courses were more valuable and that the instruction was better than instructors who do not use immediate behavior in the classroom. Both verbal and nonverbal immediacy cues influence students' perceptions of their instructors. Studies have also shown that nonverbal immediacy increases students' willingness to contact their instructors outside of classroom settings. Immediate behavior can also positively impact student learning and willingness to engage material. Students and instructors also use immediacy to gauge whether they like each other in academic settings.

Based upon the research regarding immediacy, instructors are often trained to be more immediate with their students. Common advice often includes suggestions regarding verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors. Instructors should learn their students' names as soon as possible and use them when addressing the students in the classroom. Also, instructors have been advised to communicate immediacy through nonverbal cues, such as maintaining open body language, nodding their heads to encourage participation, and using direct eye contact when lecturing. Instructors have also been advised to use cultural sensitivity with immediate behavior; however, this can be difficult to achieve when counterbalanced with the goal to use immediate behavior consistently with all students so they do not perceive some as teacher’s pets. Despite the difficulties in balancing consistency with misinterpretation, people generally respond more favorable to immediate communication.

*Cerise L. Glenn*

*See also* Communication Competence; Contact Hypothesis; Culture; Face/Facework; Forms of Address

**Further Readings**


**IMMIGRATION**

*Immigration* refers to the act of moving from one place to another. Thus, immigrants are mobile. They are not indigenous but foreign, often seen and defined as abnormal by the indigenous element. To the host citizen, immigrants may communicate strangely and may follow alien mores. The unfamiliar behavior of the immigrant is often perceived by the host country as “wrong.” Meanwhile, the immigrant may be quite aware that he or she does not know all aspects of the host cultural ways and may attribute mistakes made to his or her lack of knowledge about the local environment, that is, innocent ignorance, rather than to personal malice, disrespect for local folkways, or to his or her own moral failing. The difference the immigrant embodies may be attributed by the host as an inherent failing of the immigrant. For the immigrant, however, it is not an inherent failing but a matter of innocent misunderstanding that can be ameliorated with time and experience. The alterity, or the otherness, of the identity of the immigrant is based both in language and behavioral differences, which include cultural differences, differences in values, motives, beliefs, and expectations.

**Language and Immigrant Identity**

Otherness and marginalization do not always mean being weak, but they do demand from the immigrant greater cognitive and affective effort at socialization because of the complexity of the immigrants’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds. For a sojourner, the semantic field “thickens,” to borrow a term from Clifford Geertz. Everything, even the most mundane processes and objects, suddenly seem salient and become more prominent in one’s consciousness. For the sojourner, food,
clothing, rules for crossing streets, instructions for how to use a public telephone, and so forth, all become prominent in awareness, and this sudden foregrounding of so many experiences greatly increases the affective and cognitive labor for the newcomer. This increase in cognitive complexity and cognitive effort is not limited to being compelled to translate between two or more languages much of the time. Life abroad is more complicated and difficult than life in one’s place of primary socialization.

Culture, as a way of life, becomes an important concept because it powerfully influences how an individual understands and interprets the actions and reactions of the world at large. To some extent, the self and culture are inseparable. The self is always a cultured being, a person who has been raised and enculturated by a larger group of people. And so, to the degree that cultures vary around the globe, so too must there exist many different kinds of selves. When a person says that he or she is Greek or Malaysian, this expresses the identification that exists between the person and his or her culture and, often, his or her language.

Language is important to personal identity. Language, culture, and self are difficult to separate. Language is a sensitive subject because it involves peoples’ sense of community and identification. In France, l'Académie française guards against the use of non-French words in public discourse. As early as the ancient Taoists, in what is now China; the ancient Jews in the Middle East; and the ancient sophists, such as Isocrates in Greece, thinkers have believed that language acquisition is the same thing as acquiring the ability to think and acquiring an identity, indeed acquiring a cultural identity. When children learn a language, they learn a system that will structure not only what they can think about but also how they think about it.

The structuration of one’s consciousness is largely a process that one is not, and indeed cannot be, initially aware of. The formation of oneself, one’s language, one’s world, as such, is largely out of one’s control. We are part of the field of experience. It is not so much that a person speaks a language as it speaks him or her, meaning that one’s language has already structured the world into which one was born and it shapes one’s very modes of conscious awareness. We are an integral part of the ecology of meaning. Who we become is not a matter of our own volition. As developing children, we cannot guide our own development consciously or according to our own intentions and principles. Though everything is meaningful to us, what things mean to us, that is, how we perceive and evaluate the world, is largely beyond our control. We are taught how to see the world, not in a formal classroom setting but by being an active participant in the social world, by being an integral part of the ecology of meaning, which is not directional but a field of constant interactive and interpretive activity. This is what Eric Kramer calls the field theory of human communication. It is not limited to conceptual symbolic language (spoken written, or both; the metaphysical reductionism of linguistics) but includes nonverbal ways of being and expressing ourselves from how to drive a stick-shift car to how one holds one’s fork or chopsticks, dances, laughs, cries, points, and walks. For instance, Kiowa Indians in the United States always curl their index finger a little when they point because to point directly is rude and may have supernatural consequences.

According to the field theory of human experience and communication, we are born into an already complex and operant semantic field. When an immigrant crosses a boundary, he or she must contend with a new semantic field, which includes not merely spoken language like vocabulary and grammar but also paralinguistics, such as when it is appropriate to laugh, when it is appropriate to be silent, whether it is appropriate to talk about oneself, when jokes are appropriate, at what volume should one speak, how turn taking works, and so forth. In Japan, for instance, what might be called personal efficacy regarding communication competence has more to do with being self-controlled enough to remain silent and listen intently than to interject one’s opinion. In the United States, what counts as personal efficacy has more to do with being an eloquent speaker: witty, quick, well informed, and so forth. In addition, there are nonverbal codes that are difficult to master when crossing borders.

When one crosses a boundary and becomes marginalized, this means that one is not automatically included via social ritual and scripted behavior. Upon breeching the boundary, suddenly interaction is no longer routinized and normative.
Instead, it becomes laborious—effortful. The involuntary becomes voluntary, subconscious behavior rises to the threshold of awareness. Self- and other-monitoring increases. All of this means that interaction becomes more complex, which means that options must be weighed in the moment; cognitive labor increases and, with it, feelings of frustration. As such, immigrant identity is very much a process of intercultural communication and negotiation.

**Commonsense Negotiation**

The newcomer does not share the common sense, the folk knowledge presupposed by the indigenous population. Part of intercultural adjustment means to begin to inhabit that common sense. The common sense is the sense or mode of meaning that permeates a worldview, which seems natural, obvious, logical, and rational. It is the basis of the "realism" of a worldview for those who live within that hermeneutic horizon.

Communities are bound by the common sense they share, the way they make sense of the cosmos, what it means to them; this includes understanding their sense of self, their place. One can arrogantly refuse to take another’s way of being in the world seriously because it seems “primitive,” “backward,” or “ignorant,” but if a person wants to understand why people do what they do, he or she has to understand the world from their perspective. That does not mean the person has to presume the other worldview as true, but in order to understand others, he or she has to at least take their lifeworld into account.

The status of being an immigrant means one who crosses boundaries between groups, which usually means crossing from one commonsense ecology into a different lifeworld. What we have then is a status, an identification of a person who is on the move between groups. It is also a mood, a state of mind, a set of mannerisms and an expressed custom that is not merely contingent but has serious moral implications. Often, immigrants try their best to get along with the indigenous ways they encounter even if they do not understand. They may make mistakes and misinterpretations and harbor different values, but they typically try to get along. It is not in their interest to conflict with the local folk.

Despite the best efforts of negotiation by the immigrant group, the host culture still may see the immigrant as lacking in many competencies and even in moral character. Ethnocentrism means more than simply observing obvious differences in lifestyle and mannerisms. It involves applying particular values and moral judgments to that behavior. In addition to being a cultural and political phenomenon, ethnocentrism is also a moral and ethical phenomenon. The local folk may tend to blame mistakes on the character and personality traits of the newcomer, impugning the morality and ethical judgment of the stranger, suggesting that there is something inherently inferior, lazy, stupid, malicious, or malevolent about the newcomer. Given a lack of information, they may well fall back on stereotypes and attribute the newcomer's mistakes or odd behavior to the group to which he or she “belongs,” be it a racial or ethnic group, nationality, religious affiliation, level of educational attainment, or political party membership.

To bring the immigrant closer to the host, the immigrant and host must learn about each other. This involves communication. Lowering anxiety can be achieved through information gaining and understanding, a process that takes time. For the immigrant, many barriers exist to successful information gathering, such as social and psychological distance as well as possible language barriers. The only way such distances can be bridged is through extended contact between the immigrant and individuals in the host culture. Once they learn more about each other, they may come to identify more with certain elements of each others’ lives and see a common, shared humanity. Empathy, and perhaps even sympathy, grows through contact. As a result, there are a variety of ways in which the immigrant may assimilate, adapt, or cointegrate within the host culture.

**Assimilation to Cointegration**

Host society receptivity is a measure of how welcoming a host society or group is to an outsider. This initial posture will determine how long it might take for individuals to get to know each other. This factor is essential to the success of the newcomer. Many researchers make untested presumptions about immigrant identity and host receptivity and the interaction between the two. One presumption is that simple interaction between immigrants and their hosts will eventually lead to
assimilation, meaning that their cultural identity will follow a process of conformity whereby the immigrant abandons his or her original culture, values, and ways of thinking and adopts the customs, values, and social attributes of the host society until the immigrant becomes indistinguishable from a majority group member. As interactions between ethnic groups sharing a common socio-cultural boundary increase, their distinct ethnicities will disappear until the groups become culturally indistinguishable. When one looks at the preservation of cultural identity over centuries among ethnic groups that live side-by-side throughout Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America, there is much evidence to contradict this claim. Whereas some immigrant groups assimilate, others retain aspects of their native culture. Assimilation is far more complex than some scholars admit.

Another unfounded presumption made by the original students of immigration is that the host society presents a monolithic “mainstream” culture. This is denied by the presence of modern multicultural societies such as the United States. Rural Nebraska is very different from San Diego, which is very different from Mobile, Alabama. Even within Mobile and San Diego, there are neighborhood cultures. The claim that an immigrant faces a singular and simple mainstream culture that will guide the direction of assimilation is still prevalent in some writing.

As we follow the evolution of the idea of immigrant identity and assimilation theory from Robert Park to Milton Gordon and beyond, the concepts adapt, adopt, adjust, assimilate, and integrate sometimes become entangled. Gordon realized that the change that constitutes assimilation is on both sides of the equation: that the host culture is changed by the presence of immigrants just as immigrants are changed by the host culture, a process Kramer calls coevolution which also involves the coconstitution of identities.

At the social level, integration is really cointegration. Communication is not a one-way process. Although what some call conformity pressure, claiming that it is exerted one-way onto minority immigrants by the numerical majority of the host population, is real, it does not and cannot completely overwhelm the immigrant’s mind. It is impossible to “unlearn” or “deculturize” oneself. If it were possible, immigrants would be like an erased computer memory, having no operating system left with which to translate and interpret their new world even though that interpretation must be accented. Instead, the sojourner builds a repertoire of cultural and communication competencies as he or she gains intercultural experience and learns how to switch at will between cultural codes to fit the situation. This is how new languages and cultures emerge by means of deviation from their mother cultures and languages. Like the coconstitution of identity and the coevolutionary process, whereby a society both changes and is changed by immigrants who move in joining the living process of society as a system, as a semantic field, integration is also a communicative process. Integration is coevolution. In short, both sides influence each other. Conformity pressure exists in both directions, and the intensity of the pressure cannot be reduced to simple quantification. A single missionary entering a village can have tremendous influence.

Increasingly in this globalizing world, many contemporary writers refer to bicultural and multicultural individuals as transnational. To understand the complexity of this new development, the term transcultural may be used to capture the multiple linguistic communities that often reside within modern nation-state boarders and across political boundaries. Increasingly, culturally mobile individuals do not abandon contact with their home culture even as they live in another. New technologies such as the Internet and cell phones allow immigrants to stay in close, even daily, contact with their home societies and cultures. They stay abreast of the latest changes in music, television programs, news, and so forth via the Internet. They also can stay in close touch with friends and family back home. Social networks among immigrants today are extensive and vital, transcending cultural and geopolitical boundaries. Immigrants master a repertoire of communication and cultural rules and move between cultures with increasing facility. The unidimensional, simplistic notion that had currency during the 1950s and is still echoed by a few writers today—namely, that one can attain new competency, can really achieve “functional fit” (assimilate) only to the extent to which one unlearns and sheds one’s original identity—has been proven false by of the growing research literature on immigrant life and identity.
Coconstitutional and Coevolutionary Identity Formation

Differences between the immigrant and the host society never absolutely disappear as he or she integrates into a host society. Rather, integration involves what Kramer calls cultural fusion, a process whereby subjects encounter a host cultural form, adopt it, and, inevitably, add their accent to it. Examples from multicultural societies are innumerable. A few are curry hamburgers, playing jazz with traditional Japanese instruments, and adding Polynesian warrior dances to an American college football pregame routine. Immigrants influence the societies into which they move and are also influenced by those societies.

Whereas assimilationists argue that the evolutionary goal of an immigrant should be to adopt the host culture’s predominant mode of thinking, acting, and even feeling—what they call cognitive, behavioral, and affective functional fitness (intercultural adaptation)—as much as possible, the reality of immigrant experience is a coevolutionary process whereby the host culture and the sojourner communicate, that is, exchange, interpret, and borrow some of each other’s ways.

Cultural fusion is a theory of intercultural communication. It presupposes hundreds of years of hermeneutic research and observation in interpretation studies and accepts the hermeneutic tenet put forth by Friedrich Nietzsche and, later, Martin Heidegger, that the human condition is fundamentally a process of interpretation, of making sense of experience. The hermeneutic process presumes that all interaction involves interpretation, a process of making sense of one’s surroundings, including Others’ behaviors. This process of making sense always presumes one’s own perspective. Without a perspective, a person cannot make sense of anything. And so, all human experience is limited; without limitation, there is no sense making, no knowing. Cultural fusion thus explains how immigrants make sense of their adopted homelands. Because of perspectivism, everyone has an accent; each person has a particular take on the world. People who share a common cosmology and more or less common history and experience tend to share a common way of seeing the world, a common accent on perception and conception.

To be an immigrant has various meanings depending on the context, the human ecology that is constituted of the civilizational and cultural interface that is the necessary condition for immigration to exist and, consequently, for the identification of “immigrant” to exist. The more homogeneous a group is, the less individuals are identifiable as unique. The moment a person steps into a group that he or she is not a member of and becomes Other, or the moment someone steps into your group and is Other, homogeneity (the quality of sameness or similarity) gives way to heterogeneity. In the real world of immigration, the process of identity morphogenesis is complex and ever-present. Dependent on difference for its very existence, identity changes as differences change. However, no matter the valence of how the experience is perceived, in all cases it involves the realization of what Ernst Jentsch and Sigmund Freud called the uncanny. The uncanny is the paradoxical experience of something or someone who is both familiar and foreign at the same time. The immigrant to the host and the host to the immigrant can seem uncanny. The strangeness of difference can be fascinating or frightening, curiously pleasing while alienating, liberating while lonely, in essence, more or less sublime in the most profound sense, for it involves self-realization and a heightened sense of self-monitoring and also a heightened effort at observing the ways of the Other.

Eric Mark Kramer

See also Culture; Culture Shock; Diaspora; Self

Further Readings


Impression Management

Impression management is a sociological concept coined by Erving Goffman, one of the most important social theorists of the 20th century, who is well known for his astute observation on the microphysics of social interaction. Goffman introduced the term in his famous book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, considered to be a momentous contribution to the social psychological examination of the relationship between the individual and society. In this book, Goffman spelled out a dramaturgical theory of everyday life. The theory, however, is not about how aspects of the theater spill over to everyday life. Instead, without confounding social life and drama, Goffman effectively used the metaphor of theater to show how the self is a dramatic effect and not a preordained substance that, together with its own kind, carries out social performances. The self does not act on the basis of a previously spelled out social script that social actors read to their respective audiences either. Rather, social scripts are the outcome of active agents who are involved in vital processes of social interaction. This social interaction forms, maintains, and changes both the personal and the social identity of an individual as the “drama” of the self and the other unfolds.

In the dynamic social scene, the self, according to Goffman, encounters the fate of being credited or discredited in the midst of the very performance that defines its characteristics. Social actors, accordingly, employ several techniques to create a creditable self. One of these techniques is impression management, a technique of staging a character effectively and preventing performance disruptions that violate the interactional scene. Incidents of performance disruptions include *unmeant gestures*, fortuitous acts that contradict the intended performance; *inopportune intrusions*, intrusions of outsiders who are not part of the performance; *faux pas*, verbal or nonverbal acts that are exercised without seriously considering their implications in full; and *scenes*, intentional acts that condition the unfolding of a new interactional drama. Hence, a successful social show is materialized only when both actors and audiences possess appropriate dispositions and are prepared for forthcoming interactions. Individuals who are involved in effective impression management possess attributes that allow them to take defensive, protective, and proactive measures.

Loyalty, Discipline, and Circumspection

Goffman notes that there are three ways by which performers can be resourcefully engaged in an act of impression management. These include dramaturgical loyalty, dramaturgical discipline, and dramaturgical circumspection. *Dramaturgical loyalty* is a condition in which a team obtains an unconditional commitment from its members so that it can carry out its performance successfully. Members who are lax to expose the secrets of a team or who act out of line to protect their individual vested interest, disregarding the interest of the group as a whole, jeopardize dramatic performance. Also, if actors are not prevented from strongly attaching themselves with their respective audiences, a blurred distinction between the two parties may arise, thereby impinging on a smooth team performance.

There are various ways by which dramatic loyalty can be maintained. Establishing solidarity among members is one way of sustaining dramaturgical loyalty. Solidarity among actors whose disposition, among other things, allows them to see the audience as an outgroup that should be kept at bay, prevents an outward orientation. The more there is an organic connection among performers in which each member, however minimal his or her role, is recognized, the less likely will there be the possibility for doubt and dissension. Another way of securing dramaturgical loyalty involves audience alternation. Alternating between audiences from time to time prevents performers from forming strong ties with their “clients.” Moreover, periodic alteration of audiences counteracts against off-show actions that arise as a result of strong emotional ties between performers and audiences.

Dramaturgical loyalty must be accompanied by dramaturgical discipline in order for performance to be carried out more efficiently. *Dramaturgical...*