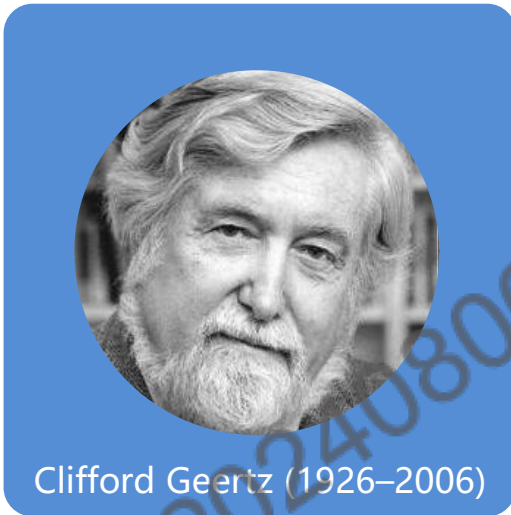
- Works done by Martin Heidegger and his student Hans-Georg Gadamer shed lights on intercultural communication.
  - Heidegger argued that communication between different cultures is interaction.
  - Gadamer argued (1) that we could not escape from our prejudiced pre-agreements; and (2) that our horizon provided us a certain perspective.
- Our perspective can enable our horizon but also limit our horizon.
  - The encounter between different people is the encounter between different horizons.



## De-Westernization of Adaptation

### Contribution of hermeneutics

- Importance of horizon



#### About Geertz

- American anthropologist, who is remembered mostly for his strong support for and influence on the practice of symbolic anthropology.

#### Web of Meaning

- As humans, we live in a web of meaning and that we ourselves have spun.

#### Culture As A Spider Web

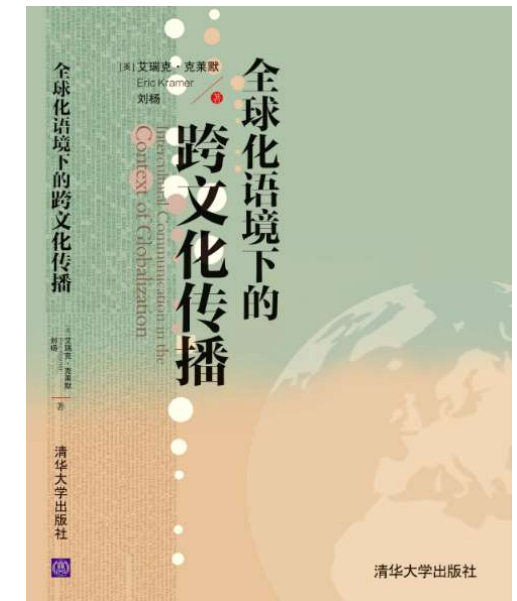
- We can never leave the spider web behind;
- We create the web by ourselves.

## De-Westernization of Adaptation

### Contribution of hermeneutics

- Inspired by hermeneutics, Dr. Eric Kramer proposed the theory of cultural fusion.

The Cultural Fusion Theory	Other Dualism-underpinned Adaptation Theories
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The original culture cannot be unlearned.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Immigrants and sojourners are encouraged to keep distance from their original culture and even unlearn it.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The acquisition and learning of new culture is not a zero-sum process. Sense-making is important. The horizon is continuously expanded in the process of communication. Differences should be respected rather than being erased.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The ultimate goal is assimilation towards the synthesis.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Different cultures will be fused together in an unpredictable way to generate new meaning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cross-cultural adaptation is a linear process, the result of which can be predicted.</li> </ul>



## De-Westernization of Adaptation

### Contribution of hermeneutics

- Cultural fusion theory: Maintaining heritage culture and respecting differences

<i>The original culture cannot be unlearned</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chinese students became more aware of their Chinese identity;</li><li>• Co-ethnic communication provided them emotional support.</li><li>• Co-ethnic communication didn't impede the interaction with host-nationals.</li></ul>
<i>Differences should be respected rather than being erased.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Chinese identity helped Chinese students to acquire respect from Americans.</li><li>• Interactions are full of creations. Migrating individuals can actively change the host environment and carve out their own positions</li></ul>

Liu, Y. (2018). Acculturation of Chinese students in the U.S.: Un-abandoned Chinese identity and intra-ethnic communication *Intercultural Communication Studies*, 27(1), 55-71.

## De-Westernization of Adaptation

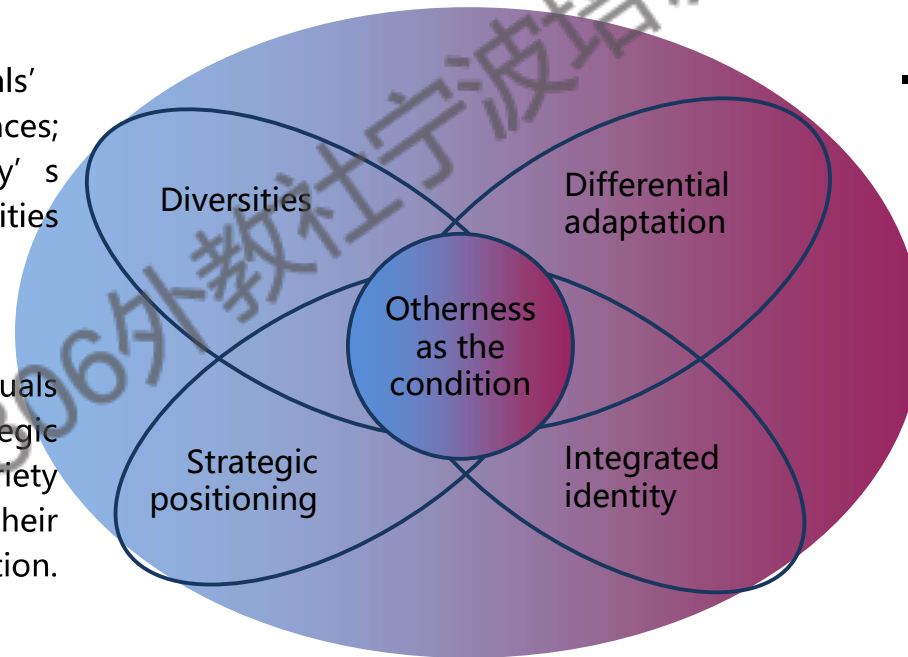
### Contribution of hermeneutics

- Cultural fusion theory: Differential adaptation instead of universal path

**Different cultures  
will be fused  
together in an  
unpredictable way**

- Migrating individuals' diverse experiences;
- The adopted society' s peculiarities

- Migrating individuals may adopt strategic positioning in a variety of ways to enact their intercultural adaptation.



- Strategic positioning can lead to differential adaptation marked by individuals' tactical negotiations.

- An integrated identity rises from differential adaptation as a result of the interplay of two and more cultures.

Liu, Y., & Kramer, E. (2021). Cultural value discrepancies, strategic positioning and integrated identity: American migrants' experiences of being the *Other* in mainland China. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 14(1), 76-93



# 04 Concluding Remark

PART FOUR

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### Efforts made in Asia

- Beyond the monolithic view of “Asia” held by the West

Challenges	Solution by calling attention to
First, the cultural level analyses tend to paint all ‘Asians’ with the same broad brush as collectivistic, and thus reserved and indirect.	The complexity and increasing heterogeneity of Asian communication styles;
Second, some argue that the representation of Asian communication systems in intercultural communication literature functions partly to ‘manage’ and ‘perpetuate’ power relations between the West and non-West.	The traditions of Asia as sources of concepts in intercultural communication
Third, there is a growing awareness of the limitations of intercultural communication theories so steeped in Eurocentrism that they oversimplify the complexity of the ‘rest of the world’ .	The reconsideration of the Western research paradigm.

Kim, M.-S. (2010). Intercultural communication in Asia: Current state and future prospects. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 20(2), 166-180



## We need to consider

- What perspective should we hold for the intercultural communication in the future?
- How can we better utilize our Chinese perspective to understand the intercultural communication in depth.
- In which way can we fuse the modern and the traditional to enrich the meaning of intercultural communication conducted by China?





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感谢聆听

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